

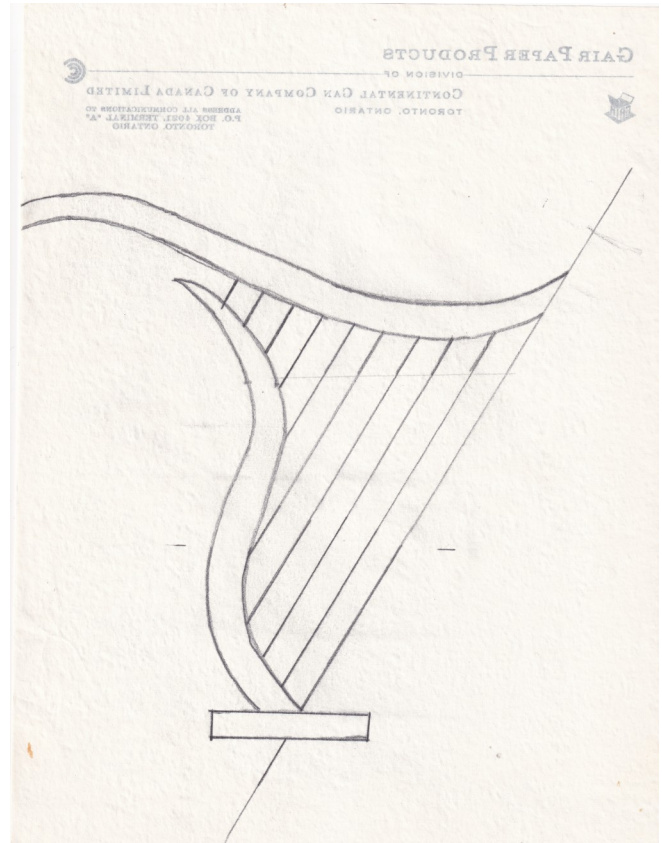


## Presbyterian History

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## *1975: A Banner Year*

By Ian McKechnie

Not long ago, I found myself rummaging through a box of papers belonging to my late paternal grandfather, Allan P. McKechnie (1923-1998), who was a longtime parishioner at Thornhill Presbyterian Church, in Thornhill, Ontario, where he served as Clerk of Session for several years.

Nestled among various other items of correspondence was a large Manilla envelope stamped "The Board of Evangelism And Social Action | The Presbyterian Church In Canada | 50 Wynford Drive, Don Mills, Ont." Below that was my grandfather's faded mailing address, while

below that were the words “Centennial Banner” written in red marker. Opening up the envelope, I encountered four hand-drawn illustrations: an open Bible and a harp (shown above), as well a loaf of bread and a dove. These had all been sketched on the back of stationery imprinted with the letterhead of the Gair Paper Products Division of Continental Can Company of Canada Limited, the Toronto-based packaging firm at which my grandfather was working as a chartered industrial accountant. What I was looking at was prototype artwork for a banner crafted more than half a century ago. Typewritten notation found with these drawings tells of the backstory:

*Near neighbours in Thornhill, Ontario and members of the Presbyterian Church there, Mary Henry and Allan McKechnie were inspired to create this banner based on symbols of their Christian faith and Presbyterian heritage.*

*Designed jointly, the banner was quilted by Mary and was then entered in the Centennial Banner Competition in December 1974.*

*Although not a prizewinner it received some distinction in being the first banner shown and explained on national TV during the Centennial worship service which was telecast in St. Andrew’s Church, Ottawa, Ontario in June of 1975. It was also included in one of the five travelling exhibits of banners which traversed the country in Centennial Year 1975.*

According to this same memo, the banner designed by my grandfather and Mrs. Henry travelled widely throughout the PCC’s Centennial Year. Host venues included Calvin (Toronto); Knox (Oakville); Zion (Charlottetown); St. James (Truro); First (Montreal); and St. Andrew’s (Quebec City) – as well as various churches in Vancouver, Chilliwack, and Creston, British Columbia; Edmonton, Alberta; and Thunder Bay and Kirkland Lake, Ontario, respectively.

The banner wrapped up its cross-country trek at St. Andrew’s, Humber Heights (Toronto), before

returning to Thornhill. Starting in 1976, the banner hung at various churches in Thornhill and Alberton, Ontario, home church of Mrs. Henry. It eventually found a home at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Ancaster, where Mr. and Mrs. Henry later worshipped.

So what was the Centennial Banner Competition of 1974-1975 all about?

The Presbyterian Church in Canada pulled out all of the stops in celebrating its first 100 years through the arts. Congregations were encouraged to write plays about their history. A touring centennial choir was formed. And the visual arts were well represented in the creation of banners that spoke to the church’s mission and heritage. Sheila Kirkland, who served as the coordinator of the banner competition, made the following observation in the July-August 1974 issue of *The Presbyterian Record*: “The central theme in western art, for the past 2,000 years, has been Christianity. Artists in each era have found new ways to illustrate, instruct, elevate, and inspire. 1974 is no exception and the entries submitted utilize new forms as well as variations on established symbolism.”

Three distinguished figures from the art world (albeit all from Ontario!) were recruited to serve as judges for the competition. Dr. T.H. Heinrich, formerly of the Royal Ontario Museum, was a professor of art at York University. Kay Kritzweiser was the *Globe and Mail*’s art critic, while Nancy-Lou Patterson was a professor of art at the University of Waterloo. According to Patterson, the criteria deployed in adjudicating the banners included their “...success as a work of design, excellence of craftsmanship, and suitability for use in a liturgical setting.”

This last point is especially interesting, particularly when one studies the various banners surrounding Kirkland’s article in the *Record*. The banners are colourful, and some border on the avant-garde. Said Patterson, “It is clear that the making of banners is a valid medium of

contemporary religious expression.” Not only were these banners a visual celebration of the PCC’s centennial, they seemed to signify something else: a church that was willing to set aside its historically-infamous opposition to art as a liturgical tool. Apart from stained-glass windows, Presbyterian sanctuaries were generally not noted for their colourful accoutrements. The Centennial Banner Competition – which ultimately garnered more than 300 entries across the children’s, youth, and open classes, and which represented the handiwork of families, individuals, and entire congregations – deserves to be seen as yet another step in the PCC’s ongoing reexamination and reinvention of itself.

Though the excitement surrounding the PCC’s Centennial has been relegated to the history books, some of those banners may yet still exist in sanctuaries, parish halls, and archival storage rooms. They represent not only someone’s personal creativity, but also a denomination looking ahead with confidence in the face of an unprecedented time of change. (Editor’s Note: A more detailed analysis of this period in the history of the PCC can be found in Stuart Macdonald’s excellent new book, *Tradition and Tension: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1945-1985*.)



*The Rev. Victor Kim, Principal Clerk of The General Assembly, presents a copy of 'Recollections + Reflections: 150 Years of The Presbyterian Church in Canada' to the PCHC on the occasion of its opening. Photo: Nicole D'Angela.*

## ***The Opening of The Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre***

**By Ian Mason**

It felt as if we had slid into home base and captured the world series!

At the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre held its dedicatory worship service and official opening of our new facility on Saturday, September 20, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. We opened our “new” facility on the main floor of Carlisle United Church, the Carlisle located in the Municipality of North Middlesex, Ontario.



Curator Ian Mason, along with his wife, Laurie, herself a retired museum curator with 37 years of experience, completed the arrangement of the last display case at 2:45 a.m. on September 20, only 12 hours before the dedication service!

The opening occurred 10 years after St. John's Presbyterian Church in Riverdale, Toronto, first informed us that redevelopment plans were underway for their church, our host church since 2002. The National Presbyterian Museum (NPM) was dedicated and officially opened on Sunday, September 29, 2002. The NPM remained at St. John's Church until the museum closed to the public in September, 2018. The collection remained at St. John's until it was removed to temporary storage in July, 2021, during the COVID pandemic.



*Organist Nancy Tapley sits at the PCHC's historic reed organ while visitors mingle in the background. Photo: Nicole D'Angela.*

The Heritage Centre Advisory Committee under its chair, Marilyn Repchuck, was delighted to open our new site this past September. At 59 people, the church was filled to capacity. The dedicatory worship service was led by and the sermon preached by the Rev. Angus Sutherland, past chair of the advisory committee. Assisting Angus was the Rev. Duncan Jeffrey, member of the advisory committee, and the Rev. Henry Bartsch of Faith Presbyterian Church, Tillsonburg, Ontario. (When Henry was serving as the minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Chatham, Ontario, he organized a work party of youth and adults from the congregation. They undertook the moving of most of the collection into temporary storage.)

Curator Ian Mason served as the beadle, delivering the Bible into the pulpit at the beginning of the service and removing it at its conclusion. The Bible was the one used at the opening worship of the United Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, Canada West on January, 11, 1858. The Rev. Angus Sutherland used Exodus 3:6 as the text for the sermon. The sermon was entitled "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob", and looked to investigate what lay behind this three-part acknowledgement of God for the people of Israel. In part, the identifier reminds the people of their past, of how God, in faithfulness, worked with these patriarchs and thus created the foundation for the people's identity and the faith they espoused. The Heritage Centre also seeks to remind our church of our past, both positive and negative, displaying the foundation of our people and our faith.

Before the dedicatory worship service began, Angus played Scottish psalm tunes on his concert bagpipes (not the popular Highland version of the bagpipes, which would be too loud for the chapel!). Two of these psalm tunes were later sung *a cappella* during the service in deference to the way Presbyterians sang at worship prior to 1875. (In 1875, the first General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada allowed

individual congregations to decide whether or not it was appropriate to sing hymns and use instruments such as organs.)

The reed organ donated from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Beeton, Ontario, was superbly played by Nancy Tapley, President of the Chatham Centre of the Royal Canadian College of Organists. Nancy was courageous in the face of danger – our reed organ has not been tuned in at least 20 years.

Two sacred classics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – *The Holy City*, with text by Frederic Weatherly and music by Stephen Adams (alias Michael Maybrick), and *How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings*, a solo setting of Psalm 84 by Samuel Liddle – were sung by operatic tenor Andrew Derynck of Jeannette's Creek, Ontario.

We were delighted that the Rev. Victor Kim, Principal Clerk of The Presbyterian Church in Canada was able to attend, along with his wife Sophie. Victor led in the prayer of dedication. He also presented the Heritage Centre's Study Collection with a copy of the PCC's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary book, donated by Don Burnard, a member of St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Sarnia, Ontario, and member of the General Assembly Committee on History. The richly illustrated *Recollections + Reflections: 150 Years of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*, has been superbly compiled and organized by Ian McKechnie of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ontario, with design and layout undertaken by Ekaterine Alexakis, of nearby Cannington, Ontario. (Copies of this book are still available for purchase via The Presbyterian Church in Canada's website: <https://form.jotform.com/Presby/pcc-order>.)

Greetings were read from the Moderator of the 2025 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Rev. Jeffrey M. Murray, who sent his regrets:

*The Heritage Centre's commitment to collect and exhibit artifacts of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and its antecedent denominations is deeply appreciated. As you help to preserve the history of our church as it ministered in different times and through many challenges, that story helps inspire us to confront the challenges that are before us today with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I regret that I cannot be with you in person as I am currently visiting Palestine to meet with various organizations and partners working to confront the challenges of an enduring conflict, where we hope and pray that reconciliation, which the Gospel of Christ has inspired for many generations, may take root and offer a lasting peace.*

We were blessed with the presence of our Presbyterian heritage colleagues, Nicole D'Angela, managing archivist, and Alex Kay, archivist of the Presbyterian Church Archives.

Those who travelled the farthest to join the celebration were Garry and Jane Marnoch of Ballyduff Presbyterian Church in Ballyduff, Ontario, and Ian MacCready of Oshawa, Ontario, and David Linderman, of Brooklin, Ontario.

After the worship service, there was a brief amount of time for informal tours, fellowship and conversation. Most of those who attended were able to enjoy dinner served promptly at 5:00 p.m. Marguerite Gilbert, sister of Marilyn Repchuck, cooked the pork barbecue. Frank Teahen of Carlisle United Church barbecued the sausages. Several of the members of Carlisle United Church helped serve the meal. Homemade pies provided by members of the curator's home church (Trinity Presbyterian, Chatham, Ontario) were the "icing on the cake."

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*This pipe organ will engage Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre visitors through the medium of sound. Photo: Ian Mason.*

As I write this, it is the eve before the arrival of the Heritage Centre's largest artefact – a 95 year-old pipe organ. This instrument was used by Dorchester Presbyterian Church, Dorchester, Ontario, from 1930 until the congregation dissolved in January, 2024. It is a two-manual, eight rank organ manufactured by Edward Lye and Sons, Toronto. It is one of the last eight instruments produced by this company before Lye's grandsons re-organized and re-named it simply Lye Organ Co. When it is installed, it will be the only pipe organ in the Municipality of North Middlesex. We have already been contacted by a local pianist who has begun organ studies and is interested in using it for practice.

We are very grateful to retired organbuilder Donald Pole of Chatham, Ontario, and Ron Dossenbach of Windsor, Ontario, who

championed the restoration of this historic Canadian instrument. Our gratitude is acknowledged to the pipe organ disassembly crew: Gordon Varney and Brett, Stephen and Jay of Paris Presbyterian Church; and Marcus Ross of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Chatham, who spent several days disassembling and carefully packing all the pipes, components and bits and pieces of the organ.

The inaugural pipe organ concert will take place on Sunday, December 7, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. Katherine Rochester, organist of Central Presbyterian Church, (Galt) Cambridge, Ontario, will play Christmas hymns and carols. There will be a free-will offering. Suggested donation is \$15 per ticket. There is limited seating. Tickets must be reserved in advance by contacting the Heritage Centre. Only ticket-holders will be admitted. Due to our space limitations, no admissions at the door will be permitted.

Marilyn Repchuck, Chair, Advisory Committee members and Curator Ian Mason look forward to continuing to serve the PCC by following our mandate:

*The Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre shall collect and exhibit artefacts relating to the history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and its antecedent denominations. The significance of the artefacts will be described by interpreting the lives of the men, women and children in association with Canadian Presbyterian denominations and how they confronted, challenged and changed both Canadian and global culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

### ***In Remembrance***

Every year, dozens of churches are closed across Canada. Even as we grieve their loss, it is important to remember their faithful witness in the communities they served. For the past two years, *Presbyterian History* has made it an annual practice to provide a list of congregations that are

no more. In some cases, the congregation may have been dissolved outright; in other cases, a beloved place of worship may have been left behind through amalgamation and may no longer be used for Presbyterian services. (This list is derived from information provided by the General Assembly Office, and may not reflect changes made to the roll since this issue was completed.)

### ***Presbytery of New Brunswick***

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Black River Bridge, dissolved on March 1, 2025.

St. James and St. Paul's Regional Ministry dissolved on June 30, 2025.

Knox Presbyterian Church, Campbellton, dissolved on July 31, 2025.

Knox Presbyterian Church, New Carlisle, dissolved on July 31, 2025.

Northern New Brunswick Regional Ministry dissolved on September 24, 2025.

### ***Presbytery of Lindsay-Peterborough***

Knox Presbyterian Church, Havelock, dissolved on October 26, 2025.

### ***Presbytery of Pickering***

Knox, St. Paul's, and St. Luke's, Oshawa, amalgamated on January 1, 2025 to become Trinity Presbyterian Church, Oshawa.

### ***Presbytery of Brampton***

Omagh Presbyterian Church, Campbellville, dissolved on December 31, 2024.

Hopedale Presbyterian Church, Oakville, amalgamated into Knox Presbyterian Church, Oakville, on January 1, 2025.

Knox Sixteen Presbyterian Church, Oakville, amalgamated with Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, Oakville, on August 31, to become Trafalgar-Knox Sixteen Presbyterian Church.

### ***Presbytery of Oak Ridges***

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Vaughan, dissolved on October 5, 2025.

Fraser Presbyterian Church, Tottenham, dissolved on October 20, 2025.

### ***Presbytery of Hamilton***

Roxborough Park Presbyterian Church, dissolved on June 29, 2025.

### ***Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington***

Knox Preston Presbyterian Church, Cambridge, amalgamated into St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Hespeler, on January 19, 2025.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Mount Forest, amalgamated with Knox-Calvin Presbyterian Church, Harriston, on September 21, 2025.

### ***Presbytery of Paris***

Hope Church, Innerkip, dissolved on September 4, 2025.

### ***Presbytery of Grey-Bruce-Maitland***

Knox Presbyterian Church, Holstein, amalgamated with Durham Presbyterian Church, Durham, on September 1, 2025.

### ***Presbytery of Winnipeg***

First Presbyterian Church, Kenora, dissolved on September 30, 2025.

***Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan***

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, North  
Battleford, dissolved on November 23, 2024.

*These stones that have echoed their praises are holy,  
And dear is the ground where their feet have once trod;  
Yet here they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims,  
And still they were seeking the city of God."*

– The Rev. William H. Draper, 1916

***Presbytery of Westminster***

West Point Grey Presbyterian Church, Vancouver,  
amalgamated into Kerrisdale Presbyterian  
Church, Vancouver, on November 30, 2024.

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***Presbytery of Eastern Han-Ca***

The Well Church dissolved on February 28, 2025.

***Presbytery of Western Han-Ca***

Galilee Korean Presbyterian Church dissolved on  
May 6, 2025.