

WORDS matter. I usually choose my words carefully. After all, my co-workers rely on me to wordsmith emails and documents that need to go out to a broad audience and I read my own emails multiple times before hitting send. However, when my youngest child came out as agender I was challenged to learn to use “they, their, them” as singular pronouns.

At General Synod 31, buttons and round table discussions helped me understand more about non-binary gender and the pronouns we each choose for ourselves. Beyond pronouns, a workshop on historical documents of the UCC showed me that from its inception the UCC has been devoted to social justice with an emphasis on our commitment to loving ALL of God’s creation.

Committee discussions on and proposed amendments to the Synod resolutions emphasized the words that would be the clearest and the most inclusive for each issue we addressed. At one point the body voted against a well-intentioned amendment that suggested changing the word “survivors” to “those living in the aftermath” after a young adult survivor of child abuse bravely spoke to the importance and empowerment of the word survivor in their recovery process. During a plenary Theological Reflection, Raven Rowe made sense of it all, saying, “There is power in the way we name and claim ourselves.”

Even more important than our words is the Word of God. As a first-time General Synod delegate I appreciated that every resolution had a background section that not only explained the issue being address, but also provided Biblical text to support the purpose of the resolution. Learning the theology behind these resolutions has provided a piece that has been missing for me in the past. All resolutions were prayerfully and carefully considered, first by a committee and then by the body as a whole. No resolution was passed or defeated lightly. I believe the opening verse of the Book of John reveals it all: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” God’s Word matters.

-Jean Pierce, Lay Delegate, Northern Association