

## **Greetings Growth Seekers from Growth Animator Sharon,**

You have been seeing that title line in your weekly announcement newsletter since the beginning of November, when I was humbled to begin my new role as growth animator serving Atlantic Canada. If you are not receiving the newsletter, please sign up. One of six growth animators across Canada, I am national staff with the Growth Department (General Council Office) regionally deployed to serve UCC-East. Thank you to all who have connected with me. For those thinking about it, wondering, how might a growth animator come along side my community of faith, in my context, contact me and let's find out. Working with congregations, those exploring new things, increasing welcome, reaching neighbourhoods, visioning, wondering about identity, finding our "why," reframing our story, figuring out how to close well, wondering what resources might be available, prayerfully discerning how to renew yourselves, seeking to explore what new thing God is up to are just some of the varied ways communities of faith like yours are connecting with me and with each other. "We've never done it this way" is a common statement. New things can be exciting and terrifying. Even though you may be struggling, to quote our moderator "alive is beautiful". Perhaps you are feeling exhausted and need prayer, a word of hope, encouragement, reassurances, a listening ear?

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19 NRSV UE)

As your growth animator, we can explore how your community of faith is being called to live with deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice. To renew, create and invite are initiatives of the growth department. We are leading with renewal and part of that strategy has found us digging deeper to find our why, and to explore our WARTS, an acronym for welcome, attract, retain, transform, and send people into the world. We have new opportunities to engage with communities of faith, our regional council staff, fellow growth animators and the communities of faith they are connected with and their regional staff, our national office, and resources. Come share your ideas. Maybe someone else has done something similar and we can learn from their wisdom. Some of our staff in the growth department were part of Edge ministries, a program that explored innovative, creative, and new ideas for more than a decade, inviting curiosity and generosity. Let's explore with awe and wonder, and be amazed about possibilities and opportunities. A church sign from an ecumenical neighbour reads: "We are not closing. We are reimagining how we can best serve the north end." Let's do some reimagining as futurists in this present moment, imagining our flourishing way forward.

Let's find ways to focus our energy on what matters to your community of faith.

Blessings,

Sharon

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