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**PRESBYTERY OF ESSEX-KENT**  
**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA**  
**REGULAR MEETING, TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023**  
**Lakeshore St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Tecumseh**  
**5:30pm**

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**THE PRESBYTERY OF ESSEX-KENT WAS CALLED TO MEET IN REGULAR SESSION ON TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023 WITHIN LAKESHORE ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TECUMSEH AT 5:30pm.**

**WORSHIP** – conducted by Interim Moderator Rev. Chris Little

**DINNER** – 6:00pm with thanks to Shane Davis for arrangements.

**BUSINESS OF THE DAY** – 6:45pm

**CALL TO ORDER** – 6:50pm

**PRAYER and CONSTITUTION** – Moderator Rev. Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal

**ATTENDANCE** –

**Clergy present:** Revs. Lisa Aide, Shirley Murdock, Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal, Tim Reddish and Chris Little.

**Elders present** – Barb Sargent, Mark Labadie, Jayne Broughton, Alison Brown, Jane Lung, Sandra Smith, Bryan Stirling, Kathy Parks and Robert Ivison

Carla Johnson-Hicks sat for Bonnie Pittock of Paulin Memorial

Audrey Bauman sat for Wendy Streptak of LSA

**Others present** – Carolyn Reid – WMS and Brian McGuffin of LSA

**Guests** – Bob MacVicar, Shane Davis, Connie Hale-Duncan and Cathy Innoeot

**MOTION** – That Carla Johnson-Hicks and Audrey Bauman be permitted to sit as Alternates for Paulin and LSA respectively, with voice and vote

**Moved by Aide and Brown.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

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**REGRETS** – Revs. Andy Cornell, Chuck Congram, Lillian Wilton, Mike Maroney, Olwyn Coughlin, Nancy Carle.

Student - Sarah Stockford.

Elders - Wendy Streptak

Convenors – Andrew Templer

**GOOD NEWS MOMENTS and PRAYER REQUESTS**

Rev. Lisa Aide reported that the Divorce Decree for her significant other Jonathan Calder has been received. The wedding is planned for July 8 with a congregational celebration on October 7, 2023.

Rev. Lisa also reported that her mother is in hospital and requested prayers for healing.

Bryan Stirling reported that Mt. Zion in Ridgetown celebrated 169<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Jayne Broughton reported that Valetta celebrated 177<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Barb Sargent reported on a successful fishing tournament and DAD FEST with Knox, Wallaceburg on Father's Day weekend that ended with a congregational picnic.

Mark Labadie reported on a successful yard sale, bake sale and barbeque at St. Andrews, Dresden.

**ACCEPTANCE OF DOCKET:**

Add to New Business UCC request for refugee family sponsor and Ridgetown request for funding for new church sign.

**That the Docket as adopted as amended.**

**Moved by Murdock and Aide.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**MINUTES**

**MOTION:** That the Regular Meeting, April 18, 2023, pages 4762 – 4799 be adopted as presented.

**Moved by Murdock and Brown.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

**Dresden Referral**

**FOLLOW UP ON VISITATION TO DRESDEN**

Recommendation 3 of Report

3. Admin Co. send someone to St. Andrew's, Dresden, to meet with leadership team (board, session and minister) to assist with conflict management.

Moved by Sargent and Aide. MOTION CARRIED.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**

**That this recommendation be referred to the Life and Mission Committee for follow up as it might be considered a conflict of interest with Rev. Andy on the Admin Co.**

**Moved by Sargent and Smith.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

**ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE – presented by Barb Sargent**

**Recommendation 1:**

**That Reports of Standing Committees be received and recommendations considered.**

**Moved by Sargent and Murdock.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**Recommendation 2:**

**That the following Correspondence be received for information.**

**Moved by Sargent and Murdock.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

- A) Rev. Chris Little** – He will join meetings of Presbytery via zoom with link provided by Rev. Andy Cornell - FYI

I was sorry to not be able to participate in the last meeting of Presbytery when the Visitation Team presented its report. I don't know if Andy told you, but I did call him that night to see if a link was possible, but unfortunately it was not.

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock**

I mentioned this to Brian and he offered to regularly set up a link for me at the Presbytery meeting, so this will be what he will regularly do. I wanted to let you know what we've arranged so you or others don't need to be concerned about it going forward.

Thanks, Chris

**B) Carolyn Reid – explanation of Milk Bag Mats – emailed to presbyters**

I'm sorry I didn't answer correctly to Rev. Shalini's question about the milk bags being a mission project. It really is a Mission project for the ladies weaving the mats. Canadian Food for Children take these mats to various countries for the people to sleep on their dirt floors. They also take balls, shoes, clothes, small toys, & bags of soup mix from Gleaners (where veggies are chopped, processed & bagged). Marlene who volunteers with them picked up 8 mats we had finished & told us the story that one man said he used the mat to fix his roof. I don't weave mats with the ladies as I have a loom at home. My job is to cut the milk bags & put them in their special box ready for the ladies to weave.

I hope I said it all as I couldn't remember what all I said to you. Thanks for letting others know that I'm apologizing for my mistake.

Carolyn

**C) GA Office – Updated/clarified guidelines for Voluntary Withdrawal- FYI –**

“In both first and second meetings of congregation, at least 80% of professing members in attendance at that meeting (must vote in favour of withdrawal) – **AND** -

At least 67% of all members on the professing members roll of the congregation at the time that written notification was made to presbytery.

What is intended here is that a low turnout of members on the Constituent Roll for either of the congregational votes, say 60% could not determine whether a congregation would seek voluntary withdrawal. For such a significant decision, the process anticipates a very strong expression of support from the entire congregation.”

**D) GA Office – April Changes to the Roll-emailed to presbyters**

**E) E&R – Candidates for Reception into PCC – emailed to Clergy**

**F) GA Office – Changes Affecting.... Completed and emailed to Marjorie Copeland (Degrees, contact information)**

Rev. Shirley F. Murdock

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**G) Ann McLachlan – Mental Health First Aid – emailed to Clergy**

**H) Knox College – annual review with Sarah Stockford – to M&D**

“...We are pleased to report following the annual review and the 2<sup>nd</sup> level assessment interview that Sarah Stockford Siracusa is continuing to 3<sup>rd</sup> year study, no concerns, making good progress in the program...”

**I) Synod Clerk - Rev. Mark McLennan** – items of discussion from Moderators and Clerks meeting of May 23, 2023. Shalini might report on this as I was only able to attend for a short time due to another previously arranged appointment that day.

**J) UCC** – request that another congregation accept sponsorship of refugees. – referred to New Business

**K) Ridgetown** – request for funding for new church sign - referred to New Business.

**L) Crieff Hills** – Clergy Wellness Retreat, July 9-11, 2023 – emailed to clergy

**FOR INFORMATION**

**From Rev. Mark MacLennan – Clerk of Synod**  
**Moderator/Clerks ZOOM Meeting – May 23, 2023**

As Synod Clerk, I took notes which I share as follows:

**Issues:**

Pulpit Supply

Interim Moderators

Root causes of shortages of people to work at these – minister shortage

Slow death of Small Congregations – some just waiting it out

- Give congregations permission to close

Fear, Panic, Discouragement – Missing the point – God is in charge

Sense of “Community” – important

Basic Question – *What is your Mission/Ministry?*

How do we lead when we don’t know where we are going? – book reference

Serving people ←-----→Serving God

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

Bound of Presbyteries –

- Organize differently
- Haves and Have-nots

**Responses/Courses of Action/New approaches**

Close some Congregations – grieve, mourn - party!

- Not an easy process
- A “*peaceful death*” for congregations

Interim Moderator Workshop – raise awareness

- New Beginnings
- House Churches

New ways – Ecumenical shared ministry, church with no building

Preaching points, Satellite ministries

Section 200, Book of Forms – “Preaching Station”

Lift burden of leadership from congregation – seek alternatives to Session/Board approach

Tired of strategizing, planning, programs

Re-imagine church courts – as gatherings/communities for a purpose

General Presbyter – has been used in London – full time position

- Interim Moderator of multiple congregations
- Funding from PCC?

Regional Minister model

Use Interim Moderators only for congregation looking to issue a Call

**Stories Shared:**

Moosomin/Whitewood - seniors Ministry

Toronto – Dan West – Same

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**Long Range Plan** – meet face-to-face for further discussion – possibly Fall/2023

**CORRESPONDENCE REQUIRING ACTION**

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**

**That the following two congregations report to the Court on the arrears to the Pension and Benefits Board**

Rev. Shirley F. Murdock

**Pension Board – congregations in arrears as of March 2023**  
**New St. Andrew’s - \$329.13**  
**Lakeshore St. Andrew’s - \$131,570.76**

**Rev. Chris Little noted in his IM report that LSA will consider a budgeted repayment plan for 2024 and that a one-time significant payment might be made before the end of 2023. Sandra Smith advised that NSA has paid the amount owing. It was reported that the treasurer did not receive the invoice in a timely manner.**

**MOTON: That the above explanations be accepted by the Court.**  
**Moved by Sargent and Murdock.**  
**MOTION CARRIED.**

**UPDATES ON COMMITTEE ITEMS**

1. General presbyter position –

**FROM THE APRIL MEETING OF PRESBYERY**

**MOTION - That presbytery appoint a special committee to propose financial details in consultation with the treasurer and assistant treasurer and to oversee the search process and report to the next regular meeting.**

**Moved by Cornell and Sargent. MOTION CARRIED**

**MOTION - That the Administration Committee be given Power to Issue to name members to this Special Committee and advise the Court at its next regular meeting.**

**Moved by Cornell and Sargent. MOTION CARRIED.**

**RECOMMENDATION 4:**

**That the following be named to a Special Committee to propose financial details and oversee the Search Process for a General Presbytery and report to subsequent meetings of Presbytery: Convenor Rev. Andy Cornell, Sandra Smith, Vic Beacock, Revs. Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal and Chuck Congram.**

**Moved by Sargent and Murdock.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

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**2. Review of standing orders - FYI**

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE WILL MEET AUGUST 24 TO HOPEFULLY COMPLETE THE REVISIONS TO THE STANDING ORDERS, TO BE PRESENTED AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING OF THE COURT.

**3. Examination of session records – Bob MacVicar/Lisa Aide/Alison Brown.**

June 2023 – Mt. Zion, Valetta, Chatham, New St. Andrew's Dover  
Chatham Minutes were not presented and are requested at the September meeting.  
Mt. Zion minutes were not acceptable. They were presented in loose form in a file folder. They were returned for proper housing.  
Valetta Minutes were attested as neatly kept with notes.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:**

**MOTION: That the above report of examiners be adopted as presented.**

**Moved by Brown and Aide.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**Examination of Registers –Roll of persons connected with the Congregation (Adherents) Roll of Professing Members, Registers of Baptism, Marriage, Death**

**BoF 32 – Every book enjoined to be kept by any court is ordered to be reviewed and attested yearly, by the next higher court, save that a presbytery, if it is desired, may call for the session records once every two years for attestation.**

**BoF 124 – Every session is instructed to keep as accurately as possible: (1) a roll containing the names of all persons connected with the congregation (2) a register of baptisms (marriages and deaths) and (3) a roll of professing members.**

**BoF 125 – lists information to be recorded in Roll of Professing Members.**

**BoF 125.6 – the Professing members roll shall be submitted at least once every two years to the Presbytery of the bounds for attestation, and presbyteries are enjoined to see that this and all other requirements of this Act are carefully observed.**

**RECOMMENDATION 6:**

**That the following be the schedule for examination of Session Registers and that the Committee members be Rev. Lisa Aide, Alison Brown and Bob MacVicar.**

**November 2023 – Wallaceburg and Paulin**

**February 2024 – Amherstburg and Dresden**

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**



April 2024 – Dover and LSA  
June 2024 – Chatham and UCC  
September 2024 – Valetta and Ridgetown

Moved by Sargent and Murdock.  
MOTION CARRIED.

**4. Membership of Ministry and Doctrine Committee**  
**RECOMMENDATION 7**

That the Presbytery accept with thanks the resignation of Rev. Tim Reddish as Convenor.

That Rev. Mike Maroney be named Convenor of M&D.

That Mark Labadie, Jane Lung and Wendy Streptak remain as members of M&D  
(Wendy continues to join the committee via zoom).

Moved by Sargent and Murdock.  
MOTION CARRIED.

**5. TREASURER'S REPORT**

Presbytery of Essex-Kent.  
Treasurers report-January-June 1, 2023.

Income to date-\$39,520.98.

Expenses to date-\$51,532.98.

Note: The over expenditure in this report is due primarily to the significant number of bursaries as well as congregational grants. It should also be noted that the presbytery remains in a strong financial position.

**Congregational dues outstanding.**

1st Church, Chatham-Synod-\$1847.05-Presbytery-\$2597.77.

Dresden-Synod-\$1192.76-Presbytery-\$963.17.

Lakeshore St. Andrew's-Synod-\$2146.36-presbytery-\$7020.71.

Leamington-Synod-\$1790.80-Presbytery-\$1446.09. Note 1.

University Community Church-Synod-\$908.68-Presbytery-\$733.77.

Note 1: Presbytery has agreed that these dues be paid out of the funds from the sale of the facility when the money is received from head office.

Submitted by: Chuck Congram, Treasurer.  
June 1, 2023.

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

**RECOMMENDATION 8: That the Treasurer’s Report be adopted for Information.**

**Moved by Sargent and Murdock.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**RECOMMENDATION 9: REPORT AS A WHOLE.**

**Moved by Sargent and Murdock.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

### **MINISTRY and DOCTRINE COMMITTEE**

**M & D met via Zoom on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, at 12:30pm via Zoom and updated on June 9<sup>th</sup>.**

**1. Study Leave Updates.**

- a. No Study Leave requests were received.
- b. Rev. Andy Cornell’s Study Leave Report and Rev. Shalini Sankarlal Conference “Report,” which was financially supported by Presbytery, were received (see below).

***Recommendation 1: That Presbytery receive these two Reports.***

***Moved by Mark Labadie and Jane Lung - carried***

- 2. Student Recertification.** Rev. Mike Maroney and Rev. Tim Reddish met with Sarah Stockford on June 7<sup>th</sup> at 3pm via Zoom. We had an hour-long meeting/interview with Sarah and went through the questions in the Book of Forms Appendix J-8. Sarah has finished her second year at Knox College and is now taking two summer courses. She continues to work as a chaplain at Hotel-Dieu Grace Healthcare and is preaching at Valetta Presbyterian Church. Without hesitation, we recommend that Sarah be recertified to continue her studies at Knox College.

***Recommendation 2: That Presbytery recertify Sarah Stockford’s in her calling towards becoming a Minister of Word and Sacrament.***

***Moved by Mark Labadie and Jane Lung - carried***

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

- 3. M & D Convenor/membership.** Rev. Tim Reddish is leaving the M & D Committee, including being its Convenor, as of August 31, 2023, one year after his retirement date. (Knowing this information at this time helps Presbytery find a replacement for September.)

Respectfully submitted,

T J Reddish

**Study Leave Report from Rev. Andy Cornell**

I completed two more courses in the winter semester of the Master of Pastoral Studies program: “Psycho-spiritual Assessment and Therapy” and “Psychotherapeutic Theories of Therapy and Spiritual Care.” I am currently taking two intensive spring courses: “Narrative Therapy” and “Aging and Spiritually-integrated Psychotherapy.” I received two offers for a fall/winter practicum and chose the Community Counselling Centre of London, where I will be seeing clients one day a week and taking online training on another day. With four courses completed, I have now applied for the spiritual care and psychotherapy certificate, which leads to certification with the College of Psychotherapists of Ontario. My goal is to complete all MPS (psychotherapy certificate) requirements by December 2024 or winter 2025.

I began the program with the maximum 10 weeks of study leave banked. I took one official week of study time in the fall and one in winter. I am back up to the 10 weeks. So far, I’ve found that I’ve been able to handle the course load without taking advantage of the study leave. That may change in the fall and winter with the two day per week practicum. Time is available if I need it. If not, I may use this in its entirety if I opt for a spring/summer intensive 13-week full time practicum this time next year.

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

**Conference “Report” (or Correspondence) from Rev. Shalini Sankaral**

Thank you for aiding my attending the Encouragement Conference hosted by Presbyterian College in Montreal from May 16 to May 18, 2023.

The fundamental aspect of the conference that motivated me was the prevailing theme of positivity as told through mapping and remembering that as the body of Christ, the church does not belong to us, but to God.

Amid the challenges we face, it is often easy to become entangled in discussions regarding the declining state of the church and our dire need to strategize, while we fully acknowledge the strategic efforts necessary to navigate the current terrain, the rejuvenating power of these uplifting words cannot be underestimated.

Among the conference highlights was artistic session hosted by Steve Prince. He shared his artwork which speaks to social justice. He explained how it tells the story of ever-present hope for the future as while tying it to the struggles of the past and present. You can look at his artwork here: <https://steveprincestudio.com/>.

We were then invited into an artistic experience which allowed us to tell our individual narratives through quilting. It reminded us of the hope God offers to those who may sometimes feel hopeless. This segment, steeped in creativity offered an immersive experience that resonated deeply with all attendees. It was a vivid reminder of the importance of our interconnected narratives and the role they play in enhancing our spiritual journey together. I will be trying this with my congregation at some point.

As mentioned about a theme of mapping was also present at the conference. For example, the way maps in the past have been useful, yet not always accurate or in fact, truthful. We talked about how that might relate to the way we have approached church in the past and how to approach it in the future.

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Additionally, an enlightening segment of the conference centered the strategic planning approach known as 'asset mapping'. This approach emphasizes harnessing the strengths and capacities of our community rather than focusing on problems or deficits. It was an eye-opening perspective that offered a practical, solution-oriented approach to strategic planning and community engagement.

Impressed and inspired by this approach, I am eager to integrate asset mapping into our mission planning. By identifying and leveraging our collective resources, we can not only enhance our strategic endeavors but also foster an environment of empowerment and positivity.

One of the most heartwarming aspects of the conference was the opportunity to connect with friends and peers, both old and new. It was a joy to engage in shared moments of reflection, camaraderie, and laughter. The chance to meet new people, to exchange ideas, and to learn from their diverse experiences and perspectives was truly enriching. These interactions, characterized by a mutual understanding and shared purpose, were a poignant reminder of the invaluable strength we derive from our community.

It was also very good to be able to be refreshed by worship services. I was able to attend Convocation and hear a lecture by Dr. Rebekah Eklund, professor of theology at Loyola University Maryland as she spoke about bearing the cross and what it means as seen in the beatitudes.

At this juncture, I'd like to once again express deep gratitude to the Presbytery for providing the necessary funds to help me to attend this conference. I am deeply moved by our Presbytery's sensitivity towards pastoral care, acknowledging that this conference was not study leave, but a much-needed source of inspiration and encouragement.

The Encouragement Conference has reinvigorated my approach towards our mission, and I am eager to implement the lessons learned within our church community. I am hopeful that the insights gained will contribute to a renewed vibrancy in our ministry and fortify our resolve to face challenges ahead as we do so empowered by the Holy Spirit. Thank you. Rev. Shalini

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

**RECOMMENDATION 4: REPORT AS A WHOLE.**

**Moved by Labadie and Lung.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**4. LIFE and MISSION COMMITTEE – Barb Sargent**

**Referrals from Dresden Visitation – April meeting of Presbytery**

*4. That the presbytery set up a workshop for treasurers, board and session members going over good practices in regards to dealing with all types of donations that are given to the church, from e-transfers, planned giving and any other changes that have happened in the last five year.*

*Referred to Life and Mission Committee*

*Moved by Maroney and Lung. REFERRAL ADOPTED*

*4. That part of Presbytery's role in oversight of the congregations in its care should be that at least every five years, there should be a workshop, or someone sent to help each congregation understand what Presbytery is and also the roles between the courts and the board and session*

*Referred to Life and Mission Committee.*

*Moved by Maroney and Lung. REFERRAL ADOPTED*

**No action has been taken on these referrals to date.**

**VISITATION Schedule –**

September 2023 – First Church, Chatham – Rev. Shirley Murdock, Jayne Broughton, Bryan Stirling

Paulin Memorial – Rev. Mike Maroney, Carolyn Reid, Wendy Streptak

Reports to be presented at November Regular Meeting of Presbytery.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: That L&M be granted Power to Issue to name a new member to Paulin Visitation in place of Wendy Streptak.**

**Moved by Sargent and Smith.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**RECOMMENDATION 2 – REPORT AS A WHOLE.**

**Moved by Sargent and Smith.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**5. Congregational Support Fund – A. Templer – no report**

**6. Card Ministry – Bonnie Pittock – no report**

**7. REPORTS OF INTERIM MODERATORS**

**a. Rev. Chris Little – Lakeshore St. Andrew’s**

Plans have now been made to conduct a training session with the Elders and the staff at LSA focused on PCC polity. This meeting will have been conducted by the time of the Presbytery meeting in June.

Discussions are ongoing with the Elders about when and how to begin to pay the debt owed to the Pension Board.

Pastor Brain has been diligent in working on the courses required of him by the Education and Reception Committee. The Presbytery can anticipate inducting Brian in 2024.

The financial state of the congregation seems to be stabilizing well. For the first time in months the finances were in the black in May. This is a very hopeful sign.

An attempt to reach out and pastorally care for some of the people who left the church in previous years were deemed unnecessary by the individuals contacted. It seems too much time has passed for a visit to be considered helpful.

The recommendations and advice of the Visitation Team are being discussed and addressed in an ongoing manner.

Rev. Brian McGuffin and Pastor Shane Davis presented a request to consider Incorporation of LSA.

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

**MOTION**

That LSA present a written proposal to the September meeting of Presbytery, containing their reasons for requesting incorporation, outlining their concerns about liability with rentals and presenting all associated costs.

Moved by Sargent and Labadie.

**MOTION CARRIED.**

It was suggested the Clerks of Assembly might be invited to attend the September meeting to address this request.

**b. Rev. A. Cornell -- Ridgetown Mt. Zion**

An old tradition will be restored this summer when the congregation partners with Erie Street United Church. Mt. Zion's people will join ESUC on five Sundays and then play host on five other Sundays. A Community Choir performed during the Anniversary Service on May 28. Pulpit supply continues from Rev. Colin Paterson, Rev. Lillian Wilton, Rev. Doug and Cathi Cameron, Mary Pat Elliot and members of session on occasion. Session (Clerk Phyllis May, rep elder Bryan Stirling, elder Renee Geluk and the interim moderator) meets approximately every six weeks or as needed.

**REQUEST FOR FUNDING**

Representative Elder Bryan Stirling presented a request for funding of a new church sign. It was noted the congregation did not request assistance from any particular fund of Presbytery. In the absence of Treasurer Chuck Congram, the following motion was presented.

**MOTION: That Presbytery support the request from Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church for funding of a new church sign; that the request be referred to the Administration Committee to decide which fund best suited this request and the amount to be granted; and that the Administration Committee be granted Power to Issue in respond to this matter in a timely fashion.**

Moved by Aide and Sargent.

**MOTION CARRIED.**



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**UPDATE**

On Thursday, July 6, 2023 the Administration Committee met online to discuss the request from Mt. Zion and determine which account the funds might come from and the amount of the grant.

**MOTION:**

**That Mt. Zion receive a grant in the amount of \$4,500.00 towards a new church sign, coming from the Congregation Support Fund.**

**Moved by Congram and Sargent.**

**MOTION CARRIED**

The Clerk informed the Convenor of Congregational Support Team, Andrew Templer, of the decision via email on July 6, 2023.

The details of this request can be found at the end of these minutes.

**c. Rev. M Maroney – St. Andrew’s Amherstburg,**

After many months of no inquiries into the vacancy at St. Andrew’s, we are encouraged to have received two requests for our congregational profile in the last week.

**d. New St. Andrew’s, Dover – no report**

**e. Rev. Lisa Aide -- Knox Wallaceburg**

Wonderful things are happening at Knox as they have been blessed with new families joining for worship and their passion for mission is burning bright for all to see. They are once again preparing to help support young mothers with a baby bottle drive and running their soup kitchen and food bank to serve those in need in their community. The congregation continues to be fed the word of God by both Barb and Jason, and I was blessed to see first hand how their joint ministry is making an impact on the congregation and the community as they seek to serve the Lord and their neighbours.

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

One of the great gifts that Jason brings to the table is his skills with design and they are hard at work creating a new logo for the church that will help encourage people to come and join the community at Knox. I am still blessed to be able to walk with them during this time of growth and renewal and I ask that you would continue to keep Knox in your prayers as they seek to grow and serve the Lord with all that they are.

**f. Rev. Shirley Murdock – Valetta**

Valetta Congregation is delighted to welcome Sarah Stockford back to its pulpit for May, June and July. The Church closes for the month of August and we anticipate Sarah will continue through the fall for most Sundays.

A successful Plant Sale and Lunch was held on Saturday, May 20.

The Celebration of their 177<sup>th</sup> Anniversary took place on June 4 with Rev. Nancy Carle leading worship and conducting the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Lunch with Anniversary cake was enjoyed following morning worship.

The next Session meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 22 at 10:00am.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the above IM Reports be adopted as presented.**

**Moved by Aide and Brown.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Reports of GA Commissioners**

**Barb Sargent, Rev. Shirley Murdock and YAR Joshua Sankarlal**

**YAR Joshua Sankarlal**

To the Leadership of the Presbytery of Essex-Kent,

I'd like to share my sincere gratitude to you for extending me the opportunity to attend the 2023 General Assembly in Halifax, Nova Scotia as the Young Adult Representative for the Presbytery. Attending the General Assembly presented me with a unique opportunity to meet others my age with an interest in how the Church operates, and allowed me to quickly gain an understanding of the scope of work that the Church takes on an annual basis, and how that

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work is carried out throughout any given year. The theme of this year's Assembly was “Hope and Possibility” - the idea that though we are facing difficulty, new opportunities for the Church are just on the horizon. Throughout this report, I will detail some of the key takeaways from my time at the General Assembly, and provide some thoughts for your consideration regarding the future of Presbyterian Ministry in Canada.

The scope of work undergone by the Presbyterian Church in Canada is much larger than I initially thought. Though I was aware that “the Church” was more than just a collection of buildings and congregations, I was surprised to learn of the progressive work undertaken by many of the Church’s agencies. The Life and Mission Agency and the International Affairs Committee are two prime examples of mission work that closely aligns with what I believe the Church should be striving to complete. I was particularly surprised by the Life and Mission Agency’s continued work on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion within the Church, and the variety of resources they publish that seek to inform and educate those who may lack familiarity with subject matter regarding human sexuality and gender expression. In the same vein, the International Affairs Committee was receptive to an additional motion presented during the Assembly that would aid Ugandan refugees fleeing the country due to newly imposed Anti-Homosexuality legislation. I am pleased that this work continues within the Church, and that steps are being taken to undo the harm that the PCC has done to marginalized groups in the past. We should continue along this path as we seek to share God’s love with everyone and in everything we do.

It was unfortunate to hear of the closing of 14 additional congregations across Canada during the Assembly. Churches, for many, provide a sense of community and fellowship, and the loss of that space is tragic. Though the theme of the Assembly this year was “Hope and Possibility”, the struggle faced by many congregations was an unavoidable presence throughout the week. Nearly every time someone approached a microphone, their words were prefaced by a statement indicating that their congregation, too, was struggling with attendance at Sunday service. Of course, the hesitation to move away from this traditional model of delivering Ministry was also at the helm of every discussion, rather than focusing on the Ministry of camp, or retreat centers, or community wellness, the underlying tone from much of the discussions wasn’t that Commissioners at large were interested in moving onto newer and better things, but were more concerned with bringing the previous world into our current times. More than

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anything, it was clear that the PCC was not ready to accept that “Sunday Church” as we previously understood it and as the primary method for delivering ministry, is a concept best left to the past. This hesitation to move forward was best exemplified during the many discussions that took place during the delivery of the Clerks of Assembly report.

The Clerks of Assembly report included items of significance to myself and many of the other YARs. The most contentious was CLK Recommendation 007, which attempted to add clarifying language to the Guidelines re Ordination and Marriage. In short, the new language would ensure that Members of a Church Court were aware that though they have “Liberty of Conscience” regarding their vote against an ordination, they were not permitted to voice that their vote against ordination was based on the candidate’s sexual orientation, gender identity, expression or marital status. As the Assembly had previously settled the matter of ordination as it relates to 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, this should have been a straightforward discussion. Unfortunately, comments by many speakers during the Assembly indicated that there was intense interest in voting against ordinations on these grounds, and equally as much interest in publicly voicing that their vote was purely due to sexual expression. As a YAR, I saw this as an opportunity to provide the Assembly with some of my thoughts, unfortunately, after waiting in line, the Sederunt ended. Upon return, having been the first in line on the same motion, the Clerks themselves asked for the Assembly for a referral vote. During the referral discussion, I again stood in line to speak on the new motion, only for a call for an immediate vote to be introduced. The YAR Advisory vote was skipped, and the motion for a referral was passed.

As the PCC discusses items of “Hope and Possibility” it is evident that a new approach is more than necessary. Unfortunately, many at the Assembly define Sunday service as the “correct” way to do Church. Further to this, the voices bemoaning the loss of congregations and attendance at Church are the same that seek to impose restrictions and limitations on who they believe should be allowed to enter their spaces - more often than not, their idea of the ideal church-goer aligns suspiciously well with their own gender and sexual identity.

Should the Assembly continue to avoid difficult conversations by referring motions, delaying conversations, making non-decisions, and refusing to move forward by accepting those who are different from them, more and more congregations will close. As outlined earlier, the Church is doing good and progressive work, but it will continue to fade into irrelevance on the Assembly floor if Commissioners are relentless in their pursuit to keep things exactly as they are. More frustrating than anything is that the Church refuses to make a decision. Referring a motion to

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come back another year where it will be equally as contentious is a story we've seen play out before - and it will ultimately land in another fence-sitting policy that prevents motion in any direction, akin to the "parallel definitions of marriage", which was, predictably, discussed ad nauseam at Assembly.

Presbyteries, such as Essex-Kent, can play an important role in revitalizing the Church by encouraging Sessions to include younger people in the work they carry out. Presbytery can also ensure that the resources provided by groups such as the Life and Mission Agency, or the Committee on International Affairs are read and understood by members of Session, who in turn, represent the Presbytery at the General Assembly.

It is difficult for me to end on a positive note given the depth of frustration I felt during the General Assembly. I am pleased to see the Church take steps in positive directions from time to

time, such as the motion on Ugandan relief, but it is equally frustrating to observe steps taken backward or the repetition of discussion on issues previously put to rest. While the work of the Life and Mission Agency and others like it are indicative of progression within the PCC, and while many of our discussions were proof that new and creative ways of delivering Ministry are being developed by some congregations, I'm unsure that the development of these initiatives will ever be accepted or implemented. It is clear that new voices are desperately needed, or we will face the dissolution of the Church long before we have the chance to explore the new horizon.

**BARB SARGENT – ELDER COMMISSIONER**

For the first time since 2019 General Assembly met in person in Halifax, June 4-7, 2023.

The general consensus of the participants was that they were glad to be back together again in person to discuss the matters before the church.

The atmosphere was much more relaxed and far less contentious than in previous General Assemblies as reports were received and recommendations discussed.

One of the most moving presentations for me was the presentation of two of the international guests and recipients of the **CUTTING EDGE OF MISSION RECIPIENTS – 2023**

ROBI DAMELIN Parents Circle – Families Forum

Robi Damelin is the Israeli spokesperson and member of the Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), a group of 600 Israeli and Palestinian families who have lost close family members to

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the conflict and who work together for reconciliation and a just resolution to the conflict. Robi Damelin's son, David, was killed by a Palestinian sniper in March of 2002 while he was guarding a checkpoint near a settlement during his army reserve service. Since becoming active in the Parents Circle, Robi has spoken to hundreds and thousands of Israelis and Palestinians and people all over the world to demand that reconciliation be a part of any peace agreement. Robi was named as a 2015 Woman of Impact by Women in the World.

In 2014, Robi was selected by the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice as one of four Women PeaceMakers. She is the protagonist featured in the documentary, "One Day after Peace". She regularly contributes to The Forward and Huffington Post.

LAILA ALSHEKH Parents Circle – Families Forum

Laila AlShekh is a Muslim Palestinian, a mother and an active member of the Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), a group of 600 Israeli and Palestinian families who have lost close family members to the conflict and who work together for reconciliation and a just resolution to the conflict. Born and raised in Jordan, Laila studied accounting and business administration. After marriage, she moved to

Bethlehem, Palestine/Israel, where her husband grew up. The joy of returning to her homeland was cut short when she lost her son Qusay in 2002. He was only six months old. The Israeli soldiers prevented Laila and her husband from taking him to the hospital which was only a 20-minute drive. The delay in seeing a healthcare worker resulted in her baby's death. Laila sees herself as a survivor, not a victim. She actively seeks out opportunities to share her story to bring about peace and reconciliation.

#### **TRUSTEE COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Trustee Board reported that 15 churches have closed in the past three years and buildings sold.

**Recommendation** That on the basis of the past three years, the Trustee Board create a demographic projection of the next three years and report to the next Assembly.

#### **CLERK'S REPORT**

##### ***Right to dissent***

Based on the theological principle that Presbyterians discern the mind of Christ together and not in isolation, and on the polity principle that a person must vote on a matter before they can dissent to it (Book of Forms 91), the Clerks make the following recommendation in order to rectify the inconsistency related to the question of dissent currently expressed in Book of Forms 8.1.

**Recommendation** That the following amendment to Book of Forms 8.1 regarding dissent, be approved and that this be the answer to the prayer of Overture No. 8, 2019:

After debate and very passionate remarks not only from representatives from the HanCa presbyteries but from others this recommendation was referred back to the Clerks for further study and report at GA 2024.

**CHURCH DOCTRINE COMMITTEE**

Additional motion re Physician assisted suicide document (A&P 2022, p. 38)

After due consideration, the committee's discussion centred on the difficulty of simply replacing the title. The document presented in 2017 laid out an argument of why the use of the word, suicide, was appropriate. Replacing the title would bring unnecessary confusion. Since the report with the previous title was received for study and feedback without being adopted as the church's stance on the issue and in the past six years there have been many new developments in legal and ethical concerns, the committee suggests that it be left as is and the General Assembly affirm the committee's continual work on this very difficult topic.

**Recommendation** That the intention of the Committee on Church Doctrine be affirmed to continue exploring the questions and realities around Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) and its intention to submit reflections to the General Assembly that will assist the church to respond faithfully and practically.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

***Vaccine Equity***

The committee asks that the Moderator of the General Assembly write a pastoral letter to congregations as people continue to suffer from the effects of the COVID-19 virus.

**Recommendation** That the Moderator write a pastoral letter to congregations encouraging continued prayerful support for those still suffering the effects of this virus, and its fallout, in Canada and around the world.

**A Delegation to visit Palestine and Israel**

"A Moment of Truth", issued 14 years ago by a group of Palestinian Christian leaders representing a wide spectrum of churches and church-related organizations in Israel and Palestine, called the church around the world "to come and see" the struggle of the Palestinian people living within Israel and in the occupied territories. The struggle of Palestinians Christians is more dire today than 14 years ago.

**Recommendation** That the International Affairs Committee and the Life and Mission Agency Committee together arrange and lead a delegation of comprised of the Moderator and other Presbyterians to visit partners in Palestine/Israel as soon as possible in the spirit of the

invitation “to come and see” and to report back to a future General Assembly.

***Inviting Guest to Address the General Assembly in 2024***

Israeli and Jewish groups, as well as Christian and other civil society organizations, call for peace and for justice for Palestinian people.

**Recommendation** That a member of the leadership team of Independent Jewish Voices and/or Canadian Voices for Peace (an offshoot of the Israeli group, Voices for Peace) be invited to address the General Assembly at its next meeting.

***Advocating for the Government of Canada to Protect International Human Rights*** The international human rights of Palestinians are not upheld by the government of *Israel*. *A sample letter will be provided for congregations and individuals to use to ask how the government of Canada intends to protect the rights of Palestinian people.*

**Recommendation** That congregations and individual write to their Member of Parliament to request a meeting to listen and to respond to the specific ways the Government of Canada intends to protect international human rights for the Palestinian people.

**LIFE AND MISSION COMMITTEE**

***Updates to Leading with Care*** - Changes to the text of Leading with Care were needed to correct copyediting errors, to ensure the consistent use of terms, to update contact information and to ensure clarity of expression. Additionally, some of the original information in the preamble to Leading with Care was out of date or a barrier to implementation. None of these proposed edits change the substance of the policy’s implementation, standards, requirements or expectations. And there are no proposed edits to Leading with Care’s policy statement.

***Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church***

Implementing The Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church, since it was adopted 2021, has revealed aspects that need clarification, which the proposed revision does. The foundational core and policy statement of the proposed policy remain unchanged but the procedures to address harassment follow the procedures for dealing with sexual abuse and harassment. Additionally, the proposed policy will be used to address allegations of racial harassment, rather than the Growing in Christ: Seeing the Image of God in our Neighbour policy, which uses approaches different from other policies. Harassment is an important enough issue to warrant a consistent approach.

For these reasons, the proposed procedures direct the church to use the Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church whenever a complaint of racial harassment is received.

**Recommendation** That the above revised Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church be approved.



***Guidelines for Dealing with Mental Health Issues***

In response to an overture about ministry and mental health, the Life and Mission Agency is proposing revised Guidelines for Dealing with Mental Health Issues based on feedback from the church.

**Recommendation** That the above proposed revisions to the Guidelines for Dealing with Mental Health Issues (2011), be adopted.

***Necessary minor changes to Guidelines for Dealing with Mental Health Issues***

As the guidelines are prepared for distribution with the above changes incorporated, it might become evident that some minor changes in wording may be necessary for the sake of clarity and ease of reading. It may also be necessary to update the guidelines to reflect informational changes subsequently approved by the General Assembly

**Recommendation** That the Life and Mission Agency be given permission to make minor changes to the Guidelines for Dealing with Mental Health Issues for the sake of clarity and ease of reading and to update information to reflect changes approved by the General Assembly.

***NATIONAL INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES COUNCIL***

Response to Overture No. 15, 2022 re repatriation of the Manitou/Iniskim Stone  
Overture 10, 2022 was referred to the Life and Mission Agency, in consultation with the National Indigenous Ministries Council. The prayer of the overture asked that the church support the efforts to return the Manitou/Iniskim Stone that has been held at the Royal Alberta Museum and share a resolution regarding the church's support of the stone's return with member churches, ecumenical partners and the Manitou/Iniskim Repatriation Organizing Team.

**Recommendation** That the prayer of Overture No 15, 2022 requesting the church to support the efforts to return the Manitou/Iniskim Stone, be answered in terms of the above report.

**Resolution regarding the church's support of the return of the Manitou/Iniskim Stone**

After consideration of the overture's prayer, the National Indigenous Ministries Council recommended supporting the return of the stone both with a resolution affirming the importance of returning the stone as well as with financial support for the stone's return.

**Recommendation** That The Presbyterian Church in Canada affirms its support for the return of the stone known as the Manitou/Iniskim Stone and contribute \$1,000 in support of the stone's return.

**Returning stolen artefacts**

During the consultation about the return of the Manitou/Iniskim Stone, the vital importance of returning artifacts stolen from Indigenous communities as part of the process of reconciliation

was discussed and confirmed. Article 12 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which The Presbyterian Church in Canada has recognized as a framework for reconciliation, recognizes the right of Indigenous peoples to have all such artefacts returned.

**Recommendation** That The Presbyterian Church in Canada affirm the vital importance of returning Indigenous spiritual and cultural artefacts that were taken without permission to the communities from where they were taken.

Overture No. 3, 2023 re sustainable funding for ministries with Indigenous People

Overture No. 3, 2023 was referred to the Life and Mission Agency Committee in consultation with the National Indigenous Ministries Council and the Assembly Council. To facilitate consultation, the Life and Mission Agency created a working group comprised of two members appointed by the Life and Mission Agency Committee, two members named by the National Indigenous Ministries Council and two members named by the Assembly Council.

The working group will meet during 2023 and 2024 to study the current funding and propose a response to Overture No. 3, 2023 at a future Assembly.

**Recommendation** That permission be granted to respond to Overture No. 3, 2023 re sustainable funding for ministry with Indigenous People to the next General Assembly.

The Moderator to write to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change re environmental racism.

Due to the ongoing influences of systemic racism and colonization, communities that are predominantly Black, Indigenous and other communities of colour can be disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change.

While climate change affects everyone and remains among the most urgent issues of our time, the disproportionate impact of climate change on people of colour is one part of a pattern often referred to as environmental racism, which extends well beyond disproportionate impacts of climate change.

**Recommendation** That the Moderator write to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change expressing support for the development of a strategy to examine the links between race, socio-economic status and environmental risk and address environmental racism in Canada and that presbyteries, congregations and individuals write their local member of parliament for the same purpose.

***Encouraged to continue learning about the harmful legacy of residential schools***

The Presbyterian Church in Canada operated residential schools at the request of the government of Canada from the 1880s until 1969. The Presbyterian Church in Canada continues its commitment to responding to the Calls to Action, one of which states, “We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that

their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary."

**Recommendation** That, in line with Call to Action 59, individuals, sessions and presbyteries be encouraged to continue learning about the harmful legacy of residential schools through resources provided on the Indigenous Justice web page of the Social Action Hub [presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/indigenous-justice](http://presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/indigenous-justice).

**Increasing continuing education allowance**

The current continuing education allowance is set at \$600 per year and has not changed since 2001. Concerns over the financial pressures experienced by many congregations persuaded the committee against proposing to increase the allowance over the years but based on this research, the committee concluded that it is time for the church to consider raising the amount to \$750 per year.

**Recommendation** That the continuing education allowance be increased to **\$1000**, effective January 1, 2024.

***Changes to the Book of Forms 176.1.7 re presbytery constituent roll***

Currently, presbyteries require the permission the Committee on Education and Reception to place on their constituent roll the names of already ordained ministers in institutional chaplaincy positions. However, there is currently no reason to retain section 176.1.7 of the Book of Forms and it is proposed that the section be deleted and circulated to presbyteries under the Barrier Act.

**Recommendation** That the following changes to the Book of Forms 176.1.6 and 176.1.7 be approved and remitted to the presbyteries under the Barrier Act.

176. The presbytery consists of:

176.1 Ordained ministers within the bounds, whose ministry is carried out on a minimum of a half- time basis and:

176.1.6 who make request and are serving in agencies not directly responsible to The Presbyterian Church in Canada as Bible Society secretaries, teachers in Bible or theological colleges or university departments of religion; workers in inner-city, national or overseas missions (the last when residing within the bounds);

***Advocating for legal humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan***

Natural disasters and decades of conflict and sanctions has left 24.4 million Afghans requiring humanitarian assistance. The UN called upon the international community to make a humanitarian exception to sanctions against the Taliban to make a way for vital humanitarian assistance. Canada has yet to provide an avenue for humanitarian agencies to continue

operations in Afghanistan with the result that PWS&D cannot resume development and relief programming without an exemption to the provisions of the Criminal Code that bar organizations from sending money that will benefit, directly or indirectly, a terrorist group/activity.

**Recommendation** That congregations and individuals be encouraged to advocate for legislative changes that would enable Canadian civil society organizations like PWS&D to provide humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

***Support for assistance in Ukraine***

Generous Presbyterian contributions of over \$930,000 towards assistance in Ukraine during the ongoing Russian aggression.

***Celebrating PWS&D's 75th anniversary***

Congregations have been celebrating PWS&D's 75th anniversary of service in the church and world.

**Recommendation** That gratitude be extended to congregations and presbyteries who commemorated PWS&D's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary by inviting speakers, using resources and by all other creative means.

***Champions for PWS&D***

The PWS&D Champions Network ensures information about PWS&D programs and appeals reaches the church.

**Recommendation** That congregations and presbyteries be encouraged to name a Champion for PWS&D to join its Champions Network.

***Expression of appreciation for support Presbyterians Sharing***

Presbyterians Sharing supports the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The Presbyterian Church in Canada celebrates the generosity of congregations, individuals, Atlantic Mission Society, foundations, WMS/AMS groups and others who support Presbyterians Sharing through gifts of prayer and money, by participating in advocacy campaigns and by serving on committees and working groups.

**Recommendation** That appreciation be expressed to the congregations, individuals and groups who support Presbyterians Sharing with prayers, financial gifts, volunteering for committees and working groups, participating in programs and advocacy campaigns for justice.

**PENSION AND BENEFITS BOARD**

In consultation with our actuaries, the Pension and Benefits Board proposes a cost-of-living increase of 2.0 percent to pensions in pay for at least one year as at January 1, 2024.

**Recommendation** That a cost-of-living increase of 2.0 percent be granted to pensions in payment for at least one year as of January 1, 2024.

***Pre-retirement Pension Benefit Improvements***

Historically, pensions were improved on a regular basis to keep up with cost of living through the pension plan design.

Before 2013, the pension formula was a Final Average Earnings (FAE) design which automatically adjusted the retirement benefit to the average earnings in the years before retirement. This formula was frozen as of December 31, 2012, and the current Career Average Earnings formula became effective January 1, 2013. This formula does not provide automatic adjustments for wage or price inflation.

Since the funded status of the plan has continued to strengthen and stabilize over the past few years and the plan is currently in surplus positions on both a solvency and going concern basis, the board explored the options available to make pre-retirement benefit improvements.

In consultation with our actuaries, the board proposes to adjust the existing frozen pensions by inflation index at 50 percent of Statistics Canada’s Consumer Price Index (CPI). Under this method, the frozen FAE benefit accrued to December 31, 2012, and career average benefits earned from 2013 are adjusted by the cost-of-living increase as measured at 50 percent of CPI.

**Recommendation** That effective January 1, 2024, the existing pre-retirement frozen pensions be increased by 50 percent of Consumers Price Index according to the above scale.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE RE LISTENING, CONFESSION AND ASSOCIATIONS**

***Exploring voluntary associations***

There is a deep longing that things would be different, that there be a place that provides “that kind of connection that is desperately needed.” The responses recognized the need for such “community and relationships to bring well-being to the denomination.” The majority of our responders wanted presbyteries to become that place, while fully recognizing that most presbyteries are not that place. The following question put the challenge aptly, “Why not find ways to equip presbyteries or congregations to be a more open and safe space?” The clearly voiced views from across the church indicate that in many cases presbyteries are not working as places of “community and relationships” for the “well-being” of the denomination. But the hope is that presbyteries could become that kind of place. We also heard that such change cannot be mandated but must be organically driven from the grassroots.

**Recommendation** That commissioners of the 148th (2023) General Assembly, having heard the hopes of the church for presbyteries to be transformed into places of support beyond simply getting the business done, commit themselves to becoming agents of that change in their presbyteries.

**Communities of Support** While there is no appetite for Voluntary Associations, there is a recognition that “The Presbyterian Church in Canada should not expect lone ranger clergy and church leaders. We further agree that the denomination should encourage church leaders to engage in communities of support and spiritual uplift.” The desire is to see these communities of support to arise organically. We were reminded that through Ministry and Church Vocations, Life and Mission Agency, there are resources to support the creation of grass-root support groups of clergy and lay leaders and that other contexts of support exist.

**Recommendation** That the General Assembly urge ministers to find communities of support and spiritual uplift and that sessions encourage the ministers serving their congregations to engage in such communities.

**ASSEMBLY COUNCIL REPORT**

**Position of Intercultural Liaison**

The position of Intercultural Liaison responds to the Assembly decision in response to the work of the Special Committee re Petition Nos. 1 and 2, 2021.

**Recommendation** That the Assembly Council proceed with the search for the Intercultural Liaison position and that candidate be brought to the 2024 General Assembly for consideration.

**Preservation of Minutes and Registers**

Emphasizing the importance of preserving and promoting congregational records.

**Recommendation** That congregations be urged to have their session minutes and church registers (marriages, baptisms, deaths/burials) digitized and/or microfilmed through the Archives to ensure a preservation copy is created for these vital records.

***Reviewing digital files and back up.***

**Recommendation** That congregations be urged to review their digital files (e.g., typed minutes, photos) and apply records management standards to them as they would to physical records and frequently back them up to an external hard drive or USB which should be stored in a secure location.

***Web Archiving Programme***

Urging congregations to participate in Web Archiving Program to preserve valuable documents and materials.

**Recommendation** That congregations be urged to take part in the Web Archiving Program offered through the Archives to preserve histories, photographs, videos and other valuable material that is posted online to their websites or social media pages.

***2024 Operating Fund Budget***

Proposed Operating Fund Budget expenditures for 2024 are \$8,000,000. Total 2024 budget expenditures have decreased by \$340,000 from the approved 2023 budget of \$8,340,000 and

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there has been a small increase of just over 1.1 percent from 2022.

**Recommendation** That the 2024 budget be approved.

***Additional \$300,000 transfer in 2023 Budget***

Based on the 2023 budget, the operating fund will drop to negative level by the end of the year. We need to request an additional \$300,000 transfer to prevent the operating fund falling to negative level.

**Recommendation** That the transfer of the restricted funds be increased from \$2,000,000 to \$2,300,000 for 2023.

***Minute of Appreciation***

Mr. Oliver Ng, CMA, CPA, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer

The Assembly Council noted the resignation of Mr. Oliver Ng as CFO and Treasurer for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The Assembly Council recognized and gave thanks to God for Oliver's faithful service to the church and adopted the following minute of appreciation.

***Closing Comments***

I would like to commend Josh Sankarlal our YAR this year. As you can see from his very comprehensive report that he was completing engaged in the issues and the discussions. Our Moderator, Rev Mary Fontaine, conducted the meeting with both compassion and grace and she taught us some songs in her own native language.

Respectfully submitted

Barbara Sargent

**Clergy Commissioner Rev. Shirley Murdock**

It was my pleasure to Attend the 148<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada from June 4-7, 2023, held in my home province of Nova Scotia.

Prior to gathering in Halifax, N.S., a series of Briefing Sessions were held online to help Commissioners prepare for the recommendations that would come before the Court. I was surprised at how few people took advantage of this opportunity.

Due to the closure of numerous congregations since last we met in-person (14 in 2022) and due to fewer active ministers in each presbytery, there were considerably less commissioners than in previous year. The Roll of Assembly totaled 189 plus resources persons and staff.

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Assembly began with evening worship within The Church of St. David in Halifax. Worship was led by the host minister Rev. Dr. Iona MacLean. Moderator Rev. Dr. Robert Faris preached. The Sacrament of Holy Communion was shared by both.

The Court was Constituted following worship. Rev. Mary Fontaine of the Cree Nation, Founder and Executive Director of Humming Bird Ministries in Mistawasis, BC was installed as Moderator of the 148<sup>th</sup> General Assembly with gifts from the Indigenous Communities bestowed upon her and verbal support offered by members of the Hummingbird Ministries.

Both our Elder Commissioner and our YAR have done an excellent job of summarizing the business of the Court. I will share only a few additions.

**AMS and WMS**

The President of the AMS presented their report as well as the President of the WMS. There were no recommendations from either. It was noted the WMS welcomes male members even though their title suggests it is a women's organization. Both organizations are struggling to understand their role in the changing world of church and society.

**PENSION and BENEFITS**

Corrie Stewart reported on Pension and Benefits. A recommendation to reconsider the Constitution of the Pension Board received a lot of attention and was brought back numerous times for discussion. This is a necessary step to permit an increase in the 2023 and 2024 Pensions where there had not been any increase in the last ten years. **THE PENSION IS SECURE!**

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BUILDING CORPORATION**

Presbyterian Church Building Corporation report was received for information with no recommendations but a strong suggestion that we need to discern ways to re-purpose churches rather than only consider closing them.

**BILLS and OVERTURES**

Bills and Overtures were presented by Jeff Murray.

Unreferred Overtures

No.6 – concerning “the new Israel” phrase in Living Faith. Referred to Church Doctrine Committee

No. 7 & 8 – amalgamation of Presbyteries of Central Alberta and Edmonton-Lakeland and possibly Peace River – referred to Clerks of Assembly with Power to Issue

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No. 9 – Ruling Elders as Interim Moderators - referred to Clerks of Assembly

No 10 – Increase benefits for Mental Health Services – referred to Pension and Benefits Board  
All recommendations were adopted.

### **COLLEGES**

Knox College reported 24 graduates in May 2023.

An Honorary DD was bestowed upon Rev. Peter Bush.

In-person classes will resume in the fall of 2023, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The building has been sold with a lease agreement with UofT.

Rev. Dr. Angela Schmidt was granted tenure as Director of Experiential Learning and Associate Professor of Spiritual Care.

Knox is developing a new Counselling Centre.

Presbyterian College continues to share partnerships within the Montreal School of Theology, including the establishment of a United Church studies program of the M.Div. within the Montreal Diocesan Theological College.

They are in discussions about deferred maintenance, similar to Knox College and UofT.

PC hopes to present a new French Program at the Masters Level.

The new Director of Programs is Adrian Langdon

St. Andrew's Hall contributes financial, pastoral and professional resources to help the mission of VST and educate future ordained ministers for the PCC.

Through the Centre for Missional Leadership, local congregations and their leaders are being equipped to navigate these challenging post-pandemic times with teaching and resources for effective missional witness in a post-Christendom Canada.

New furniture has been placed within the 93-unit residence and 12 quad units are being renovated.

There were 5 graduates in 2023.

### **ECUMENICAL VISITORS**

**The Moderator of the Korean Christian Church in Japan and the General secretary were present.**

Through a translator we heard his gratitude that he, a Vietnamese, has been elected moderator of the KCCJ, a step he understands towards unity between the two entities.

Since 1927, 34 missionaries have been sent from the PCC.

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

In 2027 they will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Partnership between the KCCJ and the PCC. In October 2023, the 57<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will meet and the Moderator has been invited to attend.

He presented a pair of Preaching Stoles to the Moderator with the crest of the KCCJ embroidered on them.

**Dr. Hamm from Cuba** reported there has been a partnership between PCC and the Cuban PC for 77 years, since 1946.

Cuba has experienced its most turbulent time in its history recently. Sanctions by the US, the pandemic, a lack of medical supplies and services, lack of food and electricity has resulted in 300,000 people leaving Cuba which consequently takes its toll on the future where there is a lack of manpower that prevents the country from moving forward in industry and economics. Cuba has renewed its contract with Knox College and Montreal School of Theology. This partnership began in 1997 with an agreement for mutual support and respect. The highest number of tourists to Cuba are Canadians.

#### **CLERKS of ASSEMBLY**

Deputy Clerk Don Muir began the presentation of the Report from the Clerks of Assembly.

Changes to BoF 8.1 (Right to Dissent) were presented and referred to Church Doctrine Committee.

Recommendation 5 permitting Presbyteries to issue Letters of Standing when a minister leaves the denomination was adopted. (in the event the minister does not request it themselves)

Recommendation 7 providing clarity of Liberty of Conscience for Remits B and C received a lot of discussion and was eventually referred back to the Clerks to report at the 2024 Assembly.

#### Comments:

As with every General Assembly, there was a lot of discussion on some issues and very little on others. Word-smithing becomes a challenge. Everyone was calm and polite in presenting their opinions. There were a few tense moments when voters had to stand to be counted and a few motions were defeated. The Moderator was challenged on one ruling but the Court supported her decision.

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There was lots of conversation over meals when commissioners had opportunities to renew friendships and establish new acquaintances. The University of St. Mary's cared for us well as we all adapted to student life in narrow beds, shared bathroom facilities and cafeteria-style meals. NO ONE DIED!

The 149<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will be held within Sir Wilfred Laurier University.  
The Assembly was adjourned at 8:15pm on Wednesday, June 4, 2023.  
2024 clergy commissioner will be Rev. Shalini with an elder commissioner coming from New St. Andrew's, Dover.

**RECOMMENDATION: That the above reports of Assembly Commissioners and our YAR be adopted as presented and they be thanked for their attendance at General Assembly and reporting to the Court.**

**Moved by Broughton and Johnson-Hicks.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPOINTMENT OF SYNOD COMMISSIONERS**

– Friday, October 20, 2023

Rev. Lisa Aide and elder from Paulin Memorial

**RECOMMENDATION: That Rev. Lisa Aide be appointed Clergy Commissioner to the Synod our Southwestern Ontario and that Paulin Memorial present a name for an elder commissioner.**

**Moved Sargent and Brown.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**TRUSTEES and TRUST DEEDS**

From Clerks' Consultation – all congregations are to prepare a Trustee Deed and provide a copy to the Clerk of Presbytery for safe keeping

The template of Appendix C has been approved by Ontario Provincial Guidelines so no additional cost for lawyer fees needs to be incurred.

The Clerk is also required to have an up-to-date list of all Trustees. Every time a name changes, the Deed and lists need to be updated and forwarded to the Clerk

Congregations are to ensure all property is in the name of the congregation, and not individuals.

**Please provide the completed Appendix C Trustee Deed with current names of all Trustees to the Clerk before the September meeting of Presbytery.**

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

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**ELDER COMMISSIONS TO PRESBYTERY – Representative and Alternate(s)**

BoF 131 – It is the right and duty of every session, whether of a settled or vacant congregation, to appoint one of its elders to represent it in presbytery and synod.

131.1 – the appointment takes place annually and takes effect on a date ordered by the Presbytery.

131.3 – An extract of minutes of the appointment of the representative elder by the session is presented to the presbytery, and his/her name is then put on the roll; and the roll of presbytery, certified by its clerk, is sufficient evidence of the elder's right to sit.

131-4 – A session may appoint additional elders to serve as alternates, as indicated by extract of minutes from the Session, and the name of such alternates in the extract minute is sufficient evidence of right to sit in presbytery and synod in the absence of his/her principal representative, the alternates being taken by the Presbytery in the order indicated in the extract.

Appointments of Representative and Alternate Elders are to renewed on an annual basis.

**Please provide to the Clerk, prior to the September meeting of Presbytery, the names (with contact information) of all current Representative and Alternate Elders.**

Any time a representative changes, a new name needs to be presented to the Court.

A congregation may name numerous alternates. (i.e., all Session Members)

**FYI**

Barb Sargent has completed her term on Assembly Council.

Rev. Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal has been appointed to Assembly Council.

**FROM UCC – Family Sponsorship - FYI**

UCC was approached once again to sponsor a family. The Leadership Team does not believe we can take on the responsibilities of another sponsorship. Can we please put this to the Presbytery.

Here are the details I have so far passed along to me by Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith.

“Refugee sponsorship has been a way for our congregation to keep connected with the needs of the world. Rami who lives in Windsor would like to co-sponsor his father-in-law and mother-in-law to come to Canada from Saudi Arabia. I understand that they are Syrians who have fled the war there.

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

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Rami has both the funds and the willingness to help with settlement tasks. However, they would need a co-sponsor to work with in order to access a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). Once this is done, it will ease the process significantly. Thankfully, the PCC is an SAH.

In a usual scenario, there are a number of factors:

Before the Family arrives

- a) funds need to be raised,
- b) forms filled out,
- c) housing arranged, and
- d) any material goods gathered.

After they arrive, church members need to help the family

- e) get from the airport to their housing, and moved in
- f) get government paperwork (drivers license, health card, etc.),
- g) set up a bank account, and monthly transfers,
- h) then check in with the family about 2x per month for the first 3-6 months, and at least monthly after that.

Working with a Co-sponsor who is prepared to put up the funds and assist with settlement means that, potentially, a) - g) are taken care of. The church can be involved in other hospitality ways, like corresponding with the family before they arrive, welcoming the family, and checking in. The family member takes the bulk of the process, with the assistance of the refugee sponsorship/new Canadian settlement team. Sometimes, there is even a champion from the team or congregation who does the primary work with the co-sponsor.

If your team wanted to move forward, I would suggest a sit down with the family member. Perhaps you, me and a couple of folks from the team.

In that conversation, we'd outline the process, ensuring agreement on the terms (i.e., who is doing what). If/when both the team and the co-sponsor decide to proceed, then we would want to sign a co-sponsor agreement that outlines the terms and clarifies expectations

Would you pray about having a conversation with me and/or Rami to find out more?"

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

*Mount Zion Presbyterian Church*

*P.O. Box 1148, 59 Main St. E  
Ridgetown, Ontario N0P 2C0*

*519-674-3487  
[mtzionridgetown@gmail.com](mailto:mtzionridgetown@gmail.com)*

May 15, 2023

Dear Members of the Presbytery of Essex-Kent,

I am writing to request a grant on behalf of the Board of Managers of Mt Zion Church Presbyterian Church in Ridgetown. Our church has been an important part of the community for over a century, and we have recently identified a need for a new outdoor signage to better serve our congregation and the broader community.

We believe that a new outdoor signage would not only benefit our church community but also attract new visitors to our church. Our current signage is outdated, difficult to read, and does not adequately reflect the welcoming and inclusive environment that we strive to create. A new signage would help us communicate important information about our church, events, and services, and provide clear directions for visitors.

As a member of the Board of Managers, I am committed to ensuring that our church remains a vital and active member of the community. A new outdoor signage is an important step towards achieving this goal. We are requesting a grant of \$5,500 to cover part of the cost of the signage and installation.

We understand that the Presbytery of Essex-Kent receives many grant requests each year and appreciate your consideration of our proposal. We are confident that this project will benefit not only our church community but also the wider community that we serve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Cameron McLean*  
(Cameron McLean)

Member of the Board of Managers, Mt Zion Church Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk

*Mount Zion Presbyterian Church*

P.O. Box 1148, 59 Main St. E  
Ridgetown, Ontario N0P 2C0

519-674-3487  
[mtzionridgetown@gmail.com](mailto:mtzionridgetown@gmail.com)

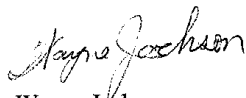
Cost projection for Mount Zion Presbyterian Church  
Ridgetown

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Peck Signs- Sign and render board                               | \$3,313.00        |
| 300 font 4" zip letters   | \$500.00          |
| 2 - 4x4 x 12 P.T posts @ \$29.99                                | \$57.98           |
| 2 - cement bags @\$6.50/bag                                     | \$13.00           |
| 75ft # 12 NMWU @ \$2.39/ft<br><i>buried 18" deep in conduit</i> | \$179.25          |
| 75ft ½" conduit @ \$7.99/10 ft                                  | \$63.92           |
| Misc. electrical connection boxes                               | \$105.00          |
| Electrician Fee   | \$500.00          |
| Electrician inspection  | \$295.00          |
| Municipality Permit \$16.90/1000                                | \$84.50           |
| Unforeseen Cost   | \$140.00          |
| Subtotal  | \$5,069.65        |
| HST – 9% - Assuming we get 4% rebated                           | \$456.27          |
| <b>Total Cost</b>   | <b>\$5,525.92</b> |

The Board is respectfully requesting \$5,500.00

The pickup in Chatham and installation will be done by the Board members

THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING THIS PROPOSAL.

  
Wayne Jackson  
(Chairman of the Board)

DATE: *May 7/23*

Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk



**TERRY**  
**Peek Signs**

P.O. Box 923, 240 William Street South,  
Chatham, Ontario N7M 5L3  
Phone:(519)354-2911

## QUOTATION

April 12, 2023

**TO: MOUNT ZION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**ATTN: CAMERON McLEAN**

**SPECIFICATIONS:** We Are Pleased To Quote You On The Following:

*Below quote is priced picked up in Chatham & does not include installation cost.*

2 – 4' h. x 7' w. x 1/4" thick dibond faces with readerboard to accommodate 3 lines of 4" h. messaging. Readerboard section covered with aluminum framing and clear polycarbonate inserts. Hinges on the bottom of aluminum frames to allow covers to open downward. Hasp fastened to top centre of aluminum for use with padlocks provided by customer

Cost @ \$1,565.50 ea.

\$ 3,131.00

300 font of 4" h. 3-D zip change letters

\$ 500.00

**\*\*A 50% DEPOSIT IS REQUIRED AT TIME ORDER IS PLACED\*\***  
**\*\*ANY UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES WILL BE AT AN ADDITIONAL COST\*\***  
**\*\*THIS QUOTE IS EFFECTIVE FOR A PERIOD OF 30 DAYS\*\***

**ALL PRICING IS SUBJECT TO HST**

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to quote you, and if accepted, your order will receive our prompt attention.

Regards,

Brodie Demers

**"Your Complete Sign Company"**

Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk



**Letter of Support from Mt. Zion Session**

To the Presbytery of Essex Kent,

We present our sign proposal with session's full support. Session has been working closely with our Board of Managers on this concept for some time.

Mt. Zion continues to be an ongoing Christian witness to the Ridgetown community. The congregation is

Christian witness.

We believe this sign proposal will accomplish three main things:

1. It will get the public's attention and let them know that the congregation is alive and well.
2. The congregation will place thought-provoking words of inspiration on the sign. The text will be short enough for passersby to catch and deep enough to convey a message.
3. The message will be the closest thing to church that many people will get. It is our prayer the words will serve as seeds of faith.

The proposal may not be high tech or virtual. We recognize that not everyone is connected that way. But it will be seen by hundreds of people on a daily basis.

We seek your prayerful support.

Rev. Andy Cornell Phyllis May Interim Moderator Clerk of session

**SCHEDULE FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Thursday, Aug 24 – Admin meets to prepare changes to Standing Orders

Next Regular Meeting of Admin – Sept. 5, 2023 -- in Chatham

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

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Next meeting of Standing Committees – Week of Aug. 28, 2023

Next regular meetings of Presbytery  
September 19, 2023 - Wallaceburg  
November 21, 2023 - Chatham

**MOTION TO ADJOURN.**

**Moved by Sargent and Labadie.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**The Court stands adjourned to meet next in a Regular Session on Tuesday, September 19, 2023 within Knox Presbyterian Church, Wallaceburg.**

**PRAYER AND BENEDICTION – THE MODERATOR**

**Court was dismissed at 8:03pm**

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**Rev. Shallini Rajack Sankarlal, Moderator**

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock, Clerk**