

Renewal News!

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The Renewal Fellowship within The Presbyterian Church in Canada

is a means to contact and encourage those concerned about the evangelical renewal of the PCC.

Our mission:

To lead each other and The Presbyterian Church in Canada to authentic Biblical thinking, powerful Spirit-led prayer and effective Gospel witness.

Our twin priorities are

PRAYER &
PASTORAL CARE

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The Renewal News is a quarterly publication of Renewal Fellowship.

We welcome your stories

A new front emerges Opposition to Physician Assisted Suicide/MAID

By **Andy Cornell**
Executive Director

Like a typical town hall meeting, Renewal Cafes provide a glimpse into the mind of Christ within the evangelical wings of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We send an invitation, accept RSVPs and open the door. The conversation then takes a life of its own.

The invitation to the July Cafe was a buffet of sorts. It served up a taste of what I determined were the most-notable news and happenings at General Assembly and invited readers to come and share. I had expected the top issue to be the ongoing uneasy tension over sexuality. GA 2023 was the first in person since dual definitions of marriage were adopted. How is liberty of con-

science and action holding up? While that remained a concern, I was surprised to see that most of the conversation at the Cafe revolved around Medical Assistance in Dying— more accurately known as Physician Assisted Suicide. The revulsion against the planned, deliberate ending of life was impressive. There is a hunger for resources which uphold the sanctity of life. So we created a new page on the RF website: <https://renewal-fellowship.ca/7649/> On it can be found church documents, a list of books and links to online resources.

One of the richest offerings is a discussion by a panel of pro-life believers: “MAID in Canada: A Multidisciplinary Conversation about End-of-Life Issues” reprinted from a Providence Theological Seminary publication.

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Bread in the wilderness

By **Sandy Copland-Dufour**
RF Board Chairperson

Dear Fellow Followers of Jesus,

I recently came across a prayer/poem of Walter Brueggemann. It begins:

“On our own, we conclude: there is not enough to go around, we are going to run short of money, of love, of grades, of publications...” (1)

We are living in a time of “shrinkflation.” We see packaging change to accommodate smaller amounts for which we pay more. Wages are not keeping pace with cost of living and in-

terest rate increases. We are all feeling the pinch. How are we, as Christians, as believers in God’s goodness and generosity supposed to respond to our anxieties about the future?

Should we as Brueggemann writes: seize the day, seize our goods, seize our neighbour’s goods because “there is not enough to go around”? Perhaps we glibly assure each other that all will be well. Or perhaps we quietly and stoically poke another hole in our belts and tighten once more.

See GOD WITH US Page 3

PAS/MAID: readers respond

“I have found in my congregations that people who have experienced loved ones or friends choosing Assisted Suicide the predominant feeling is awkwardness, uncertainty, cushioned in the “don’t want to say anything bad about it or their decision.” Glad you’re looking into it and resources available. . . My concern is sanctity of life including the value of life, our ability to serve/bring glory to God in all stages/seasons. If we agree death is the answer then we agree this life has nothing left to contribute. My other concern is how in this response to ter-

minal, critical illness, places limitations on God and his impact on the individual, forgetting his profound and intimate work in suffering.

Shannon Shearer
Youth & Family Ministries Pastor
St Andrew’s Bolsover &
Woodville Community
Presbyterian Churches

I agree this is an important issue. But it is much, much wider than the frail elderly and the terminally ill. It is becoming a means of capi-

tal punishment in Canadian penitentiaries. Forty per cent of those under 40 years old in Canada believe in MAID as a way of dealing with the depression poverty brings. The Indigenous community is deeply worried about the impact on teenagers in their communities. If this is something Renewal Fellowship is going to address please speak about the bigger context.

Second, the approach needs to affirm life, not attack MAID. It needs to leave MAID as a denier of life — not those concerned about MAID as a denier of choice.

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New front

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Like our Cafe participants and others in evangelical Christian orthodoxy, I am blown away at the pace of change within this issue and the cavalier attitudes of many in secular cultures and the church. In the Providence discussion, hospital chaplain Paul Blair summed it up nicely: “Now it takes more time to file a marriage licence than it does to kill yourself. The law requires you to be more reflective about taking out a car loan than about ending your life. I have seen patients euthanized within less than 24 hours of asking for it — which is unprecedented in health care. There is no other health service you can access that rapidly.”

That speaks volumes.

The panelists touched on a vital issue: the reason for such wide support for PAS or Physician-Assisted Death. Poverty, lack of purpose and boredom are valid reasons, apparently. Psychiatrist Victor Frankl observed that those who have a will to live can survive anything. His experience in a concentration camp revealed the freedom to choose; no one can take away one’s freedom to choose to live, and to live with a purpose. Those with that mindset were more apt to survive. In Frankl’s case, his purpose was to thrive and make an indelible contribution by developing Logotherapy.

If I was in hospital and someone on the medical team asked if I’d considered MAID/PAS I would be horrified. Talk about the removal of hope. It would plant a seed of worry that might take over my thinking. What if someone with POA decided to take that step on my behalf? (Can they actually do that?) What if another practitioner suggested it, and another? Wear the frail and weary down while in a vulnerable state. Frightening. What people need in palliative care is peace, not fear, however irrational.

Pastorally, it’s a tough hill to climb. In my congregation and in the community there’s wide support. It’s seen as a thing of beauty. A peaceful death. But they’re missing something powerful. David Guretzki, who is executive vice-president and resident theologian of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, said: “Pastoral care does not ask the question, what is the solution to the presenting problem, but what is the word of God that this person needs to hear right now?” Also: “that chart where the federal government lists reasons why people chose MAID, they will see that of the 12 reasons given, about five of them are medically related and about seven of them are things that the church could actually contribute to.” Again, a tough hill when no one has the motivation to climb.

What are your thoughts on this issue? Share them and we will consider them for publication in a future edition of Renewal News.

Retreat needs financial support

The Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga will again be the setting for our PCC Pastor's Retreat from Nov. 6-8. Teaching will be led by Rev. Dr. Richard Topping of Vancouver School of Theology with a worship team led by Rev. James Yang and friends.

The good news is that all the pieces were in place in late spring and we were able to open registrations in June. Unfortunately, fundraising efforts did not yield the same fruit as 2022. As a result, we had to close registrations at 34 in late August as we launched a second call for donations. At newsletter deadline, the organizing team remained hopeful that funds would still be found to accommodate all who wish to attend. Donations will be received right up to the event. Tax receipts will be issued.

- e-transfer to renewal-fellowship@pcc@gmail.com, specify Pastor Retreat.
- Mail a cheque to Renewal Fellowship, 3819 Bloor Street West, Etobicoke, Ontario M9B 1K7.
- Securely online with a credit card through [Canada Helps](#).

God with us, Emmanuel

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How do we face the encroachments to what we believe the Word teaches? How do we counter the shrinkflation of our financial situation? Brueggemann again reminds us that “in the midst of our perceived deficit you come, you come giving bread in the wilderness, you come giving children at the 11th hour, you come giving homes to exiles, you come giving futures to the shut down, you come giving Easter joy to the dead, you come – fleshed in Jesus.” And so, “by your giving, break our cycles of imagined scarcity, override our presumed deficits, quiet our anxieties of lack, transform our perceptual field to see, the abundance . . . mercy upon mercy, blessing upon blessing.” Can we keep on keeping on, trusting Jesus’ words about His presence and protection? Walking into each new day with its deficiencies and needs, knowing that our God will supply all our needs according to His riches? Does He truly own the cattle on a thousand hills?

Brueggemann again: “Sink your generosity deep into our lives, that your muchness may expose our false lack that endlessly receiving we may endlessly give, so that the world may be made Easter new, without greedy lack, but only wonder, without coercive need but only love, without destructive greed but only praise, all things Easter new . . . all around us, toward us and by us, all things Easter new.”

I pray for us as a Fellowship that we can boldly go into an unknown future led by a known Saviour, a loving Father who sees all and knows all, accompanied by the Holy Spirit of Jesus, God with us, Emmanuel.

(1) Inscripting the Test: Sermons and Prayers of Walter Brueggemann, 3-4.

Readers respond

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Third, the church needs to speak powerfully to hope for the depressed and the anxious, and committing itself to being community for the depressed and the anxious.

Rev. Peter Bush
Fergus, Ontario

Wow. Just wow. Hard to believe that in the space of just six years an excellent work such as the one produced can move from acceptance by the church to needing to completely re-do the work from an opposite position. It must break the

hearts of those who drafted it such as Chris O'Reilly, Myrna Talbot and Maureen Ord, all of whom have been friends and whose faith is inspirational to us. It reaffirms for us that sex is not the only reason we were led out of the PCC. I'm grieved to read this. Good for you and RF to be unafraid to open these conversations and seek to represent a life-affirming position.

Rev. Shannon Bell
Nazko, BC

How can drug overdose suicides be a problem and yet medi-suicide is a great concept?

Rev. James H. Knott

Clarksburg, Ont

Even some funeral homes offer MAID now – for convenience! I highly recommend the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, and its sister group Compassionate Care Canada. Alex Schadenburg of London heads both – assists those struggling at end of life – and educates every way he can about medically assisted suicide. I understand why you say Physician Assisted Suicide for sure. Let's get rid of God's greatest creation: man. The devil's plan – to make it seem right. Thanks for standing for life!

Jane Wright
Chatham, Ontario

'Go to the desert road'

Message to GA during morning worship June 7

A divine command steered Philip. As a preacher he was to go to the desert road which was not a road, in fact. But Philip followed the command with a childlike innocence and profound trust in God's mystery. So, there he was, in the wilderness with the Spirit. The absurd command led him to an absurd surprise in the remote place. He saw a chariot moving. It was carrying an influential Ethiopian eunuch. "Go to the chariot and stay near it." Urgently, the Spirit pushed Philip toward the unknown and unthinkable.

The Ethiopian eunuch was reading the text about the suffering servant from the book of Isaiah. Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The response from the reader was, "I need good hermeneutical guidance." Philip gladly mounted on the chariot. Verse 35 says, "Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good

news about Jesus." The connection made between Philip and the eunuch was like a whirlwind. The excitement of the companionship on the chariot was electrifying. The quickly formed friendship crossed over freely the borders of skin colour, gender,

man love will be seen at its height." In such an unlikely place, suddenly human love was shown at its height with the exquisite orchestration of the Spirit.

"Like a sheep, he was led to the slaughter . . . In his humiliation, justice was denied

“The invoking joy of living in fragments no longer and the blessed taste of what is to come transcends even the limits of time and space. To our great surprise, even in the wilderness, the baptismal water flows.



Rev. Dr. Joon Ki Kim

him." When the astounding friendship emerged, the mangled body of the Crucified One was discussed in the presence of the Spirit of the Resurrected Lord. The center of true connection cannot be a particular culture, race,

or class. The center is One

socio-economic class and religious background. The classic division between the Jews and Gentiles lost its tenacious, formidable grip. *Howards End*, by E. M. Foster, vividly describes the reality of classism in British society. A part of the novel says: "Without connection, we are meaningless fragments . . . Connect the prose and passion, [which seem to contrast each other.] Both will be exalted, and hu-

Lord who draws everyone toward him by giving himself away entirely in selfless love. And each one drawn to the Lord becomes vulnerable to new alarming changes because of the compelling love. Willie James Jennings — in his commentary on the book of Acts — says, "Where God comes, a surprising new follows, such that no one in Israel had ever seen.

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Baptism by snow in Pictou Presbytery

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The new wrought by God will now bind together Philip and the eunuch in a new paradigm of belonging.” “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” The eunuch realized his own body was included in the body of Jesus Christ, just like Philip’s. Water was poured on him in the wilderness. The bond of the extraordinary community was sealed by the baptism for good.

As you know, Nova Scotia is quite different from the wilderness. About eight years ago, I came to this beautiful part of the world. Here my family and I have been inundated by the characteristic kindness of Nova Scotians in Pictou

County and their soothing welcoming warmth. I needed some adjustment though when I had my first winter here. Before coming to Pictou County, I lived only in apartment buildings in Toronto or in Korea. For that reason, snow removal was not my particular strength. During my first winter in Nova Scotia in 2015, I was shocked to see how much snow we had. And I needed to

learn how to use a snowblower. The caring church members and my wonderful neighbors helped me to have the necessary basic knowledge about the machine. One day, I was using it for the first time after we had a huge snowstorm. When I was struggling with it on my driveway, suddenly a gust of wind blew toward me. A bunch of snow that was just made to float in the air by the snowblower all

their presence and gifts shared with me at abundance, I became certain that recentring of the culture of a community on the foundation of the broken body on the table was not wishful thinking. The hearty laughter in daily life, the shared heart-wrenching grief of the loss of loved ones, the stories of life both ordinary and unique, occasional good lobster meals, and the joy of singing old gospel pieces and

folk songs are all spiritual, human, personal and communal experiences. Several years ago, on a Sunday morning, I sang a Korean song. After the service was over, a member of the congregation came up to me to say, “Joon Ki, you told us about how the Korean words of the song could be translated



JOON KI KIM ON HIS MAIDEN SNOWBLOWER MISSION

“One could be baptized in snow not only in water.”

came upon me. I came to know one could be baptized in snow, not only in water. Hopefully, it was the baptism in snow and power, which helped me to be born again as a Korean Nova Scotian, a beautiful new identity in Christ.

The surprising grace of the Spirit of God led me to meet and serve two congregations in Pictou County. Thanks to

ed to English but even without the translation, listening to your singing in Korean, I thought I knew what it meant.” For a long time, I doubted that such a community could exist or be formed. I am grateful that the work of the Spirit, and the bountiful love of the congregations made a believer out of me.

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Good news, but challenge remains

Decline slowed after increased financial support from congregations

Thanks to our faithful supporters, the decline in our finances for the first half of 2023 was not as bad as we had expected. Renewal Fellowship lost \$17,288 from January to June compared to a budgeted loss of \$26,552.

Part of the reason for this is the increase in donations from congregations. We received an additional \$4,300 over 2022. (This does not include gifts received during the summer.) And while individual and family donations are lower overall, we did receive some significant increases from a few donors. God bless our donors. The support is humbling.

Unfortunately, the financial decline continues. Our cash reserves – which keeps us afloat – continues to decline. During the first half of 2023, the bank balance went from \$46,200 to \$34,600. Clearly, the current rate of spending is unsustainable.

Some other notable facts:

- From January to June, our membership declined 18 per cent, which is not quite as fast as expected. On the positive side, our remaining members are on average giving a bit more.

- January-June we lost \$17,300. We had expected to lose \$26,600. Last year

in this period we lost \$14,700.

- The Annual meeting and Renewal Day did not attract as many people as planned and as a result, costs were much less than we planned. Our plan was to break even but we made over \$700.

- The executive director's road trip to General Assembly in Halifax cost \$300 less than budgeted.

- Renewal's cash reserve exists largely due to two sizable bequests: \$50,000 in 2016 and the same amount from another estate in 2020.

Renewal Fellowship's board of directors meets in person November 4-5 at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Simcoe Ontario. Our future will be the main item on the agenda. Please pray for the board. Their names are listed on Page 8. We ask that you grant them the ability to clearly discern God's Holy and Perfect Will for our mission to the PCC.

How do we adapt to a different financial climate and yet remain as a voice of encouragement for those who adhere to authentic Biblical thinking, who practice powerful and Spirit-led prayer and effective Gospel witness?

Year Members

1983	379
1984	468
1985	646
1986	723
1987	606
1988	827
1989	732
1990	702
1991	761
1992	674
1993	774
1994	795
1995	808
1996	832
1997	856
1998	837
1999	963
2000	1,030
2001	1,056
2002	1,067
2003	1,027
2004	1,021
2005	844
2006	857
2007	812
2008	701
2009	714
2010	613
2011	614
2012	590
2013	583
2014	591
2015	591
2016	524
2017	520
2018	527
2019	496
2020	441
2021	420
2022	402

Thanks to our supporting congregations

From September 2022 to the end of August 2023, Renewal Fellowship received a total of \$18,514 from 14 congregations. Amounts ranged from \$100 to \$3,499 in lump sums or installments.

Bridlewood, Scarborough ON
 Cheyne, Stoney Creek ON
 First, Trail BC
 Grace West Hill, Scarborough
 Knox, Cranbrook BC
 Norman Kennedy, Regina SK
 Parkwood, Ottawa ON

St. Andrew's, Parry Sound ON
 St. Andrew's, Etobicoke ON
 St. Andrew's, Huntsville ON
 St. Andrew's, Welland ON
 St. Columba, Vancouver BC
 St. James, Miramichi NB
 St. Mark's Charlottetown, PEI

Christianity and Liberalism

Classic 1923 text by J. Gresham Machen comes to life again

By Andy Cornell
Executive director

In this diverse world of ours, we live side-by-side with colleagues, friends, neighbours and even family members who hold sometimes radically different political views, lifestyles and opinions about life.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has never been wholly unified. Progressives and traditionalists have been at odds since our inception over theology, worship and preaching styles, music and even architecture. Some would argue that the PCC crossed the line decades ago in practical terms by turning a blind eye to those who openly practiced and preached what was contrary to our subordinate standards. The 2021 decision to formally break with orthodoxy by redefining marriage marked a formal departure from global evangelicalism.

The PCC is formally divided, with two solitudes. We have a small majority consisting of progressives or liberals. We also have a significant minority of those who adhere to what we call “authentic Biblical thinking” – which reflects what most believers follow today and throughout history. There is also the mushy middle of those who aren’t quite sure about theology (or don’t care) but remain due to their love of their community, their building or family ties.

Does theology matter? Even a casual reading of scripture finds great passion for correct understanding of God and His Kingdom. The Lord had little patience for those who should have known better. “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of

God” (Matthew 22:29) he told the Sadducees.

Indeed, theology matters greatly. This is why the more conservative seminaries place great emphasis on systematic theology – a correct understanding of doctrine – while others emphasize more of a laissez-faire approach to hermeneutics. And it’s why pastors and theologians of all theological leanings publish treatises in an effort to set things straight in their minds.

Christianity and Liberalism is one such work. Don’t let the title of the book deceive you. In grammatical terms, “and” is a conjunction which links or compares various things. At face value, the reader could understand Christianity could be correlated to liberalism in the same way one might say “much of the Western church today lacks discipline and faith.” Both aspects work together. This is a positive correlation. However, the author uses “and” in the negative sense: they are not the same. Christianity and liberalism are presented as antonyms.

Gresham Machen presents liberal Christianity as essentially un-Christian. It’s hardline. At first, I was taken aback by his lack of grace. It was published exactly 100 years ago in the midst of a bitter controversy between modernists and fundamentalists. It resulted in the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary when Princeton turned liberal. In an organized fashion, Gresham contrasts the foundations of classical Christian belief with those of liberalism on six matters.

1. Doctrine: “The Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded

upon a message. . . upon doctrine.” (Kindle locations 315-346)

2. God and man – and the concept of sin: “The consciousness of sin was formerly the starting point of all preaching but today, it is gone. Characteristic of the modern age, above all else, is a supreme confidence in human goodness.” (937)

3. The Bible: “Christianity is founded upon the Bible. It bases upon the Bible both its thinking and its life. Liberalism on the other hand is founded on the shifting emotions of sinful man.” (1132)

4. Christ: “Liberalism regards Him as an Example and Guide; Christianity, as a Savior.” (1365)

5. Salvation: “According to Christian belief, man exists for the sake of God; according to the liberal Church . . . God exists for the sake of man.” (2207)

6. The Church: “Modern liberalism is like the legalism of the middle ages, with its dependence upon the merit of man. And another reformation in God’s good time will come.” (2555)

Quotes are mere snippets and do not actually do justice to this work. It must be read, slowly and carefully. And with an open Bible at the ready. Technologically and culturally, Machen lived in a different age. But as I plodded through his words, I had the growing feeling that I was reading something that might well have been written in our current church climate. As such, it’s timeless.

A deeper review of this book by Carl Trueman can be found at <http://www.theologian.org.uk/doctrine/liberalism.html>

Desert and snow

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In Seoul, there is a cemetery for the missionaries who worked for Korea. It is located near the river in Seoul.

I visited the cemetery many years ago. To stand in front of the tombs of the missionaries was such an evocative experience to me.

Ruby Kendrick from Texas came to Korea in 1907. Her epitaph in the cemetery remarks, "If I had a thousand lives, Korea should have them all." I stood there for several minutes in amazement. Deep love leaves an indelible impact on people's minds, daily living, and history. "Look, here is water! What would stop me from being baptized?" The Ethiopian exclaimed in joy. The Holy Spirit continues to weave the separate stories of individuals through the discussed Word, water, and the eternal love that is alive in you and me.

When I think about the current challenges that many congregations have faced, I often remember a Korean theologian whose name is Kim Kyo Shin. Kim Kyo Shin lived from 1901 until 1945. He was not an ordained minister but a schoolteacher and a daring and inspiring theologian. During the time of his life, Korea groaned under the oppressive power of colonialism. But in the body of the Risen Lord, he found hope for the poor and helpless sufferers. A Christian monthly publication was issued by Kim Kyo Shin. There he shared his passionate love for the Word of God and the people in Korea. In the first issue of the publication, he said, "Wipe dust on your feet to the traditions which worship themselves not Christ. Instead, you go to the countryside and mountainside. Meet a poor laborer there. Make it your mission to console his or her burdened soul. Even though our companions who listen to us appear hundred years later, what more could we ask for?"

The invoking joy of living in fragments no longer and the blessed taste of what is to come transcends even the limits of time and space. To our great surprise, even in the wilderness, the baptismal water flows. Amen.

Rev. Joon-ki Kim, Ph.D, is minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and Little Harbour Presbyterian Church in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.



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Members normally serve for two terms of three years each (six years total). Board members are elected at the spring annual general meeting. The board meets at least three times a year.

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RF's mission

To lead each other
 &
 The Presbyterian Church in Canada
 to
 authentic Biblical thinking,
 powerful Spirit-led prayer, and
 effective Gospel witness.