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**Presbytery of Essex-Kent**  
**The Presbyterian Church in Canada**

**EMERGENT MEETING**  
**Tuesday, May 17, 2022**  
**Knox Presbyterian Church, Leamington**

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**The Presbytery of Essex-Kent was called to an EMERGENT MEETING on Tuesday, May 17, 2022 at 7:00pm within Knox Presbyterian Church, Leamington, by Order of the Moderator Barbara Sargent.**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Moderator Barbara Sargent called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

**PRAYER and CONSTITUTION**

Moderator offered prayer and Constituted the Court.

**ATTENDANCE**

Clergy present were Revs. Lisa Aide, Tim Reddish, Shalini Sankarlal, Chuck Congram (Treasurer) and Shirley Murdock (Clerk).

Elders present were Barb Sargent (Moderator), Alison Brown, Jane Lung, Kathy Parks, Wendy Streptak

Others present were WMS Representative Carolyn Reid and Assessor Elder Bob MacVicar.

**REGRETS** were received from Revs. Andy Cornell, and Mike Maroney as well as Elders Bonnie Pittock, Robert Ivison, Elaine Ross, Jayne Broughton, Sandra Smith and Jeri-lou Brown.

**WELCOME**

The Moderator welcomes Glenna Lane, Clerk of Session for Knox Leamington.

**SIT and CORRESPOND**

**Motion: That Glenna Lane be invited to Sit and Correspond for this meeting.**

**Moved by Aide and Sankarlal.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING**

**To Receive and Consider a Recommendation from Knox Presbyterian Church, Leamington, to move toward DISSOLUTION OF THE CONGREGATION.**

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**RECEIVE and CONSIDER**

**Motion: That all reports be received and recommendations considered.**

**Moved by Aide and A. Brown**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**The Moderator called for the Report of the Interim Moderator Rev. Shalilni Rajack-Sankarlal.**

**REPORT of IM Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal**

Congregational Meeting May 1, 2022 and Session May 4, 2022

The decision to proceed with dissolution was made on April 6, 2022 at the ordinary meeting of the Session of Knox Presbyterian Church Leamington, and sustained by Presbytery at its regular meeting on April 19, 2022

Following this, a meeting of the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church, Leamington was held on May 1, 2022. Present at this meeting were the following representatives from the Presbytery of Essex-Kent: moderator Barbara Sargent and The Rev. Tim Reddish, Convenor of the Ministry and Doctrine Committee. Other guests included interim treasurer Debbie Wilson who was invited to sit and correspond for this meeting.

The meeting addressed the process that led to the decision by Session to proceed with dissolution. This included the lack of leadership and finances within Knox Leamington as well as a lack of interest of other Presbyterian churches within the Presbyter of Essex-Kent to partner/amalgamate with Knox.

**The motion: That the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church, Leamington request Session and Presbytery to proceed with the process of dissolution. The motion was defeated with 6 (six) against and 5 (five) in favour.**

Those who defeated the motion were asked for ways to move forward, but no answer was given. Some voiced their opinion that Presbytery poorly handled the history of conflict and other issues at Knox and were now solving it with dissolution, and others stated that Knox was poorly represented from a leadership standpoint for a long time. The interim treasurer spoke candidly about the financial situation, stating that the church was unable to sustain itself, and

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saw no other option. Moderator of Presbytery, Barbara Sargent stated although 22 were present only 11 voted and that the silence by lack vote and response indicated no energy to move forward.

After some deliberation, a motion to reconsider the original was moved, seconded and carried. The motion was repeated: **That the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church, Leamington request Session and Presbytery to proceed with the process of dissolution. The motion was carried 7(seven) in favour, 5 (five) against.**

A motion was made for representatives from Knox Leamington to speak to the dissolution at the emergent meeting on May 17, 2022. The feeling was one of sadness, weariness and disappointment. This was heightened by the fact that May 1<sup>st</sup> would have been 140+ years of ministry and mission for Knox Leamington. The clerk of Session gave her thanks to those who generously contributed financially and otherwise to Knox. She also candidly expressed her dismay at the behaviour of those that led to breakdown in relationships with former ministers. The Session met on May 4, 2022 to discuss reports due to the PCC and CRA. The various contracts that would need to be terminated and other property and finance items. It sustained the motion from the congregation and reviewed correspondence from those interested in assets and chattels from Knox noting that procedure for dissolution will have to be followed.

**ADOPTION OF REPORT**

**Motion: That the above report be adopted as presented.**

**Moved by Aide and A. Brown.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

The Moderator invited the elected representatives from Knox, Leamington, to speak. Glenna Lane spoke as Clerk of Session. Carolyn Reid spoke as a member of the congregation. Bob MacVicar spoke as Assessor Elder.

**Clerk of Session Glenna Lane**

To Presbytery May 17, 2022

I came to Knox 20 plus years ago and was warmly welcomed by Don Paterson who hoped I would stay. Scott McAndless was the minister and I received a warm welcome from him. Sunday school was quite active. Fund raising by chili lunches, the famous turkey dinner, the Christmas cookie sale all took place with many members participating.

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I did observe that there was a core group which seemed to dominate the workings of the church.

When the Karens were sponsored by LAERC and I heard them sing I asked if they were going to join the choir. The answer was that they would have to read music. So, Knox never benefitted from their musical ability during weekly worship. They were however offered the use of Knox Hall for weekly worship.

When Rev. Kay returned to Knox and proposed Logos to entice kids to come to church the program was working nicely. When he proposed 2 half-time ministers, he and Cathy, his wife, all changes fell apart and they left. I was enjoying Thomas' sermons and working with the kids, but it was not to be.

Then Rev. Walker was our choice. She stayed at my house while she sorted out her housing. When the situation deteriorated and she resigned I believed the situation was badly managed and influenced by the same players as in Thomas' case.

During this round in which I have been a participant I feel that Presbytery has done a better job of supporting us with our Interim Moderators and Assessor Elders. I have learned a great deal. I have a request from a member that the primary school books in Knox' basement be given to Southshore Christian School, 134 Mill Street East, Leamington.

A request from Louise Bryon about the organ suggests giving or selling it to Faith Mennonite Church.

A member has asked that money go to PWS&D.

If any money remains in our Camp Kintail fund I request that it be used to send Karen kids to Kintail for a wonderful Canadian experience. We have sent some each year with parents paying partial tuition of \$100 per child.

The Karen community were very grateful to celebrate Mother's day at Knox, in the sanctuary for the first time. They met in Knox Hall before Covid struck but have not gathered for 2 years. About 50 adults attended and several happy children. It was a lively 2-hour service.

The LAERC account will need to be transferred to another church to issue charitable receipts. The LAERC account could use an infusion from Knox. We have a family coming soon.

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As in health care, prevention works. Early intervention works, too. I am told that Knox was known to have problems for years but Presbytery overlooked it. Hindsight is always 20/20, the saying goes. Let's try to be more proactive in the future.

**Congregant Carolyn Reid**

May 1<sup>st</sup>! What a day! I realized 2 days later when I was looking at my envelopes that THAT DAY was my church's 144<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This has been my church for 75 years. My family moved here when I was 5 & I'm 80 now. I've lived with a vibrant congregation, made many memories, a CGIT leader for almost 30 years & have had to live through the closing of my church. The tears still come.

I really enjoyed working with the Food Bank at the Salvation Army church & really thankful for all the help with those who assisted with the donations. I think it was sometime in January that they had to stop & reassess what the families' needs were. In March I was called back & I was to do 10 tomatoes & 10 peppers each week. Plus I sometimes give them toothbrushes & shampoo. I told pastor Major Judy Wickens that Knox was closing & she offered a welcome to come to their service. I told her I would continue to support them.

I would still like to know why the LSA offer was the one to take place. All the printed material about it was handed out & we didn't have a service until Easter. We were not asked to consider this as this is what is going to happen. To come to church & sit through a zoom like of worship from LSA is not my idea of going to church (although it has been a blessing these past 2 years) as no preaching was to be done in the church.

When a business closes it has the right to place any assets where it would do best. I hope that as a congregation we have the right to place any assets where we see fit. I know a church who really needs a good piano & this same church operates a children's program & could use our Sunday School's books & supplies. I can see money going to LAERC – Leamington Area Ecumenical Refugee Committee of which I've been a member since it started 17 years ago & to Camp Kintail & possibly a donation for the Ukraine's. It is our money that was invested & so we should honour those who gave.

My last concern is for the Karen people to worship together in this church as they have the past years. Would it be possible for this to continue & they pay rent to Presbytery? Of course they may have to pay the expenses too but hopefully that can be all arranged.

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**Assessor Elder Bob MacVicar**

Observations and reflections on Knox Leamington

This document is a reflection on my two-year involvement with Knox Leamington first as a member of a three-person team assigned to discover what lead eventually to the vacating of the pulpit.

We first tried to ascertain what led to the dysfunction between the minister and the Session and found that the minister couldn't bring the Session to a sense of cohesive ministry as there was a feeling that the relationship was one of employer-employee not one of a cohesive team with common goals.

The Session allowed the management of the day-to-day operations to become the responsibility of one person. This person was responsible for the office management, roll clerk duties, envelope secretary, treasurer, and organist and was also a ruling elder. The Office manager and Organist being paid positions and being held by an elder in my opinion were contributing factors to the dysfunction.

After this person was brought to task by the Interim Moderator, she chose to resign leaving the congregation without people in key positions at year-end. This also resulted in several members withdrawing their membership and support and leaving the Session without access to vital information needed to compile a proposed budget and annual report.

The congregation is depleted to a group of infirm and elderly persons most of whom consider themselves beyond serving and rebuilding a viable functioning entity. This was evident when at the last annual meeting attended by the remnant members no nominations were brought forward to the vacant positions itemized by the Interim Moderator.

At a congregation meeting early in the process members present were asked, "Where do you see Knox Leamington in five years? ". The majority answered that it would be closed. This shows that the congregation had given up on the prospect of restoring a functioning congregation despite any intervention by the Presbytery.

It also might suggest that Presbytery needed to intentionally intervene after the resignation of Rev. Kaye and not allow Knox to search for a new minister perhaps insisting on an interim ministry at that point.

Some may cite the Co-vid pandemic as a cause for the eventual decision. I would suggest that Co-vid only served to accelerate the process of the complacency and apathy prevalent in the congregation. I believe that had there been a stronger commitment to serve and minister to the greater community despite the challenges of the pandemic we may have averted the closure.

**Rev. Shirley F. Murdock – Clerk**

There is a ministry in Leamington that continues to serve that being the ecumenical ministry to refugees and immigrants, the community food bank, not to forget ministries to the contracted migrant farmworkers, and the ministry to the senior and infirm community. These are opportunities that Presbytery might partner with other denominations as we are told that other churches in the area are finding themselves similarly challenged. Could we find a way to pool resources as exemplified by LAERC and continue to “Feed my Sheep”?

The Moderator stated that presbytery grieves along with this congregation  
There is a process set up by the denomination that we must follow  
We feel your sadness and will do all we can to satisfy the wishes of the congregation in the distribution of assets.

**RECEIVE REPORTS**

**Motion: That the above reports be received as presented.**

**Moved by Streptak and Lung.**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

## **Ministry and Doctrine Report for Presbytery May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

M & D met via Zoom on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 10:30pm via Zoom; Rev. Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal was also in attendance as Interim Moderator of Knox Leamington.

### **1. Knox Leamington**

Following on from the Congregational meeting at Knox on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, M & D met to discuss the recommendation from that meeting to “move toward the dissolution of the congregation.”

The PCC has a formal process to follow in such a situation.<sup>1</sup>

After much discussion,

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- 1. M & D recommends that the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church, Leamington, Ontario, be dissolved, on Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at the conclusion of a final worship service to take place on that day at 6pm. Moved by Reddish and Streptak. Motion Carried**

Given that there are no weekly worship services and no pastoral tie, there is no reason to delay the dissolution until a later time - i.e., post summer – and there are good pastoral and financial reasons to not allow this uncertainty to continue, and so the above recommendation helps to facilitate emotional and physical closure in a timely manner.

As part of the process, Presbytery creates a committee to oversee the dissolution as per PCC policy.

- 2. M & D recommends that Rev. Mike Maroney (FCC) and Rev. Tim Reddish (St. Andrew's, Amherstburg) are that committee, serving until the sale of the building is complete.**

**Moved by Streptak and Lung. Motion Carried**

Rev. Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal (UCC) will continue in her role as Interim Moderator.

Revs. Mike and Tim plan to attend the June 1<sup>st</sup> (1pm) Session meeting of Knox to answer questions and explain/discuss the details of dissolution process. (We also look forward to names of Knox volunteers who can help us in this endeavor.)

The two Presbytery assessor elders - Rev. Shirley Murdock and Robert MacVicar - where appointed to Knox until the June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022, Presbytery meeting. Given the dissolution date above, their formal role will now end on June 12, 2022.

Presbytery acknowledges their commitment to Knox Leamington for an extended period of time - long beyond their original end date, and for their support of IMs Rev. Lillian Wilton and Rev. Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal, and the wisdom and insights they have contributed to Knox's Session. M & D requests that we be able to call on them for advice and help during the dissolution process, as required!

Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Tim Reddish, Convener of Ministry and Doctrine Committee.

**REPORT AS A WHOLE**

**Moved by Aide and A. Brown. MOTION CARRIED.**

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**NEXT MEETING – SPECIAL MEETING – Wednesday, June 1, 2022**  
**PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING**  
**To Discuss matters associated with Lakeshore St. Andrew’s.**  
**Location yet to determined.**

**Clerk’s Note – According to an email received from Sharon Fraser of LSA, they are unable to accommodate Presbytery on June 1. Paulin Memorial offered to host.**

**Next Regular Meeting – Tuesday, June 17, 2022 – LSA**  
Time and format to be determined

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**  
**Moved by Aide and Reddish**  
**MOTION CARRIED.**

**Closing Prayer – Moderator offered a prayer and dismissed the Court at 8:10pm**

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**Barbara Sargent, Moderator**

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

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