

Acting General Secretary's Accountability Report

38th General Council (2003)

The Mandate

Since October 2002 while on leave from my position as the Executive Secretary of Manitou Conference I have served in an "Acting" capacity as the General Secretary of the General Council. The vacancy developed when the former General Secretary, Virginia Coleman, having been in the post since 1994, left to accept an appointment as the Executive Secretary of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario.

The principal functions of the office relate to offering leadership to The United Church of Canada as a whole, to coordinate its Senior Leadership Team, to interpret church polity, including overseeing the legal and judicial work of the church, and to ensure a sufficient management capacity for the denomination.

The Context

That all may be one, and that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:21)

Being a part of the church of Jesus Christ at this time is particularly challenging. Living out our baptismal vows is dangerous in a world where, in large measure, principalities and powers govern society's behaviour. Creating faith communities which are radical alternatives to the world's ways is a high calling. It requires courageous people.

The United Church of Canada is full of brave believers. In a recent lecture at Emmanuel College in Toronto, theologian Douglas Hall described the great strength of this denomination is its long and faithful history of social concern and activism. He also noted it is "the most vigilant for the general good, the most critical of economic, racial, gender and ethnic and other forms of injustice, and the most outspoken in relation to exclusionary behaviour in both society and church."

In the Future Directions report of November 2001, The United Church of Canada committed to four major mission directions. They have guided much of the work over the triennium since. The first, Following God in Mission: Fostering faith in a Changing Culture recognizes the challenge within our church of helping people to articulate their faith. The second direction, Participating in God's Mission: Shalom and Justice-seeking emphasizes the imperative to show the connection between our faith in God and our commitment to justice.

The third direction, Repentance, Justice and the Seeking of Right Relations with Aboriginal Peoples recognizes the need to address the racism and injustice in relations between church and First Nations and our seeking of a new relationship based on justice and respect. Ministry in the 21st Century: Supporting Leadership for Ministry and Mission is the fourth direction. It highlights the key partnership among different categories of ministry personnel and between ministers and laity.

The Leadership Role

As the 37th General Council rose from its meetings at York University in August 2000, members were aware they had taken an historic decision. Instead of a division structure, the General Council Office had adopted a different governance design.

In addition to powerful—and continuing—priorities that have always been a part of our identity and character as a Canadian denomination (i.e. our emphasis on theology and faith, right relations with First Nations peoples, our social justice concern for the well-being of the whole of Creation, and being a strong participant in ecumenical and global relationships) the action of the Council indicated it would emphasize two other strategic priorities. It created portfolios to direct the church in developing a stronger capacity for racial justice, as well as an enhanced, vital relationship between the regions of the church and the General Council.

This design called on the General Council to establish broad, strategic directions for the church to guide its Executive, its various committees, and its staff in carrying out the church's mission. When the new structure was implemented in February 2002, the intention was the General Secretary would work with a Senior Leadership Team made up of five General Council Ministers. In addition, there would be units, some providing "programs" for mission and ministry, others "resources" for mission and ministry. Elected and appointed members would serve on task groups, advisory groups, and four new permanent committees (Programs, Finance, Ministry and Employment Policies and Services, Governance). The latter were intended to bring the mission work of the units forward in such a way as to offer maximum assistance to the Executive in its discernment and decision-making.

As the transformation began the size of the General Council Office was reduced. The fifth floor was vacated and all the work areas were located on three full floors, in addition to the Berkeley Studios space on the first floor and the nearby Distribution Centre.

This was a major undertaking. A design had to be translated into reality. An In-House Services Review group recommended changes for how the work was to be accomplished. Some jobs were determined to be redundant. The photocopying and internal mail delivery function was contracted to IKON services. The General Council Executive decided that United Church Book Rooms could not continue. The oversight of the church's investments was moved from a staff team in the GCO to outside managers.

These processes are never easy. As time went on, they proved to be very stressful for some staff. It was painful for volunteers as well. The level of distress was such, that upon the recommendation of the General Secretary, the Sub-Executive appointed a Listening Team to meet with General Council employees. In April 2002 the General Council Executive determined that a Commission should be authorized to address the situation. The Decisions and Recommendations put forward by that three-person panel in the summer of 2002, in its report "A Call to the Table," provided a focus for the Executive for several months. There were many learnings identified then. They continue to influence our procedures now.

The Future Directions document was clear "that it has been a principle of the redesign from the beginning that the model is provisional—that change will be a continual order of the day. While it is important to make decisions, put clear structures in place and give them time to settle and mature, the redesign will be subject to ongoing evaluation and adjustment." In recent months, as roles, relationships, responsibilities and lines of authority are increasingly clarified, changes are evident. Creative contributions continue. An organizational audit group, made up of elected members, established along the lines envisaged in the original implementation plans for an evaluation process, is being finalized.

Throughout this challenging period, I am very grateful that the contributions of staff remained constant; the work of supporting the mission and ministry of the church was being accomplished. This is also true of the committees supporting our mission. There has been a

deep level of commitment—and tremendous patience—by all parties, and for that exemplary effort I want to thank these individuals sincerely.

In my April 2003 report to the General Council Executive I likened the present status of the re-structuring process in these terms. I believe the comment is still valid. “Not long ago, the former Premier of British Columbia, Mike Harcourt, was talking about his amazing recovery after a near-tragic fall down a cliff. He described his physiotherapist explaining that he had re-gained 80% in terms of his physical function, expending about 20% of his effort in doing so. The physiotherapist continued, stating that the remaining 20% gain might well take 80% of his effort.”

As the last General Council addressed the issue of governance, that same issue has been a dominant motif in the General Council Office. If there was a notable effect, it is that major new initiatives were delayed or not undertaken in the short term. However, you will note in this Resource Package that several significant ongoing projects scheduled for final action at GC39 in 2006 are progressing. As the restructuring moves closer to completion, the focus is turning to our prime mission as God's servants. The direction coming from General Council 38 will be critical to this effort.

The Senior Leadership Team

The freshly-constituted Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including myself in the Acting General Secretary role, held its first meeting in October 2002. Moderator Marion Parry is also a member of this group and has attended when her busy travel schedule permitted her to do so.

There has been an ongoing effort to fill the SLT's various positions. General Council Minister permanent appointments include Omega Bula (Racial Justice), Ian Fraser (Resources for Mission and Ministry), the Rev. Carol Hancock (Regional Relations), and the Rev. Bruce Gregersen (Programs for Mission and Ministry, effective 1 September 2003). At the time of writing we are in the midst of a search for the General Council Minister: Planning Processes. With that position filled, and the appointment of a new permanent General Secretary by General Council 38, this team will be at full strength.

I am very grateful to both David Iverson and David Estey who have served in the GCM: Programs role in the past year, David Estey in an “acting” capacity.

The SLT is charged with implementing a program of work that reflects the vision, priorities and policies as articulated by the General Council and its Executive. It is mandated to do so while always “articulating the theological grounding of program decisions and activities of the General Council offices and ensuring that the work is undertaken in the context of explicit theological reflection.” This group is accountable for the work of the units, and is also mandated to ensure that work is well managed and done collaboratively across units.

In its early months, however, much of the SLT's time was spent responding to issues raised by the Commission report, and attempting to regularize the implementation of the restructuring project. Ten implementation teams were envisaged in the process of installing the new design. However, because of the difficulties of the day, less than half were able to function. This and other operational concerns required a major part of the SLT 's weekly agenda for most of the winter. The group also held off-site retreats to consider its role and responsibilities.

By late Spring, there were additional opportunities to begin looking forward. The first of a series of staff development seminars for the SLT and the Executive Ministers/Officers from the units was held at a residential retreat center (Five Oaks) in the first week of June 2003. These seminars will be an ongoing feature of the life of this group. The next meeting will focus on the supervision and accountability processes in our life together. This is the same group that meets on the last Tuesday morning of each month, constituted for that purpose as the Planning and Operations Group.

Of Special Interest

Chapel Life

The new Worshipping Life Committee has been an active body in the General Council Office. Several volunteers, for the committee and for special projects (last winter's all-staff visitation) and services from time to time have offered a wide variety of worship experiences. Leadership came from area congregations, international visitors, and individuals and units in Church House. I want to echo the appreciation of all of the staff for the formative contribution to this part of our life together by Fred Graham at an earlier time before assuming his new role at Emmanuel College, and for most of the past year of Lydia Pedersen, Director of Music at Royal York Road United Church in Toronto.

Muslim Guests

One day when Catherine Rodd of *Spirit Connection* met a woman carrying a pile of prayer blankets up in an elevator, she inquired about where the Muslim community met for their prayers in the tower where Church House is located. "On parking level 3," was the reply. As a result of that conversation, and a decision of the Worshipping Life Committee and the Senior Leadership Team, the chapel at Church House on Friday hosts this weekly prayer group.

General Council Executive and Sub-Executive

In addition to its six regularly scheduled meetings, the GCE met twice more during the past triennium. In June 2001 it met to consider the values inherent in key documents and statements of recent General Councils. These values then (and now) continue to serve as foundational references for the re-structuring process underway, and for the purpose of the General Council Offices. An additional meeting of the GCE was held in January 2003 for the sole purpose of that body reflecting on the "A Call To The Table" Commission report, and making decisions related to it.

In keeping with its policy of attempting to meet at least once each triennium beyond Central Canada, the April 2001 meeting of the Executive was held in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The Sub-Executive's role has been enlarged by the events of the past three years. Many changes required decisions that could not wait for regular meetings of the Executive. The result is a Sub-Executive convened much more than anyone had anticipated. As a result the role of this body is being reviewed, in the same way that governance concerns of all kinds are being clarified on an ongoing basis by the Permanent Committee on Governance, Budgeting and Planning Processes.

Elected and Appointed Members

There has been a constant effort to enhance the church's system of recruiting, appointing, sustaining and valuing elected and appointed members. That is our goal. For the most part, this denomination runs on the willing gifts of time, talent and treasure of its members. More than 100 committees provide governance and expert advice to support all aspects of the General Council's contribution to furthering God's purpose. Last December the Sub-Executive launched a special project to begin the process of providing for careful recruiting (in partnership with Conferences and other bodies within the church), proper orientation, sustained support, and appreciation for church members who serve the church in this way.

Right Relations with First Nations Peoples

Seeking right relations takes at least two major forms. One is an ongoing and ambitious focus on relating to First Nations people within The United Church of Canada. Laverne Jacobs, responsible for National Aboriginal Ministries in the Support to Local Ministries Unit, Omega Bula, General Council Minister: Racial Justice, as well as a cluster of program staff in the Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit and others in support roles all participate in this effort.

The other emphasis on establishing right relations is our commitment to support the recovery of those persons damaged by their experience in the residential schools.

There will be time at GC38 to consider both these priorities, and how best to proceed so that the church can be an active partner in closing the gap between Native and non-Native peoples in Canada. For several years The Healing Fund has provided monies to assist First Nations peoples as they deal with their loss of culture and language. Defining the next chapter for this work is an important discussion, and is ongoing.

There is a significant re-alignment of personnel in this area. The Rev. David Iverson, our General Council Officer: Residential School Steering Committee leaves us to resume his life as a parish minister in September 2003. Steps are underway to make certain we have the capacity to continue the excellent work of that Committee and those who serve it.

Awards

Various honours come to staff every year. I want to congratulate all those who produce award-winning newsletters, *Mandate Magazine*, *Spirit Connection* TV presentations and *The United Church Observer* for the committed and creative ways they tell the story of the Gospel enacted.

Communication

We have many people in The United Church of Canada who are experts in communication. The new web site is a good illustration of this, and the awards already mentioned attest to this fact. My humble contribution to this effort to encourage a better sense of cohesiveness within the denomination has been to produce a weekly (almost) note to colleagues at Church House, the General Council Executive and the Conferences. I understand that these messages are passed on through various networks as well. We are also turning around the draft minutes of both the Executive and Sub-Executive more quickly so that members can be current on actions of those bodies.

The matter of a comprehensive communications strategy, for both Church House itself, and for the constituency in its various forms, is being addressed. It is a large undertaking.

First Annual General Council Office Mission and Service Fund Campaign

This is the 75th Anniversary of the Mission and Service Fund. One way of acknowledging this notable achievement was the First Annual General Council Office Mission and Service Fund Campaign in May and June. It provided an opportunity for Church House staff to learn more about the Fund, and how their daily work enables money given in trust to be used for transforming purposes, in Canada and abroad. The participation rate was high, and especially so when one takes into consideration that many of our employees are members of other denominations and faith groups. Their goodwill and gifts helped make this event such a success. There is solid backing of this Fund in the General Council Office.

Budget Processes

Probably no endeavour has engendered more mutual effort than assembling the budget. General Council elected and appointed members, staff, representatives from the Conferences, Archives and *The United Church Observer* have all worked diligently to produce a "bridging" budget for 2004. This will be followed by a budget for the period 2005-2007. It is hoped the latter will allow a greater degree of innovation and security as different parts of the church share Christ's ministry in ways that are suitable to their particular role.

The Book Rooms

Following the closure of the Book Rooms the United Church Resource Distribution system (UCRD) was established to provide resources by mail order, to all parts of the church equally. The existing Distribution Centre expanded in size to fill mail and phone orders. It continues to develop its capacity to meet growing demand for United Church and selected other resources. At the request of the General Council Executive, a major book display program has been developed and continues to grow. In 2002, for the first time in a number of years, the resource distribution system did not finish the year in a deficit position.

The United Church Foundation

After considerable and lengthy preparation the denomination has successfully incorporated The United Church of Canada Foundation/Fondation de l'Église Unie du Canada as one option for people seeking to provide for God's mission and the ministry of Jesus Christ, through the church, over the longer term. The first Chair of the Board is Richard Bailey, the recently retired President and CEO of the Toronto YMCA. You will have an opportunity to hear from Mr. Bailey at GC38, and to visit the Foundation's display area. We are very grateful to all who have worked so hard to make this foundation possible.

KAIROS

A revamping of Canadian church coalitions several years ago led to the creation of KAIROS. It is a major, vital expression of Christian policy analysis, development and animation. The United Church of Canada, on behalf of the eleven cooperating churches is the employer-of-record for KAIROS staff. Recently, both staff and the church signed its first collective agreement.

Beads of Hope Campaign

The Beads of Hope Campaign is The United Church of Canada's principal effort to raise awareness of the global HIV/AIDS crisis, and to express solidarity with everyone directly affected by this disease. It continues to elicit interest and support.

Remits

The past General Council directed that seven remits be considered across the church. The results will be reported and addressed in various ways at this General Council. One result that has particular significance for all of us is the failure of the remit which proposed re-casting of the church's structure into three levels (Pastoral Councils, Regional Councils and The General Council) rather than the present four-level system of Pastoral Charges, Presbyteries, Conferences and General Council).

SARS

As a responsible employer, and host, the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in the Toronto area was addressed by a working group at Church House. A number of measures were put in place to assist staff, and two principles were noted to guide us in our role as both a centre for meetings, and as a resource group sending staff outside the area. One was that no person would be required to attend a meeting in Toronto. The other was that General Council staff were directed to check with people where they were travelling to be clear about any implications related to SARS.

Out of this concern the format for the April 2003 Executive meeting changed, largely to a series of committee meetings of elected persons by Conference Call, and then several Conference Calls involving the Sub-Executive for decision-making. This adaptation required a crucial level of cooperation and coordination. It also met with a high level of acceptance, under the circumstances, by Executive members, though everyone acknowledged the cost in terms of not being face-to-face, not being able to offer appreciation to those whose terms were completed, etc. All of us know how blessed we were prior to that weekend and throughout it by the remarkable extra "hosting" work of Bob Johnstone, Robin Chen, Merjean Enriquez, Rabijah Hadzivukovic, Joan MacGillivray and Melinda Moore. Several other GCO staff members were also involved in different ways.

The Road Ahead

Theological Conversation

...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

The recent Statistics Canada data indicated ever greater numbers of people identifying themselves as "Christians," and fewer labelling themselves as members of a denomination. Being able to articulate why being "Christian" is important to us, as well as being able to explain in some depth why we have chosen to be a member of The United Church of Canada is increasingly important in carrying out the church's mission. The Theology and Faith Committee's work on Faith Talk "Toward A New Statement of Faith" is already having an effect. Congregations and individuals are identifying what they believe, and why that is important in our daily life. It is also an essential component of being a healthy and vital church.

I often remember the story of aboriginal people in Canada travelling to Ottawa during the days of the constitutional talks. They were met on Parliament Hill by Prime Minister Trudeau who, after the introductions, inquired of the group, "Where are your lawyers?" A puzzled silence followed, and then one of the Native leaders replied, "These talks are about the land; so we have brought our spiritual elders." I yearn for the day when our daily conversation as United Church people is peppered, naturally and instinctively, with the stories and understandings of our faith, and how they suggest directions for our decision-making, and imperatives for our personal relationships.

This kind of discourse is what keeps faith alive. G.K. Chesterton once said, "The faith has not only been often killed but it has often died a natural death; in the sense of coming to a natural and necessary end.... It ended and it began again."

That "beginning again" is being encouraged in many ways by events and resources across the church. It needs support and encouragement for the sake of our own spiritual health, for the quality of our ecumenical and interfaith dialogues, and for the inspiration and strengthening of all who have lost hope.

The Changing Church

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11, 12)

In that same report by Statistics Canada it was clear Canada has changed greatly in the past decade. That change is having a profound effect on The United Church of Canada. It is positive in terms of opportunity, and challenging.

As the population shifts, the onus is on the church to position itself so that the expression of the Gospel meets new realities. People may be leaving some areas of the country, but the need for the Good News, the need for people who speak truth to power, and the need for a compassionate and sustaining presence remain.

By the same token, as populations expand in other areas, the need for the church's care intensifies, and in many ways requires significant adaptation to be effective. There is an increasing need for creative responses in terms of the challenges presented by the multicultural character of Canadian life. I mean more than ethnicity here. We have people who are poor, and others who are not. We have young people and older folks. There are gaps between language groups, and folks who are deeply influenced by the geography of their home region. The Support to Local Ministries Unit and the Ethnic Ministries Unit are both addressing these matters. So are others.

All of this is against the backdrop of increasing needs in the lives of our global partners. These require constant vigilance on the part of the church when governments, business and other world bodies are not inclined to assist the most vulnerable, or do things that make their lives worse. There are many in the world who cry with the psalmist, "I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me, You are my help and my deliverer, hurry to my aid, O my God." The United Church of Canada is one expression of that aid. But that is only one aspect of our relationship with our sisters-and-brothers-in-Christ overseas. Both their experience and deep faith are gifts to us as we address our own blindness (If the world lived

at the level of privilege of average Canadians, we would require five more planets). This is why the Face-to-Face program, where international church guests spend time in local United Church congregations is a program I value highly.

How best to respond to all these developments in terms of where we best place our human and financial resources will be the subject of ever-increasing prayer and discernment. We are called to be sensitive to the evangelical task here, to close the gap between God and people, between groups, and between individuals.

Healing the Body

As it is there are many members yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet "I have no need of you."... If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it." (1 Corinthians 12:20–21, 26)

Important, wonderful and faithful things are happening every day in the church. At the same time there are people and situations that require healing. Sometimes we do it well. Other times we do not. During my time in this role, I often hear from people in pain.

How best to be with one another, not only in conflict but in better times, is a crucial question for us as a church community. Frequently, I hear about people feeling they have been bullied, that they are not safe or supported in their church life either by individuals or by the courts of the church. At a General Council Executive a year and a half ago I asked the Moderator about some of her early impressions, having toured the church for a while. Her response was, "We don't do human relationships all that well." Marion Parry has worked hard to encourage The United Church of Canada to be intentional about "holy manners." I am very grateful when I see people addressing the issue of how to be Christ-like in their relating to one another.

The pain may be because of difficult or awkward personal relationships. It might also be because of theological differences. The inclusive nature of our church means we have committed to relating with people who hold other views. It is always a challenge, obviously. It is critical we do not back away from it.

When it comes to differences of belief, theologian Walter Brueggemann had comments that are worthwhile for us to remember. He was talking about old habits and rigid absolutes getting in the way of understanding or acceptance. He said in a conversation, "We're always looking for ways around the radicality of the call." Speaking about Christians clinging to "a particular piece of the truth" and "imagining it to be the whole truth" he went on to remark, "There's a deep itch to excommunicate everyone who is not (aligned with my) absolutes. And we'd have a very small church when we get done doing that." Being a church together, with our diversities and celebrating our common unity, is the way to health.

This healing task is a Gospel imperative. As we work at it in the larger society it is as important in our life together in the church community.

Changes and Appreciations

Among staff leaving are those noted here, with sincere appreciation for their contribution.

- K. Virginia Coleman from the position of General Secretary, General Council;

- Steve Adams from the position of General Secretary, Finance;
- Gordon How from the position of Interim General Secretary, Division of Communication;
- Anne Shirley Sutherland from the position of General Secretary, Human Resources;
- Peter Wyatt from the position General Secretary, Theology, Faith and Ecumenism;
- Roger Coll died while serving as Executive Secretary of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. He is sorely missed.;
- George Rodgers retired from the position of Executive Secretary, Alberta and Northwest Conference;
- Roslyn Campbell from the position of Executive Secretary, Hamilton Conference;
- Clarence Sellars from the position of Executive Secretary, Newfoundland and Labrador Conference;
- Don Maclean from the position of Executive Secretary, Montreal and Ottawa Conference;
- Debra Bowman from the position of Executive Secretary, British Columbia Conference;
- Jim Pickering from the position of Director, Pensions and Group Insurance, Division of Finance.

Further changes:

- Omega Bula into the position of General Council Minister, Racial Justice;
- Ian Fraser into the position of General Council Minister, Resources for Mission and Ministry;
- Carol Hancock into the position of General Council Minister, Regional Relations;
- Bob Johnstone into the position of Executive Minister, General Council Support and Services, and Planning Processes Strategist;
- K. Virginia Coleman into the position of Executive Secretary, Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference;
- Lynn Maki into the position of Executive Secretary, Alberta and Northwest Conference;
- Fred Monteith into the position of Executive Secretary, Hamilton Conference;
- Bill Bartlett into the position of Executive Secretary, Newfoundland and Labrador Conference;
- Doug Goodwin into the position of Executive Secretary, British Columbia Conference.

The re-design of the General Council Office led to a number of position changes:

- Steven J. Chambers from General Secretary, Division of Ministry Personnel and Education to Executive Minister, Faith Formation and Education Unit;
- Richard Chung-sik Choe from General Secretary, Ethnic Ministries Council to Executive Minister, Ethnic Ministries Unit;

- Chris Ferguson from General Secretary, Division of World Outreach to Executive Minister, Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit;
- David Iverson from General Secretary, Division of Mission in Canada to General Council Officer, Residential Schools Steering Committee;
- Richard Chambers from Programme Director, Division of Mission in Canada to Associate Executive Minister, Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit;
- Bonnie Greene from Programme Director, Division of Mission in Canada to Executive Minister, Support to Local Ministries Unit;
- Elsie Manley-Casimir from Director, Department of Stewardship Services, Division of Finance to Executive Minister, Financial Stewardship.

Completing the team of Executive Ministers/Officers are:

- Michael Burke, Executive Minister, Ministry and Employment Policies & Services;
- Juliet Huntly, Executive Minister, Resource Production and Distribution;
- Ron Olsen, Executive Officer, Financial Services;
- Peter Tebbutt, Executive Officer, Information Technology Services.

A Personal Thank You

I have many people to thank for their thoughtfulness over the past several months.

- To all my colleagues in Church House, to the elected and appointed members, to the Conference Executive Secretaries and their friends at work. Their coaching, patience and determination to maintain—and even expand—the God's mission during turbulent times impresses me profoundly. I want the church-at-large to know of their dedication and commitment.
- Within the above group I have benefited particularly from my relationship with the Moderator and immediate colleagues on the Senior Leadership Team. Each of us has been well cared for by a dedicated and talented group of support people. This is a group of faithful persons, deeply loyal to the church and to God's purpose in Creation.
- I want to offer a special appreciation to people across the church, and to our global partners across the world, who have made a point of reminding everyone in the restructuring effort that we are remembered in their prayers. Messages to that effect kept flowing into Church House, and were tangible reminders of our creedal affirmation, "We are not alone."
- Not necessarily last or least, I am very grateful for the prayers and support of Donna and our children, my Manitou staff colleagues and the members of that special northern Conference who released me for this "acting" role, and my friends around the country who have actively remembered me in so many ways. I am confident whatever contribution I have offered in my time here is better because of them. I am also certain that my mistakes I simply managed to accomplish all by myself.

Respectfully submitted.
Jim Sinclair