

## President's Report for the HFRC Workbook Fall 2025

Dear Siblings in Christ,

A few months ago, the United Church's 45<sup>th</sup> General Council met in Calgary. It was mostly dreary weather: damp and overcast, not really cold, but not warm. It was my first General Council and so I was excited to go. The theme for GC45 came from Joel 2:28, "And afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions." I've always loved that bit of scripture, and so I looked forward to gathering with my United Church family, and talking about our visions and our dreams.

And then for 5 very long days packed into a room filled with unfamiliar faces, we focused on injustice and suffering in the world. The work was hard, and I wouldn't say that it was fun. We talked about Gaza, and heard raw and painful stories from Palestinian partners. We talked about colonialism and residential schools, hearing stories of ongoing injustice. We talked about failing churches, and the need to work on change in the church and the feeling that we don't have enough human or financial resources. We talked about the struggles facing youth. We grew tired to be sure, and it seemed that trust in the unfamiliar faces eroded over time rather than building up. The drearier Calgary's weather got outside, the more our own disposition darkened. We grumbled some acknowledgement about the fascist South of the border, which was just another terrible thing in the current terrible state of all things.

We didn't yet know we were about to lose the World Series.

And all of this seems to place us exactly on track as disciples of Jesus Christ.

In chapter 4 of Mark's gospel, the disciples struggle with fear in the face of a powerful storm. The wind stirred up violent waves and the boat was taking on water. I imagine that the wind and rain made it impossible to see the safety of the shoreline either ahead or behind. And so it makes some sense that they were in such great distress that they woke Jesus with cries of "We are perishing!"

The spiritual call to the faithful always seems to lead to danger, fear, and trouble. Maybe we could say that the spiritual call to the faithful seems to lead us to the cross. Whether a stormy sea, or 40 days of rain, or Pharaoh's army, genocidal war, colonialism and injustice, or climate change – the spirit calls us to action that leads into the valley of the shadow of death and perhaps our own cross to pick up and carry. But waiting for us there, we find Jesus.

Jesus, we remember, woke up and rebuked the storm. The waves calmed and the sea was at peace. He then questioned his disciples, asking what they had been so afraid of.

This scripture is one of those stories that reminds us of the true size and power of Word of God made flesh: Jesus who's power to give peace to the world is so much greater, so much more powerful than a raging storm on the sea, that he doesn't really know why anyone would be afraid.

Let us remember that His peace is our peace, and that the dark and threatening storm clouds we see are only temporarily obscuring a bright sun and calm blue sky. Whatever mission we are called to, He is with us. We are the church, we are not alone. Thanks be to God.

***Sula***

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