

Connections.. a Newsletter for St. James United Church

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Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
Hebrews 13:8

Dear Friends in Christ,

The winter really wasn't that bad this year. The temperatures never got too cold and there was virtually no snow. Compared to past years when we have had mountains of snow and continual storms through December and January, this winter was actually quite mild. But the short winter doesn't make the arrival of spring any less pleasant or welcome.

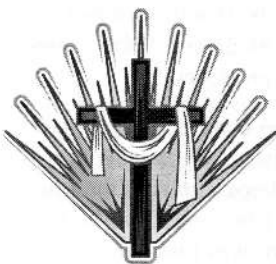
The warmer weather, the new growth, and return of songbirds is as invigorating and exhilarating as ever. The change of the season brings with it the promise of warm days and summer activities.

Change is one of those things which is a constant in our lives. We can see it reflected in the world around us and we can see it in the mirror each morning. Life is filled with change and while there are many times we feel changes should happen a little slower, the fact remains that change brings with it the promise of a new day.

The Bible speaks often about change. We are reminded that there are different seasons in our lives. We are born, we live and grow, we share experiences with other people, we pass from this world into the next. Those are the changes which every living person faces, for change is a fact of life and the pages of Scripture promise that God is with us throughout those changes.

God is with us when we are young and growing, when we are sharing in the lives of other people, and when we are struggling with the changes which limit our lives. For while life changes, God's love and care for us remain unchanging. God's invitation for us to be people of faith in the world and share in the mercy and love of Christ remains constant.

The first Easter was a loud proclamation that God had changed the world through love and grace. Death had been broken, salvation was at hand, and a new life had begun because Jesus Christ was not dead- he had risen from the grave.



That was the message of the disciples proclaimed that first Easter and that good news continues to what we celebrate each Sunday. For indeed the promises and truth of Jesus Christ- the forgiveness of the cross and the hope

of the resurrection- are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

May each new day in this season bring opportunities of faith and renewal for you and your family and may God continue to bless us as a church.

Yours in Christ's Service,

The Rev. Peter A. Smith

SERVICES HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Sunday, March 28th - Palm Sunday

10:30 am. We shout our Hosannas as Jesus enters Jerusalem and the events of Holy Week begin. At this service as we consider the Passion of our Lord as we will share in Holy Communion.

Thursday, April 1st - Maundy Thursday

7:00 pm in the Hall. Come gather around the Table as together we remember and re-experience the meal Jesus shared in the Upper Room.

Friday, April 2nd - Good Friday

10:30 am. We remember and recount the meaning and mystery of the cross through scripture and music.

Sunday, April 4th - Easter Sunday

6:30 am at Bethany. As the sun rises, voices and prayers blend to give thanks for the rising of the Son.
10:30 am. Easter Celebration at St. James United Church.

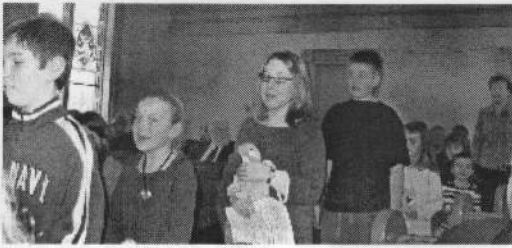
The Brass Ensemble



Members of the Brass Ensemble (guest Belinda Fraser, Fred Davison, Dawson Jowett, soloist Carolyn Tilley, Jack Lilly, Bill Stephen and Brent MacQuarrie) played Afro-American spirituals at the worship service on Sunday, February 14th. Carolyn, who sang a Duke Ellington selection, has been a member of our senior choir during her two years as an education student at St. FX. and will be returning to Halifax where she will be teaching this coming year. The group also played for a Black History presentation in New Glasgow later in the month.

Nobody's Perfect

This, the 85th anniversary of the United Church, has, like all anni-



versaries, a way of reaching far and wide. In this particular case, Ida Sarty's request that I come up with a skit for the Sunday School ended in a series of collaborations that resulted in not one skit, but two. Each being given during the anniversary year. The first collaboration was with Yema Quinn who served as a valuable reader. Then, when I heard that Gary Blackwood was giving writing advice at the local library in his role as Writer in Residence, I sought him out. It was very helpful to have an experienced writer give feedback, even though the skits were short and simple. Ida and Peter also served as readers and Peter gave me many Biblical verses that helped to focus my writing. Gradually, there evolved two skits; Nobody's Perfect and At the Door. Nobody's Perfect was performed by the



Sunday School on the first Sunday in Lent. At the Door has a different delivery. It will be presented as part of an evening fundraiser for Haiti in early May. This will be under the very talented direction of Pauline Liengme, who directed our last anniversary play, Church in the Wildwood. This skit will be an interdenominational/community effort, another great tradition of this church. I am really delighted that St. James continues to be a place where creativity and the Spirit are partners. It's something to celebrate!

-Fran Wittgens

These pictures were taken during the performance of Fran's skit "Nobody's Perfect" during the service of the 1st Sunday in Lent. The children enjoyed sharing this event with the congregation in honour of the



United Church's 85th anniversary. Our thanks to all the children who participated in the skit and to Emery Van de Weil, who played the piano.



The Price Family



The Price family has three members so far: dad (Joel Price), mom (Sunny Wang) and son (Jonathan Price).

The Price family moved to Antigonish from Waterloo, Ontario at the end of August 2009 because Sunny accepted an assistant professor position in Statistics at St. Francis Xavier University. Sunny is busy with her teaching and research. Joel enjoys being a stay-at-home dad and takes care of Jonathan. Jonathan is a 23-month-old joyful and happy boy. The whole family really enjoys living in this friendly town, Antigonish.

This is my St. James

I was brought to St. James as an infant to be baptized. The baptism took place on a Rally Day Sunday in September which corresponds with our tradition for Sunday school opening. Bob Murray was one of my teachers and our class met in what is now the scout room above the stage. The length of our class depended on choir practice and if he had to go pick up Mavis. I remember memorizing my catechism, the 23rd Psalm, the Beatitudes, the 10 Commandments and other Bible verses. Vacation Bible school was a regular summer activity. I remember doing crafts and painting on the table shaped tombstone that is in the cemetery.

The layout for the church was different in those days. The minister's study was in what is our present day choir room and the kitchen was where our nursery is today. The hall was added in the 50's and the C.E. Building was a more recent addition in the 70's. Today's rummage room was the back entrance to the church with a narrow closet for the choir on the side.

As I grew up, I became first an explorer, and finally, made it to CGIT. I still remember the hush as we sang Taps by candlelight. Never having had the pleasure of sitting in the pew with my parents, my brother and I were entrusted to the care of our grandmother and 2 grand aunts. To this day I usually sit in what at that time was the Cunningham pew. The Archibald's pew was behind us and the Sweets sat in front of us. Heaven forbid if a stranger came in and sat in your seat. I can recall sitting there between my aunts one Sunday as the elders came in to serve communion; they looked scary. They were all old men (or at my young age they seemed to be) dressed in black, and extremely stern. In those days elders were appointed for life and took their position very seriously. My grandfather and father had both been elders.

With changes in church practices and keeping up with the times I am proud to say that I also have become an elder in St. James. Don't think the old guys would have approved of young women elders.

We did not have a secretary during the week, no computer, no e-mail, no photocopier, one phone in the building, and ushers on Sunday morning. I remember at least 5 versions of the hymn book---mostly the same hymns but the books varied in size and color. Christmas Eve was always a pageant when I was growing up and there was just one service. The same costumes were used year after year.

Then in the days before the environment became important, we floated our dirty paper plates down the Brierly Brook during the annual Sunday School picnic that was complete with scavenger hunts, sack races and tossing the rolling pin. No refrigeration or porta pottys at that event.

A couple of years ago Norm Loosen talked me into taking the position of church Treasurer as it was an uncomplicated job. I began to realize that the church really had 2 faces. One was definitely the business side which meant having salaries paid, oil in the tank, milk in the kitchen and on the other was the spiritual side-where my values and faith were tested on a daily basis. It was then that I knew that, regardless of the building and all its trappings, the church was not wood and nails but the people who stopped under its roof.

I see the church in hot meals made for those who may be hungry, clothes for those with none, monies raised for lives in other countries such as Haiti or Africa, and welcoming strangers to our congregation. We provide support for those with new children, meals for families when someone is sick, special prayers and gatherings, phone calls and e-mails, being there at times of great joy and great sadness, mowing lawns, planting flowers, decorating windows, cleaning the kitchen, and planning for our future. St. James is not what it was 85 years ago or even when I was a child but it is a growing and loving community which is enriched by the passion of the members of this congregation as we go into the future. This is my St. James.

- Pamela Cunningham

Keeping Easter the Whole Year

During Holy Week and Easter we remember and recount the events of the Last Supper, the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, and the discovery on the third day that the tomb was empty. The death and resurrection of Jesus is central to our beliefs and lives as Christians so it shouldn't be a surprise that the events and symbols of Holy Week and Easter make their way into the rest of our year in the church.

We celebrate the Lord's Supper not simply during Holy Week but throughout the calendar as we remember the great love which led Jesus to die on the cross and receive spiritual food for our journey of faith.

The Cross is the most well known symbol from the events of Good Friday which is always found at the front of our church. Unlike our Roman Catholic friends, the cross in our church is empty as we remember the death of Jesus while celebrating his resurrection.

The most common and overlooked reminder of Easter is the day we gather for worship. The first Christians gathered on Sunday, the first day of the week, to celebrate Jesus rising from the tomb. We continue on that tradition and literally do make each week of the year a little celebration of Easter.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Every church is fortunate to have many volunteers whose hard work and determination keeps the many programs and projects running smoothly. St. James is no exception.



In this issue of Connections we are starting a column to introduce you to some of these special volunteers. There are so many wonderful volunteers at the church that work diligently on behalf of the congregation that it will take a good number of editions to cover all of the deserving people.

For our first subject we are focusing on "seeing double" in our congregation - twin sisters, Laura Reddick and Mary MacLean.

These two women work with such passion and dedication, we benefit weekly from their contributions (singly or as a pair) to the UCW, the Congregational Life and Hospitality Committee, Tuesday Hot Meal Program, and the Coffee Hour after Sunday service to name just a few. Mary is currently a member of Council and Laura served for many years.

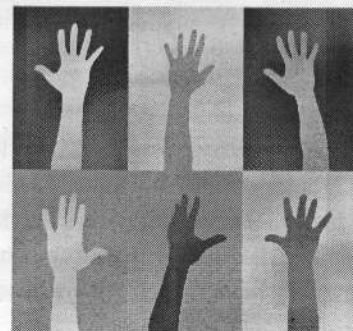
Mary, the mother of five, lived in Detroit for thirty years where she worked as a bookkeeper. She returned home for visits every year and always planned to return to live in the Antigonish area. She built her retirement home here and, fortunately for us, returned to the area and St. James in 1994. According to Mary "Laura has been at St. James since YEAR ONE".

Laura is the mother of eleven children and raising them gave her all the experience she needed to multi-task so is it any wonder that she can juggle a multitude of projects here at the church with such effortless grace?

Laura and Mary are fixtures at Tuesday morning Bible Study. They are willing workers in the kitchen at all potluck lunches as well as the annual Lobster Dinner presented by the Men's Club with the help of many of the women of the congregation.

They are always ready to welcome new people to the congregation and make them feel comfortable at St. James. They can also be counted on for a ride to church, a hospital visit and lobster sandwiches.

We hope that you have enjoyed this addition to our newsletter and welcome any suggestions you have to enhance future issues. If you would like to suggest the name of a volunteer that you think would make a great subject for **Behind the Scenes** please pass it on to one of the members of the Outreach and Communications Committee.

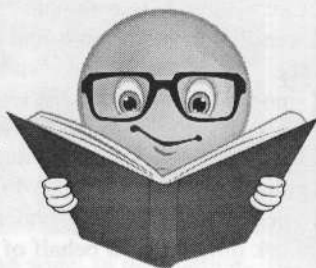


Reader's Corner

Three Cups of Tea

Authors: Greg Mortensen and David Oliver Relin

Greg Mortensen shows us the best example of Christian compassion while respecting those whose culture and beliefs are different, but no less significant, than our own.



The Mortensen family, Greg and his three sisters, grew up in Africa in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro, where their parents were Lutheran missionaries. His parents were involved in their community in the most practical ways. His mother founded a school and his father saw the overwhelming need for better health care for the people that he served. He dedicated all of his time and energy to bring about the construction and staffing of the first teaching hospital in Tanzania.

Their childhood was "like growing up in the United Nations" as there were 28 nationalities represented in their community. They celebrated all of the religious holidays and Greg learned to respect all peoples and their beliefs.

Greg was very close to his family but he had a special bond with his sister, Christa, who suffered with a number of illnesses including epilepsy and it was a seizure that took her life at the age of twenty three. Christa's death had a profound effect on Greg and he wanted to do something that would be a memorial to her life.

In 1993, shortly after the death of his sister, Greg had an invitation to join an expedition that was planning to climb K2 in Pakistan, the most notable climbing experience next to Everest. His training as a nurse, and a medic in the army, would be an important addition to the team.

Greg became separated from his Sherpa guide and wandered into the village of Korphe in Baltistan, one of the most remote areas of Pakistan. He was welcomed into the home of Haji Ali, the village elder, and was treated with unbelievable kindness, being fed with their meager supplies even if it meant the family went without. He spent several weeks there before connecting with his guide. It was from Haji Ali that he learned the Islam belief surrounding three cups of tea.

"Here (in Pakistan and Afghanistan) we drink three cups of tea to do business: the first you are a stranger; the second you become a friend, and the third, you join our family and for our family we are prepared to do anything - even die.

Author Karen Armstrong

Beginning with her narrative about leaving life as a Roman Catholic nun, *Through the Narrow Gate*, Karen Armstrong has written over 20 books. Her writing covers the three religions "of the Book" (Judaism, Islam, Christianity), what they have in common and how they have shaped human history. Recently,

she was awarded a TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design non-profit community) Prize. Her "One Wish to Change the World" was the creation of a council of Jewish, Christian and Islamic leaders to draw up a "Charter for Compassion" which would identify shared moral values to foster global understanding in the spirit of the Golden Rule. She's an author to deepen our understandings of world religions. Look for her in our church library!

Attention Readers!

It's amazing how many people, the same people who will devour a bestselling novel or immerse themselves in the Classics, have a robust appetite to ponder and explore spiritual ideas. There is no dearth of material as we've seen in our own St. James Library. There are many who are eager to recount titles that have broadened them from their own collection. It's to this end that we're taking the adventurous move to invite all those interested in discussing matters of faith, of differing beliefs, indeed of the impact of faith and culture, and all those topics in between to meet. We won't be guided by anyone from the cloth, or by any specialist. This will be a lay persons' group so we'll have to find a way to make discussion work and I'm sure we will.

The plan is to try out an initial title, one suggested by Rev. Peter called the *Meaning of Jesus: Two Views*, by N.T.Wright and Marcus Borg. Within one book, two views of Christianity are developed. The writers are friends and former classmates. They both respect each other but they differ in some basic areas. It will be a good way to get started.

At this point the plan is to meet before church on 3 Sundays in May, beginning on May 16th at 9:30am. The discussions will wind up by 10:25 so that we can filter into the service either confused or enlightened, but definitely focused! The book should be read before the first session so if you're wanting to partake, please begin by looking for the book. We are hoping to have some copies available. Using part of March, all of April and half of May we should be all able to borrow and absorb the ideas in the book.

After we finish the book in May, we'll consider if we want to continue in the fall. So all you adventurous readers and thinkers, please join us in this new effort!

Caught on Camera!



Members of the bible study group pause for a quick photo op.

