The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Highlights from the Second Full Day of General Assembly

Worship



June 3, the second full day of the 2025 General Assembly, opened with worship led by the Rev. Angie Song, a Doctoral Student at Vancouver School of Theology. Angie preached on John 20:24-29, where Thomas needs to touch the wounds of Christ in order to believe that he has truly returned from the dead. It is easy to wonder how we can believe in modern times when there are no wounds to touch. Yet Jesus says, “Blessed are those who have not seen and have come to believe”– seeing Jesus in the flesh is not a prerequisite of faith. “We may not have the wounded body to touch,” Angie stated, “but we, the church, are Christ’s body. And if scars are the proof of the healing of wounds and Christ’s unwavering love for the world, then we see Christ every time we participate in and witness Jesus’ presence even in our disbelief, grief and lostness.” We are all called to go and touch the wounds of the world because that is where Jesus is at work. Angie ended her reflection with the question, “Will we heed this call with courage?” Also joining in worship were liturgist Lynn Judd, an Elder at St. Andrews PC in Calgary and the Trinity House Band from Trinity, York Mills PC in Toronto.

The Cutting Edge of Mission Award: Friends of Prison Ministry, Malawi

Many people live in ways that are faithful to what God is calling them to do. The “cutting edge of mission” award seeks to recognize people and organizations that think and act outside the box. These are the prophetic voices that call for justice and action. These women and men have a

sacrifice.



This year, the annual award recognizes the work of Friends of Prison ministry, which strives to plant seeds of Hope in the prisons in Malawi. Men and women lack basic necessities, struggle with sickness and disease, poor hygiene, limited clean water and food, and live with the fear that they have been forgotten (by their country, their family and God). This ministry brings the hope and love of God, as found in Jesus, into these dark and desperate places.

The Rev. Hastings Phale, a member of the ministry team, was unable to attend in person, so the PCC's Malawi Liaison, the Rev. Joel Sherbino from Paris Presbyterian Church accepted the award on the team's behalf, sharing how being a part of the ministry over the past ten years has captured his heart. In 2015, the team started by visiting two prisons. The number has now grown to 24, in which 6,000 men, women and children are incarcerated. Joel shared a video of Hastings, who expressed his warm greetings to the PCC and gratitude for the award. He spoke of the prison work, describing the abysmal conditions. Team members are known in prisons as "Abwenzi" – meaning "companion" in Chichewa. In a place where many prisoners have been rejected by their families, friends, and communities, the team is there to share the Good News of God's love through counselling, hygiene supplies, Bible study, worship, friendship, advocacy, and more. Hastings addressed the commissioners briefly via livestream, once again expressing thanks to the PCC for our support, saying, "Without you, we cannot proceed to bring the good message and bring joy to others."

The Moderator greeted Hastings and accepted a gift from Joel on behalf of the ministry team.

International Affairs

Following the presentation of the award, as part of the International Affairs report, the Assembly heard updates on decisions by previous Assemblies on Palestine, which included the 2023 resolution that a "member of the leadership team of Independent Jewish Voices and/or Canadian Voices for Peace (an offshoot of the Israeli group, Voices for Peace) be invited to address the General Assembly at its next meeting". In addressing this year's Assembly, Corey Balsam, Executive Director of Independent Jewish Voices, detailed the atrocities the Israeli government is perpetrating against Palestinians, specifically in Gaza, driven by "voices" that no longer represent fringe ideology and a "genocidal mindset that has infected Israeli society."



intentional campaign to make Gaza unlivable. In the face of genocide, to be “neutral” is to take a “hollow” stand. Corey reminded the Assembly that as a Jewish person, he understood the core post-Holocaust principle of “never again” is a universal principle that includes everyone. He also noted that “genocide doesn’t happen overnight. It starts with dehumanization [and what we’re witnessing] is the culmination of decades of erasure of the Palestinian identity. With more than 60,000 people killed, hundreds of thousands more “mentally and physically scarred”, within a context where “starvation is used as a weapon of war […] and entire families and communities erased [there has] never been a more urgent time to act on Palestine.” Following Corey’s presentation, Commissioners debated five recommendations, one of which proposed that the PCC use practical tools for peace as outlined in the report to take concrete actions related to boycotting goods and services (including financial investments) that support the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory and resultant economic oppression of the Palestinian people.” In response to the deliberations, Rabbi David Mivasair reminded the Commissioners to follow their conscience when making decisions. He noted that “We are not trying to change history. What we are trying to do is to clarify our understanding of history. What really did happen? The best we can do is to change the future.” The Assembly adopted the report as a whole.



Ecumenical and Interfaith

Special Guest

The Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, General Secretary, Interim, World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), is a Ghanaian theologian born in Ho in the Volta region of Ghana in 1954. His education was mainly through Christian primary and secondary schools in Ghana. His theological studies began at the University of Ghana, Legon, and Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon in the 1970s. He has a Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree from Yale University

of churches as they also celebrate their 150th anniversary this year. He commended the PCC's healing and reconciliation work with Indigenous people, remarking that it resonates with the WCRC's work on justice, as articulated in the Accra Confession of 2004. Dr. Nyomi sent prayers that, as we celebrate this year, "The work on narratives of hope and possibility will be an inspirational tool that propels the Presbyterian Church in Canada into new heights of leadership in an era in which the larger society is experiencing despair and sensing walls and closed doors that deny people and creation the fullness of life for which our Lord Jesus Christ came." He requested our prayers for the upcoming General Council of the WCRC in October, under the theme "Persevere in Your Witness". He concluded by asking for God's blessings on the 2025 General Assembly.

Theological Colleges

Presbyterian College in Montreal, St. Andrew's Hall/Vancouver School of Theology in Vancouver and Knox College in Toronto combined their efforts this year to present their respective areas of work and reports to the Assembly as one. While lifting up what makes each of them distinct, they also illustrated what they share in common. The report was adopted as a whole.

Moments of Appreciation



The Assembly recognized and appreciated the many years of faithful service by the Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald, member of the Knox College faculty since 1996.
Stuart's research interests and publications are focused on both seventeenth century Scotland and contemporary religion in Canada, in particular religious demography and history related to The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
Stuart's teaching areas include the global history of Christianity, the reformation era, the history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the various explanations for changes which have occurred related to the place of religion in Western societies.
Stuart is a member of the Presbytery of Brampton and serves as Minister-in-Association at Clarkson Road Presbyterian Church, Mississauga.

Appreciation was also extended to the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean for his joyful, diligent and long service to Christ and the Church through his Bible translation work in Taiwan. While translating



generosity of time, sharing of their traditional language and knowledge made the translation initiative possible. The Rev. (Avai) Ching-Fa Chen from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, shared that if language disappears, people will also disappear. Because of Paul, these languages are being kept alive.

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