

REPORT OF THE CANADIAN CHURCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO GENERAL SYNOD 2025

1. Introduction

Our beloved late President, Bishop Terry Brown, died suddenly on 31 March 2024 (Easter Sunday). The Rt. Rev. Terry Brown had been the President of the Canadian Church Historical Society (CCHS) since 2015. The CCHS conference held in April 2024 grew out of Terry's vision. The entire conference and a great deal of the planning, presentations, and large number of attendees bore witness to his peerless knowledge of the Anglican Congress of August 1963, and of the implications of the Mutual Responsibility document produced at Huron College in the weeks prior to the Congress. Bishop Terry's vocation was, in many ways, a witness to that revolutionary work. Both the conference and the journal volume are dedicated to Bishop Terry with enormous gratitude for his life and service to the Anglican Church in Canada and around the world. On behalf of the CCHS Committee, I wish to acknowledge our profound sadness and sense of loss. Bishop Terry was the driving force behind the MRI@60 conference.

On behalf of the CCHS Committee, I wish to express our thanks to the Anglican Foundation for a \$10,000 grant in support of our international conference, "Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ at Sixty", or MRI@60, 12-14 April 2024. Further funds were gratefully received from the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church (HSEC). The conference commemorated a transformational process in the life of the Anglican Communion. Although the term "post-colonial" was not used in 1963, the papers given explored in detail the effects of the MRI document as it shaped the succeeding decades in a post-colonial world.

The publication of *Documents of the Mohawk Institute: The Journals and Reports of Robert Ashton, 1872–1876, and the Diary of Alice Ashton, 1877* in May 2024 gave a detailed exploration of the origins of modern models of Indian Residential Schools in Canada. Our forthcoming conference (2026) on Canadian missions will explore in detail all aspects of missions and missionary culture, 1700-1922, in Canada. The MRI conference and published papers, the *Ashton* papers, and the missions conference mark the CCHS' commitment to dismantling racism and colonialism; and, to further our understanding of the effects of racist and colonial policies and practices within the Anglican Church, and more broadly. In these publications, conferences and lectures (see our recent activities, pt. 2, and upcoming activities, pt. 5) we are committed to furthering and deepening our relationships with Indigenous Church leaders.

2. Recent activities

The CCHS Executive Committee has met regularly since CCHS became a General Synod committee, usually by Zoom, but was able to meet in person informally in early December 2024. These meetings have usually consisted of planning for future events and monitoring publication of the CCHS *Journal*. Our last General Meeting was held by Zoom on 8 November 2024. General meetings also include a programme with a featured speaker. At that meeting, the very distinguished scholar, Dr. Kwok Pui-lan, Dean's Professor in the Candler School of Divinity at Emory University, gave a presentation on "Postcolonialism and Anglicanism."

3. Committee membership

Current members of the CCHS Committee and their positions, as approved by the CCHS General meeting on 8 November 2024, are as follows:

Executive Members

President	Dr. Bill Acres, London, Ontario
Vice-President	The Rev'd Andrew Rampton, Hamilton, Ontario
Secretary	Dr. Susan Paterson Glover, Toronto, Ontario
Treasurer	Laurel Parson, General Synod Archivist
Journal Editor	Dr. Thomas Power, Toronto, Ontario
At-large members	The Rev'd Daniel F. Graves, Aurora, Ontario The Rev'd Dr. Alan Hayes, Toronto, Ontario

Committee Members

The Rev'd Stephen Sharman, Selkirk, Manitoba
 The Rev'd Canon Philip Hobson, Toronto, Ontario
 The Rev'd Dr. Norman J. Knowles, Calgary, Alberta
 Canon Trevor Powell, Regina, Saskatchewan
 Dr. Richard Virr, Montreal, Quebec

CoGS Member: The Right Rev. Susan Bell, PhD. Bishop of Niagara Diocese.

General Synod Archivist: Laurel Parson, Toronto, Ontario

The Rev'd Paul G. Walker, Toronto, Ontario (CCHS Past President)

It should also be noted that the Primate and National Indigenous Archbishop are Patrons of the Society and are always welcome at CCHS Committee meetings.

Current overall paid-up membership in the CCHS at the end of 2022 was 31 personal memberships and 46 institutional memberships, although because of a grace period the actual numbers of those on the membership list are higher. Institutional memberships are largely tied to the subscription to the CCHS *Journal*. In the last few years, institutional memberships have dropped as the *Journal* is published online as part of the ATLA consortia. A membership drive was discussed for individuals in November 2024.

4. *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*

Dr. Thomas Power, formerly of Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, was unanimously elected Editor of the *Journal* in March 2024. He brings a wealth of experience in scholarly editing and publications. The most recent issue of the *CCHS Journal* is dated 2021 and 2022 but did not appear until 2 May 2024. This is a special book-length issue containing the edited journals of the Rev'd and Mrs. Robert Ashton, 1872-7 with a lengthy introduction by Dr. Bill Acres. This edition will be of significance in understanding the operation of the Mohawk Institution and identifying Indigenous students and their experiences there. Copies will be available for sale at the General Synod, 2025, at the CCHS booth.

Two other *Journal* volumes are in preparation: Dr. Todd Webb and Dr. Bruce Douville of the Society of Canadian Church History (our secular sibling) are editing a special commemorative volume in memory of the late Prof. William Westfall, Professor Emeritus at York University, and historian of Trinity College, Toronto.

Dr. Power is currently completing an edition of papers given at the Society's conference 12-14 April, 2024, an international meeting "MRI@60", held at St. Paul's, Bloor St. The Rev. Daniel Graves' appreciation and brief life of Bishop Terry will front the volume. Professor Mark Chapman of Oxford University, a major scholar of Anglicanism, gave a superb keynote, an edited version of which will appear in this volume as well as in the *Anglican and Episcopal History*, the journal of the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church (HSEC), where a companion volume of further Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ (1963) conference papers will be published.

These two most recent volumes of the *Journal* will be published in 2025.

5. Upcoming activities

CCHS is planning a conference (hybrid in-person and on-line) on the history of missions in Canada in June 2026 at Huron University College. The Call for Papers will be distributed in late summer, 2025. It is anticipated that the papers given at this conference will comprise an issue of the CCHS *Journal*. Laurel Parson, Treasurer of the Society, will be present with Dr. Bill Acres and others at the CCHS booth at General Synod in June, 2025. The Executive of the CCHS is currently undertaking a membership drive. Our Annual General Meeting will be held in conjunction with the national meeting of Anglican Archivists in November, 2025.

6. Conclusion

Interest in Anglican church history remains high at the parish level. CCHS is working on resources to support that interest. However, as the Anglican Church of Canada undergoes retrenchment at all levels, including in theological education, sometimes archives and church history are not regarded as high priorities. The existence of CCHS and its inclusion in General Synod is witness that the Anglican Church of Canada believes otherwise and that we still have much to learn from the past, both its strengths and weaknesses. The CCHS has committed to the work of right relationships through its conferences, journal, and special events.

Dr. Bill Acres
President, Canadian Church Historical Society