

To: Members of the Executive of the General Council

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last Friday I was warmly greeted with a fresh cup of coffee at the office of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario.

Shortly after a nice chat with staff, when I had been sufficiently lulled into a false sense of security, Conference Executive Secretary Bruce Faurschou suddenly produced a video camera and asked me to respond to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?"

Now I wouldn't want to suggest that Bruce is in any way, um, devilish, but I felt somewhat tested in that moment. And yet a few minutes later, when Jordan Crosthwaite started recording, I found myself responding in a way that felt authentic, and I became very grateful for the request.

Grappling with Jesus' question is a good way to begin Lent. I recommend it.

In the 90 seconds I was given to respond, here's roughly what I said.

Had I been there when you asked "Who do you say that I am?" I would have told you that you're someone with more questions than answers, and your questions go straight to the heart; no detours. Your questions are so life-giving that here we are, still grappling with them, generation after generation.

Second, I would have said that you are a person of well-formed faith, because on those occasions when you did answer a question (e.g. What is the most important commandment?), you answered as a good rabbi - for example, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind", adding, "and your neighbour as yourself."

Today, I call you friend, companion and saviour. Your saving presence brings wholeness and healing to souls, to communities and to all of creation.

I'll be returning to Jesus' question throughout Lent. Thank you, Bruce! And I commend this practice to you: with 90 seconds, how would you answer Jesus' question?

If you're inclined to share the Moderator's video Lenten message, with more thoughts on how to mark Lent, please check out: <http://www.youtube.com/user/unitedchurchofcanada?gl=CA&hl=en>

Lenten blessings in this singular time of deep spiritual reflection,

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