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## Approaching the Millennium

### *Identity and Doubt*

The meeting of the 101st General Assembly in Montreal in 1975 climaxed the year of centennial celebrations. The numerous public events and historical publications had reminded Canadian Presbyterians of their rich and varied heritage, and seemed to have given them a greater confidence and self-awareness than ever before. At that very moment, however, the church's understanding of its own identity was challenged from an unexpected quarter. Twenty-eight Presbyterians and an equal number of United Church members, mostly clergy, issued a public call for an act of reconciliation in 1975 to end the tensions caused by church union a half century earlier. Although there was little immediate reaction to the manifesto itself, the question of the church's identity and self-understanding and of its relation to Canadian society were in fact addressed by leading churchmen. Moderator David Hay called for a return to authentic catholic Presbyterianism to avoid both sectarianism and sectionalism, and Dr. D. J. M. Corbett challenged the church to face the reality of a multicultural, multiracial Canada.<sup>1</sup>

As an official response to the manifesto the General Assembly appointed a committee to join representatives of the United Church in discussing "closer co-operation" between the two churches, possibly through joint presbytery meetings. By 1978 it became clear that the United Church wanted an organic union, to which one Presbyterian committee member replied, "Organic union is not the model of our time."<sup>2</sup> Seven resolutions submitted to the two churches

were not adopted, and the General Assembly effectively ended the exchange in 1979 with its decision that the time was not appropriate for the mutual reception of ministers by the two churches. Another question of inter-church relations had also arisen in 1975 when a conference of the World Council of Churches discussed the problem of joint worship and dialogue with Jews. One writer to the editor of the *Record* called on the Presbyterian Church to repudiate these dialogues and described them as “shocking heresy” and “snivelling accommodation,” which prompted another correspondent to remind critics of these dialogues that God is neither Christian nor Jew, but simply God.<sup>3</sup>

The decade following the centenary was marked by deep concern about the current state and the future of the church. By the late seventies it was obvious that church membership and givings were declining in all major Canadian Protestant churches, but from 1966 to 1976 the Presbyterian Church in Canada had recorded annual declines in membership, and proportionately the highest among major Protestant denominations. From 1956 to 1965 membership had grown an average 1.2 per cent per annum, but from 1965 to 1974 it had declined annually by 1.5 per cent. Losses had occurred in every synod, but the Atlantic Provinces and Saskatchewan showed the smallest loss while Toronto-Kingston had the largest. The church’s Comptroller insisted there was no crisis but that it was a time of financial stringency, while another contributor reminded readers of the *Record* that statistics taken alone are misleading and divert attention from what the church does to what the church has. The numerical loss of strength continued, however, particularly among younger generations. In 1960 111,874 students were enrolled in church schools. By 1975 this number had shrunk to 54,246, and by 1985 to 37,52 a reduction of 66 per cent in a quarter century. Similarly, when the Presbyterian Young People’s Society celebrated its own centenary in 1986 its members had declined from a one-time high of 10,000 to about 1000. According to the church’s own statistical records membership in the church fell between 1975 and 1985 by 5 per cent, from 171,791 to 163,170.<sup>4</sup>

Two related programmes were mounted in an attempt to counter falling membership. In 1976 the church announced that a “Second Century Advance for Christ” campaign to raise three million dollars would begin in 1978. This money was for outreach and missions, but the Advance programme called also for deeper spirituality and personal involvement in the church’s life. Three years later the General Assembly adopted another project, to double church membership in the eighties, which was expected to be the church’s decisive decade. One goal was to establish ten new congregations each year. More attention was given to youth ministry, and a new evangelical technique, “face to face,” was promoted. Despite workshops, training programmes and

“relational evangelism,” church membership continued to decline overall, although in erratic regional patterns. In 1984 the church recorded an increase of 750 communicant members, the first such increase in twenty years. A decade after the heady emotions of the church’s centenary the Second Century Advance for Christ campaign had ended almost \$2 million short of its objective. As for the plan to double the membership by 1990, the church had actually lost another 2 per cent of its members during the first six years of the campaign.<sup>5</sup>

In the years following the church’s centennial celebrations several issues that had arisen earlier became once more subjects of discussion and sometimes dispute within the church. Neo-Pentecostalism or the charismatic movement, that had caused divisions in congregations and the church in earlier years, reappeared in the seventies, although with less serious results. In 1974 one writer to the *Record* who had called the charismatic movement dangerous, mendacious and satanic, was accused by another of “terminal self—righteousness.” The next year the Committee on Church Doctrine declared, “In spite of the apparently genuine nature of the neo-Pentecostal experience, the way in which that experience is often interpreted is not true to Scripture.” In fact the interpretation “opens wide the door to errors and excesses which the Reformers already opposed in their time” and constituted “a false mysticism.” The Committee firmly rejected any “new or additional type of baptism.” This statement was denounced by some in the church and the Committee’s summary pamphlet was characterized as “wholly negative,” but popular interest in the issue waned after 1980.<sup>6</sup>

Also in the centennial year the General Assembly received overtures complaining that Canada’s abortion laws were being so liberally interpreted that they amounted to “abortion on demand.” The church was urged to investigate legal protection for the life of the unborn, and the government was urged to encourage adoption. The following year the Board of Congregational Life issued a statement calling for accountability on the part of abortion committees and recommending that presbyteries and congregations study its statement. Several presbyteries and congregations did respond in 1977 in favour of stricter interpretation of the abortion laws. There the issue rested until 1985 when the Assembly was again overtured to oppose any liberalization of the laws under which nearly a million abortions had been performed since 1969. Throughout 1985 the abortion issue was prominent in nearly every issue of the *Record*. A private letter of the Moderator denouncing abortion as murder brought replies that the Moderator’s approach to the problem was simplistic, and that the church’s urgent need was reconciliation rather than polarization on the abortion question.<sup>7</sup>

Like most Canadian churches the Presbyterian Church in Canada supported

the abolition of capital punishment and reaffirmed this position on several occasions. When the question of restoring the death penalty was reopened in the early eighties the Board of Congregational Life reminded Presbyterians that statistics showed a drop in the murder rate wherever capital punishment was abolished. At the level of national politics demands for restoration of the death penalty continued to be heard, and so the same Board suggested in 1985 that the government of Canada needed to be reminded of the church's pronouncements and that congregations should study this recurrent issue.<sup>8</sup> In 1974 the Presbyterian Church had joined PLURA (Presbyterian-Lutheran-United-Roman Catholic-Anglican), an interchurch group to promote social justice in Canada. PLURA had pursued its goals in relative harmony until, in 1981, controversy arose when PLURA granted almost \$5000 to investigate the relation of the gay community to society. As yet the Presbyterian Church had made no official pronouncement of its position on homosexuality, but this grant was seen to involve conflicting claims of Christian charity, values and human rights, and the church's Administrative Council agreed that the grant was a mistake in judgement made at the local level.<sup>9</sup> When the Presbytery of Cape Breton overtook the General Assembly in 1984 to condemn "homosexual practice" as sinful, the Committee on Church Doctrine prepared a statement, adopted by the next Assembly, pointing out the double issue of "homophobic cruelty" practised in Canadian society, *versus* "ethical indifference." Where this seemed to present a choice of "to condemn entirely or to condone," the real task of the church is to proclaim "a middle way," pointing both heterosexual and homosexual sinners to the grace and mercy of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

On the question of nuclear weapons the Board of Congregational Life issued in 1981 a "Covenant Declaration for a Nuclear Age," which asserted that the church, although aware of the threats of both industrial nuclear accidents and nuclear war, still supports the "reasonable use" of nuclear science and condemns the proliferation of nuclear arms. The General Assembly adopted this Declaration in 1982, and resolved that no nation has a right before God to use such weapons under any circumstance, either offensively or defensively. Two years later the *Record* carried a series of articles by Dr. John Stapert, editor of the *Church Herald*, on the international arms race, arms limitations and the peace movement in which he urged that negotiations must have priority over the development and deployment of the hardware of war. As tensions between the superpowers continued to escalate in the second half of the eighties, the Moderator, J.C. McLelland, wrote in the *Record* that the possession of nuclear arms is "morally unjust", and the primary goal of Christians must be peacemaking.<sup>11</sup>

One recurrent issue — whether children should be given communion —

grew from centuries-old differences in the understanding and practice of communion by the various branches of the Christian Church. Generally the Reformed tradition withheld communion until the “age of discretion” had been reached, and with a service of confirmation conferring the individual’s communicant membership in the Church. Some found this position difficult to defend because it treated the two sacraments unequally — if children were too young to receive communion were they not also too young to accept baptism, as the Baptist communion insists? In 1975 the Committee on Church Doctrine recommended that every session makes its own decision on the question, although it reminded church members that full membership involves legal responsibilities as well as participation at communion.

Two years later a document entitled the Covenant of Grace, an analysis of traditions surrounding communion practices, was sent to sessions for study. The document favoured admitting children to communion, but it evoked from sessions such a wide variety of responses that the Committee on Church Doctrine felt more study was required. The practice of leaving each session to control access to communion proved, however, to be very divisive because of the lack of uniformity that ensued. Families moving from “open” to “adult” communion congregations objected to the disparity of treatment of their children. In 1981 an overture to the General Assembly from the Presbytery of Halifax-Lunenburg asked that the experiment be ended. The issue was referred to the Committee on Church Doctrine which a year later requested more time to restudy the question. In 1985 the Committee produced for congregational use a pamphlet on the question of children receiving communion but, indicative of the divided opinion within the church, the deadline for receiving responses from sessions was further postponed in 1986.<sup>12</sup>

Like the question of children receiving communion, the most controversial issue to arise within the Presbyterian Church in Canada during this decade also involved theological differences over the nature of the Church. The Presbyterian Church in Canada had already approved the ordination of women to the teaching ministry in 1966, although over seventy dissenting votes were cast by persons who believed there was no scriptural authority for such action. By 1979 the church had a small but growing number of women ministers and a considerable number of women elders, although in certain regions of Canada the innovation was tacitly rejected. The 1979 General Assembly received a memorial from the Presbytery of Montreal charging that women were experiencing “discrimination and prejudice at all levels of church life,” and calling for a special committee to educate the church on sexual equality. When such a committee did report to the next Assembly, it noted that negative attitudes towards women were certainly in the minority, but that most sessions had never discussed the issue.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile a test case with serious implications had already arisen in 1979 when the Presbytery of East Toronto refused to take on trial a candidate who declared that he would not participate in the ordination of women and claimed liberty of conscience in the matter. In a major article in the *Record* Dr. James D. Smart, a leading theologian of the church, accused any presbytery that refused such ordinations of following a divisive course. "Respect for the church as it is constituted is at stake here." A reply by Dr. Edward McKinlay established clearly the basis of the minority position — a higher loyalty justified defiance of church law. Another writer in the *Record* insisted that the ordination of women was not church law but merely a decision of the General Assembly. The question was foremost on the agenda of the 1980 General Assembly, and after considering extensive documentation from both sides the Assembly resolved the issue by ordering the ordination of the candidate from the Presbytery of East Toronto, but also directed that in future there would be no exemptions and all clergy previously ordained must conform to the church's law by 1990.<sup>14</sup>

The General Assembly's decision seemed to increase rather than end the argument and the next year was filled with heated discussions. The paper war in the *Record* surfaced again in the months prior to the 1981 General Assembly, with the minority challenging the church to evict dissenting ministers and holding a "Presbyterian Renewal Day" that promised to address a whole range of problems stemming from liberalism in the church. A new publication, *Foundations*, for "conservative evangelicals," took up the liberty of conscience issue. *Foundations* carried out an opinion survey of its readers on the question of the ordination of women, and the survey revealed that the issue was indeed only one of several perceived problems. The survey also revealed that some respondents favoured schism rather than obedience to the Assembly's ruling.<sup>15</sup>

At the Assembly the Committee on Church Doctrine addressed the question of liberty of conscience and stated categorically that, "Individual conscience is not the final authority in the life of the Church," a pronouncement that the minority viewed as a denial of a central tenet of the Reformation. Over forty appeals regarding the 1980 decision were received, some calling for a reaffirmation of liberty of conscience, more opposing such action, and a few recommending "further study." As a result a task force of eight women and fourteen men was appointed to report to the Assembly in 1982. It declared that all ordained persons, both ministers and elders, have freedom of belief but not freedom of action in the matter of ordinations, because abstention from participation in ordinations constitutes a breach of one's own ordination vows. Four men and one woman from the task force offered a minority

dissent, but the Assembly accepted the majority report and fulfilled one of its recommendations by having guide lines governing ordinations prepared for the next meeting of Assembly.<sup>16</sup>

By 1983 the storm over the ordination of women had subsided, but it had not ended. A second case involving the attempt of a Montreal congregation to call an avowed opponent of women's ordination produced the un-Presbyterian statement by the candidate that congregations are more important than presbytery. The General Assembly of 1983 had received, and rejected, thirteen more memorials and overtures demanding liberty of conscience. The next year no further appeals were received but when, at the 1985 General Assembly, a new overture to the same effect arrived, the Clerk advised against any further discussion because every point raised by the overture had already been thoroughly aired in the General Assembly during earlier debates.<sup>17</sup>

One question that was resolved after the centenary concerned the proposals for an order of deacons which had been placed before the General Assembly in 1974 and again in 1975. By a close vote in 1976 the Assembly sent the matter to the Committee on Church Doctrine for study. The following year that committee reported in favour of creating a diaconate of men and women, "a contemporary order to meet the present needs of the church."<sup>18</sup> Deacons would be members of both sessions and presbyteries, and it would be their function to provide a ministry in education and counselling in social work. This report was in turn sent to the various church courts, colleges and boards for study and comment.

Although the question of creating a diaconate involved theological considerations of minimal interest to the laity, considerable discussion took place among the ruling and teaching elders. In January 1979 the *Record* carried a lengthy defence of the proposed new order which would offer the church "a fuller ministry." This article was followed in March by a commissioned item entitled "No To the Ordained Diaconate," and in May by a rebuttal. The first writer insisted such a diaconate was unscriptural and would downgrade the teaching eldership, but the second author believed deacons would complement, not compete with, the existing two orders of elders. When the presbyteries' vote on the question was recorded at the General Assembly in June, sixteen presbyteries, mostly from western Canada, favoured an order of deacons, but nineteen were opposed. The debate over deacons ended, but in a related move to resolve the confusion about men trained as deaconesses, the General Assembly resolved in 1984 henceforth to use the term "Diaconal Ministries" to cover any person educated at Ewart College.<sup>19</sup>

*National Unity and International Crises*

Like most other Canadians, the Presbyterian Church in Canada was disturbed by the separatist developments in the province of Quebec after the election of the Parti Québécois in the autumn of 1976. The next General Assembly received two overtures asking for guidance on the issues of political disunity and national reconciliation. The Assembly responded by creating a special committee to consider the issues from a theological basis. The committee report, adopted by the 1978 Assembly, called on the church to support the French Reformed heritage in Quebec and to develop French communications capacity within its head offices. The report went on to uphold the right of self-determination for Quebec, and recognition of the rights of minorities in all Canadian provinces.<sup>20</sup>

The *Record* had already produced a special "Quebec" edition in February 1978. The editor invited the church to undertake a "voyage of rediscovery" on which members would come to know and understand Quebec and its aspirations. At the practical level, in 1980 the church developed through The Presbyterian College a three-year theological programme for francophones that was sufficiently successful to justify extending it in 1983 for a further three-year period. The following year a special committee on francophone theological education urged that the Institut Farel at Quebec City be involved in the programme because of the Institut's resources, and at the same time the Board of World Mission announced that it was working with other denominations and groups to create a co-operative programme in francophone work. At least some members of the church expressed reservations about what they saw as a one-sided attempt at reconciliation with francophone Quebec. A correspondent to the *Record* complained in 1983 that the Presbyterian Church in Canada was more concerned about conditions in El Salvador than in Quebec — the Presbytery of Montreal had not even protested the injustices perpetrated in that province against anglophones!<sup>21</sup>

Another controversy that involved Presbyterians directly in national politics in 1981 arose out of the long-drawn negotiations to create a new constitution for Canada. The failure of the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau to include a reference to God in the proposed new constitution aroused the anger of numerous Canadians from many denominations. One correspondent to the *Record* was "appalled" by this omission, and the government soon began to receive similar letters of protest from concerned and voting Christians across the country. By the summer of 1981, when eight thousand letters of complaint had arrived, the Liberal government decided to include in the preamble of the constitutional bill a phrase indicating that Canada did officially recognize "the supremacy of God," thus perpetuating Victorian ideal of Canada as a Christian



nation without confronting the reality of a religiously pluralistic society.<sup>22</sup>

The church's concern with issues of social justice continued to involve it in Canadian public affairs. In 1973 member churches of the Canadian Council of Churches had undertaken to create a new relationship with Canada's native peoples. The General Assembly of 1975 designated the next five years for emphasizing the church's support for native people and for their concerns with land claims, economic development, and environmental safeguards. The operative principle was to work with native peoples, not for them. Many urban Presbyterian congregations contributed to establishing a native cultural centre in Toronto, and when, in 1977, Moderator David Hay asked congregations to declare a Native Peoples Sunday, some responded positively.<sup>23</sup> The next year the *Record* called on Presbyterians to fight the increase of racism in Canada. The dissemination of half-truths about ethnic groups was making them scapegoats in the current economic recession. The Church should be enriched, not divided, by the diversity that multiracial and multi-ethnic congregations bring to its religious life. Regrettably racism continued to increase within the country, and in 1981 the General Assembly summoned all congregations to oppose recruiting by the Ku Klux Klan which had recently re-entered Canada from the United States. The Board of World Mission asserted that the Presbyterian Church in Canada was "a pluralistic church," and challenged the church to provide ethnic ministers, to seek leaders from among its ethnic members and to be "super-sensitive" to racism.<sup>24</sup>

The most controversial of all such politico-social issues in the late seventies and eighties, however, was the church's involvement in Third World problems. The church's concern for human rights and its condemnation of tyranny, whether in the form of political, economic or racial oppression, had been voiced regularly over the years, and the General Assembly declared that the Mission Study Theme for 1979-80 would be "Human Rights and International Order." In 1972 the church, distressed by the violence and conflicts in South Africa, had strongly condemned apartheid. This statement was reprinted in the 1977 report of the Board of World Mission which noted that most Christian communions had condemned apartheid because it meant the "perpetual inferiority" of blacks and also the restricting of freedoms for whites. The Board reaffirmed the Church's teaching that "all forms of racism and apartheid are contrary to the mind and will of Christ," and urged all international corporations active or influential in South Africa to follow "just employment practices."<sup>25</sup> The following year, when the Committee on Corporate Responsibility and Investments presented a task force report on problems of racism and investment in the Third World, the Committee had to defend the report against charges of imbalance in its emphasis by explaining that, for lack of resources, the

Committee was dependent on research by other churches and so its report could not cover all instances of injustice and abuse of human rights. More seriously, a charge by a minority of the Committee that the report was divisive gave evidence of growing polarization within the church itself on its proper relation to Third World conditions.<sup>26</sup>

The confrontation between liberal and conservative interpretations of the church's definition of its mission for justice began in 1978. Under its Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) the World Council of Churches was supporting groups opposed to the racist governments of South Africa and Zimbabwe (then called Rhodesia), including the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front which had received a \$85,000 grant. The amount of money contributed to the PCR by the Presbyterian Church in Canada was small — only \$5,500 — and earmarked for relief work only. Such grants, made by the World Council for several years, had been regularly denounced by the *Reader's Digest* in what one Canadian Presbyterian admitted was a "well financed" campaign of misinformation. This time, however, opponents of the PCR charged that the recipients were murderers, and that Canadian funds might be used to buy weapons. Canadian church leaders sought more information about the grant from the World Council, and when the General Assembly met in 1978 it overwhelmingly reaffirmed its support for the World Council and its anti-racist programme.<sup>27</sup>

Critics of the World Council and its policies were neither satisfied nor silenced by the Assembly's decision. Demands were heard that the church quit the World Council and threats made to withhold funds from the General Assembly's Budget to force a change of policy (although the grant funds were independent of the Assembly's Budget). Defenders of the PCR were hard pressed from both sides, for when Dr. Heather Johnston, a Canadian Presbyterian and member of the Council's Central Committee, raised questions about the Zimbabwe grant, Third World members of the Committee called her racist. Letters to the editor of the *Record* ran eight or nine to one against the grant.<sup>28</sup>

The PRC grant to the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front had, as one observer noted, "stirred up most vehement opposition" and the General Assembly of 1979 received a "spate of overtures" on the subject. Debate in the Assembly was bitter and often personal, and when the Assembly finally voted to reaffirm its commitment to the PCR, one Presbyterian minister accused the commissioners of openly supporting "murder and terrorism." The crisis regarding funding at that General Assembly was followed by a call for church courts to boycott the World Council.<sup>29</sup> The church reiterated its concern for social justice and the human rights of victims of oppressive governments. One correspondent to the *Record*, however, described himself as a "counterwitness" to the Church's

prophetic voice on racism. Another charged the World Council was in “unholy alliance” with international Marxism to aid black revolutionary terrorist minorities against South Africa’s government, which was fighting to save southern Africa from the tide of communism.<sup>30</sup>

The General Assembly of 1980 rejected another overture calling for suspension of the Church’s connection with the World Council and thereafter attention switched to the problems of human rights in troubled Latin America. Concern about conditions in El Salvador were voiced in 1983 and thereafter about American attempts to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. When the United States occupied Grenada late in 1983, the Moderator, Dr. Donald MacDonald, joined the Moderator of the United Church and the Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches in a public call for the “withdrawal of all foreign forces” from the British island, fearing that the armed invasion might be the prelude to “further militarization of the whole region, including further intervention by the United States in Central America.”<sup>31</sup> Almost immediately the *Record* received letters condemning the Moderator’s action as “ill advised and ill considered,” defending the American invasion and denouncing the *Record* for failing to be more vocal in criticizing communist aggression. One minister wrote that MacDonald was not competent to judge American motives in Grenada, that his comments displayed the “abysmal ineptitude” of the church’s policy. At least one correspondent was prepared to defend the original joint statement by the three church leaders, “because it is right.”<sup>32</sup>

In the early eighties public attention was directed more to the problems of human rights in Central America, but the situation in South Africa was not forgotten — the General Assembly of 1984 declared categorically, “apartheid is a sin.”<sup>33</sup> When the Rev. Glen Davis contributed articles to the *Record* on Nicaragua and El Salvador critical of American interference in those countries and favourable to the local efforts at peace and stability, he was roundly condemned as an apologist for Marxism. Davis’ reply, that “some people think that to be pro-Christian one must also be pro-U.S. policy” only brought more condemnatory letters to the editor. This sharp polarization of opinion in the church was again evident when Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa received the Nobel Peace prize in 1985 and letters attacking Tutu were sent to the *Record*. After Glen Davis’ interview with the bishop in November 1985, when the bishop asked the Christian churches to pray for a peaceful solution to apartheid, one correspondent to the *Record* called opponents of apartheid “one-issue simpletons,” and Desmond Tutu “that man lately strutting the world stage.” Partly in response to this emotional confrontation among its members over the politics of social justice the General Assembly

in 1986 approved the recommendation of its International Affairs Committee that Canada should give more active support in the struggle for human rights, and that the Presbyterian Church in Canada should take steps to educate church members about the complex issues involved in this continuing struggle.<sup>34</sup>

### *Nec Tamen Consumebatur*

In retrospect, the decade after the centennial celebrations seemed to be dominated by increasingly bitter confrontations and polarization within The Presbyterian Church. As the editor of the *Record* wrote in January 1987, “the saddest, and possibly the most dangerous, threats to the church are those that are made from within its ranks.” In the same issue of the *Record*, however, another observer of the scene, commented on *Living Faith*, the Church’s very significant theological statement for a modern age, adopted by the 1984 General Assembly and subsequently accepted with the Westminster Confession as a subordinate standard. Since 1945 the outlook of Presbyterian churches around the world had changed. Now they were sharing in the reinterpretation of predestination; were abandoning their “strident opposition” to the Roman Catholic Church; broadening their understanding of the Bible and breathing a “new open spirit” – all of which were reflected in the Canadian Presbyterian Church’s *Living Faith*. In two short sentences the author summarized the enduring witness of that busy decade: “The story continues. The faith is alive.”

Nevertheless, the decline in the number of communicant Presbyterians continued despite the “Church Growth” movement that began in 1980. In 1987 the Church Growth Committee commented, “Not only is the Church not winning the world, it is losing, through attrition, members it already has.” Only forty-nine per cent of members attended communion, and an estimated sixty per cent of members were classed as “functioning inactive.” On the other hand, forty-three per cent of congregations had recorded positive growth during the preceding five years. Much of this growth arose from denominational switching – an estimated twenty-three per cent of new members came from other communions, and an additional ten per cent had previously been unchurched.<sup>35</sup> By 1990 membership stood at 157,000, but five years later it was just over 147,000 – less than five per cent of the Canadian population, and less than half the percentage it had had forty years earlier.<sup>36</sup> Two thirds of those members were contained in just two synods in southern Ontario, and only fourteen per cent were between southern Ontario and the Pacific coast. Similarly, of 915 congregations, 519 or fifty-seven per cent were in the same

two synods. In forty per cent of Canada – the Northwest Territories and Yukon – there was no congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada after 1987.

Meanwhile the paradox of increased giving by some declining congregations also continued as the 1990 total of \$70.5 million swelled by almost twenty per cent to more than \$85.3 million in 1995, and to over \$103 million in 2000, an increase of forty-six per cent in the decade. Paralleling the decline in church members, although at a slower rate, the enrolment in church schools slipped slightly most years of the decade until in 2000 the number of pupils was reported at 27,746. As a result of its statistical preoccupation, however, the Presbyterian Church in Canada could boast that it had assembled more data of this kind than any other Canadian denomination.<sup>37</sup> Concerned about this apparent failure of its outreach, the Church initiated a variety of measures to attract more members and adherents. In a controversial move the Assembly of 1987 also allowed the admission of older children to the communion table, but in the years that followed it became obvious that this decision had not been well received in the Church.<sup>38</sup>

A very active programme of youth and young adult ministry was developed, and accessibility for the handicapped to places of worship received church-wide attention. There had been no national men's programme until the association of Presbyterian Men arose in the larger congregations and some presbyteries after its founding in 1957 by W. R. (Bill) Cross, chairman of the Board of Evangelism and Social Action. During the 1970s and 1980s, under the enthusiastic guidance of its first National Director, Roy Hamilton, Presbyterian Men became increasingly active in various service and educational roles in congregational life. From the Presbyterian Men a chorus was established under the directorship of Cyril Redford, and it performed in both Ontario and British Columbia. A Presbyterian ladies' choral group, the Covenanters, joined with the men in a joint tour to Ireland in 1991. The two choirs then merged to be the Presbyterian Chorus which toured Scotland in 1994 and the Maritime provinces in 1997.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of these various innovations, Church growth remained stalled and in the next year, 1988, the Church lost the equivalent of nineteen mid-sized congregations.<sup>40</sup> To meet this continuing crisis the Church believed that strategic planning, both long and short term, was an absolute essential, and it produced a nine-point "Vision Statement" to direct its planning for a renewal of the Church from top to bottom.<sup>41</sup> The over-all goal was to integrate evangelism, social action and justice ministry, and congregations were urged to create their own "Vision" of their own future. This failure to increase numerically had in many minds made the Church a "sideline" instead of a "mainline" denomination, but now the Church seemed to be calling itself back from "the



Camp Life



Crieff Hills Community



**Margaret Taylor**

First female chair, Board of Missionary  
Deaconess Training School  
First Female recipient of D.D., Presbyterian  
College, Montreal  
First Female chair, Board of Congregational  
Life

**Principal Dorcas Gordon**

First female principal, Knox College, Toronto  
Director, Doctor of Ministry, Toronto School  
of Theology



**Tamiko (Nakamura) Corbett**

First nonwhite and female Moderator of  
General Assembly  
Executive Secretary, Women's Missionary  
Society (WD)  
Chair, Board of World Mission

**Heather Johnston**

First Canadian Presbyterian elected to Central  
Assembly World Council of Churches  
First lay president, Canadian Council of  
Churches



theological drift” which had “become apparent over the past decades.” Lack of critical self-examination was defined as “the major obstacle to renewal and growth,”<sup>42</sup> and gradually the reaction was to emphasize the quality and extent of the Church’s work rather than the size of its membership.

Another measure of quantitative decrease of interest in the Church and its work in Canada was the falling rate of subscriptions to its “national magazine,” *The Presbyterian Record*. Between 1986 and 1991 circulation fell from 74,000 to 64,000. Because of the cost added by the Goods and Services Tax and an increased subscription rate, many congregations left the “Every Home Plan” in 1990 and 1991.<sup>43</sup> During the next two years the *Record’s* circulation fell to 60,000 for the same reasons, but in 1995, when a slight recovery was reported, the General Assembly approved of separate incorporation of the magazine to obtain preferential postal rates. When the cost of paper rose dramatically in 1996 circulation stood at 57,000, yet only one year later that figure had decreased by ten thousand subscribers.<sup>44</sup> By the turn of the century, however, despite the continuing decline in readership to 47,000, the *Record* had become financially independent and showed a small annual profit, unlike most of its counterparts in other denominations or its American counterpart which had the same readership in a denomination with two and a half millions members.<sup>45</sup>

A new structure within the traditional system of presbyteries was created in 1997 when the two Han-Ca presbyteries, Eastern and Western, were established with ethnic rather than geographic boundaries. Korean ministers had felt uneasy in the established presbyteries and sought instead courts based on ethnicity or culture rather than propinquity. In that year and the following one, the clerks of the General Assembly opposed the basis of this organizational structure because it departed from the definition of “presbytery” used by the reformed churches for more than four centuries and left the way open for the establishing of other types of non-geographic presbyteries. In the opinion of some, this new structure would have a divisive and separatist impact on the Church, but if the first three years existence of the Han-Ca presbyteries were any indication, all developments pointed towards greater integration into what might be termed modern mainstream Presbyterianism. By 2002 Western Han-Ca had grown to thirteen congregations and almost seven thousand members, and Eastern Han-Ca had a similar membership in fourteen congregations.<sup>46</sup> In 2003 the trial period for these two new presbyteries was ended and they were given permanent status in the Church.

### *Restructuring the Church*

Continuing concern over the state of the Church led to further new initiatives



in the nineties, and the reorganization of its administration was probably the largest of these undertakings. In 1990 the General Assembly appointed a Special Committee on Restructuring with a view to creating two “Agencies” – Life and Mission, and Service – to institutionalize the “Vision” by replacing all boards and committees, and an “Assembly Council” instead of the Administrative Council. By 1992 the extensive work of this Special Committee was finished and its report had been adopted by the General Assembly.<sup>47</sup> As a result of restructuring, committees that had previously reported to the Board that appointed them were abolished and replaced by “Advisory Committees.” This gave greater power in policy-making to the elected officials in the Church’s head offices by lessening the influence of committees whose chairpersons no longer reported directly to the Board but advised the associate secretaries of the two Agencies.

At the same time the Committee on Theological Education, created in 1990, was to be “one single Presbyterian theological education structure,” responsible for co-ordinating all aspects of theological education and oversight of all colleges, despite the objections of the heads of the colleges at this loss of responsibility.<sup>48</sup> The new committee arranged the absorption of Ewart College into Knox College and the elevation of diaconal ministry to a degree programme at the latter institution.<sup>49</sup> This involved a redefinition and upgrading of diaconal ministry, and ultimately the charging of fees for students in the theological colleges.

Another initiative arising from concern over membership involved the serious under-representation of youth and young adults in the life of the Church. The General Assembly took a major step in this matter by creating a special committee and three years later Synod Youth Directors were appointed nationwide. Although this plan soon encountered difficulties in finance and communication, this model for ministry was extended until the end of 1994, but after restructuring a new regional model emerged and the topic received diminished attention.<sup>50</sup> In view of the virtual disappearance of such time-honoured youth activities as Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, Canadian Girls in Training and Presbyterian Young People’s Society, a less institutionalized and more contemporary approach to youth involvement in church life was proposed. An approach that has centred on greater and more direct participation in worship services, and experimentation with new and contemporary worship forms employing nontraditional music, youth conferences, and work camps were developed. “Youth in Mission” projects in Canada and abroad have been carried on since 1984, and the presence of several hundred young Canadians in each of the week-long North American Youth Triennium conferences have been enthusiastically supported.

Another project arising from the “Vision Statement” of 1989 was plans for changes in the patterns of Presbyterian worship. The “Statement” called for more variety in the form and content of worship and the Assembly of 1990 empowered the Board of Congregational Life to begin work on the new Book of Praise by incorporating changes already in use and initiating further changes. A separate *Book of Psalms* responses was to be prepared to replace the metric psalms in the 1972 *Book of Praise*, because it was felt that their awkward syntax was a hindrance to modern worship.<sup>51</sup> Guide lines for a new *Book of Praise* were laid down the following year and publication was scheduled for 1997.<sup>52</sup> The *Book of Praise* Task Force met twelve times in the next three years while its subcommittees tackled various aspects of the proposed revisions. Some five hundred congregations were surveyed as to their actual use of the hymnal, and it was found that nearly half of the 1972 *Book of Praise* was used “very infrequently.”<sup>53</sup> A “New Hymns Testing Program” was undertaken by three thousand Presbyterians, and consultations with the Anglican, United and other Presbyterian churches followed. Some old hymns were dropped, others got changed words or music, and hymns with modern words and music were added until the work was completed at the end of 1996.

Despite various sales incentives and the Task Forces’ insistence that the new *Book of Praise* and the new *Psalter* were being received with enthusiasm in most Canadian provinces, voices of dissent and disappointing sales initially suggested a different reaction to the new form and content of Presbyterian worship. After the Task Force circulated a “Sampler” of the proposed *Book of Praise* the Presbytery of Vancouver Island overtured the General Assembly of 1996 requesting that the older hymnal be kept in print because the new volume had never been submitted to the Committee on Church Doctrine and that, on principle, the congregations at large had not accepted the new book..<sup>54</sup> With the approval of its presbytery one congregation called for the removal of three new hymns whose unscriptural blatant feminism was “heretical and wholly unacceptable.”<sup>55</sup> By the end of 2002, however, over eighty-five thousand *Book of Praise*, one for every two communicants in the congregation, and almost thirty-nine thousand *Book of Psalms* had been sold.

Closely related to worship through music were two other subjects – order of worship and vestments. A new *Book of Common Worship* was approved for distribution by the General Assembly of 1992 but, although the Board of Congregational Life reported it had been “received with enthusiasm,”<sup>56</sup> it seems to have been widely ignored by many ministers who saw it as a covert attempt to “anglicanize” or ritualize Presbyterian worship. The same Board responded at the same Assembly to an Overture from the Presbytery of Sarnia that requested guidance on what vestments were “appropriate both from within

the Reformed tradition and the broader, more ancient and ecumenical tradition.”<sup>57</sup> This report favoured strongly the extensive use of seasonal liturgical colours, and the wearing of the ancient white alb which, the report said, was being recognized as “the common garb of the clergy.” Any secular apparel, including academic regalia, was to be resisted in any liturgical setting as “the uniform of bankers, lawyers, politicians, or business men.” The purpose of these recommendations was explained as emphasizing the clergy’s call to leadership of the Church, and “the understanding of that office in its historic continuity with the Holy Catholic Church, reformed.” There is little evidence that Canadian Presbyterian congregations responded enthusiastically or positively to these ritualistic suggestions.

After the 1989 General Assembly had adopted its “Vision Statement” the next Assembly approved a “Vision” campaign to enhance the Church’s sense of stewardship and to raise at least \$10 million in five years. Three-quarters of this sum would be for new church development and the remainder for overseas projects.<sup>58</sup> Many congregations took up this “Live the Vision” challenge enthusiastically and often applied the concept of goal-identification at the local level, but the pace of the larger campaign seemed so slow that the Life and Mission Agency called on the whole Church in 1993 to implement this “Vision” as “a signal of the high calling of God.”<sup>59</sup> By the time the national campaign ended officially in 1995, only \$5.8 million had been raised and \$850,000 had already been spent on Canadian and \$87,000 on overseas projects respectively.<sup>60</sup> Almost one million dollars of pledges were, however, still outstanding and these continued to be received by the “Vision” campaign in succeeding years.

One programme begun in the 1980s and continued through most of the nineties was the World Council of Churches’ “Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.” Inaugurated at Easter 1988, it called on participating churches to “become more inclusive of women in decision-making and leadership, to listen to women’s perspectives on matters of justice, peace and the environment, and to recognize the insights of women in theology and spirituality.”<sup>61</sup> During those ten years the Committee on Women in Ministry sent representatives to various international gatherings on women’s issues. It circulated the biennial publication, *From a Woman’s Perspective* and, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ordination of women in the Church, published *Counting the Women*, a volume of sermons by Canadian Presbyterian women. For the Presbyterian Church the programme closed with a conference entitled “Daring the Hope/Oser l’Espérance,” held at the University of Guelph at the end of August 1998,<sup>62</sup> but the increased public interest in the contributions of Presbyterian women to the life of the Church was reflected in 1999 and 2002 by *Gifts and Graces*, two volumes of profiles of Canadian Presbyterian



1875 1975 2075



THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

# ST. ANDREW'S

1975 Centennial Celebrations



Ministers' Group,  
'Lost and Found'



St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver



Kenora Fellowship Centre

women, published by the Committee on History to mark the millennium and celebrate the Church's one-hundred and twenty-fifth birthday.

When the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women ended in 1998, a retrospective article in the *Record* of June 1998 listed some of the advances made in this field by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In 1992 Presbyterian World Service and Development (successor to the committee formed for postwar relief) had set itself a target – eighty per cent of its projects must focus on women's organizations (or groups which favour women's involvement). That same year the Rev. Linda Bell was elected as the first female Moderator of the General Assembly, and the election four years later of Tamiko Corbett, the first laywoman and the first non-Caucasian to hold that post. Another milestone was passed in 1999 when the Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon became the first female principal of Knox College. By 1995, 12.4 per cent of the Church's clergy were women, and by 1997 women students outnumbered men seventy-three to sixty-nine in the Church's three theological colleges. There was some disappointment that more had not been achieved in the decade, but Canadian Presbyterian women had participated in so many women-centred activities and conferences that the future was bright with new possibilities in terms of involvement, participation, and research.

### *Unity in Diversity*

This increased involvement of women in all aspects of the Church's life and mission seemed symbolic of a spirit of optimism and a catholicity of outlook growing in the Church as the last decade before the millennium was approached, even though some major problems remained unresolved including the widening gap between the evangelical and "liberal" groups in the church. In 1990 evangelical Francophone congregations separated to establish their own small but determined church, L'Église Réformée de Québec, but for the majority of evangelicals the watchword for the future was given by the Rev. Mariano DiGangi who reminded them that, "Renewal of the Presbyterian Church in Canada must be our concern, not its disruption."<sup>63</sup> The Renewal Fellowship Within the Presbyterian Church of Canada (each word carefully chosen), officially formed in the autumn of 1982, began its own periodical, *Channels*. To air different viewpoints on divisive issues such as homosexuality and economic justice, in the late nineties other Presbyterians established their own periodical, *A New Network*.

As "a volunteer organization, within the church, committed to renewing spiritual vitality and historical biblical witness in and through the church," by means of Renewal Conferences, Days of Prayer, and workshops for a variety

of groups, the Fellowship challenged other Canadian Presbyterians to promote renewal.<sup>64</sup> From a membership of 379 the Fellowship grew in two years to 616, with an income of just under \$60,000 in 1986. Through the nineties the Fellowship held annual meetings and continued its programme of “spiritual, theological, and structural revitalization in the faith, life and ministry of the Church.” Individual members have filled some of the highest offices in the Church, but as a Fellowship have remained a small and autonomous group of Presbyterians committed to the renewal of the denomination through “prayer, spiritual vitality and a living commitment to classical Christianity.”

Independent Presbyterian journals had existed since Peter Brown founded *The Banner* to support the Free Church cause in 1843, but unlike those periodicals of the next eighty years, when nationalism, literature and church union were the main thrusts of independent Canadian Presbyterian journalism, those created in the post-1925 period have concentrated primarily on theological issues and have reflected the more conservative evangelical minority within the Church. Predecessors of *Channels* had been *Bible Christianity*, 1935-52, which reflected the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in the United States, and Dr. Stanford Reid's *Reformation Today*, published from 1951 to 1954 which questioned the Church's mission policy and official participation in certain ecumenical programmes. Between 1960 and 1979 Reid published a more critically outspoken *Presbyterian Comment*, which was followed briefly by *Foundations*, until in the autumn of 1983 the more comprehensive and professional *Channels* began its successful career and included social issues which had previously received less attention from conservative critics of the prophetic Church.<sup>65</sup>

### *Viewing the Global Village*

One of the most marked changes to occur in The Presbyterian Church during recent decades has been the drastic decrease of missionaries overseas by the millennium. The emphasis has shifted from sending personnel to providing financial and expertise for education, health and agriculture, emergency relief, refugee aid and the exchange of personnel with “sister churches.” This withdrawal from the older type of missionary influence has seemingly increased even more the Church's interest and involvement in international affairs, although the denomination continued its support in no less than twelve interchurch social action coalitions, a uniquely Canadian arrangement whereby denominations can support ventures of their own choosing. In 1991 the Church's International Affairs Committee continued discussing injustices as seen through Christian eyes. That year its report commented at length on the Gulf War,

pointing to the illogicality of arguments defending hostilities and calling the whole action “a victory for the arms merchants.”<sup>66</sup> Concerning the “Intifada” in Israel that same report charged that the extensive United States support of Israel had encouraged the latter’s hard-line government to avoid the promised negotiations towards peace with the Palestinians. As a result of restructuring, however, the content of the *Acts & Proceedings* of the General Assembly was modified, and its annual reports became extensive thematic studies of major ethical topics. The problems of peace making and indigenous peoples were addressed in 1992 and 1993, economic justice in 1994, debt crisis and poverty the following year, food security and human rights in 1996 and 1997. The condition and problems of Cuba and the frustrating “quagmire of corruption” in Nigeria held centre stage in 1998, and environmental issues and the tension between free trade and human rights in 1999. At its final Assembly of the second millennium, the Assembly heard the Committee’s report on a hopeful recovery of Nigeria from a generation of violence and the prospects for Guatemala after a decade of civil war that killed two million children.<sup>67</sup>

Similarly after 1992, because of the comprehensive and extensive nature of the Life and Mission Agency’s mandate to concern itself with so many aspects of the Church’s role, its report grew longer each year after 1992 until it filled more than one hundred pages. The Agency’s predecessor, the Board of Congregational Life had already proposed a five-point energy policy and a comprehensive declaration on Aboriginal Rights, both of which were adopted in 1991.<sup>68</sup> Ministry with aboriginal peoples was an on-going concern of the Church through its participation in the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC), and ultimately a lengthy confessional statement of reconciliation was accepted by the General Assembly in 1994.<sup>69</sup> A similar lengthy process, seven years in the making, led to precise definition of the role of diaconal ministries in 1991 whereby the Order of Diaconal Ministries was given a new and expanded status in the law and courts of the Church.<sup>70</sup>

Also, on the Canadian national scene the recurrent issue of Quebec’s future relationship to the rest of the country occasionally reached into and affected the life of the Church. In 1991 the Assembly was asked what the future relationship of Quebec Presbyterians might be as a result of new constitutional arrangements.<sup>71</sup> The following year the Board of Congregational Life responded to the then current constitutional proposals with a five-page brief that called for recognition of the distinctiveness of Quebec, the inherent right of Aboriginal people to self-government with an adequate land and economic base, and the protection of the social, economic, and political rights of all people living in Canada. These principles were adopted by that year’s General Assembly,<sup>72</sup> and a year later, in the face of upcoming elections in Quebec,



which were expected to have “a profound effect on the very nature of Canada,” the Assembly called for special prayers in all congregations that “God’s will be done.”<sup>73</sup>

The question of the future of Quebec Presbyterians was not, however, addressed again, but the issue of reconciliation and healing between The Presbyterian Church in Canada and native peoples received serious attention. The first step was taken by the General Assembly in 1994 when it adopted a “Confession” regarding injustices suffered by Canada’s First Nations at the hands of Christians. The next step, in 1996, was the creation of a Healing Fund to receive voluntary contributions towards mending those wounds. Two years later the Assembly established the “Journey to Wholeness” campaign to raise \$250,000 by the year 2000, a fund that immediately received \$30,000 from the Women’s Missionary Society. The main thrust of this campaign was primarily educational rather than financial, and one focus was on the charges laid against practices of residential schools.<sup>74</sup>

#### *The Human Sexuality Question.*

The most divisive event of the 1990s was, however, the controversy that arose from the desire of a congregation to call an avowed practising homosexual minister. The Church’s policy on homosexuality had seemingly been put to rest in 1985 when the General Assembly adopted the statement from the Committee on Church Doctrine that highlighted the difficulties of choice and the Church’s real task to proclaim “a middle way” that would help sinners, both homosexual and heterosexual, to find the grace and mercy of God. Two years later the Assembly commissioned the Committee on Church Doctrine to prepare a statement on the larger issue of human sexuality, and spurred by the epidemic of AIDS and HIV infections, the Committee finally submitted a detailed eighteen-page document in 1992 and a longer revised final draft was still under discussion at the Assembly of 1994.<sup>75</sup> The more specific issue of homosexuality seemed to recede from the Church’s attention – the only official action was a reaffirmation by the 1991 General Assembly of the position taken in 1985.<sup>76</sup> A test case arose, however, in 1994 at Lachine, QC, where a congregation whose pulpit had been vacant for two years called an experienced licentiate who was a practising homosexual.

At an emotional and procedurally complicated meeting in 1995, Montreal Presbytery voted in favour of sustaining the call but, because of the vociferous dissent of a considerable minority, the complex question was made into an appeal to the General Assembly which appointed a Special Committee to hear both sides. In its fifteen-page report the Special Committee recommended

unanimously that the Assembly overturn the Presbytery's decision in support of the call and give special attention to the pastoral needs of the troubled congregation. By an overwhelming majority the Assembly accepted this report in this classic but painful case of congregationalism *versus* presbyterianism, but the story was still not at an end. When the Presbytery of Montreal allowed the licentiate to continue as interim supply for the Lachine congregation authorized the congregation to convert his status to full-time supply. At the same time while the Presbytery tried to spread discussion of the issue throughout the Church, the Session of another congregation in the same Presbytery overtured the 1997 Assembly to appoint a judicial commission to exercise church discipline against the Presbytery of Montreal.<sup>77</sup> This overture and six others, plus two appeals and one memorial, were given to another Special Commission which reported the following year to end the controversy. To soften this blow an amendment was adopted offering the congregation the rental of the church building if members rejected the Church's discipline and decided to leave the Presbyterian Church in Canada.<sup>78</sup> Early in 2003 the General Assembly's Special Committee on Sexual Orientation issued the desired handbook, *Listening . . . Understanding Human Sexuality*, which defines the questions and lists the Committee's twelve points of agreement. The result is not a statement but "a basis for reflection and a stimulus for discussion," which will undoubtedly keep this issue alive in the future.

For the present-day Church, husband and wife joint ministries have given rise to a variety of difficulties for congregations and for courts of the Church. Another unsolved and perhaps insoluble problem, inherent in the Presbyterian polity which gives congregations the right to call a minister of their choosing, is that of filling distant or isolated pulpits in areas with low population density. After the opening of the Canadian West that challenge had been met by James Robertson as Superintendent of Home Missions by having students fill such missions during the winter, but this short-term and incomplete solution was abandoned after Robertson's death in 1902. After church union in 1925, when proportionately more clergy than congregations left the Presbyterian Church, some vacant pulpits had been filled by ministers from the United States, but by 1938, in the depth of the Depression, the shortage of ministers for home mission fields had reached crisis proportions. Of several suggested answers the General Assembly chose to create "Ordained Missionaries" by licensing recent graduates and appointing them to specified fields for their first year of service.

This solution, although it infringed upon the congregation's right to call, lasted until 1969 when the three western synods had a total of eleven such vacancies, against only one in the three eastern synods. Ordained Missionaries

were reintroduced in 1974 with a compulsory two years in missions, an unsatisfactory and incomplete response to the ongoing problem, but in 1986 a crisis in enforcing this rule led the General Assembly to reverse its decision by a vote of 141 to 87. To some observers this reversal smacked of domination of the Church's policies by an urban majority in the Assembly, but the ordination of women to the preaching ministry has at least partially filled the ministerial void. Nevertheless, as recently as 2001 the synods of Alberta and Northwestern Ontario overruled the General Assembly to reinstate the Ordained Missionary system.<sup>79</sup>

### *Preserving Presbyterian Heritage*

When reporting on the statistical picture of church membership at the General Assembly of 2001, the Study Group on Denominational Membership Decline emphasized the need to attract and involve young people to the Church. Youth need links to the past for self-identification. "Without a Christian memory, the emerging generation can only be appealed to through evangelism."<sup>80</sup> Creating such links to the past by drawing the Church's attention to its own experience, traditions and beliefs, a veritable shelf of books on Canadian Presbyterian history has been published in recent years, including *The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (1997), *The Chignecto Covenanters* (1996), *Western Challenge: the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Mission on the Prairies and North, 1885-1925* (2000), *Certain Women Amazed Us* (2003), the story of the Women's Missionary Society, and *Early Presbyterianism in Canada*, (2003), a collection of essays which includes an extensive bibliography of Canadian Presbyterian history. Annually the Committee on History issues the periodical *Presbyterian History* and offers two awards – one for the best congregational history, the other for the best scholarly volume on Canadian Presbyterian history.

Since 1999 the Church's Committee on History has published the fourth volume of *Called to Witness*, its series of short Presbyterian biographies, the two volumes entitled *Gifts and Graces*, and this third edition of *Enduring Witness*. It also made strong positive steps to preserve and display the Canadian Presbyterian heritage when the Church's archives and record management facilities were moved in to a modern climate-controlled and state-of-the-art mobile shelving system built in the Church's head offices in 1998. The following year the new archives received the Province of Ontario's Merit Award. In 2002 the Church opened its own National Presbyterian Museum in Toronto, displaying numerous exhibits concerning the Presbyterian Church in Canada and abroad, including an outstanding collection of communion tokens, a small



National Presbyterian Museum, Toronto



### Communion Tokens

There was no more familiar object in Scotland after the Reformation than the communion token. Such objects date back to the Greeks, who used them for identifying those who had been initiated into kindred mysteries, such as the Eleusinian rites. In Christian times, they served the purpose of excluding spies from religious gatherings. Later, they signified those who

had a right to be present. Thus a holder of tokens was admitted to Holy Communion. The tables were often fenced to emphasize the importance of the sacrament. Tokens were ordinarily made of lead, about the size of a 25¢ piece, bearing the initials of a minister or church.



Presbyterian Archives, Toronto

reconstructed chapel, the complete library of an early nineteenth-century Canadian minister and numerous historical artifacts from Canada's Presbyterian past. In addition to all these official Church heritage undertakings, the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History, an interest group which began meetings in 1975, the Church's centennial year, publishes its "Papers" annually, including to date 125 lectures, including some on general Presbyterian and Reformed topics.