



CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for St. James United Church · 197 Main Street, Antigonish, Nova Scotia

By the Outreach & Communications Committee

Fall 2022

God says "Behold, I am doing 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



is once more an active community in a busy building each day of the week.

In other ways, I think the unnoticed change of season is a reminder for me that God is always at work in the world. Even when I am busy with other things, God's plan and purpose continue to unfold in the way and manner that God intends. I may be occupied by the tasks of the day but God is working toward the larger plan of salvation for the world.

So as we move into the fall and the life and work which are ours, let us embrace the tasks and opportunities God gives us for service and worship and let us always be aware that our work is only part of what God is doing in the world. May God bless you, your families, and our church community.

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

HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION-OR- THE 60TH UCW ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

July 11-15, I was in Sydney, Cape Breton for the 60th UCW Anniversary Celebration. It was a wonderful, uplifting experience, as were the 50th and 55th, which I was also blessed to attend. I am extremely grateful to both the local and national UCWs, and St James for encouraging and partially funding my attendance. What happens at these conferences? Well, a lot of prayer and praise - wonderful fellowship, renewing of old friendships and making of new ones! There are interesting speakers who educate us. Some entertainment. And one day is dedicated to optional tours for those who have travelled great distances to attend, and want to see a new corner of the world before returning home. In between there is a lot of singing! An impromptu choir holds daily practices and participates in the final worship service. This time we sang a chorus in Gaelic! There were a variety of "ice-breakers" and games to encourage us to get to know other ladies from across Canada. And for most of the conference a "Book Store" sells religious themed books and articles of use to individuals and churches. Monday evening opened with a warm welcome from Chief Terrance (Terry) Paul, Chief and CEO of Membertou. He was followed by Mi'kmaq dancers, singers and drummers. The organizer of this event, David, was frequently encountered at the Centre as he runs a small gift shop on the premises. Throughout the week, he made bookmarks for pretty well every attendee - in the UCW colours! Everyone at the Membertou Trade & Convention Centre made us feel welcome indeed. We enjoyed

outstanding hospitality. Banners made by the various regional UCWs were ceremoniously marched in on the opening evening and "piped out" Friday morning. These unique, beautiful reflections of UCWs across Canada added a cheerful note to the surroundings the entire week. We had an update from our National UCW President, Nancy Risto. There was recognition of the fact that attendance, at both church and UCWs is dwindling; and about church and UCW closures. We identified the need to move with the times to be relevant and to retain younger church members. We need to stop insisting on doing things the same way they've been done for years. We need to be welcoming of new ideas and methods. Nothing makes a newcomer feel less welcome than having their ideas minimized. This year our speakers were: 1) The Rev Catherine Stuart from Riverview NB. She spoke on "Spiritual Renewal Through Movement and Song". She was a good speaker and talked about worshipping with our bodies and liturgical movement. I cannot lie, this is not really my thing. But it was interesting and I'm sure many others got a lot out of it. 2) Rev Alice Finnamore of the Prince William Pastoral Charge in NB. She enthusiastically led our music worship all week and spoke to us about "Self-Care - Hope in Action". She addressed the loneliness many people felt and are still feeling during COVID. To sum up her tips, she suggested a) incorporate some exercise into our lives, b) make new friends, c) make younger friends!, d) borrow from others - this leads to "social capital" and new friendships, stops us from buying items we don't actually need and makes the loaner feel needed and useful, and e) be social

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CHILDREN'S WORSHIP RESUMES

In early September, Children's Worship resumed. Since resuming we have seen larger numbers than we have through the last year. We have only been back for a few weeks but the children are settling into the Godly Play curriculum.

So far we have only completed two Children's Worship sessions, one on the Holy Family and one on St. Theresa of Avila. Each week after the story the children have time to draw, play with the story materials, and use playdough to explore the story independently. During this time the children wondered about what St. Theresa wore and thought that riding great distances on a donkey won't be much fun.

I am looking forward to helping the children learn more about Jesus and building a relationship with him. I also can't wait to share more of their learning and wondering.

- May MacKenzie
Christian Education Coordinator



NEW ADDITIONS TO ST JAMES' LIBRARY

When I attended the 60th UCW Anniversary Celebration in Sydney in July, I was given some money to purchase books for the UCW from the mobile Book Store that always comes to these events. I tried to make the selections as wide ranging as possible, hoping to find "something for everyone". Here's what we'll add to our library as soon as it officially reopens:

Power Shift: The Longest Revolution by Sally Armstrong. 271 pages. This book is the text of Armstrong's 2019 Massey lecture series presentation on CBC radio. As a journalist and activist who has travelled widely delving into women's rights issues, she is perfectly positioned to discuss the longstanding barriers to female empowerment and the shift that is in the wind today. She writes of her personal story, her meetings with politicians and world leaders, and the experiences and heroic stands of ordinary women. This well researched book looks at the historic reasons for women's inequality and what has changed recently. Has the time finally come for true equality?

The Bible Promise Book – Devotional for Women. Assorted contributors. 372 pages. A daily devotional that provides "scriptural wisdom and encouragement for dozens of key life topics". Daily devotions on weekly concepts such as: Repentance, Hope, Comfort, Peace, Anger

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ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY RESUMES

On 17 September a small but mighty group from St James conducted the first Adopt-A-Highway clean up since 2019! Pictured are Shaun Scott, Michèle Ashby, Christine Briand, Barb Shea, Hope Graham, Barb deMarsh and Liz Millett. Missing from the photo is Tim Hinds.

It was a cool, blustery fall day, but we managed to divert 23 bags of trash to the landfill. Interesting and "new" finds - directions to Montréal and masks, masks, masks!

- Michèle Ashby



FINE FINIALS!



If you look waaaay up, you can see that St. James is proudly displaying a brand new set of *finials*, which are adorning the four corners at the base of the steeple. This was a labour of love by several members of the congregation over a period of time. *Thank you* for your effort, your skill and your time!



OUTREACH TABLES AFTER CHURCH

For most of October there's a chance for the congregation to see some of our church groups on display after church. The main purpose is to happily announce there's life following the long Covid lull. Yes, there are changes in the midst of transition. But that's a sign of growth, too. Communication and Outreach wants to keep you up on the activities.

But don't wait! Shake the tree and ask after church or call the Office 902 863 2001 if you want to know about Sunday School or some other aspect.

The following groups will be, or have been, on display. Check them out by going to the church hall after Sunday's service:

- BELL CHOIR,
- HOT MEAL,
- SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE,
- SUNDAY SCHOOL & CHRISTIAN EDUCATION,
- CHRISTIAN MEDITATION GROUP,
- UNITED CHURCH WOMEN (UCW),
- PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY,
- PRAYER MINISTRY



NEW BOOKS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

and Humility. Each reading has a Biblical promise, devotional thought and prayer.

How to C.O.M.F.O.R.T. A Dying Friend by Rev. J.D. Kennedy. 135 pages. As stated in my synopsis of the 60th Celebration (page 2), this book suffers from a frustrating lack of expert editing, but the topic and suggestions are excellent. I found myself desperately wishing that I'd read this as my brother lay dying in May. I will definitely be returning to this book in the future. Rev. Kennedy expounds on his seven points:

- C – Confront your own fears about dying,
- O – offer your physical presence,
- M – minister through practical assistance,
- F – fortify with emotional support,
- O – open their lives up,
- R – remember their family's needs, and
- T – turn them to Jesus. He even adds one extra T in there!

He has many useful ideas, but you'll have to read the book to learn more about them.

The Top 100 Promises of the Bible by Tina Krause & Marjorie Vawter. 208 pages. Each of the 100 sections begins with a short Bible passage followed by an exposition on the topic. The "promises" are loosely grouped under subjects such as Comfort, Courage, Faith, Guidance, Peace, Prayer, Protection and Strength.

A Year of Prayer by John MacArthur. 250 pages. These prayers were gathered by the author's children and are divided into fifty-two "weeks" with five overarching

themes of prayers on: Worship and the Attributes of God, Joy and Longing, The Cross and The Gospel, Personal Holiness, and Useful Service. Each one begins with a Bible selection followed by a prayer.

- Michèle Ashby

BROADVIEW

Broadview is an independent Canadian magazine featuring award-winning coverage of spirituality, justice and ethical living. Through our compelling stories and engaging images, Broadview challenges and inspires readers seeking to live a purpose-filled life.

Our spirituality reporting features Christian perspectives on belief and faith, as well as points of view from other religions and philosophies.

We cover social justice from local, national and global contexts, drawing attention to contemporary issues and our response as people of faith and as caring citizens.

Our ethical living stories offer inspiration and ideas on how we can all make a positive difference with our lives.



Find Broadview in the parlor at St. James, and consider receiving it as a subscription.

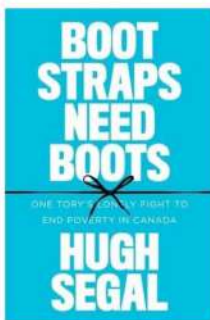


BOOK REVIEWS

This is Assisted Dying – A Doctor’s Story of Empowering Patients at the End of Life by Stefanie Green, MD.
294 pages.

This new release explains everything you’ve ever wanted to know about Medical Assistance in Dying. It tracks the author during the first year of legally assisted dying in Canada after June 2016. This deeply nuanced chronicle follows her original interest in the practice through to her becoming one of the leading pioneer practitioners in Victoria BC, and the founder of CAMAP, the Canadian Association of MAiD Assessors and Providers. Dr Green practised medicine for over twenty years as a family physician focused on maternity and newborn care, prior to deciding to begin offering this service. Her journey to where she is today is a fascinating story. She deals with all the pros and cons of the concept; patients’ and doctors’ fears and concerns about abuse and other issues of legality and morality; and her largely positive experiences with patients and their families. Since that time there have been further changes to Canadian law, which she briefly updates. Dr Green also provides Explanations of what is happening with similar laws in other countries and specifically compares the differences between the Canadian system and that in the US.

Along the way you meet patients who are by turns endearing, humorous and poignantly heartbreaking. I found her comprehensive and compassionate perspective to be both well reasoned and moving. For anyone who has questions about MAiD – this book will surely answer them. Available in the church library as soon as it is up and running again.



Bootstraps Need Boots: One Tory’s Lonely Fight to End Poverty in Canada by Hugh Segal. 173 pages.

I confess that while I knew I’d agree with Mr Segal’s basic premise, (an argument in favour of a Guaranteed Annual Income or GAI), I anticipated that I’d find this book rather dry and academic, so I was truly pleasantly surprised to thoroughly enjoy it! Canadian Senator, (retired), Hugh Segal writes in language accessible to all and he tells the story of his political life and how his personal “lived” experiences made him a proponent of a GAI. He thoroughly explains why a GAI is a good solution to poverty, (reduction of general financial hardship, stigma reduction, financial stability for individuals, less governmental administrative burden, past “experiments” findings and other countries’ experiences), and refutes all the standard arguments against it, (it’s a disincentive to work, poverty is too complex to be “fixed” with these

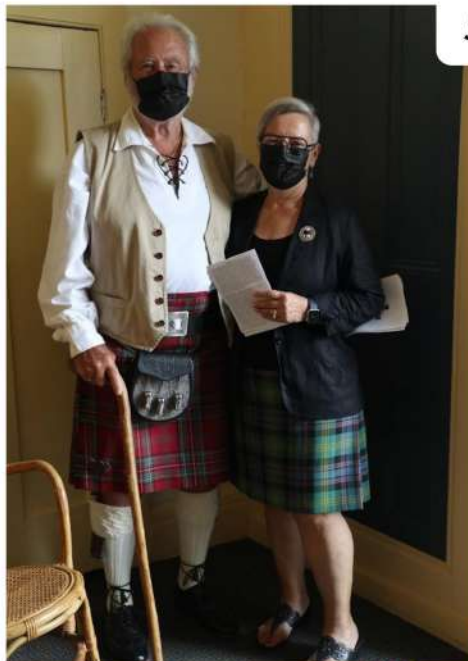
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PHOTO GALLERY



HIGHLAND GAMES WEEK



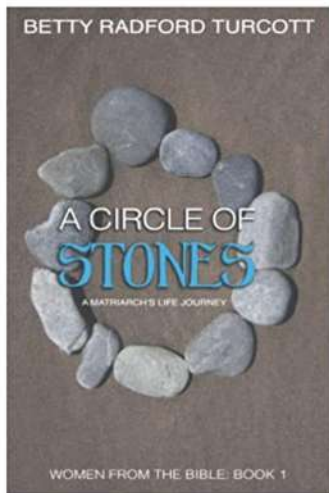
HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER

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with strangers – pay compliments, smile! 3) Rev J.D. Kennedy spoke to us on the topic of his book, (one I purchased for our library), How to C.O.M.F.O.R.T. a Dying Friend. The book suffers from an unfortunate lack of editing, but the topic and suggestions are excellent as was his talk. To paraphrase, he recommends: C – start by confronting your own fears about dying, O – offer your physical presence, be with your friend, M – minister by providing practical assistance, F – fortify them with emotional support, O – open their lives up with questions about it, R – remember their family and their needs, T – turn them to Jesus, we can't travel this final journey with them, but He can. He had other helpful ideas; you'll have to read the book to learn them all. 4) Sally Armstrong was the keynote speaker and was brilliant! This author, journalist and human rights activist is always an engaging presenter and held us captivated with wide ranging stories of her experiences and a synopsis of her recent book, Power Shift: The Longest Revolution. She shared numerous personal anecdotes of meeting with world leaders – some funny, some sad. She discussed terrorism in its many forms and how it affects women specifically, but how women can and do fight back against it. In reference to our theme she spoke of women such as Malala Yousafzai, activist; and the Polish women who left strollers and baby supplies at the train stations on the border for incoming Ukrainian mothers. She discussed how public and government "will to act" is paramount to changing conditions for

women around the world. All the speakers addressed the conference theme "Continuing in Hope". We also had a presentation by two staff members from Women for Change – Zambia. WFC is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that works in rural communities focusing on social and economic changes that empower women and children. Their stories of how simply getting an education can change a girl's life in Zambia had quite the impact! Established in 1992, and partnered with the UCC, WFC has grown into one of the most influential indigenous NGOs in Zambia. A total of \$103,000.00 has been raised and donated to this worthy NGO over the past five years, which is quite amazing given how COVID curtailed fundraising. There are still monies coming in. How about St James UCW considering a \$60.00 donation in light of the 60th anniversary? Unfortunately, a presentation by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada had to be cancelled when the speakers' flights were cancelled. This is the organization that brings us The World Day of Prayer every year from various countries around the world. There were also fun events. Tuesday evening's entertainment was the hilarious comedian Patrick Ledwell who attends a United Church in PEI. He kept us in stitches for almost two solid hours, we had the legendary Men Of The Deeps – who only seem to improve with age. Several of their numbers had us in tears. And Thursday evening many ladies were up step dancing along with Fiddles & Friends – some traditional Cape Breton musicians. Wednesday saw the ladies scatter on tours – Highland Village/Iona, Fortress Louisbourg and Cabot Trail/Ingonish/Smokey. A fine time was had by all our

visitors. For those who chose not to tour, there was a presentation by Betty Radford Turcotte on her latest book *A Circle of Stones* about Sarah. There was also time to tour the on-site Heritage Park and the Museum's displays of Mi'kmaq culture. Thursday evening wrapped up with a delightful, (and delicious!), banquet. Our speaker was the Rev Michael Blair,



General Secretary of the General Council of the UCC. He stated that he feels the UCC is good at being a "welcoming church", but needs to become better at being "hospitable". We welcome everyone and want to treat them equally, rather than recognizing that we aren't all the same and adapting to their differences. He also feels that as a church, we can be "too serious". The week concluded Friday morning with a moving, bilingual, (English/Gaelic), communion service led by Rev Alison Etter, as everyone prepared to head home. In her message she encouraged everyone to "do something" – no matter how small, it can have an impact! Be God's vision for the world. One delightful custom that was new to me,

was the gathering's practice of thanking each presenter/speaker/performer with a short "blessing song", sung twice by all, hands upheld. Many folks were visibly touched by this, and in fact, the comedian sent us an email later in the week to let us know how moved he had been by our blessing. I would love to see this tradition taken up at St James ... Every day we received small tokens from UCWs around Canada and Bermuda – musical "shaker eggs", crocheted mats to be placed under microwaved items to protect hands, UCW mission and prayer cards, Bermudian coins with attached explanations, etc. Our communion cups were recycled – an excellent idea! But, rather poignantly, they were donated by churches that are closing down, or have closed. The last day saw our tables decorated with cozies under teapots full of beautiful wildflower arrangements. Each place had a tea cup and saucer with a written explanation of the maritime tradition of welcoming folks into one's home for a cup of tea. The organizing committee are to be commended on the hard work they did for this event. Especially considering the many last minute changes due to COVID, flight issues and delays, lost luggage, etc, they did an amazing job! There were many ideas shared for both future UCW Conferences and local UCW meetings. No "region" has yet stepped up to volunteer to host the next conference in five years. Keeping to the traditional rotation, this should fall to the central region. Time will tell. I'm sure the ladies from other parts of Canada enjoyed a true maritime welcome throughout the entire week and are already looking forward to the 65th Conference.

- Michèle Ashby

ABORTION ON DEMAND?

I have been wondering lately why the conversation around Roe v Wade takes up so much time in the media and the United States but so little time here in our community. In talking to friends and family, I realize that this could be an uncomfortable conversation, so people sometimes avoid it. How can that be the case at St James? I had not been at this church for long before noticing that social justice issues raised different and occasionally contradictory ideas in meetings and e-mail correspondence. I have felt great pride in being part of a faith community ready to raise questions and our voices. Yet regarding abortion, we are quiet.



My concern started when a good friend from Ontario talked about how sad it was to see the decision coming from the United States Supreme Court. She worried about how life would now be more difficult for pregnant people there. I mentioned that rural Canada is not better. I told her that until 2017, PEI had no access to abortion. I also told her that getting abortions here in Antigonish is still challenging due to historical links between religious orders and the medical community. Additionally, centralizing services into the cities often means people

have to travel for service. I believe that the uncomfortable quiet around this topic is rooted in misunderstanding and avoidance.

The United Church of Canada's social policy statement on contraception and abortion has one idea that explains my desire for conversation: "Within our community, strong differences of opinion on moral issues are our strength, not our weakness." What are the differences of opinions, and where do we stand on this social justice issue? More importantly, how do we act on our beliefs if we don't talk about what we believe and why?

Faith views around the issue of abortion are often only heard in the context of these three statements from the UC social policy:

- Abortion is always a moral issue and can only be accepted as the lesser of two evils.
- Social pressure must always be to reduce the incidence of abortion.
- Abortion is acceptable only in certain medical, social and economic situations.

Those of you who believe that might feel that our focus in this conversation should be to pursue foundations of our society that reduce the need for abortion. We could focus on campaigns to ensure that all genders receive adequate sexual education, promote contraception use and access, and support educators and parents in having those conversations. We might also concentrate on advocating for funding for family planning clinics or social services that help families in poverty or violence.

Alternatively, some may be reading this

who believe, as I do, that the issue of abortion is a conversation between a pregnant individual and their doctor. No exceptions. It is time to end the idea that the community should have a voice on what is considered an acceptable medical, social or economic condition for abortion. What right have we as a group to decide what is acceptable for another individual? Adults frequently make decisions about their lives based on their moral compass and the restrictions within their own lives. Pregnant individuals are not different.

The often heard phrase, "We do not support 'abortion on demand,'" is another idea that I believe we should examine. All health care is "on-demand." No one seeks medical services for fun. Are we to now oppose "bypass surgery on demand" or "knee replacement on demand"? Of course not! Like all medical decisions, these procedures happen when needed, without discussing why they are required. We don't suggest shaming individuals or encouraging counselling to discuss potential moral questions of sloth or gluttony that might have led to the need for or the repercussions of those "on-demand" services. Why assume that making the medical decision to have an abortion needs outside guidance on the issue?

Please do not mistake me; I see a therapist monthly for counselling on all aspects of my life and, as such, have unwavering support



for counselling services. Therapists and counsellors should be more readily available and affordable, whatever the need – concerning faith, health, or interpersonal relationships. The notion that counselling should be recommended to a person for this issue suggests that pregnant individuals are less capable than others of thoughtful discourse. Available counselling - absolutely. Necessary counselling - no, not more for this matter than any other. Pregnant persons are not oblivious to their morals.

For a faith community so forward in our social ideal, I am disheartened that we have a policy regarding the need for and access to abortion, yet we don't discuss it as openly and confidently as we speak on other justice issues. Our United Church policy on this also beautifully advocates many options to support individuals and families before an abortion is needed. Still, we are silent. We MUST have these conversations for pregnant persons worldwide. It is not merely those in our neighbouring countries or developing nations facing challenges. People in your life have faced this issue individually or as a support for someone; it is our family members, neighbours, and coworkers.

If anyone in your life needed a drive to Halifax for an eye appointment or to see a specialist, they might start a phone tree to line up that day in the city. People need that same help in the case of abortions, but now they find it in silence. The pregnant person must, in the lead up to that decision

- consider who they can lean on for support or help,
- have access to a medical professional

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St. JAMES HOT MEAL PROGRAM

It is Tuesday morning, (hopefully Thursday as well), and from the St. James kitchen comes the sound of enthusiastic volunteers chopping, shredding, stirring and the opening and closing of ovens and refrigerators. The warm fragrant smells of lunch being prepared are floating on the air.

Waiting for lunch is anyone who would like a hot meal and some friendship. Attendance for lunch ranges from 25 to 60 depending on the time of year, week of the month and the weather that day. Volunteers arrive to help set the tables, serve the meal, have conversations and listen to the stories told at the tables.

Our volunteers are divided into teams who take turns providing a hot nutritious lunch and dessert. Supplies for the meals are bought using money donated to the program. Each team decides what they want to serve, buys the groceries, prepares the meal, and cleans up the kitchen.



Would you be interested in helping? Here are some suggestions:

- Join a team*
- Provide dessert for a meal*
- Come help serve and have a chat*
- Donate groceries for a meal*
- Make a monetary donation*

Volunteers arrive around 9am and get to work amidst much chatter and laughter. One does not have to know how to cook but just be willing to help out where needed. Lunch service begins around 11 and the kitchen is usually cleaned up and you are ready to leave by 1 or before. Lunch is not served on storm days that school is cancelled.

Would you like to help or need more information? The Church Secretary is in the office at 902-863-2001 every morning during the week. Donations of money can be placed in the offering box marked 'Hot Meal' or put in the slot outside the office door.

Everyone is welcome. We hope to see you there.

Region 15 Annual General Meeting

The Regional 15 Annual General Meeting was on May 27 and May 28, 2022. The meeting was held over zoom once again this year and thankfully with two years of online meetings we have become much more comfortable with the process and there were fewer technical problems.

The theme of this year's meeting was "We Are Not Alone" and all of the worship and presentations touched on the theme in some way. The first night began with the worship and the memorial services as we gathered to remember the faithful members who have died in the past year and whose service to the wider church is appreciated and valued. I find the longer I am in ministry the harder those services are for me to attend as I have known and worked with so many of the people who are lifted up. This year among those remembered the Region gave thanks for Bob Murray whose participation in Presbytery and Conference were so important.

There were two candidates who were ordained as ministers this year by the Region, Rick Gunn and April Hart, who both have a connection to our area as St. FX graduates. Rick also taught Sunday School at St James while he was in Antigonish and in his introduction to the Region, he mentioned that his time with us helped him



to better understand his call to ministry. May God bless both Rick and April as they begin their journey serving the church in this way.

The theme speaker for this year was the Rev. Dr. Anna Robbins, Dean of Theology at Acadia University. She spoke for two sessions and the first was about the history which we carry with us as a church and the importance of understanding how our past makes us see where we are and where we are heading. She highlighted through video clips, scripture, and artwork the dangers of nostalgia (especially when we remember only the good from the past and not the struggles) as well as the changing nature of the church as we emerge from the pandemic

The second presentation followed the same format but highlighted how people's outlook on the world has changed and how that has shaped relationships with each other and God. She used popular media (song and movies) to illustrate the shift in how people look at life and how that affects their faith and the message of the church. She ended with calling us to think about the planning we need to do in order to emerge from this uncertain time and to reach out with our message not simply as we had but also in new ways.

The meeting time was also filled with reports from groups, organizations connected to us, and the normal business which happens in Annual Meetings. The printed reports and some of the presented material can be found on the Region 15 website. The meeting was an opportunity for congregations to come together as the wider church to give thanks to God, to reconnect with each other, and to see the future which God is calling us to live.

- Rev. Peter Smith

BOOK REVIEWS

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programs, individuals will not use their money wisely, it will cost too much, and where will the money come from?). Poverty is well known to be related to poor health outcomes, low educational achievement, increased substance abuse and increased interactions with the legal system. A GAI would significantly contribute to the reduction of all these societal ills. Well worth the read and very timely! Also available in the church library as soon as it is up and running again.

- Michèle Ashby



September's Hurricane Fiona was very hard on the St. James churchyard.

ABORTION

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that is willing to prescribe the services or medications necessary,

- have access to the funds and a vehicle to get to this care,
- be able to secure time off work or supports with child or family responsibilities, both for the day of the appointment and for the days afterwards while they physically recover.

They may have to hide their pregnancy and choice of abortion from those around them for fear of judgment, ostracization, being physically unsafe, or being cast out of their home or faith community.

We must raise our voices on this issue just as we do on other social justice issues. Those individuals and support networks must know they are loved, valued, and not alone. I challenge you to think about how we do that as individuals and as a faith community.

- Christine Briand



St. James United Church · 197 Main Street, Antigonish, NS
Phone: (902) 863-2001 · Website: www.stjamesuc.com

Email: stjamesconnections@gmail.com