



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

February 23, 2017

A sabbatical allows me time to think about my faith and our church.



I am writing from midway through my sabbatical. It's my first ever experience of a sabbatical, and a wonderful experience. It's wonderful, but also slightly disorienting.

Right now I am sitting in the front room upstairs at our cottage, (my past and future home). There is a strong wind off the lake and a bit of fresh snow outside but inside all is peaceful. The dogs are stretched out on the floor next to me, sound asleep.

Flexibility is one of the great things about sabbatical time: being able to work from different locations; being able to do the drive on days with good weather without the pressure of getting back for a certain meeting; being able to walk the dogs in the daylight; getting to wear my running clothes all day if I want to; having time to make better suppers

and to sometimes have friends over for meals; and of course, having time for more relaxed conversations with people who are doing interesting things in church!

The focus for my thinking during this time is small group ministries and house churches, plus other ways of being church. A small group I was part of in Yellowknife, and a "house church" that I was part of in Iqaluit, have been very significant in my own faith life, so reflecting on them has been my starting point. I spent a few days in Yellowknife at the end of last month reconnecting with that little group, a precious and long-awaited time that felt so normal when we actually came together. I have been connecting by phone and email with those who were part of the group in Iqaluit, and enjoying the range of memories and the common thread of trust and connection which is sustained more than a dozen years later.

Beyond that I'm connecting with others within and outside of the United Church to learn of their experiences, and sometimes to join in those experiences for a time. I'm interested in figuring out what things let us go deeper in our faith and in our communities, what things are common to all, and where there is room for flexibility and creativity.

All of this could take a lot longer than three months. Of course it will because these thoughts are ones I will continue to pursue as my faith journey continues. But I'm extremely grateful for the privilege of this time set aside for study, reflection, and perhaps a little writing.

May God's peace be with all of you, especially those who are carrying extra loads so that I can have this sabbatical time!

Nora

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