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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

October 14, 2016

Bare roads, sunshine, and bits of white in the fields left over from the snowstorm last week.... The drive from Fort Saskatchewan to the Edmonton airport was beautiful.

I'm sitting in the departure lounge now, ready to head home after spending a little time with the Executive of [Alberta and Northwest Conference](#). Last night we gathered in the sanctuary of St. Paul's United Church for the covenanting service for the Conference's new two one-thirds Conference Executive Secretaries. A collaborative arrangement that seemed complicated — when discussions were held last summer with Alberta and Northwest, [Saskatchewan](#), and [Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario](#) — now feels real and natural. Shannon McCarthy and Bill Doyle shared enthusiasm for their new roles and were warmly welcomed.



I was glad to be part of that event, and to sit in on the morning with the Conference

Executive. The conversations covered the mix of uncertainty, faith, and hope that is encountered across our church. There is no doubt that we are in changing times. Some of the changes worry us, and some excite us! I consider these opportunities to be part of conversations like this, and to celebrate bold moves like this new sharing arrangement amongst three conferences, to be one of the privileges of my role.

We met after Thanksgiving weekend, when most of us had enjoyed bountiful eating in the company of family and friends. We met while neighbours on the East Coast of Canada were struggling with the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew's unwelcome visit. We met while neighbours in Haiti were experiencing food and clean water shortages, loss of basic shelter, and grief at the many dead after [Hurricane Matthew's vicious sweep](#) through their homeland. Prayers were offered for these neighbours, and [Conference President Paul Walfall](#) called on everyone to encourage generous support to the [United Church's emergency appeal](#) for Haiti, Cuba and surrounding Caribbean countries.

As important as our attention to structural change in the United Church is for our future, the scope of life and death issues, food and shelter issues, elsewhere, serve to remind us that institutional processes are only important if they equip us to serve God through working for justice for all on Earth.

In Thanksgiving for all whose service in the church helps build a better world.

Nora

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