

The VISION Statement of the Presbyterian Church in Canada 1989

It is our VISION that:

1. **We will grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ.** Discipleship will become the way of life among our members. We will be a people who pray for others and for ourselves, as we grow towards oneness with Christ, and deep commitment to him. We will seek God's help in becoming a more spiritually-aware people. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we will grow in our knowledge and understanding of the written word of God, as we subject ourselves to the Lordship of the living Word, Jesus Christ. We will seek to be changed, to be reformed, to take whatever risks are necessary as we learn to obey God's will. Our emphasis will be on learning and action in small groups. This spiritual growth is more important than, and is also a prerequisite for, growth in numbers.
2. **We will reach out in mission, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ with relevance and power.** We will be able to share our faith with those around, to speak about our discipleship in the work-place and in the community as we serve Christ in the world through love. As well as living out our own mission, we will, as we are able, share with other churches around the world in their discipleship. A part of the outreach will be to help build communities of faith in newly-developed areas, and in places where resources are limited.
3. **We will integrate evangelism, social action and justice ministry.** Each of these ingredients will be essential to the others. Our goal will be to serve as witnesses to the transforming power of Christ in our society, beginning with the communities in which we live. We will promote world peace by living at peace with each other and with our neighbours. Our theology will teach the stewardship of all creation, and it will be expressed through our concerns for our immediate environment. We will develop new, creative forms of ministry to the society around us, thus freeing ourselves to respond to the guidance of the Spirit. We will not be afraid to provide moral leadership to society and also to the Church in ministering to new and emerging conditions and issues in society.
4. **Our congregations will be alive.** Worship services will be joyful and full of meaning, aware of the world in which we live, and work, and seek to do God's will. The forms of worship and the music used in worship will be lively and varied. Congregations will be clear about themselves and their purpose, and will have developed vision and direction about their specific service to God in their communities. Stewardship will no longer mean just money, but a creative, effective, and intentional use of all resources: people, buildings and technologies, as well as dollars. We will be intentional about the ministry of youth and young adults, recognizing their

value in the life and work of Christ's Church. It will be important for us to be aware of being part of the whole Body of Christ in the world. We will be an ecumenical people, one with the other Christian denominations in seeking God's will for the Church, and contributing to that wider work of service and obedience as we are able, beginning in each local community.

5. **We will be a loving, inclusive community – truly God's family.** We will not simply be a club for "nice" people. The use of the word inclusive opens up the Church to take seriously the presence and needs of people of all ages, and of many different cultural backgrounds other than the Scots-Irish out of which this Church sprang in past centuries. We will take seriously the special needs of disadvantaged people, and we will be intentional about seeing that those needs are met. We will use inclusive language as we learn to be inclusive. Our congregations will be a family for those who have no other family and an extended family for those who do. We will be a people who practice love, as we have met and experienced it in Jesus Christ.
6. **We will be effective communicators.** We will use contemporary, inclusive language and learn to use metaphors sensitively. Our communication will convey our essential unity, vision, and sense of identity, as we continually witness to the Lordship of Christ over all life. Technology will be a benefit, but will not be allowed to become intrusive. It will provide tools for the service of Christ, which will not become barriers between Christ's people. We will learn the effective use of a variety of contemporary media, and all this we will discuss in plain words, trying to avoid speaking in a technical jargon. We will be aware of the tremendous power of technologies as carriers of culture, and molders of morals.
7. **We will have a Spirit-led ministry by the whole people of God.** More patterns of mutual support will be developed for the ministries of the Church. We will seek to mobilize ourselves, the members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and to equip ourselves for ministry within the Church, our homes, our communities, and our places of work. We will all live out the challenging words used at the Ordination and Induction of a minister of Word and Sacrament: "It is the calling of all... to share the Gospel with the whole world, and through Christ the only Mediator to represent the world before the Father in worship and service, until Christ comes again". Within the ministry of the whole Church there will be effective recruitment and screening of candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacrament and the Order of Diaconal Ministries. Their education for a servant ministry will be practical. Pastors and teachers will continue to approach their work of ministry from differing perspectives, but will also show the essential unity which comes through commitment to Christ and his people.

8. **The courts of the Church will be vital and compassionate.** We will discover our fundamental role in discerning the mind of Christ, in conciliation, and in inspiring and challenging the Church. There will be a spiritual deepening of the life of the Courts through prayer, fellowship, and study. We will learn to function pastorally toward congregations and toward those engaged in the ministries of the Church. There will be positive and compassionate response to crises and conflicts. There will be review of the optimum size of the Courts, including the geographical factors which so affect the life of the Canadian Church. The Courts will be careful not to exclude members and interested persons in such simple ways as scheduling the time of meetings. Priority issues will be given adequate time on the agenda, and less time will be given over to the purely administrative business of the Courts. There will be less desire to escape into legalistic debates over procedures.

9. **The administration of the Church will be lean and accountable.** It will aim at supporting the spiritual development of the people of God within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The hours involved in administration in the Church will be reduced. We will reclaim the time needed to care for each other as sisters and brothers in Christ, and to fulfill our mission. There will be time to read and reflect upon Christ's call to us. The paralyzing disease of organizational overload will diminish, from the pastor's study as from the General Assembly offices. The Agencies of the General Assembly will do only what cannot be done at the local level, and their mandate will be to serve the congregations, Presbyteries, and Synods. The function of these Agencies will be to provide resources for the programmes of the Church, and to share in the development and training of leaders.

How to use this VISION Statement in your congregation:

This vision statement is a picture of the Church as the Presbyterian Church in Canada would like to see it become. It is a description of ideals, goals, values and practices that we would like to come to embrace and live out. The only way that can happen for a denomination, however, is for individual congregations one by one to take this picture and begin to move towards it themselves. As more and more individual churches evolve and change, so too the whole denomination will change. It takes your participation.

Here are some ways you can use this statement to help foster change in your congregation:

- Become familiar with the essence of the statement. Know the nine summary statements. Carry a copy of the whole VISION statement in your day planner. If you make it a part of you and part of your vision for your own congregation, the vision will find its expression in your talk, your reflection, your discussions and your plans. For this national vision to have impact, it has to be incorporated into your personal vision for your congregation.
- Share the vision statement with other congregational leaders. Run a workshop day with your session focused on this statement. At the workshop conduct a "prescriptive analysis" of your congregation using this statement. Prescriptive analysis is a method of evaluation for your congregation's life, using an ideal model (such as a vision statement) as the reference point. A suggested workshop agenda would be this:
 - Spend the first session reviewing and reflecting on the vision itself, with the goal of gaining the elders' appreciation for the vision;
 - Spend the second session considering how your congregation already reflects this vision now;
 - Spend a third session considering where your congregation should enhance its life to live out more fully aspects of this vision;
 - In a fourth session, set priorities for action, and make some initial plans for fulfilling those plans.
- Refer to the vision statement in sermons. Perhaps preach a short series of sermons on some of the points.
- Ask your committees, task groups and fellowship groups to consider the relevant parts of this vision. How well are they living it out now in what they do?
- Make the vision statement available to the members of your congregation. Promote individual initiative towards living out the vision more fully in your congregation.
- Create a vision statement for your own congregation. Use this denominational statement as "food for thought" to help suggest possibilities where the two might intersect.

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