



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

October 4, 2017

A colleague mentioned that the salmon were spawning in the Humber River yesterday, so I chose that route for my run this morning. I stopped near a small waterfall and watched these sleek, gleaming, determined fish make their way against the current, trying again and again to overcome what looked like an insurmountable barrier. Science has explanations for these things, but not for the sense of wonder I felt as I observed it.



Photo: Adam Conolly, (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Later today I will get on a plane to go to Edmonton for "An Awkward Conversation." That is the name of the conference, a name that acknowledges that we need to be brave enough to have awkward conversations about race. I expect that there may be uncomfortable moments, but I am grateful for the opportunity to grow in my

understanding of what it means to live together as part of humanity, as children of God together.

I will get home in time for Thanksgiving weekend. Perhaps like many of you I have been struggling a bit with how to give thanks for the bounty in my life in a time when each day brings news of shocking and terrible events. This week, we saw a mass shooting of people attending a country and western concert in Las Vegas and a terrorist incident in Edmonton. Just recently, hurricanes and earthquakes and floods have destroyed many homes and lives, even as many of us were enjoying the pleasant late summer weather.

Yet this is the time for Thanksgiving. In the midst of events horrible beyond explanation, and in the midst of the more private heartaches known to all, we also lift up the good things that God has provided. At Thanksgiving, we are reminded to notice the many joys, large or small, that are around us every day. Sometimes the gifts of God are so apparent that we are, briefly, unaware of anything bad in the world. Sometimes the burdens of the world or our lives are so heavy that we struggle to see the good things that are somewhere there. Most of the time we live in a place that is a big mixture of joys and sorrows. Maybe the best we can do at Thanksgiving is to be aware of the gifts we are given, and to understand that as we receive, so we are called to share.

I think of those fish, swimming upstream, powerfully pursuing a call that is within them and yet part of something so much bigger than any one of them. I am still filled with the wonder I felt in observing those glistening bodies flashing out of the water. I give thanks for the beauty, joy, mystery, and even for the struggle that is part of the life God gives us.

Nora