

# Annual Meeting May-June 2009 – Highlights

## Highlights of the 85<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of Toronto Conference

May 29-31, 2009

## And the Final Meeting of the Current Conference Executive

June 10, 2009

**Annual meeting highlights:** The 85<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of Toronto Conference was held at the Toronto Congress Centre May 28-30, 2009 with the theme based on Isaiah 43:19, "*Behold I Do A New Thing; Can You Not See It?*".

The Conference...

- named Margaret Walker, a lay person from Knox United Church in Scarborough, as president-elect; she will be installed as president at the 2010 annual meeting;
- elected Lynella Reid-James of Scarborough as the Conference's lay representative to the General Council Executive; she begins a six-year term;
- elected 38 people as Commissioners to this summer's General Council meeting in Kelowna, BC August 7-15;
- thanked and disbanded the four Presbytery Commissions which have worked for the last year to develop new structures for each Presbytery;
- covenanted with the staff who will be serving in the central Conference office and the four Presbytery offices;
- ordained 12 people to the Order of Ministry and admitted four ministers from other denominations;
- celebrated the ministries of 12 persons who were retiring;
- honoured the ministries of five Conference staff who would be leaving their positions at the end of June;
- thanked the many volunteers who had served on Conference

- committees over the years;
- heard a number of challenging addresses from theme speaker Catherine MacLean of Edmonton;
  - heard presentations from General Council representatives, Five Oaks Centre and the Francis Sandy Theological Centre;
  - spent time in table groups reflecting on times when individuals had felt God's call;
  - worshipped and sang in a variety of styles and languages;

**Proposals:** The annual meeting considered a number of Proposals. The titles with the action of the meeting were:

- "On Green Energy: the Way to Address Climate Change" calls for finding ways to produce energy other than through nuclear power. Action: forwarded to General Council.
- "The Abolition of Nuclear Weapons" asks the federal government to support the abolition of nuclear weapons in the world. Action: forwarded to General Council.
- "Canada's Official Development Assistance" urges that Canada increase its development assistance to 0.7% of the Gross National Income by 2015. Action: forwarded to General Council.
- "Millennium Development Goals" urges the federal government to target its official development assistance to attaining the United Nations' millennium development goals. Action: forwarded to General Council.
- "Permission to conduct votes by e-mail..." asks the General Council to permit electronic voting. Action: forwarded to General Council.
- "Emergency Issues for Employment Insurance" asks the federal government to make changes to the employment insurance system to aid those who most need help. Action: forwarded to General Council, and letters to be sent to the government from the Conference.
- "2010-2012 Conference budgets and assessment" asked the meeting to approve a three-year budget; the meeting approved a budget for 2010.
- "Conference Nominations" appointed a number of people to committees and other bodies.
- The Conference defeated a motion calling for one-day annual meetings in non-General Council years. Later in the meeting

members voted to have annual meetings in non-General Council years which will focus on worship and theme addresses, with the business limited to half a day.

- Conference encouraged its Presbyteries to include family members in a discernment process for those who are retiring from ministry positions.
- "Presumed Consent for Organ Donation" asked the Conference to accept the principle of presumed consent as it pertains to organ donation for transplantation. Action: forwarded to General Council, and letters sent to the province by the Conference.
- "Pathway to Peace in Israel/Palestine" urges the federal government to comply with its Geneva Convention obligations, and denounce discriminatory policies. Action: forwarded to General Council.
- "Humanitarian Aid for Sri Lanka" called on the Conference to express its concern over the situation in Sri Lanka. Action: Three motions were passed and were communicated to the Conference at large.
- "Seeking Peace through Justice" urges the General Council to encourage a boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions while supporting Palestinian academic and cultural institutions. Action: forwarded to General Council.

**Executive meeting June 10:** The Executive held its final meeting in its current configuration. On July 1, 2009 the Executive will be reduced in size to 15 members. The Executive dealt with unfinished business from the annual meeting in the following way:

- The Executive urged the General Council to recognize "Camping Ministry" as a priority for the United Church. Action: forwarded to General Council.
  - A Proposal entitled "Worship as a Primary Function of the Church" was forwarded to the General Council.
  - "Working for Peace in Israel/Palestine" urges General Council to encourage church members to participate in a process of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until positive change occurs for Palestinian people. Action: forwarded to General Council.
  - "Reconsideration of Presbytery Quorum" highlights the difficulty some Presbyteries are having in attaining the

- quorum required by the United Church. Action: forwarded to General Council.
- "Official Youth Representation" asks the federal government to include youth representation at a climate change conference in Denmark. Action: letters to be sent to the federal government.
  - "The Peace Policy of the United Church" calls for the development of a comprehensive peace policy for the United Church. Action: forwarded to General Council.
  - "Ten-Year Moratorium on Dump Site 41" urges all church levels to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples and rural communities regarding protection of water. Action: forwarded to General Council, and letters from the Conference.
- In addition to dealing with the unfinished business from the annual meeting, the Executive considered a number of actions to support Ministry Personnel. These recommendations came from the Ministry Support Task Group and will be forwarded to the new Presbyteries for their consideration. Possible actions include:
- offering workshops for ministry and personnel committees and the producing standard resources for performance evaluation;
  - distributing information about resources available to Ministry Personnel;
  - providing supervision and support for persons returning from disability leaves;
  - supporting small group gatherings for mentoring, study and fellowship;
  - providing a "pastor to pastors" in the new Presbyteries.

Copies of all Proposals and the Ministry Support report and recommendations can be obtained by contacting Linda Gray at [lgray@united-church.ca](mailto:lgray@united-church.ca) or by calling 416.241.2677 or 1.800.446.4729, ext. 222. Pictures of the annual meeting can be seen at [www.flickr.com/photos/rchoephoto/collections/72157619032290318/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/rchoephoto/collections/72157619032290318/).