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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

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It's Advent, a time of preparation.



With the lives we lead, juggling various responsibilities, are any of us ever just preparing for one thing?

If you saw my office right now, you would think that I am preparing for a big move. And you would be right. We are moving ahead with a plan to condense two-and-a-half floors of offices onto one floor by September. We will all be working in an open-space environment then, and there will be no place for the many pictures, books, and mementoes that currently cram my office. I think it is a good plan, because it will save the church a lot of money, money that can be used to touch people's lives, and it is also going to speed up the pace of our transition to using more electronic communications and less paper. It's a good plan, but it won't be without challenges as we adjust to the big changes.

Step one of the big change, moving all the staff from the second floor to temporary spaces upstairs so that the renovations can be done, will take

place this winter, while I am off on sabbatical. Yes, that is another thing that I am preparing for right now, a very welcome thing. I'm preparing by trying to get a few things in my inbox dealt with, and by getting ready for the research I want to do this winter. I'm going to spend three months catching up on reading, and reflecting on some of my own small group and house church experiences, and learning from others who are engaged in creative or alternative forms of ministry. So if you know of a ministry that you think I should learn about, I'd love to hear from you.

There are other preparations going on, of course, a myriad of things that we have come to associate with getting ready for Christmas. Shopping, baking, Christmas cards, social events, wrapping gifts, putting up the tree, decorating the house... the list goes on and on. In some ways these fun things prepare us for Christmas, and in other ways, they threaten to make us so busy that we could fail to take the time to truly experience Advent.

There are also other demands on our attention. The politics south of the border and elsewhere in the world is quite distracting! Headlines that scream of air strikes and desperation in Aleppo are more than distracting! There are many urgent needs in our world that feel overwhelming.

Yet this is Advent. Advent requires — or offers — a particular focus even in the midst of all that is going on in our lives and in the world.

We are preparing for the birth of a baby in Bethlehem. We are preparing for the birth of a baby in unlikely, humble, circumstances. We are preparing for a birth that offers transformation to the world.

Can we let ourselves believe in the miracle that is offered?

Can we let ourselves believe that the birth of one baby can change the world?

Can we choose to live as though our lives, and our actions, can help make the miracle continue?

Peace on Earth. Good will to all people and all creatures of the Earth.

Nora

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