



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

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## ***Advent Message from the President of Regional Council 15 November, 2021***



As this letter is coming to you as we move into our Advent season, I sit here on November 11<sup>th</sup> thinking of those who have served our country of Canada, past and present; either in a uniform of our Canadian Armed Forces, Merchant Marine or policing our streets to keep us safe. Let us continue to remember those that have given the ultimate sacrifice for us to remain free. Thank you to all the families that we live with, connect with, and the friends who know the sorrow of having lost a loved one.

On that note, this year continues to bring about angst, pain and sorrow for those that are suffering through isolation, loss of a loved one, job or business because of the COVID-19 virus. We continue to thank the scientists, and health care workers, for working to find ways to keep us safe and to minimize the affects of this deadly virus on all whom we meet and love.

Advent offers us much to anticipate and rejoice. For me it is a renewal of hope. I find that as we move, step by step, closer to the beginning of Advent, I feel the mantle around my shoulders become lighter and more hopeful. This is, of course, not the same for everyone and we must respect that. We have friends and families that have lost people very near and dear to them. For those that find this time of year sorrowful, we need to surround them with love and support. Reach out to someone that you know is struggling and offer them a hand, a cup of coffee/tea, a visit, a meal, or spend time with them and listen. Let them know that the Lord is there to comfort them, you can be that messenger.

I expect that many, if not most, of our Communities of Faith will be offering a service of reflection as we approach Christmas to offer solace for those that find this time of year painful. Let us all remember and be supportive.

What does Advent mean to you? As mentioned previously, weight leaves me to offer renewal and hope for the future. I hope that for most of you, renewed strength, energy and love are emotions that you encounter as we move to one of the most beloved seasons in our faith. I think of the four emotions that we focus on during Advent in our western Christian culture. Those being Hope, Faith, Joy and Peace. To each of us they may mean something slightly different.

Let's take HOPE, the candle that we light on this first Sunday of Advent. Hope, often called the Prophecy Candle, represents the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. This is the season for anticipation. What will our future hold? Will we be blessed in the coming year? Will our lives become simpler as we grasp the tentacles of COVID-19 and find ways to minimize the affects it has caused many? Will we be able to meet as Communities of Faith as we used to, and share bread with those in our church families and our personal family and friends. We are limited by our imagination and that gives us HOPE.

Our second week of Advent we have PEACE. Our lives have been forever changed over the past year and a half. We have seen and witnessed so much anger, violence, and hatred to many around us. As a white person I cannot begin to understand the hurt, pain and sorrow those that are different from me have had to suffer and continue to suffer. We, as Communities of Faith, have the opportunity to educate ourselves and stand as allies and to fight for Peace. Let us be the people that stand with all people no matter their race, sexual orientation, gender identity, amongst a few, and be the people to strive for PEACE within our communities, country and the world.

On our third Sunday of Advent, we have JOY. What a wonderful emotion. In our church life we anticipate the birth of Jesus and the joy and hope that the coming of the Messiah holds for us as faith communities. I hope that each of us can find joy in our lives. On a personal note, I am so fortunate to have grandchildren that live close by. Everyday that I get to see them, I have reminders of the joy of life. Reminders of simple things that we now, as adults, sometimes take for granted. The joy of standing in the rain, offering, or getting, a hug. The joy of seeing a smile on another individual's face. We are so fortunate to have those sprinklings throughout our lives. They make our days easier and offer hope for a bright and loving future. We have the opportunity to spread joy throughout our connections with others. Some times this past year and a half have been difficult.

With the opening of restrictions, our congregations are working their way back to services in person. The joy I see on peoples faces as they greet those that they have missed is heart warming, and offers me happiness that those that have felt isolated are now able to reach for some happiness and JOY.

As we reach that fourth week of Advent, and the anticipation grows, we have LOVE. Love; Jesus has taught us to love each other as he loves us. We as individuals are comforted by the fact that God loves us no matter what. Let us share that undeniable and all-encompassing love. Let us reach out to those in our communities, country and the world; our homeless, our indigenou, our black and people of colour, who are suffering and feeling the hatred of others as they try to navigate in this different world. The world has been forever changed, and we need to change. We can offer love to those that need support. Let us step out of our comfort zones to be there for others. We have great depths of LOVE within in us. Let us share it and make this world a better place for all.

Let us not forget the Christ Candle and the wreath that is often used in our Advent ceremonies. The wreath offers us a circle. The never-ending love of God in our lives. What joy that can bring us to know that God is with us and we are not alone. The Christ Candle, the representation of the birth of Jesus. Jesus brought light into the world. Let us follow in his footsteps and offer the light to all around us from this day forward.

As I end this letter, I ask each of you to consider the HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE that you have to offer, and be the light of Christ.

Yours in faith always,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane McDonald".

Jane McDonald  
President