

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE 44th GENERAL COUNCIL

MINUTES

Saturday, October 21, 2023

The annual meeting of the 44th General Council of The United Church of Canada was convened on Saturday, October 21, 2023 at 12 p.m. and concluded at 4: p.m. (Eastern). The meeting was held by video / teleconference. The Moderator, Carmen Lansdowne, presided.

Attendance

Commissioners Present:

Demanya Kofi Akoussah, Tammy Allan, Don Anderson, Kathleen Anderson, Mitchell Anderson, Brenda Andrews, Mary Annan, Eileen Antone, Richard Auckland, Jingle Ayupan, Hedy Baker-Graf, Amanda Barnes, Nicole Beaudry, Michael Blair, Dawn Blanchard, Richard Bott, Miriam Bowlby, Susan Brodrick, Elizabeth Brown, Whitney Bruno, Florence Bukam, Teresa Burnett-Cole, Cynthia Burt, Barbara Cairns, Bethe Cameron, Liz Church, Peter Chynoweth, Shirley Cleave, Tina Conlon, Kevin Cox, Taylor Croissant, Penelope Culverson, Samuel Vauvert Dansokho, Christopher Davis, Janice Davis, Evelyn Day, Ken DeLisle, Liz Dillman, Oliver Dingwell, Paul Douglas Walfall, Diane Dwarka, Hugh Ellis, Joyce Fergus-Moore, Albert Fowler, Allan Gairns, Paula Gale, Marc Grenon, Samuel Grottenberg, Cathy Hamilton, Lesley Harrison, Robert Hayes, Lloyd Henderson, John Hurst, Laura Hutchison, Susan Hutton, SunDo Hyun, Jennifer Irving, Franklyn James, Alex Jebson, Beth Johnston, Isaac Kamta, Meggin King Hare, Olav Kitchen, Frances Kitson, OhWang Kwon, Joseph Kyser, Deborah Laforet, Carmen Lansdowne, Francis Liu, Barbara Lloyd, Sharon Lohnes, Audrey Lounder, Steven Lowden, Wendy Lowden, Shauna MacDonald, Malcolm MacLeod, Kenji Marui, Hope Maria Mattus, Simbarashe Mazhara, Jessica McCrae, Jane McDonald, Ken McEvoy, Erin McIntyre, Ryan McNally, Ted Meyers, L.E. Moir, Carol Munro, Simon Muwowo, Valerie Nickson, Barbara Nott, Nancy Nourse, Lawrence Nyarko, Laurie O'Leary, Karen Orlandi, Emma O'Rourke, Kaitlyn Ostrander, Kevin Parks, Wanalda Parsons, Katherine Paton, David Patterson, Joyce Payne, Bill Pollock, Cyndi Price, Helen Reed, Lynella Reid-James, Darrell Reine, Lawrence Roche, Mary Royal Duczek, Heather Sandilands, Linda Scherzinger, Arlyce Schiebout, Jeannette Schieck, Dong-Chun Seo, Janelle Shaw, Thea Sheridan-Jonah, Susan Siczkar, Keith Simmonds, Leigh Sinclair, Tom Smart, Fay Smith, Janet Sollows, Jack Spencer, Heather Stevenson, Anna Stewart, Catherine Stewart Savage, Wanda Stride, Diane Thurlow, Mary-Jo Tracy, Tony Tuck, Hazel Ward-Moreau, Keri Wehlander, Bruce West, Rebecca Whiting, Kathleen Whyte, Pam Wilcox, Fraser Williamson, Erica Wittevrongel, Owen Wright, Yvonne Wright, Taeil Yang, Judy Zarubick

Regrets Received:

G. Brent Caslick, Mary Anne Silverthorn

Corresponding:

Sharon Ballantyne, Patricia Bird, Graham Brownmiller, Marion Best, Allan Buckingham, Michael

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Caveney, Sarah Charters, M Chorney, Treena Duncan, Alison Etter, Catherine Glover, Wilson Gonese, Alan Hall, Adele Halliday, Peter Hartmans, Éric Hébert-Daly, Jennifer Henry, Jennifer Janzen-Ball, Steven Johann, Samer Laham (Partner Council), Mark Laird, Marcelo Leites (Partner Council), David Leyton-Brown, Alcris Limongi Ortiz, Kit Loewen, Faith March-MacCuish, Erik Mathiesen, Shannon McCarthy, Horacio Mesones (Partner Council), Annie Namala (Partner Council), Japhet Ndhlovu, Marion Pardy, Gary Paterson, Sara Stratton, Patti Talbot, Emmanuel Tehindrazanarivelo, Mardi Tindal, Nicole Treksler, Jane Van Patter

Welcome

The Moderator outlined the process for speakers to be acknowledged and how voting would occur during this meeting. She also noted simultaneous language interpretation in English and French would be available.

The Moderator constituted the meeting: “Au nom de Notre Seigneur, Jésus-Christ, seul chef souverain de l'Église, et par l'autorité qui m'a été conférée par le quarante-quatrième Conseil général, I hereby declare this meeting of the Executive of the General Council to be in session for the work that may properly be brought before it to the glory of God.”

Territory Acknowledgement

The Moderator noted that she and the General Secretary were situated on the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat, and the Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The Moderator then invited those gathered to name the traditional territory from which they were joining the meeting.

Introduction of Elder

The Moderator introduced the honoured Elder for this meeting, Evelyn Day, a member of the of the Tahltan, Gixtsan, and Tlingit nations. Evelyn offered a prayer to open the meeting.

Equity Reminders

The equity reminder questions were shared in French as well as English:

- Am I responding with my bias(es)?
- Just because we've always done it this way, should we continue?
- Who is missing around our table in this discussion? (Do we need to consult wider?)
- Whose voices haven't been heard? Have I spoken too much?
- Am I using correct pronouns for colleagues?
- Am I making assumptions based on race, sexual orientation, gender, to name a few?

Partner Greeting (Appendix I)

Horacio Mesones, Centro Regional EcuMénico de Asesoría y Servicio (Argentina), brought greetings from The United Church of Canada Partner Council. Members of the Partner Council gathered in Canada from October 20-26, 2023, for their first in-person session since 2018.

The Moderator thanked Horacio for his greetings on behalf of the Partner Council. She expressed gratitude for the partnership between the Council and The United Church of Canada.

Worship

A time of worship conducted by Graham Brownmiller, GC44 Worship Coordinator, included a reflection from former Moderator, the Very Rev. Peter Short, and the Moderator's prayer for the Middle East. Rev. Brownmiller led communion, which was celebrated by Commissioners and corresponding members remotely from where they were gathered.

GS 18 Opening Procedural Motion

The Moderator invited Michael Blair, General Secretary, to introduce the opening procedural motion. The General Secretary noted that there were sufficient Commissioners present to constitute quorum. He then briefly outlined the contents of the opening motion.

Motion: Michael Blair/Susan Brodrick

GC44 2023-046

Bounds of Council

That the bounds of the 44th General Council annual meeting 2023 be the virtual meeting room and the telephone connections to that meeting space.

Corresponding Members

That the following persons who are in attendance be corresponding members of the 44th General Council annual meeting 2023, and as such, be entitled to speak but not to move motions or to vote:

- former Moderators of The United Church of Canada;
- global partners, Youth Forum participants, and members of the Facilitation Group from GC44, 2022;
- General Council Officers, Executive Ministers, Executive Officers, and Regional Council Executive Ministers;
- members of the General Council Executive who are not Commissioners;
- members of the National Indigenous Council and National Indigenous Elders Council who are not Commissioners;
- Commissioners from GC43 who have since become staff members of the General Council Office or a region; and
- those who have been requested by the General Secretary, General Council to serve as resource persons to the Council.

Business Table Membership

That the Business Table for the 44th General Council annual meeting 2023 be:

- Carmen Lansdowne – Moderator
- Michael Blair – General Secretary
- Kit Loewen – General Council Executive, Business Planning Committee
- Allan Buckingham – General Council 43 and 44 Business Coordinator
- Shannon McCarthy – Executive Regional Minister, Northern Spirit, Living Skies and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils

- Nicole Treksler – Legal/Judicial Counsel
- Sharon Ballantyne – Equity Monitor

Facilitation Group

That the Facilitation Group for the 44th General Council annual meeting 2023 be the members of the business table named above.

Minute Secretary

That the Minute Secretary for the 44th General Council annual meeting 2023 be Shirley Welch.

Business before the 44th General Council annual meeting 2023

That the reports and proposals provided in the Workbook (online and including additions and updates) be received for consideration by the 44th General Council annual meeting 2023.

Agenda

That the 44th General Council annual meeting 2023 accept as its agenda, the agenda as circulated.

New Business

All notices of new business (including the draft proposal) will be presented in writing to the Business Committee, for consideration. New business that cannot be dealt with within the time limitations of the meeting will be referred to the General Council Executive for consideration and action.

Business Procedures

The Moderator will chair the meeting, making any rulings necessary. The Moderator will apply the Procedures for Holding a Meeting and Decision-Making (*The Manual Appendix*). Bourinot's Rules of Order will be used as the authority should a question arise which is not answered by the Appendix.

Speakers will:

- indicate their intention to speak as per instructions provided at the meeting
- be recognized by the Moderator prior to speaking
- begin comments by identifying themselves by name, role, and Regional Council (or position as appropriate)
- only speak once to a given proposal except at the discretion of the Moderator
- each new speaker should offer a new perspective or information
- keep comment brief except at the discretion of the Moderator;

Procedure for Withdrawing Proposals from the Consent Motion:

The 44th General Council annual meeting 2023 will adopt the following procedure in the event that a Commissioner desires that a proposal be withdrawn from the consent motion:

1. The Commissioner making such a request will have one minute to make their request and provide their rationale for their request.
2. The request will be granted only if a majority of Commissioners vote in favour of it.

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3. If an item of business is removed from the consent proposal the business table will determine time on the agenda; if time does not allow, it will be forwarded to the General Council Executive as unfinished business for decision.

Carried

GS 19 Consent Motion (Appendix II)

The Moderator invited Michael Blair, General Secretary, to introduce the consent motion. The General Secretary noted that the minutes from previous General Council meetings could be found online on the United Church Commons. Consent docket material is found in *Appendix I* included with these minutes.

There was an opportunity to ask questions or withdraw any item from the consent agenda.

Motion: Michael Blair/Susan Brodrick

GC44 2023-047

That the 44th General Council, 2023:

1. Approve the minutes of the online annual meeting of the 43rd General Council, October 2021.
2. Receive and accept the following:
 - General Secretary's Accountability Report
 - General Council Executive Report
 - Audit Committee Report, 2023
 - Strategic Plan Update
 - Theology and Inter-Church, Inter-Faith Committee Report
 - Anti-Racism Action Plan Update
 - Reconciliation Report
 - National Indigenous Council Update
3. Approve the following proposals and ensure that action is taken as outlined:
 - AUD 02 Audit Committee Recommendations
 - GCE 01 Financial Support for Ministry Personnel Suspended While in a Directed Program
 - GS 20 Affirm Existing Assessment Funding Rates and Principles for 2024

Carried

Video: Journey of Anti-racism

The United Church of Canada made a commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination in 2020. What has that meant to different communities of faith or networks across this church? In this video, people from communities of faith across the country respond to this question with ideas for action, reflections, and continued challenges for the church.

Table Group Time

The Moderator invited Allan Buckingham, GC44 Business Planning Coordinator, to introduce the table group time. Allan noted that this time would be for discussion in smaller groups regarding the proposals before the Council at this meeting.

At the end of the table group time, the Moderator noted that there had also been an opportunity to participate in a learning session regarding the proposals.

TICIF 02 Principles-Based Justice Work (Appendix III)

A learning session regarding this proposal had been held a week prior to the meeting.

After the proposal was moved and seconded there was opportunity for questions, comments or concerns. In response to comments, the General Secretary noted that the principles would be tested over the next couple of years, and that an update would be brought to GC45 in 2025. There was a question about whether the proposals regarding Israel / Palestine, which had been tabled in July 2022 would be revisited, if this motion was carried. The General Secretary indicated that the current circumstances, including requests from partners, would provide an opportunity to test the principles, and that those proposals would not be addressed at this meeting.

Motion: Frances Kitson/Isaac Kamta**GC44 2023-048**

That the General Council:

- a) adopt in principle the proposed Principles, with any necessary revisions to be brought to the 45th General Council 2025 for final adoption. Such revisions will be based on the experience and evaluation of using these principles to respond to situations of injustice and to requests from partners, and
- b) encourage further conversation with the Indigenous church about ways to include Indigenous spiritual teachings into the Principles document and to bring suggestions and revisions to the 45th General Council 2025.

Carried

GCE 08 Ministry Leadership to Meet the Needs of the Church in the 2020s, Part B DLM Recommendations (Appendix IV)

A learning session regarding this proposal had been held a week prior to the meeting.

There was time for general questions and comments prior to the proposal being moved or seconded. The Moderator explained that the proposal would be separated into five sections for voting (dealt with *seriatim*). There was further opportunity for questions as each section was dealt with.

Motion: Arlyce Schiebout/Mitchell Anderson**GC44 2023-049**

There were no additional questions or comments prior to dealing with the first proposal.

Minutes

1. *For Current Designated Lay Ministers*

That the 44th General Council, 2023, honour and value designated lay ministers' many years of faithful service to the church; recognize the lifelong vocational call of many current designated lay ministers; and direct the General Secretary to develop an appropriate acknowledgement for the 45th General Council (2025).

Carried

There were no additional questions or comments prior to dealing with the second proposal.

2. *Possible Pathway to Testamur for Current DLMs and Current DLM Candidates*

That the 44th General Council, 2023:

- a) direct the General Secretary, in cooperation with the Credentialing Committee of the Board of Vocation, to develop and implement a process that would allow current designated lay ministers who have discerned and practiced a lifelong vocational call to ministry to demonstrate that they meet the requirements for Testamur and readiness for commissioning or ordination, and
- b) grant authority to the Board of Vocation, on the recommendation of its Credentialing Committee, to grant Testamur to those DLMs. This process would also be open to current DLM candidates who have discerned a lifelong vocational call to ministry.

Carried

There were requests for clarification regarding wording prior to the vote on the third proposal. Alan Hall, Executive Officer, General Council Shared Services, explained that "collaborative ministry settings" is the current term for shared ministries (i.e. there may be one ministry personnel that is supporting a team of lay leaders to meet the pastoral care and worship needs of that collective of congregations); and in point a) that current Designated Lay Ministers would be allowed to move to different communities of faith, if they so chose, but future DLMs would be directed towards preparation for becoming Ordered.

3. *For Lay Ministry Going Forward*

That the 44th General Council, 2023:

- a) request that regional councils permit currently recognized DLMs and those who are current students who do not choose to request ordering, to move to different communities of faith;
- b) acknowledge that the need identified in 2000 for localized lay leadership still exists (in the "Ministry Together" Report on Ministry for the 21st Century received by the 37th General Council, 2000); and
- c) refer the original intent of designated lay ministry (in the "Ministry Together" Report on Ministry for the 21st Century received by the 37th General Council, 2000) to the on-going conversations about trained lay leadership in collaborative ministry settings.

Carried

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There were additional questions prior to the vote on the fourth proposal. In response to a question about equity regarding costs of attaining accreditation as a DLM and ordering as an Ordained or Diaconal Minister, Jennifer Janzen-Ball, Executive Officer, Theology & Ministry Leadership, noted that the length of study and costs are comparable to other education streams and there are options for appointments while studying; and that most theological schools now do not require an undergraduate degree for entry.

4. *For Future Candidates without undergraduate degrees*

That the 44th General Council, 2023:

- a) recognize that most of our theological schools do not require an undergraduate degree for entry into degree and diploma programs leading to ordination or commissioning;
- b) affirm the theological schools' development of a variety of programs of study for theological education and formation leading to commissioning or ordination; and
- c) encourage the Board of Vocation and candidacy boards to direct people without an undergraduate degree, who are discerning a call to life-long, church-wide ministry, towards ordered ministry preparation and formation.

Carried

There were additional questions prior to the vote on the fifth proposal relating to the possibility of mandating recognition of retired Designated Lay Ministers. Alan Hall noted that previous advice from the Manual Committee had suggested not making this change to *The Manual*, as they felt that currently there was adequate provision for full recognition of people who retired as Designated Lay Ministers.

After a short break the General Secretary offered Commissioners the option of whether or not to deal with this proposal. In a straw poll vote the Moderator noted a very strong preference for calling the question versus taking no action.

5. *For People who Retired as Designated Lay Ministers*

That the 44th General Council, 2023:

- a) strongly encourage regional councils to review their practices under C.2.1 b) and I.2.4.1 b) of *The Manual* to consider, in light of the leadership roles and acquired experience of many lay members who retired as designated lay minister, granting both licence to administer the sacraments, and membership in the regional council to lay members who retired as designated lay ministers and are resident within the regional council; and
- b) encourage regional councils to review their policies on voluntary associate ministry and eligibility to practice other functions of ministry as may apply to lay members who have retired as designated lay ministers.

Carried

The Moderator expressed thanks for those contributing to the conversation and decision-making regarding Designated Lay Ministry in the church.

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Video: Admission Ministry

In 2022, members from the Board of Vocation and Board of Admissions, national staff and Pastoral Relations Ministers formed an Admissions Matching Committee and embarked on a pilot project. The plan was to match five willing congregations and five racialized ministers approved for Admission to commit to being together for a three-year ministry placement. This video was created to encourage communities of faith to participate in the pilot project.

Reports

There was a time for Commissioners to pose questions or offer comments regarding the following reports which had been shared prior to the meeting:

- General Secretary's Accountability Report
- General Council Executive Report
- Strategic Plan Update
- Theology and Inter-Church, Inter-Faith Committee Report
- Anti-Racism Action Plan Update
- Reconciliation Report
- National Indigenous Council Update

There was a question about finances and the future of the church. The General Secretary explained that much funding at the national level is through communities of faith and if they struggle so does the national church. He noted that the strategic plan has been put in place to determine what work can be continued at a national level going forward.

A concern was raised about the decision taken by the General Council Executive to not invite a reporter from Broadview magazine to the meetings of the Executive, and whether this decision would be revisited. In response, it was noted that the structure of both the church and the Executive had changed. The GCE engages in much more generative conversation than previously, and are working at increasing communication prior to and after meetings so that Broadview, Commissioners, and the public are aware of the work. There was a hope expressed that there is a need to trust in the work of the Holy Spirit and the those elected to serve on the Executive.

Video: Kindred Works

The United Property Resource Corporation and its development arm, Kindred Works, celebrated the ground-breaking of its first project.

Video: Mohawk Bible

The Scriptures have been translated into one of the languages of the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. It been a labour of love which it took the Gabriels family – Satewas (Harvey) and Susan – generations to complete. The United Church Foundation, ecumenical partners and eastern Ontario regional councils contributed to the production.

GS 21 Renunciation of Former Mission Property in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) (Appendix V)

The General Secretary introduced the proposal noting that the action was requested by our partner The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). This item had been included in the learning session prior to the meeting. It was noted that though this was largely a symbolic act on the part of the United Church, it was important to support the work of the PROK towards bringing about reconciliation and justice in the Korean peninsula.

Motion: Michael Blair/Susan Brodrick

GC44 2023-050

That General Council 44, at its annual meeting in October 2023, respond to the request from The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) by:

- a. approving the attached statement in support of the PROK's declaration regarding former properties in North Korea;
- b. renouncing any claims to property in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) consistent with the church's 1960s action; and
- c. framing this action as an expression of The United Church of Canada's ongoing commitment to decolonization and reconciliation.

Carried

Recognition of John Egger

The General Secretary recognized and paid tribute to Dr. John Egger as the last solo ministry overseas personnel. Dr. Egger returned to Canada from Seoul in January, 2023, and completed a period of "Home Assignment" through May 2023, ending The United Church of Canada's global program sole Co-Worker in Mission appointments.

Since 1898, 110 Canadian mission personnel related to The United Church of Canada and its predecessor the Canadian Presbyterian Mission to Korea have served in Korea – with a forced gap of only a few years during WWII. The United Church of Canada – Korea mission partnership continues in diverse ways, including through the many in Canada of Korean heritage who are part of the United Church *in* Canada, and through the formal Mutual Recognition of Ministry agreement between The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and the United Church.

NOM 03 Recommendations for Appointment to the General Council Executive (Appendix VI)

Lynella Reid-James, Chair of the Nominations Committee, introduced this proposal, briefly noting the various pieces of work undertaken by the committee at their recent meeting.

Motion: Lynella Reid-James/Samuel Dansokho

GC44 2023-051

That the General Council appoint the following members to the General Council Executive until the 46th General Council, 2028:

- David Leyton-Brown (Lay Person, Shining Waters Regional Council)
- Alcris Limongi (Ordained Minister, Prairie to Pine Regional Council)

Carried

A liturgy of covenanting with the new members of the Executive followed the approval of the Nominations proposal.

Time with the Moderator

The Moderator turned the chair over to the Immediate Past Moderator, Richard Bott, while she provided a verbal update.

The Moderator opened her remarks by outlining for Commissioners her priorities for her time as Moderator:

- to engage in change-making conversations, both inside and outside of the church,
- to broaden what engagement looks like, both inside and outside of the church, and
- to mentor a new generation of leaders in the church.

She went on to speak more particularly about attending various events centred on youth and younger leadership in the church, including a week of canoeing with the Gibimishkaadimin project, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from across the country work towards reconciliation; a week in residence at Camp Pringle with the Youth Climate Motivators, students sponsored by local communities of faith to work on local climate justice or environmental needs; time in retreat with young clergy from the Fundy-St. Lawrence Dawning Waters, and Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Councils in the spring; and time in retreat with the youth councils for Chinook Winds, and Pacific Mountain Regional Councils.

She noted the start of the Flourishing Project, which she hopes will be a catalyst for change in the church and beyond. Questions addressed by the project include: How do we envision a flourishing church ten years from now? And what are the things that we can do now to contribute to that flourishing future that we want to see?

In conclusion, the Moderator noted that there had been two sessions of the book club, *The Mod's Book Squad*, to date.

Past Moderator Richard offered a prayer for the Moderator and her continuing work. The Moderator resumed the chair.

Mission and Service

Sarah Charters, President of The United Church of Canada Foundation, and Executive Officer of Philanthropy, highlighted a variety of resources to support Mission and Service including stories, worship materials, videos, discussion prompts, etc. These are available on the United Church website under the Community and Faith tab. Sarah encouraged submission of stories.

Report from Equity Team

On behalf of the Equity Team, Maedith Radlein expressed how pleased the team was with seeing so many of the equity aspirations becoming common practice during the meeting. She did note that communication continues to be a challenge. In conclusion, Maedith thanked the

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Council for their commitment to making equity more than performative, and striving to make equity something that is experienced by every member of the United Church.

Elder Reflection

Elder Evelyn offered a closing prayer.

Closing Comments

The General Secretary noted that the United Church has launched an appeal for the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, to support those who are impacted by the conflict.

Closing Procedural

Motion: Michael Blair/Susan Brodrick

GC44 2023-052

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That the General Secretary be authorized to publish the minutes in such format(s) as deemed appropriate by the General Secretary for the communication of the actions of the 44th General Council, October 2023 throughout the church.

Adjournment

That the meeting of the 44th General Council, October 2023 be adjourned.

Carried**Thanks**

The Moderator thanked honoured Elder, Evelyn Day, the Equity Team, staff and elected members who had provided assistance during and prior to the meeting. She expressed special thanks to the Commissioners for their work and their engagement with the work.

Closing

The Moderator closed the meeting with a blessing. A final video was shared as the meeting ended.

Video: History Moment

As the United Church begins to mark its centennial, stories which have shaped the church will be shared. This video remembers Lydia Gruchy on the centennial of her graduation from St. Andrew's College.

Moderator, Carmen Lansdowne

General Secretary, Michael Blair