

September 1, 2009

Dear friends,

The 40th General Council this year was held with the theme "*down to the potter's house,*" bringing great momentum for The United Church of Canada to call us into the potter's house, and to explore what it means to be reshaped and transformed. It was also a time of affirming our continued commitment to Emerging Spirit, Intercultural Ministry, Living in the Midst of Empire, green energy, ecological justice, and much more.

Some of the special highlights of GC 40 were the sharing of stories in worship, presenting and hearing reports, discussions and debates, and chatting with friends at table groups or over a cup of coffee. These stories reflect God's story, and are beautiful. Our faith journey together is witnessed to by creating and sharing these stories.

At GC 40, I heard quite a few people talking about our new presbyteries within the Toronto Conference, and sharing their hopes saying, "We are watching with excitement and prayer." I hope our new journey will illumine a new vision for the whole of the Church and the world. It is time that we begin a new venture of reshaping and transforming boldly and courageously, grounded in our faith that God is with us always.

As we begin our new journey as Toronto Southeast Presbytery, I appreciate those who have committed to the work of the new presbytery and who are joining in many different ways as well as the Commission members who worked so hard on the governance and other matters. The role of the Presbytery includes supporting the congregations as they journey together by nurturing spiritual life, developing healthy ministries and striving for justice. I hope our presbytery will be an empowering and caring body that reflects Jesus' ministry.

Toronto Southeast Presbytery is blessed with rich diversity, and with different gifts that are given to us to share for the new creation of the world. We are also gifted with people who are serving in many different areas of God's mission within the United Church, with other faith communities of ecumenical and global partners, and in the world as disciples of Jesus. When we breathe in the Spirit, we can see each other with new eyes of love and compassion, and find the beauty which, without exception, God has gifted to each one of us.

As we, Toronto Southeast Presbytery, move into a new era of transformation, may we create many stories around the potter's house. In this our journey, may we say to each other, "You are beautiful!"

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Lee", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Lee

Chair, Toronto Southeast Presbytery, Toronto Conference, The United Church of Canada