

Response to the Special Committee of Past Moderators on the Question of Unity and Diversity

Ross Bassingthwaighe, Kelowna BC

Some thoughts regarding the unity of the church.

Keep it simple. Easy to say, hard to do. But do it we must.

Let us agree, as essential starting points, that there are two things we must keep in mind regarding the necessity of the unity of the church. First and foremost, unity is not something we achieve or work for on our own. The first essential element of unity is that it is given to us. Unity is given to the church by God himself. It has a transcendent quality and character to it. This is what comes into focus when we speak of the unity of the Triune God, and insist that it be reflected in his church.

Second, the single requirement for belonging to the one true church is faith in Christ. That alone is the determinant. A person's spiritual maturity, doctrinal discernment, giftedness, or cultural identity are not the determining factors, important as each of these may be. Neither are one's denomination or doctrinal distinctiveness - all those who genuinely trust in Christ, from the weakest to the strongest and the least to the greatest, belong to his church. How much they understand of God's Word and how well they obey are expressions of their spiritual maturity but not the basis of or their inclusion in the church. As Peter said, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). - Luder G Whitlock Jr, *Divided We Fall*, p. 13.

That being said, how did we ever get to where we are... bickering and being distracted by an impassible squabble about sexuality? It is patently obvious that this has become an argument about right and wrong, true and false, black and white. With both sides claiming biblical authority and a moral high ground, it would seem that any hope of finding a middle ground has been lost.

A decision must be made, and it is not an easy or enviable one. Will that decision involve trying to carve a middle ground? Realistically, that will probably only serve to perpetuate a troublesome and fractured future. Or do we discard the judicious and honourable history upon which the church, and our denomination in particular, has been built? That would seem to be a most unwise and suspicious course to choose.

The remaining alternative - to stand in the time-honoured tradition to which we have made covenant - will be difficult and will take courage, with consequences that we cannot accurately predict. Our calling is to follow Jesus Christ, in truth, with love, in faith that he will honour his church by abiding with her, leading her, powerfully filling her for the tasks ahead. The eternal consequences of holding fast to our orthodox doctrine are entirely predictable.

If we are to save the Presbyterian Church in Canada, it is time to draw a line in the sand. Have we the courage to do so?

Soli Deo Gloria.