



Parkwood Presbyterian Church

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The session of Parkwood Church at its meeting June 21, 2021 received a report from the minister who was a commissioner to the General Assembly which met June 6-9, 2021 online. The Assembly disregarded calls to limit business to non-contentious items and pushed through all the reports of its committees, adopting more than 200 recommendations, most in a series of omnibus motions, without opportunity for discussion of many important and significant items.

Two items which were discussed were Remits B and C, 2019, previously adopted by the Assembly in 2019 and sent to the presbyteries under the Barrier Act. Both of these were approved — Remit B by a vote of 136-76 and Remit C by a vote of 130-83. The adoption of these Remits represent significant changes to the teaching and governing of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC).

Remit B

That The Presbyterian Church in Canada holds two parallel definitions of marriage and recognizes that faithful, Holy Spirit filled, Christ centred, God honouring people can understand marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or as a covenant relationship between two adult persons.

That congregations, sessions, ruling and teaching elders be granted liberty of conscience and action on marriage.

Remit C

That congregations and presbyteries may call and ordain as ministers and elect and ordain as ruling elders LGBTQI persons (married or single) with the provision that liberty of conscience and action regarding participation in ordinations, inductions and installations be granted to ministers and ruling elders.

In response to these changes, and noting the provisions for liberty of conscience and action on marriage, the session of Parkwood Church at its meeting on June 21, 2021 resolved to exercise liberty of conscience and to reaffirm the position of the session as previously stated that marriage within the Christian church is the union of one man and one woman, based upon God's design as revealed in the Bible. The session also affirmed that the standards of conduct expected for pastors and elders should remain unchanged. The session further resolved that its position in response to changes on the part of the PCC be communicated to the congregation.

The proposal of the session for re-structuring of the national church was received by the Assembly, along with several other similar proposals, which were referred to the Assembly Council to consult with the clerks of Assembly who were together directed to report back to the General Assembly in 2022.

Minister
Clerk of Session

The Rev. James T. Hurd
Dennis Featherstone

The subject of gracious dismissal — a request that provision be made for congregations choosing to leave The Presbyterian Church in Canada without forfeiting their property and financial assets — was not discussed but remains with the Assembly Council for study and report back to the General Assembly. Whether anything substantial comes from either of these studies remains to be seen.

In the meantime, in view of the changes in teaching and practice on the part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the session of Parkwood Church also resolved that it communicate its position to uphold the traditional position of the Christian Church on marriage to the sessions of like-minded congregations both within the local presbytery (Ottawa) and beyond, to begin to network with a view to strategic collaboration. The session believes that it is wise to be both patient and active: patient to await further developments by the national church on either restructuring and/or gracious dismissal, which will not come before 2022, but active in the meantime to discern prudent next steps in concert with like-minded congregations with whom we may partner in furthering the work of the gospel. Sister congregations may share wisdom and planning, and we may offer one another support and encouragement.

The ministry of Parkwood Church is to honour Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I will build my Church.” and Jesus has given His Church its mission: “Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28: 19-20) We have no right to change the teaching of our Lord, and we must not allow other intentions and designs and preoccupations to distract us from the mission entrusted to us. Parkwood Church is called and has committed ourselves “to enable individuals and families to discover, grow in, and share the love of God found in Jesus Christ”. The session is determined to proceed with that mission — in the neighbourhood, the city, the country, and the world. We take heart from the assurance Jesus gives to His faithful disciples: “Surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 20).

We invite the congregation to continue prayerful and active in faith and in witness together, and to move forward together with like-minded believers.

In Christ’s service,

Dennis Featherstone, Clerk of Session.
James T. Hurd, Minister.