

Dear Friends,

When my thoughts turn to Advent, I often recall a remarkable worship service on a first Sunday of Advent many years ago...

From the balcony on that particular Sunday morning, a young man's clear voice floated gently above the congregation, piercing the quiet as we gathered for worship. The opening of Godspell's 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord' filled the air. It was quiet at first, then the volume rose. A rock band...added the harmony of electric guitars, then the driving percussion of the drums. In moments we had moved from a gentle invitation to a lively participation. We were on our feet, swaying and clapping, ready to prepare the way of the Lord with our whole being!

I pray that your experience of Advent will build with joy, expectation and preparation for the power of what's to come.

As Advent begins I am meeting with church leaders from around the world in Durban, South Africa at the United Nations climate change talks. I see our presence here, among other things, as an Advent action and witness. We are encouraging national leaders of our global community to take steps to mitigate the effects of global warming and prevent further threat to God's creation, and in so doing to help prepare the way of the Lord. And if, at times, we feel that our efforts resemble "a voice crying in the wilderness" - well, that too is an Advent task. But we know we are not alone.

There are many ways to make straight the path and prepare the way of the Lord. Your solidarity in both prayer and action during the climate change talks is one.

...May all that you do to mark this start of the church year be experienced as God's blessing in your own life, and in the lives of others.

May we all rise to our feet with the energy required to prepare the way of the Lord.

In the abundant joy of Christ,
Moderator,
Mardi Tindal,
The United Church of Canada