

## **Minutes for Special Congregation Meeting on May 1, 2021**

At the call of the session, a special congregational meeting of Parkwood Church, Ottawa was held on Saturday, May 1, 2021 via Zoom conference for the following purposes: to provide an update on the status of the proposal in The Presbyterian Church in Canada to change the current definition of marriage; to provide an opportunity for the congregation to express support or otherwise for the session's expressed position in support of the current definition of marriage; to give opportunity for comments or reflections upon the session's proposal for restructuring; and to give opportunity for the congregation to reflect on the possible implications for future ministry and leadership in the event that the General Assembly adopts the proposed changes to the church's teaching on marriage.

In addition to the minister, fifty-three members and adherents were present, as follows: Helen Atkinson, Dora Brown, Brenda Creighton, Jean Elder, Stewart Elder, Asuquo Eniang, Mahshid Eshtiagh, John Fair, Martha Fair, Brenda Featherstone, Dennis Featherstone, Gordon Gardner, Janet Gardner, Marcia Harten, Carolyn Herbert, Karen Hurd, John Huber, Susanne Johnson, Ted Johnson, Christina Kritsch, Victoria Mabie, Holly MacDonald, Alta MacFie, Jim MacFie, Philip MacFie, Don MacMillan, Susan McCullough, Rachel McGregor, Dolly McKyes, Margaret McPherson, Claire McPhee, Floyd McPhee, Olivia Meyia-Takoukam, Dan Moffet, John Moors, Derek Newton, Kathy Newton, Robert Newton, Dianne Nickerson, Betty Paul, Peter Paul, Heather Peckett, Don Pestaluky, Pamela Pestaluky, Mohammad Raouf, Judy Reeves, Stewart Reeves, Lorne Roach, Margaret Roach, Jan Sheridan, Dianne Smith, Barbara Townsend, and Dale Tuck.

The minister called to meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., leading in prayer, and reading 1 Corinthians 3: 10b—4: 5, offering brief comment thereon, and again leading in prayer.

The chair called for the election of a secretary. D. Nickerson, seconded by J. Huber, placed in nomination the name of D. Featherstone, who signified his willingness to serve.

The chair called for further nominations, after which it was moved by P. Pestaluky, seconded by D. Nickerson, and agreed, that nominations cease.

The chair declared D. Featherstone elected as secretary by acclamation.

The Moderator reviewed the major developments underlying the upcoming General Assembly in early June:

- As background, the evolving history of the consideration for the change in the definition of marriage, from 2017 to the present
- Approximately 20 per cent of the PCC has a first language other than English (Korean, Arabic, Hungarian, etc) and generally they have a strong attachment to the PCC

- Parkwood and several other congregations have prepared overtures on the development of two synods for consideration should the upcoming votes on the definition of marriage and eligibility for ordination be in favour of a change
- The first overture on gracious dismissal originated with the Grace Orleans session and has been followed by 17 similar overtures
- The Assembly Council does not want to consider an existing report on gracious dismissal until after the resolution of the two remits
- While the current plan is for the General Assembly to meet via ZOOM in early June, there is an overture requesting that major decisions be delayed until General Assembly can meet in person.

In advance of the meeting, a copy of a summary letter and a series of questions and answers were circulated to the congregation via the e-newsletter. Those in attendance were invited to ask questions or to provide comments on the circulated questions and answers. In summary, there were four areas of question and comment:

Remits B and C: The remits will be voted on separately because they are independent questions.

Two Synods: The comments generally reflected doubt on the overall benefit of two synods, and in particular that equal benefits would be available to both synods.

Gracious dismissal: Session was encouraged to review the evolving thinking on the concept and to study it further to be able to provide details.

Other: There were pleas for no change to the existing position on the definition of marriage. Also, there were questions about how well the approximately 400 commissioners to the General Assembly would be able to represent the preferences of the over 70,000 members of the PCC.

To assess the degree of support for the session's position on the definition of marriage and eligibility for ordination, two questions were put via an anonymous electronic poll:

#### Poll question #1

Does the congregation support the session's position that the current definition of marriage as stated in the confessions (Westminster Confession of Faith and Living Faith) should continue to be upheld?

Yes - 36

No - 6

Undecided - 3

Total votes cast - 45

Poll question #2

Do you support the position of the session that the current standards for ordination as ministers and elders remain as they are currently?

Yes - 35

No - 7

Undecided - 5

Total votes cast – 47

It was moved by Brenda Featherstone and seconded by John Huber that we adjourn and John Huber, John Fair and the Moderator adjourned the meeting with prayer at 9:25 p.m.

Dennis Featherstone  
Secretary

Rev. James T. Hurd  
Moderator