# Moderator’s Advent Message 2018

## Transcript of Videotaped Message

Grace and peace to you, in Jesus’ name!

This is one of the times of year that I have a *lot* of fun in congregational ministry. I call it the “Advent-Oh-No-Where-Did-We-Put-It?!” preparation time. This is the moment when the Worship Committee, or the United Church Women leadership, or the facilitator for the Children’s Ministry, or someone else, pokes their head in my door and says, “Richard, have you seen the Advent wreath (or the wall hanging) (or the crèche) (or another of the Advent accoutrements)? I’m sure it was put away properly at Christmas last year, but I can’t find it.”

Sometimes it’s because it didn’t get put away exactly in the changeover from Advent to Christmas; but often it’s because things have gotten moved during all of the changes and shifts and congregational living that happened during the year.

So we go searching. Often we find what we’re searching for. Sometimes we don’t—and we need to make a decision: is it something we need? If so, is it something that should be purchased, or is it something that someone in the congregation would be willing to make? Is it something that we’ll forego this year, but work on having ready for next?

Then there are times when there’s something new that is found, and we wonder how it can be shared—how it will fit into our Christmas traditions.

In many congregations, colours change as the cycle of the liturgical year goes on: green for Ordinary Time, orange for Creation, purple for Lent, white or gold for Easter, and so on. Advent is interesting. Many communities of faith choose blue as the colour for Advent. I think that’s wonderful! I grew up in a part of the church that used purple as the Advent colour. Not the deep purple of Lent but a lighter purple—a gentle purple. What I love about the purple is that it connects the two seasons together. Both of them are times for telling the journey stories of Jesus: in Lent, his final journey to Jerusalem, to the cross, and beyond; in Advent, his first journey from conception, to birth, to his beginning.

Historically, both seasons have been considered “penitential seasons”: times for followers of Jesus to take a look at their lives, to recognize the places where how they’re living their lives has shifted in ways that aren’t aligned with Christ’s call for them, and times to reset and rebalance our lives.

I really appreciate the fact that the liturgical year invites me to do this more than once. Like a car driving over constantly bumpy roads, I need to be rebalanced on a regular basis.

So, I’d like to invite you to unwrap the gift of Advent with me, this year—to join me in “rebalancing”!

Would you be willing to set aside six minutes, each day, between now and Christmas? If you would, consider trying this. Find a quiet spot in which you can sit comfortably. You might want to light a candle, or turn on one of those battery-powered ones if open flame is unwise where you are. Then, just breathe.

Seriously. For five minutes, just sit and breathe. As you breathe in, consider saying in your head, “Here I am, your beloved child.” Then, when you’re breathing out, consider saying, “What do I need to learn?”

At the end of those five minutes, get up, and go on with your day. And then, at the end of the day, take that one minute you’ve got left in the practice, and ask yourself the question, “What did God teach me today?” It may be that nothing jumps out at you. It may be that you have an “Aha!” moment! Whatever the case, keep breathing! Be open to the possibilities that God is giving you as our Christmas celebrations draw near.

Oh! And if you’d like to share some of your insights, consider sharing them on social media with the hashtags #uccan and #rebalance. If you’re not on social media (or even if you are) why not partner up with someone else who is willing to try this. Get together for a beverage and some conversation. Or maybe just sit together.

May your Advent be fruitful, and your Christmas be filled with joy and wonder.

Christ’s peace to you!