

COMMITTEE ON HISTORY

Interim Report, May 2020

“Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life.” (Acts 5:20)

“As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.” (Acts 5:41–42)

The faith that we share is the “go and tell” story of God’s saving plan for creation. From Jesus’ final commission for the disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19–20a) The primary action of the church has been to tell the story – to offer the saving grace that we have received to others so that they might also be saved. The above quote from Acts 5 is the most explicit example of how this commission is both empowered by God’s Holy Spirit but is to speak God’s truth to power.

For 145 years, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been prophetically proclaiming God’s good news to the nation, living out what the first apostles did in Jerusalem. Today, as we face challenges from an increasingly secular and diverse society – and from differing interpretations on the tenets and principles of our denomination, this commission is still the one true value of our faith that unites and moves us forward together. We are people of The Story – the story of God’s saving grace known in and through “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:2) Heeding the commission to ‘go and tell’, the Committee on History is looking to focus on what binds us together as we begin to plan and prepare for the denomination’s 150th anniversary in 2025: we have much to share and tell; all to the glory of God!

Our history is alive in the buildings in which we worship, in the beauty of our stained glass windows, in our books, records and other artefacts. Preservation of church records is a legal requirement of our denomination. Preserving them is another way in which we Presbyterians can be good stewards.

For the past 29 years the denomination has benefitted from the passion and commitment of the Rev. Peter Bush’s work in editing, writing and publishing the *Presbyterian History* newsletter that is circulated twice annually. This year, his 30th year producing this informative and essential publication, will be his last. The Committee on History is indebted to Peter for his drive, initiative and creative energy in steering this labour of love that has been a blessing and benefit to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Given the body of work and the scope of his interests, it was with understandable gratitude and regret that the committee received his decision and resignation, which will take effect after the fall 2020 issue, on December 31, 2020. The committee will explore new options for the *Presbyterian History* newsletter and will inform the church after the November meeting.

The committee’s various responsibilities include reporting on historical updates and ongoing projects as we share in celebrating and preserving Presbyterian history right across the country. The Committee on History celebrated its 140th year as a committee of our church. It is responsible for reporting on the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre (formerly the National Presbyterian Museum) and highlighting the work of the Presbyterian Archives. The committee meets twice a year (usually in November and February) and is fortunate to have members from across Canada who provide a balanced and insightful regional perspective. The members include: the Rev. Geoffrey Ross (convener), the Rev. Jenn Geddes, Mr. Scott MacDonald, Mr. David Mawhinney and the Rev. Janet Taylor. The committee also enjoys the support of the Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald (Knox College representative) and the Rev. Dr. Glenn Chestnutt (Presbyterian College representative), the Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart (Vancouver School of Theology representative), Ms. Kim Arnold (Archivist), Mr. Bob Anger (Assistant Archivist) and Ms. Marilyn Repchuck (convener for the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre Advisory Committee).

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA’S STRATEGIC PLAN

The Committee has discussed our part in The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s strategic plan and documented it in the 2017 Acts and Proceedings (p. 292).

HERITAGE SUNDAY

Many congregations have designated a Heritage Sunday to celebrate the vibrant and dynamic faith legacy that is ours within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The committee enjoys hearing various ways congregations commemorate Heritage Sunday. Some celebrate with events and some honour individuals within their own church family, while others profile the ministries of missionaries or church activities of outreach within their communities. February 21 is

the suggested date for Heritage Sunday in 2021 but congregations are encouraged to choose an anniversary Sunday or another date that is more suitable.

Recommendation No. 1 (will be presented in final report to the General Assembly)

HISTORY BOOK PRIZES

Every year the committee awards history prize certificates in three categories: congregational, academic and memoirs. This year we had some excellent submissions. The 2020 awards including an honourable mention are.

1. Congregational History: *St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Kirk Hill: Celebrating 200 Years, 1819–2019* by Committee Chair: Audrey Nixon Crawford
2. Memoir: *Pleasant Remembrances – A Memoir of the Mackay's at Cap-a-l'aigle* by Mary M. Harvey (nee Mackay)
3. Academic: *A Short History of Berbice High School, the Canadian Mission Church in New Amsterdam, Guyana and the Bishops* by Andrew Ranji Bishop
4. Honourable Mention: *By Land, Sea and Air* by Donna George

Congregations and individuals are encouraged to submit publications for consideration of the history prizes. Submission are to be sent to the Prize Committee, Presbyterian Church Archives by December 31, 2020, to be considered for the 2021 History Prizes.

Recommendation No. 2 (will be presented in final report to the General Assembly)

PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY

Two issues of *Presbyterian History* were published in 2019. The spring issue had a lead article on how The Presbyterian Church in Canada arrived at the 1994 Confession regarding its relationship with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. The fall issue's article marked the 50th anniversary of Canair relief and The Presbyterian Church in Canada's involvement in the Biafran crisis/Nigerian civil war.

The spring 2020 issue will examine the evolution of the current (2019) preamble and ordination/induction questions. The focus of the fall 2020 issue is to be determined.

The Committee on History recognizes the work involved with *Presbyterian History*. Appreciation is extended to the Rev. Peter Bush for 30 years of dedication as editor. Most articles can be found at presbyterian.ca/newsletters.

Recommendation No. 3 (will be presented in final report to the General Assembly)

THE ORAL AND VISUAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Committee on History encourages the ongoing oral and visual history project. The archives collects oral histories for researchers' use. Oral history interviews are an effective way to capture the memories of involved individuals in our church. Interviews provide a unique historical record and recollection of a period in time. They offer the added element of voice and personality. Those interviewed have had a connection to the church – lay, ordained, professional church worker, etc. The archives has recording equipment available to those who are interested in assisting the committee with this project by contacting Kim Arnold or Bob Anger. We have an ongoing list of interviewee names from across the country. We are hopeful to have more interest in visual history recordings in years to come.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HERITAGE CENTRE (formerly the National Presbyterian Museum)

Since 2002, the National Presbyterian Museum was located in the basement of St. John's Church, 415 Broadview Avenue, Toronto which closed at this location at the end of 2018 due to the church undergoing future redevelopment. It contained a vast collection of interesting and informative items. From the largest collection of communion tokens in Canada, to items sent by missionaries from around the world, to the largest collection of pictorial church plates in our country, as well as some of the oldest books ever used in seminary education in Canada and the opportunity to walk into a pioneer Presbyterian chapel. We appreciate the ongoing knowledge and support of our curator, Mr. Ian Mason who has been busy packing up the artefacts and items in Toronto for storage.

We have chosen a new name! It is the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre (PCHC). The PCHC Advisory Committee has met often over the past year. Members are Ms. Kim Arnold, the Rev. Duncan Jeffrey, Mr. Ian Mason (curator),

the Rev. Geoffrey Ross (convener of the Committee on History), the Rev. Angus Sutherland (past convener) and Ms. Marilyn Repchuck (convener). We extend our gratitude to the Rev. Stephen Kendall, the Rev. Ian Ross-MacDonald, Mr. Oliver Ng and Ms. Jackie Czegledi from 50 Wynford for their outstanding support over the past two years during the transition and finding our new future home.

After searching extensively and making many inquiries for space to relocate, representatives of the National Presbyterian Museum Advisory Committee met with people from Carlisle United Church, Carlisle, Ontario (in the municipality of North Middlesex and above London, just east of Ailsa Craig) in January 2018. This led to further meetings with the kind-hearted people in Carlisle, ready and willing to give up their church sanctuary for our Heritage Centre. Since 2017 we have remained open to other facilities, we have visited many and have been drawn back to Carlisle Church satisfied with its well kept heritage building. We must add that Carlisle United Church was originally Presbyterian!

A resolution was received from Antler River Watershed Regional Council for the United Church of Canada in November 2019, giving permission for a lease agreement between Carlisle United Church Trustees and The Presbyterian Church in Canada Trustees. In January 2020, the lease agreement was signed that beginning in June 2021 the PCHC pay \$2,000 per year as well as hydro and gas utility costs. Architectural drawings are completed and we are hopeful to display and stage all items and artefacts once again in the new renovated space.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada Management Team has given PCHC their blessing to begin a three year campaign at General Assembly 2021. We have resources now, however, our intention is to raise \$200,000 to transform the new space within the sanctuary of Carlisle United Church into the Heritage Centre. The plan is to begin renovations in early 2022 after the first six months of the national campaign. We will invest our time and energy into raising funds next year and we are truly hopeful for our church's support and a good response.

As we plan ahead for the campaign, we ask for your prayers and positive wishes that together we will make the PCHC a place our church can be pleased with, where it can enjoy and learn about the history of our family in future years and for generations yet to come. Please view our website for further information and updates.

Recommendation No. 4 (will be presented in final report to the General Assembly)

Our mailing address: Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre (PCHC)

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

50 Wynford Drive

Toronto ON M3C 1J7

Phone Ian Mason, Curator, Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre at 416-469-1345

E-mail: heritagecentre@presbyterian.ca

Website: pcheritagecentre.ca

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY

The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History continues to be an active academic society with a broad constituency and holds yearly meetings. We are interested in the breadth of the history of the Presbyterian tradition in Canada, though our focus is largely on the history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and its antecedent denominations and congregations. The meeting was held at Knox College on September 28, 2019, and participants heard papers on the Glasgow Colonial Society, John Pringle, future directions in research, the evolution of Sunday school curriculum in the post WWII period and two papers on relations with Indigenous communities: one on ministry in Swan Lake, Manitoba and one analyzing the process The Presbyterian Church in Canada undertook in formulating the apology to Indigenous peoples. We were able to live-stream this event so those at a distance could participate. The papers each year are prepared for the members and we are very grateful to the editor, Kate Revington, for her work. A call for papers has been issued for the next meeting to be held at Knox College on Saturday September 26, 2020, and we are anticipating papers on a variety of topics. We are grateful for the interest of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the support of many members of this denomination and others.

The Society's website is csph.ca. Those interested in membership or information can email: secretary@csph.ca or contact Ian Mason at 416-469-1345.

ARCHIVES

As a denomination, we are in an enviable position with the archives. The Archivist, Ms. Kim Arnold and the Assistant Archivist, Mr. Bob Anger, continue to provide dependable, meticulous and hardworking service. The committee

commends them for the exceptional service they provide to The Presbyterian Church in Canada! The Committee on History appreciates the Rev. Dr. Robert Anderson for his important contribution and service with us as a volunteer.

This has been another busy year in the archives. In addition to the daily work of appraising, preserving, cataloguing and responding to church-related research requests, the archives staff also provide the church: records management and orientation for the national office and congregations; assessing best practices for managing digital records; arranging for the microfilming/digitizing of congregational records; and creating new resources regarding care of church records. We have updated the website that highlights periodic features. The archives staff network with seminary students regarding their assignments on church history. The staff will apply for an annual government student grant to host a summer photo cataloguing project.

Recommendation No. 5 (will be presented in final report to the General Assembly)

RECOGNITION OF RETIRING CLERGY

In thanks and celebration for those who have provided many years and often an entire career of faithful service to The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the hope is that this the General Assembly will share in a moment of appreciation.

Recommendation No. 6 (will be presented in final report to the General Assembly)

The Committee on History is grateful for the time, wisdom and assistance provided by the Rev. Stephen Kendall, Clerk of the the General Assembly; the Rev. Don Muir, Deputy Clerk of the the General Assembly; Ms. Terrie-Lee Hamilton, Senior Administrator and staff in the the General Assembly Office.

Please visit the exhibit table at the General Assembly and see the updated brochures and resources for the Archives and campaign materials for the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre. Contact the Archives office if you would like information on any aspect of church records management.

CONCLUSION

The Book of Acts goes on to tell how the apostles – and the early Church – responded to the adversities they faced by rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer “for the sake of the (Jesus’) name.” It then says, “And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.” (Acts 5:41–42) The commission to ‘go and tell’ didn’t promise that there would be no hardships or disagreements but, that if we did, Jesus promised, “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Our prayer is that The Presbyterian Church in Canada – like the early Church – will continue to be blessed by our Lord’s presence as we seek to faithfully ‘go and tell’ of God’s story.

Geoffrey Ross
Convener