The United Church of Canada
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Advent Message from the President
of Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council
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Friends in Christ,

When beginning his letters, the Apostle Paul made it a practice to thank God for the people he was writing to. For example, to the Christians in Thessalonica he wrote, "From Paul, Silas and Timothy":

> *"We always thank God for all of you and remember you in our prayers. We call to mind before our God and Creator how you are proving your faith by your actions, labouring in love, and showing constancy of hope in our Savior Jesus Christ."*
> *(1 Thessalonians 1:2–3, The Inclusive Bible)*

Similarly, as I approach the halfway point in my year as President, I want to tell you that I give thanks to God for your good and faithful work in Bermuda-Nova Scotia region. In these first six months, I find myself marveling at the dedication and Christian witness of our people in this region.

On October 23 and 24, it was my privilege to attend the LLWL (Licensed Lay Worship Leaders) Gathering. It was called "Holding Space" and was based on worship planning for Advent. Thank you to the leaders for their gifts of teaching and organization. One of the things I took away from our time together was the reminder that sometimes the most important thing we can do is simply make room: room for God, room for one another, and room for the possibilities God places before us.

Advent is the time to both soberly and joyfully prepare once again to receive God's gift of Christmas. Advent is the time to remember the ancient promises to Abraham, David, and the prophets. Advent is the time to ready our hearts to celebrate once again the joy of God's incarnation.

God's Christmas gift of Jesus is the beginning of a story that continues through the ages. It begins with angel choirs and brilliant stars heralding Jesus' birth, but the story is not finished.

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We live between the promise of Christ's coming and the day when God's purposes for creation will be fulfilled. Meanwhile, Jesus, the Incarnate God, continues to work among us, restoring creation and bringing about a new order of justice, peace and love. Sometimes that work is dramatic; more often, it happens gradually, in ways we hardly notice.

We hold these things in tension at Advent. We celebrate what has happened and what is to come. We wait, we wonder, and we experience the longing of expectation of the great joy to come. And somewhere in the midst of all this waiting, wondering and celebrating, we need to hold space: to be intentionally present to one another and to Mystery.

This Advent season, I invite you to be intentional about making space:

- for hope when the world seems hopeless.
- for peace when life is unsettled.
- for joy when happiness seems out of reach.
- for love when relationships are strained.
- for Christ when our attention is drawn to so many other things.

Hold space for God to do something new among us.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us of God's promise:

"*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*"
(Isaiah 43:19)

May this Advent season open our eyes to the new things God is doing among us. May we find hope in the promises of God, courage for the journey ahead, and joy in the knowledge that Christ came and dwells among us. And make space for one another, especially for those who need to know they are not alone.

May you and those you love be blessed with a holy and hope-filled Advent and a joyful Christmas.

Donnie Morrison
President

