

Greetings, Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council, Staff and all Communities of Faith.

This is my second month as your President and I wish to share with you what I have been up to, on your behalf since July 12, 2023 to August 11, 2023. As I was installed on June 11, 2023, I will keep everyone posted on my activities beginning on the 12th day of each month.

On your behalf, at 2:00pm Saturday, July 15, 2023 I attended the funeral of Nancy Whitney-Latham, DLM - at United Heritage Church, Sydney, NS and brought condolences to the family and friends in attendance. Rev. Duncan Roach (Calvin United, New Waterford) presided. Nancy put others before herself and was always willing to lend a helping hand to those who needed her assistance. Nancy always went the extra mile for those who required her help. Nancy will be sorely missed by her colleagues, family and friends.

I took a week's vacation from July 16 to July 24, 2023 to be with family, to celebrate 4 generations together; including my father, myself, both sons, their wives, and 4 granddaughters ages 1 to 7, together in Ingonish, Cape Breton, NS. The weather was wonderful, the ocean was warm and the food was fabulous. It was too hot to cook in or outside of our trailer, so we either went to a restaurant or ate take out. If you ever want fabulous fish and chips, try the Seagull Restaurant in Ingonish. Of course, The Coastal Waters, Main Street Lunch and Brookside Take Out are close seconds. You can't beat fresh fish straight off the wharf! I will post the family picture on my president's page.

I was invited to attend Berwick Camp by the Board of Directors at Berwick United Church Camp Meeting Association to personally experience the warm welcome and unique environment of the camp located in the Town of Berwick, NS. This camp runs from July 29 to August 6, 2023. We could drop in for a quick visit, stay for a night, or multiple nights!

Berwick Camp is run by the United Church of Canada and has been operating every summer since 1872. It is a wonderful community full of love, laughter, worship and play. It is nestled in one of the oldest hemlock groves in Eastern North America. It is a great place to disconnect and relax in nature. It is a unique place where people of all ages enjoy multi-generational fellowship and fun. The Worship Services were held on Sundays at 10:00am and every evening at 7:00pm. A hymn sing took place on Sunday, July 30, at 7:00pm. Debra Mooney - pianist/accompanist in Southminster Steinhauer United in Edmonton, Alberta. The Minister in Residence was (Rev. Dr. Nancy Steeves, who hailed from Edmonton, Alberta). Vacation Bible School for children (Rev. Catherine Stuart - Regional Minister for Children, Youth and Young Adults; Linnea Good - Ukulele church/VBS music, comes to us from Summerland, BC) and a Youth Group for students in grades 7 through 12 (Rev. Shannon MacLean - St. Andrew's, Truro) took place on weekday mornings. (Shawn Redden was the Morningside Leader who ministers with Visions United in Moncton, NB).

The theme this year dealt with earth, water, air and fire and how to live more respectfully and responsibly in creation. Cynthia Wood is Camp Berwick's President. Cynthia's message to everyone: the joy of helping and being helped will be felt and witnessed many times, all over the grounds of Berwick Camp 152. However you decide to give or receive HELP is up to you. However you decide to give or receive JOY is up to you. I just know that Berwick Camp is a

joyful place and a very safe space in which to practice all that "giving and receiving" among friends.

Berwick Camp is a very social community focused on spiritual growth. (There are lots of spots to enjoy peace and quiet too.) They hosted a "theology for today" with speaker Rev. Wendy Evans, each weekday morning. The afternoons and evenings were set aside for recreation (or napping!) They had horseshoes, ring toss, softball, frisbee, basketball, volleyball, arts and crafts, singing, ukulele church, trivia night, cribbage, a talent show, a silent and live auction, plus so much more...you can be very busy.

Breakfast, dinner and supper were held at their dining hall at 8:00am, 12:15pm and 5:00pm daily. This building is the original dining hall constructed in 1872. The kitchen portion has been upgraded to include some modern appliances. The Cookie Cottage was open after worship every morning and evening and various times, if they had enough volunteers. Homemade cookies, scones, sweetbreads, rice krispie squares, etc. were free along with tea and coffee. (I think they wanted to fatten me up, so much protein each and every day.) wow!

Now that you know the background of Camp Berwick, I will fill you in on some of the fun I had while there.

On your behalf, I attended Camp Berwick from Friday, July 28 until I left Monday, July 31, 2023 after the evening worship service. This was an opportunity for me to meet those families who returned yearly for those 152 years. Many had never missed a summer and travelled from all over Canada and the United States each year to meet up with old friends and make new ones, as I did. Their chef this year hailed from Montreal and he was a great cook. Too good as I think I gained 5lbs while I was there...but then again that could have been the ice cream I had each evening after worship. I sense a theme here, after morning worship, ice cream; after evening worship, ice cream. Then the cookie cottage was 2 doors down from my dormitory, so the smell of freshly made coffee would waft into my window and of course, who can resist that temptation, even if it's hot outside, certainly not me. I met many and I mean many people, who were my elders, who walked over 10,000 steps daily. Gordon (who is also a lefty), whom I met the first day at supper time with his lovely wife Vera and her sister Winnie. I would guess they are all in their 70's/80's. They own their own cabin as they call it. He took me on the tour. They had running water, electricity and a small living area to sit inside if it got cold, 2 bedrooms downstairs plus the loft. He built a second storey for the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

.

On your behalf, I attended the Friday evening Taize worship service of contemplative interpretation. It was a very beautiful service but I wasn't sure what I should be doing, so I watched, hoping to learn. I may require more services of this style.

On your behalf, I attended the Saturday morning worship service on July 29. I was then escorted by Julia Cottingham, Chair, Public Worship and Programming for the Board of Directors at Camp Berwick in a golf cart around the entire campgrounds. We went up and down alleys and laneways, showing me the various cottages, cabins, shacks, dormitories, apartments, tents, campers and travel trailers. Explaining how some families come but do not participate

in activities, some come and participate with those around them, some come and mingle at certain times while others mingle throughout the campgrounds. Everyone was friendly and helpful if I had any questions. That afternoon at 3:00pm I attended the exquisite wedding of Tim Routley and Bryna Ashe held at the Open Pavilion. Tim wore a scottish kilt complete with vest; Bryna wore a gorgeous white wedding gown complete with a red sash draped around her shoulders. Everyone in the camp was invited to attend the wedding as well as the reception; they met at Camp Berwick and wanted to start their lives together in a place that meant so much to both of them. On Saturday evening, I attended the Worship Service at 7:00pm.

On your behalf, I brought greetings from the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council, Staff and all Communities of Faith and how happy I was to be a part of their community. The entire community was very welcoming. I told those in attendance who did not know what we were all about, a little of who we were and that we wanted to let people know we are here and we care. If you ever wish to reach out to any of us, we will be here to listen and understand and respond as best we can. Our Executive Minister, Rev. Faith March-MacCuish was the guest speaker on Saturday evening, so it was an honour to be there while she and her husband Ian were in attendance. Faith's theme was "which was stronger, the sun or the wind?" There are clearly arguments for both of those answers. hmmm... I went for ice cream after the worship service, followed by cookies and coffee.

On your behalf on Sunday morning, I attended the 10:00am Worship Service with Communion. This was presided over by co-coordinators Rev. Michael Mugford (Cole Harbour Woodside United) and Rev. Joan Griffin (Musquodoboit Harbour United). I spent Sunday afternoon looking for bug spray as the mosquitoes were relentless. Sunday evening we had an old fashioned hymn sing at 7:00pm for over an hour and it was really enjoyable. Fun was had by all! Yes, you guessed it, ice cream afterwards!

Molly will be 100 years young on August 21, 2023. She is a firecracker and nothing slows her down, not even heatstroke. She walks up and down the laneways and even walks up the hills to the tent grounds with her walker every chance she gets. We sat down and talked for a while on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Molly has a phenomenal memory and she knows everyone's name and each family's history. They held a parade in her honour on Monday afternoon where many walked behind the golf cart in which she was riding. Cake and of course ice cream were consumed afterwards. This is clearly a recurring theme throughout these 10 days...haha!!

On your behalf, Monday morning I attended morning worship followed by "theology for today" with Rev. Wendy Evans from Montreal explaining the 4 elements - earth, water, air and fire and where did we see ourselves? Molly's parade took up most of the afternoon and after supper I attended the evening worship service before heading home to Lake Echo as I had a 2 hour drive ahead of me.

This is truly a community, a family, a community of faith or whatever you wish to label Camp Berwick but it is so much more than a camp. These are families, individuals, couples who have spent their lives enjoying each other's company and the beauty of the hemlocks which are everywhere you turn. Everyone feels the love, serenity and beauty of the hemlocks, trees, birds, rabbits hopping around the camp. I felt the love of God surround me while I was there, even though many people were not affiliated with the United Church, they still wanted to hear my

story of how I came to be there. They wanted to know who I was and why I was invited, I got to tell my story, my story of my love for my church and my church family. These are loving and caring people, regardless of how they came to Berwick Camp 152 years ago, they are alive and strong today, in 2023. You feel the camaraderie they feel towards each other, some only see each other for these 10 days each year, others keep in touch and still others end up getting married as Tim and Bryna did on July 29, 2023.

Berwick Camp is a magical place, rustic and dusty and not something you would want to wear your best outfits to on a regular basis but then again, it is "camping." Camping is meant to be rustic, where you dust off your clothes before taking them off. You will never find another spot where you will commune with God except perhaps the crashing ocean waves at Ingonish Beach, Cape Breton. There is God's power and majesty but then God is everywhere, at all times, to all people. I think God can be anywhere we wish God to be. As we were asked at one of the morning sessions "theology for today," where do you feel you belong? to the earth, water, air or fire? Good question to ponder.

Thank you to Julia Cottingham, Ted Tupper-registrar, Shawn-managed dining hall, Staff and Volunteers, Ministry Personnel and lay and those who worked tirelessly serving us at every meal, thank you! I will be posting pictures of those I met over the next few days. For more information please visit their website: <https://www.berwickcamp.org/>

On Friday, August 11, 2023 at 9:00am, On your behalf, I attended the Pastoral Relations Committee Meeting via Zoom, Rev. Tom Woods, Chair. I brought greetings from the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council, Staff and all Communities of Faith. It was very nice to meet others serving the wider church.

During Covid, if we haven't served on the same committees, I was limited to my opportunities to meet other committee members, so attending as many regional meetings this year as I am able, allows me to meet even more people across Bermuda and Nova Scotia.

In Peace and Hope,

Shauna MacDonald  
President  
Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council