



MODERATOR OF THE 2021 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Daniel D. Scott, B.A., M.C.S, M.Div., D. Min.

20 August 2021

The Rev. Darryl Macdonald
Montreal

Dear Darryl,

On behalf of the 2021 General Assembly, I offer to you the heartfelt apology of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for the hurt and harm we have caused you during your journey to become a minister of the gospel. Through the courts of our church, we made very public our refusal to accept your candidacy and our denial to allow you to preach within our churches. All this we did, despite your calling and gifts, because of our previous exclusive position regarding sexual orientation and your loving commitment to your partner. We now have adopted additional perspectives on this matter and are sorry our actions in the past have harmed you, your family, your ministry, and the congregation of St. Andrew's Lachine that discerned a call to ministry to you. We offer this gesture to you understanding that it has been well over 20 years since you sought to be certified for ordination in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and aware that you are one person among many who have been affected in this way by our church.

This apology comes as the result of a decision taken by the General Assembly asking the Moderator to write a letter of apology to you and to St. Andrew's Lachine (through Summerlea United) in light of the Rainbow Communion Listening Committee report.

The Special Listening Committee re. LGBTQI, also known as "Rainbow Communion," was established by the General Assembly in 2017 to: 1) create a safe and respectful environment in which LGBTQI people can tell stories of harm done to them; 2) listen to the stories told by LGBTQI people; 3) draft an appropriate response regarding homophobia within the denomination; 4) name concrete actions that the General Assembly considers implementing; and 5) report to a future General Assembly within the next three years.

The final report of the Special Listening Committee came to the General Assembly this year after four years of work. The report is based on personal experiences that were told to the Rainbow Communion verbally and in written form.

We are grateful to you that you were willing to participate in the work of the Rainbow Communion. In your public statements, you recalled the pain caused you, your family and friends, and the congregation of St. Andrew's Lachine, stemming from the Commission Report of 1998 that resulted in you not being eligible to occupy a pulpit or receive a call to a congregation within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The public nature of your experience has formed an important part of the journey our denomination has taken toward seeking to repent of homophobia, and toward the affirmation of LGBTQI persons in ministry within our church. Part of that gradual journey was a decision at the 2012 General Assembly reversing the previous denial and welcoming you to preach in Presbyterian pulpits as an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada.

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Stephen Kendall and The Rev. Donald Muir

Your experience and the resulting harm were echoed in the stories of others. “A number of storytellers recounted how they had to end their preparation for ministry of Word and Sacraments or diaconal ministry in the Presbyterian Church when they were outed or when they found the need to hide overwhelming. Despite a strong sense of call to ministry, they were told that they could not continue in the process because of their same-sex relationship or their refusal to commit to a life of celibacy. This left many people with a deep sense of internal trauma because they were unable to follow their call in the church that they loved. The cost was heavy as they had to pursue their calling in another denomination that was inclusive or had to find work in another vocation” (A&P 2021, p. 621).

The Rev. Peter Bush, a former moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada wrote words of apology for this very type of action: “The church too often puts more emphasis on a person’s sexual identity than on their identity in Christ. When the church ignores the gifts present within the body of Christ, it fails to appreciate all that God has for the church and fails to see God’s glory revealed in all people. For our unwillingness to affirm the spiritual gifts present in all the people of the church, we are sorry, and we repent” (Letter of Repentance, 2018). These words are appropriate in your situation, and I echo them to you now in this apology.

Please know that The Presbyterian Church in Canada is sorry and repents for the harm done to you, your mother Rena Mae Macdonald, your father Donald Matheson Macdonald, your husband Chris Maragoudakis, your friends, and the congregation that wished to call you as their minister. We put more emphasis on your sexual identity than on your identity in Christ. By ignoring your gifts, we failed to appreciate all that God has for the church and we failed to see God’s glory revealed in all people.

Repentance and apology are first and important steps, but we understand that action needs to follow. The report provides practical ways to ensure that harm does not continue. In doing so, it points to the familiar story of Jesus journeying with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. The Easter Hymn “Come to us Beloved Stranger” is based on that story and asks Jesus to “Walk with us to our Emmaus, for we need you still today;” to “Come to us when we are broken, when our dearest hopes are lost...” It further asks: “Risen Christ, once dead, now living, come to us through joy, through pain” and “Help us trust that through your mercy we can doubt and fear transcend, and to others be a blessing. Keep us faithful to life’s end.”

We pray that The Presbyterian Church in Canada will continue this walk with Jesus until we become a blessing to all people.



The Rev. Dr. Daniel D. Scott
Moderator
2021 General Assembly