



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

**March 4, 2016**



I'm gradually making my way through the book of Psalms, my personal "project" for Lent. It's easy to get distracted by the vivid language; and I have to admit that some days it is not easy to get to my "project." I'm enjoying it though, and will make it part of my March break reading too. Whether I read them all by Easter or not, it's a good journey.

That kind of reading is quite a contrast to the reading project that we offered the church last week when the [package of remits and background materials](#) related to Comprehensive Review and other major decisions from General Council 42 went up on the web. I'm so grateful for the work of Jeff Cook who took on the initial writing in the midst of Advent, to a whole group of colleagues who reviewed and revised everything so carefully, to the translators who prepared the French versions, and to everyone who worked so hard to get them finished and out to the people of the church. The beauty of having the material all online was reinforced when it turned out that the wrong excerpt of a document had been inserted into one of them. Thanks to the quick eye of several readers, that was able to be corrected right away. I hope that we have included information that is clear, helpful, and concise enough that people will engage fully with it. I look forward to hearing about great discussions taking place across the church in coming weeks and months.

Last week the Permanent Committee on Governance and Agenda met. (I really wish we had shorter names for almost everything. I usually just refer to it as the “Governance Committee”). Three members were present in person and two took part electronically, one from a warm southern location and one from snowbound PEI. This committee, which intentionally reduced its own size a few years back, works very effectively and confirms my sense that a small committee makes it easier for everyone to contribute fully.

A big part of the focus of the Governance Committee’s meeting was to plan how everything is going to work when the General Council Executive meets electronically for the first time this spring. The different meeting format has prompted consideration of all the things that the Executive typically does when it meets, and led to thought about what can and should be done differently this time. It’s good to have a reason to examine the way meetings work, and I think that the members of the Executive will find it very interesting – hopefully even fun – to try something different. The Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry – our biggest committee – led the way last week by holding their meeting in an electronic format and the reports I have heard were quite enthusiastic.

The Canadian winter is one of the reasons why it makes all kinds of sense for us to let people take part in meetings from a distance, using technological tools. I was telling my son tonight about the saying that was always repeated about the month of March when I was a child, “If March comes in like a lamb, it will go out like a lion – or the other way around.” Well in Toronto and most of southern Ontario, March came in like a lion earlier this week. It didn’t quite live up to all the predictions, but we got a good pile of snow and a bit of wind. I’m grateful to have someone at home who is now bigger and stronger than me to help with the shoveling!

Back to the Psalms... The brief bit of Toronto winter this week with fresh snow and blazing sunlight bring to mind the words of Psalm 100:

*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*

*Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.*

Blessings,

Nora

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