

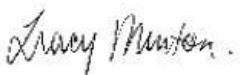
Pastoral Relations Ponderings – Volume 65

Welcome to the work of the Pastoral Relations desk in Living Skies Regional Council. This is the place to find the most recent information about the support Committees and updates for M&P Committees. Happy reading!

1. **An update from the Committee on Community of Faith Support** – The gift of Zoom is that the Committee has been able to invite all communities of faith into conversation with others from around the Regional Council. 5 gatherings have been held with members of the Committee (one more happening this week) as an opportunity to ask questions and to build connections. These online conversations have been rich and full of interesting stories of faithful churches from all over the province, large and small, rural and urban. It has been a valuable and heart-felt glimpse into one another's stories – much gratitude for all who have participated. The next task will be follow-up from the self-assessments that have been received to ensure the Committee is offering the most relevant support possible. If you haven't had a chance to complete the self-assessment, you can find that [tool at this link](#). Stay tuned for best practices for writing annual reports in the new year!
2. **An update from the Committee on Lay Leadership Support** – There have been 10 conversations with Licensed Lay Worship Leaders over Zoom to renew licenses. These have been filled with affirmations and gratitude for the leadership offered around the Regional Council. Much gratitude to our volunteers joining committee members to make these happen – Debra Berg, Jan Coffey-Olsen, Sheila Ivanochko, Pat Lyster, and Nora Vedress. Stay tuned for information regarding Sacraments Elder training in the spring.
3. **A note or two for ministry and personnel committees** – As we approach the season of Advent, consider ways in which you might express gratitude to those who are employed or offering leadership in your community of faith. There are many "gifts" that you might offer, both tangible and intangible, that might make a difference this season – offering assistance setting up for an event, providing sustenance for busy worship leaders, or creating additional opportunities for gratitude. As requests for "extras" are made of our staff and leaders, ranging from special music to extra worship services to additional events requiring snow shovelling and cleaning to special programs for children, see if there might be a way to be extra supportive. A word of kindness goes a long way!

I sometimes feel like a small child at Christmas time. I love the lights, the latitude for cookies and chocolate, the music – all of it. And, sometimes there are moments when the challenges of the season are so overwhelming they take my breath away. The grief and health struggles present in my friends and family are compounded when I hear about the grief and struggles present in all the people I have the pleasure of working with, or when I read the news. I often wonder how we can proclaim hope, peace, joy and love in the midst of it all, and feel tremendous gratitude and admiration for those in worship leadership creating moments to fully embrace the season. This is the gift and call of our faith tradition, every year. So, may you find those moments in your own life to catch glimpses of the wonder, beauty and warmth embodied in the birth of the Christ-child this Advent season, and be sure to shine the light in the darkness for others.

Blessings and peace,



Tracy Murton,
Pastoral Relations Minister
tmurton@united-church.ca

