



## Presbyterian History

A Newsletter of the Committee on History  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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*Figure 1: Ballyduff Presbyterian Church, in the Presbytery of Lindsay-Peterborough marked its 170th anniversary in 2023. What sort of stories emerged from here over the years? The Committee on History is preparing a book of stories about where we have been, where we stand, and where we are going as a denomination – and it is looking for contributions. Photo: Emily Turner, City of Kawartha Lakes.*

### *I Love to Tell the Story*

That's the title of a well-known hymn by the English Anglican evangelist, Katherine Hankey (1834-1911), which appeared a few years before the formation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada – and it's a refrain the Committee on History is hoping Presbyterians from coast to coast will embrace as it develops a

collection of stories for the denomination's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025.

So what is involved in this project? The final product will take the form of an illustrated softcover book titled *Recollections & Reflections: 150 Years of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* and will encompass three parts:

- (1) Where We Have Been
- (2) Where We Stand
- (3) Where We Are Going

Part 1, **Where We Have Been**, will be composed of memories submitted by members and adherents of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Do you have a favourite memory of singing in a choir, attending a youth group, going to a potluck supper, or attending the General Assembly – or anything else that shaped your involvement in church? Your editor has several such recollections, one of which is printed here:

*I was a Young Adult Representative (YAR) at the 138th General Assembly, which took place at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Oshawa. The YARs arrived at the university a day ahead of the Commissioners, and we soon learned that one of our number – a YAR from Prince Edward Island – was celebrating a birthday that very day. Well, someone procured an ice cream cake from Dairy Queen and had it delivered to the South Village Residence dining hall in which we had gathered to get to know one another. We just about had to send for an axe to cut through that cake, which was almost frozen solid. Later that week, another YAR had a birthday and another ice cream cake was procured. I can't recall if it too was frozen solid, but I do remember it pouring rain that evening as we YARs sat cozily inside enjoying our last supper together – carbonated lemonade, wings, and ice cream cake!*

**No story is too insignificant for inclusion in this collection.** Building projects, camp, Christian education, missions and mission work (domestic and abroad), concerts, memorable people, the social justice initiatives, special events, theological colleges, and the experiences derived from worship and liturgy – all of these germinate stories, and we are keen to see these stories preserved on the occasion of our sesquicentennial.

Part 2, **Where We Stand**, will provide a snapshot of what it means to be a Presbyterian in Canada today. Through profiles of select congregations

doing innovative things in ministry, as well as comments and observations from those who serve the church as ministers, teachers, laity, and others, this part of the book will offer a glimpse at what the PCC is doing in the way of current mission initiatives, environmental stewardship, outreach to communities that have historically been marginalized by the church, and work being undertaken in the name of reconciliation.

Part 3, **Where We Are Going**, will look to the future through the lens of such questions as “What will the PCC look like in 25 years?” “What do I dream of the PCC becoming?” and “What are we doing/what am I doing to get there?”

### **Now It's Your Turn**

Please send your stories, suggestions, questions, and ideas to Ian McKechnie, projector coordinator, at [pcc150book@gmail.com](mailto:pcc150book@gmail.com). Or, if you prefer, please consider filling out an online form developed by the PCC Communications team. This questionnaire come with helpful prompts to get those creative juices flowing: <https://form.jotform.com/Presby/online-interview-questionnaire-form>. We are accepting submissions through December 2024, with the goal of having a product published for distribution at General Assembly in June 2025.

### **Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre**

Finally under one roof! After three years, the collection of the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre (PCHC) is finally all in one place. From February to June in 2021, during the height of pandemic lockdowns, the collection of the PCHC was packed and stored at church offices at 50 Wynford Drive. Youth volunteers from St. Timothy Presbyterian Church in Etobicoke and St. John's Presbyterian Church in Toronto, the National Presbyterian Museum's host church for 19 years, provided greatly appreciated assistance.

Construction was slow due to pandemic building material shortages. However, by April, 2024, our two contractors had completed their work and

artefacts could come home to Carlisle United Church in Carlisle (the Carlisle that is northwest of London, ON).

First came the large artefacts that were kindly and generously stored in temporary quarters in the Archives building of the Ailsa Craig Museum (formerly Trinity Anglican Church, Ailsa Craig). Then came a  $\frac{3}{4}$  loaded transport truck packed with all the artefacts that had been stored at church offices. Special thanks is given to Colleen McCue, Senior Administrator of church offices, who proved invaluable in facilitating moving arrangements.

On Tuesday, April 23, 2024, the transport truck was unloaded in Carlisle United Church. The first phase is to place all of the smaller artefacts into storage. The second phase is to unload the large cabinets that were used to transport the textiles (some clerical and choir gowns, but mostly clothing from countries such as Nigeria and Korea; flags; linen broadsides; banners; wall-hangings; quilts; etc.). The display cabinets can then be filled with artefacts once again.

Throughout the next year, displays will be created in time for our official opening and dedication, which will take place in 2025 – the 150th anniversary year of the formation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (essentially the culmination of the union of the ten distinct Presbyterian denominations that existed in Canada during the 19th century).

We are also planning, for those of robust stamina, a re-created 1850s Presbyterian worship service, complete with a typical 2-hour worship service, which included (at the very least) a one-hour sermon and a cappella Psalm singing.

Due to our compact size, the exhibit hall of the Heritage Centre will be both display and open concept storage. The exhibit hall will offer a kaleidoscopic buffet of the colours and textures of our artefacts whereas the stark simplicity of the chapel will provide a “visual rest” from the compact combination of display and storage

beyond the walls of the replica 1850s Presbyterian chapel.

The life and work of the Canadian Presbyterian followers of Jesus Christ await to be told with the stuff that they have left behind! – *Ian Mason*



*Figure 2: This chapel at the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre will replicate a typical Presbyterian place of worship from the mid-nineteenth century. Photo: Ian Mason*

## Editor's Note

Another General Assembly will be wrapping up as I write this – and thus another chapter in the life of the church. June is also the season of commencement exercises in many parts of the country – a time when secondary school students pass through the portal separating youth from young adulthood, and when those who have chosen some field of post-secondary study pass into whatever vocation God has called them to.

On June 27<sup>th</sup> 1893, the Rev'd. Robert Johnston, minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Lindsay, was invited to give the main address at the closing exercises of Lindsay Collegiate Institute. “In his usual able manner he impressed upon the minds of the pupils the great value and good results of diligence and perseverance,” noted an observant *Canadian Post* reporter, “and also of the duty of every parent to their children as regards [to] their education.”

With that in mind, may it be the calling of every generation to pass on to the next those stories that make us who we are – not only as Presbyterians in Canada, but also as members of the Holy Catholic Church in every time and place.

*Presbyterian History* is always looking for topic suggestions for future issues. Please contact the editor at [iandmckechnie91@gmail.com](mailto:iandmckechnie91@gmail.com), or write to Ian McKechnie, 40 Parkway Avenue, Lindsay, ON, K9V 4T9.