

Dear St. Andrew's Friends in Christ:



I am looking forward to joining with your community of faith as we walk together through this time of transition. I have crossed paths with many of you, and hope that in the coming months we will build deeper connections together, as we discern dreams for this community. On the road to building relationship, let me share a little about my own journey. Most recently I retired from the Canadian Shield Regional Council as the Pastoral Relations Minister. During the 37 years since ordination by Manitou Conference, I have served in congregational

ministry with Sebright Pastoral Charge, Trinity Ottawa, Rideau Park Ottawa and as Presbytery Minister for Ottawa Presbytery. I am married to Gord, who is also a retired United Church minister and we have two adult daughters and two grandchildren.

This is a transitional season in the life of St. Andrew's. All congregations have been challenged by the shift in ministry demanded by the pandemic, but alongside of that you have faced a costly building retrofit, and changes in ministry leadership and support staff. It is not surprising that all of these disruptions and uncertainties have resulted in varying experiences of anxiety about the future. This moment may feel rather chaotic, and it is. But chaos is not new in the story of God's people, in fact is often the precursor to new paths of service and re-newed relationship with the Holy One.

My time of leadership with you beginning February 15<sup>th</sup>, will be focused on seeing the opportunity in the unsettledness and creating space for conversation about possibilities for faithfulness. Some of this will be uncomfortable work: assessing the dysfunctional places and processes, taking a hard look at what is not healthy and needs to be done differently; assessing the financial sustainability of ministry; examining the capacity for congregational leadership and volunteer engagement. This work needs all of us, lifers and newcomers; disillusioned and excited; hurting and committed; tired and not-connected; young and old; however we self-identify our gender, orientation, race, social-economic reality. All of us because we will only unearth the meaning of calling this community home when we all dig together.

There is a certain appropriateness of beginning this work during Lent, a season on self-examination and turning in new directions while learning to trust in God's assurance and promise. Even during this pandemic reality of being church and being community while socially distanced, I will endeavour to nurture open and ongoing communication. I would love to hear from each of you about your experience and your dreams!

I want to conclude by sharing a prayer that comes from a project by people of faith exploring dynamics ways of being "church today". I believe it invites us to enter this Lenten time in a way that roots the transition work ahead of us.

## **A LENTEN PRAYER**

*Our sights will not be on the dark corners and frayed edges,  
rather we will cling to the bright Center.*

*We will enter the Forty,*

*. . . AFFIRMING the safe spaces,  
so we can see others and ourselves.*

*. . . LIVING within the unsettled spaces,  
that we might be present in the process.*

*. . . MAKING space for newness,  
Knowing that this day in and day out living  
reflects the bright restoring by Christ  
which leaves us with unveiled faces,  
like the promise of springtime,  
and the reality of the morning horizon.*

*Scott Scrivner – Covergence Community <https://convergenceokc.org/>*

*Rev. Lillian Roberts*

*Transitional Supply Minister*