

The 2015 General Assembly

Our delegates were Rhonda McClure and Donald Walcott

The General Assembly 2015 Of the Presbyterian Church in Canada opened with worship at Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church in Vancouver. This was special and significant for us because this is the church where Steve Filyk is Minister, formerly an Assistant Minister at St. Andrew and St. Paul. The service had a large representation and participation from several different cultures, most notably Native American and Korean.

The General Assembly (GA) was well organized and run. The Moderator, the Reverend Karen Horst did a wonderful job, keeping everything in order and running smoothly. The 2015 GA was held at the campus of the University of British Columbia, a breathtaking location with good residence accommodation.

Overall the most positive experiences were the worship, singing, prayer and the table groups during the human sexuality discussion. Although the human sexuality “small group” discussions were handled sensitively, and seemed quite effective, it was the overall consensus that the Church may continue to sit on this issue without making any clear decision.

Our least favourite parts were the motions and counter motions made during most of the meeting. It was very confusing, most significantly during the human sexuality discussion - no one came out and said what was going on, and so one had to figure out the hidden agendas.

Several people were mentioned from our church which was very nice - Moira Barclay Fernie for all her ecumenical and interfaith work; David Christiani and his work on the Synod question; Keith Randall was described by the head of justice ministries as one of the best people he had trained and had done such good work during the Truth and Reconciliation study; and Dr. Armour was recognized and thanked by the Rev. Rick Fee. He was honoured for his mission work and his retirement was celebrated.

The overture on End-of-Life from the Rev. Roland de Vries and the Rev. Barry Mack (Presbytery of Montreal) was passed. Don Walcott had helped to draft the terms of reference on that committee. He was also appointed to the Pension Board.

I met the current minister of St. Andrew's Hespeler, the Rev. Scott McAndless. This was Jeff Veenstra's former congregation, and Jeff's parents still attend worship services there. Scott asked me to convey to the church family of St. Andrew and St. Paul how truly grateful Jeff's parents, and the entire Hespeler congregation, were for the support given to the Veenstra family during Jeff's illness, and for the support Diana and the family continue to receive. We should remember that the Hespeler church members are also in mourning, as Jeff was very dear to them.

Rhonda McClure

Viewpoint

A thoughtful perspective

David Seaman is an ordained Ruling Elder of our congregation, though because of his work he no longer lives here, and he is on the inactive list of Elders. His family still lives here, and at times such as Christmas and Easter David can be seen back in town and in the congregation. Here are some of his thoughts “from abroad”.

How can someone who has lived in New York City and Los Angeles for close to 19 years still consider the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul their home? It isn't like I haven't tried to find a substitute... When I first moved to Los Angeles I tried on at least five different churches from three denominations: Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregationalist and none of them really fit. I'll never forget going into Beverly Hills Presbyterian where a quartet was playing pre-service music and thinking that this might be a good fit. The minister came out and greeted the congregation, who answered in unison and, after the announcements he asked if we could all “hold hands” for the opening prayer. I glanced over my shoulder to see how far away I was from the door! In New York City, I was looking for some basics for my new place and found myself outside First Presbyterian Church, a fine edifice on 5th Avenue at 14th Street. I wandered into the offices where a receptionist was stationed like a sentry in the hallway. I enquired if I might visit the sanctuary and she sat up a little straighter and announced that “We don't do that”. I never gave that congregation a try!

I did ultimately find a church to attend in NY: Marble Collegiate, made famous by “The Power of Positive Thought” and Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. Riverside Church was exciting to attend, but at 120th Street on the West Side, it was a little too far to travel from 32nd Street on the East Side. In Los Angeles, either First Congregational in Hancock Park or Hollywood United Methodist have been doing their best to fill the void.

Back the original question: Why is A&P still home? Someone once wrote an article bemoaning the invention of the shower. Before the advent of the shower, one had to stop a few times a week and soak in a tub. You cannot do too much in a tub – books get wet and dropping a telephone could be a problem - so you are pretty much forced to be alone with your thoughts, to think. Unless someone bangs on the bathroom door, that time is uninterrupted. The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul has this incredible power of letting us think about God, to focus on all His goodness and how we fit into His world without interruption. Thoughtful prayers that our Ministers craft each Sunday, a sermon that hopefully makes me think outside of myself and music, that beautiful music, that transports us from this world into another. No “holding hands” or “passing of the peace” to interrupt the contemplative nature of these services. That said, the dynamic activities that take place in the halls outside of the sanctuary before and after the Sunday service and during the week make it clear that this is a community and one that is open to all and wanting to make a difference in God's name. It is this special balance that I have had trouble finding in my adopted cities and that I miss. I am glad I still have many reasons to visit Montreal and one of them is the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul.

David Seaman