

COMMITTEE ON HISTORY

To the Venerable, the 146th General Assembly:

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 146 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 30 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. In 2021, we recognize his 30 years producing this informative and essential publication. The committee has been 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. We have been blessed with the work and the scope of his interests, along with others who have shared contributions over the years. The most recent editions of *Presbyterian History* can be found on the website at presbyterian.ca/newsletters.

The Committee on History’s various responsibilities include reporting on historical updates and ongoing projects as we share in celebrating and preserving Presbyterian history across the country. The Committee on History has celebrated its 140th year as a committee of our church and is responsible for reporting on the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre (formerly the National Presbyterian Museum) and highlighting the work of the Presbyterian Archives. It 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, the Rev. Dr. Beth McCutcheon and the Rev. Janet Taylor. The committee also enjoys the support of the Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald (Knox College) and the Rev. Dr. Glenn Chestnutt (Presbyterian College), the Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart (Vancouver School of Theology), 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 STRATEGIC PLAN

The committee reports our part in The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s strategic plan in the 2017 A&P on page 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 20, 2022 is the suggested date for Heritage Sunday but congregations are encouraged to choose an anniversary Sunday or another date that is more suitable.

Recommendation HIS-001

That the congregations be encouraged to observe Heritage Sunday on February 20, 2022, or on another Sunday, as a means of celebrating the unique faith journey and heritage we enjoy as Presbyterians.

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 including an honourable mention of a fourth book. Congregations and individuals are encouraged to submit publications for consideration of the history prizes. Submission should be sent to the Prize Committee, Presbyterian Church Archives by December 31, 2021, to be considered for the 2022 History prizes. There were no books entered in 2020 and so we celebrate and acknowledge the following from 2019.

Recommendation HIS-002

That the Assembly recognize the 2021 winners of the history book prizes:

1. Congregational History: St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Kirk Hill: *Celebrating 200 Years, 1819–2019*. 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

PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY

Two issues of *Presbyterian History* were published in 2019. The spring issue lead article was on how The Presbyterian Church in Canada arrived at the 1994 Confession re its relationship with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. The fall issue marked the 50th anniversary of Canairelief and The Presbyterian Church in Canada's involvement in the Biafran Crisis/Nigerian Civil War.

A special article, "The Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, 1851", was printed in the winter 2020 issue of the *Presbyterian Connection*. The lead article in the newsletter in 2020 was "The Church, Its Subordinate Standards, and the Ordination Questions."

In winter 2021, the *Presbyterian Connection* published an article about sermons on church-less Sundays during the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918.

The next issue of *Presbyterian History* will have an article looking at two Canadian missionaries and to using wonder as a way of looking at cross-cultural engagement.

We regret that the PCPak has been discontinued. *Presbyterian History* articles are now on church's website at presbyterian.ca/newsletters. Individuals who wish to be on an email list to receive a copy, may contact Peter Bush at peter.bush@wightman.ca.

The Committee on History recognizes the work involved with *Presbyterian History*. Appreciation is expressed to Peter Bush, for over 30 years of dedication as editor. The articles can be accessed online at presbyterian.ca/newsletters.

Recommendation HIS-003

That the Rev. Peter Bush be recognized for having completed over 30 years as editor of *Presbyterian History*.

THE ORAL AND VISUAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Committee on History has encouraged this ongoing project over the past few years, however due to COVID-19 we have not progressed any further with it. 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 with the added element of voice and personality. Interviews provide a unique historical record and recollection of a period in time. Those interviewed have had a connection to the church – lay, ordained, professional church worker, etc. The Archives has the recording equipment available to those who might be interested in assisting our committee with this project.

Contact Kim Arnold if you are interested. We have an ongoing list of interviewees from across the country. We are hopeful to have even more visual history interest over the years to come.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HERITAGE CENTRE

Since 2002, the National Presbyterian Museum was located in the basement of St. John's Church, 415 Broadview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, and closed at the end of 2018 due to the congregation's building redevelopment. The museum contained a vast collection of interesting and informative items that include the largest collection of communion tokens in Canada, items sent by missionaries from around the world, the largest collection of pictorial church plates in our country, some of the oldest books ever used in seminary education in Canada, as well as the opportunity to walk into a pioneer Presbyterian chapel. We appreciate the ongoing knowledge and support of our curator, Mr. Ian Mason, as we packed 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 last few years. 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 chair), Mr. Doug Carmichael and Ms. Marilyn Repchuck (chair). 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 three years during the transition and finding our new future home.

After searching extensively and making many inquiries for space to relocate, in January 2018, some of the National Presbyterian Museum Advisory Committee met with people of Carlisle United Church, Carlisle, Ontario, (in the municipality of North Middlesex and above London, just east of Ailsa Craig). This led to further meetings with the kind-hearted people in Carlisle, who were ready and willing to give up their church sanctuary for our Heritage Centre. Since 2017, we have remained open to other facilities. We visited many and were 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 the Antler River Watershed Regional Council of 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 February 2021, the PCHC pay \$2,000 per year as well as hydro and gas utility costs. Drawings have been completed and we are hopeful to display and stage all items and artefacts once again in the new renovated space.

2021 Update

The advisory committee has hired a contractor and a time frame has been organized for both moving and the renovations to be completed. We are unable to confirm the actual date of completion but do look forward to announcing the date in a year.

The wood types have been inspected to determine the floor load bearing requirements in the sanctuary of Carlisle United Church. The wood types have been examined and reviewed as:

Joist is hemlock.
Flooring is white pine.
Beam is elm...an interesting collection.

Our new website is pcheritagecentre.ca.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada Management Team gave PCHC their blessing for a three-year campaign beginning at the 2021 General Assembly. We have resources now, however, our intention is to raise \$200,000 to transform the sanctuary of Carlisle United Church into the Heritage Centre. We will invest our time and energy over the next few years to raise funds. We are truly hopeful for our church's support and a good response. Each congregation will receive upcoming information.

As we launch the campaign, we ask for your prayers and 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. The website, pcheritagecentre.ca, has further information and updates.

Recommendation HIS-004

That presbyteries, congregations, groups and individuals be encouraged to support the national campaign for and contribute to the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre.

The mailing address:

Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre (PCHC)
19 Falkirk St
RR 3
Denfield ON N0M 1P0
416-469-1345 (Ian Mason, Curator)
pcheritagecentre@gmail.com
pcheritagecentre.ca

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY

The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History is an academic society that supports studies in the history of the Presbyterian tradition in all its different forms and streams in Canada. As the largest Presbyterian body in Canada, we have always had a close collegial relationship with The Presbyterian Church in Canada and its national history committee. This year the society managed to hold a virtual conference on September 26, 2020, where four papers were shared: Angus Sutherland presented on Major John Norton (Teyoninhokarawen); Robert Revington presented on "George L. Robinson and the History of Knox College"; Rebecca Jess presented on "Young People and the Future of the Presbyterian Church" in the post-union period; and Stuart Macdonald explored the background to the "Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation". The society's website, csph.ca, contains information on the society and a link to a recording of this past year's conference, including previous conferences and papers. The executive includes: Stuart Macdonald (President); Ian Mason (Secretary); and Sid Castle (Treasurer). We welcome new members. We have issued a call for papers for our 2021 conference which will be held virtually on Saturday, September 25, 2021. To receive membership information email: secretary@csph.ca.

ARCHIVES

As a denomination we are in an enviable position with our archives. The Archivist, Ms. Kim Arnold, and the Assistant Archivist, Mr. Bob Anger, provide dependable, meticulous and hardworking service. However, due to the ongoing pandemic they both worked from their homes between March and August. After Labour Day, the Archivist returned to the national church office while the Assistant Archivist began a nine month leave of absence and will return in July 2021. As a member of the Health and Safety Committee, he worked on COVID-19 policies and procedures for the national office prior to leaving.

The daily work includes appraising, preserving, cataloguing, responding to church-related research requests, records management and orientation for the national office staff and congregations, assessing best practices for managing digital records, arranging for the ongoing microfilming/digitizing of congregational records and creating new resources of church records. The updated Archives website highlights periodic features. The staff network with seminary students regarding their assignments on church history. The Disaster Preparedness Plan for Archives and Records Centre areas needs updating and will be reviewed by the Archivist and suggested changes will be drafted. The committee commends Kim and Bob for the exceptional service they provide to The Presbyterian Church in Canada!

Recommendation HIS-005

That congregations understand the importance of well-kept congregational records and the management of such records and to follow the advice and guidance of the Presbyterian Church Archives.

ANNIVERSARIES AND HISTORICAL UPDATES**Biafran Crisis 1966–1970 (50 Years)**

2020 marked 50 years since the end of the Biafran Crisis (the Nigerian Civil War). The Presbyterian Church in Canada was the only Canadian denomination with missionaries in Nigeria at the time of the conflict, therefore Presbyterians were at the centre of the action in Canada as churches responded to the crisis through the airlift by *Canairielief*. Over the last 50 years Africa has shaped The Presbyterian Church in Canada in fundamental ways – the Biafran Crisis, support of the ANC, divestment and other pressures seeking the end of apartheid, response to AIDS, the debate about church investment in Talisman Energy's exploration work in Darfur, mission connections to Malawi and

Mozambique, and the arrival of Ghanaian, Nigerian, Rwandan, and South African ministers, members, and congregations in Canada.

Prince Edward Island – October 11, 1821–2021 (200 years)

“The first Presbytery of Prince Edward Island was, by deed of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, formed on October 11, 1821 and held its first meeting in the house of Archibald Campbell, Esq., Lot 16, and consisted of the Rev. John Keir, moderator; Mr. Robert Douglas, the grandfather of Professor Falconer of Halifax, William McGregor, minister and Mr. Edward Ramsay, ruling elder. Mr. Douglas was clerk of the first Presbytery of Prince Edward.” *History of Presbyterianism on Prince Edward Island*, the Rev. John M. McLeod, 1904.

The Story of Vanuatu 1846–2021 (175 Years)

2021 marks 175 years since John and Charlotte Geddie left Nova Scotia to be pioneer missionaries for Vanuatu (The New Hebrides). Today Vanuatu is the only country in the South Pacific with a significant Presbyterian heritage and membership.

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, our hope is that this General Assembly will share in a moment of appreciation.

Recommendation HIS-006

That with thanks to God and in celebration of the clergy and church workers who retired in 2019–2020, a moment of recognition and appreciation be offered by this General Assembly for these faithful representatives of Jesus Christ and diligent servants of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

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

Members may email pcheritagecentre@gmail.com for campaign materials for the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre or contact the Archives office for 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