

## **EXECUTIVE MINISTER'S REPORT FUNDY ST. LAWRENCE DAWNING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL**

### Reflecting on the Year

Margaret Wheatley, in her book *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*, said; “There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about. Ask *What’s Possible?* not *What’s wrong?* Keep asking.”

I believe that as a regional council, as Communities of Faith, and as individuals, throughout this pandemic we have been discovering what it is that we care about. I remember the first time that the congregation I attend was permitted to have congregational singing. After the service, many spoke of being brought to tears as they stood and sang the story of our faith together. Families that have been separated, now being able to be together and embrace one another. When we shut down we, as a community, found out very quickly how important our faith, our family, our friends, and our future together, really was to our wellbeing. We began to ask “what’s possible?” and we began to invite everybody who cared to work together on what was possible. In the midst of a pandemic, we were able to continue to be the church, to be present to one another in ways we would never have dreamed. We found out that relying on human goodness helped us to stay together while we needed to be apart. As we come out the other side of this pandemic, I encourage us to not forget the valuable things that we have learned as a community. As families and congregations, let us remember and hold on to what matters. There may be something that we have had to let go of that we may not want to pick up again. This is a new time, let’s cast off “the way we have always done things”, and reimagine returning to something new, something more deeply authentic. I encourage you and your faith communities to notice what you really care about, and have conversations about that, and, as Margaret Wheatley tells us, trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.

### **What We are About:**

This year has been a continuation of providing support to our ministry personnel and our communities of faith with information and tools to maneuver through the highs and lows of the pandemic. The region has continued to provide the zoom links and conference calling numbers for communities of faith free of charge. Our executive and committees have worked hard to be responsive to our communities of faith. Each group has been working hard to ask the question of “What is Possible”. The executive and committees continue to discern their role and live into their call to ministry for the region. As we have worked with our mandates, some committees have discovered that changes were needed to reflect the reality of their work, and in those cases mandates and policies were updated in order to be more responsive. A heartfelt thank you to all those who answered the call to discipleship, and have taken up positions on committees, and have kept the wheels of our region moving along some very difficult roads.

There have been retreats and learning events, budget approvals, grant funding, audited statements, Living Faith Stories, changes in pastoral relations, retirements and retiree anniversaries, incorporated ministries, newsletters, calls for justice, stewardship, chaplaincy, affirming webinars, licensing, retiree support, conversations about viability, cooperative and shared ministries, and sadly, closures. As individuals, our faith communities have been there for our passages of life from new beginnings, births, endings and everything in between. The vision of our Regional Council;

*Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region consults with, guides, and supports Communities of Faith and other ministries in building trusting, respectful, affirming relationships that embody Creator's presence within the world in which we live, is what matters. That is what we care about, that is what we have been about. May it continue to be so.*

#### **Future Concerns:**

Reggie McNeal told Leonard Sweet in Sweet's book *So Beautiful*, "*These are the best of times to be the church. These are the worst of times to be the church.*" Bob Farr says, "*I do not know why we are the chosen leaders (lay and clergy) who are being called upon to lead the church at this time. But in fact, we are and so we must*".

Some of the concerns that we have been sharing, and hearing from each other, is the concern over shrinking congregations, growing expenses, and lack of volunteers to carry the load. These are conversations we need to continue having. We need to speak openly and honestly about our reality, and at the same time, we need to recognize that while, at times, it feels like it is the worst of times, it may also be the best of times as we reimagine the joy of ministry in our communities of faith. When we are able to articulate what it is that we care about, and we are so completely convinced that we believe that God has called us to it, we will, as a people, make it happen. So, let's change the culture of naming what's wrong, and begin to ask; what's possible? The regional council, with its executive and committees, are continuing to have these discussions, and are hoping that together, all of us can be the church we are called to be in our time.

#### **Thank you to our Volunteers:**

Our Executive and its committees are comprised of faithful volunteers, who have been very busy with the work of ministry for the region. None of this work is done by one person. You only have to look at the reports to see that there is a lot of work on the ground happening on a daily basis. Thank you, thank you, to all who have contributed to the region's life and work. A special thank you to our President, Sheila Gallant, for her leadership and guidance.

#### **Good Bye to Staff:**

On June 30, 2021, Laura Hunter, our Minister for Justice, Mission and Outreach finished up her ministry with the three regions and we were able to celebrate with her and wish her well at our AGM last spring. The process and search for our new Minister for Justice, Mission and Outreach began in June and concluded in November, with the announcement of Rev. Sherpherd Munikwa as the successful applicant. Welcome to the region, Sherpherd, and blessings on your ministry.

#### **Thank you to our Staff:**

All of our staff have worked hard over this past year to support our communities of faith, our ministry personnel, our lay leaders, the executive and its committees. I take this opportunity to thank each one of them for their continuous support, faithfulness, professionalism and ministry.

#### **Conclusion:**

Sharon Salzburg, said, "only love is big enough to hold all of the pain of this world". Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is to love God, love neighbour, and love self. May our ministry, whatever the next reiteration is, be filled with love.