

# DAYSPRING DAYBOOK

Monthly Newsletter of Dayspring Presbyterian Church, 11445-40 Ave, Edmonton, AB, CAN, T6J 0R4

November 2023

## ABOUT THE “HEAD” OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

Recently, I was told about someone who said that they didn't like being part of a church in which they were told “from above” what to do. That comment stimulated some reflection for me.

Is our denomination structured hierarchically?

Well - “Yes” but also “No.”

As a congregation of the PCC, Dayspring doesn't get to do whatever it wants to do.

All actions taken by the congregation, the Board of Managers, and the Session are under the direction of a system of church courts or church councils: Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. At all levels of decision-making, we are doing our best to interpret what Christ would say, based on our reading of the Bible.

There is also a book (*The Book of Forms*) that lays out the principles that have decided all the major decisions that have been made in the past. It reads like a legal text book - which it is. It is definitely not bedtime reading.

More about the way that system works in the pages that follow. But let's start with the question of hierarchy.

One of the problems with the comment about not liking to be told “from above” is an assumption that individuals (presumably adult individuals) do not need any input from others.

On the face of it, that seems like a pretty narrow stance. Do people think that they are “an island, entire unto [them] self”??? (John Donne: 1572 - 1631)

We are all dependent, to some extent, on others - for guidance and support - sometimes more and sometimes less.

The PCC operates as a hierarchy of church councils. However, the people who are “under” the direction of a particular church council have elected (**directly or indirectly**) those who are “above.”

Now sometimes, of course, individuals manage to create the impression that they are in charge - which is only partly true. Individuals are accountable for their actions to the church council that is “above” them. But read on ...



### Quote of the Month

*Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."*

*– Helen Keller*

### In This Issue

- About the “Head” of the PCC
- How does it work?
- Minister's Message
- What does it look like?
- What's it for?

## WHAT DOES IT ALL LOOK LIKE?



So here you can see three images

- A group of people
- An open Bible
- The Book of Forms

### Book of Forms



The Presbyterian Church in Canada  
2023 Edition

## HOW DOES IT WORK???

So what comes to mind as you look at these three images?

We have a group of people intensively involved in some kind of interaction.

We have a Bible that contains much wisdom about how we should behave in our relationships with one another in the Christian community.

And we have the book in which is recorded the wisdom that has been acquired during the last couple of centuries as Christian Individuals, Congregations, Boards of Managers, Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies have tried to discern what God would want them to do about particular situations.

Of course, we start with the Bible. However, the Bible came into existence in a very different world than the world we live in. So we have to interpret what the Bible says and particularly what it might be saying about a specific situation.

The Bible itself is very clear about the fact that that discernment process is not usually an individual task and especially when decisions affect groups, congregations, and various other communities.

We need to come together and listen to each other and to God's Spirit who is present with us.

Presbyterianism, and other Reformed churches express that principle in a way that has been described as a "representative democracy." The Reformed practice of decision-making for the Church was adopted by the many countries in the world that have parliamentary democracies for political governance.

The word "presbyterian" is based on a Greek word, "presbuteros," that means "elder." Congregations elect people from among their membership who are deemed to have the wisdom to represent them in the decision-making processes of the Church (Session, Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly).

The original assumption of this system of church government was that "age" was equivalent to "wisdom."

In recent years, that assumption has been challenged and persons who are 18 years or older may be elected to serve as Elders.

Moreover, ministers are sometimes known as "teaching elders." They are not "appointed" by some body "above" the congregation. Rather they are "called" to be a congregation's minister by those persons who are "Professing Members" of the congregation. (Adherents may indicate that they agree with the decision of the Professing Members.)

However, the Presbytery has to approve the "Call" and installs the minister in the congregation.

## FROM OUR MINISTER: Presbyterians & Baptism

### For whom?

- Infants & Adults

### What is it?

- One of two Sacraments
- A seal of the Covenant of Grace
- The Gospel made visible
- A Holy Mystery
- An outward sign of an inward reality that God chooses us
- An act of faith that brings us into the family of God whereby we experience its benefits
- Initiation into the covenant (community) and a sign of salvation.

### Results

- Entrance to the Church
- Promise to grow in faith
- “Sealed” as a covenant member of the community
- Parental promise (in infant baptism) to raise the child in the faith leading to their eventual confirmation of the parental promise

### Mode

- Pouring or sprinkling as well as immersion

### Scriptural Basis

- Genesis 17:7 (covenant)
- Acts 2:39
- Romans 4:13-18 (whole families)
- Acts 16

### Critique

- This view tends to suggest that the Church and Israel are one thing.
- No clear examples in scripture of infants being baptized

*If you would like to have a copy of the chart I prepared showing Catholic, Lutheran, and Evangelical belief and practice, send me an email.*

*Brad Childs*

*Minister@DayspringChurch.ca*



## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Presbyterian Church in Canada oversight has four levels: Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies.

**Sessions oversee the ministry of the local congregation.** The word “session” means “sitting together.” Elders are elected “for life” by the congregation and serve on Session as long as they are able to do so. (Some congregations have Term Service on Session but Dayspring has not chosen that option).

**Presbyteries oversee the ministry of congregations in a geographic area.** On January 1, 2024, Dayspring becomes part of the **Presbytery of the Northwest** which oversee PCC congregations in Alberta from Red Deer north, a small corner of NE British Columbia, Yukon Territory, and a portion of the Western Arctic (although there are only PCC congregations in Alberta and NE BC). Presbytery comprises all of the active Ministers in the geographic region, along with an equal number of Elders elected by the Sessions of the congregations in the Presbytery. The Northwest Presbytery will meet via ZOOM with, perhaps, one in-person meeting a year.

**Synods** are the next level of church government. They comprise all of the members (Ministers and Elders) of the presbyteries that are part of the Synod. Dayspring is part of the **Synod of Alberta and the Northwest**, which includes the Presbytery of the Northwest and the Presbytery of Calgary MacLeod (that is, the rest of Alberta south of Red Deer). Synod meets each year in the autumn. “Synod,” by the way, means an “assembly.”

Finally, overseeing all of the PCC congregations and ministries in Canada, Bermuda, and overseas is the **General Assembly**. General Assembly meets for several days early in June and comprises one-sixth of the members of all of the presbyteries. Most presbyteries use a rotation system to determine which ministers and which Session-named Elders will attend.

Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly do much of their work through Boards, Committees, and Staff - who report to and are accountable to General Assembly.

## WHAT'S IT FOR? WHAT DOES IT DO?

So we have tried to describe what the Presbyterian Church in Canada looks like on the preceeding pages.

*Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief* that is one of the PCC's doctrinal standards tells us the following (7.1)

The church is Christ together with his people called both to worship and to serve him in all of life.

The church is one. It is one family under God whose purpose it is to unite all people in Jesus Christ.

The church is holy. It is set apart by God through the Holy Spirit to be a chosen people in the world.

The church is catholic. It is universal, including all people of all time who affirm the Christian Faith.

The church is apostolic. It is founded on Christ and the apostles and is in continuity with their teachings.

The church is in constant need of reform because of the failure and sin which mark its life in every age.

The church is present when the Word is truly preached the sacraments rightly administered, and as it orders its life according to the word of God.

\* \* \* \* \*

The structures that we have described on previous pages are just that - structures that enable the Gospel to be shared through people working together in congregations and through congregations working together locally, regionally, throughout Canada, and to the outer reaches of the universe.



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### DayBook Deadlines

3rd Sunday of the month

## SESSION

**Moderator:** Brad Childs

**Session Clerk:** Gina Kottke

**Deputy Clerk:** Iris Routledge

**Roll Clerk:** Darlene Eerkes

### Other Elders

Jane de Caen  
Peter Eerkes

Sam Malayang  
Heather Tansem

## MINISTER

The Rev Brad Childs

## CHURCH STAFF

**Church School Coordinator**

Lynn Vaughan

**Youth Coordinator:** TBD

**Music Director**

Binaifer (Binu) Kapadia, B.Mus.

**Administrative Assistant:** Linda

**Custodian:** Jim