



Greetings and blessings for the new year from your Growth Animator!

A Growth Animator... what is that?!

The United Church of Canada believes that God is calling us to *Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship* and *Daring Justice*. Hearing this, the church's vision for the next 5-10 years is: *Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice.*

One way the United Church is putting this into action is by working to Strengthen Invitation. This is about helping existing ministries grow, and nurturing new and emerging communities of faith. To support this, a new Growth Team was formed. We have 3 streams of work.

- **Renew:** We are coming alongside existing communities of faith. We want to help you attract and welcome neighbours, knit them into your congregation's life, share in the Spirit's transforming work in their lives, and inspire them to share in God's work in the world.
- **Create:** We are seeding and strengthening new communities of faith. Across the country new expressions of church are emerging, largely among populations that have historically been underserved by the church. Can we imagine new forms of rural faith communities? How about online ones? God is calling people together in new ways. How can we join in?
- **Invite:** We are helping United Church people to talk with others about our faith and invite them to explore the Christian life together with us. How do we share the story of Jesus today? What does a post-Christian, post-colonial, humble, and joyful evangelism look like?

An *animator* brings things to life. God is the Life-giver! As an animator of growth, I'll be watching and listening for signs of life – glowing embers, sparks of heat and energy, signposts that God is working away. I'll be looking for how I can help fan those embers to help them burn brighter: having supportive conversations, sharing in prayer, providing encouragement, exploring questions, making connections, offering resources.

Six Growth Animators are serving across the country. I am focusing on our 3 regional councils in the prairies (Prairie to Pine, Living Skies, and Northern Spirit). I will be working closely with your regional ministers and regionally deployed staff. And maybe I'll get to work with you and your congregation!

Do you have ideas? Questions? Want to talk with me about your community of faith? I still have so much to figure out. And I'm delighted to listen and learn with you. What might we hear together?

Together in Christ,

Jordan Cantwell

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