

Welcome to the 84th Meeting of Alberta and Northwest Conference

First, an introduction:

The basic unit of organization for the United Church is the pastoral charge. A pastoral charge may be made up of one or more congregations.

The United Church is organized into four levels, or courts. The four courts are:

- The governing body of the pastoral charge (here at St. Andrew's the official board)
- The presbytery
- The Conference
- The General Council

Pat Hatfield and myself represent St. Andrew's at the Presbytery level.

The Conference is responsible for the oversight of the religious life in the Conference (in our case Alberta and Northwest Conference).

The Conference must meet at least once every third year. This year the 84th meeting was held in Slave Lake (Yellowhead Presbytery). Joining Reverend Ray Goodship and other southern Alberta representatives, Pat and I caught a bus early Thursday (May 28) for the almost six hour drive to Slave Lake.

The General Council has the responsibility to set policy for the United Church on:

- Doctrine
- Worship
- Membership
- Government

General Council meets every third year – The 42nd **General Council** will take place in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, August 8–15, 2015.

At the Slave Lake meeting nearly 300 delegates worked on the Comprehensive Review recommendations and its implications, received updates from church ministries far and wide, discussed United Church investments in fossil fuels, voted in favour of a youth staff person to plan Conference-wide youth events, defeated a motion for a conference-wide chaplain and elected a new president (Paul Walfall), a president-elect (Kathy Yamashita) and 29 people to be commissioners at the General Council meeting.

It was my first Conference meeting – I was totally impressed with the business side of the United Church. But also other activities worked into the four days – workshops (i.e. Messy Church, Radical Church, the opportunity to visit the Indian/Metis Fellowship Centre) the CGIT Vesper Service, the various verbal/written reports (i.e. Settlement Report, Intercultural Ministry, Student Bursary Fund Report) the displays (i.e. Child Well-Being Initiative, book tables) and wonderful meals shared with old and new friends.

The Conference meeting wound up with the Celebration of Ministry Worship Service on Sunday morning. Checking out of hotels, on to the bus and the return trip accompanied by music and enthusiastic conversation. Thank you to St. Andrew's United Church for allowing me the opportunity to join my fellow Partners in Faith at this meaningful event.

Arlene Hepburn