

Happy Halloween from Ezra and Rev. Lynn's alter ego!



The United Church of Canada's General Secretary, Nora Sanders is retiring and posted the following message on the United Church of Canada Webpage:

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*Note from Nora - October 30, 2020*



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

## **October 30, 2020**

We are over seven months into the pandemic lockdown. This is the longest I have gone in my life without entering a church building. I suspect that this is true of many of us.

We have kept on worshipping, but in different ways. The electronic tools we have today have given us options. Worship has been possible. Community has continued... and sometimes even grown. Those of us not back in our church buildings look forward to being back, but maybe we will see our buildings in new ways too. Maybe we will broaden our view of what church looks like.

Many people are speaking these days of discovering anew, the beauty of the world outside our doors. When I am out with the dogs or on my runs, I find that the landscapes (and I am back in the landscape familiar from my childhood) let me shift away from focused thoughts and open up to a sense of deeper connection.



I love the Celtic concept of “thin places”, the idea that there are places where the earthly setting – whether so majestic or so bare – lets us feel closer to the Eternal. Sometimes they are described as places where the space between earth and heaven collapses. You don’t have to be on a Scottish moor or a mountain top to be in a thin place. I believe that thin places can be found where each of us lives, wherever we can set aside the things that distract us from the God’s presence.

I have been thinking recently of a conversation that my sister and I had many years ago, one that I have thought of many times since. She was excited about a workshop she had taken, and shared with me what she had learned. The way I have always remembered it is that when you are in a time of turmoil or uncertainty or just a time that is overly busy, you can find peace by going, in your mind, to a place you have been where you felt at peace. Take the time to let your mind take you to that place, that cathedral, that sanctuary, where you felt the grandeur of God or felt at one with the earth, and rest there for a bit.

You might be in the middle of a big city but you can go in your mind to that place in the forest where the trees grow so tall and where you sat amongst the flickering shadows of the light filtering through the branches. You might be in the midst of an impossibly frustrating piece of work, but you can take a moment to go to that place by the river where you watched the water flow past and felt your spirit renewed. Or maybe the place your mind takes you to is that moment on the lake just at sunset when you set down your paddle to lose yourself in the shimmering colour of sky and water.



During these days of pandemic church closures, maybe you will go in your mind to the actual cathedral, the sanctuary, the church that you call home, and feel yourself sitting in the pew, your head bowed as you remember the sense of being part of a congregation joining together in prayer to the eternal and mysterious one that we call God.

We will be back in our buildings, and we will be so happy to worship there some day without restrictions. But we can be grateful for being

reminded in this pandemic time that we can feel the presence of God wherever we are.

God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Blessings,

Nora

<https://mailchi.mp/united-church/notefromnora-201030?e=eec9ad346b>

November 1<sup>st</sup> Minutes for Mission: “Young Palestinian Refugees”

Imagine living in a refugee camp with minimal rights to work, own property, or travel. Imagine families living in that camp—parents, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren all together. Imagine if those families could see no end to the cycle of poverty and violence they were experiencing living there. That reality is what Palestinians in 12 refugee camps in Lebanon have been facing for 70 years. The camps themselves are overcrowded, and the infrastructure is deteriorating. More Palestinian refugees displaced from camps in Syria have added to the cramped living conditions. Youth, many rebellious and frustrated, are particularly affected by the overcrowding. Seeing no future, many of them drop out of school or are recruited by violent extremist factions in the camps. Mission & Service partner the Joint Christian Committee for Social Service in Lebanon, part of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, is working to change that dynamic with a program for children aged 11–15 called Children on the Go. The program offers an alternative to the growing culture of violence by providing at-risk youth with other ways to creatively express themselves and imagine a positive future. The program teaches conflict resolution and gives young people the skills to resist social pressures to resort to violence. And just as important for their future, the youth are given practical vocational training. They are then able to make a meaningful contribution to their families and their communities, learn skills, and gain the respect of peers, parents, and community. Your gifts to Mission & Service help build resilience and a culture of peace in the midst of conflict in the refugee camps of Lebanon. If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please join me in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. Loving our neighbour is at the heart of our Mission & Service.

Just a reminder, change your clocks an hour back for Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>!