



# 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

The Presbyterian  
Church in Canada

Carleton University, Ottawa ON  
1-6 June 2008

## WEDNESDAY

JUNE 4, 2008

BY RUTH HOUTBY

### WORSHIP

*Grace Church is a Christian community of about 150 people serving eastern Ottawa. The sign inside our door says, "Our Church of Grace to all who need comfort; to all who need friendship; to the broken who seek healing and grace; to the wounded who need rest and the power to face tomorrow; to those who seek sanctuary and the need of a Saviour; this church opens its door and in the name of Jesus Christ says, 'Welcome!'"*

As the day began, the Assembly gathered for morning worship with Grace Church and raised their voices in praise under the leadership of their praise team. We heard about the judge and the persistent widow and the link between justice and faith and how as followers of Jesus Christ we are to be advocates of justice. "What will be the signature drum beat of The Presbyterian Church in Canada?" and "What will our drum beat mean?"

### A NEW DAY

This day proved to be a relatively "quiet" day on the floor of Assembly and as someone quipped at the end of the day "there were no fisticuffs on the floor of Assembly today!" And so the business of the Assembly soon got under way as Moderator, Cheol Soon Park opened the Assembly with prayer and welcomed the commissioners to a new day! He pointed out his new haberdashery and looked very fitting in his new Presbyterian Church in Canada stole!



Praise Team from Grace Church, Ottawa

Helen Humphreys, immediate past president of the Atlantic Mission Society, began the business presenting the report of the AMS in the absence of the current president. She brought to our attention that the AMS has many men as members and they are indeed proud of this fact! Mention was made of long time editor of *The Message*, Janice Carter, who died this past March after a long battle with cancer. Tribute was given to Janice at their Annual Meeting. Helen reminded everyone about the publication and urged all to pick one up at the display table. She passed one to the Moderator and lightened the load! Mission Awareness Sunday is celebrated each year and the theme this year was "Who is my Family?" The AMS continues to support Camp Geddie and bursaries are awarded each year to deserving theological students.

## ECUMENICAL INTERFAITH INTERNATIONAL VISITOR

Mr. Glen Choi was introduced and invited to address the Assembly. Mr. Choi is second generation Korean and comes to us from the Buddhist community in Canada. He holds degrees in the sociology of religion (i.e. Buddhism) and was host of "Path to Enlightenment" a documentary TV series on "Buddhism in Canada." He is presently a Ph.D student in the Department of Classical and Religious studies at the University of Ottawa.



Mr. Glen Choi

His research has a focus on the Buddhist community in Canada and he gave us a brief history of Buddhism in Canada. Established for 100 years the Buddhist population continues to grow mostly in the large urban centers and today tops 300,000 and is the fourth largest religion in Canada. The Moderator thanked Mr. Choi for being with us and presented him with a token of appreciation on behalf of the Assembly.

## BUSINESS OF THE DAY

The Responsibility to Protect Document as presented in the report of the **International Affairs Committee** (recommendation 8, pg. 12.1.13) was adopted.

Some debate ensued when a motion was put forward to reconsider Recommendation 3 on pg. 12.1.6. This being defeated a new motion was presented as follows ; Given that the World Council of Churches has designated this week as a Week of Action for Peace and Israel, and given that next year marks the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth that the Assembly repudiate any version of Christian Zionism that implies a two covenant theology, that it affirm Calvin's conviction (based on Paul) that, in the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith (VII,6) "there are not two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations" After discussion the motion was referred to the International Affairs Committee and Church Doctrine.

The **History Committee** began their report with acknowledgement and appreciation for the Rev. Dr. John Johnston and his devotion to the Committee on History and to his founding of the National Presbyterian Museum. It was adopted that the tribute to the Rev. Dr. John A. Johnston included in the report be spread in the minutes of the Assembly as a posthumous minute of appreciation. The Rev. Dr. Andrew Johnston having then joined the court, the minute of appreciation was read.

Wendy Fletcher Principle and Dean of the **Vancouver School of Theology** addressed the Assembly, giving background information about



Commissioners browsing The Bookroom during breaks.

the school and commended the Assembly for approving the establishment of the new chair of theology.

Dr. Fletcher expressed deep gratitude for the long and on-going relationship between VST and St. Andrew's Hall. She told us that many ask the question, "What difference does theological education make, what's it for?" Her reply; "It's a matter of life and death. School is a companion for the discipleship journey. Bread to a starving one. Theological education is a vehicle for the bread of life - carried to the people of God, it's leaders and teachers. The work of any theological school is a matter of life and death to us all. To live discipleship now in this time and this place. "

We were reminded that the business of theological education is about educating the whole cycle, body mind and spirit and that with schools as companions the possibility for the church is beyond measure. She urges us to be ready because we are the upcoming project!

The Assembly then moved on to approve the recommendation to appoint the Rev. Dr. Dale Woods as Director of Pastoral Studies at **Presbyterian College** for a three year term. Rev. Dr. John Vissers, principal of Presbyterian College, introduced Dr. Woods to the Assembly and he was welcomed by the moderator. The by-laws for

Knox College, as printed were approved. Narrative reports from the college were noted and are printed in the book of reports.

**The Life and Mission Agency** Report got under way with Daniel Cho, chair of the LMA Committee, opening with remarks about the Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, General Secretary of the LMA. Daniel updated us on Rick's health. His condition is improving and he is recovering at home. Rick wished to relay, through Daniel, his appreciation of the well wishes and prayers of so many during his illness. He expressed sincere gratitude to the court and to all who have passed along greetings to him for his recovery. The Moderator offered prayer for Rick and for his continuing recovery.

Daniel expressed gratitude to Ian Morrison for returning to the job of General Secretary while Rick recovers. Special thanks to Anne Phillips were extended for her ongoing support and dedication to the LMA during this crisis and indeed at all times. "She is the glue that holds it all together." Thanks were also extended to Dorothy Henderson who stepped in as acting General Secretary during that first week of Rick's illness.

Daniel also commented on his association with the present Moderator and of their adventures in the snow tobogganing!

Minutes of appreciation were read for the work of the Rev. Dr. Jim Czeglédi and for the work of Mr. Keith Knight.

A response from Jim was read by Daniel expressing thanks to the Assembly and the church for friendships made and for the dedication of the church. Jim gave thanks to God and The Presbyterian Church in Canada for the privilege of having served as Associate Secretary for Worship and Evangelism.

Keith responded with a letter to The Presbyterian Church in Canada with thanks to Ian Morrison for his guidance and support. He praised God for the privilege of walking with and among the people of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. "Communicate boldly that God is with you!" wrote Keith.

An update on the search process for a new Associate Secretary for Communication was given.

Because of the illness of Rick Fee and his involvement with this position the search process has been brought to a halt at this point and will resume at a later date.

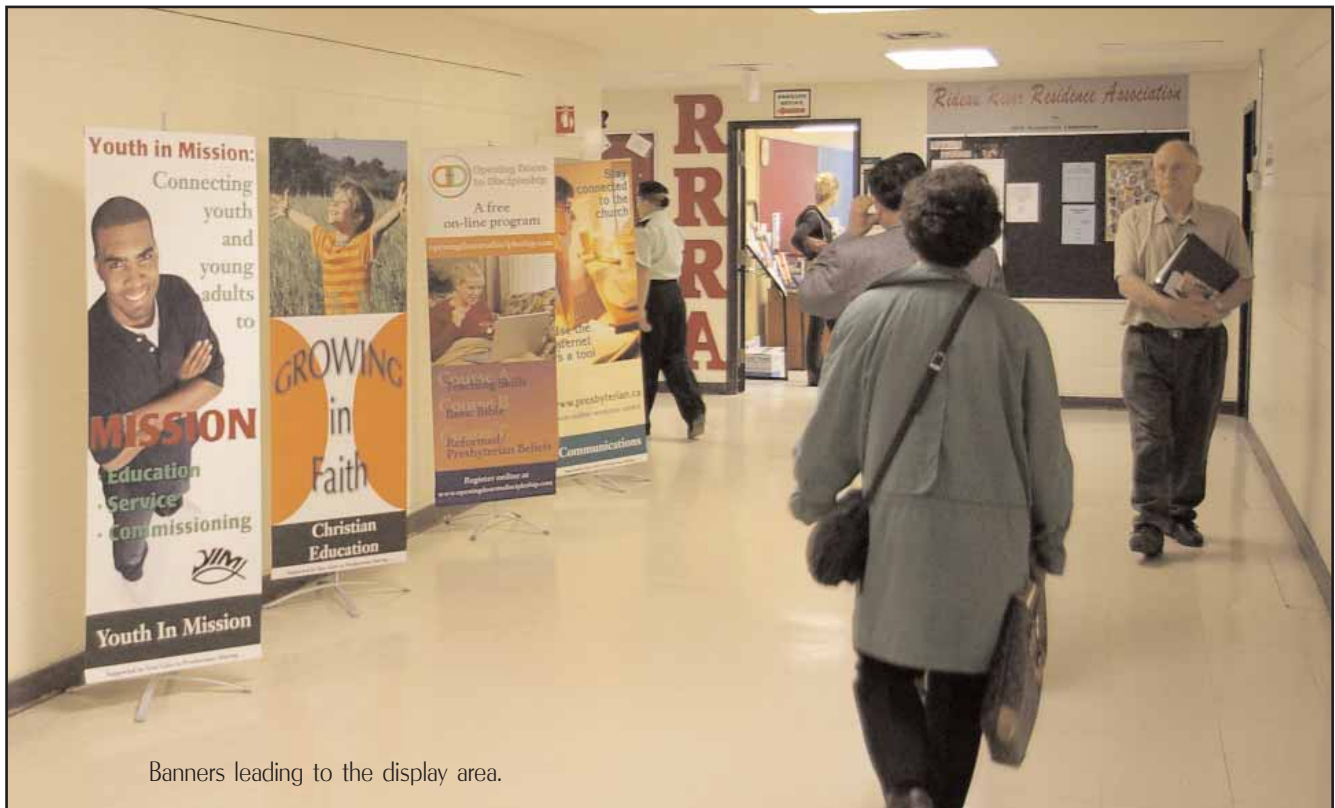
The mandate for the LMA is being revised and will come to the 2009 GA.

**Canada Ministries** - highlighting planning programs giving assistance in planting new congregations.

**Communication and Resource Production** - change in name because it was felt that communication was the most important part of this portfolio. Comments about the changes in The Presbyterian Church in Canada web site were offered.

Andrew Johnston, former convenor presented the **Presbyterian World Service and Development** report and urged the Assembly to hold up the power of prayer remembering all those who suffer in the world. Quoting Desmond Tutu addressing the World Council of Churches; "Evil, injustice, oppression, all those awful things, they are not going to have the last word. Goodness, laughter, joy, caring, compassion, the things that you do and you help others do, those are going to prevail."

Through these words we were reminded of the kingdom acts of compassion and justice. The Assembly was reminded that Development work remains a priority of PWS&D; Andrew reminded us that "though it is the emergency appeals that catch our eye in the media, it is the slow, steady work of education, income generation, health care,



Banners leading to the display area.

sustainable agriculture that provide firm foundations for life.” PWS&D has an ongoing and continuing emphasis on community projects. There is no sponsorship of individuals, but it is water tanks for the whole village in Africa, health workers for the whole village in India, sustainable and organic farming for the whole village in Guatemala.

The Assembly was commended to uphold the work of PWS&D for it is the slow and steady work which provides the firm foundations of life. This is the work of PWS&D where emphasis in development remains upon communities, whole regions, where local small scale development work becoming and more and more urgent in the world. We are doing it in PWS&D.

The second emphasis for this “small and mighty team” at PWS&D is partnership. They are committed to working with local churches and partners in supporting local Christians and their work as Christians in their places. Supporting rather than implementing projects is what makes PWS&D different from other Aid organizations. By working through local partners much is contributed through local volunteers working through church and community who are at work amongst their own peoples. “Not only is this a way to support the local churches and partners, but this ensures that all is done with knowledge and skills appropriate, with personal care and community understanding, with highest levels of responsiveness and accountability.

PWS&D has introduced something new this year -The Loaves and Fishes Fund. PWS&D operates with no endowments and no support from national churches funds. They are completely reliant upon the offerings and fundraisers of individuals and congregations within the church. “From time to time larger sums are received and it was felt that it would be most respectful of donors and of our partners, if these sums could be expended not all within that particular calendar year, but over a period of years. This exciting new tool allows for projects to be developed and progress monitored.” This new fund was commended to the Assembly for consideration and publication.



Wireless microphones were available for commissioners who couldn't easily get to the microphone stands.

Ken Kim, executive director of PWS&D, brought the Assembly up to date on the ongoing appeals to Burma and China and extended thanks to those who support PWS&D. A brief video presented some of the work of PWS&D in photographs.

A vote of thanks to the church was passed commending all for their generous support of PWS&D and that congregations be encouraged to consider PWS&D as a line item on their weekly offering envelopes.

The convener of the **MacLean Estate** highlighted the many events that take place at the Crieff Hills Community He gave a brief history of Crieff and how it came into the possession of The Presbyterian Church in Canada through a generous donation of the MacLean Estate and the gift of 300 acres of property. What an amazing Planned Gift! Thanks were extended to Lawrence Pentelow, managing director of Crieff Hills Community.

**Committee to Nominate** - report presented and adopted as circulated as well the **Committee to advise the Moderator** was approved.

The Assembly adjourned for the evening and the commissioners moved off, some to enjoy an evening of planned events around the city of Ottawa and others to take advantage of some free time to catch up with old friends, to visit and even to catch up on some sleep!