

Website reflection – July 6, 2018 “On the road to General Council 43”

Today marks the 2 week count-down. From July 21 to 28 I will be serving as a commissioner to General Council 43 – that is the 43rd gathering of the United Church of Canada delegates from across the country. General Council (GC) meetings every 3 years, this year we'll be at Durham College and University of Ontario Institute of Technology (DC-UOIT). The event begins with 2 days of a Festival of Faith – with all manner of workshops and music, as well as opportunities to learn and grow in faith. Then we'll shift into business mode, listening, discussing, and making decisions on the life and mission of the United Church of Canada. This is a particularly important gathering, as the United Church faces major restructuring to help maintain a sustainable model of governance and mission, and around seeking vision for our future as the largest protestant denomination in Canada.

In addition to decisions around structure and governance, there are proposals in areas of justice – environmental justice, advocacy for the marginalized, support of peace initiatives in regions such as North Korea, the Middle East, Indigenous justice and right relations, rural ministry, mental health, and racism and privilege. There are also proposals around theological concerns – administration of the sacraments, social gospel study, and consideration of the historic and current relevance of the church's Article's of Faith. Also, discussion and decisions will happen around leadership in the church, with regards to formation, on-going training, pay equity, and pensions.

We will also be electing a new moderator – the Spiritual Leader and spokesperson, for the United Church. There are 10 well qualified candidates that have been nominated for this position, and having reviewed their profiles, and read their reflections on questions posed to them, it will not be an easy decision. Each of the 10 brings gifts of wisdom and experience to the church.

In preparation for this week of involvement in the governance and decision making at the General Council meeting, I have been studying the 95 proposals that have come from across the church, and reviewing the educational webinars that offer background information and an opportunity for clarity around those many proposals. I was privileged to attend General Council 38 in Wolfville, Nova Scotia in 2003, as a commissioner from Yellowhead Presbytery, so I have some idea of what to expect. I know that a General Council gathering is exciting, and interesting, and a lot of work. I know it's a time to connect with friends, old and new, and to see the “big picture” of the United Church.

I am excited about the opportunity to serve in this way again, this time as a commissioner from Red Deer Presbytery. In addition to the work, there are opportunities to share in worship with the several hundred people that will gather, and that in and of itself is a gift! If you want to follow the proceedings, go to www.generalcouncil43. There you can see the events occurring daily, you can read the proposals that we'll be working on, as well as reports from the many working groups and divisions of the church. You can also sign up for daily reports of the events.

It is an exciting, challenging, wondrous time to be the church! With God's guidance, I believe we are in a good time, a good place, to offer spiritual leadership in Canada. Your prayers for all of us who gather there are welcome!

I hope to offer a few reflections on GC43 while I am there, so do check our website for those!

Blessings!

Tammy