



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

1 May 2022

The congregation of Summerlea United Church, and members of the former St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Lachine

Dear friends in Christ,

Today I offer to you the heartfelt apology of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for the hurt and harm our church has caused to the Rev. Darryl Macdonald, his family and friends, and many of you, the faithful members of the congregation he sought to serve. Through the courts of our church, we made very public our refusal to accept Darryl's candidacy. All this we did, despite Darryl's calling and gifts, because of our past exclusive position regarding sexual orientation and Darryl's loving commitment to his partner. We now have adopted additional perspectives on this matter and are sorry our actions in the past have caused harm. We offer this gesture to you understanding that it has been well over 20 years since you sought to call Darryl to be your minister.

This apology comes as the result of a decision taken by the 2021 General Assembly asking the Moderator to write a letter of apology to St. Andrew's Lachine (through Summerlea United). An apology has also been offered to Darryl himself.

The 2021 General Assembly received the report of what is called the Rainbow Communion, this committee was established 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 this 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.

At the time that Darryl was being called to St. Andrew's Lachine, Ruth Taylor was an elder and member of the Search Committee at St. Andrew's Lachine. The Rainbow Communion report contains an account from her about how the congregation was affected. Her reflections follow Darryl Macdonald's story, where he recalled the pain caused to him, his family and friends and the congregation of St. Andrew's Lachine, stemming from the Commission Report of 1998. That report resulted in him not being eligible to occupy a pulpit or receive a call to a congregation within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. After a petition to the Assembly several years later, he was granted permission to preach in Presbyterian pulpits as an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada.

The experience of St. Andrew's Lachine, and the resulting harm, was echoed in the stories that other people shared with the Rainbow Communion. "Although the harm done to those who identify as LGBTQI is most direct and obvious, harm is also done to others who are members of their families and communities simply because they seek to be affirming or to advocate for the rights and dignity of those they love. In 2018, a recommendation in the Rainbow Communion's interim report was adopted by the

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

Assembly to include the stories of those other than people who identify as LGBTQI who have been harmed by homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism and hypocrisy. These people often identify themselves as allies and many times find themselves marginalized, abused or silenced because of their supportive words and actions. Sometimes it is simply the fear of ‘what might be’ for those they love that causes the harm” (A&P 2021, p. 633–634).

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 especially in light of the fact that your congregation was prevented from benefitting from Darryl’s gifts in ministry.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada of today is sorry and repents of the harm done to the congregation of St. Andrew’s Lachine, the Rev. Darryl Macdonald, his mother Rena Mae Macdonald, his father Donald Matheson Macdonald, his husband Chris Maragoudakis, his family and friends. We put more emphasis on Darryl’s sexual identity than on his identity in Christ. We ignored the gifts present within the body of Christ and as a result failed to appreciate all that God had for the church and 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 of the Rainbow Communion provides practical ways forward 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.

This letter of apology comes wishing you God’s rich blessing in your ministry.



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