



CONNECTIONS

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

By the Outreach & Communications Committee

Volume 10 Issue 1 • Spring 2016

*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,

Spring, filled with new life and new possibilities, is just around the corner. The warmer brighter days this month are a welcome sign that better weeks are ahead. Which may seem like a strange thing to focus on since the weather in January and February was not that bad.

In fact, I think it was a mild, gentle winter compared to what we have experienced the past few years. We only had a couple of weeks with lots of snow and we didn't have the weeks of bitter cold that often come in January and February. Yet despite all of that, the arrival of spring this year is still just as welcome and just as important as the arrival of spring after a long, hard winter.

That first Easter, the message that Jesus was alive filled the disciples with joy. The crushing weight of despair was lifted from them as they realized that the death of Jesus was not the end. For those disciples, the announcement of the resurrection changed their mourning into celebration- it was just what they needed in life.

Yet for those who had not experienced the despair of watching Jesus die on the cross, the message of the resurrection was still important. The empty tomb meant the grip of sin and fear had been broken for all people and the promise of a new tomorrow extended beyond the original disciples of Jesus.

The good news of Easter is not restricted to those whose lives are in utter chaos or only for people crushed under guilt and sin. The message that Jesus is risen and death has been overcome is one which

touches all of us for the good news of Easter is that God is changing creation. The power of God's love and grace is reaching into our world to bring new life and hope which is a joyful message 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 celebrate together the great things God has done for us through Jesus' death and resurrection. May God bless you and your family this Easter season and may God continue to bless our church.

*Yours in Christ's Service,
The Rev. Peter A. Smith*



Holy Week Easter

March 20, 2016 Palm Sunday

10:30 am We wave our palms and shout our Hosanna's as Jesus enters Jerusalem and we consider the events which follow as we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

March 24, 2016 Maundy Thursday

7:00 pm in the Hall. Come gather around the Table as together we remember and share the events in the Upper Room.

March 25, 2015 Good Friday

10:30 am As disciples of Jesus, we experience through story and song the emotions, events, and meaning of the crucifixion.

March 27, 2016 Easter Sunday

6:30 am on the Bethany grounds. As the sun rises, our voices and prayers blend to give thanks for the Resurrection. A pancake breakfast will follow back in the church hall hosted by the Men's Club.

10:30 am Easter Sunday Service

A Peek into the St. James Sunday School

The organ notes haven't even faded as the sound of pattering feet begin to echo throughout the Sanctuary. Rev. Peter has no need to announce it – the kids know it's Children's Time. As the front pew fills, little arms outstretch over each other vying to be next to greet the minister. Some are shier than others, but no one is left out. No doubt you have witnessed the rapt attention of the youngest among us engaging with Peter who so skillfully imparts the meaning of scripture and of the love of God through clever use of props and Socratic inquiry. After the Lord's prayer, the group excitedly scrambles out of the service. What has them so energized? Where are they off to? Let's take a peek into the chaotic spirituality of Sunday School at St James.

Ida comes every Sunday with a clear teaching plan and activities to illustrate the message of the week's scripture. However, it's the children that dictate how the day's lesson will play out. Sunday school starts with the lighting of the candle, and an opening prayer. This is by far the quietest the group will be during their 45 minutes upstairs.

On the day of my visit, the children were acting out the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9). It took some kind-hearted prompting, but every child took on his role – and acted it to the max! For a moment, we were in an orchard, all nervously watching Ben scrutinize his unproductive fig tree (a role which Ben took beyond seriously) while Sam (the farmer) defended his bare-branched tree. Every child was fully engaged in the lesson.

The symbolism of the parable may have been a bit deeper than the youngsters were willing to dig, the importance of caring for nature, of caring for each other, and for loving God who loves us, was not lost. The passion that Ida and Judy bring to the program is clear. As these children grow, we will certainly see the benefits of the lessons they have learned during their time in Sunday School.



Sunday School & Youth Group News



Our Sunday School continues to be an active and thriving part of life at St. James. Sunday mornings following children's time the children, Judy and I make our way upstairs where we enjoy our time together learning about God and Jesus, learning new songs, doing a special activity related to the day's lesson, and enjoying a snack at the end of our time together.

As a special Lenten project the children took home jars in which they are encouraged to put a dime a day for the 40 days of Lent. This special offering will be donated to the food bank. They also enjoyed making pretzels to celebrate the first Sunday of Lent.

On Sunday April 3rd the Sunday School children are looking forward to providing leadership for the morning worship service.

Thanks to the congregation for their continued support and the love they share with us.



Cultural Connections ANTIGONISH

The community knows this group as the one that has for four years organized the potlucks at St. James. But in the last year it became obvious that there is more out there to do, and a new name helped to bring about a sense of a new mission: Cultural Connections Antigonish. The group's mission is to find more connections to encourage diversity and create the sense of a welcoming community.

In February a brainstorming session took place to explore possible new directions. With many new partners to work with, it was a very positive experience led by Olga Gladkick, recently retired from the Coady. Individuals and organizations came out to work towards some possible initiatives, some of which are listed below.

Stay tuned for more, and don't hesitate to speak to any of our St. James Communication and Outreach members who are sponsors of Cultural Connections Antigonish: (Rev. Peter Smith, Barbara De Marsh, Fran Wittgens, Linda Darwish, Brenda Rose, Marlene Groenenburg and Sarah Armstrong)

- Calendar of events to be in media, online and in print
- Discover who the newcomers are (Service Canada Kiosk and Book of Welcome)
- Paid navigator to be hired with a sustainable core leadership role coordinating from a central location
- Registry of newcomers to be greeted and invited
- Transportation: break down the transportation barrier with community navigator as key component
- Central location for information-calendar
- Event festival that brings together cultural groups, newcomers, born in Antigonish-Acadian, European, Mikmaq, African, CFA (ABC..Antigonish By Choice)
- Ongoing community education campaign - public engagement through existing tools
- Celebration of Antigonish: We Are The World (a one-week event, perhaps a parade)
- Broaden the Antigonish identity, evolve our perception to being a We Are The World place
- Training, education on employment opportunities, inclusion, hiring newcomers. Training employers with cultural competency
- Celebrate and sustain our newcomer culture



The annual St. James Black History Month service is always a special time, and the musical contributions of the St. James Brass Quintet are a pleasure to hear. To further enhance the day we were



pleased to welcome back Kathy Rhodes-Langille, who, performing with the brass quintet, sang Duke Ellington's *Ain't Nobody Nowhere Nothin' Without God*.

The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why

by Phyllis Tickle

This book was given to me by my sister. When I read it, I recommended it to Marilyn Gerriets for our St. James library. It is a great read and would be a wonderful book for a group discussion.

This slim book isn't trying to be a comprehensive church history and yet the author deftly covers the major shifts from the beginning of Christianity until now.

The author's point is that every 500 years it seems there is a major shift in our religion. It usually results in the church becoming different and better. A Re-Formation.

This is a fascinating journey through the ages. We have the shift in the 6th Century with Gregory the Great and the formation of monasteries. Then in the 11th Century the Great Schism between the Eastern and the Roman church. Each upheaval, the author writes, is like a giant rummage sale. Things are gotten rid of and new things brought in. Never is the church less.

The Reformation in the 16th century saw the growth of Protestantism and indeed, the growth of literacy and the belief in one's relationship to Scripture. In modern times we are facing the Great Emergence as science, technology and much else influence the fabric of our society and affect everything. The author shows how things unravel in our modern times and then are promisingly woven together again.

This is well worth a read and a talk! Look for it on our shelves.

Fran Wittgens

Why I Choose St. James

A PERSONAL ESSAY

When I go to bed Saturday night, I fall asleep looking forward to going to church in the morning. That is not something I would have thought I would ever say – and mean with all of my heart.

When I moved to Antigonish, I was not looking for a church to attend.

Though I was raised Catholic, and had been attending Mass in my former community, I felt that this move was more than just geographical, but a chance for a new beginning.

I began attending St James through my connections with L'Arche. Within a month, I was coming on my own. I was hooked on St James. I instantly felt welcomed into the church community. I made friends. I made community connections. I found a place where I can safely explore both my spiritual doubts and affirmations.

I am not a member of the United Church. I don't know if I will ever be. But I consider myself to be a part of the St James community, and I eagerly contribute in every way that I can. I want to use my gifts to make the world a better place. The good people at St James, each and every one of you, open that door for me. I know that I am a better me because of you.

Sarah Claudette

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Having raised a considerable sum of money for our renovations let us consider the costs of building a Manse in 1872.

Plans for Building a New Manse from the Minutes of the Congregational Meeting Oct. 14, 1872

Moved, Seconded and passed that the congregation build a Manse not to exceed in cost two thousand dollars.

Moved, Seconded and passed that the sum of one thousand four hundred dollars be raised by subscription for the purpose of paying for the building of said Manse in addition to the sum now in hand raised by the Ladies Tea Meeting.

Moved, Seconded and passed Mr. John Bishop, Robert Trotter A. M. Cunningham Esq. be a joint

Committee with all the Trustees of the congregation for the building of the Manse.

Plans to Sell the School House Lot from the minutes of the Congregational Meeting Oct. 22, 1873

Moved by R. Trotter Esq. seconded by John R. Fraser and passed that the Trustees be empowered to sell the Lot of land now called the School House Lot and appropriate the proceeds to the payment of the new Manse and also to dispose of the old Manse to the best advantage.

Moved, Seconded and passed that A. M. Cunningham be continued as Treasurer and collection of the stipends and to receive a commission of 3 per cent.

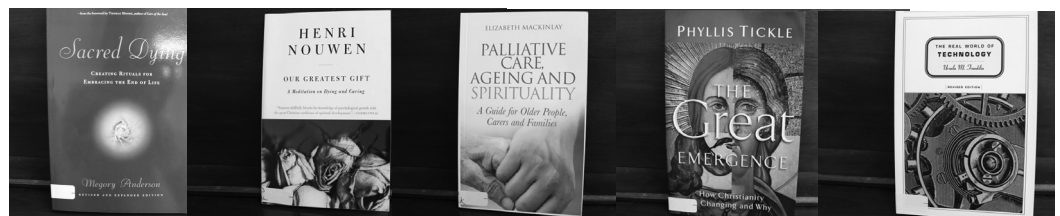
New to the St. James Library

Every year the St. James library, located in our comfortable parlour, adds several new titles to the already excellent selection of religious and secular books available to the congregation. Connections would be pleased if those of you who have read any of these books would be willing to offer up an occasional book review.

Your opinions matter. What did you like about the book you read? What left you perplexed? Do you think the book was aimed at any

particular audience? Whatever you might wish to say about the book will definitely be of interest to others.

These are just a few of this year's new arrivals, and Fran Wittgens has graciously provided a review of *The Great Emergence*. Why not take a few minutes before or after church to browse the shelves? A good book is a good friend.



R A P !

*R*AP! is a new campaign that St James' ever energetic *Social Justice Committee* is undertaking with outside support. *RAP!* stands for *Reduce Antigonish Plastics!* We plan to gradually work toward various long term goals, but are starting with an education component. Our first objective is an awareness exhibit at the *Dr John Hugh Gillis Regional High School* in conjunction with Earth Day 22 April. This will focus on bottled water reduction. But we have some other projects in mind ... stay tuned for updates and announcements!

The approach we're taking stresses these important points:

- plastics are petroleum products – therefore intrinsically harmful to our environment
- they take forever to biodegrade (only a slight exaggeration)
- our oceans are quickly filling with plastics, where they have a major, often lethal, impact on wildlife – in particular marine animals such as turtles and dolphins

Your *Social Justice Committee* is small in numbers, so for this endeavour we anticipate liaising with like-minded individuals and groups including but not limited to: *Responsible Energy Action*, *Antigonish Climate Resilience* and *Sustainable Antigonish*. However we are eager to have your input and hopefully your assistance! If you care about the environment we'd love to hear from you. Whether it's assisting with posters or just brainstorming and sharing your ideas and passion – we'd love to hear from you. Simply speak to Anne Camozzi, Judy Jowett or Michèle Ashby.



Welcome Back



We are pleased to once again call Antigonish “home”. While serving in the RCMP in 1972 I was transferred to Antigonish, accompanied by my wife, Marilyn, and our three sons, Jeffrey, Gregory and Mark, who were ages 6, 4 and 2 at the time. During our six-year stay in Antigonish, we made some long-lasting friends in the community and attended St. James United Church with our sons.

Now retired, it's a pleasure to return to Antigonish where we've always felt welcome and at home.

*Sincerely,
Marilyn & Wayne MacNeill*

AGM 2016



Spiritual Enrichment Fund

The Spiritual Enrichment Fund provides financial support for new experiences related to Christian growth. It provides financial support to individuals and/or families who wish to attend church-sponsored events. The general aim of this fund is to stimulate more involvement and interest in enriching our faith by providing access to experiences and resources outside our church and congregation.

Grants from the fund are intended for those who attend St. James United Church, Antigonish. The fund will be applied to registration fees but may also be used to cover other costs related to the event.

Events and organizations that might be of interest are as follows:

Workshops at the Tatamagouche Centre
Arthur Kidston Memorial Camp
Berwick United Church Camp
Sherbrooke Lake Camp

Application forms are available at the church office. For more information, contact Ida Sarty at idasarty@stjamesuc.com

Islam in Canada

Dr. Linda Darwish will be offering a Spring edition of the course Islam in Canada through Distance Learning from April 26 - June 17. The course will be offered in real time in a virtual classroom and she would be very happy to have members of the church and the wider community enrol.

This course explores diverse Muslim identities in North American, especially Canadian, society. The first part of the course surveys Islamic belief and history, and the history of Islam in Canada. In the remaining weeks, students engage with a variety of North American Muslim and non-Muslim perspectives on contemporary issues such as institutional development, authority, youth, gender, shariah, integration, media, discrimination, reform, and radicalization post-9/11.

Open to everyone and free to anyone over the age of 65. Registration details are available through the Continuing and Distance Education office of StFX.

Phone: (902) 867-2372

Email: continuinged@stfx.ca



Fran is Downsizing

I'm writing this because I think there is a spiritual component that joins the emotional and physical ones to the act of letting go of so much of your worldly possessions. I am "downsizing". When you are selling your house, so much attention goes toward sorting, finding the right place for each item, and letting go.

I'm in the spirit of it and frankly, I have no regrets. But it is hard. My daughter Andrea even gave me a book about this downsizing or decluttering. Find the joy in it was the recommendation. Sure enough, there has been joy and even surprises in this activity. For the many items that need a home, if you decide your first option is NOT to send them to the dumpster and NOT to sell them at a garage sale, then you are scrambling to find homes for your precious goods. I started with friends and Facebook. I took pictures of various things and got responses. That worked very well as friends came by and looked over books I had laid out on the ping pong table.

I learned how one family only gives second hand Christmas gifts. So my literature collection offered some good ideas. Then there were the German books of my late husband written in the German language. There was no interest from the university so I went on Kijiji and the German books found homes with 1) someone whose family had escaped Russian-occupied East Germany (just like my husband's family had), 2) a mother of an autistic son who is a keen reader of the German language and wanted more books for her son, and 3) A woman who loves all things related to modern German history. For each trip to Halifax with the books I had found a life story that added onto my own narrative of downsizing.

It has been almost four months of finding matches. It still continues and I am ready for more. One other joyful gem was going through my papers and finding my mother's prayer: "Lord, great expectations are flying my kite of high hopes but patience holds the string." This indeed is a piece of wisdom as I get ready to sell my house .

Fran Wittgens

What's so Amazing About Grace? by Philip Yancey

Our Bible Study (discussion group) on Tuesdays covers many subjects: service, love, hope, the list is endless. During one session we discussed Phillip Yancey, who serves as editor-at-large for Christianity Today magazine.

This was the beginning of my reading some of Philip Yancey books:

The Jesus I Never Knew,
Where is God When It Hurts?
Disappointment With God.
What's So Amazing about Grace?

This is a brief review which I hope will cause you to read the books for yourself.

What is grace? So often we think of it as words uttered before a meal - a person's name - but it is so much more.

A quote from the book tells about a man whose daughter was killed by an IRA bomb. He said of the bombing, "I have lost my daughter but I bear no grudge... I shall pray tonight and every night, that God will forgive them."

Can grace survive in the midst of such atrocities as the Nazi holocaust? Can grace be shown to someone who kills without reason?

How does someone like General Romeo D'Allaire forgive what happened in Rwanda? Or what is happening in our world today?

What about grudges held against family, acquaintances in the Church or community? How do we seek forgiveness? How do we receive God's grace to live with hope and healing.

Betty Webber



St. James United Church • 197 Main Street, Antigonish, NS
Phone: (902) 863-2001 • Email: st.james@ns.sympatico.ca
www.stjamesuc.com/connect.htm