

## **President-Elect Message**

“Over my head, I hear music in the air...there must be a God somewhere.”

The words of this traditional African-American song bring me comfort in these times as I've taken on the privilege and challenge of President-Elect of Maritime Conference. In accepting the nomination I mentioned this song “When the winds of strife are blowin', there is music in the air,” because we know we're living in contentious times where many changes are taking place in our pastoral charges and in our world. Yet, we see signs of God's grace all around us. I believe it's in the sharing of our stories, the sharing of our joys and our sorrows, we recognize God in our midst. This past year, I had the privilege to be present and preach at an anniversary service celebrating 150 years of ministry. During a delicious potluck luncheon following the service, stories of joy, pain, and worry about the future were shared. This is typical of the many conversations I've been part of in the past year as I listen and feel blessed to be in this position. As part of the Executive of our Conference, I also heard stories of challenges and celebrations from the chairs of our Presbyteries and Synod. In preparation for a gathering in April of the Presidents-Elect in Toronto, I took this information as well as what I received in correspondence and made it part of my report. It was heart-wrenching to learn of the many church closings, amalgamations, and pastoral charges going to part time ministry, yet heart-warming to hear of the many innovative and inspiring ways in which congregations have allowed the Spirit to work in and through these changes. We are indeed a people of resurrection and as some things die, rebirth and new life is not only possible but exciting and joyful. “I hear music in the air.” I hear music in the air, too, as we continue our discernment about whether or not to become an Affirming Conference. It's in the stories we tell and hear, that we grow and become more aware of what God is calling us to do and be. It's in the stories of our faith that we find the strength to meet the challenges that face us. I'm delighted our theme for Conference this year is “Stories of Faith: Telling...Listening...Sharing.” Through these challenging times for our churches, I look forward as your incoming president, to walking with you and continuing to tell, listen, and share the stories of our faith as lived out in the Maritime Conference as part of the Body of Christ. “There must be a God somewhere.”