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Letter from Rev. Jane Van Patter

In my ongoing quest to attend worship services at as many Communities of Faith as possible, nearly all the services I have attended this year have been via YouTube and Zoom link. On Labour Day Sunday however, I attended an outdoor worship service. The children had been invited to bring their school backpacks to the service. A backpack conversation between the worship leader and the children acknowledged many feelings that may be experienced on the first day of the new school year. Among the feelings mentioned were excitement, nervousness, fear, happiness.

Although, technically, Advent is the beginning of a new church year and January 1st is the beginning of a new calendar year, we often think of September as the beginning of a new year. It is the month when meetings resume, and programs gear up for another year.

But this September is not just any September. A year and a half after the Covid 19 pandemic began, we are still trying to find our way in this new lifestyle of wearing masks and keeping a safe distance from each other. Anticipating the

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word “hybrid” has been used a lot, thanks to the pandemic. A definition of Hybrid is “a thing made by two different elements.” Hybrid learning, hybrid work and hybrid worship all incorporate a mixture of both in person and online or virtual experiences.

This September we, the church, continue to live into the concerns we embraced at the regional meeting in June ... Indigenous Justice, All Children Matter, Racial Justice, Black Lives Matter, Celebrating Diversity...

In the spirit of *Encouraging and Upholding Communities of Faith* within the Region, let me share a dream I have for the Region. It is inspired by a question asked at the September Executive meeting. The dream is that September does not find us complacent, fearful and anxious but eager, enthusiastic and aspiring as we embark on the “hybrid year” ahead, pilgrims on a journey together.

Risking faith and daring hope in a time such as this, my dream is that we have the courage of our convictions to protest, though not angrily as has been witnessed during the federal election campaign related to Covid vaccinations. Our protest is about speaking out through our actions and with voices united in favour of seeking justice, loving kindness and walking humbly in faith. My hope is that this dream will be our reality, a reality where all people feel welcome all the time in the church we call, Antler River Watershed Region and beyond.

It's September. As the hybrid church year begins, “Keep Calm and Rock On.”

In Faith & Hope,



Rev. Jane Van Patter,
Resident, Antler River Watershed Region

Vaccine Passports

The legal advice the regional council has received to date is that communities of faith do not have grounds to request this information. Privacy legislation protects medical information and there has been no provincial action mandating such information be shared in a community of faith. In fact, worshipping communities have been specifically exempted from the vaccine passport.

There is also the ethical/faith issue of denying people access to the church. How do we make the faith available to all and protect those who gather?

Communities of faith are encouraged to:

1. continue to follow provincial legislation and local public health advice when gathering in person;
2. screen attendees at any in-person event and maintain their contact information;
3. follow best practices when in-person: masks, maintain social distance, manage traffic flow through the building, provide sanitizer, minimize contact, follow advice re singing).

Several months ago Dr. Tam, Chief Public Health Officer, met with religious leaders asking us to encourage vaccinations. Dr. Tam outlined the research behind the vaccine and its safety and asked faith leaders to be partners in promoting vaccinations. Communities of faith are encouraged to follow these steps to manage risk.

This is our current advice. Throughout the pandemic, advice has changed based on new information. We will keep you posted if new information comes our way. As always, the decision rests with the governing body of the community of faith and these are recommendations to them.

Any governing body that feels vaccine passports should be required for worship is encouraged to write their local Member of Provincial Parliament, Minister of Health, the Honorable Christine Elliott and Premier, the Honorable Doug Ford, to advocate for an expansion of the legislation.

The Human Resources Commissions of Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls, and Western Ontario Waterways share with you the following Hellos and Goodbyes stemming from the meetings in August. We hold in prayer the ministers, candidates, and communities of faith named.

VIEW ONLINE

United Fresh Start: Transitions

The Human Resources Commissions of our regional councils want to help new (or continuing) pastoral relationships get off to a healthy beginning by inviting you and your minister to take part in the United Fresh Start program.



There are over 20 modules of resources to support learning together. In October, we will be offering the module "Transitions" on two different dates for you to choose from:

- Tuesday, October 19 from 7-9PM
- Saturday, October 23 from 9-11AM

We invite you to register a group from your community of faith, including your minister, for these modules.

Register Online

Watch for more sessions and United Fresh Start Peer Groups when Diane Blanchard returns from her sabbatical in November.

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congregations as well. If you are interested in this, please contact Thérèse Samuel, Acting Minister, Pastoral Relations (September – October), for a list of UFS facilitators. The schedule above is offered without charge. Engaging a facilitator for your community of faith alone has a suggested fee of \$221 per module, negotiated with and payable to the facilitator.

RIGHT RELATIONS EVENTS 2021

The following Right Relations events are all being offered by Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls, Western Ontario Waterways regions of the United Church of Canada. Please note that you are able to call into the Zoom meetings with a regular phone call if you do not have access to video calls. For more information contact Thérèse Samuel, Minister, Right Relations and Social Justice at TSamuel@united-church.ca.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR RIGHT RELATIONS: Networking and Resources Workshop

Wed. Sept. 22nd, 1:00-2:30pm

Interested in Indigenous justice and right relations? Whether you are just beginning or have been doing this work for years. Hear from networks and other organizations who offer education and programs in our regions. Share your work and/or interests and hear what others are doing.

Please register in advance for this session. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

RECENT NEWS

Grants & Funding

Do you have a particular ministry initiative that might need funding?

Take a look at what is available through the regional council – details and applications are now live on the website!

Financial Support



The United Church of Canada, in conjunction with For the Love of Creation, is searching for delegates to form a virtual delegation for the United Nations Climate

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NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH & RECONCILIATION Orange Shirt Day - Thursday, September 30

Wear an orange shirt to remember and honour Indigenous children who were taken from their communities and families to residential schools.

Take a picture to share on Facebook and Twitter (include the hashtags #OrangeShirtDay, #EveryChildMatters, and #UCCan),

Challenge your friends and family to do the same.

If you buy an orange shirt, please seek out an organization that supports Indigenous initiatives & communities, such as Atlohsha Family Healing Services in London, ON.

Atlohsha Orange Shirts

Orange Shirt Retailers Authorized by
Orange Shirt Day Society

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

Join Indigenous Ministries and Justice Executive Minister Murray Pruden for a **candlelight vigil at 7:00 p.m. EDT** on the Indigenous Ministries Facebook page.

Celebrating the Fall Equinox



a spiritual journey around Victoria Park
led by Tracey Whiteye
5pm, Tuesday, September 21, 2021

Celebrating the Fall Equinox

Sponsored by [Greening Sacred Spaces \(London\)](#), [Climate Action London Initiative](#)

**A spiritual journey
around Victoria Park
in London, led by
Tracey Whiteye!**

**Tuesday, September 21st,
2021 at 5:00pm**

- Beginning and ending at Bandshell
- All COVID protocols will be observed



Painting by
Martha Pedoniquotte.

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**All Saint's Day -
Monday, November
1st at 7:00pm**
*Light a candle and
remember all those who
never got to go home.
Indigenous and non-
Indigenous, we join
together with songs of
hope and healing.*

ENGAGING THE TRC CALLS TO ACTION

Four Tuesdays from 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Become acquainted with the Calls to Action and consider a faith-filled response. These sessions will be opportunities for interactive learning. If needed, we will adjust the plan to respond to the movement of the Spirit.

Oct. 12, Session 1: Introduction to the TRC Calls to Action

Oct. 26, Session 2: What is the role of the church?

Nov. 9, Session 3: What has been done? What can we do?

Nov. 23, Session 4: Networking and Planning

Please register in advance for this series. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

REGISTER HERE

Please register in advance for this series. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. If you do not have video, you can still join the Zoom meeting with a regular phone call.

REGISTER HERE



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Caring for the Caregiver

A night for churches family and friends to learn about what caregiving is, who caregivers are, what support can be offered by the Ontario Caregiver Organization and the church.

Date: September 28, 2021

Time: 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Where: Port Nelson United Church (PNUC) and live streamed

Registration details: Pre-registration is required for both in person and on line streaming through karen@portnelson.ca. Streaming information will be available after September 21. For more information contact karen@portnelson.ca.

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T 416-362-2273 E info@ontariocaregiver.ca 24/7 Helpline 1-833-416-2273

ontariocaregiver.ca

Funded by:



The views expressed are the views of The Ontario Caregiver Organization and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.

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