

Dear friends:

The text for Wednesday's chapel service at Church House was the first creation story from Genesis.

The same day I noticed that my lawn is just beginning to look a little parched, in stark contrast to the flooded farms around Estevan that a friend in Saskatchewan sent me. Meanwhile fires near Fort Providence, NWT, forced the closure of Highway 3 part of this week.

In offering the reflection at chapel, the Rev. Melody Duncanson-Hales zeroed in on that troublesome word *dominion*, and invited us to spend a few minutes discussing with neighbours how we should understand its meaning. It seems most of us have trouble with that particular word. Some translations of the Bible don't use that word – couldn't we just use those? But no, it's good to struggle with a text that doesn't sit easily: The insight gained after struggle goes deeper, I think.

Some of us are old enough to remember Canada Day being called Dominion Day. That memory brings a similar kind of uneasiness today, as we reflect on historic relations with Aboriginal peoples, and the environmental impacts of our consumer lifestyle.

I don't have a great answer about what we should make of the word "dominion" but I think maybe it is like most of the Bible (and maybe most of life), in that it's meaning is more clear when considered in context. God created a beautiful and bountiful world, and gave each living being the gift of adequate food -- and the right kinds of food -- for all species. The gift of a beautiful and bountiful earth was given to all creatures, and in that context, a species with greater abilities than the other was given "dominion" over the others. Our dominion includes a heavy set of responsibilities, for which we are accountable, as well.

The creation passage has great majesty, and it offers much to wonder about. Like much of what we worry about, the answers may never be ours to hold. Surely God's powers would be quite limited if our reality fit within what we can understand.

This is my last weekly letter till after Labour Day, as I'm beginning a period of parental leave over the summer. I look forward to this time immensely, all the while knowing that there may be moments when it would be a lot easier to be sitting at my desk in the office. A wonderful adventure in life waits...

Peace and blessings,

Nora

*The General Secretary's letter is distributed approximately weekly to staff at the General Council Office and colleagues across the United Church. Also, please visit, and subscribe to the RSS feed for, Moderator Mardi Tindal's [blog](#) where she posts messages for the whole United Church and beyond.*