



**Clifton Pastoral Charge
Old Barns and Hilden United Churches
October 11, 2026**

Good day and blessings to you in this season of Thanksgiving! In the life of the Church, we give thanks and praise to God at all times but Thanksgiving is a time to remind ourselves of the relationships that bond us and bless our lives. We have relationships with God, with friends and family, with our faith community and wider communities, and with the whole of the sacred web of life. It is for all this that we give thanks to God, Our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

I have been with the people of this pastoral charge, consisting of two congregations, for the past eight months as a supply minister, and a little more since I also provided pulpit supply just before my appointment. The congregations of Hilden United and Old Barns United have stayed the course. We have said goodbye to some people through the passage from life to death. Such experiences are always a mix of grief and appreciation for the people who have passed from this earth to dwell with God beyond this time and space. I have had amazing pastoral visits and phone calls. We have experienced some creative ways to be together in worship. We have extended outreach with the programs of the church and we have gone out to learn from our neighbours, especially in our visit to the Millbrook Cultural Centre, where we were a group of 20 to learn with and from our Indigenous sisters and brothers about their culture and heritage and how we can walk the road to a good life together. You have a long history and this is another opportunity to dream and do together. I am so thankful for each of you who have joined us in person or online for a connection to our faith community. Thank you for being with us. I have experienced so much appreciation, support, generosity, and faith-filled openness with all of you. You have helped to renew my spirit and my ministry call. Thank you!

Though this time has been relatively brief, I believe we have tended to the gospel of Jesus in that time and shared activities, words, and intentions for a small church ministry. There would have been lots more than we could do! But our paths shall part for now. I wish you all well in your search for a new minister and I give thanks for you and all you offer as a people of the United Church of Canada and beyond. I have enjoyed my time with you and leave feeling refreshed, appreciated, and celebrated for the quirkiness of who I am. I give thanks to God for the time we have shared together in pastoral ministry. If you're ever in Dartmouth over the next 6 months on a Sunday morning and you find yourself wondering, where shall we go to church? Please come and visit us at St. James United, where I will be the Minister until early May.

We all know the challenges of ministry in this time when decline often becomes the narrative but I encourage you to live in a spirit of abundance, as Jesus encouraged the community that journeyed with him. Jesus journeys with us all and offers abundance even in small churches, with communities of faith living in this present moment and enthusiastic for the tasks ahead, filled with hope for the mission and vision of God alive in the world and in their people. I believe you all have this spark of a fresh beginning and you can create something for the future with awareness of the reality of change. Uncertainty can be a friend that emboldens our faith as we stay faithful to who Jesus is in our lives and in our churches. Give thanks, often, for the blessing of your life and for the small church families that we call home. Most churches are small churches. The more we can come together, the most blessings we will discover.

As you look to the near future, I encourage you to get to know your neighbours; gather yourselves and gather with them. make for yourself the vision of building community step by step, always with attention to what the word of God says is most important: Love one another!

Our future will be strengthened not only by people of all Christian traditions getting together in ecumenical ventures but also by people of faith of all traditions, and even those without a professing faith, who gather for the sake of peace, friendship, compassion, and love in this world. I hope you will create opportunities at the church to do so and outside of the doors of the church, realizing the presence of the Spirit is in all things holy and inclusive. Keep getting to know one another and God and you will be on the road of faith, forever discovering the meaning of the gospel for today's times. If you ever want to invite me back to lead a retreat or a workshop, please know the door is always open.

Blessings on your Thanksgiving!!!! May it be filled with good food, rest, sisterly and brotherly love, appreciation for those gathered as family and friends, and support for those around us because everyone needs to be accompanied in these hard times. May our hearts and doors always remain open to one another and to the stranger in our midst.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Darlene
The Reverend Darlene Brewer, PhD (Theology)