

THIRD SEDERUNT

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUTED

At St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Monday, June 5, 2023 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)

D.R. Kendall moved, duly seconded, that the Assembly's agenda be amended as follows. Adopted.

- that the Committee on Pension and Benefits be heard during the third sederunt;
- that this evening's 7:00 p.m. stated hour for the Rev. Carlos Emilio Ham, be moved to 3:00 p.m. this afternoon;
- that the Life & Mission Agency report be scheduled to be received on Tuesday;
- that the Fourth Sederunt adjourn at 8:00 p.m. instead of 9:00 p.m.

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CLERKS OF ASSEMBLY (cont'd from p. XXX)

Discussion Resumed – Recommendation CLK-005

The Assembly resumed its discussion regarding Recommendation CLK-005.

Recommendation CLK-005 was adopted.

Recommendation CLK-007 (p. XXX) was moved by L.V. Hargrove, duly seconded.

Amendment

D. Konrad moved, duly seconded, that "That the Guidelines re Ordination and Marriage, as clarified, be adopted" be replaced by "regarding voting against ordination, induction or installation, provided the dissenter wishes to give reasons that are in accord with our reformed tradition of open and honest communication, any such dissent, however expressed, must be based solely on the dissenter's understanding of scripture and be delivered in Christian love and in respectful language."

Out of Order

The Moderator ruled the amendment 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.

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INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL GUEST

The Moderator invited Life and Mission General Secretary, I.A. Ross-McDonald to introduce the Rev. Carlos Emilio Ham, President Emeritus of the Caribbean Conference of Churches and pastor of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba for 35 years. He joined the World Council of Churches staff in March 2001. The Moderator welcomed Pastor Ham.

The Rev Carlos Emilio Ham noted the long-standing relationship between our churches. He said, "Our country is going through one of the most turbulent times in recent history. The hardening of the US sanctions against our people, the COVID pandemic, the global financial crisis on the one hand, and on the other hand, our own mistakes and shortcomings are the main causes of this situation. This deep crisis is provoking a great lack of medicine, medical equipment, shortage of food and fuel for transportation and the production of electricity." He also spoke of the large emigration wave that has taken 300,000 people out of Cuba in the last month that will have a negative impact on the country. Referring to *Seminario Evangélico de Teología, Matanzas, Cuba*, he said, "Our seminary is called to

accompany the churches to carry out God's mission entrusted to them. We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future."

CLERKS OF ASSEMBLY (cont'd from p. XXX)

Discussion Resumed – Recommendation CLK-007

The Assembly resumed its discussion regarding Recommendation CLK-007.

Motion to Refer

J.M. Miller moved, duly seconded, that Recommendation CLK-007 be referred to the Clerks of Assembly to respond at a future sederunt.

Immediate Vote

R.T. Royal called for the Assembly to take an immediate vote on the Motion to Refer.

Motion to Refer was adopted

The Assembly adopted the motion to refer Recommendation CLK-007 to the Clerks of Assembly.

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PENSION AND BENEFITS BOARD

The Assembly called for the report of the Pension and Benefits Board which, as printed on p. XXX, was presented by W.C. Stewart, convener.

Motion to Reconsider

Pursuant to notice of motion (p. XXX), D.R. Kendall moved, duly seconded, that the constitution of the Pension and Benefits Board be reconsidered. Adopted.

Consent recommendations were placed before the Assembly.

A commissioner asked that Recommendations PAB-002 and PAB-003 be withdrawn from the consent recommendation. The convener indicated that the Assembly could not properly approve Recommendation PAB-004 by consent before considering the second and third recommendations because it depends on those recommendations being adopted beforehand. Since a consent recommendation cannot be made with just one recommendation, the Assembly agreed that all four recommendations would be considered in the usual manner.

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MODERATOR OF THE 2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADDRESSES THE ASSEMBLY

The Moderator invited the Rev. Dr. Robert N. Faris, Moderator of the 2022 General Assembly, to report to the Assembly.

The Rev. Dr. Bob Faris noted the two foci during his Moderatorial year; to be in conversation with people about the ways in which the church is becoming more welcoming and inclusive of all people and to connect with, and understand more deeply, how we are living out our confession to indigenous peoples. Bob spoke of the opportunity to sit in a circle in Grace Church, Calgary, with indigenous leaders, other Presbyterians, and people who were engaged in repatriating the Manitou Stone. He said, "I was deeply honoured to be part of the circle and I'm happy to see that that work is continuing." He was pleased to visit most of the indigenous ministries of our church and said of one visit, "I heard the pain and the anger of many people in that community about what had happened at residential schools and the intergenerational trauma of the children and grandchildren of residential school survivors. There is still a tremendous amount of truth-telling, healing and reconciliation to be done." Regarding the Moderatorial trip to Taiwan, he said, "It was a very rich experience. There are tremendous threats to Taiwan from China. For the Taiwanese people it is important to have an international presence with them to indicate our solidarity with them as they speak out for democracy, autonomy and human rights in Taiwan." He concluded by thanking his congregation, St. Andrew's, King St. in Toronto, for their support; his chaplain, Bill Elliott; his partner Redha; and his family and friends, for their encouragement.

NARRATIVES OF HOPE AND POSSIBILITIES

The Moderator invited the Rev. Victor Kim, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, to introduce a time of sharing and discussion called Narratives of Hope and Possibilities. During later sederunts, commissioners will be invited to consider our story as a denomination, both as it is now and as we consider the path ahead.

The Principal Clerk, Victor Kim, explained that while preparing for this Assembly, it was felt that this was a crucial time for our denomination and that questions of “Where are we?” and “Where is God directing us?” are pivotal ones for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Therefore, time for conversations around hope and possibility were woven into the agenda so that commissioners could engage with each other around these questions. Summaries of the stories and conversations will be taken back to the Assembly Council to help the Council in its ongoing discernment of its prophetic role for the church. At an appropriate time, the Assembly Council would hope to bring recommendations to the Assembly for prayerful discernment.

Victor asked, “Could we go back to the way we were?” and even if it were possible, “Would we want to go back to the way we were?” He shared a story of how someone recently said to him, “I don’t know that there’s a way back, but I do believe there’s a way forward.” He then encouraged the commissioners to begin the conversations with a time of prayer saying, “We need to depend on God to be in our midst so that our hearts are open to God’s leading.”

Quoting from a Bible study that he participated in at the Canadian Council of Churches, Victor referred to the story in Acts 11 of the transition in the Jerusalem church from being a Jewish movement to one that invited and welcomed Gentiles into the fellowship. It was a transformative move that took the nascent movement of Jesus followers forward. He also referred to a text from Jeremiah 29 where God encouraged the Jewish exiles who longed to return to the way things were to go forward with hope, knowing that God would be with them.

Victor shared an old African proverb: “A falling tree makes more noise than a growing forest”. The loudest events are not necessarily the most important ones. He then invited commissioners to consider the following questions.

- What’s is our story?
- If we didn’t dwell on the noise of falling trees, what would discover that is growing underneath?
- What are the stories of hope and possibility in our denomination, in your congregations?

He encouraged commissioners to share with each other what’s going on, especially where hope and possibility, where prophetic imagination and risk are taking place.

Victor also suggested that structures are always in service of stories and asked whether our current structures serve the stories we want to tell about ourselves. He used as a metaphor for how old structures don’t necessarily support future stories, the planned relocation of the national office from 50 Wynford Drive, which was built in the 1960’s, to 300 Bloor Street and a space created for ministry looking to a future that will includes closer ecumenical relationships with other Christian denominations.

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GOOD NEWS STORY (cont’d from p. XXX)

The Moderator explained that two videos depicting stories of good news from congregations within The Presbyterian Church in Canada will be played for the Assembly.

The first Good News Story to be viewed by commissioners was submitted by Trinity Presbyterian Church in Burnaby, British Columbia. The Rev. Laurie McKay, one of two pastors at Trinity, along with Karen Beattie, a member of the congregation and coordinator for their Don’t Go Hungry program, a food support mission of the church, shared how the program supports children who rely on the local school’s breakfast and lunch program during the school year. Trinity invited representatives from public health, the school, the city planner and other churches to meet. Within two weeks, a summer food program had begun. This initial program generated confidence to explore ways to continue to help hungry children and families. COVID-19 made the need even greater and that led to the Don’t Go Hungry Food Support Program. Funding from the United Way and Vancouver Foundations helped the program get started. The program has continued to grow and has expanded into the development of gardens and donated non-food items. To learn more, go to dontgohungry.ca.

ADJOURNMENT

Announcements having been made, the Moderator adjourned the Assembly with prayer to meet at St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Monday, June 5, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., of which public intimation was given.