

President

“We are not alone,
we live in God’s world.
We believe in God:
Who has created and is creating,
Who has come in Jesus,
The Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new”

Those words of faith from our United Church Creed bring a consoling message during these challenging times. Throughout the past year, our church communities in this Province, along with all Canadians and indeed the whole world, have been seriously impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic. All of us - whether individuals, families, congregations or institutions - have been required to make sacrifices, including many difficult decisions about matters that affect our way of life. As your President, I am very grateful for the many ways in which you, as clergy, staff and laity, have continued to fulfill your calling as faithful servants during unprecedented circumstances. As our Creed implies, we believe that in the process of creating and recreating, God allows all occasions, whether positive or negative, to teach us lessons for living the message of the Gospel through loving and caring relationships.

While ‘social distancing’ has prevented us from physical closeness during times of isolation, as a church, we have learned to be the Body of Christ in amazing new ways.

When our churches were forced to close, an amazing transition took place. Through immeasurable efforts, our worship service moved to live streaming online and God was indeed doing something new. In a time of crisis, our services brought hope, joy and spiritual blessings to many previously ‘unconnected’ people who regularly tuned in ... not just our own congregations. Quickly we discovered there was no need for cancellation of any meetings ... not even bible studies, congregational support sessions and our 2020 Annual General Meeting. All took place successfully through online technology.

I have no words to adequately convey my gratitude for the ingenuity of our Regional Staff in organizing regular Zoom meetings for clergy and lay persons. While this was a tremendous feat in enabling the flow of desperately needed information, it also provided a connectiveness that reminded us we truly are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. These Zoom meetings literally became a lifeline for clergy and congregations.

I would be remiss if I didn’t single out our Executive Minister, Rev. Faith March-MacCuish, for her phenomenal coordination efforts. She was the conduit through which information came from multiple sources and was shared with all of us through the help of her skilled and cooperative staff.

Due to Pandemic restrictions, I regret that as your President I did not have the pleasure of visiting congregations on your special occasions. However, my heart was warmed throughout the year as I viewed many of your services being live streamed and heard through Zoom of the innovative ways in which you maintained your congregational spirit.

While physical closeness enabling conversation still has its limitations, let us never forget the power of prayer. Through prayer we are profoundly connected to God and to one another in deep and meaningful

ways. With this thought in mind, I leave you with the prayer of St. Francis which seeks Divine guidance for all our human relationships.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith, where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Your faithful servant in Christ's service.

Rev. Peggy Johnson
President