



## The United Church of Canada L'Eglise Unie du Canada

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Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council  
21 Wright Street, Sackville, NB E4L 4P8  
Tel: (800) 268-3781 ext. 6153 • Email: kharrison@united-church.ca

May 5, 2020

A letter of thank you, appreciation, encouragement and reminder to you our Ministry Personnel who are our greatest gift.

Perhaps the Miriam Webster phrase for 2020 will be “the new normal.” Whatever, that turns out to be. Too many things are already new but very few seem normal. This seems most evident in the midst of our personal and vocational lives as we continue to live through this time of world wide disruption.

Your continued efforts in leadership to care for your communities in worship, pastoral response, administration and study have been heartwarming and are deeply deeply appreciated. The learning of new skills, the creativity, the teaming support, has offered deep gift for so very many. Yet, we know it is not easy and does not come without a cost.

This note is to say thank you and to you remind you to take special care of yourself in the midst of this challenging time. These new realities are exhausting. As we learn more about this pandemic we begin to understand we are in a distance race of unknown length rather than a sprint back to the way things were. These words from the 13th century Islamic scholar and poet Rumi may be grounding.

*“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.  
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”  
~ Rumi (1207-1273)*

It is now recognized that the situations we are facing are significantly detrimental to our overall mental wellbeing. It has never been more important to care for oneself and loved ones to the best of our ability. We remind you of the support resources provided by the United Church for our leaders, employees and families. The employee assistance plan is there with a variety of supports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1 800 361 5676 (French) 1 800 387 4765 (English) You can check out the services offered at this link: <https://www.uccan-benefitscentre.ca/group-benefits/employee-and-family-assistance-program/>.

Given also the recent traumatic events experienced in the Province of Nova Scotia that are having an impact on many across the country the EAP program has reminded us of the importance of recognizing trauma in all its forms and is offering these helpful resources. <https://www.uccan-benefitscentre.ca/morneau-shepell-traumatic-event-support/>

We are reaching out daily to leaders and having conversations with lay community of faith leaders, as well as we continue to be the church in this time in new ways. I welcome all calls and questions or the opportunity to offer a safe place to listen. I can be reached directly at 1 800 268 3781 Ex 6153.

Some of you as pastoral leaders have wanted to speak about strategies for working from home. Yet, we recognize our situations are very diverse and no one strategy will meet all needs. We fully recognize the challenges of sharing workspace, of full time childcare and educational responsibilities, as well as the worry we hold together for family members who have lost employment at this time.

I have found some modicum of success by trying to adhere to these strategies as much as possible. Some of them might assist you or spark you to other strategies. I recognize that my only care responsibilities at home are 4 pets and that care is shared.

1. Keep you regular schedule.
2. Dress for the office.
3. Have a designated workspace. (With a door if possible, if not possible tell your people you are now going into your office.)
4. Remove Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok & Snapchat from you work environment. (Unless you work for these companies they are productivity killers.) Keep your cell phone out of your work area if possible.
5. Set a schedule to check email (2 to 4 x per day) and put this on your outgoing message.
6. Take your regular “coffee” breaks. (Quick walk, get some fresh air.) Do not distract yourself with household chores.
7. Start the day by “eating the elephant” get started on the most difficult task.
8. Set your top three priorities for the day and do them.
9. Try not to end your day until they are accomplished.
10. Limit list making. Remember making lists is not the work. (It is an organizational review task to prepare for work.)
11. Limit as much as possible the number of meetings you commit to.

I would love to hear from you other strategies that have been helpful.

Or those who keep asking for reading suggestions I have just ordered the following book as I am hearing from some of you that it is most helpful in this time. **“How to lead when you don’t know where you are going”: Leading in a liminal season**, by Susan Beaumont.

More information about the book here:

[https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=how+to+lead+when+you+don%27t+know+where+you%27re+going&crid=1KUEOKPHU4DSI&srefix=How+yo+lead+%2Caps%2C189&ref=nb\\_sb\\_ss\\_sc\\_3\\_12](https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=how+to+lead+when+you+don%27t+know+where+you%27re+going&crid=1KUEOKPHU4DSI&srefix=How+yo+lead+%2Caps%2C189&ref=nb_sb_ss_sc_3_12)

If you want to read to forget about work have a go at the Louise Penny murder mystery series.

Finally, let me remind you of the wonderful resource ministry carried out by the Rev. Janice MacLean at <https://prayerbench.ca>. There are two new programs on offer now with “Stroll for your Soul” and “Making Spiritual Resilience”.

Let me close in honour of you with a quote from my personal favourite collection.

“Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

— Rob Siltanen

Be kind to yourself and others in this unknown time. Hope to chat with you soon or invite you to a zoom meeting you are free to ignore. (Rule 11).

Thank you!

Kendall Harrison  
Regional Minister  
Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council  
1 800 268 3781 Ex 6153  
Kharrison@united-church.ca