



CONNECTIONS

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

By the Outreach & Communications Committee

Volume 16 • Issue 2 • Summer 2021

(God says)

*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

- Isaiah 43:19

Dear Friends in Christ,

There is a new building next door to the church. The property was vacant for a long time and seemed to be forgotten. Then suddenly workers and equipment appeared and construction began. The foundation was laid, walls and a roof were built, and the structure started to take shape. Now the new building is almost finished and people are starting to move into the apartments. I expect in the fall there will be lots of activity and life in a place that stood empty for so long.

I am hopeful that we can restart many of our activities at St. James this fall. After a period where we were limited in what was possible within the building, it is a relief to think that we will be able to freely gather for worship and fellowship in the church once more when the public health guidelines are lifted. The past year and a half have been a difficult time and moving past the Covid-19 restrictions is both a welcome change and a bit exciting because I think we will see a new church taking shape at St. James in the fall.

Certainly we will resume many of the things that have happened in this location in the past- there will be people gathered on Sunday to sing and praise, there will be groups and activities happening in the hall, and we will feed people again in the hot meal program. Yet I know there will be new things as we continue the online service to reach a wider congrega-

tion and as we explore how technology can help us be the church in ways we had not considered before. I believe that St. James will continue to be a strong witness of the gospel as we blend what we have always known with the new things that the Holy Spirit is calling us to discover.

May God bless you and your family and may God continue to bless us as a church.

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

The Garden Club

Many thanks go out to the St. James Garden Club. This stalwart team is keeping the grounds of St. James in tip-top shape while members of the congregation await the day when they can once again meet inside the sanctuary. Thank you Diane, Marlene, Gerrit, and Andrew for all that you do.



Sunday School Report

When I started working with Children's Worship in the fall of 2019, I had not expected a global pandemic to start only a few months later. I was learning how the Godly Play Program worked and the roles of those involved. I finally felt comfortable in my role when in March 2020 everything was shut down. It was an adjustment to move to online service, not getting to interact with the children, no longer hearing their ideas. Yet we adjusted and came up with activity ideas to continue children's worship online.

I was so excited when we could return to in-person service in the fall of 2020. Many people were nervous about the return and our children's worship group was a small but dedicated group of children and Cathy Sampson acting as door keeper almost every week of Children's Worship. We wore masks and maintained distance during our in-person services. While our services were significantly shorter than pre-COVID we managed to share the story and have meaningful conversations with the children about being disciples of God.

When we first returned to in-person service the children were quieter and more reserved than they had been in the Spring. As we adapted the schedule and became comfortable with the Public Health Guidelines the children began to open up and share more ideas about their faith and living in God's image with our new normal. Having a small dedicated group our conversations became more in depth as we learned more about the liturgical year and moved through it. Another change noticed with the small group was that they were practicing respect by listening to other's ideas and feelings. Their ideas and thoughts around Jesus' life and living as a Christian have become deeper and more complex, sometimes have differences of opinions on what the story was trying to teach us.

Another positive change with the group this year is their excitement when it came to activity time. They would each engage, continue to share ideas

about the story, and encourage each other, helping each other when needed. They were always eager and willing to take their activities home to share with their families. They were especially excited when we used their ideas for future activities, like when we created posters of things that help us remain focused on our faith in challenging times.

Throughout my time with Children's Worship one of the biggest challenges has been during our online Children's Worship. There are many activities that do not translate well to online service, due to being interactive activities or copyright. We lose so much not being able to discuss the children's ideas around the story. COVID may have changed Children's Worship but has not made it less fulfilling.

May MacKenzie

Did you know?

While most birds are considered "protected" while they're nesting, as soon as they fly away for the winter, their territory becomes fair game for developers. Think about the cliff swallow habitat along The Landing for example. Most birds are federally protected, so the Canadian Wildlife Service is in charge. But blackbirds, the crow family, raptors, most fish eaters and grouse are under provincial jurisdiction, through the Department of Lands & Forestry. Can we as individuals do anything to discourage habitat destruction? Something to think about!



Hot Meal Program:

2004-2019

Many people may not know the history of the hot meal program so the following is a modified version. The hot meal program began in 2004, when we celebrated the 200th anniversary of St. James. (Who remembers the dinners, the teas, and the outstanding play written by Fran Wittgens, *The Lion and the Lamb*, directed by Pauline Liengme?)

At that time, a small group of women, Hazel Murray, Mavis Murray, Joyce Hilling, and Betty Webber, wanted to provide an outreach programme. We discussed many ideas and finally decided on an inclusive gathering where people could gather for a meal. Hot Meal was chosen as the name, open to everyone, one day a week.

Volunteers came forward, the hall and kitchen at St. James were available, but the question arose: how do we pay for everything? When I was walking through the hall a person said, "I have something for you." It turned out to be \$100. I was overwhelmed and rushed to the office to give it to the secretary. This was the beginning of our Hot Meal account.

Many people got involved, food handlers' courses were held, money and food was donated, teams were formed, and meals were served from 11:00 - 1:00 p.m. on Tuesdays. It has since grown to two days a week, including Thursday.

The first Tuesday five people came for a meal and we wondered, "Is there a need?" Since then it has grown to serving 50 - 60 people each Tuesday and Thursday. Volunteers set up the hall and assist with cleanup. There are 7 - 8 teams with 8 - 9 people per team. Food is prepared on site.

Gift cards are available from Sobey's and Superstore for supplies, although much is donated by volunteers from the town and county. Receipts are given for all cash donations, and the list goes on.

It is impossible to thank everyone who has given so generously of their gifts. Thank you, thank you, from many grateful people.

Betty Webber, on behalf of many

Note: If all goes well, we hope to begin serving

meals in late 2021 or early 2022. We will need to form new teams, and hold food handler's courses. We will also need to talk about the pre-preparation of meals at St. James for future use (soups, stews, etc.) for any who may not have time to cook a full meal.

I will be in touch regarding a future meeting to discuss future plans. We are now officially under the outreach committee, chairperson Fran Wittgens.

B.W.

Town of Antigonish Accessibility Plan

The Town of Antigonish and the Accessibility Committee are working with Upland Planning + Design and RHAD Architects to develop an Accessibility Plan for the community. In line with Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act, this process is intended to remove and prevent barriers that restrict people with disabilities from fully participating in society. The plan will recognize the diversity among people with disabilities and aim to improve the independence and wellbeing of residents, community members, and visitors with disabilities.

Initial engagement on this plan went through the spring of 2021, when interviews with local stakeholders and community members provided input on the process. A draft of the Accessibility Plan document is scheduled to be completed this summer, and it will be available on the Town of Antigonish website in both text and audio formats, and hard copies (including large-print and Braille) will be made available by request. Following the release of the draft, we will conduct follow-up calls with interested stakeholders, and the public will have the opportunity to provide feedback by submitting comments through email, phone, or print, in addition to a community open house (to be held in-person, as public health restrictions allow).

For more information about how to participate, visit www.townofantigonish.ca/accessibility-plan.html or contact Steve Scannell, Director of Community Development at sscannell@townofantigonish.ca or 902-318-1378.

Census 2021 – what’s that all about anyway?

I hope by now you’ve completed your census. Because if you haven’t, some poor enumerator will have to keep pestering you until you do so! The census takes place every five years to provide the government with a snapshot of Canada on a specific day. This year Census Day fell on 12 May. Each household is supposed to complete either a short form (3/4 of households) or a long form (1/4 of households). Unless you’ve a very large family, the short form can usually be finished in five minutes, either on line or on a paper copy that can be requested. Admittedly, the long form can take forty-five to sixty minutes, depending on the size of your household. Completing the census is actually a legal requirement and the penalties for failing to complete it range from fines to prison terms.

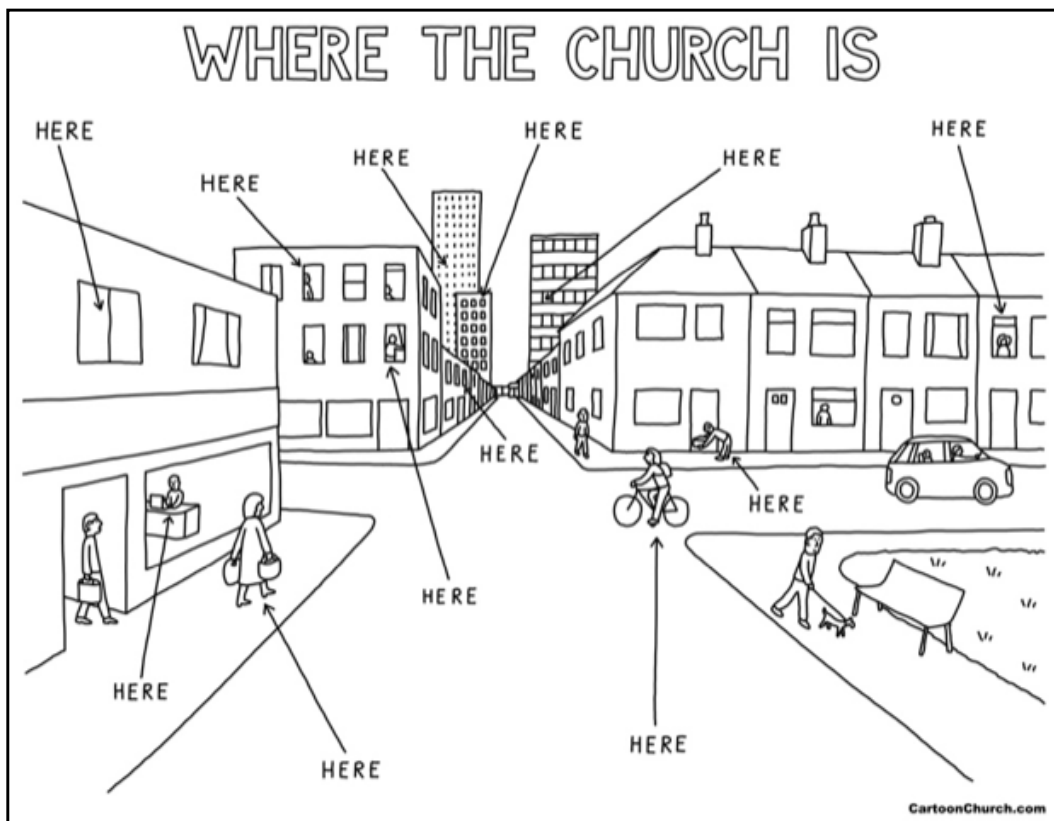
The two main questions people usually ask about the census are: how confidential is my information, and what is it used for?

All Statistics Canada employees, even temporary ones like enumerators, must take an oath of secrecy.

None of your personal information can be given to anyone outside Statistics Canada without your consent.

The information is used for purposes such as planning by government departments. For example – if your community’s population skews toward younger folks, perhaps more money needs to be spent on education. If on the other hand, it leans toward elders, perhaps more money needs to be spent on long term care facilities. Does your local hospital need more funding? If one aspect of health services is a major issue in Canada, should we be putting more money there? How many people actually need to access services in both our official languages? What is Canada’s ethnic makeup? How many Canadians move frequently? Within their home province, or to other provinces? How many Canadians are struggling to find employment? How many work seasonally? How do Canadians travel to work? What kinds of infrastructure might be most useful in a specific area?

It’s truly vital that all our information goes toward providing an accurate statistical portrait of Canada. Thank you for doing your part!



Regional Meeting Highlights

On May 28-29, I attended the Zoom online annual meeting of Regional Council 15 along with Rev. Peter Smith, Michèle Ashby, and Tim Hinds. Even though we couldn't meet in person we were still able to worship together to celebrate milestones throughout the years of ministry and retirements, as well as remembering those who are no longer with us. The theme, Beacons of Hope, shone throughout the meeting as we move forward as church. We heard from guests from the General Council Office and ecumenical guests, as well as from Faith March-MacCuish, Executive Minister and Janet Sollows, President of the Region, who gave us updates on what took place during the year.

We received a lot of helpful information during the meeting on what the United Church is doing and also what we can do. One was the grant program being offered by the United Church to help churches reduce their carbon footprint. It is the United Church's goal to reduce our carbon footprint by 80% by the year 2050. United churches can apply to receive efficiency grants up to \$20,000 to help them reach this goal.

Another presentation was by Japheth Ndhlovu, United Church staff person. He talked about global issues and related them to our theme of Beacons of Hope and how lighthouses guide ships especially in times of storms. The lighthouses are a beacon of hope and this hope is needed throughout the whole world as there are many global issues. One he talked about was population growth and how it is leading to increased needs and consumption which leads to declining resources. All this causes environmental degradation, migration, war, and conflict. He noted that these things are happening worldwide and told us 3 stories from India, Cuba and the Philippines along with some positives. Even in extreme difficulties many, through faith, are clinging to hope because of the efforts of others including the United Church. Bishop Marioze, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and Rev. Mtata, General Secretary of the church in Zimbabwe, also talked about hope and how small initiatives by churches are making a difference. They challenged us to be Beacons of Hope as we share

love and hope to make the world a better place. The presentation concluded with the hymn from "More Voices" "Go Make A Difference in the World" as a reminder of what we are all called to do.

We also had a presentation from the Ecological Justice Working Group with a video compiled from stories of how churches are working towards climate justice as stewards of all God's creation. We were reminded, through an art piece made from recycled bottle caps and materials, how one bottle cap can make a difference and how churches can and are also making a difference. St. Andrews has made a green covenant and Windsor United Church has collected 7300 pounds of food waste and redistributed it, to name just two examples.

Michèle found a presentation from Kevin Parks of special interest. He spoke about the SING 2025 Development Committee's work. This group of multiple Protestant faiths are developing the new digital hymnal and worship resource. This will include almost all of the hymns currently in Voices United, More Voices, Voix Unies and over 150 new ones – approximately 12,000 songs. Content will also include resources for worship and liturgy planning. The launch is planned for 2025 in time for the UCC's 100th Anniversary. Ongoing updates will be available. It's hard for some of us dedicated choir members to imagine that the day may be coming when hard copies of hymnals will be museum items!

Besides these education and interest pieces there was business to be done. Proposals were presented and the following were passed:

- Reports from Committees
- Budget and financial statements
- Strategic plan
- Climate Crisis: A Call to the Faithful to Work Towards Climate Justice
- Support for Ministry Personnel Taking Maternity and/or Parental Leave
- Election of President Elect
- Election of Commissioners to the 44th General Council

The reports and motions can all be found on the website uceast.ca

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this meeting.

Joan MacGillivray

Cape George Heritage Museum



Prior student Jenny Poirier at the museum (2018)

Many people on the south side of the Cape George community grew up knowing and even attending the one room schoolhouse, which is now operating as the Cape George Heritage Museum. This was the school attended by children who lived in Ballantynes Cove and the south side of Cape George.

The first recorded government schoolhouse was built in 1861, and it is believed it stood at the location of the present school. When this building fell into disrepair, it was replaced in 1925 with the building that still stands today. This school operated until the early 1960s.

The first recorded teacher in the area was a Mr. John Hanrahan, who taught at the Cape in 1816-1817. It is believed that this was an informal community school as we cannot find any government records of a school at this location. Also, there are indications

that education continued in the area between 1817 and when the first government school was built in 1861, but information and records are lacking to confirm this.

A teacher, usually a female, would be hired to come to the community and board at someone's home during the school year. In those days the teacher had to be single, and if she decided to marry, it was understood that she would have to give up her career. The grades taught were often determined by the teacher they were able to hire as well as his/her credentials. There was such a shortage of teachers some years that they occasionally didn't have any formal training.

Students of all grades initially attended this school and were taught in one big room. The older children often helped with the teaching of the younger ones. There was a stove in the middle of the room so on frosty days the window seats were quite cold. Often kids would bring what leftovers they had from home and add it to a pot kept on the stove. At lunch-time they could enjoy soup that had been cooked on the stove all morning!

Eventually, the kids moved to a larger, more central school, while the old school was still used for community events. Many remember the card parties, the dances, and the baby/bridal showers held at the school. Unfortunately, over time the building fell into disrepair, but showing true community spirit some members of the community got together and repaired the school in 1999. Through the hard work of many, a basement was added, and it was brought back to life.

The school now has Provincial Heritage status, and it continued to be used for community events such as the Cape School Reunion which saw many familiar faces return to the school!

Now the school opens as a community museum in July and August of each year. Typically a local student is hired to look after things and he/she is on hand to sell ice cream and answer questions about the displays and artifacts. The museum is now painted a fresh and calming sea glass blue on the inside. Large photo banners bring the space to life and there are artifacts that explain what life was like in the early days.



School house circa 1925



Group of school boys (12) sitting outside along a field. Top Row L to R- Albie Falkenham, Daniel Falkenham, David MacKenzie, John Livingstone, Joe MacEachern, Edgar Bond and Kevin Adams. Bottom row L to R - Leonard McPhie (was visiting - only 4), Freddie Adams, Brian Adams, Daniel MacEachern, Donald Haskett, Bernie Falkenham.

Displays of people of interest, fishing, farming, the lighthouse, home life and of course, school days are on hand. It also features plenty of photographs. So, if people have some time in July or August, why not take the beautiful drive along Highway 337 from Antigonish and stop in at the museum? It will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Afterwards, visitors can enjoy the trails, have some fish and chips at Ballantynes Cove wharf, visit the Tuna Interpretive Centre, and finish off the tour at the stunning Cape George Lighthouse.

The Cape George Heritage Museum has a Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/Capegeorgeheritageschool
and a website www.capegeorgemuseum.ca

- Susan Rutledge-Smith

An extract from the History Book 1804-1979

The year 1953 brought the erection of the new hall. The hall was opened November 1, with special ceremony, Dr. W. Fraser Munro, editor of "The United Churchman", being the preacher of the day. After public worship, the congregation left the Church and marched in procession to the rear door of the hall, where Mr. Howard Williams, representing the Session, cut the tape and opened the door. The members of the Boys' and Girls' Departments, dressed in the uniforms of their groups, were the first to enter, symbolizing that the hall had been built primarily to advance the Youth Training of the Congregation. In the afternoon, a rally of the children of the Church was held, addressed by Mr. Andrew Braid and Mr. J.A. MacGregor of Westville. On the following Tuesday evening, a Congregational banquet was held in the hall, at which 240 sat down together, visitors present from Mulgrave, Afton, Guysborough, Loch Katrine, and Sherbrooke. Dr. O.C. Macintosh presided, and a fine list of toasts elicited remarks from speakers both resident and visitant, that made the occasion a very happy one, and message of congratulations were read from all the living former pastors. The hall was constructed under the direction of A. Leslie Cunningham, James Russell being Chairman of the building Committee. Much volunteer labour was given by many members of the congregation. While its completion will require another year or more, the hall at once began to play a very useful part in the life of the Congregation.



CHOIR MEMORIES

Once did a cross-stitch that read “A garden refreshes the soul”. The same can be said for music and if so, then my soul has been refreshed many times.

I was sixteen years old when I received a phone call from the choir director of Trinity United Church in New Glasgow. She was inviting me to join the choir and I remember being so excited. I loved singing in the High School Glee Club and as with Trinity Choir I was so fortunate to have two excellent choir directors. I knew then that I had a love of choral singing – the making of music together, the blending of voices. Trinity was known for having a very strong choir and it was here that I learned of the great music of the church. To this day I can sing John Stainer’s God So Loved the World by memory. A favourite at Trinity at Easter.

When Bob and I married we sang in several church choirs as we moved about when he was with the bank – Montague, Dartmouth, Antigonish. When finally we made the decision to move back to Antigonish and made it our permanent home, it was partly because of the way we felt at home at St. James, especially in the choir. Jean Barkhouse is the only one left of that choir of 1963 besides ourselves.

Many years ago I heard that church choirs could be known as the war department of the church. Not so at St. James. Always a very congenial group, friendly and with lots of humour. Sitting in front of the tenor section meant that I often was subject to some of that humour. I think the tenors had a plot to see if they could get me to break down in giggles. One day, Dr. O.C. MacIntosh who looked stern but was not, leaned forward and whispered: “Mavis, do you think God likes good music?” Alan Stouffer and Paul Price were also known to have funny remarks. But the best wise crack came from Ernie Gourlay. Russell Alcorn was the minister at the time and he was making an eloquent appeal for old nylon stock-

ings which were to be sent to Korea where (I think I remember this correctly) they would be unravelled by Korean widows and the threads reused. Ernie was heard by more than the choir saying: “with legs in them or not”. That was just one of the times that Pat Cunningham and I ducked down behind the organ in pretence of finding a tissue in our purses, but actually we were behind the organ hiding our laughter. But there were times when we hid behind the organ so we could wipe tears from our eyes, especially at baptisms. For some reason we both got weepy at baptisms. Don’t be alarmed Rev. Peter as to what might be going on behind your back. Present day choir members are a well behaved lot.

Sometimes it is what is going on in the congregation that can bring smiles to the choir. I remember the time when a wee toddler must have thought that the centre aisle would be a good place to roll. And roll she did, from midway right up to the front, much to the chagrin of her parents.

Another time for a smile was the Sunday when a coin fell at the back of the church and rolled all the way to the front with the slanting floor helping it pick up speed.

Sunday morning in the Murray household was hectic. The two older children whom we called “the big pair” and Bob left for 9:30 Sunday School (Bob was a Sunday School teacher) and then the “little pair” and I got ready to leave with Anne MacEachern for the 11 a.m. service. The boys sat with Anne until they went out to Sunday School. I remember one of the teenagers in the church saying he thought there should be guitars and more upbeat music and my reply was, “I just want some peace and quiet when I get to church.”

To be in the choir on Christmas Eve is very special. In the early years of the 7 p.m. service everyone in the pews held a lighted candle as the overhead lights were turned off and Silent Night was sung by all. It was the most beautiful sight from the choir and it is a memory I cherish every Christmas. One year we had a pageant written by Jean Wayling, wife of

Rev. John who was minister at that time. It was multicultural in having Silent Night sung in several languages – French (Dr. MacIntosh), Gaelic (Anna Archer), Estonian (Alvi Oja) and in the original German but I don't remember who was the soloist for that, and English of course. Patsy Wong was Mary and Howard Phee was either Joseph or a king. Another lovely memory.

I love the joyous music of Easter and many times the choir loft was filled with Senior Choir, Men's Choir, and Junior Choir. Whenever I hear Jesus Christ Is Risen Today I picture the choir loft with the three choirs singing this glorious hymn.

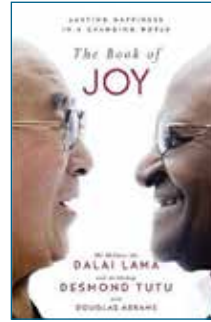
Another special time were the concerts put on every February. Sponsored by the Men's Club, and with a different theme each year, the choir sang the songs and there were duets, solos, and instrumental solos. A huge amount of time was spent in producing these shows but what fun they were and the hall was packed for each performance.

During my fifty years in the choir I have sung many anthems, solos, duets, quartets. I would have to say my favourite singing were the duets with Bob. The first duet we sang was when Rev. Dr. E.V. Forbes introduced us to Doris Manship, the organist at the time we first moved to Antigonish when Bob was with the bank. And he informed her that we would be singing on Sunday. We sang My Jesus I Love Thee. And thus began our years with the St. James choir. We have appreciated the support that was always there from the organists and the guidance given by the choir directors. There has been a change in church music in recent years and my hope is that we do not throw out the baby with the bath water. Music such as The Lord's Prayer, Oh Rest In The Lord, The Holy City, All In the April Evening all stand the test of time.

It has been a privilege to have been a member of the St. James Choir and I treasure the friendships and memories made. My faith journey has been strengthened by the great music and hymns of the church.

- Mavis Murray

Book Review by Betty Webber



The Book of Joy Lasting Happiness in a Changing World

The Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams: a story of two religious leaders of different backgrounds find and affirm their common humanity

Despite differences of culture, race, and religion, Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama share a week together which is chronicled by journalist Douglas Abrams. Coming from different perspectives they recognize a common place of joy in living, and reflect on their life's journeys and the paths of joy they experienced. They identified some of the obstacles to joy in our lives.

(They cite) eight pillars of joy which they agree are a means to finding joy in one's life:

- Perspective
- Humility
- Humour
- Acceptance
- Forgiveness
- Gratitude
- Compassion
- Generosity

What they expressed about forgiveness touched me deeply. It is so important to forgive those who hurt us or wrong us, intentionally or unintentionally. This book was loaned to me by my son-in-law, the Reverent Jim Webber-Cook. He helped me with the review. I highly recommend this book to anyone. It's available at the Antigonish library.

A poem comes to mind:

There's so much good in the best of us
And so much bad in the rest of us
That it ill behooves the rest of us
To talk about the rest of us.
(author unknown)

Ending White Supremacy and Hate: Our Responsibility as Christians

“White supremacy does not take days off and neither should those of us who are working to dismantle it.”

- Aaron Lakoff, Independent Jewish Voice



Palestine is a country under military occupation. Rolling blackouts and potable water shortages are endemic. Now, following ten days of sustained bombing, Gaza City is effectively destroyed. From sewer, electric and water systems, to residences, to hospitals, to schools were flattened. Israel’s attempt to further undermine Palestine’s economic viability has left the county’s most densely populated city in shatters. Air, sea and land blockades make essential supplies extremely difficult, if not impossible to secure.

Palestinians have suffered for decades, yet outside of social justice circles, there is barely reference to the county. Unless there is conflict with Israel. But in these cases most media will portray the robust, well-funded imported military weapons and defence system of Israel as equal to Hamas’ rocket creations. The Israeli government and military avoid accountability for their attacks by ignoring the provocation and offence of rightwing Israelis who are known to taunt and intentionally offend Palestinians on religious holidays.

Rarely do we hear leaders speak out against the injustices of Israeli settlements in occupied territories. Even rarer do we see the issue framed in the context of white supremacy in action. Most often, those who stand up for Palestinians’ rights are faced with accusations of anti-semitism. Lobbing the label “anti-semite” at anyone who criticizes Israel’s actions is extremely effective at stifling criticism of Israel. The label can kill your career and reputation overnight.

The false accusation of anti-semitism is not just an issue for advocates of Palestinian liberation, but it is also alarming and harmful to Jews everywhere. Narrowing anti-semitism to an Israel-specific issue erases the very real threat of white supremacy and the rise of the alt-right. Seeking social justice requires a strong stand against all forms of hate. There is no justice until white supremacy is eliminated in all of its forms - including anti-semitism. How do we do that?

Independent Jewish Voices has an excellent 6-point call to action to dismantle anti-semitism and white supremacy, stating:

Isolating antisemitism ignores the central threats faced by [Black people and other people of color, people who are Muslim, immigrants, Indigenous communities, and others] under white supremacy, erases the lived experiences of Black Jews and other Jews of color, and atomizes a struggle that must be united to succeed. [We must] act from the principles that oppression is intersectional and that justice is indivisible.

We, as Christians, are called to stand against hate. We must stand together in the struggle to end white supremacy and recognize that until it is defeated, Palestine will never be free. If you would like to explore ways that our Church can work to do our part in ending oppression and hate, please consider joining the St James Social Justice Committee, who can be contacted through the Church Office 902-863-2001 or office@stjamesuc.com.

To read all six points see: ijvcanada.org/jerusalem-declaration

Sarah Armstrong | she/her |
living & working in Mi’kma’ki

Orange Ribbons

They've fluttered from the railings
Rousing honks and hoorays
But down the road
Does it mark a way?

We have been shocked and upset about the story of the 215 unmarked children's graves. This story can be multiplied innumerable times as more sites are scanned for more such atrocities. What does it mean?

It was important for Rev. Peter to read from the remarks from an Elder of the Indigenous Ministries of the United Church.

"Please," it was said, "let this be a time of mourning."

So we are with our brothers and sisters: mourning, remembering, praying for healing. But when guests on CBC's Cross Country Checkup spoke that same day, they urged us to think of what each one of us can do.

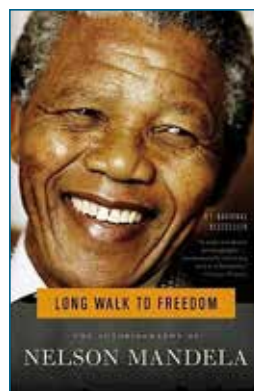
It's immediate now and let's be as open as possible for ways in which we can listen and learn how to be part of the healing and solution. We mourn because it's the time to mourn. Then it will be another time to act.

The ribbons were an idea hatched from Social Justice and Outreach Committees.

- Fran Wittgens



Book Review by Michèle Ashby



**Long Walk to Freedom –
the Autobiography of
Nelson Mandela**
Softcover, 625 pages, 1995

This book was published some time ago, but the pandemic finally gave me the opportunity to tackle it, having heard many rave reviews. I was not disappointed! I had concerns that I would find the minute details of the political wrangling that went on in apartheid South Africa somewhat tedious, but I was pleasantly surprised. It is so well written that I got caught up in the story and thoroughly enjoyed it, right down to the party politics and personalities. Although the subject matter is disheartening, Mr. Mandela's positive attitude in the face of horrendous obstacles throughout his life is bracing. He manages to forgive, (although not forget), the outrageous attitudes and policies that were permitted to continue for decades and that landed him in jail for twenty-seven years. His judicious mix of personal vignettes and coverage of events both national and global make for an inspiring read.

My only issue, (perhaps assisted by hindsight), is his extremely forgiving attitude toward his second wife, Winnie Madikizela. While Mandela did occasionally promote some violence in his country's struggle for freedom, history has shown that she encouraged violence when there was absolutely no reason for its use. Other than this, I completely enjoyed the read and recommend it to everyone.

WHAT'S YOUR VISION OF A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE?



The Nova Scotia government has just announced consultations for the Sustainable Development Goals Act (SDGA) and the provincial climate plan, giving those of us living in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia a chance to put forth a vision of a just, sustainable future.

But why are these climate and environmental goals so important?

Our communities are already beginning to feel the effects of the climate emergency, and we are witnessing the loss of species and habitat every day. At the same time, people in our communities need better support: affordable energy, accessible transit, food security, clean water, climate-safe infrastructure, and equitable access to good, safe jobs here at home.

Setting ambitious, measurable goals now is our best chance to create an equitable, sustainable future for our province. A future that prioritizes collective wellbeing, protects the communities and natural spaces we love and rely on, and leaves no one behind.

Like the ones we set in our everyday lives, the goals laid out in the SDGA will help motivate us to achieve more, measure our progress and keep us on track to creating the world we want for ourselves and future generations. And by setting goals for climate action, we're able to realize what we need to avoid or change in order to achieve that future.

Through the SDGA consultations, Nova Scotians can advocate for the things that matter most to our communities. We can support measures to hold government and industry accountable to the goals they set and make sure Nova Scotia is doing our fair share

in the fight to curb the climate crisis. We can call for actions that support workers through a just transition and ensure that BIPOC, rural, and other traditionally underserved communities are truly heard throughout the process and benefit from our transition to a green economy.

Over the coming months the Nova Scotia government will be making decisions that will set our path forward on climate and the environment for the next decade. **They've signaled that they're ready to listen. So let's make sure that all our voices are heard.**

How to participate:

- 1. Go to cleanfuture.ca to see the government website, check the schedule and see how you can submit your feedback!** Consultations will run from Thursday, May 27 until 11:59 P.M. on Monday July 26. You have the option to:
 1. Join eight different Zoom sessions beginning on Thursday, June 10.
 2. Host your own online consultation session.
 3. Send a submission by mail, email or phone.
 4. Submit your ideas online.
- 2. If you're interested in engaging further and helping us mobilize our communities to participate, or want advice on hosting your own consultation session, fill in the form below and we will be in touch!**

Here are a few additional resources you may be interested in as you prepare for consultations:

- The Sustainable Development Goals Act includes a legislated climate target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 53% below 2005 levels

by 2030. This is currently the most ambitious GHG reduction target in Canada, but is still insufficient. This link ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/images-documents/Press%20Release%20Backgrounder.pdf gives an in-depth background document on GHG emissions targets.

- The Ecology Action Centre has drafted 20 Goals to Advance the Environmental and Economic Well-being of Nova Scotia. Read about them at: <https://tinyurl.com/ECA20Goals>

- <https://tinyurl.com/SustainabilityGoalsNS> to read EAC's press release about the consultations.

Want to get involved to help mobilize around this campaign? Sign up below!

Background information

The SDGA was introduced in 2019, and included a legislated GHG emissions reduction target for 2030, legislated net zero emissions by 2050, and a commitment to create a new climate change plan that was supposed to be developed by the end of 2020. Public consultations were a legal requirement of the process but were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Public consultations will inform the development of new targets for things like renewable electricity, energy efficiency, clean transportation, local food, wilderness protection, waste diversion and more.

Joanna Bull,

Community Engagement Manager
Ecology Action Centre

The Ecology Action Centre is a member-based environmental charity in Nova Scotia taking leadership on critical issues from **biodiversity** to **climate change** to **environmental justice**.

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Lockdown Litter Challenge:



This initiative replaced our Adopt-A-Highway clean up this spring – forced by the pandemic lockdown. But over 75 bags were collected by 28 people, mostly from our church, but some from outside. Some of the areas covered included sections of Addington Forks, Ballantyne's Cove, Mount Cameron Circle, The Landing, Hwy 337, Hwys 4 and 104, St Ninian St, Hillside Dr, Willow Lane, and Cloverville. Jennifer Baudoux, manager of the Antigonish A&W, generously donated a “Teen Meal” to all who collected! I'm not saying we'll all work for food – but it surely didn't hurt either. (photo of Hope Smith)

On the Hunt for Bicycles

The sound of dropped wrenches rings out from an otherwise quiet Antigonish street! This spring has been a busy one for the bicycle repair and donation service whose original goal was to provide members of newly-arrived Syrian refugee families with a "new-to-you" bicycle upon arrival in Canada. Since 2015, this volunteer initiative has connected dozens of refurbished bikes to newcomer families. So far this season, we have managed to provide 8 bikes to people in these families who have expressed a need for low-cost active transportation. The kids are able to explore their new neighbourhood on two wheels, the youth and adults may travel to school and work, or just on family outings. Bikes are great for building confidence, independence and familiarity and belonging in Antigonish, beloved new home to so many!

Started and operated by Chad Brazier, with frequent help from Sarah Armstrong, this community program, located at 44 Victoria St., was begun to support and augment the stunning good work of SAFE (Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace). We seek out donations of quality used bikes, or of all kinds of parts that can be used for repairs. People are so generous, and are so eager to help, they have been known to drop bikes off to us that they have found on bulky garbage days. We are constantly in search of bicycles that are just about to be tossed out, so that we can save them and give them a whole new second life!

If you have a bike that you are all done with, and would like to donate to this great cause, please get in touch with Chad or Sarah at 735-2336. If you don't have a bike, but would be interested in helping this program out, any donation to SAFE would be gratefully accepted.

N.B.: Please no more kids bikes! We cannot accept them. Look at the tire: only 24" and bigger needed, thank you.



The Enduring Struggle Between Palestine and Israel



Why is it so hard to discuss Palestine and Israel? The first obvious issue is that negative comments expressed toward Israel automatically sound anti-Semitic. But they aren't. The problem is not your average Israeli, or the right of Israelis to have their own country and to live there in safety. It's the politics and policies that have set up what is basically an apartheid system. It's important to note that there are many major world and Israeli organizations, (UNICEF, B'tselem and DCI-Palestine (Defense for Children International)), and leaders who support the Palestinian position that it has the right to retain its traditional and longstanding homes and towns in land that Israel has and continues to expropriate or "settle".

Secondly the actions of Hamas in continuing to fire rockets into Israel are disturbing and speak against the Palestinian cause. Our government, under the Anti-Terrorism Act, has listed Hamas as a terrorist organization since 2002. It has anti-Semitic positions, it supports violence, (even martyrdom of its own people, attacks on civilians, use of civilian shields and child soldiers), and it has derailed much desired peace talks. It is however important to note that only approximately a third of Palestinians hold a favourable view of Hamas and that is often due to the actions of their "welfare branch", not the military component.

There's so much more to this story. Too much to be gone into in any proper detail in this short article. But I implore you if you have questions on this topic

to inform yourself. There are many reliable resources out there, some of which I'll list. I apologize that they all require a computer, but our excellent town library has valuable resources also.

This issue is in the news again following the rise in tensions in May 2021, when the situation and violence once again escalated following evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and the attack on the al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem. Eleven days of fighting left at least 243 dead in Gaza and 12 in Israel. There is no doubt that the violence on both sides is wrong and is rightly denounced. But the lopsidedness of the fight has been correctly likened to "shooting fish in a barrel".

It is impossible to compare the situations of Gaza and Israel. Having had the great good fortune to travel to Israel twice, I can attest to the fact that Israelis enjoy an excellent standard of living – similar to most of us here in Canada. Inhabitants of Gaza on the other hand, live with close to two million Palestinians, (more than half of them refugees), crowded into less than 380 square kilometres. To put that into perspective, Antigonish town's population density is 13.2 per km² – Gaza city's is 13,000 per km². A debilitating embargo by Israel and Egypt for almost fifteen years has left the economy in tatters and deprived the inhabitants of necessary food, vital medications and fuel. Palestinians have irregular electricity, (when they have any at all), little access to potable water and woefully inadequate sewage systems. Their hospitals are regular targets for Israeli attacks. Palestinians attempting to travel within Israeli occupied territories nowadays face long line-ups, interrogations at "check stops" and frequent refusals for little reason.

While there are multiple injustices I could address, I'll speak to just one that surely cannot be ignored by any right minded Canadian. This is the treatment of Palestinian children under the Israeli justice system. And I do mean children, not young adults.

Because children as young as eight are being arrested by Israeli soldiers and taken to military camps. Think of your own children at that age – how would you react? Families are left with no information as to

where their children are being taken or for how long, and are not permitted contact with them. On average 700 Palestinian children yearly are arrested, often at home in the middle of the night, by armed soldiers who handcuff and blindfold them as they're transported to detention centres where they are frequently physically abused. These "prisoners" are prosecuted in the Israeli military court system which denies them their fundamental rights to a fair trial. Israel is the only country in the world which allows youth to be treated this way.

Last month the Israeli newspaper Haaretz took the unusual step of publishing on its front page the faces and stories of 67 Palestinian children killed in the latest attack by the Israel Defence Forces. "This is the price of war," the headline read. This unprecedented gesture was greeted with both accolades and criticism. "Conversations around Israel/Palestine are changing in Jewish communities across the globe," tweeted rabbi and author Abby Stein. "It's about time."

There is a new campaign recently launched here in Canada called "Canada, Stand Up for Children". You can sign up to support Palestinian children living under the Israeli military occupation through this link: <http://eepurl.com/htSZpb>. One of their recent actions was to petition the government of Canada "to ensure the human rights of Palestinian children are protected by instructing a Special Envoy to promote, monitor and report on the human rights situation of Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian Territory and Gaza". This was followed up by a letter writing campaign to the Honourable Marc Garneau, MP and Minister of Global Affairs calling him out on the government's stated position that "Canadian foreign policy is to promote and protect human rights, to advocate to end all violations of human rights against children, and that Canadian officials "continue to closely monitor the status of children's rights in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza"". If they are indeed monitoring the children's rights they must know about the complete and organized abuse of Palestinian youth by the Israeli military. It is documented by many sources (see paragraph 1). What is the Canadian government doing about the obvious

lack of basic human rights for these children? Not enough!

The “Canada, Stand Up for Children” campaign lists the following resources amongst others:

- The Present is a film directed by Palestinian-British director Farah Nabulsi, co-written by her and Hind Shoufani. (2020) 25 min. A father and daughter attempt to buy an anniversary gift in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and encounter many obstacles. Oscar nominated in 2021. Could work well to promote discussion in a youth group or other gathering. Available on Netflix.
- Through their Lens – CPT: Palestine Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) Palestine recently launched ‘Through their Lens’: a new project with five children who live in a restricted area of the Old City in al-Khalil (Hebron). One girl’s story: “This occupation’s policy to scare me and stop me from walking to my school won’t work.”
- Mechanics of Occupation, Children in Military Detention This Webinar recording is an educational tool for those new to the topic.
- Meet virtually with grassroots organizations in Palestine <https://eyewitnesspalestine.org/virtual-delegations>
- google canadatalksisraelpalestine.ca/2018/07/16/canadian-parliamentarians-release-report

What can we as Canadians do?

- educate ourselves! Check out the above-mentioned resources or look up others such as a recent report from Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/27/abusive-israeli-policies-constitute-crimes-apartheid-persecution>, B’tselem, a major Israeli Human Rights organization: <https://www.btselem.org/apartheid> and the UNJPPI (a group of United Church people concerned for peace in Palestine and Israel) website: <https://www.unjppi.org/index.html>
- write your national politicians and representatives about this issue and push them to say what exact steps they will take to address

it. Don’t accept generic platitudes! Tell them you want to see a Special Envoy. Demand that Canada stop selling weapons and military technology to Israel.

- practise BDS, (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions). This is important work! Major international companies operating in the Occupied Territories are: Soda Stream, Wix, AirBNB, Expedia, General Mills, Motorola and many more. The UN Human Rights Office identified 112 companies in total that are proven to be directly benefiting from the Illegal Israeli Occupation of Palestine. For the full list of companies see: <http://bdslit.org/full-list/>
- speak to others about this issue and challenge them to become informed and not buy into false mindsets that justify Israel’s war crimes and use of collective punishment.
- invite comparisons between colonialism in Canada and in the Occupied Territories: there are 750,000 illegal Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Remember our church’s official statement on this issue: “The United Church of Canada joins Canadian civil society in renewing the call to the Canadian government to intervene with Israel and de-escalate the spiralling violence”. Raise your voice in opposition to these serious human rights violations.

I would like to thank the many members of our Social Justice Committee and others who made valuable contributions to the content of this article and shared their passion on the subject.

Michèle Ashby

