



# CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for St. James United Church • 197 Main Street, Antigonish, NS

By the Outreach & Communications Committee

Volume 5 Issue 1 • March 2011

*For this purpose God called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Thessalonians 2:14

## Dear Friends in Christ

*From The Rev. Peter A. Smith*

I think this was one of the most unpleasant winters I have ever seen with storm after storm after storm. The mountains of snow and the thick ice which surrounded us when March finally arrived made it seem like winter would never let go.

Yet in an instant the weather changed, the snow melted, and the ice disappeared. Now Spring, filled with new life and new possibilities, is in the air and the warmer brighter days signal that ever better things are coming.

That first Easter, the crushing weight of despair lifted from the disciples as they realized that the death of Jesus was not the end. The message that Jesus had risen from the dead was greeted with great joy by the disciples. For them, the announcement of the resurrection changed their mourning into celebration. It was just what they needed in life.

Yet the message of the resurrection also touched people who had not experienced the grief of the disciples. The empty tomb meant that their lives were changed as well because the grip of death and fear were now broken for all people. The promise of a new tomorrow extended beyond the original disciples of Jesus to the whole world.

The power of Easter is not restricted to those whose lives are in utter chaos or people crushed under guilt and sin. The message that Jesus has risen and death has been overcome is one which changes life for all of us. For the message of Easter is that the power of God's love and grace reaches into our world to transform loss and despair into victory and hope and that is good news for everyone to experience and celebrate.

So no matter what your situation in life, I invite you to join with us in worship this Holy Week and Easter as we walk to the cross, see the empty tomb, and rejoice together at the great things God does for us through Jesus Christ.

May God bless you and your family this Easter season and may God continue to bless our church.

### *Why is Easter so late this year?*

Easter moves from year to year because the early church tried to keep it close to the time described in the gospels as being near the Jewish festival of the Passover. The exact method of deciding the date of Easter is quite complicated but basically it usually works out that Easter falls on the Sunday after the first full moon in spring (and when the first full moon is a Sunday it's the next Sunday). That means that Easter can come as early as March 22 and as late as April 25.

## Services Holy Week & Easter

### **April 17, 2011 Palm Sunday • 10:30 am**

We shout our Hosanna's as Jesus Enters Jerusalem and then celebrate together the Lord's Supper. Following the service the Sunday School Children will present "A Walk through Lent" in the Hall.

### **April 21, 2011 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.

### **April 22, 2011 Good Friday • 10:30 am**

As we gather at the cross, the Senior Choir will lead us through the events of the passion through a Tenebrae Cantata.

### **April 24, 2011 Easter Sunday • 6:00 am on the**

**Bethany grounds.** As the sun rises, voices and prayers blend to give thanks for the Resurrection. Following the service there is a pancake breakfast in the church hall hosted by the Men's Club.

**• 10:30 am Easter Sunday service.**



Front row: Laura Reddick and Mary MacLean representing our local African-Canadians.

## African-American Heritage Month

Our February 13 Sunday service emphasized the contribution of African-American spirituals to our church life. To honour this heritage the Men's Choir sang "Precious Lord (Tommy A Dorsey) and guest soloist Carolyn Curry performed "The Majesty of God" ("Duke" Ellington). The hymns for the service were appropriate to the theme. The Saint James Brass Quintet provided spirituals for preludes, offertory and postlude.

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

#### *Session Deals With the Sins of the Congregation*

***The following is an excerpt from the minutes of St. James Presbyterian Session on January 8, 1881:***

Mrs. Robert Burnside appeared before the Session (having suspended herself from church privileges on account of falling into the sin of anti nuptial fornication) wished to be reinstated confessing her repentance of the sin committed. The Session agreed to reinstate her. John Williams, Stage Road having been some time ago suspended for refusing to comply to a citation, came before the Session desirous of being again reinstated. The Session agreed to reinstate him.

#### *Concerns about the Baptist Minister*

***The following is an excerpt from the minutes of St. James Presbyterian Session in November 1880:***

The Moderator (Rev. Goodfellow) stated that the Baptist Minister of this place had been going into a district of this congregation, Addington Forks, and preaching fortnightly on Sabbath afternoons in the house of a member of this church, and that on that account members of the congregation were led to absent themselves from ordinances here. He, the Moderator, desired to place on record his disapproval of such derisive proceedings as dangerous to the peace and integrity of this congregation.

All the members present unanimously concurred in the views of the Moderator and expressed their disappointment of the Baptists holding services there, as only having one tendency, that of dividing the congregation.



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## Behind the Scenes

Bob & Mavis Murray are a couple to be admired, emulated and truly appreciated as one of the “pillars of the church” here at St. James. That may be an old fashioned

term but there is nothing old fashioned about this very young at heart, generous and modern couple.

To spend time with them and discuss their various involvements, present and past, is truly exhausting. They are probably one of the most recognizable couples in the church as they have spent a total of fifty years at the front of the church as members of the choir. Bob is still a member but Mavis “retired” in September of 2010, completing her fifty years. Of course, she can still be seen from time to time as she fills in when another voice is needed. Music is such a key component of who they both are. Bob was choir director for thirty years and has directed junior choirs in the church over the years.

They have known each other since they attended Grade 9 together in New Glasgow, although they did not start dating until Grade 11. They have been a couple ever since, now married for fifty seven years. They have raised four children. Janice lives in New Zealand and they have managed to visit four times over the years. David lives in Halifax, Ross in Stanstead, Quebec and Andrew who, after several years away, has returned to live in Antigonish. They are very proud of all of their children’s accomplishment and of their eight grandchildren – and those could fill another newsletter. One of Andrew’s contributions to St. James has to be mentioned – the three beautiful

murals that enhance our sanctuary.

Bob went to work for the Bank of Nova Scotia when he graduated from high school and was promoted up through the system with all of the transfers around the Maritimes that banking entails. He and Mavis were married during those years and she joined him as a bride in Montague, PEI. According to Mavis moving always presented them with a local choir to join and gave them opportunities to meet people.

One of their temporary homes had been Antigonish and they made a decision in 1964 to settle here to raise their family. Bob spent the next thirty one years in accounting at Eastern Auto until his retirement. Mavis who had attended Maritime Business College after high school worked part time for sixteen years for a local optometrists’ office. They still sing her praises (pardon the pun).

At St. James, besides their dedication and enjoyment of the choir, they served on the Official Board, Bob as Chair for one term and Mavis as Clerk of the Session for 14 years. They are now members of Council which replaced the Session and Official Board. Bob taught Sunday school for a number of years and Mavis was a CGIT leader. Both have been representatives to Presbytery which Bob chaired for two years and Secretary for 20 years. Mavis was and still is an involved member of the UCW and Bob has been a member of the Men’s Club FOREVER.

*That was then, time to slow down, this is now:*

Bob – Member of the Choir, acting Director when Christine is absent, Co-Chair of Seniors’ Club, Chair of Worship Committee.

Mavis – Member of Council and the UCW, team member of the Tuesday Hot Lunch Program, group leader for the Prayer Shawl Ministry and a faithful participant in the Tuesday morning Bible Study.

Aside from the official memberships, as part of their natural gifts, they can be counted on to make sure that new people feel welcome at St. James,

chatting with them at coffee hour and other church functions, help decorate the sanctuary for special occasions and can be counted on when history notes are needed.

St. James is an important part of their lives but the community of Antigonish has received their gifts in abundance as well.

Bob has been involved in the Music of the Night productions and was in the first production of Theatre Antigonish, Romanoff and Juliet, 37 years ago. Theatre Antigonish has been recipient of both their musical and acting talents over the years and they are dedicated volunteers for the Antigonish Performing Arts concert series. Bob has served as President and Treasurer of the Highland Society and his violin/fiddle (he can explain the difference) has provided many opportunities to entertain at local and church events. He still has a couple of violin students. Mavis volunteers with such charitable organizations as Heart & Stroke.

Bob and Mavis are generous in sharing their time and talent but they would be the first to tell us that they are only two of many whose contributions help to make St. James a wonderful church community.

*If you would like to suggest a name or names to be featured in our Behind the Scenes column please pass your suggestion on to one of the members of the Outreach and Communications Committee.*

## St. James Handbell Choir

*Notes from Tara Nicholson*

I'm very pleased to say that over the course of the last two months we have been able to start up our very first handbell choir. There are eight of us intrepid ringers learning all about technique, musicality, and playing together. It's a lot on the plate of our director, Loreen Allen, but together we've been having a whole lot of fun and lots of laughs. We've begun working on a few pieces to play in church and you will hopefully be introduced to our brand of music making in the next month or two. We still have one spot available if anyone should be interested or keep us in mind for the fall season. If you have any questions about the bell choir please feel free to call Tara @ 735-2757 or email: tara.l@ns.aliantzinc.ca.

## Art for Health Project



Six women from the St. James Social Justice Committee, Muriel Kennedy, Barbara DeMarsh, Judy Jowett, Michele Ashby, Fran Wittgens and Anne Camozzi participated in a volunteer Public

Art Project this winter. The women painted ceiling tiles which have been placed over examining areas in Lindsay's Health Centre for Women to give inspiration and hope to those who view them.

The women went to Anne's studio to paint the tiles as a form of painted prayers for the women who might view them in the Health Centre. It was a relaxing and fun project that was enjoyed by all who participated. An additional five women from the community also painted tiles at Anne's studio so that ten tiles were painted in total.

The inspiration for the project came from Men's Choir member John Graham-Pole who had worked at a hospital in the United States where artists and patients painted ceiling tiles to decorate the halls leading to and from surgery and recovery areas. Patients on their way or returning from surgery can look at bright life-giving images.

More and more research shows that looking at art reduces anxiety and pain and can help in healing.

It is hoped that this demonstration public art project will inspire other ceiling tile projects in medical and healing venues.

# Community Christmas

Volunteers enjoyed helping with the Community Christmas Dinner at St. James, December 25, 2010. About 65 volunteers and guests enjoyed the dinner. It was the first year for the event and organizers are hoping to make it an annual event.



Dawson mashing potatoes



David at the desserts table



# Supporting Our Sisters in Spirit



With support from the United Church Social Justice Committee and other local groups and organizations, over fifty women, men, youth and children gathered at the United Church Hall on February 16 to hear about Sisters in Spirit (SIS), a research, education and policy initiative driven and led by Aboriginal women. The primary goal is to conduct research and raise awareness of the alarmingly high rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Since 2005, SIS has been investigating the root causes of violence against Aboriginal women - mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and grandmothers.

Dick Cotterill (Quakers) presented some of the findings from a five year research SIS project, "What Their Stories Tell". In Canada, the number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls is far higher than for any other group, violence that irreparably changes the women's families and communities and our society as a whole. Cotterill emphasized that everyone – men as well as women, non-aboriginal as well as Aboriginal People – is called upon to play a part in bringing about change. Next Nova Scotia Native Women's Association representative, Rose Julien from Paqtnkek, shared pictures and stories of Aboriginal women in Nova Scotia who have been victims of violence. Julien says that "I'm the voice of women who can't speak, for the women who are still missing and the ones who have sustained abuse and are scared to be part of the justice system". Julien invited everyone to join with Aboriginal women in efforts aimed at raising awareness of violence in our community.

More information about Sisters in Spirit can be found on-line at:

[www.nwac.ca/programs/sisters-spirit](http://www.nwac.ca/programs/sisters-spirit)

# Voices Forum ~ Slow Foods ~ Local Food ~ Community

The annual Voices Stir-Fry Forum was held at St. James this last February. Local food producers, consumers and advocates looked to find ways to boost production and consumption of local food. Soledad, pictured



here with Colleen Cameron, shared information about the International Slow Foods Movement and ways to use local foods during the winter months. Her samples of potato delicacies were both delicious and remarkable.

Slow Foods NS principles are: 1) To promote good, clean and fair food from local producers.

- 2) To encourage the best growing practises especially organic and sustainable methods.
- 3) To preserve our culinary history and culture so that we have diversity in our food choices.
- 4) To reconnect producers and consumers so they can educate each other. [www.slowfoods.ca](http://www.slowfoods.ca)

There was a presentation by StFX student and Voices summer coordinator Chris Stothard about the Antigonish community gardens and the Local Produce Food Boxes being assembled at Breamore Co-op. The Co-op is also starting an organic food box for produce not available locally. Kevin Beckers gave an informative presentation about our local food production challenges and the benefits of supporting our local farmers. Followed by a discussion and input from local producers.

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## Meditation New Location

In early March 2011 the Tuesday Meditation Group began to meet on the second floor of the Alaya Ch'an Meditation Centre located at 319 Main Street in Antigonish. Close to the Post Office and Shoppers it can be a delightful invitation to interrupt your errands to have a moment of stillness. The group hopes that having this new space will be comfortable to a larger group of people, including students and even the Coady when they're in town. The meditation practice is nothing esoteric or strange. It is simply going into quiet as a group, each person saying the mantra inwardly for a period of 25 minutes. We have come to feel the strong pull toward quietness to let God's Spirit work within each of us.

*"Over and over in the biblical revelation we read of how God reveals Himself to those who walk with Him, to those who live 'in confidence in His sight'. Again this is what our meditation is essentially about: being with God who is with us and making the journey of transformation confidently in his*



*care. Meditation is a pilgrimage in which we journey to our own heart, there to find Jesus—the revealer and embodier of God. Finding His Spirit is the first stage of our pilgrimage. Then we continue our pilgrimage with Jesus to the Father."*

- John Main, *The Way of Unknowing*

Tuesdays at 3:45pm, the Alaya Ch'an Meditation Centre 319 Main Street, upstairs. Call St. James for further information 863-2001

# Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Prayer Shawl Ministry was founded in 1998 by two women in the United States and since that time it has spread throughout that country and now there are many prayer shawl groups in Canada as well.

The making of a prayer shawl is more than just knitting or crocheting a pretty shawl and giving it to someone as a gift. And what is it that makes it different? First and foremost the shawls are

created in prayer and given with prayer. As the stitches are made the knitter can pray for the person who will be receiving the shawl – whether known or unknown. When completed the shawl can be passed from person to person in the group and a prayer is said by each person while holding it and when given a card is enclosed with a prayer written on it. A final blessing is given the shawls when they are brought to a worship service and dedicated by the minister.

The shawls are given – they are never sold – to people with a special need. The need may be during a time of illness, bereavement, stress, loneliness or as the phrase says “when someone is in need of a hug.” They can also be given as a special celebration in someone’s life.

On January 11, 2010 a group of ten ladies met in the church parlour and a Prayer Shawl Group was begun at St. James. We meet every two weeks and we have some members who create shawls at home as they cannot get to the meetings. To date, twenty three shawls have



been made and fifteen have been given away. There has been one service of dedication and another dedication is planned for April 3rd. We are beginning to see what a blessing these shawls are to people and we in turn feel blessed in making them. The enthusiasm within the group is wonderful and there is much laughter as well as prayer.

If anyone is interested in creating a shawl you are welcome to join the group. Contact Mavis at 863-3179 to let her know of your interest or if you know of anyone who you feel has a special need of receiving a shawl you can let her know that as well.





## Mary March

Mary has returned to her United Church roots, worshipping at St. James now for about one and half years. Mary says it feels like “home”. She finds there

is always something in the sermon to hold on to and that the overall atmosphere is welcoming. Mary grew up in Newfoundland/Labrador but moved to Maryvale where she has raised four sons. Her parents had lived in St. Andrews and her father was the manager of the local Co-op. As a single mother, she is thankful for the great neighbours in Maryvale and congregation at St. James.

## 3rd Sunday Each Month

The Spirituality Discussion Group has been meeting at St. James at 9:15 on the third Sunday of each month since Spring 2010. It is a relaxed and welcoming group of about eight regulars from St. James and the wider community. Sometimes a topic is selected, such as Celtic Spirituality which ran for two sessions. We’ve also had an invited guest, Kathleen Kaveny, from StFX Adult Education who spoke with us about Civility. Other times we bring in books we’ve read and speak about what is noteworthy or powerful in them.

### In November the books shared were:

- Karen Armstrongs: *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness* • Michael Morwood: *God is Near: Understanding a Changing Church*
- Judy Cannato: *Field of Compassion: How the New Cosmology is Transforming Spiritual Life*
- David Wolpe: *Making Loss Matter: Creating Meaning in Difficult Times*

In March we plan to discuss Echart Tolle’s book *The New Earth*. Some individuals are coming just to discuss this one title. The group is very flexible as it encourages new links related to our lives, our thoughts and each other as searchers.



## Babs MacLeod

Even though Babs MacLeod moved three years ago, she still has a keen interest in what is going on at St. James and

in Antigonish. To help keep her up to date Andrea Holland has sent her our newsletters. She also has had visits from Margaret Ballantyne, Mary Rose Wong, and Fran Wittgens. Flo Burke and others keep up via phone calls. Recently she was able to meet up with Vera Reeves who recently moved into Melville Heights where Babs also lives. Babs was very interested to hear of St. James’s new Prayer Shawl Ministry. At Melville Heights, they have had a ministry to the street people, knitting blankets for the last 17 years. Those of you who remember Babs can be sure she is active in this group. She is also still walking and gardening on the spacious grounds there. Babs would love to welcome any old friends who are in the area.

Call her at 1-902-477-0834

## In Appreciation

The Outreach and Communications Committee are grateful to Tara Nicholson for the time and talent that she has devoted to the production of the Connections newsletter for the past two years. Tara devoted many hours to collecting the stories, doing all of the necessary graphics and sending the finished product off to the printers. She generously absorbed all costs related to the project and was the ultimate professional in her approach to turning out Connections for our enjoyment.

Tara is now focusing her extra time and energy to our newly formed hand bell choir and we wish her the best. Thank you, Tara, for your commitment.

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