



General Council News

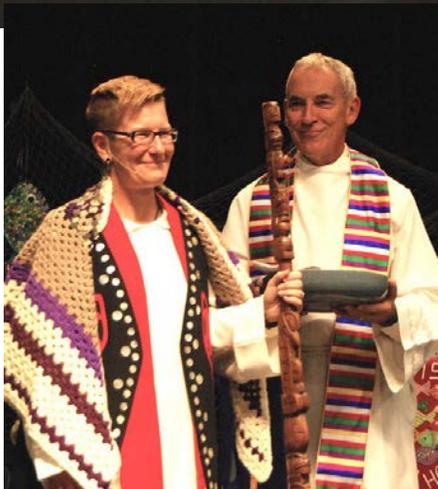
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The United Church of Canada



Jordan Cantwell Installed As Moderator

by Jim Cairney

We believe that Jordan is worthy! Glory be to God!" Those words rang out loud and clear as the whole General Council joyously spoke with one voice in response to the question, "Dear friends in Christ, do you believe that Jordan, by God's grace, is worthy to be installed as Moderator?"

The installation of the Rt. Rev. Jordan Cantwell as the 42nd Moderator of The United Church of Canada was a

buoyant, joyous, and intercultural worship celebration that concluded the 42nd General Council meeting, and capped off what had been a long day of business.

Cantwell was presented with symbols of the office of Moderator: a stole, a talking stick, a piece of cloth, a bowl, and a prayer shawl. She was also given a Heiltsuk eagle clan vest with abalone shell buttons by Jim White of Bella Bella, BC.

The new Moderator co-presided at Holy Communion with the Very Rev. Gary Paterson, the outgoing Moderator.

In her brief sermon, Cantwell spoke of the biblical story of the miraculous manna in the wilderness for the children of Israel (Exodus 16) and the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 (Mark 6:33-44).

Manna comes for six days. If too much is taken, it spoils. None comes on the Sabbath, but enough is given the day before for the Sabbath.

"So God says to Moses, tell the people to open their eyes when they get up in the morning and see what's right in front of them," Cantwell said. "Sure enough, the next day when they get up they look around and notice a weird, flaky substance all over the ground that they call manna, which roughly translated, means *qu'est-ce que c'est?*—what the heck is it?!

"This is the practice run for what will be revealed as God's new economy of justice and right relationship between people and the land and God. It's our introduction to Sabbath economics.

"Manna teaches the principles of mutuality, justice, rest for people and the land, and trust—trust God with everything they've got, trust one another," said Cantwell.

"So now here we are on the hillside with Jesus... another wilderness place," she said. "Once again they start looking over their shoulder, thinking maybe we should go back now, back to where those with money can buy themselves something to eat.

"Those who most benefit from the political and economic structures of the day—whatever they are, first century Palestine or 21st century Canadian—folks with privilege want everyone to believe that the only way to do things is the way they have prescribed.

"Even though the disciples are not privileged people... they don't enjoy the benefits of the dominant social and economic structures in their day, they're still caught in the mindset of that structure, unable to see any alternative.

"Jesus did something far more radical and amazing than stretching five loaves to feed 5,000. What Jesus did that day on the hillside was to remind the people of one of the key stories and truths that shaped who they are as a people," said Cantwell.

"He reminded them that they were a people constituted by an alternative vision of how the world might be, a whole different set of principles and values and therefore a whole different set of possibilities than the ones offered by the dominant culture.

"On the hillside Jesus practised Sabbath economics," said Cantwell.

"As he did so, something awoke in these people. Something was called forth from their collective history: a memory of an alternative way, the first lesson they'd learned in the wilderness.

"There were a whole lot more than five loaves of bread and two fish hiding in pockets and purses there on that hillside that day. When the people remembered who they were and the way of justice, mutuality, and trust to which they were called, they found the courage to lay it all on the line and discovered that together they had more than enough to fill all the hungry bellies, with plenty left over for the Sabbath day.

"The miracle of the loaves and fishes is the power that our stories have to reshape our imagination and to give us the courage to act with hope, compassion, and generosity, even when we are deeply uncertain about our future."



Council Passes Comprehensive Review

by Jeff Cook

After several days of discussion, the General Council has passed a reworked version of the Comprehensive Review Task Group (CRTG) recommendations.

The omnibus proposal passed with 95 percent of commissioners voting in favour and 4 percent against. The omnibus motion was moved by Cathy Hamilton, who chaired the CRTG, and seconded by Larry Doyle, who co-chaired the CRTG Sessional Committee.

The full text of the approved proposal, "CRTG Motion Document," is online at gc42.ca/workbook.

Highlights of the proposal include:

- a three-council model consisting of communities of faith, regional councils, and a denominational council
 - Order of ministry will be members of regional councils, not of communities of faith.
 - support to new ministries and new forms of ministry through an initiative tentatively called *Chasing the Spirit*, with 10 percent of annual Mission & Service givings to be invested in the initiative
 - approval of the CRTG's original recommendations regarding Aboriginal Ministries
 - Ministry and mission activities will continue to be funded by Mission & Service.
 - Governance and support services will be funded by the denominational council assessing communities of faith. The details of that assessment are still to be developed.
 - Regional councils also have authority to assess communities of faith for any additional services the regional council wishes to undertake.
 - The denominational council will not hold large meetings with representation from each community of faith. Regional councils will elect representatives to attend denominational council meetings every three years.
 - The executive of the regional council will have fewer members than the current Executive of the General Council. The new executive would consist of 12–18 members. The composition of that membership is yet to be determined.

- There will not be a college of ministers. Instead, there will be a denominational office of vocation comprised of staff and nominated elected representatives.

- Alongside the three-council structure there will be less formal clusters and networks.

- elimination of the transfer and settlement processes for members of the order of ministry

- A working group will consider the idea of establishing an Association of Ministers.

- A precise method of assessments is to be developed, informed by principles approved by General Council 42.

- authorization of a category 3 remit to presbyteries and pastoral charges regarding these changes

- Prior to the issuing of remits, a number of items will be further developed, such as the number of regions, membership of regional councils and executives, and the relationship of the regional and denominational councils to staff.

In addition, the General Council waived the requirement for 24 months of study before the remit return date for the category 3 remits arising from the Comprehensive Review.

Council also advanced the date of the regular meeting of the 43rd General Council from 2018 to sometime in 2017.

It also approved that test projects for the three-council structure and the office of vocation begin immediately and approved that provision be made for the participation of youth and young adults in all three councils.



La Révision globale adoptée !

par Stéphane Gaudet

Après avoir passé quatre jours à discuter du libellé de la seule proposition 3 du comité de séance, les délégués ont finalement adopté, telle qu'amendée, la Révision globale. Une motion omnibus, qui incluait toutes les propositions du comité de séance sur la Révision globale modifiées par le Conseil général en plénière au cours de la semaine, a été adoptée à une écrasante majorité de 95 %.

Si les délégués ont mis assez peu de temps à se mettre d'accord sur la proposition 1 concernant l'initiative *Discerner l'esprit* et la deuxième sur les ministères autochtones, ils ont été accaparés du mardi au vendredi par la proposition 3 qui porte sur le modèle à trois conseils et sur les compétences, le fonctionnement, la composition de chacun de ces conseils. Une fois venus à bout du libellé de cette proposition énorme et complexe vendredi matin, on savait d'ores et déjà que le Conseil général irait dans le sens d'un modèle à trois instances – conseil ecclésial, conseils régionaux, communautés de foi – pour remplacer la structure à quatre niveaux actuelle (Conseil général, synodes, consistoires, paroisses) qui remonte à la création de l'Église en 1925.

Les discussions ont été plus rapides vendredi après-midi sur les propositions 5 (explorer l'idée de la création d'une association ministérielle), 6 (financement de la nouvelle structure, y compris compressions de 11 millions d'ici 2018 dans le budget du Conseil général, soit le tiers du total) avec mise sur pied d'un groupe de travail chargé de proposer un système précis pour les cotisations obligatoires que devront désormais payer les communautés de foi, et la septième qui porte sur les renvois nécessaires.

Vendredi soir, le modérateur sortant Gary Paterson a suggéré à l'assemblée de voter en bloc toutes les propositions retravaillées. Émue, la Québécoise Cathy Hamilton, qui était présidente du Groupe de travail sur la révision globale, a tenu à être la proposeuse de cette motion omnibus. Et c'est dans les larmes et la joie que les membres du groupe de travail, tout comme les délégués, se sont sautés au cou au moment où les résultats du vote électroniques sont apparus à l'écran :

95 % pour, 4 % contre, 1 % d'abstention.

Les principales différences entre le texte adopté par le 42^e Conseil général vendredi soir et les recommandations de la Révision globale se situent surtout au plan du rôle d'*episkopos*, soit la supervision des pasteurs. La Révision globale proposait un collège ministériel, sur le modèle des différents collèges et ordres professionnels chargés de la déontologie dans leur profession. Les délégués au 42^e Conseil général ont préféré maintenir au niveau régional cette compétence présentement assumée en grande partie par les consistoires tout en souhaitant créer un bureau national des vocations dont la responsabilité serait, entre autres, d'établir les critères de formation et d'accréditation du personnel ministériel, d'évaluer l'aptitude d'une personne à devenir pasteur-e, d'assurer la discipline et de recevoir les plaintes, et de répondre aux demandes d'aide émanant des conseils régionaux.

Le Conseil général a aussi écarté l'idée de la Révision globale d'un grand conseil ecclésial qui serait composé des représentants de chaque communauté de foi au Canada. Comme dans le modèle actuel, les délégués au conseil ecclésial seront élus par l'instance régionale, qui elle-même regroupera des délégués des communautés de foi de son territoire.

Avant d'entrer en vigueur, ces changements devront faire l'objet de plusieurs renvois auprès des consistoires et des charges pastorales et de précisions de la part de la secrétaire générale, notamment sur le nombre de régions. L'Église Unie 2.0 n'est donc pas pour demain matin.



Church Will Continue under Federal Act

by Jim Cairney

Commissioners in favour of moving The United Church of Canada under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (CNCA) failed to get the required two-thirds vote. So the United Church continues under the federal United Church of Canada Act of 1924.

In a close vote, General Council 42 voted 56 percent in favour and 41 percent against, with 3 percent abstaining. The vote followed rigorous debate, with questions about the implications of staying with the status quo or making the change.

General Secretary Nora Sanders explained that, at the moment, any major changes in the denomination can only be made by going to Parliament to amend The United Church of Canada Act.

Sanders said the current work on changing the structures of the church means that "there will be remits [to presbyteries and congregations] and quite likely changes to The United Church of Canada Act."

There was an acknowledgment that the CNCA could itself be changed by the federal government.

"Either way, we are in their hands," said Sanders.

Former Moderator and former Senator Lois Wilson said that her contacts on Parliament Hill suggest that in the Prime Minister's caucus, the United Church is considered "just a social justice group." She wondered if a change to the CNCA would reinforce that perception.

Greg Smith-Young of Hamilton Conference said, "There's no reason to assume the government will block changes."

Shaun Fryday of Montreal and Ottawa Conference said, "Remit processes are fundamental to our core processes."

There were questions about possibly losing tax-exempt charitable status due to perceived political activity. Sanders said that, on that issue, it doesn't matter which legislation the church is governed by.

If the proposal had passed, it would have required a remit for the change to come into effect, and the change would have come with the 43rd General Council.



One Order of Ministry

by Jeff Cook

The United Church will have a two-year study on recognizing one order of ministry, prior to voting on a remit on the proposal before the next General Council.

General Council 42 approved recommendations from the Theology and Inter-Faith Inter-Church Committee that there be one order of ministry and it be "known as the ordained ministry."

The one order of ministry would contain the current designations of those who are ordained, those commissioned to diaconal ministry, and those recognized as designated lay ministers (DLM).

Commissioners discussed the possibility of approving a period of study without a remit, which would have resulted in a new report and recommendation coming to the 43rd General Council. At that time, a remit might be approved for enactment at the following General Council.

Ann Harbridge of Toronto Conference said this idea has already been under discussion for 12 years and spoke against delaying it another three years. "Surely to goodness we can make a decision," she said.

Dwaine Dornan of Saskatchewan Conference said he supported the proposal, though he still had some concerns. "It's not a perfect report," he said, "but it's a good report."

Speaking against the proposal, Hewitt Holmes from Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario said we would not be able to justify to our ecumenical partners this understanding of ordination.

Michelle Slater from British Columbia Conference raised concerns that the church may be ordaining people to a ministry of pastoral care who have not been trained for such ministry.

The motion allows people who so choose to be ordained to the diakonia, requires development of multiple paths of educational formation, and authorizes a category 3 remit to go to presbyteries and pastoral charges.

The proposal passed with 59 percent voting in favour and 39 percent voting against.

