



General Council News

Ottawa, Ontario

Sunday, August 19, 2012

Vol. 41 No. 9

Moderator Installed During Closing Worship

by Derek Carlisle

Over the course of his upcoming three-year term as Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Gary Paterson will offer a special prayer to God daily.

During the service on August 18, 2012, where he was installed as the United Church's 41st Moderator, Paterson told commissioners and guests that he would

promise his best to say a prayer based on Ephesians 3:14–21 every day of his term.

"I calculated that's well over 1,000 times this prayer will be said," noted Paterson, who outlined that the verses speak of being humble and grateful for being filled with the fullness of God.

"I pray that each of us and all of us...will be strengthened in our inner being with power through God's Spirit," he added.

The worship service followed a multilingual format with the participation of several United Church representatives from across the country. Congregation



The United Church of Canada

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Gary Paterson, Moderator, and former Moderator Mardi Tindal during the closing worship

members were struck by Paterson's addition of an expressive "Oh" before the scripted "I will" pledges in the formal installation portion of the service.

During the laying on of hands, Paterson's spouse, the Rev. Tim Stevenson, joined outgoing Moderator Mardi Tindal and General Secretary Nora Sanders on the raised circular platform in the middle of the gymnasium at Carleton University in Ottawa.

Paterson's sermon compared the early church described in Paul's letter to the ancient city of Ephesus with The United Church of Canada in its very beginnings.

"We think we have a history of only 87 years, but we were back there at Ephesus. They found themselves in a vast multicultural community and began struggling, praying, wrestling, and fighting about what it means to be an intercultural church," said Paterson.

"We, like those people of Ephesus, are struggling, and we need to hear this prayer from Paul," he added.

A number of symbols were presented to the new Moderator immediately following his installation, including a stole from Tindal, a talking stick presented by Alvin Dixon, a General Council Executive member from British Columbia, and a prayer shawl from Betty Turcott, representing the National United Church Women.

Youth Forum delegates Paul Henderson from British Columbia Conference and Rachel Hearn from London Conference provided a reflection time based

on Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require of you?"

Henderson said that God wants us to create a world "where justice is sought, kindness is loved, and where we walk humbly...towards a future free of discrimination and prejudice."

Hearn called on commissioners to think back to their high school years before taking them on a journey to the mind of the youth in the church today. "Look at the condition of the church and the downward spiral of a trend it seems to be following," she said. "This is a real tangible problem and don't think that we can't see it."

What proved helpful for Hearn and her fellow youth delegates in facing this problem was each taking a breath, which allowed them to form a community throughout their time in Ottawa.

"Now that we have been thoroughly surrounded by hope given to us by our leaders, by each other, by the work of the General Council, and by the grace of our God, who could dream of giving up?" said Hearn.

Special music during the service was provided by a mass choir from Ottawa and the Stream musical ensemble. During the offering time, the gifts of knitting that were made throughout the week by commissioners and other visitors to the Council were presented to three Mission and Service partners. Carolyn Ruda from Montreal and Ottawa Conference thanked all the knitters for their gifts of creation and caring.

Also during the offering time, past Moderator Mardi Tindal presented her successor with a 108-page report that was generated from the Open Space day during the Council proceedings. Youth representatives presented the new Moderator with an offering of written hopes and dreams they had compiled for the church.

In his closing remarks, Paterson bid farewell to commissioners from what he described as their "bubble" in Ottawa.

"In a couple of hours, a thousand of us will be scattered from this place to the corners of this continent, this country, and then around the world. We will go filled with the power beyond our understanding, with the God who can do so much more than you can ever imagine and ask, and you are equipped to love the world," said Paterson.



The United Church of Canada



Covenant Recognizes Place of Aboriginal Church at Union

by Kevin Cox

Ray Jones, Chair of the Aboriginal Ministries Council, and Moderator Mardi Tindal celebrated the final step of a journey towards the United Church's formal recognition of Aboriginal congregations by showing off their new moccasins.

The footwear was a gift from the church to mark the signing of a covenant by the Aboriginal Ministries Council and The United Church of Canada that acknowledges the place of the Aboriginal church in the formation of the denomination in 1925.

The signing was part of a banquet held at the 41st General Council on August 17, 2012.

There were more than 60 Methodist and Presbyterian Aboriginal congregations when the United Church was formed, but they were included under the Board of Home Missions.

Earlier this week the General Council invited the Aboriginal congregations to sign the covenant and changed the United Church crest to include the words

"all my relations" in Mohawk and the four colours of the Aboriginal medicine wheel.

Tindal, Jones, and Moderator-elect Gary Paterson showed off their moccasins after signing the historic covenant in the presence of leading Elder Lorna Standingready of the All Native Circle Conference.

The moccasins are "for walking the path together, to remember this day," Tindal said.

Paterson read aloud the covenant, which celebrates the establishment of the Aboriginal Ministries Council and rejects, "all historical attitudes which imposed European cultural norms as a condition of accepting the gospel."

It adds that the Basis of Union will now be read within the context of the words added to the Introduction and Declaration parts of *The Manual* that remind the church of the place of the Indigenous church in the formation of the denomination.

The covenant is made "to proclaim symbolically through the revised crest that all peoples are equally welcome in The United Church of Canada and to affirm our commitment to walking together, following Christ on a path towards right relations."



The United Church of Canada

Ray Jones, Moderator Mardi Tindal, Moderator-elect Gary Paterson, and leading Elder Lorna Standingready

Dominion-Chalmers United Hosts Musical Evening

by Derek Carlisle

Favourite church hymns old and new and the words of United Church prophets stirred the souls of those attending a special service hosted by Ottawa's Dominion-Chalmers United Church on August 16, 2012, during the 41st General Council.

The musical evening marked the first time a worship service has taken place inside a church building during General Council proceedings since the Youth Forum hosted commissioners at the Acadia University chapel in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, in 2003.

In welcoming the assembled commissioners and local United Church members, Ottawa Presbytery minister Lillian Roberts noted that in 2012 Dominion-Chalmers is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its sanctuary and the 50th anniversary of the amalgamation of the former Dominion and Chalmers pastoral charges.

The floor and balcony areas of the sanctuary were filled with the sounds of an assembled Ottawa Presbytery mass choir, the Rideau Park United Church Bell Choir, and the local Stream musical group, which has led commissioners in song all week long under the direction of Ottawa's Stephanie Coward-Yaskiw.

Ottawa Presbytery Chair George Hermanson began the service by inviting the congregation to "step back with us, way back to the beginning, to the origin of our union... Hear the excitement, concern, hopes, and dreams for our church in the voices of those who have gone before." These remarks were followed by hundreds of voices joining in "O for a Thousand Tongues," which was sung at the inaugural service of The United Church of Canada in 1925.

Musical offerings were interspersed with selected passages by United Church Moderators and *Observer* staff over the years read by Thérèse Samuel, Read Sherman, Tessa Włodarczyk, and Shaun Yaskiw.

The event marked the final public appearance of outgoing Moderator Mardi Tindal, who was joined by her newly elected successor, Gary Paterson, just two hours following his election by commissioners. Tindal and Paterson co-presided during the commissioning and benediction portion of the service.

In advance of the service, Barbara Reynolds, Co-chair of the Local Arrangements Committee, told *General Council News* that the idea of an Ottawa Presbytery musical evening was initiated by Stream's musical leader Coward-Yaskiw.

Reynolds noted that Dominion-Chalmers was a fitting choice for a summer evening service due to a number of factors, including the availability of air conditioning in August.

"It's a very comfortable church...it's a big spot and we're just going to let the rafters go on this," said Reynolds.



General Council to Engage In Affirming Ministry Study Program

by Christine Johnson

Both the Executive and staff of the General Council will be engaging in an Affirming Ministry study program after a proposal was approved on Saturday, August 18, 2012, in some of the final business of the 41st General Council.

An Affirming Ministry declares itself to be fully inclusive of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and backs this up with action.

The proposal also directs the General Secretary, Nora Sanders, to bring a report and recommendation about the results of the study program to the next General Council in 2015.

The proposal was considered by the Council earlier in the week before being passed on Saturday. In the earlier discussions, Alan Boyd of Bay of Quinte Conference said he felt the study program was one of the "finest educational processes" he had ever participated in. He said it changed his point of view on a number of issues.

Judith Evenden of Bay of Quinte Conference explained some of the history behind the proposal. It originated with a group called 10 by 10, whose

goal was to have 10 Affirming congregations in Bay of Quinte Conference by 2010. She said they accomplished their goal in 2012.

One objection to the proposal came from Teresa Burnett-Cole of Toronto Conference who said she wondered if staff should be engaged in the process, since normally General Council staff follow direction from General Council. Paul Browning of London Conference raised a concern that future elected officials on the Executive would have to abide by the decision.

Others expressed the view that more people would leave the church if the General Council became an Affirming ministry. But John Hurst of Hamilton Conference recounted the experience of his home church going through the process. Although some parishioners didn't agree with the decision, only three families left out of a 300-family congregation. "I don't think the risks are huge," he said.



Simplified Pastoral Relations Models To Be Tested

by Derek Carlisle

In response to feedback from over 1,200 United Church personnel and leaders over the last year, commissioners attending the 41st General Council in Ottawa, Ontario, have approved a proposal to develop and test simplified pastoral relations models.

Over a four-month period in late 2011 and early 2012, comments on the pastoral relations process were received from 400 participants in Conference focus groups and from an additional 800 respondents through an online survey. Following the church-wide consultation, a proposal for the 41st General Council was developed by the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services calling for the testing of simplified pastoral relations models and oversight and discipline policies of the church. The aim of the new models is to free presbyteries from the

administrative burden of increasingly complex human resource and regulatory work.

In moving the motion to adopt the proposal, Arlyce Schiebout from Montreal and Ottawa Conference said that she believed that the Permanent Committee has heard "what is being said in Conferences and pastoral charges about healthy relationships."

"We have been asking these questions of our ministry personnel and our Conference staff people for over six years and they have been answering," said Leigh Sinclair of Alberta and Northwest Conference.

Sinclair added she was comfortable with a reference in the report that over 73 percent of the respondents felt that the course of action "is the general direction we need to go as a group, knowing that the specifics in each place will look different."

The testing phase is to be carried out in a manner that is flexible to contextual and regional differences and supported within the financial capacity of the church. An additional amendment was added by the commissioners directing the General Secretary, Nora Sanders, to monitor and report on all costs associated with the proposal on a regular basis to the Executive of the General Council.

Michelle Owens from London Conference said the timing of the proposal was welcome due to a backlog of pastoral relations matters requiring attention by congregations and presbyteries that block pressing pastoral needs.

"This summer I had pastoral emergency responsibilities for six to eight congregations for the month of July. On top of that, I chair pastoral relations in Huron-Perth Presbytery where 40 of our 60 congregations are either in experimental ministry, transition, or have students."

"Please pass this motion and take this workload off of my congregation, so that they can have my time back to go to the hospital, to prepare my sermons, and to do the Bible studies that they are not getting because all of my time is spent...doing pastoral relations," added Owens.

During reflection on the motion, John Young of Bay of Quinte Conference said he was concerned about making policy changes in areas that the church will be running pilots in.

"Frankly, that doesn't make any logical sense to me. This is a huge change. I'm happy to pilot...but I am not sure about why we are rushing to change, in

this case, bylaws on something that in fact we need as a whole court to own," said Young.

A subsequent amendment adopted by the Council limits the ability of the Executive of the General Council to only implement changes that do not require any remit or bylaw changes.

Following adoption of this proposal, the General Secretary will invite Conferences to express interest in testing the new policies. Potential outcomes identified for measuring identified in the report of the Permanent Committee include

- improving the "fit" of pastoral relationships as reported by ministers and pastoral charges
- increasing the number of ministers and pastoral charges that report having a healthy relationship
- increasing the number of ministers stating that they receive the support they need to perform their ministries
- decreasing the number of ministry personnel who report that they feel isolated



Council Passes Statement on Ministry

by Kevin Cox

Faced with a growing number of part-time ministries struggling to find leadership, the United Church will be looking at new forms of ministry that could see ordination at the local level and the establishment of regional ministry teams.

On August 15, 2012, the 41st General Council passed a Statement on Ministry that affirms the role of diaconal, ordered, and designated lay ministers. It also approved a study of the theological and practical implications of local ordination of designated lay ministers serving in pastoral ministry roles.

The study will look at enabling Conferences to ordain lay ministers who complete three years of study and preparation. Lay ministers who are locally ordained would have all the rights and responsibilities

of an ordained minister but would be limited to calls within their own Conference.

The background material prepared by the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee says that the church's understanding and practices of designated lay ministry are "unsustainable."

"It does not have the support of many of those whose ministry it defines. There is no clear theological articulation of its distinctiveness from ordered ministry. There is confusion of the meaning of 'lay' in the title."

The committee also prepared a report on regional team models for ministry that would see a team of ministers serving several congregations. The teams would provide leadership and resources for the increasing number of charges that rely on part-time ministry leadership. The proposal related to regional team ministry has been passed on to the Executive of the General Council for decision.



Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Challenges General Council

by Christine Johnson

Marie Wilson, a commissioner of the federal government's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), told the 41st General Council on August 17, 2012, to "muscle up, because the toughest sprint is yet to come."

Wilson reported that the TRC is now in its third year and a narrow window of opportunity remains to effect change.

She reminded Council that the TRC will be completed before the next General Council in 2015. Like the Olympics, she said, the race is often won in the last 100 metres.

"The United Church of Canada is one of the parties to the largest class action court case in Canadian history," she said. "We have a specific obligation, both legal and moral."

In her presentation, Wilson said it's important for the people of the United Church to share the load, to seek justice, and to exercise "the will to know." At the last General Council in 2009, commissioners took a journey from head to heart by listening to the stories of Indian Residential School survivors. She said that now it is time to go from listening to action.

"How do we take that heart and move it to our hands and our voices?" she asked. Wilson also asked commissioners to speak up and to make noise, just as Jesus made a racket, because there is so much more to be done.

The United Church was the first out of the gate in apologizing, she said, but the apology has only played a small role. "The greater weight and impact is being tested, is still being held out for its trueness. Is it just words or is it action?" she asked.

"The consistent messages that we have heard over the three years now of our mandate are loss of pride, loss of identity, loss of educational opportunity, loss of self-respect, loss of a sense of belonging, a sense of not filling in anywhere," said Wilson.

Sadly, she recounted the fact that the largest growing community of Indigenous women is in women's correctional facilities. "We have disproportionately high numbers of Indigenous people in all the places of society that most of us have the privilege of never setting foot in," she said. That list includes the social welfare system, jails, emergency wards, group homes, and detention centres.

"They are also in the graveyards of our country," she noted. "They are also in the graveyards of our residential schools."

The next TRC hearing will be held in Montreal in April 2013. Wilson asked that the United Church be significantly engaged in that hearing across the province of Quebec.



Children at Council

by Christine Johnson

"We're a small but close-knit group," said Amy Crawford, Program Coordinator for Children, Youth, and Young Adults, of the children's program at the 41st General Council.

Three children, Liam Simmonds from Trail, British Columbia, Cody Chambre from Williamstown, Ontario, and Nathan Douglas from Winnipeg, Manitoba, were joined by a supervisory team of six adults, youth, and young adults.

One of the highlights, said Crawford, was making a video about all 15 Moderator nominees. The questions were both serious ("What is your passion and what do you hope to accomplish as Moderator?") and lighthearted ("What is your favourite movie and what games do you play on your phone?") The video was played on August 16, 2012, before the vote for Moderator.

During the weekdays, the children joined others from Ottawa Presbytery for Camp Awesome at Rideau Park United Church. Camp Awesome is a day camp program run by Ottawa Presbytery that is hosted on a weekly basis by churches throughout the presbytery.

In a report to Council on the last morning, the children shared their experiences from their week. They told commissioners they played games, sang songs, and learned Bible stories at Camp Awesome.

They described their Sunday morning worship on August 12, 2012, which took place in the "Weeping Willow Cathedral," found underneath a willow tree in the Arboretum of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa.

On August 17, 2012, the children joined six others from Ottawa Presbytery for a sleepover at the Museum of Science and Technology. When they told commissioners "Moderator Mardi" had come to read them a bedtime story, a collective "ahhhhh" could be heard.

One project they undertook together was the creation of a painted mural that depicted a "to do" list that included 1. seek justice; 2. love kindness; 3. walk humbly with God. The mural was presented to General Secretary Nora Sanders for the General Council Office in Toronto. Sanders received the mural and said she would be pleased to find a place for it.

One of the leaders, James Murray, a local minister



Children at Council with their leaders

from Ottawa, said the number of children was quite low because of the prohibitive cost of \$800 per child.

Crawford said she thought there might be “future leaders” represented by the three boys. She added that it was also a great opportunity for leadership training for the three youth and young adult leaders.

During the closing worship on August 18, 2012, the children called the Council to renewed ministry.

“We are an important part of the church,” said Nathan. “We may need you, but you also need us,” said Liam. Cody said he thought the church should be more like Sunday school, with everyone doing crafts. He said he hoped the church would explore new and exciting ways to worship. In unison, the three boys closed their portion of the service with the words, “Together we are the church.”



Une relève optimiste et enthousiaste

Stéphane Gaudet

Le 41^e Conseil général de l'Église Unie a établi un record, celui du nombre de délégués de moins de 30 ans. En effet, sur les quelque 350 délégués, 49 avaient moins de 30 ans. Du jamais vu.

Et attention : ces jeunes femmes et jeunes hommes étaient délégués à part entière, ils n'avaient rien à voir avec le Forum Jeunesse.

Certes, les Synodes sont invités à élire quelques jeunes de 15 à 30 ans parmi leurs délégués. Mais cette année, on a pu observer un grand nombre de candidatures de cette tranche d'âge. « Au Synode Montréal et Ottawa, il y en a eu sept ! », de dire fièrement Denis Ashby, 21 ans, de Sherbrooke. « Et le Synode a élu les sept », continue-t-il.

Mais qu'est-ce qui pousse de jeunes adultes à s'enfermer toute une semaine d'été dans un gymnase à discuter de propositions et de procédures ? « Le Conseil général est une chose chère à mon cœur. Tout mon été a été planifié en fonction de ça », affirme Shanna Pauline Bernier, 24 ans, également de Sherbrooke. De Montréal, Joëlle Leduc (29 ans) parle d'une occasion d'apprentissage exceptionnel sur les mécanismes de fonctionnement et de prise de décision de notre Église. « C'est d'autant plus important que je commence en septembre mes études en théologie au Séminaire Uni ».

« C'est tout simplement que j'adore l'Église et ses politiques. Et que je me sens en famille ici », répond Denis à la même question. En effet, pour être ici toute une semaine, il faut vraiment que ces jeunes soient passionnés par les processus décisionnels de l'Église, car ils avouent que le déroulement des travaux est souvent ennuyeux. « Ce n'est pas que les sujets eux-mêmes qui étaient débattus n'étaient pas intéressants, c'est qu'on perdait trop de temps », précise Shanna qui n'hésite pas à révéler qu'elle a souvent « twitté » pendant les séances. « C'est parfois frustrant. Moi, je sais ce que je veux que l'Église fasse ! », dit Hanna Strong, 20 ans, d'Ottawa. Joëlle déclare avoir appris un nouveau mot anglais au cours de la semaine : *wordsmithing*, le chipotage sur les formulations des propositions. « Mais c'est comme ça dans toutes les organisations qui ont des assemblées délibérantes. »

« Ici cependant, les tensions sont entre les idées, pas entre les gens. Il est souvent arrivé que ma table soit divisée moitié-moitié lors d'un vote, et que les rapports entre les personnes restent chaleureux. J'ai été surprise que les débats aient été si peu émotifs », conclut-elle.

Une assemblée d'une semaine avec des règles de procédures, des propositions, des votes... Est-ce bien cela que Jésus nous demande ? « Je pense que Jésus nous demande d'être en conversation. Et pour un groupe aussi étendu et diversifié que l'Église Unie, il faut que ce soit organisé », dit Gordon Lambie, 25 ans, le mari de Shanna qui poursuit dans la même veine que ce dernier – « On doit avoir des règles si on veut faire de l'action sociale » – et fait remarquer qu'il y a plein d'exemples d'assemblées dans la Bible. « Jésus était toujours en groupe » confirme Denis. Mais pour lui, l'Église demeure une famille plutôt qu'une organisation. Pour Daniel Reed, 20 ans, de Montréal, « Jésus nous demande d'avoir une maison joyeuse et transformatrice ».

Avec quoi ces jeunes repartent-ils ? « Je crois en l'avenir », répond Daniel tout de go. « Dans mon cœur, de nouveaux amis, des relations. Dans mon sac, beaucoup de papiers », ricane Denis. Gordon pense moins aux décisions qui ont été prises qu'aux rêves qui ont été exprimés pour l'avenir. Shanna, elle, repart avec l'espoir. « Je ne vois pas le déclin de notre Église, au contraire j'ai vu combien elle est grande. » Quant à Joëlle, une prise de conscience : soutenir, ça ne signifie pas seulement mettre de l'argent. « Pour s'organiser en réseau, ça ne coûte rien. »

Et Hanna repart avec la « hâte de voir ce que l'Église va faire au cours des trois prochaines années ». Dans une Église où l'on martèle souvent la moyenne d'âge de 65 ans de nos membres, la relève est là. Et elle est enthousiaste !



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.

General Council News is prepared by the following General Council staff and volunteer writers:

Reporters: Derek Carlisle, Kevin Cox,
Stéphane Gaudet,
Christine Johnson

Editor: Rebekah Chevalier

Designer: Christopher Dumas

Photographer: Dan Benson

Online edition: Bill Gillard

Video Producer: Kate Rodd

Video Reporters: Stéphane Gaudet,
Elizabeth Macdonald

Editorial Oversight: Dan Benson,
Bruce Gregersen

Newsroom Manager: Mary-Frances Denis