

FIFTH SEDERUNT

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUTED

At Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, on Tuesday, June 4, 2019 at 2:00 p.m., the Assembly met pursuant to adjournment. The Moderator constituted the Assembly with prayer.

COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS (cont'd from p. xxx)

The Assembly called for the report of the Committee on Business which was presented by M.R. McLennan, convener. J.I.F. Barrett moved, duly seconded, that the agenda for the afternoon be approved as presented. Adopted.

(cont'd on p. XXX)

SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF FORMER MODERATORS (cont'd from p. xxx)

The Assembly continued meeting as a Committee of the Whole and commissioners resumed offering comments in favour of a pathway.

Commissioners discussed two questions in table groups. (1) On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being uncertain and 5 confident, how confident are you that you understand what you are being asked to do when filling in your ballot? (2) What have you heard in the conversation today that you thought was wise?

The preferential ballot voting process was described by the Principal Clerk. K.R. Horst lit a Christ candle and led commissioners in prayer. In silence, commissioners marked and submitted secret ballots for a pathway. The Principal Clerk and the Special Committee of Former Moderators withdrew from the Assembly Hall to count the ballots.

Ballot Results Announced

Upon the return for the special committee members, D. Cho announced the result of the ballot count. The Young Adult and Student Representative advisory vote was in favour of Pathway B (inclusion). The commissioner vote was also in favour of Pathway B (Inclusion).

Rise from the Committee of the Whole

C.S. Park, duly seconded, that the Assembly rise from the Committee of the Whole with the recommendation that Pathway B (Inclusion) be approved. Adopted.

Additional Motion

C.S. Park moved, duly seconded, that Pathway B (inclusion) be approved.

Amendment

G.T. Gunnink moved, duly seconded, that Option B be replaced by "Option C – One Church, Three Streams.

Immediate Vote

J.C. Borthwick moved, duly seconded, that the Assembly take an immediate vote.

The Young Adult Representatives advisory vote was in favour of taking an immediate vote. Commissioners also voted in favour of taking an immediate vote.

Amendment defeated

The vote was taken, and the amendment was defeated.

A commissioner asked for a vote count on the defeated amendment. A recount resulted in the following totals. Young Adult Representatives: two in favour and nine opposed. Commissioners: 87 in favour and 128 opposed.

Amendment

S. Howard moved, duly seconded, that the Assembly add the following to the end of the recommendation of the Committee of the Whole. "And that any congregation that believes Pathway (the pathway recommended by the committee of the whole) is contrary to their understanding of the teaching of scripture be permitted to withdraw from the denomination while keeping their resources and buildings."

Amendment Ruled Out of Order

The Moderator ruled the amendment out of order.

Ballot Count

J.M. Kreplin asked for the count of the ballots to be announced on the additional motion.

Ballot Count Ruled Out of Order

The Moderator ruled the request for a ballot count out of order.

Moderator's Ruling Challenged

The ruling of the Moderator was challenged.

The Principal Clerk asked the Assembly whether it upheld the ruling of the Moderator.

The Assembly upheld the ruling.

Immediate Vote

D.L. DeWolfe moved, duly seconded, that the Assembly take an immediate vote on the additional motion. Adopted.

The Young Adult Representatives advisory vote was in favour of taking an immediate vote. Commissioners also voted in favour of taking an immediate vote.

Additional Motion

D.L. DeWolfe moved, duly seconded, that the vote on the motion be by secret ballot.

The Young Adult Representatives advisory vote was in favour of voting by secret ballot. Commissioners defeated the motion.

Additional Motion was adopted

The additional motion, that Pathway B (Inclusion) be approved, was adopted.

Vote Count

Upon the request of two commissioners, the Moderator announced the count of the vote as 126 in favour and 91 opposed.

Dissent

The following Commissioners asked that their dissent, regarding the Additional Motion, be recorded:

D.A. Adlam, D.A. Adlam, T. Anyam, M. Baxter, E.M. Beattie, A.D. Brouwer, C.A. Calkin, C. Carter, J. Choi, G. Chow, C. Clark, C.L. Clarke, J. Coppeters, A.M. Cornell, R. De Vries, J. Douglas, S.A. Filyk, G.A. Forsyth, P.S. Han, J. Hong, M. Horrigan, G.B. Jay, J. Khang, J.J. Kim, P. Kim, B.Y.J. Ko, B.K. Lee, Y.J. Lee, J.T. Lim, A. Lin, A. MacLeod, C. MacRitchie, G.S. Malcolm, R.B. Napier, D. Oudekerk, M.R. Park, T. Paasuke, J.D. Rickwood, M.A. Robertson, M.J.E. Ross, R.T. Royal, N. Said, E. Shariff, D.E. Sherbino, Y. Shin, D.J. Shute, G.J. Snyman, R. Tarr, R.W. Thomson, A. Van Bodegom, W.H. van de Wall, L. Vanderkamp, J.V.R.T. Nel, G. Vissers, C.E. Wilson, E.S. Wilson, and J. Yang.

The following commissioners asked that their dissent, regarding the Additional Motion be recorded with reasons given as follows:

D.P. Allen-Macartney: With respect, I believe pathway "B" to be unhelpful to our church and dishonouring to the Lord because of its harsh and exclusionary position to students considering a call to ordination and others in the denomination who hold that scripture calls us to traditional views of marriage. Further, and also with respect, I believe that the Assembly did not have opportunity for clear and fulsome debate on the four pathways presented by the Special Committee. Firstly, during the Committee of the Whole, commissioners were told firmly and repeatedly by the convener that we were not to speak negatively about any option but to speak positively about options we preferred. This was done by the speakers. When speakers asked when debate could take place, we were told there would be opportunity for debate when the Committee as a Whole brought its recommendation to the Assembly. However, when the recommendation came to the Assembly, a commissioner called for an immediate vote. This took place. Therefore, there was never an opportunity for fulsome debate on the different pathways. Further, I believe the church as a whole, would be far better served if we did the work together to propose a way forward that would allow faithful brothers and sisters with differing theological views on this question to work together in the church. Pathway "B" in its present

form does not do that. Further, several commissioners asked for the vote count to be made known. This was not permitted by the Moderator. Thus, we are left without knowing whether there might have been another, more productive, pathway forward that could have been endorsed by a greater majority of commissioners. It is my fervent hope and prayer that during this Assembly, and in the months ahead, there will be a greater willingness on the part of commissioners, sessions and presbyteries to seek a pathway forward that will welcome and respect congregations, elders, clergy and individuals on both sides of this issue.

A.A. Bartha: We excluded those who did not support inclusivity. We shot ourselves in the foot.

M. Bereczki-Farkas: Because I don't feel the love toward those who are on a different option. They had the chance to say "yes" to us but they didn't do that. It means "no" to us and not love. It is not the way of Jesus Christ.

K. Broersma: The adoption of marriage between two adult persons is not defined to be between two adults of the same sex. God created male and female to live in a state of marriage and in His image. According to the Word of God, marriage was instituted to be between female and male. Homosexuality is a sin according to scriptures I read.

C.S. Cook: The context of the Assembly's decision was entirely love for one another and graciousness expressed and felt, yet this decision for option "B" is the most exclusive option for change out of the possibilities given. It pays no heed to the voice of the communion of saints or the holy Catholic church. It is a decision for a divisive course of action and will irreparably damage our ecumenical relations with the international church. It also says to those who have served this denomination for years in the terms of the theology and doctrinal framework of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that there is no place for them. Indeed, their pleas for accommodation were unheeded and they were clearly informed their concerns are of no concern. There was no compelling, theological vision expressed to inform this choice but only stories of hurt and pain. But such stories from others were clearly not desirable. Moreover, even the worship preceding the sederunts clearly spoke to the inclusion option "B" represents. Whereas those who spoke for option "C" in the Assembly when an amendment was proposed were held to a mere 90 seconds, the Assembly was given a 20 minute sermon for option "B" during morning worship as was the sermon the following morning, a call to step into line". We have just affirmed that theologically and doctrinally we know and have heard the Holy Spirit more clearly than the vast majority of Christians throughout time and in our world today.

D. Delport: Excludes rather than includes: Pathway "B", though it is called inclusion, will exclude congregations and individuals called to ministry who believe in the traditional definition of marriage (one man and one woman). Pathway "B" excludes traditionally minded-individuals who will discern a call to ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada after the new policy takes effect. And Pathway "B" will eventually eliminate congregations who hold to a traditional view of marriage within the next 20-30 years. Pathway "C" (one church – three streams) on the other hand, would have allowed for those individuals and congregations who believe in the traditional view of marriage a place within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Pathway "C" encourages unity; Pathway "B" encourages exclusion. Pathway "B" does not create a safe space for clergy (future and present) nor congregations who hold to a traditional view of marriage.

The Subordinate Standard Living Faith: The traditional view of marriage which our church confessed was deeply rooted, not only in scripture but also in Living Faith and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Living Faith states: The Bible has been given to us by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. The preamble of the ordination vows reiterates this view of scripture: The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God, testifying to Christ, the Living Word, are the canon of all doctrine, by which Christ rules our faith and life. It is therefore not the society, culture, the youth, the boomers or the millennials who provide the rule of faith and life. It is not the societal pressures outside the church that should determine the rule and faith of life. It is the Word of God that is the rule of faith and life. We may not always agree with God's revealed Word, however, God's Word is still the rule of faith and life. It appears that Pathway "B" leans toward the society and culture more than it leans toward the Word of God as the rule of life and faith. Living Faith 8.2.3 states: Christian marriage is a union in Christ whereby a man and a woman become one in the sight of God. Pathway "B" ignores this statement. A change in the doctrine of marriage should have proceeded a move to Pathway "B" at the very least. Ordained ministers and elders promise to uphold our subordinate standards as a true reflection of the Bible's doctrine. The clause in the preamble to ordination vows which speaks of holding "such doctrine as the church in obedience to scripture and under guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess" is intended to cover reformulations of the same scripturally based faith, not new departures in doctrine, supposedly based on the leading of the Holy Spirit, divorced from scripture's plain meaning. (I realize there are other interpretations of scripture but I do not find revisionist accounts persuasive. They have arisen in the context of our culture's search for justification to affirm behaviours which scripture clearly doesn't affirm.)

Love Is More Than a Thumbs Up: It seems that love is often used in our discussions. Yet we inevitably look at one side or aspect of love. As much as a loving parent gives a hug to a child, a loving parent also gives a child (often the same child) a time out. Parents don't do this because they deny a child the right of her/his individuality but because of love. Love is more than simply saying "everything is okay, no matter what you do or how you feel".

Jesus and Acceptance: Often the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery is referred when we talk about acceptance – Jesus' acceptance of all people. I find that we truncate the story and do it an injustice. Yes, Jesus did say, "Neither do I condemn you", which is where we often stop. We forget Jesus continued to say, "Go and sin no more". Jesus looked for her transformation through grace and mercy. The same applies to Nicodemus the pharisee and Zacchaeus the tax collector. No longer are they the adulteress, the pharisee and the tax collector. They have become people who changed their behaviour through grace. This distinction between the essence of who we are and the behaviour which is based in choice, is so important to the Bible's view of the human person but is obscured in the cultural language we have adopted of "LBGTQ".

The Federal Government Sanctions Same Sex Marriages: The argument for Pathway "B" include the fact that civil same sex marriages are legal. As such, why doesn't the church follow suit; after all, it is legal? There are things passed into law by the government that The Presbyterian Church in Canada does not endorse. Physician assisted suicide is one of these. Just because the federal government passes a law, doesn't mean The Presbyterian Church in Canada has to approve. After all, we serve God.

J.B. Dennis: The General Assembly has made a decision that contradicts our Basis of Union and the commitment all ministers and elders to "uphold" the church's doctrine "under the continual illumination of the Holy Spirit speak in the Scriptures." Scripture had no role in the decision-making process.

R.A.F. DeSandoli: My decision to dissent was a difficult one borne out of frustration with process if not outcome of this decision. I have been blessed to serve in ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada to this point and I see no reason for this to change following today's sederunts. My frustration rests with those from the option "C" camp who attempted to game the vote which took place in the committee as a whole. This camp, in its decision to attempt to pass what were blatantly dishonest and divisive amendments ensured that what might have been an open, honest and (most important to me) unity-focused decision was instead calcified into two streams: those who pursued the divisive action mentioned and those who wished to see the polity of our church respected, even if it limited opportunity to discuss how we would safeguard the unity of our beloved denomination. Stuck between these two streams, I made the difficult decision to stand with certain other dissenting commissioners whom I know to be thoughtful, prayerful and faithful in this and every decision placed before them as Presbyterian Church in Canada clergy. Most importantly, I dissented as a way to protest what might have otherwise been a unity focused decision. The freedom of conscience we enjoy as clergy in The Presbyterian Church in Canada is chief also among my concerns.

R. French: This vote, which does not constitute a huge majority, will only cause more division in the church, more overtures for gracious dismissal, more conservatives moving out of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Present and future theology students (candidates for ordination) will be forced to conform to "popular opinion" and not follow their hearts as to what they consider being true to scripture. I believe we will continue to "cave" to other groups representing many sexuality options until The Presbyterian Church in Canada becomes a confusing mess cast adrift in a sea of ambiguity.

G.T. Gunnink: This proposed change in doctrine and practice and discipline is unbiblical, false teaching and does not honour Jesus Christ or build up his Church.

D.M Homer: Proposed amendment to change to Pathway "C" (one denomination from three streams) from Pathway "B" (inclusion), which had been defeated as a proposed amendment after "B" won the initial vote (and the Assembly was refused the actual counts by which "B" won over the three other options.) The amendment was defeated by only 58 percent of the floor vote. For those of us who have been with The Presbyterian Church in Canada for a long time (40 years for myself, 1979), Option "B" doesn't solve anything for older congregations and provides zero flexibility. You have opened the door to gracious dismissal once again when this result, Option "B" hits the presbyteries across the country. This is more than a "leap of faith" and is a contradiction of the holy Bible teachings. Option "C", three streams, is the only option that would have satisfied most congregations, new and old and people, young and old. After all that hard work by the former Moderators, we, as The Presbyterian Church in Canada, are no further ahead unless the plan was to model the United Church of Canada and their "one way fits all approach". Clearly, as an elder of The Presbyterian Church in Canada since 1982, I am detailing my profound dissent.

J.A. Hopkins: I'm very concerned that the four-option voting structure was flawed. Options A, C and D were opposed to B option and therefore the (no to inclusion) vote was split and therefore not appropriate. A yes/no vote to inclusion likely would have gone differently today.

S. Howard: Pathway "B" contravenes our vows in "pursing no divisive course". Pathway "B" uses language of inclusion but is, of the four pathways, by far the most divisive. It will lead to a split in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is unbiblical, calling "good" what God has clearly called "not good". I cannot in good conscience be part of a Pathway "B" church.

J.M. Kreplin: The Pathway of full inclusion is contrary to the scriptures and contravenes our essential identity as a "reformed church" founded upon, in part, "sola scriptura". The Presbyterian Church in Canada loses its moral authority to continue to be a prophetic voice in society. It fails to be truly inclusive, especially of theological diversity, forcing an eventual end to orthodox clergy and congregations within the denomination. Of all the choices before the Assembly, it is the most divisive and the most clearly in violation of our ordination vows.

R.P. Lenters: Scriptural. Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 1 Corinthians 7:1-4, 1 Timothy 1:8-10.

K.D. MacLeod: I wish to record my dissent on the motion to acceptance of Pathway "B". I believe this to be in contradiction of scripture, Living Faith and all doctrinal standards of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. I believe this divisive and exclusive course and denial of inclusive options was refused and has spoken to half our church that they are no longer welcome in our church. With this decision irreparable damage has been done, with no one listening.

S. Mattinson: Pathway "B" shows a lack of grace towards and inclusion of those ministers, presbyteries, sessions and congregations that hold a traditional view with the love and acceptance shown in Jesus Christ and scripture.

M. McClure: Pathway "B" is one of the two least inclusive pathways that could have been chosen by commissioners. Pathway "B" was the logical choice for those who wanted to advance an inclusive LGBTQI agenda but in doing so, they have excluded and marginalized those Presbyterians who uphold the subordinate standards of our church and the traditional view of marriage as found in scripture and who are supported by the consensus of the global church. Pathway "B" does not reflect the spirit of our ordination vows to pursue no divisive course. The choice of Pathway "B" by the 2019 General Assembly shows what happens when the standards by which we define what it means to be Presbyterian are abandoned. The choice of Pathway "B" promotes maximum division in the church. If we were to follow Jesus' teaching to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves, we would have chosen a "bigger umbrella", option "C" or "D", rather than pathway "B". By the way, the debate was structured so that we were admonished to only speak "for" rather than against a pathway. We were not able to explain why we were against a pathway and how it would impact the wider church from our perspective. The most devastating result of this decision, in my opinion, is the impact it will have on candidates for ministry. Within a short time, candidates who have a scriptural understanding of marriage between a man and a woman will not even be admitted to Presbyterian seminaries. So the traditional foundation of our church will be lost.

T. Nelson: While I do so with respect and a heavy heart, I believe Pastoral Accommodation was a wiser option. However, if the General Assembly were to provide the same consideration of freedom of conscience afforded to existing ministers, then I'd be willing to prayerfully consider withdrawing my dissent.

N. Said: 1) This decision takes the denomination away from the biblical perspective of marriage, confirmed by the order of creation, teachings of the Old Testament and New Testament and Jesus. 2) This decision discredits our witness to the Arabic speaking community to which our church is called to serve. 3) This decision that aimed at including LGBTQI has excluded many Presbyterians who hold onto the traditional view. I have been Presbyterian all my life and I would say this is the case of the majority of my congregation but now we feel alienated. 4) I am certain that the above perspective and feeling represent not only myself but also the sheer majority, if not 100 percent of the Arabic speaking Presbyterians all over Canada.

P.J. Sanderson: In so far as scripture is our role of all life and faith, and as this decision departs from the clear teaching of scripture and the historic and global ecumenical church, I must dissent.

D.U. Schonberg: The General Assembly had opportunity to choose a path forward that included all theological streams of our denomination, Path "C - multiple streams". The opportunity was present on the ranked ballot, again in an amendment that offered path C as an alternative to presented path "B". This vote on the amendment revealed that approximately 40 percent of the commissioners desired a path that would include all. Despite this revelation, the vote

to move forward with path B was selected by approximately 60 percent of commissioners. The repeated and deliberate choice of B effectively and intentionally excludes those wishing to continue in our confession and 1994 statement on human sexuality. It is a decision that is not inclusive to theological differences and causes egregious harm to our denomination's unity. We had opportunity to work together and chose otherwise.

B.N. Skelding: I am registering my dissent because I am unable to recommend Pathway B to the denomination. While I understand the sentiments of those who support Pathway B, the arguments are based on little more than emotion and cultural acquiescence. It is inappropriate to change a theological and doctrinal position based on emotion and cultural sentiment.

I cannot accept Pathway B because I don't believe it is scriptural. I believe that the interpretation of scripture is clear and compelling when it comes to the matter of sexual relationships, namely God's plan for sex is that it is a gift from God, to be enjoyed within the beautiful, committed, lifelong bounds of a married relationship between a man and a woman. While I recognize that humans have and continue to struggle in this matter and that God has nonetheless shown us love, mercy and grace, I don't believe normalizing any other sexual practice or behaviour is ultimately loving, gracious nor good news.

I believe that Pathway B ultimately undermines the Gospel, diminishes God's love, minimizes the power of the Cross, and the need for salvation. Pathway B is a form of idolatry, worshipping love rather than Jesus, the true Lover, who sacrificed himself and battled to give all of us victory over sin and death.

I cannot accept Pathway B because I believe it will egregiously disrupt and divide God's people. I believe the end result will be a DisUnity from which The Presbyterian Church in Canada cannot recover. I believe that a significant portion of the membership and the clergy will vacate the denomination. This will have an eventually crippling impact on resources for ministry – financial & human. I don't believe The Presbyterian Church in Canada will continue to exist; the denomination will eventually join with another denomination.

I dissent from Pathway B, because I believe it will undermine the congregational ministry I am currently in. Whether the Remit passes or fails in the next year, the likelihood of damage to the congregation is high. The anxiety, stress, uncertainty that Pathway B introduces will severely hamper ministry. There is a great chance that members, adherents and staff will leave or at least begin preparations to leave. It will undermine a wide range of ministries, including our attempts to raise funds to sponsor a refugee family (our application already endorsed by PWS&D). In the end, Pathway B will make the church unsafe for everyone.

While I cannot give a full expression to all my reasons for dissent, I nonetheless submit this dissent as an initial expression of what I expect will be my growing lament in the coming year, over the 145th General Assembly's decision to remit Pathway B. Submitted in sorrow.

The following Young Adult Representatives asked that their dissent, regarding the Additional Motion, be recorded:
B. Kenwell and P. Joug

The following Student Representatives asked that their dissent, regarding the Additional Motion, be recorded:
A. Atkins and J. Park

ADJOURNMENT

Announcements having been made, commissioners worshipped in song and the Moderator adjourned the Assembly with prayer, to meet at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, on Tuesday, June 4, 2019 at 7:30 p.m., of which public intimation was given.