

# CONNECTIONS

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

By the Outreach & Communications Committee

Volume 8 Issue 3 • Autumn 2014



*Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks  
in all circumstances,  
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*  
I Thessalonians 5:16-18

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thanksgiving is the time of year when we pause and give thanks for all the good things we have in life- family, friends, health, and other blessings. Yet have you ever considered what follows the beautiful autumn days we have at Thanksgiving?

The months which come after we stop and express our gratitude for the harvest are filled with difficult weather, cold temperatures, and less daylight than any other time of year. The harvest celebrations and our time of gratitude in October come before the colder and shorter days in November and the winter storms which are simply part of life in Nova Scotia.

Yet even knowing that does not stop us from giving thanks, from being grateful for what we have received from God. For giving thanks does not come about simply because things are good and will stay that way but rather because we know that we have been blessed, we are grateful for the people and experiences which make up our lives, and because we know that God's goodness can not be stopped no matter what happens in this world.

So this October I would invite you to consider your life and give thanks to God. For while each of us have reasons to worry and problems that are on the horizon, none of that prevents us from being people filled with appreciation and wonder at what we are experiencing today. Be grateful for the new people who are part of your world and those who have been there for many years. Be thankful for all you have received and what has been promised to you through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*May God bless us all,  
The Rev. Peter A. Smith*

## Sunday School & Youth Group News

We joyfully began a new Sunday school season on Sept 7th. Once again we look forward to a year of learning and sharing, laughter and fun and those special Sundays when we can share our gifts and talents with the rest of the congregation.

We also extend a sincere thank you to Linda Penner for her leadership during the past year and express heartfelt thanks to her for remaining as coordinator of the youth group. Linda and the youth group held their first gathering on Sept 20th. They enjoyed a evening of fun and fellowship and planned future events.



The St. James community was thrilled to learn of the arrival of three-year-old Hope into the lives of Reverends Peter and Meredith Smith early this summer. The congregation wanted to welcome Hope in some way so the gift of a swing set or, as Hope calls it, her 'play set', was decided upon along with a monetary gift. Gord Morrison, Chuck Gardiner and his grandson helped Rev. Peter assemble the gift and a happy time was had by all.



*In their first weeks of classes at Coady, groups students were interested in the dynamics of volunteerism in Antigonish and met with members from the International Potluck group, the Antigonish Art Fair and Antigonish Culture Alive. The students were also impressed with our church and its features.*

## More Than Statistics: A response?

**E**bola. This is an everyday word now although it strikes terror in the hearts of those living in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. Health care professionals in Europe and North America hasten to develop emergency plans just “in case” Ebola arrives near us.

In 1976, from what is now Equateur province in the northwest Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), not far from the Ebola River, the world first heard of the Ebola virus. Since then periodic outbreaks of Ebola in the DRC occurred in 1995, 2007, and now, 2014. Ebola most likely was in DRC during the seven months I was living and working there during the fall and winter of 2013-14. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that the current outbreak in DRC is not related to the one in West Africa. The media constantly give us stories to show our connectedness to this story.

The number of cases and the number of deaths are updated regularly. We clap hands over dropped jaws when we hear or see the terrible details: two thousand, six hundred sixty-seven deaths as I write, each one a life, a story, a family affected.

Feeling quite helpless is not something to which we are accustomed. It is not comfortable. I, personally, do not like it. How can I respond? Most effectively?

I was amazed to hear broad-based appeals for healthcare professionals to volunteer. In light of my relatively long personal connections with Sierra

Leone, my first instinct was to jump in the queue to go and help. Then, on second thought, I stopped and reflected on my current responsibilities to students who have chosen to work on gaining the knowledge, skill, and judgment necessary to meet the health care needs of the world in the future. I feel torn.

Ebola is only one of a long list of diseases that kill people. The world list of killer diseases is long. Lassa fever, another viral haemorrhagic fever, has been around West Africa since 1969. If they were to measure the “biggest” serial killer disease in the world by the number of deaths, I suspect malaria would be the “winner”.

A major contributor to the current longevity we (citizens of the developed world) experience today is largely due to Public Health efforts begun in the early 20th century and continuing through to now. Contagious diseases were conquered to a large extent. The “we” with longevity, unfortunately, does not include the Majority World. Following Jesus’ Command Two, love your neighbour, is still applicable. Just as it took much dedication of determination, energy, time, and resources a hundred years ago to find solutions to TB, the plague, polio, etc. so similar dedication now needs to focus on the Majority World, our neighbours. The contagious diseases are still killing and maiming them in large numbers: HIV, TB, measles, polio. That is not to mention malaria, Ebola, Lassa, etc. We still have challenging frontiers. What are our priorities?

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Galatians 6.9)

*H Graham*

*Welcome to the St. James United Church choir Hagar Hagarabab (left), Emily Shushang (centre), & Jenn Samson (right)*



## The Bell Choir

This past spring our handbell choir travelled to Halifax in order to participate in our first bell festival at Bethany United Church. A bell festival is a wonderful chance for different choirs to get together and play pieces in unison as well as to play a solo piece of their choice. It was particularly wonderful for our choir to attend as we are still a fairly new group in comparison to some of the other choirs which have been playing for twenty years or more. It is really eye opening to see what some of these experienced choirs can do. One of the players had close to a dozen bells to play. Armed with mallets, he met the challenge and added so much colour to the pieces with these rich bass notes.

This year there were 10 bell choirs in attendance from across the Maritimes with a wide range of experience and ages. We had ringers that were eight years old and barely able to reach the tables all the way up to ringers that had thirty years of experience.

It can be a real challenge to rein in close to 100 players and have everyone on the same page, never mind the same bar of music. This task was taken on by our guest conductor, Joan Plume, who hails from Ontario. She led the mass pieces which were incredible to hear. The music that we played was challenging but we worked hard and learned many new techniques. Our favourite piece was Joshua Fit the Battle of Jerico which we played at the festival and in church the following Sunday.

We are definitely looking forward to participating in upcoming festivals.

## Conversation Café

The Development Studies Student Society from St. Francis Xavier University has organized a Conversation Cafe to bring together temporary foreign workers, students, and other members of the Antigonish community. This conversation space is an opportunity for both old and new community members to come together, build relationships, and come to better understand one another. It is hoped this will become a space where new community members feel safe and welcome to make new friends and improve their English communication skills.

The idea for the project emerged from a Service Learning placement last year as part of a Development in Practice class with Dr. Jonathon Langdon. Two students spent a semester working with the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition doing research with temporary foreign workers in Antigonish, specifically thinking about what social systems would enhance the feeling of support and inclusion in the community. Through this experience and research, it quickly emerged that communication continues to be a challenge, and that opportunities to practice English in a relaxed and casual environment would contribute to the sense of community inclusion. The café will take place on Saturdays in the upstairs Sunday School room from 2-4 p.m. Any future changes in meeting days and times will be announced well in advance. Those who are interested can contact Rachel Garbary at [x2011crx@stfx.ca](mailto:x2011crx@stfx.ca) from September to the last week of November. All are welcome.

*Summer visitors: Marilyn Swim with her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren, visiting from Vancouver.*





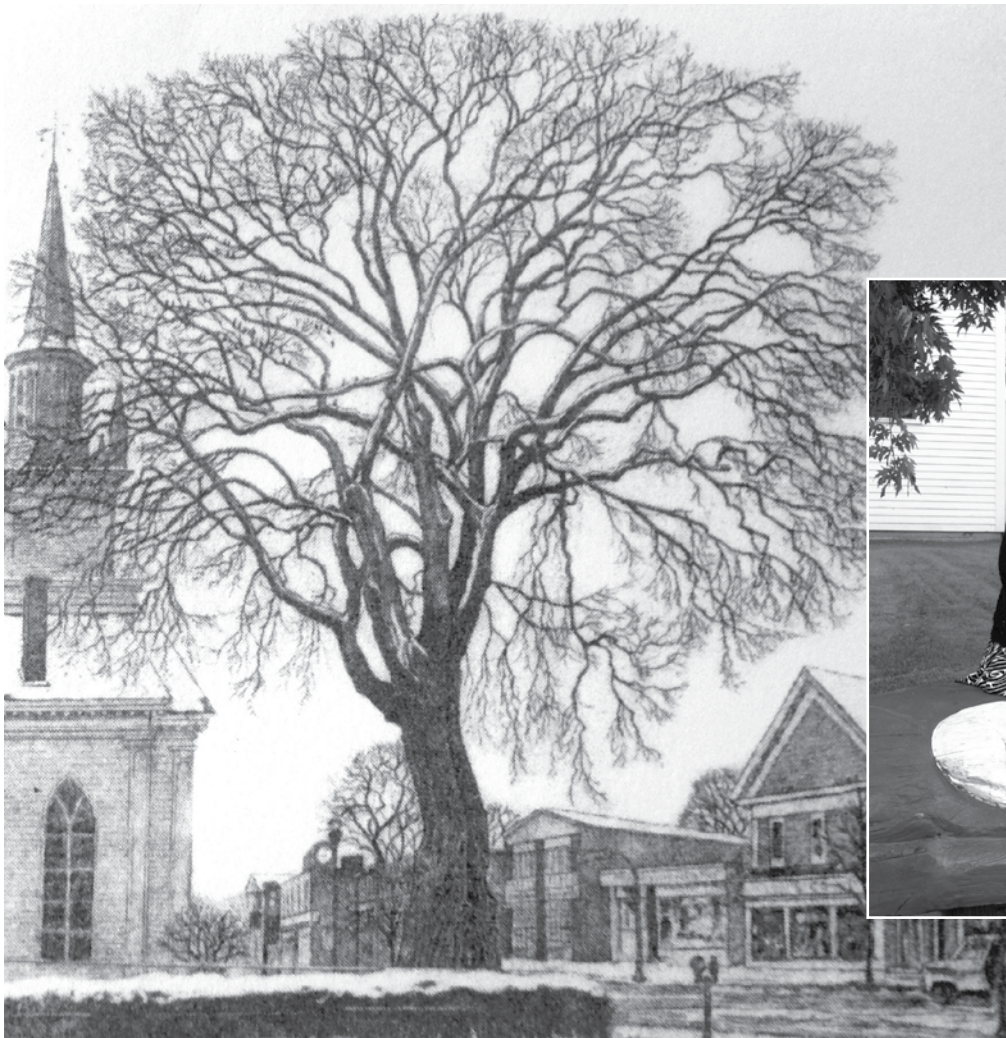
# The Elm Tree Story

Twenty years ago on November 26, 1994, the stately elm tree which stood in front of the entrance to St. James United Church was taken down. It had succumbed to the ravages of the Dutch elm disease and despite efforts to try and save the tree with injections it could not be saved, much to the dismay of many members of the congregation and the general public.

Before the final cutting, the Elm Tree Project was begun, spearheaded by Dr. Paul Price and Fran Wittgens. Anna Syperek was commissioned to produce an etching of the tree that had shaded the front of the church for nearly 200 years. Fifty limited editions of the etchings were made available for sale to the public in April 1995 and a copy is displayed in the church courtesy of the UCW in memory of past members. The funds from the sale were to go to restore the heritage stained glass windows which were in need of repair.

New life came from the old in the planting of a Mountain Ash sapling that had achieved considerable growth in the neck of the old Elm. It was planted in front of the Christian Education building and has continued to grow and thrive in that location ever since. Legend has it that a horse's bridle and reins were buried inside the tree. Apparently, a horse tied to the young tree had managed to run off, leaving the bridle and reins. The tree grew around these two items and indeed a long piece of leather resembling a rein or bridle was found. The tree left another bequest, a Bank of Upper Canada penny dated 1887 was discovered in a notch of the tree.

The Church was left with a sizeable stump and plans were made to hold an "Old Stump Frolic" on May 27, 1995. This has become an annual event and has been held in the spring of every year except for 2013 due to the renovations. In 1999 the Men's Club of the church was approached by Albert Deveau to see if they might be interested in having him carve a 'Lion and a Lamb' out of the stump. They agreed to this and the carving was carried out. Over the years the elements and moisture caused deterioration to occur so it had to be replaced with another carving made of elm wood from Pictou County.



*Image:  
Detail from "Sunday Morning"  
by Anna Syperek*



*Fran, Ethan and his uncle Kent  
from Malaysia, along with Emily Dai.*





*From left to right: Hagar from Ghana, Patience from the Cameroons, Rev. Peter back from holiday, Shuchang Dai returning to StFX for her last year, Linda Darwish back from holiday and Aziza from the Republic of Congo.*

*Matthew Wright was on vacation with L'Arche. They spent two weeks at Niagara Falls, Ontario. He can be seen here riding on an elephant with Marie Eileen.*



*Once again St. James opened its doors to the community group, Highland Quilt Guild. Below we see the sanctuary festively adorned with some of their creations.*



## Hot Meal Program Grows

Ten years ago as an anniversary project of St. James we began the Tuesday hot meal programme. Volunteer teams from the congregation invited people in need to come to our hall and enjoy a hot nutritious meal. Over the years that programme has served a growing number of meals each year and we have welcomed the involvement of groups like the Lion's Club and sister churches like St. Mary's Church in Maryvale in helping to feed hungry people in the Antigonish area.

Last May, after discussion with the current hot meal teams, conversation with community partners, and fund-raising efforts spearheaded by Len "P.D." MacDonald, the Church Council approved a plan to expand the hot meal program to Thursday. Teams of new volunteers have been organized to work alongside the existing Tuesday teams and our hope and prayer is that the Spirit continues to use this outreach effort to touch the lives of people in our community.

If you would like to help at one of the hot meal days as a volunteer or would like to make a donation to help support this ministry please contact the church office or speak to Rev. Peter.

# Porches, BBQs, Tents, Lakefronts, Ice Cream, Balloons, and More

by Fran Wittgens



**H**ow can I keep from singing as the old 19th century tune asks? There is joy in summer when the routine is loosened and new horizons are seen.

For my first ever visit to Chautauqua in the western corner of New York State just south of Buffalo and east of Lake Erie, the experience rang and keeps ringing in me as I immersed myself in daily worship, daily lectures, art, music, and recreation, and I have the strong desire to share this experience as a place that many others would like, especially families. Families keep coming, one summer after another. I overheard one father say he never felt his kids were so safe and happy as they were at Chautauqua. Grandparents come and are with their grown offspring who in turn have their own children. Many children look forward to seeing their friends from previous summers. Newcomers and returnees are encouraged to attend a number of stimulating programmes and while the children are safely occupied, the adults are free to take in the visiting lecturers, take a class, or just relax.

At Chautauqua, founded by a Methodist minister in 1874, visitors are encouraged to explore and to think critically, creatively, compassionately, and globally. According to President Thomas Becker's description, "The community is designed to emphasize the scale of human interaction, promoting conversations and unplanned encounters." The physical surroundings help this to happen as cars are not allowed, so foot

traffic and bicycles are everywhere. The old Victorian B&Bs that catered to 19th century visitors have large gracious porches where people sit and converse. Each denomination has its own Welcome House where people are encouraged to meet and converse. At our B&B, we followed this social tradition of mingling on the porch as we ate our breakfast, lunch or dinner. There was always something to talk about with complete strangers.

But there is much more than porches and sidewalks. There is music coming from the Carillon twice a day from the world's largest outdoor organ donated by our Canadian Massey family, or coming from groups such as Canadian Brass that performed at night in the Amphitheatre. A youth symphony, a Chautauqua Theatre and a Chautauqua Ballet train and perform each summer. There also are fitness areas, and Lake Chautauqua itself is superb for swimming and sailing.

The daily worship becomes a touch stone. Thankfully at the end of each week visitors can buy CDs of the services to listen again to the message and to hear the hymns, readings and prayers. Each afternoon there is a session on faith exploration in the Philosopher's Hall. Whether a fan or a sceptic of John Shelby Spong, there were crowds of listeners during the week I was there, and each week features a different speaker.

Diversity has ruled since the late 1800s when many Christian denominations were included in the experience of Chautauqua. In the mid 20th century, it became even more diverse when the Methodists gave their church to the Jewish fellowship to use on Saturdays. Now, in 2014, there are 18 denominations with a special youth emphasis on exploring the Abrahamic Faiths (Christian, Jewish and Muslim).

American writer David McCullough narrated a documentary on Chautauqua (this can be seen on





YouTube) quoting Theodore Roosevelt as saying this is the best of America. It represents a time in history when people were convinced that they needed to be fully engaged in life as a citizen and as a believer. This is what the Chautauqua Institution has been sustaining for over 100 years.

Returning to Antigonish so very enthused, I had one of those moments when I heard from two friends who had very similar experiences as Chautauqua, but much closer to home. Their accounts follow and help to underline that we can truly take wing in spirit, mind and body by engaging in some of these opportunities. Both Sharon Whitmee and Liliona Quarmyne have agreed to share their own experiences.

## Berwick Camp

*by Sharon Whitmee*

**B**erwick United Church Camp is a magical place nestled amongst the hemlocks in Berwick, Nova Scotia. This year marks its 140th year of operation by the United Church of Canada. It is a ten day camp that has something to offer everyone, young and old.

Some of the programs include daily evening worship led by the evangelist, morning side worship, and theology today. There are daily programs for youth (Youth Group), younger children (Vacation Bible School) and very young (Nursery). Activities may include the book club, yoga, UCW and physical recreation, just to name a few. Music is also a very important part of Berwick. There are many venues to showcase talent, be it the choir, evening sing songs, the musical production, variety show and even drumming.

The days at Berwick may be as active or laid back as a person wishes but in its peaceful and relaxed environment visitors can renew or rejuvenate their faith. I have been attending Berwick for thirty-two years with my immediate and extended family and have made many wonderful lifetime friends and lasting memories.

Perhaps you or your family may wish to be a Berwick camper. More information will follow in the months ahead. To learn more about Berwick United Church Camp you may go online to:  
[www.berwickcamp.org/newsite/](http://www.berwickcamp.org/newsite/)

## Tatamagouche Centre

*by Liliona Quarmyne*

**I**f you're passionate about personal and social transformation, the Tatamagouche Centre is a great place to be. For close to 60 years, the Centre has been a gathering place for those wanting to explore leadership, community development, spirituality, holistic health, and social justice. Located on 15 rolling acres that overlook the beautiful Tatamagouche Bay, the Centre offers over 60 programs a year, ranging from women's wellness retreats to leadership programs for those in ministry, to signature annual events such as the Peace and Friendship gathering. One of the most amazing things about the Centre is the number of communities who feel at home there: indigenous groups, church goers, artists, activists, outdoor enthusiasts, travellers – the list goes on.

The Centre is deeply invested in youth and family programming. The newest annual event, Festimagouche – a joyful mingling of social justice, arts, music, and spirit – is unique in that it's a space where adults get to dive into workshops while kids enjoy their own specially-tailored programming. Other events, such as the Social Justice Youth Camp and the Young Writers' retreat, give youth lots of room to explore who they are and what role they can play in making the world better.

The Tatamagouche Centre is a special place, where people come because they want to change the world.

Tatamagouche Centre  
1-800-218-2220 or 902-657-2231  
<https://www.tatacentre.ca>



Tatamagouche Centre



*New Coady students have a lovely afternoon with members of our congregation.*

The summer the post-service fellowship continued to attract both old and new members.



*Hope Graham with her friends from the Valley.*



*Dale Archibald with his Coady neighbour Michael along with Rhoda and Lazarus. Michael and Rhoda are from Nigeria, Lazarus from India are joined by Sunny and her boys. Lazarus is the fine violinist who performed at the Art Fair this summer.*

*Gavin Fraser and Emery and Garret Van de Wiel following the Nova Scotia Youth Choir concert at Trinity United Church, New Glasgow.*



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