August 27, 2018

TO: Clerks of Session

FROM: Stephen Kendall, Principal Clerk

RE: Actions of the 2018 General Assembly for Attention of Sessions

Dear Clerks of Session,

Please find below, the General Assembly referrals for your attention and action. Electronic copies of the referrals letters (and the documents noted for study and report) are available online at presbyterian.ca/referrals.

1. STUDY AND REPORT

1.1 Committee on Church Doctrine, Recommendation No. 1

That the document “On the Question of Unity and Diversity” be commended to the agencies, colleges, congregations, session, presbytery, synods, committee and groups of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for study and response to the Special Committee of Former Moderators through the General Assembly office by January 31, 2019.

The report can be found at A&P 2018, p. 237-48 (amended, p. 36) and presbyterian.ca/referrals.

1.2 Clerks of Assembly, Recommendation No. 9

That the proposed amendments to Book of Forms sections 108 and 108.2 regarding term service for elders be referred to sessions and presbyteries for study and report to the Clerks of Assembly by January 31, 2019.

The report can be found at A&P 2018, p. 260-61 (adopted, p. 36) and presbyterian.ca/referrals.

2. EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION

2.1 Committee to Advise with the Moderator, Recommendation No. 3 (A&P 2018, p. 202, adopted, p. 19)

That the thanks of the Assembly be extended to the congregations, individuals, presbyteries, synods, organizations, and international and ecumenical partners who warmly welcomed and graciously offered hospitality to the Rev. Peter Bush.


That individuals, congregations and presbyteries be commended for their responses to PWS&D’s appeals for the Syria crisis and the Africa famine.


That appreciation be expressed to the congregations and individuals who faithfully supported Presbyterians Sharing in 2018.
3. INFORMATION/ACTION

3.1 Assembly Council, Recommendation No. 1 (A&P 2018, p. 205, adopted, p. 36)
That all church courts be encouraged to have their official records (especially session minutes and church registers) copied to microfilm for security and preservation purposes, and also digitized if desired, by contacting the Archives.

3.2 Assembly Council, Recommendation No. 7 (A&P 2018, p. 214, adopted, p. 36)
That the stipend for students on summer appointment meet or exceed the minimum wage requirements for the province in which the appointment takes place; housing costs may be shared with the student, at a rate not to exceed $100 per week, plus travel, as applicable.

3.3 Assembly Council, Recommendation No. 10 (A&P 2018, p. 216, adopted, p. 36)
That we as a church seek unity in Christ in our dealings with one another, in the spirit of the experience of the workshop engaged in by representatives of the Han-Ca Presbyteries, the Committee on Church Doctrine, the Life and Mission Agency, the Assembly Council and the Clerks of Assembly.

3.4 The 2019 Minimum Stipend Schedule can be found at (A&P 2018, p. 220-221 and presbyterian.ca 2018/referrals.

3.5 Clerks of Assembly, Recommendation No. 13 (A&P 2018, p. 265, adopted, p. 36)
That the stipend portion of Book of Forms Appendices A–29 and A–30 be reconfigured as shown on p. 265.

The stipend section of the call document at A–29 and A–30 in the Book of Forms has been amended for clarity.

3.6 Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, Recommendation No. 2 (A&P 2018, p. 267, adopted, p. 21)
That congregations seek to build ecumenical and interfaith connections within their local communities.

3.7 Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, Recommendation No. 3 (A&P 2018, p. 267, adopted, p. 21)
That congregations be encouraged to participate in or initiate events and services related to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18–25, 2019) and Interfaith Harmony Week (February 1–7, 2019).

3.8 Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, Recommendation No. 4 (A&P 2018, p. 267, adopted, p. 21)
That Presbyterians and congregations seek to learn more about Canadian Indigenous spirituality.

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee is preparing resources to assist with this endeavour.

That congregations be encouraged to celebrate Heritage Sunday on February 17, 2019, or on another Sunday, as a means of celebrating the unique faith journey and heritage we enjoy as Presbyterians.
3.10 **Committee on History, Recommendation No. 4** (A&P 2018, p. 276, adopted, p. 21)
That thanks be expressed to the Rev. Peter Bush for his role in planning the Sola Reformation@500 events held each October over the past five years.

3.11 **International Affairs Committee, Recommendation No. 5** (A&P 2018, p. 284, adopted, p. 22)
That congregations pray for the safety and wellbeing of all peacekeepers, and the people they protect.

That congregations assess the need to keep a naloxone kit on church property, ensuring that staff and/or volunteers are properly trained in its administration (if a kit is procured) as a life saving, harm reduction measure.

That congregations assess the need for safe disposal sites on church property, as a harm reduction measure.

That congregations wishing to learn more about responses to the opioid crisis in their community be encouraged to contact their local Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Office or their community health centre.
The report on the opioid crisis can be found at (A&P p. 351-60) and presbyterian.ca/referrals.

That individuals in the church be invited to write to their Members of Parliament affirming the church’s support for the Government of Canada’s commitment to ratify P029; and that courts of the church may wish to write to Members of Parliament in their communities.

**Recommendation No. 23**
That members of the church be invited to meet with or write to their Members of Parliament, calling on the Government of Canada to establish measurable targets and reporting timelines to reduce levels of poverty in Canada-at-large and among specific groups identified as being at greatest risk of poverty as part of a national poverty reduction strategy.
Justice Ministries is available to assist individuals or courts of the church in preparing to write or to meet with their Members of Parliament.

**Recommendation No. 24**
That congregations be invited to use resources for prayers and thematic reflections (such as the Moderator’s reflection on poverty) on a Sunday near October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

**Recommendation No. 25**
That individuals and courts of the church be invited to express their support by signing on to “Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada” and to receive periodic updates concerning efforts to reduce poverty in Canada.
The report on Poverty Reduction can be found at A&P, p. 369-70 and presbyterian.ca/referrals.
3.17 **Special Committee Re Listening (LGBTQI) People, Recommendation No. 3** (A&P 2018, p. 462, adopted, p. 29)

That those who are subject to the discipline of The Presbyterian Church in Canada who accepted the invitation to serve on the Special Committee re Listening (LGBTQI People) or who accept the invitation to tell their stories of harm done or grace experienced, even in the midst the challenges they have faced because of homophobia, hypocrisy, heterosexism or transphobia in the church, would have potential censure with respect to The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s stance on same-sex relationships suspended indefinitely in order to allow them to participate freely and honestly in the work of the special committee.

3.18 **Special Committee Re Listening (LGBTQI) People, Recommendation No. 4** (A&P 2018, p. 464, adopted, p. 29)

That individuals and groups be encouraged to tell their stories of harm done by homophobia, hypocrisy, heterosexism and transphobia, and to share stories of grace received in the midst of challenges in The Presbyterian Church in Canada through the listening process developed by the Rainbow Communion **until June 15, 2019.**
ON THE QUESTION OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

Introduction

Jesus prayed for his disciples, “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:22–23) The Apostle Paul echoed that prayer in his letter to the Romans: “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:5–6) This fulfills God’s promise given through Jeremiah, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for all time, for their own good and the good of their children after them.” (Jeremiah 32:38–39)

What does the “unity of the church” mean? There are at least three distinct meanings for the phrase. There is the unity of the holy catholic church; there is the unity of The Presbyterian Church in Canada; and there is the unity of an individual congregation. Each is important in our present debate.

The section of John Calvin’s Institutes dealing with the Christian life begins with a chapter entitled “The True Church, With Which As the Mother of All the Godly We Must Keep Unity”. Calvin notes God gathers God’s children to the church “not only that they may be nourished by her help and ministry as long as they are infants and children, but also that they may be guided by her motherly care until they mature and at last reach the goal of faith.” Calvin adds God has arranged things so that “for those to whom [God] is Father the church may also be Mother”. (Institutes, 4.1.1, Battles translation).

Further, Calvin argued, apart from the church “one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation, as Isaiah (Isaiah 37:32) and Joel (Joel 2:32) testify. Ezekiel agrees with them when he declares that those whom God rejects from heavenly life will not be enrolled among God’s people. (Ezekiel 13:9) On the other hand, those who turn to the cultivation of true godliness are said to inscribe their names among the citizens of Jerusalem. (cf. Isaiah 56:5; Psalm 87:6) For this reason, it is said in another Psalm: “Remember me, O Jehovah, with favour toward thy people; visit me with salvation: that I may see the well-doing of thy chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the joy of thy nation, that I may be glad with thine inheritance.” (Psalm 106:4–5; cf. Psalm 105:4, Vg., etc.) By these words God’s fatherly favour and the especial witness of spiritual life are limited to his flock, so that it is always disastrous to leave the church. (Institutes, 4.1.4)

In this sense, Calvin agrees with Cyprian: “No one can have God as Father who does not have the church as Mother.” The Westminster Confession of Faith, one of the Presbyterian Church’s historic subordinate standards, builds on this, calling the “visible church, which is also Catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law)…the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

This gives Reformed Christians a strong commitment to unity in the visible church. Even though the “purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ…” somewhere there is one that does deserve our allegiance and membership: “Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth to worship God according to His will.” (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXV)

Living Faith is clear about the church’s unity: “The church is one. It is one family under God whose purpose it is to unite all people in Jesus Christ.” (Living Faith 7.1.2) The 2004 study resource A Catechism for Today declares “the church is essential to Christian belief and practice. The church is holy in that it is set apart by God to be a chosen people in the world. The church is catholic in that it is universal, including all people of all time who affirm the Christian faith. To belong to a congregation is to belong to the holy catholic church.” (Question 68)
This has echoes of the historic Reformed standard The Second Helvetic Confession which describes the importance of the church this way, “but we esteem fellowship with the true church of Christ so highly that we deny that those can live before God who do not stand in fellowship with the true church of God, but separate themselves from it. For as there was no salvation outside Noah’s ark when the world perished in flood; so we believe that there is no certain salvation outside Christ, who offers himself to be enjoyed by the elect in the church; and hence we teach that those who wish to live ought not to be separated from the true church of Christ.” (The Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter XVII)

The Church and Unity in the Bible

The New Testament talks about the church in two ways. On the one hand, church describes the universal body of Christ. Summarizing passages on this aspect of the church, the Westminster Confession of Faith says this universal body “is invisible [and] consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof.” (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXV) This unity of this church is described in, for example, Ephesians 4: “There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all,” (Ephesians 4:4–6)

On the other hand, church also describes the particular gathering or congregation of believers in a specific place. Disruptions of these local communities is the focus of passages like Paul’s rebuke to the Christians in Corinth: “For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?”. (1 Corinthians 3:3) Defending the unity of the church in this sense involves calling people to work together in harmony, as Paul taught the Philippians: “Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.” (Philippians 2:14–15)

As much as Jesus urged his disciples to seek peace and unity (Matthew 18:21–22) and prayed that they might stay united after his death (John 17:11), unity was to be a major challenge for the early church. One of the greatest disagreements was over the inclusion of the Gentiles. It was a dispute between those who felt that new converts to the way of Christ should follow the laws of the Old Testament and those who felt the law no longer applied. (Acts 15:1–11) Paul addresses this debate in his letter to the Romans, arguing that the grace of God experienced in Jesus Christ was sufficient for salvation. (Romans 4:13–25) This was a radical position for it marked a departure away from laws that, up until that point, were the bedrock of faith in God: including circumcision and dietary restrictions.

Defending the unity of the church universal involves remembering God “has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Ephesians 1:9–10) In this global intention, God is gathering into the eternal city “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.” (Revelation 7:9) Growing in this unity means mutually remembering, as, for example, the Ephesians were urged to remember, “the way you learned Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:20–24)

The New Testament shows evidence of particular congregations working together to care for each other in God’s grace. For example, Paul took up a collection from the churches in Asia minor to care for the suffering Christians in Jerusalem. He was able to do this because the church at Antioch commissioned him and Barnabas as missionaries to plant and strengthen churches through the region.
A History of Unity

The apostolic church struggled to agree on the essential tenets of Christianity. The first attempts were called “Rules of Faith” and Irenaeus and Tertullian cited a very early one, the Roman symbol, in their letters in the 2nd century. The earliest surviving text of this simple statement dates from 340:

I believe in God the Father almighty;  
and in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord,  
Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried,  
on the third day rose again from the dead,  
ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father,  
whence He will come to judge the living and the dead;  
and in the Holy Spirit, the holy Church,  
the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, the life everlasting.

Between 313, when Constantine stopped the persecution of Christians, and 380, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, emperors called ecumenical councils to define more fully the essentials of the faith. Constantine himself convened the First Council of Nicaea in 325. They produced the Nicene Creed, which the First Council of Constantinople amended in 381. That still failed to settle the question of essential tenets to unify the church. This quest for unity was not simply an intellectual exercise. Some of the opposition to false doctrines was violent and brutal. It would not be the last time church leaders used force to silence dissent and create a form of unity.

Some at these councils were troubled by the “filioque” clause in the section of the Nicene Creed discussing the Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified…

They believed that the Spirit, like the Son, proceeded only from the Father. This is still an important division between contemporary Christians in the eastern and western traditions. The simpler Apostles Creed, based on the Roman symbol, came into use after the council in Milan in 389. It simply says “I believe in the Holy Spirit” and was something both east and west could affirm.

As the church planted deeper roots in distinct cultures, organizational unity between congregations who had different attitudes, languages, habits and so on became more and more difficult. Eventually, the Great Schism of 1054 cemented the division between the Latin and Greek churches. The Orthodox tradition splintered into eastern and oriental traditions. In the west, the Catholic tradition fractured during the Protestant Reformation into national churches like the Church of England, into theologically-oriented churches like the Anabaptist movements, and into churches characterized by both like the Dutch Reformed Church. What does the unity of the church mean with regard to these bodies?

The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s History

The Presbyterian Church in Canada today is the continuing presence of a tradition central to early Canada. The largest group in that tradition was Presbyterians from Scotland who served in the British army or were traders and settlers. These people belonged to synods connected to churches in Scotland created by divisions in the 16th and 17th centuries. There were also some Irish Presbyterians connected with those same synods in Scotland, French Huguenots and Presbyterians from the United States, some of whom came north after the American Revolution and some of whom were Dutch Reformed from New York.

In the second half of the 19th century, the first ecumenical movement within the Protestant churches in North America began to bring various related denominations into larger groups. In 1861, the merger of the Canadian synods of the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church formed the Canada Presbyterian Church. In 1867, the groups in the Maritimes associated with the Church of Scotland merged to become the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Maritime Provinces of British North America. In 1875, these two
bodies and the Presbyterian Church of Canada formed The Presbyterian Church in Canada. For 50 years this new denomination grew and developed with an active overseas mission program.

But uniting groups of the same tradition was not the only concern of the ecumenical movement. Discussions grew about the possibility of uniting all Canadian Protestants as the new territories were being developed. The Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Anglicans and Baptists were all part of that discussion. A plan was put to a vote in the Methodist, Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches in late 1924 and into 1925. The dramatic story of the vote for union in the 1925 General Assembly and the resistance of 79 commissioners and their supporters is well known. Those who resisted union were divided between the descendants of the Church of Scotland and of the Free Church of Scotland traditions. These two groups have lived together for almost a century, creating a denomination for which theology is important but sometimes divisive.

Between 1925 and 1939, the new United Church of Canada and the “Continuing Presbyterians” were in constant and widespread battles over the politics of the division, the theology of the division and the property both of the old Presbyterian Church and the individual congregations who were allowed to vote whether to take their congregation into union or not. Families were divided.

In the centres of Canadian cities, churches that had once been Methodist and some that were Presbyterian became united while the dissenting remnants of Presbyterian churches had to find buildings to buy or rent or build new. Lawsuits proliferated. Finally, in 1939, many of the property issues, and even the name of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, were settled by an act of Parliament. However, the effects of the church union issue continue.

New ministers for the continuing Presbyterian churches were recruited from Scotland and Ireland. After the war, The Presbyterian Church in Canada grew and (to some extent) diversified with immigration from Britain and Holland and then, after the 1956 rising, from Hungary. More recently, immigration from countries where missionaries were active has added to the cultural diversity of the denomination. This diversity and the 78 years that have passed since the chaos of church union has dimmed the sense of loss from the years after church union. Still, for many the issue of possible schism raises unhappy emotional memories of their own (or their parents’) past.

At church union, congregations split; very few went into union or stayed out as a collective. It was individuals and families who ultimately made the choice of who stayed in a congregation and who left. Individuals within a congregation today will have different understandings of the issues surrounding human sexuality and the doctrines surrounding marriage. They will also have different understandings about leaving the denomination especially if it means leaving behind a building that they have helped build or care for. Congregations are made up of these individuals. We are dealing with hard issues that are complex and emotional.

**Denominations and Unity**

Denominations are historical and sociological realities. They are ways for congregations sharing a common heritage – perhaps ethnic, perhaps theological, and perhaps both – to work together in common mission projects. The denomination’s unity and usefulness grows out of the way member congregations can pool resources and work together in peace and harmony to accomplish a shared vision of Christ’s call.

The family of Christian churches is united in the common faith expressed in shared standards like the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. Denominations within that family are distinguished by different attitudes about issues like church government, doctrinal development, or sacramental practice. Part of what distinguishes different traditions is their sense of where the essential unity of the church lies. The Roman Catholic tradition, for example, can embrace a broad range of theological diversity because their essential unity is in the regular apostolic succession of ordinations and submission to the leadership of the Pope and the teaching authority of the Magisterium. While some Anglican congregations find doctrinal consensus in the 39 Articles of Religion from the 1604 English prayer book, the shared commitment to the worship life outlined in that book and its successors has been a more broadly accepted standard of unity in the Anglican communion.
As noted in the Committee on Church Doctrine report in 2016, “A Study of Presbyterian Polity”, Presbyterian and Reformed denominations have been distinguished by an emphasis “on the supreme authority of scripture (‘the only rule of faith and life’), the importance of a defined theological confession (‘This we believe...’), the collegiality and plurality of shared oversight and mutual accountability (‘elders’, plural in each congregation and equal numbers of ministers and elders in the presbytery and higher courts), and an orderly record (regularly ‘attested’ which has ensured a long and retentive corporate memory).” (A&P 2016, p. 252) The contemporary standard Living Faith illustrates this Reformed tradition when it affirms, “the church is present when the Word is truly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and as it orders its life according to the word of God.” (Living Faith 7.1.6)

This means Reformed and Presbyterian congregations have tended to find unity in a shared commitment to “defined theological confessions”. Whether it is the Swiss Second Helvetic Confession, the Dutch Belgic Confession, the French Gallican Confession, the German Heidelberg Catechism, or our own Westminster Confession from the British Isles, Reformed Christians gathered in denominations marked by a shared confession. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has continued this tradition of expressing unity in a common confession by developing The Declaration Concerning Church and Nation and the contemporary standard Living Faith to stand beside the Westminster Confession. While the exact phrasing of these confessions has varied over time and in different places, some themes are common across the tradition.

“Confessing the Faith Today”, a Committee on Church Doctrine paper the General Assembly commended to the church in 2003, noted this work of confession “is a continuing and never a completed task... The second paragraph of the Preamble to the Ordination Questions makes this clear when after speaking of the subordinate standards, it adds: ‘and such doctrine as the church in obedience to scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess in the church’s continuing task of reformulating the faith.’ This open-ended assertion, to be sure, assumes that all such reformulation is subject to the Barrier Act procedure that requires the approval of all new doctrinal formulations by the presbyteries and by two General Assemblies of the church.”

Recognizing the Presbyterian Church is “a reformed church, always reforming”, Confessing the Faith Today continues, “Reformation is a never-ending task. It is not change for the sake of change. Rather, it is reformation and renewal in obedience to God’s word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or, as the other phrase of the formula, often omitted, puts it, secundum verbum Dei, that is, ‘according to the word of God’.” (A&P 2003, p. 252)

**The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Polity and Unity**

Our governance expresses that unity in the real connections that bind sessions together in mission. As the Clerks of Assembly reported to the 2016 General Assembly, “Congregations are not independent bodies within our church. They are a part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada which is governed by the Book of Forms and the Presbyterian system of church government.” (A&P 2016, p. 281) This system of church government is conciliar; that is, we are governed by courts not a hierarchy of individual bishops. Decisions are made in the courts of the church – in sessions, presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly. We are connected by a system of study, discussion and vote on matters of policy and doctrine.

The clerks noted this sense of connection applies to congregational finances: “when donors through the years have given to the congregation, they have given to a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for the purposes of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.” (A&P 2016, p. 282) Trustees hold the deed for the property in trust for the congregation, but only so long as it is a congregation within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Should it cease to be a congregation within the Presbyterian Church in Canada, title to the property devolves to the national trustees.

This connection between congregations also applies to membership, as the Clerks note “we are members both of a local congregation and also of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. A member in good standing has the right to present a membership certificate to any session of any congregation in the country and immediately claim the privileges of membership in that congregation by virtue of their membership in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.” (A&P 2016, p. 282–83)
A commitment to unity comes naturally to Canadian Presbyterians. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was born when Canadian members decided differences important enough to divide the Church of Scotland were irrelevant in Canada. While the Presbyterian Church continues to exist in Canada because of concerns with the particular structure of the 1925 plan for union that created the United Church of Canada, it is still committed to the idea that all Christ’s followers should in some way be seen to be united.

Through most of their histories, each of the various theological traditions (and the particular denominational organizations that grew up within them) tended to consider itself the faithful embodiment of the Christian faith and tended to see other organizations and traditions as, in some way, falling short of that ideal. The growth of the 20th century ecumenical movement broke those barriers, with even the Roman Catholic Church recognizing Protestants as “separated brethren”.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada expresses this impulse to ecumenical unity, for example, through our membership in the Canadian Council of Churches, World Council of Churches and the World Communion of Reformed Churches, our bilateral covenants with denominations like the Christian Reformed Church in North America, our observer status in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and our partnerships in mission groups like the ACT Alliance. This may not be full organizational union, but it is a way of obeying Christ’s desire for the church to be united.

What is Essential?

In seeking to serve Christ together, The Presbyterian Church in Canada embraces the spirit of the slogan born in the heat of the 16th century Reformation debates: “in essential things unity, in non-essential things freedom, and in all things charity”. While the Presbyterian Church has not formally listed what things are essential, that at least some things are essential is clear, for example, when ministers at their ordination or induction testify by their signatures their “adherence to those things declared and required to be accepted in the preamble and questions at the ordination of a minister”. (Book of Forms 446)

The 2003 study document “Confessing the Faith Today” offers this summary: “In taking ordination or designation vows, ministers of Word and Sacraments, Diaconal ministers and ruling elders commit themselves first to God the Father, made known in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom the Holy Spirit witnesses in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; secondly, to the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the written Word of God, as the canon of all doctrine by which Christ rules the church’s faith and life; and thirdly to the confessional heritage of the ecumenical creeds, Reformed confessions and the subordinate standards of the church, promising to uphold its doctrines under the continual illumination and correction of the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures.” (A&P 2003, p. 264)

Together with other Christian traditions, the Presbyterian Church has struggled with the question of what is essential in the church’s ministry and message in society.

For instance, as the church was being founded at the end of the 19th century, the temperance social reform movement was sweeping North America. From newly-formed frontier settlements to established industrial inner cities, many Presbyterian leaders helped advance the movement. It seemed a morally-intelligible response to social stresses made worse by alcohol abuse. They rallied people to pass and support prohibition legislation to make sure their communities stayed “dry” and protected against “demon rum”.

Some of these church leaders faced strong opposition, eventually even within their own church communities. A century removed from the controversy, it was hard to feel the passion the issue raised. For some, the temperance movement was an essential part of the Christian witness for social reform. For others, it was an overreaction to a problem that needed a more subtle and nuanced response.

Was support for prohibition policies an essential part of the Christian social witness? Eventually people began to see temperance was not abstinence, and noticed the Bible’s concern was not simply with drinking but with drunkenness (that is, excessive drinking). Avoiding alcohol entirely became seen as a permissible way to avoid drunkenness, but not a necessary conclusion from the biblical witness. After all, didn’t Paul advise
On the Question of Unity and Diversity (cont’d)

Timothy, “No longer drink only water, but take a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments?” (1 Timothy 5:23)

The echoes of this disagreement reverberate today. Some congregations still have rules against alcohol use on church property. Presbyterians who defend those rules argue never drinking is the safest way to avoid excessive drinking. However, for the denomination as a whole, the controversy is more of an historical curiosity than a present reality, and people do not often talk about whether they, personally, drink or abstain from alcohol. That is, until someone wonders why they cannot have their reception in their church hall.

Another issue from the founding days of The Presbyterian Church in Canada was the presence of instruments in the sanctuary. Worship in the earliest Presbyterian congregations was a cappella, with a precentor setting the pitch and leading the congregation in singing. In frontier congregations, this was practical: organs are expensive and not nearly as important on a winter morning as a well-functioning, well-fuelled furnace. But established urban congregations also considered organs inappropriate for divine worship. The attitude was the heir of the English reform impulse to remove ostentation and ornamentation from churches in pursuit of a pure, simple focus on God and God’s word.

That began to change in the late 1800s, as some leading Presbyterian congregations began installing organs in their sanctuaries. Worship in the earliest Presbyterian congregations was a cappella, with a precentor setting the pitch and leading the congregation in singing. In frontier congregations, this was practical: organs are expensive and not nearly as important on a winter morning as a well-functioning, well-fuelled furnace. But established urban congregations also considered organs inappropriate for divine worship. The attitude was the heir of the English reform impulse to remove ostentation and ornamentation from churches in pursuit of a pure, simple focus on God and God’s word.

That began to change in the late 1800s, as some leading Presbyterian congregations began installing organs in their sanctuaries. This caused great controversy in the newly-formed The Presbyterian Church in Canada. People left congregations after organs were installed and ministers were criticized for introducing divisive innovations into congregational life. Across the denomination, the controversy began to settle down as people began to appreciate the value of organs and other instruments to enliven congregational worship.

Echoes of this historic controversy reverberate in present discussions about “contemporary” and “traditional” worship styles. Just as when the organs and pianos were introduced a century ago, people are leaving congregations when organs and pianos are replaced by guitars, basses and drums. These changes are largely not seen as divisive innovations but as efforts to re-contextualize historic worship in a new generation.

**Commonality and Contextualization**

The pursuit of unity across a denomination like The Presbyterian Church in Canada is the quest for a proper balance between commonality and contextualization. As noted earlier, to borrow again the words from the Clerks of Assembly’s report to the 2016 General Assembly, “Congregations are not independent bodies within our church. They are a part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada…” (A&P 2016, p. 281) Some practices reflect the essential identity of the Presbyterian Church and need to be shared in all congregations, but neither are congregations identical bodies with our church. They exist in particular places and minister to particular groups of people. This requires a certain freedom to contextualize worship and service in those situations. However, there is a constant struggle with the question of when contextualization has changed something essentially Presbyterian.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada affords considerable room for diversity and innovation, but not unlimited room, and there is greater room for diversity in personal belief than in visible practice. In the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, for example, Presbyterians can hold a range of understandings as they participate. Some commune believing it to be simply a memorial of Christ’s work on the cross; others partake recognizing the real presence of Jesus in the bread and the cup. But normally all use the elements of bread and grape beverage. Ministers are free to baptize by immersion or sprinkling, and to baptize believing adults and children of church members; but a minister who refused in principle to perform infant baptisms would be removed from the pulpit.

Perhaps the best example of the tension between commonality and contextualization is in the question of ordination of women. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was formed with an understanding only men were eligible to hold church offices. That began to change in the late 20th century as some congregations saw the gifts for ministry women in their community had and began to interpret the scriptures differently. These congregations eventually gained the freedom to contextualize their ministry to recognize those gifts and elect women to offices in the church.
Just like membership is not a purely local function in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, neither is election to office. Again, as the Clerks of Assembly reported in 2016, professing members “are members both of a local congregation and also of The Presbyterian Church in Canada”. (A&P 2016, p. 282) So also, elders are elders both of a local congregation and also of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. But women elected to be teaching and ruling elders in particular contextualized ministries were not recognized as elders in other ministries. This created a tension in Presbyterian polity that was eventually resolved by declaring the eligibility of women for church offices was an essential part of Presbyterian identity.

While privately Presbyterians may hold a range of convictions about the ordination of women, in the public conduct of presbytery business, all presbyters are expected to participate collegially with all those recognized in the offices of the church. As with all such discussions, this resulted in people leaving the Presbyterian church. No one was told to leave, but people realized they could not be part of a church where they were not free to act in harmony with their conscience.

The question of the ordination of women also offers an illustration of the distinction between pursuing the unity of the Holy Catholic Church and the unity of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Presbyterians maintain ecumenical relationships with Christian bodies that do not allow women to serve in church offices. We realize this is not an issue that defines the boundaries of the family of Jesus Christ. There is no particular reason why a presbyter in the Presbyterian Church should be a presbyter in the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, this is an issue that defines the boundaries of the Presbyterian church. The Presbyterian Church loses an essential part of its identity when a presbyter in one congregation is not recognized as a presbyter in all congregations.

We can see this in terms of the Reformation slogan “in essential things unity, in non-essential things freedom, and in all things charity”. With regard to the global Christian community, the ordination of women is a non-essential thing where different communions are free to follow their own convictions. With regard to The Presbyterian Church in Canada, though, this is an essential thing in which there must be unity. While a particular congregation, contextualizing their ministry to their particular situation, may for a time not elect women as active teaching or ruling elders, they must be prepared to embrace the ministry of women elders when the time arises.

Can We Agree to Disagree?

The question of the full inclusion of LGBTQI persons in the life of The Presbyterian Church in Canada seems to pose unique stresses on the covenant that binds the congregations of the denomination together. Is this an issue such as worship style, where congregations worshipping in contemporary and traditional styles can celebrate their common confession of faith? Or is this an issue like membership where one session’s decision to consider a person a member in good standing is expected to be affirmed by all sessions? Is this an essential thing where there needs to be unity, or a non-essential thing where there can be freedom to disagree?

The different answers to the question of LGBTQI welcome and inclusion are not simply two different opinions, but two different commitments growing out of profoundly different ways of looking at the world. David Gushee described the passion of the disagreement this way: “Those Christians standing up for LGBT equality and inclusion believe we are reflecting the deepest, truest values of Christ. Those standing against it believe the same thing. We will never, ever agree.”

The disagreement on this question puts such stress on our ability to maintain organizational unity because it is the tip of an iceberg of disagreements, most of which lie unexamined beneath the surface. Like different understandings of the Lord’s Supper, they pose no particular challenge for the unity of The Presbyterian Church in Canada so long as they remain personal opinions. Questions of marriage equality and ordination to church office bring these issues into very visible practice, and the deep division is very visible.

Disagreeing in Faith, Romans 14

An additional motion passed at the 2016 Assembly asked for “a consideration of Romans 14:1–13 as permission to recommend a dual or two-prong approach, in interest of avoiding rupture of the denomination”. (A&P 2016, p. 39) Any consideration of Romans 14 should begin with a consideration of its place in the
context of Romans. In a familiar pattern for a Pauline letter, Romans has an opening theological discussion followed by a discussion of how that theology should change the way Christians live.

In chapters 12–15 of Romans, Paul turns to the practical matters of how to live as a believer, and in particular, how to live in a church which has a history of some members using power to enforce unity. Leading up to chapter 14, Paul reminds his readers we are all one body in Christ (Romans 12:5) and we are to welcome and bless everyone, including those who might hurt us (Romans 12:13–14). Even when we engage and challenge civil authorities, we do so with respect and love (Romans 13:3, 13:10). We are to lay aside all self-indulgent behaviour, including our jealousies and quarrels, so that we might put on Christ (Romans 13:13–14).

Romans 13 points out all these commands, “and any other commandment”, are simply the way we love our neighbours as ourselves (Romans 13:9). Then Paul adds an additional motivation for changed behaviour: “For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light…” (Romans 13:11–12). In other words, “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Romans 13:14).

What does it look like to put on Christ and to be one body? It means not judging one another. From the beginning of his letter (Romans 2:1), Paul has been urging the Roman members to stop judging. In chapter 14 he makes clear that even if we have different beliefs on important issues, we are not to judge those with whom we disagree (Romans 14:10). We need to respect that we are each committed to Christ and ultimately accountable to only God (Romans 14:7–12). In this particular context, the debate was around food (Romans 14:2), wine (Romans 14:21), and which days are most holy (Romans 14:5). This was an argument about the law and about whether certain foods were clean or unclean (Romans 14:14).

Romans 14 begins with a call to “welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions” (Romans 14:1). The command here to welcome is a powerful word. It is more than the reluctant, often grudging endurance that too often characterizes diversity in contemporary culture. The image behind the Greek term is a compound of “taking hold of” and “bringing close to”. There is an openness and warmth in this embrace that is easy to lose sight of these days.

We need to keep a firm grip on the purpose of this embrace. This is “not for the purpose of quarrelling”. This is a call to welcome the other, opinions and all, without trying to judge who is right and who is wrong. This is a sharp contrast from the attitude of Romans 13. In that chapter, Paul was clear some things are right and some things are wrong: Christians are to “live…not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy” (Romans 13:13).

That Paul raises this issue in this way suggests some in Rome evidently thought there was nothing wrong with a little licentiousness, quarrelling or jealousy now and then. In these things, even if some disagreed, there is right and wrong, and Christians are to avoid the wrong. No matter what a person’s individual opinions, “Love does no harm to a neighbour” (Romans 13:10, NIV). Those things are deeds of darkness which Christians must renounce. Continuing to cause harm and contribute to harm cannot be an option for The Presbyterian Church in Canada as it seeks unity in the bond of peace. The things in Romans 14 are of a different sort. These are choices that are not ultimately right or wrong but are simply different ways of offering thanks and praise to the Lord. “Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.” (Romans 14:6)

Murdering, stealing, coveting and all the other ways of doing harm that Romans 13 discusses are not simply different ways of honouring the Lord. But the choices in Romans 14 are, and this is why the welcome can be extended without trying to settle things. We focus on our common goal of honouring the Lord rather than the specific choices we make about how to do that. “Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them.” (Romans 14:2–3)

What are the presenting issues in Romans 14? While we may never know the exact context of their debate, the church in Rome likely shared in the first generation tension between Jewish and Gentile converts to faith.
Some scholars make a connection here to Paul’s discussion on idol meat in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 (for example, N.T. Wright), while others see a more localized concern with traditional observance of Jewish dietary and ritual practices (for example, C.E.B. Cranfield). Regardless, it is clear the disagreement was a source of tension for the church and had passionate supporters on either side.

Instead of focusing on which side is right or wrong, Paul shifts attention and asks: who is strong and who is weak in faith. Those who identify themselves to be strong (and therefore “right”) have a special responsibility towards the people who disagree with them, the “weak” (Romans 15:1). The strong are neither to bash the weak with righteous arguments nor flaunt their religious freedoms because that might cause the weak to stumble in their faith (Romans 14:21). Instead, we are called to pursue peace (Romans 14:19), build up each other (Romans 15:2) and live in harmony (Romans 15:5).

For Paul, in Romans 14, none of these were works of darkness that did harm to one’s neighbour. The church could safely embrace all these choices by affirming their deeper unity in declaring the praise of Jesus Christ. This does not overrule the teaching of Romans 13. Some disagreements between Christians need to be resolved by those living in error laying aside works of darkness that do harm to one’s neighbour. In contrast, Romans 14 affirms some disagreements between Christians need to be resolved by agreeing to disagree and giving up the effort to decide who is right or wrong.

What does this mean for unity in the church today? It is a reminder that whenever the church is divided on an issue, we must love those on the opposing side. Those of us who think we are right, which is naturally everyone, must place the spiritual well-being of our opponent as our primary concern. Our theological righteousness is meaningless if we are unable to demonstrate love for our neighbour. Paul does not say that we should compromise our theology (Romans 14:16), but our actions need to demonstrate compassion and Christ’s love.

Romans 14 questions our motivations. In our debates, are we motivated by a selfish need to be “right”; or do we disagree out of a genuine concern and love for our neighbour? What actions and words might help lift up “the weak”? How do we show love and support to people who might never agree with us?

The Debate Today

As noted before, The Presbyterian Church in Canada is diverse enough to embrace many different worship styles. How can we do this? Officers in The Presbyterian Church in Canada promise to “accept the subordinate standards of this church, promising to uphold its doctrine under the continual illumination and correction of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures”. So long as the worship they lead fulfills this promise, they are free to contextualize the worship in any way that allows the gathered community to join in praise. To borrow the language of Romans 14, these are simply different ways of honouring the Lord and giving thanks to God. Contextualizing ministry in diverse circumstances will lead to these kinds of diversity in practice. The command to unity is satisfied in that they are all offering praise.

But the question of LGBTQI inclusion is not simply a matter of personal preference. For example, some believe the traditional doctrine itself causes harm to LGBTQI people, including an increased risk of suicide. The Moderator, Peter Bush, described that harm this way:

Families have felt and still feel the church’s expectations to condemn and reject children, siblings and parents who do not look, act or speak in ways congruent with the restrictive gender definitions of the church and society. Friends feel pressure to break off connections. For the ways our congregations judge and exclude others based on restrictive gender definitions, we are sorry, and we repent. (Letter of Repentance from the Moderator, Peter Bush, February 12, 2018)

As the Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it, “The sixth commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbour unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto.” (Question 69, emphasis added) That would make excluding LGBTQI youth a violation of the sixth commandment. It would be a breaking of the law of love; it would be something Romans 13 says Christians must “lay aside [to] put on the
On the Question of Unity and Diversity (cont’d)

armour of light…” (Romans 13:12). Is it possible to imagine a welcome that would be content not to quarrel over this opinion? Is this the kind of thing the church can embrace without trying to decide who is right and who is wrong?

The additional motion’s “interest of avoiding rupture of the denomination” is one most Presbyterians can share. Every officer in The Presbyterian Church in Canada commits to defending the unity of the church in the promise “to follow no divisive course but to seek the peace and unity of Christ among your people and throughout the Holy Catholic Church”. This promise means more than simply defending the organization of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, for surely ecumenical unity is included in seeking “peace and unity…throughout the Holy Catholic Church”. And defending the peace of the church surely includes finding a way to get out of a continual cycle of contentious debate.

The question having been joined, there are no easy, painless solutions. How do we find a way forward together?

The Church’s Current Conversation

In 2015, when the General Assembly called on “the church (congregations, sessions, presbyteries, synods and denominational committees)…to engage in a year of prayerful conversation and discernment and Bible study on the topics of human sexuality, sexual orientation and other related matters”, it also invited them “to share the result of their conversation with both the Committee on Church Doctrine and Life and Mission Agency (Justice Ministries)” (A&P 2015, p. 43, 44) The Assembly expressed no definition of the purpose of this sharing.

We do not do theology through popular opinion because the truths of the gospel are true whether or not they are popular. (For example, Jesus was still “the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father” whether Athanasius was in or out of favour.) Still, if we are to chart a way forward together, a due regard for the church as a whole means we should have some respect for the current opinions of The Presbyterian Church in Canada as a whole.

With appropriate caution, the sharing the Assembly invited in 2015 can help in this. The 2017 General Assembly invited the church as a whole to join in another round of study and response. The comments people shared from those conversations do not constitute a statistically representative sample of the church as a whole: they come from people invested enough in the issue to take part in the study and send a comment. Having asked for their comments, we do well to reflect on what those who took the time to study and respond show us about our present position as we consider a way forward.

The responses show a denomination deeply divided on this question. Many believe it is a gospel imperative to change our teaching. Many believe the gospel requires us to maintain our present teaching. Some are frustrated because they have done the study, embraced a new teaching and are ready to move forward with it; why must we be held back by a denomination too afraid to embrace change? Others are frustrated because their study has confirmed their confession about human sexuality and want to get on with sharing the call to new life in Christ; why must we delay with discussion about an issue we’ve already answered?

A fair conclusion from reading these responses is any decision the Assembly makes on this question will place great strains, and perhaps break, the ties that hold the Presbyterian Church together.

Recommendation No. 1 as amended, was adopted as follows:

That the document “On the Question of Unity and Diversity” be commended to the agencies, colleges, congregations, sessions, presbyteries, synods, committees and groups of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for study and response to the Committee on Church Doctrine through the General Assembly Office by January 31, 2019.
REVIEW LENGTH OF TERM SERVICE FOR ELDERS

OVERTURE NO. 9, 2017

Term service has been an elder election model for some two decades. Overture No. 9, 2017 asserts that as the denomination has gained experience with term service, some congregations have encountered challenges related to it. Finding suitable elder candidates who are willing to make a six-year commitment to the ministry of the session as well as the time and effort required to hold elections every two years are identified as two of those challenges. The overture asks that it be permissible for terms of service to be set between three to six years.

To help formulate a response to this overture, the Clerks of Assembly prepared a survey inviting the church to comment on the term-service model. There were 185 replies. They came from sessions as well as individual ministers and elders. The number of responses suggests that ministers and elders value their calling to the leadership, pastoral care and oversight of congregations and are keen to comment on the models of service.

Survey responses make it clear there is a significant diversity of views regarding this legislation. Some indicate the current six-year term is too long and discourages candidates from considering the office of elder. Others maintain a six-year term is appropriate since it can take two years for a new elder to learn about the role before becoming effective in it. Still others feel a six-year term is not long enough because session experience and corporate memory are lost by a frequently changing membership. Among those who currently employ the term-service model, 56% are satisfied with the status quo (six-year term – election every two years), 44% desire flexibility.

The church is blessed to have more than 7,400 women and men leading and serving the denomination in the office of ruling elder. Having two models of service provides helpful options for the various needs of congregations. Since the survey indicates a wide range of preference even within the term-service model, the Clerks of Assembly believe there may be merit in making term service more flexible by permitting sessions to determine the length of term and frequency of elections that best suits their needs. While the initial decision to employ term service requires consultation with the congregation and the permission of the presbytery, changes to the length of term and frequency of election could be initiated by the session with the approval of the presbytery.

While maintaining the status quo as the standard for term service, the Clerks propose amendments to sections 108 and 108.2 that would enable a local term service option. The amendments are underlined and struck through.

108. Elders once lawfully called to the office, and having gifts of God meet to exercise the same, are ordained for life. They may serve in the office for life unless deposed or suspended in process of discipline. They may, however, at the call of a congregation in which the session has instituted term service for elders, fulfill the duties of the eldership on the session normally for periods of six years, but may stand for re-election at the end of each six year term.

108.1 Any session desiring to opt for term service for elders should consult with the congregation and must notify the presbytery of its intention and receive that court’s permission.

108.2 In congregations that have instituted term service for elders, normally one third of the session shall be elected every two years. Sessions opting for an alternative term shall establish a consistent term of service and frequency of election, which shall be subject to approval by the presbytery.

108.3 Elders may resign the active exercise of the office at any time during their term of service. (Declaratory Act 1985, p. 261, 52)

If the General Assembly refers amendments to sections 108 and 108.2 to the church for study and report, a detailed summary of survey responses can be made available to assist with this deliberation.
Recommendation No. 9 (adopted, p. 36)
That the proposed amendments to Book of Forms sections 108 and 108.2 regarding term service for elders be referred to sessions and presbyteries for study and report to the Clerks of Assembly by January 31, 2019.
### 2019 Minimum Stipend and Allowance Schedule

Presbyteries can set their own minimums, provided they exceed those set by the 144th General Assembly.

**Categories:** (see Note 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Category I</th>
<th>Category II</th>
<th>Category III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic Stipend 2018:</strong> (see Notes 2 &amp; 3)</td>
<td>38,019</td>
<td>35,815</td>
<td>33,618</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>the increment has been adjusted and COLA of 1.8% has been applied to the minimum stipend grid</strong> (see Note 1)</td>
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<td>34,223</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increment:</strong> (see Note 4)</td>
<td>885</td>
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### Minimum Stipend

<table>
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<th>Category III</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting Stipend 2019</td>
<td>38,703</td>
<td>36,460</td>
<td>34,223</td>
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<tr>
<td>After 1st increment</td>
<td>39,588</td>
<td>37,275</td>
<td>34,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 2nd increment</td>
<td>40,473</td>
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<td>35,703</td>
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<tr>
<td>After 3rd increment</td>
<td>41,358</td>
<td>38,905</td>
<td>36,443</td>
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<tr>
<td>After 4th increment</td>
<td>42,243</td>
<td>39,720</td>
<td>37,183</td>
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<tr>
<td>After 5th increment</td>
<td>43,128</td>
<td>40,535</td>
<td>37,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 6th increment</td>
<td>44,013</td>
<td>41,350</td>
<td>38,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 7th increment</td>
<td>44,898</td>
<td>42,165</td>
<td>39,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 8th increment</td>
<td>45,783</td>
<td>42,980</td>
<td>40,143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appropriate Accommodation:** (see Note 5) Applicable to each category.

**Utilities – on voucher** Applicable to each category.

**Health & Dental Insurance:** (see Note 6) Applicable to each category.

- (working 50% or more of normal hours of work)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuing Education</th>
<th>Category I</th>
<th>Category II</th>
<th>Category III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>600</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
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### Other

**Retired Minister:** 100% of Category I basic stipend and increments, plus accommodation and utilities; prorated for part-time service based on 5 days per week.

(See A&P 1991, p. 344 re part-time ministries.)

**Student on annual appointment:** (see Note 7) $28,640 per annum, plus manse and utilities.

**Student on summer appointment:** Rate must meet or exceed minimum wage requirements for the province in which the appointment takes place. Housing shall be provided and costs may be shared with the student at a rate not to exceed $100 per week. Travel to be paid as applicable.

**Sunday Supply:** $150 per Sunday for both clergy and lay, plus accommodation and meals, as required, and travel expense reimbursed at the rate of $0.45 per km.

**Maximum Qualifying Income:** (See Note 8) $73,260 per annum effective January 1, 2019.

Effective January 1, 2013 the members contribution level was changed to 9.0% of their “Maximum Qualifying Income” formerly “Pensionable Earnings” to the annual maximum.

(Please see next page for an explanation of the notes.)
NOTES:

1. **Stipend Categories:**
   - **Category I** – ordained ministers, lay directors of institutions
   - **Category II** – diaconal ministers, lay missionaries with special training
   - **Category III** – lay missionaries

   The 2008 General Assembly defined COLA to be CPI (consumers price index) as per Statistics Canada average of the year on year increases from June to May.

2. **Basic Travel:** The basic travel allowance is included in the minimum basic stipend figure.

   The individual worker has a choice of either:
   - including on his/her annual tax return as part of income all revenue received in respect to travel and then claiming as a deduction all business travel related expenses,
   - or
   - being reimbursed at a per kilometre rate as per Revenue Canada’s 4 point provision as supplied to congregational treasurers for church workers. Basic stipend can be adjusted downward by the mutually agreed upon cost of the option.

3. **Multiple Point Charges:** A travel allowance is provided equal to the average number of kilometres travelled on a Sunday for church services within the charge, multiplied by $41.00, to a maximum of $4,920 (non taxable).

4. **Years of Service Increments:** The first year of service increment is payable on the first of the month following the completion of the first 12 months of service, counting from the date of the service of induction/ recognition. Subsequent incremental increases become effective on the first of the month following the completion of further 12 month periods of service.

5. **Appropriate Accommodation:** All persons remunerated under one of the minimum stipend categories for church workers, regardless of their marital status, are to receive 100 percent of the fair rental value of appropriate accommodation. (see A&P 1992, p. 222)

6. **Health & Dental Insurance:** Coverage under the Health & Dental Insurance plan will apply to the above three categories of professional church workers. (See also A&P 1986, p. 212, Item No. 6; and A&P 1988, Rec. No. 37, p. 227) As of July 1, 1998, we allow participation of non-clergy full-time and part-time staff with 20 hours or more, conditional upon participation of all such employees in a congregation and the congregation providing the required premiums. (see A&P 1998, Rec. No. 24, p. 219)

7. **Student on Annual Appointment:** Students on annual appointment do not receive increments, are expected to work full-time when their college is not in session (apart from one month’s annual vacation) and must not enroll in summer programs; therefore the annual remuneration rate for such students in respect to their congregational responsibilities is 74 percent of the basic rate set annually by the General Assembly in respect to an ordained minister. (see A&P 1989, p. 212–213)

8. **Maximum Qualifying Income:** is defined as the sum of the actual stipend plus an additional 60% of stipend (in respect of allowances) up to the annual maximum
APPENDIX A–29 AND A–30 RE GUARANTEE OF STIPEND
(A&P 2018, p. 264-65)

A–29 Call to a Minister of Word and Sacraments and Guarantee to Presbytery of Stipend – Reconfigured

Book of Forms Appendix A–29 is a template to guide the preparation of a call and guaranteed of stipend for a minister of Word and Sacraments. The guarantee of stipend portion is introduced with this paragraph.

In order that you {name of person being called} may be free to devote yourself to ministry of Word and Sacraments among us, we {name of congregation} hereby guarantee to the Presbytery of {name of court}, of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, that out of our estimated annual revenue of {amount in words} we promise and obligate ourselves to provide you, as a first charge thereon, the following annually:

That paragraph is followed by an itemization of the promised compensation including stipend, travel allowance, housing and utilities.

A–29 shows two options for paying travel allowance. Option A lists stipend and travel allowance combined in one figure. Option B lists stipend separately alongside a line for travel allowance to be reimbursed at a per kilometre basis up to a specified maximum. The second option requires the calculation of a reasonable travel allowance so that, when combined with stipend, it meets or exceeds the minimum stipend and allowance schedule provided each year in the Assembly Council portion of the Acts and Proceedings. For example, see pages 224–25 in the 2017 Acts and Proceedings. The stipend in the Assembly Council grid includes basic travel as noted in item 2 under “NOTES”.

There are occasions, such as when a pastoral tie is dissolved and a transition allowance is provided, that it can be important for all parties to understand what will be provided to the minister during the “transition” period. The minister could be paid stipend and travel. This allows the minister to continue to receive the monthly income to which the minister has grown accustomed. This is the usual practice when Option A is used. Sometimes travel is deducted since the minister is no longer “travelling” for the congregation. This would normally happen when Option B is used. In a few instances, Appendix A–29 as it now appears has made this calculation a little difficult. Indenting the “with travel” line would make it clear that the line relates to Option B only, and not Option A.

With that explanation, the Clerks propose a simple reconfigure A–29, and A–30 (a similar template for members of the Order of Diaconal Ministries) so that it will appear as below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Stipend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option A</strong> (inclusive of travel allowance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option B</strong> (exclusive of travel allowance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with travel reimbursed at $__/_km up to annual maximum of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Housing/Rental allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Plus cost of utilities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation No. 13** (adopted, p. 36)

That the stipend portion of Book of Forms Appendices A–29 and A–30 be reconfigured as shown above.
OVERTURE NO. 2, 2018 (p. 488)
Re: Resources to assist in responding to opioid crisis

Overture No. 2, 2018 was submitted by the Presbytery of Winnipeg and asks for a resource or resources to help congregations address the pastoral, theological, community support and social policy aspects of the opioid crisis.

Defining the Opioid Crisis in Canada

Canada’s opioid crisis refers to the current overdose emergency caused by the use of fentanyl and other opioid-class drugs and has led to an unprecedented number of deaths. Some people struggling with addiction first access opioids as prescribed medical treatment, others access opioids through illicit channels. Regardless, Canada has the second highest (behind the United States) rate of opioid use per capita in the world. (Canadian Institute for Health Information)

About the Chemical Properties of Opioids, and Addiction to Opioids

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid or opiate. Natural opioids are derived from opium like morphine and codeine. Synthetic opioids include hydrocodone, oxycodone (brand name OxyContin) and fentanyl. Codeine is 0.15 times the strength of morphine. Fentanyl is 50–100 times stronger than morphine. Carfentanil is 10,000 times stronger than morphine.

Fentanyl has legitimate medical uses. Developed in the 1960s and used primarily to manage chronic pain, or to use in combination with other drugs for sedation during medical procedures, fentanyl is listed as an essential medicine by the World Health Organization.

Opioids work by mimicking the body’s natural endorphins, the hormones that block pain messages to the brain. Public health experts note that opioids’ powerful addictive properties literally change the brain of the person using the drug creating cravings and compulsive behaviour. The ability to choose to use, or not use, these drugs quickly disappears. (Thompson)

Lord, when did we see you addicted?

“Lord, when did we see you addicted?” was an article in the December 2017 edition of Sojourners about the opioid crisis in the United States. The article frames compassionate loving care at the centre of harm reduction and community responses to what has become a deadly public health emergency.

Jesus’ ministry was to and with people who were sick, dying, broken and poor. It was marked by touch, fellowship and healing.

In John 8, a man with leprosy approaches Jesus. People with leprosy were segregated. Leprosy was associated with being unclean. Patients were ostracized because of their illness. Far from being fearful of, or drawing away from this man, Jesus touches him. He spends time with him and then encourages him to be restored to community life. This parable challenges us to see and treat illness where we encounter it, and to treat those who are ill as beloved of our community, and worthy of care.

In Matthew 15, a Syrophoenician woman with a sick and suffering daughter approaches Jesus. Jesus’ response in Matthew 15 is quite different than his response in John 8. At first he does not acknowledge her. When she again tries to gain Jesus’ attention, his disciples ridicule and send her away. Jesus says: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” She is someone else’s problem. Her persistence is finally rewarded: she knew that Jesus had the ability to help her sick child and she persisted in her mission to seek treatment for her child, finally getting the recognition and help she knew was needed. This parable teaches that we give care where and when it is needed.
In Mark 3:1–6, Jesus heals someone on the Sabbath, breaking Jewish laws. He does this publically and without shame.

The writer of Matthew ties judgment and redemption to exercising radical familiarity (to association, fellowship and kinship love) with people who may (or may not) fall outside one’s normal sphere of concern. The author of Matthew writes “I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me.”

Responses to the opioid crisis need to remove shame and stigmatism and address the suffering of people, caused by numerous factors that are often beyond the control of any one person, community or level of government and will only be effectively addressed when all parties work together to respond to a multi-faceted public health crisis.

Scope of the Crisis

In 2016, there were an estimated 2,800 deaths in Canada associated with opioid overdose. Canada’s chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, describes the roots of the crisis, “We are facing two different but overlapping issues: first, overdose deaths from prescription opioids and second, overdose deaths from illicit drugs laced with fentanyl or other synthetic opioids.”

Prior to 1996, opioids were primarily prescribed to cancer patients and other patients suffering debilitating pain. In 1996 Health Canada approved OxyContin (oxycodone) to relieve moderate-to-severe pain. This decision was a watershed moment. Purdue Pharmaceutical, maker of OxyContin, launched a marketing campaign to promote the drug and generated $31 billion USD in revenue from sales in Canada and the United States. Doctors prescribed the drug for less severe conditions including backaches and fibromyalgia. In 2015 alone, doctors wrote enough prescriptions for one in every two Canadians.

Law Suits against Purdue Pharmaceutical

Purdue was sued by several municipal and state governments in the United States. In 2007, Purdue pled guilty to criminal and civil charges that they misled government regulators, physicians and patients about the harms and dangers of the drug. (Salvaterra) The fine was $634.5 million USD. The State of Alabama launched another case against Purdue in February 2018. A 2007 class action submitted to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia claimed that the marketing of OxyContin in Canada was highly abusive and led to detrimental health outcomes for patients.

There were allegations that Purdue (and Abbott Laboratories Inc., the company that was involved in the distribution of OxyContin in Canada) engaged in marketing techniques which included paying costs and fees for doctors to attend pain management meetings and that pharmacists were advised that if they did not renew prescriptions of OxyContin for their patients, their patients would suffer. (Robertson and Howlett, Lexchin and Kohler) The class action also claimed that doctors who prescribed the medication were not initially informed about the serious risk of abuse and addiction with OxyContin ingestion. In Canada, Purdue will pay a $20 million CAD fine with $2 million allocated to provincial health providers, which, if approved by all courts, will settle a Canadian class action suit. (Lexchin and Kohler)

In 2012, Purdue removed OxyContin and replaced it with a more tamper-resistant alternative drug, OxyNEO. At the same time, provinces limited coverage of opioids in drug plans. When medically prescribed opioid sources were limited, the market for illicit opioids soared.

The Market for Illicit Fentanyl

Since 2015, when the drug agency that oversees regulation in China added 116 synthetic drugs to its list of controlled substances – including fentanyl and other fentanyl-like substances – the manufacture of fentanyl became invisible. Science Magazine notes: “Chinese labs began altering the fentanyl molecule – easy for anyone with basic knowledge of chemistry and lab tools – so that they have created new, unregulated variants, some of them even more potent than the original.” (McLaughlin) Most illicit fentanyl in Canada is produced (illicitly) in China and smuggled into Canada. Fentanyl is odourless and tasteless. Because of this and because
of the potency of small doses, it is not difficult to smuggle small packages in a variety of other imported goods. This has led to the widespread contamination of the illicit drug supply.

Overdose deaths from opioids have been rising steadily over the past decade but the current crisis was first recognized in western Canada. In December 2014, the Alberta government issued a province-wide warning to doctors about illicit fentanyl. In March 2015, Stand Off First Nation in Southern Alberta was the first community to declare a state of emergency related to fentanyl. In December 2015, Alberta’s Minister of Health allowed first responders to treat overdose victims with the fentanyl antidote drug, naloxone. In 2016, British Columbia’s Minister of Health declared a public health emergency because of deaths due to fentanyl overdoses.

Unlike the United States, Canada does not have a national system tracking fatal opioid overdoses. The public health danger stems from fentanyl’s potency and invisibility. It can be easily and undetectably cut into other drugs. People using illicit drugs may not know they are being exposed to fentanyl. Small and trace amount exposures can endanger the person consuming the drug as well as family, friends, first responders and other health workers assisting overdose victims. First responders and healthcare workers report increased stress and burnout from daily life-and-death urgent calls related to opioid overdoses. The emergence of Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) speaks to the need to provide low barrier (stations that require fewer administrative procedures to set up and approve) spaces close to places where drugs are being used or shared in order to protect those who might not visit a supervised drug injection sites (SIS). They are also often seen as interim measures while federal approval for a SIS is being sought.

**Responding to the Crisis**

**Frontline Responses**

The Canadian Institute for Health Information reports a 20 percent increase in the past two years of Canadians admitted to hospital for opioid toxicity. For people who use non-prescription drugs, establishing safe or supervised drug injection sites reduces the number of fatalities and uses fewer health care resources in responding to people who overdose. The sites have sterile equipment, access to medical staff and health care, supervision and access to resuscitation and the antidote drug, naloxone. Sites can also be an entry point for people struggling with addictions to connect with addiction counselling and anti-withdrawal drugs. Sites offer greater protection and reduce risks for front-line workers such as first responders.

Often communities are divided in their opinions about supervised injection sites. Some think they encourage or enable drug addiction and criminality. Others say the focus is harm reduction, reducing the number of deaths and providing a necessary health service. As Dr. Christy Sutherland, a family physician who treats patients in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, said, “People die less when you bring them inside and when you attach them to medical care… That’s the outcome that we should be concerned about as physicians – not what it looks like to the public.” (Canadian Press 2017)

**Church Responses**

**Callingwood Road Church, Edmonton**

Claudette Young is an elder at Callingwood Road Church in Edmonton. During a family crisis nine years ago, she sought family supports for parents with children struggling with addictions. Finding no appropriate supports locally, she contacted an American group called Because I Love You (BILY) and started an Edmonton chapter, and is now its Executive Director.

BILY is a non-profit organization that creates spaces for families in crisis to meet with, and support, other families in crisis. There are no fees. Parents of children/teens and adults of all ages who are struggling with addictions, mental health, criminal activities, etc. come to share their stories and seek comfort, support and advice from other parents in similar circumstances. Groups are mentored by parent volunteers who provide support during, and outside of, weekly meetings. There is a facilitated youth group for teens and their parents. One focus of the youth program is to build self esteem and teach communication tools. Additionally, BILY operates a 24-hour hotline supported
by volunteers. Callingwood Road Church provided funding and other support to set up a BILY group in Edmonton and continues to support BILY. Ms. Young reports that people in Parkland County (west of Edmonton), in response to the fentanyl crisis, requested a second chapter of BILY for their community and, in May 2017, a chapter of BILY in Parkland County was established, overseen by Ms. Young.

Ms. Young notes that hundreds of Albertans have died and are continuing to die every day, and that each of these individuals has value and worth. She encourages churches to take action: “You don’t have to have a personal connection for this to be an issue in your community.” She challenges church members to do what they can and to consider how church facilities can be used to support families in crisis.

Grace Church, Calgary

Roberto DeSandoli directs youth ministry at Grace Church in Calgary, a position he began in the summer of 2017. This downtown church is close to a youth shelter. Street youth congregate on church property. Grace’s property manager often removes drug paraphernalia (e.g. needles). Mr. DeSandoli and Grace’s staff interact with the youth on a daily basis.

Periodically there are tense moments between church staff and members of the homeless community (e.g. if they are asked to leave church property for engaging in inappropriate behaviour). After an overdose incident, Grace procured a naloxone kit and let the homeless community know that the kit is available in an emergency.

Seeking guidance from service-providing organizations in the community offered helpful information for ministry in this situation. Mr. DeSandoli reminds us that this ministry witnesses to the dignity and value of human life no matter what situation a person may be in.

Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry

The Rev. Stewart Folster is the executive director of Saskatoon Native Circle Ministries (SNCM). SNCM’s community deals with drug and alcohol addiction on a daily basis. The Rev. Folster reports that SNCM staff have been threatened with knives and guns, and with retaliation from gang members. Drug use in their community tends to be crystal meth, fentanyl and alcohol. Stewart Folster writes: “We have lost a lot of people from drug overdose and alcohol related illness and gang violence in the past few years. So pray for all of us in every mission and keep us in mind if there is any way you can help. God’s blessings and peace.”

Winnipeg Inner City Missions

Winnipeg Inner City Missions deals with drug and alcohol addiction on a daily basis. The staff and volunteers minister to low income people, many of whom are Indigenous, and many of whom are also living with the legacy of residential schools. The Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin, Executive Director, writes:

The drug and alcohol crisis is a part of our daily experience. People who attend the drop-in centre and church can be very volatile and sometimes violent. Staff and volunteers must have adequate personal capacity to deal with any crisis as it arises. Fentanyl is being laced into everything, it seems, and more people are dying from overdosing. Our people are dying out here and it is directly related to colonization and the residential school legacy. We bear witness that generational trauma is real and devastating.

St. Andrew’s Church, Thunder Bay

The Rev. Joyce Yanishewski is the minister at St. Andrew’s Church in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The church is situated in downtown Thunder Bay. Members of the homeless community tend to congregate on or near church property and substance abuse is prevalent. The church set up a safe disposal site for needles. In November 2017, the church installed a custom gate with locks at the top
of the sanctuary steps. The gate honours the architecture of the building, but also provides a barrier to the alcove that has consistently been used for unlawful and harmful behaviours. The combination of these actions has helped to reduced incidence of substance abuse and drug use on church property.

The Rev. Yanishewski connected with the district health unit and an agreement was reached to have a mobile nursing unit set up in the parking lot of the church twice weekly. This unit offers free health services to the community and is particularly important to the well being of the homeless population who can easily access the van for care.

She encourages churches to consider installing safe disposal bins on church property where public safety is a concern. She notes it is not just to collect needles from drug use, but can also be used to dispose of needles and lances from treating diabetes or other conditions that require the use of needles.

Chalmers Church, London, Ontario

The Rev. John Bannerman is the minister at Chalmers Church in London, Ontario. He attended a talk given at King’s University College in London by Dr. Chris Mackie, Medical Officer of Health for London Middlesex. Dr. Mackie’s presentation noted the serious nature of the drug problem in London. The Rev. Bannerman writes: “I appreciated that Dr. Mackie spoke [of the need for] an ethic of love as we reach out to those who are addicted to opioids and other drugs and alcohol. I spoke with Dr. Mackie briefly following his presentation and I plan to invite him to speak at one of our Sunday church lunch events later this year.”

ARISE Ministry, Toronto

ARISE Ministry offers outreach, case management and spiritual care to individuals involved in the sex trade. ARISE is supported by the Presbytery of East Toronto and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The Rev. Deb Rapport is Executive Director of ARISE.

The Rev. Rapport shared that in the summer of 2017, three people who were part of the community served by ARISE died from fentanyl-related overdose. Their loss is still being grieved by their community and ARISE staff.

Moss Park, located in the downtown east end of Toronto, has a safe injection site and has saved people’s lives. Deb Rapport advises churches to learn more about safe injection sites and their role in reducing deaths related to the opioid crisis. ARISE ministry has naloxone kits. She encourages churches, and the wider community, to acquire a kit and be trained in its use. Kits are available for free in many provinces and public and community health centres can provide training using the kit. Access to naloxone saves lives.

She notes the need for churches to create safe spaces for all people to share their stories and struggles: “Someone may have a loved one struggling with addictions and feel they cannot share their grief and anxieties openly for fear of being judged.”

Evangel Hall Mission, Toronto

Evangel Hall Mission (EHM) was founded by The Presbyterian Church in Canada and supports people living with homelessness, poverty and in isolation. It is located in the west end of downtown Toronto. EHM provides safe space, hot meals and support services to individuals who are homeless or who may be living in unstable conditions. Evangel Hall Mission operates an 84-unit apartment building serving 110 residents and assists people in finding housing and support to stay housed.

Some of EHM’s clients, both drop-in participants and residents, are impacted by the opioid crisis. All frontline support staff and EHM management are trained to use naloxone and have taken overdose response training.
EHM provides referrals to doctors, counselors, addictions workers, mental health agencies and information about safe injection sites. A nurse is onsite two days per week. A doctor is onsite during “Out of the Cold” meals. EHM offers its clients and tenants one-on-one support and daily Narcotics Anonymous groups. EHM tenants also have opportunities for eviction prevention supports that include access to safe disposals for needles, etc.

EHM provides pastoral care for its clients including one-on-one meetings, group support meetings, worship and, when needed, memorial services.

EHM sits on the community advisory committee for the new safe injection site that is opening up at the Queen West Community Health Centre. EHM notes that this site is a five minute walk from EHM and will be a very important resource to many EHM clients. EHM was invited onto the community advisory committee because of its pre-existing relationship with Queen West Community Health Centre. The advisory group provides input and advice on identifying benefits and risks to the community, as well as how to make the site effective for people who use it.

EHM says “As a Presbyterian mission, we are proud to be an important part of the community response to the crisis, and to follow in Jesus’ footsteps to serve those most in need.”

Queen Street East Church and South Riverdale Community Health Centre, Toronto

Across Canada, community health centres provide primary health care. They also function as community hubs, advocating for healthy public policy, encouraging community participation and initiating health promotion programs. Community health centres provide frontline care and a response to public health emergencies. Within the network of these centres, there are staff with longtime expertise in working with communities and populations who are marginalized and vulnerable to health and social crises including people struggling with substance use.

South Riverdale Community Health Centre (SRCHC) is in southeast Toronto and is located beside Queen Street East Church. They are long-time neighbours and have an established relationship.

SRCHC focuses its services on the particular needs of vulnerable populations including people who are poor, precariously housed and struggling with mental health and/or substance use; have multiple chronic health conditions; and are newcomers to Canada. Because some of SRCHC’s clients struggle with substance use issues, SRCHC is focused on building trust with and keeping people alive as the core of the non-judgmental service and approach embedded in harm-reduction and other programs. The ultimate goal is to instill hope and personal agency, and to address internalized and generalized stigma by reinforcing the value, rights and dignity of each person. The centre is often a first point of connection for other health and social services.

SRCHC opened a safe consumption site in November 2017, after navigating a three-year governmental process for approval. This is now part of the longstanding harm reduction program which began as a needle distribution service 20 years ago to reduce the risk of infectious disease transmission (such as Hepatitis C) and in so doing promotes safer, healthier communities. More than 3,000 people use the centre’s harm reduction services annually.

“We need to recognize that stigma kills” notes Lynne Raskin, SRCHC’s Executive Director, while speaking about the harmful patterns of shame and secrecy that too often prevent people who struggle with substance use and other stigmatizing social issues from connecting with other people and public services. The goal of this work, she emphasizes “is to keep people alive and as healthy as possible so they can continue to make choices in their lives”.

Community health centres are in communities across Canada. They are community-governed, connect with their local communities, are welcoming and are excellent resources and community allies.
Knox Church, Vankleek Hill

Vankleek Hill is in Ontario, halfway between Ottawa and Montreal. Mr. Verne Gilkes, church elder, is a retired police officer and has noted that while no one in the community has died of an overdose yet, he is concerned about the opioid crisis. After having a conversation with his minister, the Rev. James Douglas, Mr. Gilkes contacted the Eastern Ontario Health Unit and first responders groups, and is setting up a public event about the opioid crisis.

**Government Responses**

On November 19, 2016, federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Health, along with community organizations, issued a Joint Statement of Action to Address the Opioid Crisis. The statement was a commitment to improve harm reduction measures including increased access to naloxone, reviewing better treatment options for patients, information sharing and sharing best practices between public health and medical professional agencies (including prescriber and regulatory bodies), and increasing public outreach and awareness. Other aspects of the agreement differ according to jurisdictional purviews (e.g. the RCMP will have different priorities from provincial governments).

Community frontline agencies continue to emphasize the need for access to naloxone and supervised consumption sites. The Government of Canada is reviewing more than a dozen applications for sites across Canada.

**Additional Information about Supervised Injection/Consumption Sites**

Public health experts advocate for a harm-reduction approach to the opioid crisis. Part of a harm reduction framework includes supervised consumption sites. Some of the public perceptions of these sites were outlined earlier in this report. Scientists at Toronto’s St. Michael’s Hospital and the University of Toronto conducted a Toronto and Ottawa Supervised Consumption Assessment Study. (Bayoumi and Strike) They concluded that supervised injection/consumption sites could save lives by reducing infections, preventing overdoses and more effectively encouraging people with addictions and connecting them to additional health services and treatment. The study and its conclusions were published in 2012, before the deadly impacts of illicit fentanyl were fully realized. Since that time, and as a direct response to the opioid/fentanyl crisis, beginning in May 2017, the Government of Canada has approved 29 applications for safe consumption sites in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. Information about this may be found on its website: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-abuse/supervised-consumption-sites.

An evaluation of the first and longest running permanent safe consumption/injection site in Vancouver estimated that the site saved healthcare money because of fewer overdoses and lower rates of injection-related diseases reduced hospital visits. The site also increased access to methadone treatments. (Bayoumi and Zaric)

One of the conclusions to be drawn from researching the scope and scale of the opioid crisis is that it is not a problem of any one particular group. People in urban and rural communities, of many different backgrounds, from different social and economic groups, struggle with addictions to opioids. In a situation of crisis, we must focus attention on emergency response as well as long term solutions with a focus on saving as many lives as possible.

**Additional Information on Purdue’s Marketing of OxyContin and How Drug Marketing is Regulated in Canada**

It is the responsibility of the government to regulate and ensure that drug products available in Canada are safe and do what pharmaceutical companies say they do. Government and other regulators also oversee how drugs are marketed. Prescription drugs cannot be marketed in Canadian media, except in industry related publications such as medical journals. The Pharmaceutical Advertising Advisory Board (PAAB) is an independent and not-for-profit organization funded on a fee-for-service basis. PAAB has a preclearance from Health Canada for advertising directed to healthcare professionals through outlets such as medical journals, but prescription drugs can be advertised to the public in the United States and these advertisements reach Canadians through American broadcasters and publishers.
The Regulatory “Grey Area” of Drug Marketing

Since 2000, the University of Toronto has organized a week-long course in pain management for its Health Science students. Between 2002 and 2006, the course was funded by unrestricted educational grants from four pharmaceutical companies, including Purdue. Until 2010, students were given a book on pain management produced by Purdue. An unpaid speaker for the course was on Purdue’s speaker’s bureau. (Lexchin and Kohler)

There is no national body that regulates interactions between physicians and the pharmaceutical industry. The Canadian Medical Association’s “Guidelines for Physicians in Interactions with Industry” are voluntary guidelines.

Each province and territory has medical regulatory authorities. In Ontario, for example, this is the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO). Regulatory authorities have the mandate to protect patients and the authority to oversee, investigate and discipline its members. The CPSO has guidelines on physicians’ relationships with the pharmaceutical industry.

What Can You Do?
- If you have concerns about your personal, or a loved one’s, use of prescribed opioids, talk to a doctor. Be informed about risks related to habit-forming drugs, addiction and risks associated with concurrent benzodiazepine or alcohol use.
- If a family member or friend is using opioids and is at risk of an overdose, consider getting a naloxone kit and be trained in its use. Encourage your loved one never to use drugs alone. Caution any loved ones about the dangers of using any illicit drugs and the risk of opioid poisoning.
- Find out what your community’s plan is to address opioid use and look for ways to support it.
- Support your community’s drug strategy if one exists.
- Talk to your community’s public health official. Find out if your community is considering hosting a safe consumption site. Ask how you can become involved.

In Church Life
- Introduce the topic of substance use, addiction, and related issues, in your church. Talk about these challenges. Pray about them. Provide educational materials, such as the resources listed in this report, and other resources. Do not remain silent. Ask questions. Talk to each other and talk to community organizations. Host community conversations.
- Encourage church members to question doctors when pain medications are prescribed. This is not about questioning whether someone needs pain medication. The focus is on patient education and care. Ask about side effects, whether medicines have habit-forming qualities, and how long to stay on pain medications.
- Educate your congregation about the risks of keeping unused medications. Most pharmacies will take back unused prescription medication for safe disposal.
- Host circles and support groups for people struggling with addiction and their families and friends. These circles should be facilitated by experienced volunteers or paid professionals. One way to do this is to contact Narcotics Anonymous about hosting one of their groups; many churches already do this.
- Compile contact information to programs and services for people in crisis. Ensure church leaders have access to this information.
- Find out if there is a community health centre in your community. Learn about its work and find ways to support it. You can find information on the website of the Canadian Association of Community Health Centres (cachc.ca). Provinces will also have provincial associations.

Pray
- Pray for people with substance use disorders who may be struggling with addiction or mental health problems; for members of their families; for ministers, counsellors, first responders and other health care providers who provide care for people struggling with pain, trauma, mental illness and addiction.
Educate
- Examine and address your own prejudice towards people who use drugs. Refrain from using words that dehumanize them. They are people with addictions, not addicts or drug abusers.
- Find community groups responding to the opioid crisis and support their work.
- Start a public conversation. Contact your local public health official for resources and information about opioid use. Host a public information event.

Read
- “Lord, when did we see you addicted?” in the December 2017 edition of Sojourners for information about church responses to the opioid crisis in the United States.
- The Globe and Mail articles “How Canada got addicted to fentanyl” and “How a little-known patent sparked Canada's opioid crisis” to learn about the growth of opioid use in Canada and Purdue Pharmaceutical’s role in the Canadian opioid crisis. These articles are available on The Globe and Mail’s website at theglobeandmail.com.
- Do a web search on “church responses to the opioid crisis”. Many faith organizations have additional resources and suggestions.

Advocate
- If your community is applying for either a temporary overdose prevention site or a more permanent supervised injection site, find out how you can help to support this, as well as other efforts to expand harm reduction services.
- Advocate for stigma-free access to pain management, community withdrawal programs and rapid access treatment services in your community.

Recommendation No. 5 (adopted, p. 13)
That the Moderator write to the federal and provincial Ministers of Health affirming the decisions to approve safe consumption/injection sites as a life-saving measure in the opioid crisis in Canada.

Recommendation No. 6 (adopted, p. 13)
That the Moderator write to provincial Ministers of Health inquiring about their plans to improve access to and funding for addiction treatment services.

Recommendation No. 7 (adopted, p. 13)
That the Moderator write to the federal Minister of Health asking that Health Canada to 1) set stronger print marketing regulations for drugs with habit-forming properties that have a high level of potential for abuse and 2) provide procedures for medical professionals to register complaints with Health Canada about prescription drug print ads.

Recommendation No. 8 (adopted, p. 13)
That the Moderator write to the federal Minister of Health affirming Health Canada’s decision that warning stickers will be mandatory with all dispensed prescription opioids as well a handout for patients.

Recommendation No. 9 (adopted, p. 13)
That the Moderator write to the Canadian Medical Association inquiring how the association assesses the impact of its voluntary “Guidelines for Physicians in Interactions with Industry”.

Recommendation No. 10 (adopted, p. 13)
That the Moderator write to provincial and territorial medical regulatory authorities (Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons) inquiring how they assess the impact of their policies and guidelines for physicians’ interactions with the pharmaceutical industry.

Recommendation No. 11 (adopted, p. 13)
That congregations assess the need to keep a naloxone kit on church property, ensuring that staff and/or volunteers are properly trained in its administration (if a kit is procured) as a life saving, harm reduction measure.
Recommendation No. 12 (adopted, p. 13)
That congregations assess the need for safe disposal sites on church property, as a harm reduction measure.

Recommendation No. 13 (adopted, p. 13)
That congregations wishing to learn more about responses to the opioid crisis in their community be encouraged to contact their local Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Office or their community health centre.

Recommendation No. 14 (adopted, p. 13)
That the above report and recommendations be the response to Overture No. 2, 2018 re resources to assist in responding to the opioid crisis.
FORCED LABOUR CONVENTION (1930)
(A&P 2018, p. 368-69, 14)

OVERTURE NO. 6, 2018 (p. 490–91)
Re: Adopting protocol of 2014 re Forced Labour Convention 1930

This overture is in response to persons trafficked for the purposes of forced labour. Canadian citizens and foreign workers are affected.

An especially evil dimension of trafficking is human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. According to reports from Statistics Canada, 93% of victims of human trafficking are females and of these 50% are between the ages of 18 to 24.

This report focuses on forced labour and the Protocol of 2014 (P029). Forced labour generally occurs in service, manufacturing, agricultural or construction sectors, through domestic work and in the sex industry.

The Protocol of 2014 (P029) to the Forced Labour Convention 1930 is intended to strengthen the protection and restitution for victims of forced labour. Under Canada’s British North America Act, labour legislation is a shared responsibility of the federal and provincial and territorial governments.

Increasingly restrictive immigration rules worldwide are making it more difficult for people to migrate safely. Men and women who become victims of trafficking and forced labour are in desperate need of work. Traffickers take advantage of these situations by exploiting the limited options and lack of legal and social protections available to migrants.

Traffic occurring in different ways. An individual may be deceived through promises of a good job or educational opportunities and discover that the promises were lies. An individual may be deliberately isolated in order to control his or her freedom of movement. The individual is constantly monitored. Intimidation by threats of being underpaid, or not being paid at all, or by physical violence is common. If an individual is not in Canada legally or the individual’s visa has expired, those committing forced labour may threaten to inform authorities. The individual may have his/her passport and other identity documents taken away from them. The individual may be forced to participate in illegal activities and threatened with being turned over to the police.

There are limited statistics on forced labour and human trafficking in Canada. In 2014, Canadian police services reported 206 violations of human trafficking. (Karam)

While the Government of Canada is committed to ratifying P029, a number of steps need to occur beforehand. The following is a summary of these steps. (MLA-GOC)

The Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL) sets the priorities for the issues it will focus on in a given period of time. Consultations take place with employer and labour organizations. This process has begun.

The federal government consults with provincial and territorial governments. This process has started. It may be necessary for provinces and territories to amend their legislation and policies to be consistent with P029.

All provinces and territories must agree with P029. Once this happens, the Government of Canada will be able to ratify P029. Senior civil servants in Employment and Social Development Canada indicated in an interview with Justice Ministries that ratification will not occur in 2018. (MLA-GOC)

Ratifying P029 will strengthen measures to protect victims of forced labour. The following highlights some of the protocol’s key features. Upon ratification, the following measures will have to be implemented:

- Develop a national policy and plan of action to eliminate forced labour.
- Educate and inform those considered to be at risk as well as employers to prevent them from participating in exploitative practices.
- Ensure all laws relevant to preventing forced labour extend to all workers and economic sectors.
- Improve labour inspections of work places in sectors likely to be using forced labour.
- Protect individuals, especially migrant workers from exploitative and fraudulent practices during the recruitment and placement process.
- Have policies in place to identify, release, protect and provide assistance and support to those subjected to forced labour, including measures to support their recovery and rehabilitation.
- Ensure those subjected to forced labour are compensated for their work regardless of their immigration status.
- Ensure authorities have discretion not to prosecute those who have been subjected to forced labour and who were forced to participate in criminal activities.
- Cooperate internationally to prevent and eliminate all forms of forced and compulsory labour.

Many other countries have larger numbers of people in forced labour. Nonetheless, it is important for Canada to ratify P029. Firstly, even one person in forced labour violates God’s expectation that all human beings are to be treated with dignity. Secondly, as the number of countries that ratify P029 grows, so does the capacity of the international community to work together in order to eliminate the sin of forced labour. Once Canada ratifies P029, it is legally obligated to enforce the protocol.

P029 complements and strengthens existing international law. This protocol is a benchmark in which all governments can be measured for their commitment to tackle forced labour or to tolerate it.

**Recommendation No. 19**  
(adopted, p. 14)  
That the Moderator write to the Minister of Employment and Social Development Canada affirming the Government of Canada’s commitment to ratify P029.

**Recommendation No. 20**  
(adopted, p. 14)  
That individuals in the church be invited to write to their Members of Parliament affirming the church’s support for the Government of Canada’s commitment to ratify P029; and that courts of the church may wish to write to Members of Parliament in their communities. Justice Ministries can assist in drafting these letters.

**Recommendation No. 21**  
(adopted, p. 14)  
That the above be the response to Overture No. 6, 2018 re adopting protocol of 2014 re Forced Labour Convention 1930.
Poverty Levels in Canada Still High

In 2007, the General Assembly adopted a report from the Life and Mission Agency (Justice Ministries) on the “Growing Gap Between Rich and Poor in Canada”. The General Assembly had not considered poverty and the gap between rich and poor since 1992.

The current Government of Canada initiated a consultative process which concluded at the end of the summer in 2017 as part of its 2015 commitment to develop and implement the first-ever Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy (CPRS). As this report to the General Assembly was being prepared, the government had not released its plans, but intends to release the CPRS in 2018.

The Government of Canada does not have an official definition of poverty. Statistics Canada produces three main measures of low income. Each has strengths and weaknesses. (Scott, Aldridge)3 What is important is that there are too many people in Canada living in difficult circumstances and a poverty reduction strategy from the Government of Canada could contribute to reducing poverty levels.

Many countries use the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT). A household is considered low income if its income is 50% below the median household income. It is a relative measure of low income. Using this measure, how does Canada compare?

According to a report (using the LIM-AT) by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Canada ranks 20 out of 31 wealthy countries for its levels of poverty. Iceland ranks first with the least number of its citizens below the poverty line. The United States, Turkey and Israel have the highest rates of poverty. (Government of Canada, p.3)

According to 2015 census data and using the LIM-AT, 14.2% of Canadians live in poverty; 17.4% of children in Canada live in poverty. (Campaign 2000) Without government transfers, this figure would increase to 27.8%. Transfers such as the Canada Child Benefit (introduced by the current federal government and indexed to inflation in the 2018 budget), improvements to the Guaranteed Income Supplement for Seniors and the Working Income Tax Benefit make a real difference, but a more comprehensive approach is required to address the many areas that impact people’s ability to meet even their most basic needs.

In 2007, the Moderator of the General Assembly wrote to then Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, encouraging the Government of Canada to set specific targets and timelines to reduce poverty. The Moderator also encouraged the government to work in partnership with provinces and territories, municipal governments and Indigenous organizations to reduce the levels of poverty. Further, the Moderator acknowledged that civil society, including faith communities had an important role to play in reducing the levels of poverty in Canada.

Since 2009, “Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada” has been calling on the Canadian government to create a national anti-poverty plan. “Dignity for All” is organized by Citizens for Public Justice and Canada Without Poverty. “Dignity for All” was endorsed by the 2010 General Assembly. (A&P 2010, p. 39)


Recommendation No. 22 (adopted, p. 14)

That the Moderator write to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development encouraging the government to include in the Poverty Reduction Strategy specific targets, measures and reporting timelines to reduce the levels of poverty in Canada-at-large as well as among specific groups identified as being at greatest risk of poverty (Indigenous people, racialized minorities, those living with a disability/differently abled, newcomers to Canada).
Recommendation No. 23 (adopted, p. 14)
That members of the church be invited to meet with or write to their Members of Parliament, calling on the Government of Canada to establish measurable targets and reporting timelines to reduce levels of poverty in Canada-at-large and among specific groups identified as being at greatest risk of poverty as part of a national poverty reduction strategy.

Justice Ministries is available to assist individuals or courts of the church in preparing to write or to meet with their Members of Parliament.

Recommendation No. 24 (adopted, p. 14)
That congregations be invited to use resources for prayers and thematic reflections (such as the Moderator’s reflection on poverty) on a Sunday near October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Recommendation No. 25 (adopted, p. 14)
That individuals and courts of the church be invited to express their support by signing on to “Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada” and to receive periodic updates concerning efforts to reduce poverty in Canada.