

Moderator's Lent Message 2019

Transcript of Videotaped Message

Hello! I'm Richard Bott, the Moderator of The United Church of Canada.

Now that I'm into my tenure as Moderator, I've started some of the important work of meeting with people in various regions and communities of faith. As I travel from community to community, there is one subject that just about everyone wants to talk with me about.

The weather.

Whether it's good or bad. If there's sun, or rain, or snow. Whether there's a breeze, or probably even in a hurricane—the weather.

In Canada, it is THE most important subject of conversation.

It does make sense.

The weather is really important to just about everyone. What we wear, what we're going to do for the day, where we're going to go—all of it depends on the weather.

For a long time, I've wondered if there is a faith conversation—maybe a question—that could be just as important to us as "So, what do you think about the weather!?"

Perhaps it's a question that John Wesley used to ask. He was the founder of the Methodist tradition. The Methodist Church in Canada was one of the parent churches to The United Church of Canada. John Wesley believed that it was very important for Christians to come together every week to meet, in addition to Sunday worship. Members of these small groups would gather to read and study scripture, to pray, and to support one another in their faith life.

The first question that was asked of these participants, each week? "How is it with your soul?" Not, "How are you," but "How is it with your soul?" I believe that that is a very profound and important question. It's an invitation to think, deeply, about your relationship with God—right now. I believe that it's a question that is important not just for Methodist Christians but for all of us who seek to follow the Way of Jesus.

It's not an easy question. It demands some pretty intense self-reflection and honest response. It's the kind of question that needs safe space, and someone you really trust who will listen to what you have to say.

I wonder what would happen to our faith lives if this question was asked as often as ones about the weather.

We're about to begin the season of Lent. Forty-six days from Ash Wednesday to Easter.

Traditionally, this has been a season of penitence. Often, people have given up something that, in their life, they see as damaging their relationship with Christ. And often, giving something up that binds us IS important to do. But sometimes, taking on something new is just as important.

Perhaps, this Lent, you could meet with another disciple of Jesus and explore the question "How is it with your soul?"

Talk about the highs and the lows. Talk about the things that are bothering you and the questions that keep coming up. Talk about the places that you see God and the places where it feels like God just...isn't there. Talk about HOW you want to work to make God's world a better place for all God's children.

Invite your spiritual friend to respond to the question, too. "How is it with your soul?"

And then...go and live your lives, fueled by your faith and filled with God's love! When you can—maybe even the following week—meet again to share your experiences and how your soul is doing.

I wonder what that might do. Not just for you—but for the church and for the world?

Have a blessed Lent—and the peace of Christ is with you!