

Christmas Greetings from the Desk of the Executive Minister for Regional Council 15

As the New Year approaches I will move into the role of Executive Minister for Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council, Regional Council 15 and First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council. All of our staff will move into new positions and Marlene Trenholm will conclude her 23 years of work with the Maritime Conference and Tracey Rose will begin her new position. Our Presbyteries and Conferences will be no more and things will be different.

Through the preparation for changes, I have encountered many people who are working hard to help birth the changes necessary to comply with the directive of the church through the General Council approved remits. Members of our Staff, Congregations, Districts/Presbyteries/Synods, Conferences and General Council -- all people who love this church and have a deep faith in God. People who want to make sure all of our decisions are faith-centered responses to the needs of the church and community.

A few years ago I was invited to take part in an Advent Festival of Carols and Scripture Service at the Roman Catholic Basilica. Each Christian denomination was invited to be a part of the service.

The service began with this statement:

It is good to have an end to journey towards, but it is the journey that matters in the end. Every day of our lives we experience the journey that we call life. Advent is a time to reflect on the past year's journey.

Sometimes that journey forces us to struggle up the mountains of despair or unbearable loss. Sometimes that journey demands that we labour under the weight of unemployment or financial crises. Sometimes it forces us to endure the path of chemotherapy or family break-ups. Sometimes our life journey is just plain hard. And then there are those times when our journey is quiet and uneventful and we can 'rest beside the still waters'. And ... sometimes our journey leads us to surprising and joy-filled times when we reach the top of the mountain and we realize how precious our life is and how blessed our journey.

That statement is very true for me and I suspect for all of us. I am sure we or someone we know have been in any one of those places in their life's journey and perhaps in any one of those places in any given year. It is also the journey that our church has been on over these past few years, with struggle, loss, pain, surprise, joy, hope and fulfillment. And we are all-in different places in that journey.

As we prepare for the coming of the New Year, I find comfort in the words of Minnie Haskins: "*And I said to the one, who stood at the gate of the year, 'give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'. And he replied, 'go out into the world and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way'.*" May we walk into the unknown year holding the hand of God who guides and loves us, and may that be enough!

Blessings and a heartfelt thank you to Marlene as she concludes her ministry with the Conference and a warm welcome is extended to Tracey as she steps into her new position with us.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!