

Then Peter said: "It's clear to me now that God plays no favorites. It makes no difference who you are or where you're from—if you revere God and do what is right, the door is open. The message God sent to the children of Israel—that through Jesus Christ everything is being put together again—well, it's for everyone, everywhere! [Acts 10:34-36]

Greetings, friends, my name is Jordan Cantwell and I am the Growth Animator for the Prairie regions.

The Acts passage for Easter Sunday (Acts 10:34-43) opens in the midst of the story of the encounter of Peter and the household of Roman centurion Cornelius, in a transforming life-changing moment. At Cornelius' invitation, Peter shares the story of Jesus, who he is and his message of love. In this moment of sharing, Peter comes to understand that this message is for everyone, all people, with no exceptions.

As 2025 continues to unfold, how are we loving our neighbours? Not just those who are like us, those we naturally gravitate towards, those we feel most comfortable with, but all the neighbours God has given us. In this time of deepening uncertainty and social division, followers of Jesus must share the power of Jesus' transforming love in our own lives. Within and beyond the walls of our communities of faith, we are called to stretch ourselves, confront bias, advocate for equity, celebrate diversity, learn a new message, and extend God's loving invitation to all people with humility, respect, generosity, and openness, that all may know they have a place at the table.

This year the whole United Church is thinking not just about its past 100 years of ministry, but the years to come. There is a growing vision of a resilient, inspired, diverse, multigenerational church, present in rural and urban spaces spanning from coast to coast. This church cannot exist if we do not cross cultural, linguistic, social and generational divides. I would even daresay that our Good News is not truly good news unless we are willing to get uncomfortable, to be called out of our comfort zones and biases, and to greet the stranger with curiosity.

This Easter season, how will you be open to God's confronting vision of inclusivity and a table that has a place for everyone?

What is your community of faith doing to strengthen invitation, deepen relationships, offer radical hospitality, foster new friendships, share life together?

I'd love to hear your stories of what God is up to where you are, and what new things you are trying, or considering, or to beginning to wonder about in response. What kinds of support or resources might you need? How is your faith being sustained in these challenging times? As a community of faith or as an individual, what words of hope can you share?

United Church people are being invited to share "**100 Words of Hope**" that draw from deep spirituality to speak to this moment of high anxiety and change in the church, Canada, and the world. You are invited to share your own 100-word reflection, poem, or prayer that conveys hope and faith in these times [here](#).

Or, you could simply make a point of introducing yourself to a neighbour you don't yet know, someone who is different from yourself, and look for the values you find in common. This simple act of befriending the stranger can have an unimaginable impact.

Whatever you do this Spring to ground yourself in the Easter Good News story, I hope that it will bring you inspiration, new learnings, and deeper relationships with your neighbours. And, if you'd like to tell me about it, or share more ideas for ways communities of faith can work towards that vision of a resilient, inspired, diverse, multigenerational church, please reach out at jcantwell@united-church.ca

Stay faithful and resilient! We all offer our gifts and our ministries in so many ways. Your prayers, words, time, talent, support of and care for others is Christ ministry. And so we say together: "Alleluia, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!"

Wishing you God's richest blessings this Easter.

Prayerfully,
Jordan

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