

L'ÉGLISE PRESBYTÉRIENNE AU CANADA -- THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA
CONSISTOIRE DE MONTRÉAL -- PRESBYTERY OF MONTREAL

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**Overture from the Arabic Presbyterian Church of Montreal
Concerning Restructuring Synods and Presbyteries along Theological Lines**

Minute extract of an overture transmitted by the Presbytery of Montreal

At Montreal, on the internet by Zoom, the 16th day of March in the year 2021:
Which day the Presbytery of Montreal met and was constituted with prayer.
Among other matters addressed, the presbytery agreed to transmit the following overture to the General Assembly:

To the Venerable the General Assembly:

WHEREAS: the effects of the remits on marriage and ordination adopted by the 145th General Assembly and submitted to presbyteries under the Barrier Act are to enshrine in church law and culture two very different understandings of marriage which if ultimately adopted require that space be found for those holding these different understandings to live and practice the same with integrity in Christian community, in both congregations and presbyteries; and

WHEREAS: PCC does not need to be an entirely monolithic homogeneous unit, and there can be different expressions of Presbyterianism in Canada; and

WHEREAS: We seek congregations and presbyteries to exist with theological and pastoral integrity; and

WHEREAS: There is significant theological divergence in the PCC, currently under one structure; and

WHEREAS: There are differences of authority that are unsustainable in a monolithic structure, and

WHEREAS: There is a long-term trend of diminishing membership in the PCC (a reduction of 30,000 between 2010 and 2020), which would be further weakened by departures for theological reasons; and

WHEREAS: We are ethnically and theologically diverse and need to respect different voices in secure spaces, allowing for effective work and witness; and

WHEREAS: There is precedent for "elective-affinity presbyteries" (among Presbyterians in the United States in the 1830s) enabling those with differing theological convictions and practices to collaborate together, maintaining those convictions and practices within respective presbyteries while still functioning within one national General Assembly structure, at least for a time; and

WHEREAS: There are already existing presbyteries formed along a combination of geographical and non-geographical considerations (Eastern and Western HanCa); and

WHEREAS: There are 45 presbyteries in the PCC some of which are too unpopulated to be able to function effectively and optimally; and

WHEREAS: There are some congregations and presbyteries which are internally divided theologically, seriously impeding effective advances in ministry to fulfill Christ's mission; and

WHEREAS: There are some national functions that are common to all, regardless of theological considerations (e.g. pensions and benefits, Leading with Care policy, archives, PWS&D relief efforts, etc.):

THEREFORE, the session of the Arabic Presbyterian Church of Montreal humbly overtures the Venerable, the one hundred and forty-sixth General Assembly to:

- A) take steps to form two synods, each national in scope, with autonomy in doctrinal issues, discipline, etc.
- B) enable the formation of presbyteries along generous regional and theological lines
- C) confine General Assembly responsibilities to matters common to both synods; or to do otherwise as General Assembly in its wisdom may deem best, or to do otherwise as the General Assembly, in its wisdom, deems best.

The Presbytery transmits this overture without comment.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael Pettem", followed by a long horizontal flourish line extending to the right.

Michael Pettem
Clerk of Presbytery