



# CONNECTIONS

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

By the Outreach & Communications Committee

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*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.* ~Hebrews 12:1-2a



*Dear Friends in Christ,*

When I was ordained to ministry on May 29, 1994, I had some idea of what the future would hold. I expected I would preach sermons, visit in hospitals and homes, and attend meetings. I knew at times the days would be long and my faith would be tested. Over the last quarter century those things have indeed happened. Yet so much more has taken place as well.

I have had the privilege of sharing in the lives of countless wonderful people and in the work and witness of some incredible churches. I have preached in front of crowds ranging from one person to almost a thousand people. I have visited in large facilities and small homes. I have been part of meetings which established food banks, built seniors homes, and revitalized the local congregation.

I have been richly blessed during my time in ministry. God has led me to places which challenged me and helped me to grow and God has surrounded me with people whose lives, faith, and witness have inspired me to greater discipleship.

As I pass my 25th Anniversary of ordination and over a decade here at St. James and St. David's, I feel honoured that God led me to Antigonish to serve as your minister and I can honestly say that I am as excited to be doing ministry with you as I was when I started with the church so many years ago.

May God continue to bless our life of faith together.

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

# Youth in Action

We have had another great year at Youth Group! Each month featured an opportunity for service, Christian learning, fun and food! Participants from St. James, Full Gospel, Locharbor United, Grace Church, St. Paul’s, St. Ninians, Sherbrooke United, St. Mary’s, and “no particular church at all” enjoyed a Karaoke Night with our Friends for



L’arche, quizzing “The Rev’s” Peter, Sue, and Gerry about a life of faith, hearing from Missionaries about living intentionally, having a pool party, enjoying a worship night with “Life Supply” and much more. New friendships were forged and thoughts challenged. Our final event will be a barbeque on June 15th.

Since my own last “youth” will be graduating this year, I would like to welcome a new Youth Group Coordinator. There are many guest speakers who are eager to be involved, and students from Xavier Christian Fellowship happy to help out as well. This monthly ministry of St. James has been a

blessing for youth in a town who don’t always have a lot of fun, healthy, options for teens. I am happy to help transition and support. Please consider this opportunity and spread the word. On behalf of the youth, THANK YOU to St. James for hosting!



# Cookies & Caring for Claire

Deep gratitude goes out to the St. James community and also to her friends and family in Antigonish, who made "Music for Claire's Journey" such a success.

On June 2 the community came together to show Claire MacDonell and her two children our support as she receives treatment for cancer. Money was raised to help

with extra expenses associated with travel for medical treatment, childcare, and additional medical costs. The music was beautiful, the church was filled, and the cookies were yummy as we all put our hearts, minds, and talents to supporting Claire. If you would like to donate but have not already had an opportunity, you are welcome to drop a donation off at the St. James church office.



# You Matter

Jodi Myles lost her youngest son, Jordon, in Feb 2016. At the time of his death, he was a well liked artist in grade 12, who had been fighting suicidal thoughts for several years.

Jordon accessed many resources during his illness including several inpatient stays at both St. Martha’s Regional Hospital in Antigonish and the IWK in Halifax. After Jordon took his life, Jodi struggled herself to find purpose.

With the support of family and friends, she hosted the first Warrior Walk at Keppoch to honour those lost because of mental illness and to speak openly and without shame about these illnesses and suicide. With funds donated at that event, the Jordon Myles Foundation was created.

Jodi and the Jordon Myles Foundation (JMF) board have done several things since then to help those living with mental illness and to decrease stigma in our community. The biggest and most successful initiative, the YouMatter bags, began in December 2016 and continues today.

Each person who arrives as an inpatient in mental health or addictions at St. Martha’s Regional Hospital as well as those using outpatient

detox services receives a YouMatter bag during their stay. The response to these bags has been incredible, with almost 900 bags delivered at this point.

## "You Matter Bags"

The Jordon Myles Foundation creates "You Matter" care bags to be given to anyone admitted to the Mental Health & Addictions unit at St. Martha's. These kits are filled with basic care items to provide comfort, love, & support. We want people to know that even in their darkest moments, they are loved, cared for and that they MATTER!!

We are always looking for donations of supplies of the following items:

- Fleece Blankets, Toothpaste, Toothbrush, Lip Balm, Socks, Water, Granola/Protein Bars, Deodrant, Comb/Brush, Body Lotion, Gently Used Reading Books/Comics, Mini Shampoos/Conditioners, Soap, Hard Candies, and Markers/Pencil Crayons for adult coloring.

Sincerely,  
The Jordon Myles Foundations

# An Auspicious Occasion

June 2, 2019 was the first Sunday of the month, a time when special occasions and anniversaries are blessed. Rev. Peter Smith invited all celebrants to come to the front of the church for blessings and the line stretched from window to window and we heard about birthdays, anniversaries, and even Bob



and Mavis' 65th. It was Ascension Sunday, a date appropriately saved to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Rev. Peter's ordination and Rev. Doug Stewart's 40th.

Both Peter and Doug answered their call to ministry and have become gifts to our congregation and community, enriching our lives spiritually with their talents of commitment and dedication to the service of God. They jointly delivered their sermon titled "Where Do We Look For God". They shared stories of their journey towards becoming ministers, the various calls they answered, and some interesting experiences they encountered along the way. A most touching moment for me was when Doug credited his grandmother for being the angel that guided and inspired him to become the person he became. Since we grew up in Lochaber and I knew Mrs. Ethel "Duncan E." and I know how pleased this acknowledgement would make her and how very deserving she was of this credit I was near to tears. Their choice of hymns for the service also reflects their ownership of Christian action - I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me, I The Lord of Sea and Sky and Go To The World.

Rev Peter's first sermon at St. James was on December 2, 2007. Those of us that had been on the Search Committee felt the arrival of Peter and Meredith was the Best Christmas Present Ever. To be at Sunday's celebration and witnessing the tributes made by Doug Hunter, Rev Norman Marple (Peter's father-in-law), Father Donald MacGillivray, Brian MacLeod, and Harley MacCaull summed up for us how successful Rev. Peter has been for the past eleven and a half years in helping our congregation reach its goals. St James is buzzing with activities; its lights come on early and go out late. When Peter posted a message to us in Connections October 2007 he wrote "It felt like a gift from God when everything came together and Roy (Murray) told me the call had been extended". Peter went on to write, "I believe God has great things in store for St James and St David's and I look forward to being a part of your community."

Today's speakers boasted of Rev Peter's skill at helping us become a healthy church in an ecumenical community with active outreach. He has published 4

books that are a resource for other ministers and lay worship leaders. Our groups and committees are busy, and many organizations and folks have found a home at St James. Our young people and children have fun and enjoy Christian fellowship and music with us. Rev Peter's children's stories have props and magic tricks with themes that are so very intergenerational that they are like Bruce MacKinnon's newspaper cartoons, allowing the adults to receive a preview of the sermon with entertainment.

Following the tributes to Peter he shared some stories and gave thanks to the group. At this time his little daughter Hope run over to him with a big hug and exclaimed "Daddy, I love you," and she touched all our hearts and probably not nearly so much as she must have melted his. How appropriate is it that Meredith and Peter have their wee daughter Hope all these years after coming to us during Advent, the season of hope and anticipation?

Liz Millet provided an entertaining overview of Doug's career from ordination in 1979 to High Level, Alberta; Shawinigan-Grand Mare, Valois United Church in Pointe Clare, Quebec and then the completion of his ministry as the conference minister at Montreal & Ottawa Conference.

He thought he came home to retire but that was short lived. He is presently the Associate Chaplain at St. Martha's Regional Hospital as well as the supervising minister at Merigomish and provides pulpit supply. He even covers some services at St. James. Doug's sense of humour and quick wit add flavour to his stories and sermons. We appreciate his contributions to the life and work of St James and surrounding areas. Sister Catherine Mac Gillivray, Doug's co-chaplain at St Martha's, also shared her reflections both serious and funny on the joys and rewards of working with Doug.

As per usual the organizers of the event deserve thanks for a successful time. The refreshments were delicious, the cakes were beautiful, the entertainment was delightful, and the slide show was informative as well as enjoyable. Presentations were made to Doug and Peter on behalf of the congregation, UCW and Men's Club. The celebration closed with a prayer.

- Joanne Mackenzie

# Sunday June 2 A Celebration to Honour the Ministry of

The Rev. Peter Smith — 25yrs  
The Rev. Doug Stewart — 40yrs



*"This is your life" which was in a form of slide show of pictures that were given from both their families. Refreshments were hosted by St. James Hospitality committee. Doug Hunter had the pleasure of saying a few words and sharing a few stories about Rev. Peter, and Liz Millet had pleasure of saying few words and sharing a few stories about Rev. Doug. There were a number of invited guests and members of our congregation that added a few comments also.*

## Rev. Peter

St. James is truly blessed to have Rev. Peter Smith as our minister. Our congregation has become healthier and more active in its community outreach. And today we celebrate his 25th anniversary of his ordination. We have numerous groups and organizations within our congregation, in addition many community groups have found a convenient home at St. James.

Rev. Peter has published 4 books, and these books are a resource for other ministers and lay leaders of worship.

Antigonish is an ecumenical community, and our minister plays a big role in that.

Probably the biggest challenge for a minister is Sunday worship with the children. You may think you have control but at times the children seize the moment. But Rev. Peter handles it well with panache. He is a master at using props and magic tricks to grab and hold the children 's attention.

We congratulate him on reaching this milestone of 25 years in his ministry since ordination.

We give thanks that Rev. Peter answered God's call to the ministry and he answered our call to be our minister.

## Rev. Doug

Following his ordination in 1979, he was called to High Level for 4 years, then 6 years in Shawinigan - Grand Mère, then 18 yrs at Valois United Church in Pointe Claire, Quebec. He completed his ministry as the conference and personnel minister at Montreal & Ottawa conference.

After his long and distinguished career in ministry, Rev. Doug retired, but not for long. After returning home, Rev. Doug accepted the position of Associate Chaplain at St. Martha's Regional Hospital and continues in this role today. He also accepted the position of supervising minister at Merigomish United Church where he continues to do pulpit supply.

Rev. Doug has a wonderful sense of humour and a quick wit. It's easy to see this as he tells the children's story - he's ready for whatever they have to offer. He has witnessed many interesting events in his 40 years in the ministry. Rev. Doug volunteers at our Hot Meal program, and he is a gift to St. James, St. Martha's, and his community. He gives freely of his time and talents.

After 40 years of ministry, there is no doubt that Rev. Doug has made a difference in many lives.

*Rev. Peter and Rev. Doug cut the special cake and everyone enjoyed some. The afternoon ended with the closing prayer which was said all together.*

## Tribute Rev. Peter Smith 25th Anniversary of his Ordination

St. James is truly blessed to have Rev. Peter Smith as its minister. Our congregation has become healthier and more active in its community outreach during Peter's ministry. And today we are here to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination.

Rev. Ken MacLeod led us through a difficult time and with his guidance we developed a mission statement - a statement of what we wanted to be. Under Peter's guidance we have seen that mission statement come to fruition. We set out on a major capital campaign to maintain and upgrade our physical facilities so they would better meet the goals we had set for ourselves - and we raised more money than the goal we had set. As a result the physical infrastructure at St. James is recognized and used by many community groups as well as by the groups and organizations within our congregation.

We have: The Sunday School, The Youth Group, Our 4 choirs, The 2 UCW Units, The Seniors' Group, The Bible Study Group, The Meditation Group, The Prayer Shawl Ministry. Our very active Social Justice Committee and our Hot Meal Program and Christmas Dinner that have both expanded to encompass broader community sponsorship. In addition many community groups have found a convenient home at St. James since the renovations were completed.

Peter is incredibly well organized and he keeps the Council and committees of the church running smoothly and effectively. Admittedly we have excellent lay leadership on these committees but Peter's hand can be seen in the coordination between the committees and their smooth functioning.



Peter's leadership in worship is outstanding - and recognized beyond our congregation. Peter has published four books: a book of communion prayers and three books of stories synchronized to the three year lectionary cycle. These books are a resource for other ministers and lay leaders of worship. (He has also written numerous short stories). Peter regularly enrolls in continuing education programs that keep his preaching relevant and expand his skill set for pastoral ministry.

Antigonish is an ecumenical community. Our minister plays a big role in that. He is chaplain to the Royal Canadian Legion, he is part of the Chaplaincy at StFX, interacting with Fr. Gary, Sr. Jovita and the other protestant chaplains, as well as interacting with Rev Sue at St. Paul's and Fr. Don at the Cathedral. Peter shares in the ministry at the RK nursing home, conducting worship there once a month.

Probably the biggest challenge for a minister in Sunday worship is the children's time. Other parts of the service are pretty well scripted but the children's time ... . The leader may have a plan to control the flow, but at times the kids seize control and it is like a transport truck hurtling down the highway with no brakes - unpredictable and out of control. But Peter handles it well with panache. In fact his children's stories are as relevant to the rest of the congregation as they are to the kids. He is a master at using props and magic tricks to grab and hold the children's attention. And I have heard gasps from adults in the congregation at the outcome of some of his slight of hand.

And speaking of children... Hope springs eternal - and she certainly did spring into the lives of Peter and Meredith and into the life of this congregation. Hope is a breath of fresh air and a constant reminder of joy, enthusiasm and HOPE. She has been a blessing to the Smith family and we are delighted that she is a part of our family too.

Now you have probably noticed that during the time Peter has been at St. James his hair has undergone a change in colour. I see two possible explanations for this. The first is the challenges that he has faced with us at St. James. The second is the challenge he has faced becoming a father. Perhaps the credit or blame for this should be shared equally between the two explanations.

I do know that we, in this church, are blessed and privileged to have Rev. Peter as our minister. We

## Clan Thompson Pipe Band and Friends ~ In Concert ~

2:30 PM Sunday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
St. James United Church



Photo taken July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 The Clan

## Thompson Pipe Band and Friends Returns for Fourth Year

The Clan Thompson Pipe Band, under the direction of Pipe Major Scott Williams and Lead Drummer Judy Smith, both of Antigonish, will return to St. James United Church on Sunday afternoon, June 7<sup>th</sup> with an all star cast of performers featuring Emery Van de Wiel on Flute and vocals, Martha Palmer on Accordion and vocals, Fiddler Karen Beaton accompanied by Leona Williams on piano, Trumpet and Flute by Luke and Mary Henderson, Organist Sandra Johnson, a Scottish Small Pipes Ensemble, dancers from the Smith School of Highland Dance, and featuring in his debut solo performance, piper Oakley MacLean of St. Andrews. The M.C. will be Jack Langlois, Stellarton's Town Crier. The concert will start at 2:30 PM. Admission is \$10 with children under 12 admitted free with an adult. All proceeds will be directed to the St. James Music Bursary Fund.

congratulate him on reaching this milestone in his ministry - the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination. We give thanks that Peter answered God's call to ministry, 25 years ago and that he answered our call to be our minister. Thank you so much Peter. Congratulations on reaching this milestone and may you have many more years of ministry.

# Who is that Singing Physician

Well that sounds like Minoli Amit. She’s a highly competent paediatrician who sings in our choir. But do you know anything else about her? Her story is an interesting one.



Minoli was born and spent her early life in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). When she was 17, she moved to Antigonish with her family and completed high school here. Her father Eric, a high ranking Sri Lankan civil servant, had taken a post at the Coady International Institute, eventually holding the position of Director from 1991 to 1994, and again from 1995 to 1996.

Minoli’s mother was also a force to be reckoned with – well loved matriarch and teacher to her family. It is probably from “Amy” that Minoli inherited many of her passions – a strong love for family, music (singing, piano and ... accordion?), entertaining, and volunteering. She sits on multiple boards including those for Theatre Antigonish, St. Martha’s Regional Hospital Foundation, Doctors Nova Scotia and the Antigonish Beautification and Land Rehabilitation Committee.

From a young age Minoli was encouraged to participate in many typical Canadian activities. Although skating was never really her favourite sport, today she’s one of the organizers of the “Grand Kilted Skating Party” – a fundraiser for Theatre Antigonish. She was actually a better soccer player.

Today she still enjoys cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, canoeing, hiking, swimming, and sailing. Rumour has it she secretly longs to own and operate her own speedboat! One of Minoli’s other current enthusiasms is gardening. And she’s interested in fashion and known to sport “très chic” shoes and purses. Minoli has quite catholic tastes in music, enjoying everything from jazz to classical to ABBA!

Minoli started her university career at StFX, but when offered the chance to follow a medical career, she moved on to Dalhousie in Halifax. While at Dalhousie, she met and eventually married Dr John Hamilton (an ophthalmologist) and they carried on two careers here at Saint Martha’s Hospital. They also expanded their family by three children – Alistair, Claire (married to Glenn Graham), and David. Minoli is now a doting grandmother of two – another proud achievement!

While growing up on Hawthorne St., Minoli was exposed to multiculturalism through her parents’ entertaining of a constant flow of Coady participants. Because Minoli was exposed to so many different cultures, she has proven to be an excellent mentor to many medical professionals who have come to Canada from other countries. She is very involved in St James United Church and the choir is especially grateful for her beautiful soprano contribution to their music.

## People’s School on Poverty (Part 1)

Throughout 2018, the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC) conducted a People’s School on Poverty – a “model which highlights community knowledge holding”. They “...gathered community members together to discuss their experiences with poverty and possible solutions and ways to alleviate the effects of poverty. The project consisted of six sessions with community members and service providers to discuss how they have experienced poverty, what programs and services are available and effective, and what can be done going forward to improve the community.”

This consisted of two large group sessions (initial and closing), plus four sessions in specific communities within Antigonish county (Antigonish, Pomquet, Paq’tnekek Mi’kmaw Nation, and Upper Big Tracadie). The final report will eventually be available on line and the link to it will be published at St James.

For now, with the kind permission of the APRC, here is a synopsis of some of the information presented and collected. All quotes are taken directly from the final abstract, including a statistical quote from Dr. Christine Saulnier with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – the keynote speaker at the opening session.

“The discussions, though in-depth and unique in each community, covered topics which are categorized into six emergent themes: housing, transportation, food security, income security and policy, communication, and culture and socialization. The report covers each of these themes in terms of identified gaps and experiences as well as recommendations for actions in each category. Though these six themes emerged from the discussions, we also recognize that the effects of poverty are intertwined and therefore solutions need to be comprehensive and multi-faceted.”

### What does poverty in Antigonish look like?

“The data shows that while unemployment is a barrier, underemployment and poor wage are often the experiences of those facing poverty. The people in our community living in poverty are often working multiple jobs or wish to be working full time and are only offered part time opportunities.”

“The minimum wage in Nova Scotia is currently \$11.00 an hour but based on the living costs in Antigonish and surrounding area, the living wage, or the hourly wage required for a full-time job to live comfortably in the area, is \$17.75 an hour (Saulnier, 2018)... For a one-person household, the poverty line is considered an annual after tax income of \$22,133.”

### What is already being done to address poverty issues?

“There are many programs, services, organizations, and events that work to address the effects of poverty already happening in communities. These services work on an immediate needs level, and often address one or more aspects of living in poverty.” Asset maps of identified services and programs in each community will be available in Appendix A of the final Abstract.

## Critical Issues

### Housing:

There is a lack of housing in general, affordable housing specifically, emergency housing, and maintenance and support.

“There are limitations to housing in African Nova Scotian and First Nation communities that stem directly from racism and oppressive policies. Under current measures, funding for building houses on reserve is restricted, and ownership is restricted based under the Indian Act. African Nova Scotian communities have been fighting a battle for title to their historic family lands as well. These factors cannot be ignored in the analysis of housing gaps in our communities.”

### Transportation:

There is a continued problem with a lack of access to transportation.

“This restricts access to many other necessities, including healthcare, socialization, education, and employment. Many people can’t access services or participate in activities because they have no access to transportation.”

This is especially true for people with mobility issues and our rural population.

### Food Security:

Multiple issues in this area include poor experience accessing services (judgmental attitudes, being “tested”), lack of choice (people often donate what is unwanted), lack of access (to the Food Bank for example, due to hours and location) and malnutrition (limited food budgets can restrict good food choices).

### Income Security and Policy:

Underpaid workers (unrealistic minimum wage), inadequate social assistance (underfunded social assistance, disability and employment insurance), difficulty accessing social assistance (unfair ineligibility, students’ issues) lack of support for transitioning off of social assistance (no supports in place to ease this, strictly regulated) and institutional racism in policy (colonial model which implements racism, both implicit and explicit, is heightened in First Nations and African Nova Scotian communities).

## Communications:

There is a lack of information that leads to both community members and service providers/organizations frequently not knowing what services are available, there are service overlaps and gaps (lack of networking, competition for funding and barriers to transitions from one service to another), and unclear expectations and eligibility.

## Culture and Socialization:

Distance from cultural practices (both physical and as a result of assimilationist policies), inaccessible cultural practices and events (recognized as important, but there may be both physical and financial barriers to attendance), and social isolation (leading to other concerns, including health impacts).

“Community members expressed that poverty is a social experience as well as a financial one, and often poverty is experienced relatively based on circumstances.”

In the next edition of Connections, I’ll present some of the recommendations that arose out of the People’s School on Poverty, but one of the most common recommendations across categories was the implementation of a hub model for services. “This model is based on the concept that ‘every door is the right door’. It understands that poverty is multi-faceted and is influenced by many factors that extend beyond financial status. When all related services are in the same physical space, someone who is accessing services does not need to deal with the difficulties of navigating which is the right service, where it is, how to access it, etc. Instead, someone can go to a hub, and be directly helped in whatever way is most appropriate for them. It also eases communication among service providers, and uses a lens that understands that people face a complexity of barriers and difficulties which require wraparound services.”

If you are interested in this particular topic, please retain this copy of Connections so you can match up the issues with the recommendations in the next edition.

-Michèle Ashby

# Annual Meeting Region 15



Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of Regions 14 and 15. Nova Scotia and Bermuda are in Region 15 and New Brunswick, PEI and the Gaspé are in Region 14 which has been renamed Fundy, St. Lawrence, Dawning Waters Regional Council but most people still call it Region 14 because most of us could not remember the whole name.

I met many new people while there, and everyone was so very friendly and welcoming, true Maritimers. I also met some people I had known through my work at the General Council Office and they had a very surprised look on their faces to see me there. It was great to have the chance to visit and catch up plus meet so many new people.

During the meeting we met together in the 2 regions except for Saturday when we met separately as Regional Councils 15 and 14. That was a long morning for us in Region 15 and we did not finish our work so had to go back in the evening after scheduled Saturday evening agenda items. We did complete our work and did agree to meet again next year with Regional Council 14.

Worship and music were an important part of the meeting and led us in faith and thanksgiving throughout. The Saturday evening worship was led by the Intermediates and Youth and was a wonderful, energetic worship of praise through Words and Song. The picture of Ben was taken during that worship service. The Youth and Intermediates also joined us at different times throughout the meeting, coming into the room with much energy and enthusiasm, and their input and questions were welcomed and greatly appreciated.

As a Regional Council, there is still work to be done with new learnings and ways of doing things. The theme of the meeting was Faith Forward and much of the meeting was talking about how to do this, how to move forward and live as a faith community working together, as a regional council and as The United Church of Canada. To help with this staff members explained their roles with further explanations on pastoral relations and the new Church Hub.

Catherine MacDonald, who is now the Past President, talked about her year as President. She used the Bible verse from Ecclesiastes 3 “There is a time for everything ....” as she talked about the formal end of Maritime Conference as we move from what was into new beginnings and new possibilities in the Regions.

Kate Rodd, was one person surprised to see me and it was great to talk with her. Kate was the representative from General Council and its Executive and she told us about the Executive of General Council. It is now a smaller group but the diversity of its members reflects the diversity across the church. She spoke about the guiding principles and vision of the church as we move forward in this new structure.

We also had 3 theme speakers who gave wonderful presentations. Michael Dowd talked about the environment and the importance of right relationships with it and its sustainability as we move into the future. He explained many different things with many examples but what I remember most was his discussion on the importance of God and life centred-ness versus human centred-ness. In this he talked about how we need to honour the past and the future in our faithfulness to God, remembering that all creation shows us God.

Emma Seamone was another theme speaker. She is a social justice advocate and was part of the delegation of youth who went to the UN for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. She talked about the history of the Wabanakis territory of which the Mik’maq are a part including colonization and relationships.

The other presenter was Shannon MacLean who is in Youth Ministry. She talked about her children

and how they all came to be one family, and her son, who was with Youth Forum, joined her. She also talked about how she and her family live their faith forward with love in their daily lives which also reaches into her work with youth.

It was a great meeting, some times it got a bit long but it quickly turned around as we continued our work and I’m so glad that I could be a part of it. I also enjoyed my daily walks in the nearby Waterfowl Park. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this first meeting of the 2 Regional Councils.

*Blessings,  
Joan MacGillivray*

## Post Script

We met as a region in the morning, the only time we met for business, and it was a long morning.

The biggest question before us was how we will meet in the future and there was a lot of discussion and very heartfelt and emotional input. The youth and intermediates expressed concerns with real emotion that if we didn’t meet as the 2 regions then they would lose many of their friends and connections and even their church. The question was also how often do we need to meet, yearly or every 2 years. There were a lot of conversations in table groups and also people speaking to the whole group. In the end, with confusion over the vote and what we were voting for, we had to adjourn because we were already almost an hour late for lunch. And we had to reconvene after the larger meeting adjourned on Saturday evening. Thankfully we had had time to think and were also rejuvenated by a wonderful worship led by the youth and intermediates.

When we reconvened we were able to make the decision to meet together with Region 14. However we didn’t know how they voted so we’re still unsure of the outcome. We did however agree in the larger meeting of the 2 conferences that we would meet in 2020.

As I said earlier the youth and intermediates led a wonderful, energetic worship of praise through Words and Song.



From May 2 - 5, I was privileged to attend a KAIROS Streams of Justice Gathering on the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq in Sackville NB at Mount Alison University. This workshop focused on social justice issues and I chose to follow the Indigenous "stream", an issue long dear to my heart.

I must start by thanking St. James United Church and specifically the Christian Education Fund for paying my registration and supporting my participation at this wonderful event. Opportunities for personal growth abounded and hopefully I can share some of the information I gleaned with you.

Our Indigenous Rights "stream" was facilitated by Dawn Maracle, a Kanienkeha / Mohawk woman from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, currently living in Toronto. Dawn is an award-winning diversity activist/organizer. Our stream surveyed various topics impacting Indigenous rights across Turtle Island (North America).

Our first session partnered with the Ecological Justice stream, for an outstanding presentation by Michelle Francis-Denny, the Community Liaison for the Boat Harbour Remediation Project at nearby A'se'k (The Other Room). The Boat Harbour Treatment Facility, adjacent to the Pictou Landing First Nation, has had a hugely negative impact on these people since the 1960s. We explored the necessity of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous activism to protect the watershed. For me, it was sickening to hear the many ways the PLFN people have been lied to and how promises made to them by the mills and governments have consistently been broken. A beautiful area which once provided them with an abundance of natural resources is now polluted almost beyond belief. This issue has been in the news recently as the province pushes the current

mill owners, Northern Pulp, to honour the agreement to close the treatment facility by 31 January 2020 and start the remediation process. There has been tremendous pushback from the company despite years of forewarning. Their latest proposal is to discharge effluent out a mile long pipe into the Northumberland Strait!

Our group then moved into discussions on the status of Bill C-262 (an Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and the progress of Education for Reconciliation – a response to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Report and "Calls to Action". If you've been following the weekly notices in our church's bulletins the last few months, these are the 94 "Calls to Action" which will continue to be published over time. Personally I love then Justice (now Senator) Murray Sinclair's succinct response when asked by a non-Indigenous person "What can I do?" he replied, "Read the damned report!"

Another workshop I attended was called "Meeting our Multi-Faith Neighbours". Pastor Rick Pryce discussed being open to others and building relationships with them. He is a Lutheran who has been working with Muslims in Lunenburg for over ten years. He led a lively discussion on the Ten Commandments of Interfaith Dialogue demonstrating how easy it is to let pre- and misconceptions colour our thinking.

Friday afternoon we were invited to join students from Tantramar Regional High School in marching through Sackville's downtown streets, as they protested against climate change in solidarity with students world wide who have been inspired by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. The students were out of school for a Teachers' PD day and therefore it was even more impressive how many turned out and how organized, passionate and articulate they were! It was an honour to march in their ranks.

The second day of work focused on networking and a conversation regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) facilitated by Andrea Colfer, an Indigenous educator from Elsipogtog Reserve in NB. Andrea's sister, Gladys Simon, went missing in 2004. Her remains were only discovered in a very isolated location in Sugarloaf Park, south of Campbelltown in 2012. Andrea recounted her story in a frank way, including the varied community and police responses. This was followed by an emotional but supportive discussion.

The group then discussed allyship and how to mobilize action, specifically after a KAIROS Blanket Exercise. That afternoon over 150 people gathered for the largest KAIROS Blanket Exercise (KBE) so far in Atlantic Canada. Elder Donna Augustine shared how the spiritual teachings of Indigenous people from the coast were taken west for preservation when colonization began in the east and contributed a spiritual welcome to all who had gathered.

The Blanket Exercise is a "unique, participatory history lesson – developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers and educators. It fosters truth, understanding, respect and reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples". I had always wanted to participate in one since I first heard of them and the experience did not disappoint. During a KBE, participants "walk on blankets representing the land and into the role of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples by reading scrolls and carrying cards which ultimately determine their outcome as they literally 'walk' through situations that include pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization and resistance. Participants are guided through the experience by trained facilitators (who read the script and assume the roles of European explorers and settlers) and Indigenous Elders or knowledge keepers. The Exercise concludes with a debriefing, conducted as a 'talking circle', during which participants discuss the learning experience, process their feelings, ask questions, share insights and deepen their understanding."

All photos and KBE quotes courtesy of KAIROS Canada.

Throughout the weekend other activities included a banquet (guest speaker Colombian activist Kelly Johanna Campo of the Organización Femenina Popular spoke on arts and activism), multiple smudging opportunities, daily morning worship services of assorted faiths (UCC to Quaker) and also participation in a Pipe Ceremony at a Sacred Fire. "The Sacred Fire provides a connection between the physical and spiritual worlds. It is a space for prayers, offerings and quiet reflection." Our Fire Keeper was Elder Brett Colfer and he had many interesting thoughts to pass on as did all the Elders with whom I was privileged to speak throughout the weekend. I must share that this ceremony takes place at sunrise and the first morning I attempted to attend it, I somehow missed the location (and large tipi) entirely as I was looking in

the wrong direction! However, all was not wasted as I took advantage of my early rising to enjoy a solitary walk along the boardwalk in the lovely Waterfowl Park adjacent to the campus.

I returned home with multiple resource materials, most of which I have left or will leave in "the parlour" for anyone to read. Many but not all of these deal with Indigenous issues, some are on the other "streams" – ecological justice and migrant issues.

One of the stories that inspired me during this time in NB, was the legend of a hummingbird who is observed putting drops of water on a forest fire – over and over again. The other animals ask her what she is doing and especially the large bear is rather condescending. Her response is "I am doing what I can." The other animals are all inspired to contribute their own unique offering and together they save their forest home. Sometimes our passion to improve our world can feel this way. What can I personally do to prevent injustice in our world? Each of us needs to "do what we can".

- Michèle Ashby



Andrew Murray was recently in Quebec City attending the annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference. His observation on the presence of public art in that city? "Everywhere I turn there's beauty."

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

*An excerpt from the Session minutes of November 18, 1953:*

The Chairman explained that the meeting was called to decide what would be the best course to follow in assigning the use of the hall to be opened and dedicated today. After discussion it was decided to appoint a committee to have oversight of this matter under the Session, and on motions duly moved and seconded and passed the following were

suggested as members, the same to be approached by the Chairman and asked to serve until further notice: Mr. W.D. Graham, Dr. O.C. MacIntosh ,and Mrs. E. S. Gourley. The chairman invited the members of Session to lead the procession from the Church to the Hall for the dedication, and to sit at the front facing the congregation in the Hall.

*An excerpt from the Session meeting on January 13, 1954:*

The Chairman reported for the committee in charge of assigning use of the new hall that it was in

use each week day evening as follows: on Monday evening the girls and boys alternate each week, on Tuesday the Senior Badminton Club, Wednesday is Church night, Thursday the Young Peoples Union. Friday the Junior Badminton Club and on Saturday it is being used by a group of young people not at present organized. The need for proper supervision of the use of the new facilities was stressed and it was decided to carry on with the same committee for the time being.

*Another excerpt from the same meeting:*

The Chairman gave a very interesting sketch of the early History of the Congregation, the holding of the first regular services in 1804, the acquisition of the Church property and the calling of the first Minister four years later etc .After considerable discussion it was moved by Mr. A. E. Whidden seconded by E. D. MacNaughton and passed that very special anniversary services on this sesquicentennial or 150th anniversary of the start and the sustained services of worship in this area be commended to the Congregation at the Annual meeting. These services would be held preferably in October and it was felt that laymen should take a prominent part in these services as they did in the first ones 150 years ago. The fact that two of the pioneer ministers of

this congregation, Rev. Messers. James Munroe and Thomas T Trotter were buried in the old cemetery at the rear of the Church, was mention as a reason for improving the appearance of the cemetery during the coming summer before the anniversary service.

## Meditation: In Search of Stillness

What is it that keeps a group of meditators going for 25 years? Stillness in the midst of busy lives! And it seems that we aren't the only ones. Permitting ourselves space each day to be still, to let silence come to allow that peace is what is and was being practiced around the world for thousands of years.

In today's lingo we need it for our spiritual, mental and physical health. There are meditation practices in schools, in prisons, in hospitals. It's practiced on campuses, in self help groups, and on expensive cruises and getaways. Yet the practice is simple and it's been a lifeline to countless people.

The Tuesday Meditation Group that meets at St.James multi purpose room each Tuesday at 3 p.m. September through June gathered on June 14th and 15th for a celebration honouring the many practices in our local area that pursue meditation, either through groups or through classes. The three guests to lead us each has had a special involvement in meditation and its sister, mindfulness.

People curious to learn more about the traditions and also the different groups gathered together. A light lunch was served as well as an opportunity for a Q and A to question and share. Two short meditations, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, gave the uninitiated a sense of how it is done. One takeaway the group is really proud of is the brochure for each participant. It has a section in which the information on the local meditation groups is printed for easy reference in the future.

We hope there are still those of you who are curious about meditation. Our group is very welcoming to those who want to give it a try. It isn't a formal or daunting experience, . . . just comfortable.

### Pathways to Meditation

an exploration of the traditions available in Antigonish



June 14 & 15  
St. James United Church

World Community for Christian Meditation  
celebrating 25 years of interdenominational meditation in Antigonish

ALL WELCOME

Friday, June 14 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Discussion & Film:

history & philosophy of Eastern  
meditation

Saturday, June 15 9:45 am - 3:00 pm

9:45 - 10:00 Registration

10:00 - 10:10 Welcome:

Rev. Peter Smith & Fran Wittgens

10:10 - 12:30 Ancient Teachings  
on the Essence of Meditation:

Yvonne Macor

12:30 - 1:30 lunch:

vegan & non-vegan soups & sides  
(pay what you can)

1:30 - 2:15 Mindfulness Meditation:

Phyllis O'Donnell, C.S.M.

2:15 - 3:00 Q&A:

Dr. Adéla Sandness



PUTTING THE polish on their upcoming performances, cast and musicians of St. James United Church Youth Choir invite the public to "Hurry on Down," a play of Zacchaeus, November 21 and 22 at the St. James United Church Hall, at 7:30 p.m. Involved in the production are Lee Smith-Hanlon (front, left), Suzanne Swaine; Katie MacDonald (middle, left), Kaylyn MacKenzie, Brett Smith-Hanlon, Jeffrey MacNeil; Bob Murray (back, left), Beth Fraser, Elizabeth Van Den Heuvel, and J.J. Steeves. Also participating in the play is Candace MacKenzie.

## Highland Brunch

St James United Church  
Saturday, July 13 9:30-11:30



Pancakes, Sausages, Maple Syrup,  
Blueberry Sauce, Juice, Fair Trade  
Coffee, Tea

Adults \$8 • Children \$4 • toddlers free

St James Flower Committee has been revived. During the summer we have access to beautiful flowers, during autumn, winter and early spring not so available. If anyone wishes to donate flowers during that time by honouring a special event or loved one please contact: Sheila Davison, 902-863-5734; Dianne Theuerkauf, 902-338-2338; or Betty Webber, 902-863-1301.

Antigonish Transit - There is interest in the availability of the Transit Service on Sundays for church attendance etc. A survey is needed before this can happen. If you are interested in helping, please call Joe Crossman, 902-318-0968 or Antigonish Transit, 902-867-0411.

# Regional Council 15

Rev. Peter Smith



On January 1, 2019, after years of consultation, voting by congregations and presbyteries, and the action of the 43rd General Council, the United Church moved to a new way of working together.

Instead of 90 Presbyteries and 13 Conferences there are now 16 Regions which gather together congregations to do the wider work of the church.

From May 24-26, 2019 the first meeting of Region 15 (we're still working on a name), consisting of clergy and representatives of all the United Churches and ministries in Nova Scotia met in Sackville, NB for education, fellowship, business, and worship. For everything except the business we met with Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region (Region 14 -New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island). The youth programs, with about 200 enthusiastic young people ranging in age from 12-19, were also run jointly.

The theme for the gathering was "Faith Forward." There were three theme speakers for the gatherings - one who spoke on faith and climate change, one who talked about accompanying indigenous youth to the United Nations, and the other who shared about L'Arche, orphanages in Brazil, and her personal journey of faith.

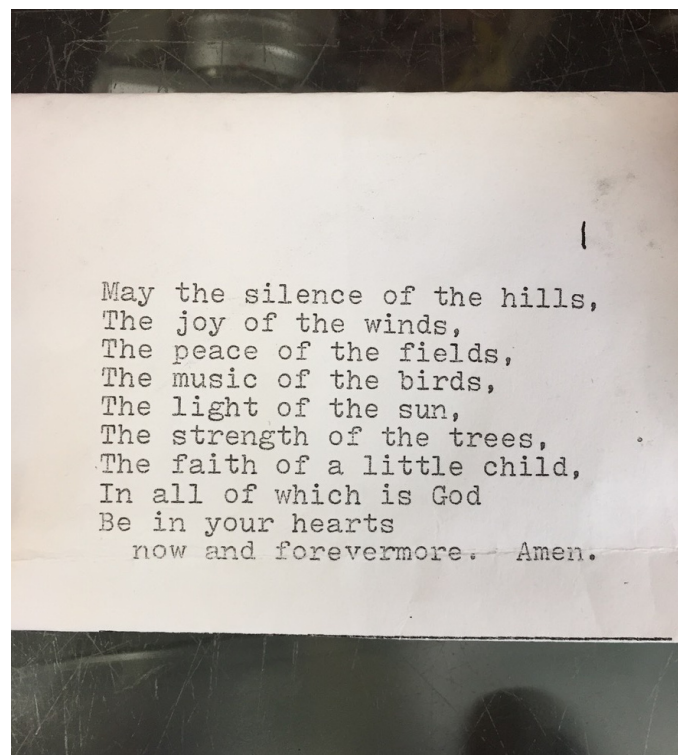
Some of the educational time was spent learning the new ways of doing things (some of it now happens online via a portal called Church Hub) and hearing how the new Office of Vocation has gathered together the duties of training, supervising, and overseeing ministers.

The business was a combination of routine tasks and setting in place the processes and policies we need to work as a Region. We struggled with the format for future meetings since we want to live in a way that is environmentally conscious and aware of financial costs

but also preserve the opportunities for youth programs and fellowship which happen when we meet as more than one Region. The conversation is still ongoing but for next year we will meet jointly with Region 14 in Sackville again.

The worship followed the theme of "Faith Forward" as we remembered before God those who had died since our last gathering, heard challenging and interesting meditations, were led in a variety of different types of music, had the youth joyfully share their experiences, and finally on Sunday morning celebrated the ordination of six new ministers.

For me everything above was important but the highlight was the chance to see colleagues and friends from all over the Maritimes. At meal times and after the sessions ended for the day there was a chance to reconnect, network, and learn from each other. Hearing the stories of other churches and sharing about what is happening at St. James, I can not help but marvel at how God is at work in the United Church.



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[www.stjamesuc.com/connect.htm](http://www.stjamesuc.com/connect.htm)