



General Council News

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Opening Worship Calls the Church to Unity

by Christine Johnson

On a stage in the centre of the gymnasium surrounded by more than 650 participants, Moderator Mardi Tindal presided at the opening worship of General Council, calling the United Church to blend the instructions of the prophet Micah with the words in the Gospel of John found on the church's crest.

"Might this be, I wonder, a time to marry the words of Micah and of John?" she asked. "What does the

Lord require? Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God, 'that all may be one.'"

From exuberant hand clapping and dancing in the aisles to quiet reflection, the service had a multilingual flavour, with prayers and other worship material spoken in a variety of languages. Along with English and French, worship leaders spoke Arabic, Mohawk, Cree, Ojibwa, and dialects from India and Kenya.

In her sermon, Tindal addressed the call for unity in the context of an action-oriented, intercultural church. Her sermon was in three parts, and she spoke each while facing a different direction in the gym, a recognition of the four sacred directions in Aboriginal teachings. In part one, she spoke about humility and



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Liturgical dancers at opening worship

paid homage to the insights of the 27th Moderator, the Very Rev. George Tuttle, whose life was remembered during the service.

"He modelled the importance of listening to those who are vulnerable, including the young, and to church custodians," said Tindal. "He told me these [people] have particular insight into what's really happening in the church."

In part two, Tindal spoke in French of compassion and community, referring to the pain suffered by those who attended the Indian Residential School system as documented by the federal Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She shared the fact that the grandmother of Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, sent 17 children away to residential schools. When we have the courage to share in the sorrow of Aboriginal people, Tindal suggested, we allow the community to practise compassion.

In the third part, the Moderator reflected on justice and creation. She says she often uses the Micah 6:8 passage to describe the United Church to those unfamiliar with the church. But, she adds, she's honest about it. "I add my observation that we have tended to shout 'do justice,' to speak more quietly the words 'love kindness,' and to mumble 'walk humbly with your God.'"

After each section of the sermon, liturgical dancers from an Ottawa-based ensemble surrounded the central stage and waved coloured ribbons representing the direction to which the Moderator had previously referred.

A blend of traditional hymns, praise music, jazz saxophone, and a 65-member mass choir made up

mainly of singers from Ottawa-area churches shaped the sound and rhythm of the gathering. The contemporary band, Stream, which comes from Ottawa Presbytery and is under the direction of Stephanie Coward-Yaskiw, led the singing and provided accompaniment.

The worship was designed by a team from Red Deer, Alberta, under the leadership of Worship Chair Linda Ervin. The music was coordinated by Coward-Yaskiw of Ottawa Presbytery and Rosemary Lambie, Executive Secretary of Montreal and Ottawa Conference. The team is also responsible for daily worship in plenary sessions and the closing worship.

Ervin says the team started with the Moderator's theme and expanded it to include scriptures related to the topic of abundance. "We wanted to talk about the abundance we have in The United Church of Canada—the people, the resources, the generosity."

Along with Tuttle, the ministry of two others was remembered among the many clergy who have died since the last General Council: Don Ray, who was General Secretary from 1977–1982 and Ted Kostecki, who served as a member of the Executive of the General Council during the most recent term.

For the sacrament of communion, commissioners from across Canada brought bread baked in their home communities to symbolize the gathering of the one Body of Christ. Also, grape juice from Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia was shared.

At the end, commissioners—some of whose enthusiasm was waning as worship ran 45 minutes longer than scheduled—were sent out with the words, "Rise up. Get to it."

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Moderator Mardi Tindal, Nora Sanders, and Stéphane Vermette at the blessing of the elements for communion



L'Université Carleton accueille l'Église Unie

Stéphane Gaudet

C'est à l'Université Carleton, à Ottawa, que se réunit toute la semaine le 41^e Conseil général de l'Église Unie du Canada. C'est la première fois depuis 1958 que le Consistoire d'Ottawa est l'hôte du Conseil général.

L'université, à l'origine petit collège, a été fondée 1942 par une association laïque de promotion de l'éducation. Ces bienfaiteurs se souciaient de permettre aux jeunes habitants de la capitale, dont plusieurs avaient préféré travaillé durant la Grande Dépression des années 30 pour joindre les deux bouts, de poursuivre ou reprendre leurs études. Dix ans plus tard, elle s'établit dans le sud d'Ottawa, sur une pointe verdoyante de 60 hectares au confluent de la rivière Rideau et du canal du même nom.

Aujourd'hui, l'Université Carleton compte plus de 25 000 étudiants. Environ 2 000 professeurs et employés y travaillent, ce qui fait de Carleton l'un des principaux employeurs d'Ottawa. Ses cinq facultés offrent 65 programmes dans plus de 50 disciplines.

En plus des étudiants et du personnel, l'université a coutume d'accueillir des militaires de partout à travers le monde, de passage dans la capitale fédérale pour des événements de musique militaire. C'est aussi à Carleton que loge la Garde de cérémonie des Forces canadiennes, qui assure quotidiennement la relève de la garde au parlement durant la belle saison. Les gardes sont faciles à identifier, avec leurs uniformes rouge vif et leurs chapeaux en fourrure d'ours noir, et on peut les voir parader sur le campus entre juin et août.

Mais pourquoi l'Église Unie choisit-elle toujours des campus universitaires pour tenir son Conseil général ? Pourquoi pas un centre de congrès ?

L'une des raisons est que les campus universitaires offrent un service de résidences qui peuvent héberger les délégués, invités et le personnel. Un hôtel aussi... mais de façon plus impersonnelle. Les résidences étudiantes, avec leurs espaces communs, favorisent la proximité, le partage et contribuent ainsi à nourrir un esprit de communauté chrétienne.

Deux prix Nobel ont enseigné à Carleton, dont l'ex-premier ministre Lester B. Pearson (Prix Nobel de la paix 1957) qui était d'ailleurs membre de l'Église Unie. Carleton est reconnue comme l'une des meilleures universités canadiennes.

C'est donc dans ce cadre agréable que logeront et travailleront toute la semaine les 350 délégués (laïcs et pasteurs) en provenance de partout au Canada, de même que les quelque 300 enfants, adolescents, membres du personnel de l'Église, bénévoles et invités œcuméniques ou internationaux qui vivront avec eux cette aventure.



Hard-Working Volunteers Handle Council Logistics

by Derek Carlisle

Awarm, enthusiastic, organized, and bilingual welcome is being extended to those attending the 41st General Council from Ottawa Presbytery volunteers serving on the Local Arrangements Committee.

Their work began three years ago, when volunteers from Ottawa were embedded with the team handling welcome and logistics at the 40th General Council in Kelowna, British Columbia, in 2009. Committee Co-chairs Barbara Reynolds and David Stafford not only attended Kelowna in an observer capacity, but have several other General Council meetings under their belts.

There are many similarities between this Council and the last, says Stafford, who is attending his fourth General Council meeting as either a volunteer or commissioner.

The Ottawa General Council also marks the fourth for Reynolds. She notes that attending previous General Councils has helped her and Stafford in framing the big picture for the 200-strong volunteer team from Ottawa Presbytery and the greater Montreal and Ottawa Conference who are offering their services this week.

"When you are working out serving muffins... you also have to know what else is going on and what could be going on. We're ready," she says.

Ottawa Presbytery encompasses close to 80 congregations in 64 pastoral charges ranging from urban



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Co-chairs Barbara Reynolds and David Stafford

churches near the site of Carleton University, where the Council is meeting, to rural charges up to 100 kilometres away in Ontario and Quebec.

Stafford says that the concentration of churches has enabled the committee to have an abundance of people power to divvy up the many tasks over the seven days. In addition to baking and transporting healthy cookies and muffins to the gymnasium where Council meets, presbytery and Conference volunteers are assisting with registration, information, set-up and take-down logistics, transportation, first aid, and chaplaincy services.

New to this General Council is a focus on liaison with local congregations. A Conference-specific display table that changes daily features local United Church ministries.

The committee is also paying specific attention to commissioners and guests speaking both of Canada's official languages. "One of the hopes that I would have is that people will leave this [General Council] knowing what it is like to have ministries in French as a part of the United Church," says Reynolds.

Throughout the week, Local Arrangements Committee members proficient in French will be sporting buttons to spark conversations. Reynolds says the inspiration for the buttons came from meeting a unilingual francophone commissioner at the 2006 General Council in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

"For three days, she was feeling very lonely. She could cope in English, but it was an effort. She didn't know who else spoke French," recalls Reynolds.

At this Council, commissioners and guests will be encouraged to wear buttons highlighting the different languages they speak. Buttons are available that indicate French-speaking ability, and blank ones have also been produced on which people can write the other languages they speak.

The committee is also responsible for organizing mid-week local activities for commissioners and guests that highlight some of the unique ministries of the United Church in the region.

"What we tried to do in looking at this was to say there are many ways of ministry in Ottawa Presbytery," says Reynolds. "Clearly, we could have organized a bunch of tours to go to the art gallery, or whatever, but if people want to do that, they can do it on their own."

Some of the activities include:

- a downtown social justice walk beginning at an adult drop-in centre at Centretown United

Church followed by visits to other outreach projects by ecumenical partners

- a visit to Stittsville and Emmanuel United Churches, which are leaders in the green movement
- a visit to the French-speaking congregation of Église Unie Saint-Marc in downtown Ottawa
- a hike in Gatineau National Park highlighting local ecology, followed by a meal at Aylmer United Church
- a rural ministry experience in historic Fitzroy Harbour, Ontario, featuring a barbecue with local produce



Welcome To *General Council News*

General Council News is being posted daily on The United Church of Canada's 41st General Council website, www.gc41.ca. Individual news stories are being posted throughout the day. Each day a single printed copy will also be delivered to all table groups for commissioners to share. The final edition of *General Council News* will be available online within 24 hours of the closing of General Council on Saturday, August 18.

General Council News reporters will be covering the highlights and significant happenings of the 41st General Council, rather than recording everything that happens each day. All *General Council News* stories may be reproduced freely.

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