

# CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for St. James United Church · 197 Main Street, Antigonish, Nova Scotia  
By the Outreach & Communications Committee Spring 2023

*We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him."*

-Romans 6:9

## Spring 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

Jesus is alive. The message was surprising, unexpected, and hard to accept because everyone saw Jesus die on Good Friday. The disciples watched his lifeless body taken from the cross and saw it buried. They left the tomb with broken hearts and shattered dreams. Yet the startling message that Jesus was no longer dead spread through the community of believers on Easter morning.

For early on the third day, the women discovered that the tomb was empty and the Risen Jesus appeared to them. They rushed to tell the others and soon every disciple began to experience the truth that everything changed because of the resurrection. The tomb being empty meant that death no longer has a hold on God's people, that the promises of God were unstoppable, and that God's love was so powerful that it could transform a symbol of terror to one of grace. All of which was good news for those first



disciples and for those of us who follow Jesus now.

Jesus is alive. That's the truth we celebrate on Easter morning. We come together to rejoice that nothing, not even death itself, can stop the salvation of God from being part of our lives. We sing our hallelujahs because through his death and resurrection, Jesus makes everything new and everything possible.

This year, I would invite you to gather with other disciples and hear again that wonderful and powerful news that the tomb is empty and the cross has become a symbol of hope. This year, I would invite you to join with us as we discover the new life and promising future which is ours because Jesus is alive!

May God bless each and everyone of you and our community of faith.

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

## ACTIVE HOPE

Starting with a quote from the educational environmentalist Joanna Macy,

*"ACTIVE HOPE IS WAKING UP TO THE BEAUTY OF LIFE ON WHOSE BEHALF WE CAN ACT. WE BELONG TO THIS WORLD."*

But it sometimes takes courage to stir oneself from the comforts of home on a winter Tuesday's night to join a global Zoom meeting on the Earth Crisis in Brazil.

Yet a lovely group of about 16 did so, enjoying a chili supper as we gathered in the basement hall of St Paul's Anglican Church the last night of February.

We heard from three speakers, two coming from the legacy of European settlers and the third from the Amazon indigenous experience. The situation is indeed grave for the Amazon River and its native inhabitants as a result of the relentless extraction and poisoning of resources. Native populations have shrunk, in some cases from 200 million down to just 1/2 million. Starvation and sickness due to contaminated rivers and deforestation are the legacies. The speaker, Bartô, an articulate artist who has for a seat in the Brazillian Senate in 2022, is a powerful spokesperson for his people lending reason for hope.

Christiana, who in many ways echoes our privilege expressed the guilt and disquiet she felt when she began to absorb the true depths of the crisis. She said it led to depression and a kind of paralysis. Meditation has helped her overcome this over 20 years ago. \*



Now she works on reconciliation efforts, such as learning more about the indigenous, their customs and language. It reminded me of our efforts in response to the Murdered and Missing Women here in Canada.

We can conclude with another quote from Joanna Macy (look her up on YouTube!)

*"Of all the dangers we face, from climate chaos to nuclear war, none is so great as the deadening of our response!"*

Let's take what comes to us and give it a prayerful response. God is here in us and in every part of Creation. We just need to listen to the planet and let God guide us.

\*This in-person session was planned by the St James Meditation Group which meets weekly at 3pm Tuesdays at St James. The International Zoom event was supported and organized by WCCM, World Community for Christian Meditation.

- Fran Wittgens

## ***EARTH CRISIS BRAZIL***

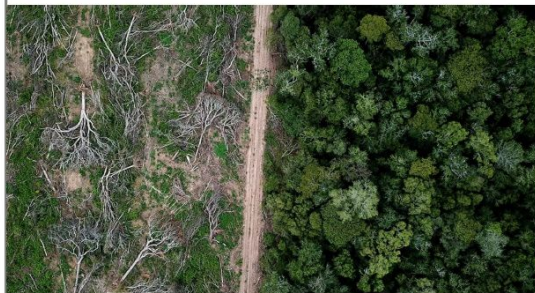
### *A personal reflection on an introduction to Christian Meditation*

When I first heard of the Earth Crisis Series event held by the World Community for Christian Meditation, I was both intrigued and skeptical. Having no experience with mediation of any kind, I struggled to see a connection between the massive tragedy of the destruction of the Amazon, the exploitation of Brazilian resources, and what seemed to me to be a very individualist practice of quiet meditation. By the end of the two and a half hour event, I was humbled and came away with a deeper understanding of both the current struggles in Brazil for environmental and social justice, and of the power and role of Christian meditation in framing our place in them.

The online event was bookended with a six minute silent meditation. The event was hosted by and for its own adherents and did not take time to explain the hows and whys of Christian mediation. I didn't really know what I was supposed to do besides be quiet in my mind and heart for six minutes straight. I was surprised by how quickly the time passed, and how peaceful and settling being in complete inner and outer silence was. My mind and soul felt sharper and more ready to be engaged after just a short experience of meditation.

The presentation, livestreamed from Brazil, was hard-hitting. The audience was confronted with the realities of colonialism and capitalism in the Global South. When thinking of Brazil, the entirety of my knowledge of

environmental issues was that of the depletion of the rainforest. It was a shocking revelation to be exposed to the breadth of exploitation. The prominent world issues that we are aware of in the Global North are often only a superficial understanding of the complexities of lingering colonialism; the extraction of wealth and resources from Indigenous peoples and territories. For example, environmental activist Christiana Coimbra, identifies five distinct periods of resource



extraction from her home country: Brazilwood (1500-1530); Sugarcane and slavery (16th - 18th Century); Gold Mining (17th - 18 Century); Coffee (18th - 20th Century); Rubber (20th Century). She adds that contemporary beef production for exportation is an added environmental burden. Through this lens, the impact and extent of which Brazil has been pillaged and looted - and the resulting destruction and poisoning of the environment, is made inarguably clear.

Equally clear, and perhaps the most striking takeaway for me, was the role that meditation played in Coimbra's ability to maintain her activism despite seemingly insurmountable barriers. The wisdom that the practice provides her is obvious.

The second speaker gave over his time to



## ***EARTH CRISIS REFLECTION***

*(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)*

2022 senatorial candidate Bartô Macuxi, who embodied the intersection of Indigeneity and artistic expression in relation to environmental and social justice struggles in Brazil. His work is heavily focused on building public consciousness in uplifting calls to action. Again, the link between our inner world and our ability to maintain focus, optimism, and find stamina to continue in the struggle, were evident in the ways Macuxi spoke of the multifacetedness of long term engagement. Leaving the event, I came to understand that finding inner strength through meditation is fundamental to maintaining yourself in the face of devastating economic forces.

The World Community of Christian Meditation has a guide on its website that I wish I had looked up before the event. It provides a step-by-step overview on how to

### **- Explore the benefits of meditation:**

[www.wccm-canada.ca/how-to-meditate](http://www.wccm-canada.ca/how-to-meditate)

### **- Watch Earth Crisis: Brazil:**

[tinyurl.com/EarthCrisisBrazil](https://tinyurl.com/EarthCrisisBrazil)

or on the WCCM website: [wccm.org](http://wccm.org)

### **- See all recordings of the Earth Crisis series events here:**

[wccm.org/outreach-areas/earth-crisis-climate-ecology](http://wccm.org/outreach-areas/earth-crisis-climate-ecology)

meditate. The explainer on how to use the group's adopted mantra of "Maranatha" to develop meditation skills is particularly instructive. I learned that there is even a WCCM app with videos, readings and even a timer to guide your meditation!

- Sarah Armstrong

## ***EARTH DAY SERVICE***

The service on 26 March was organized by the Social Justice Committee and served as our Earth Day Service - albeit one month early. Christine Briand arranged a lovely environmentally themed service with the entire committee participating in different ways.

The theme was "Act, Learn, Pray". Floral decorations were kindly provided by Atlantic Superstore. Musical selections were appropriate and stirring. Afterward various exhibits in the hall were enjoyed by much of the congregation. The Sisters of St Martha contributed a display on their garden and arboretum on the grounds at Parkland.

Paul Strome loaned us posters and climate books on behalf of the Fridays for



# EARTH DAY SERVICE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

Future group – whose table was run by Alison Lee. John Graham-Pole represented the Quaker Group and their environmental philosophy. Tammy Feltmate was the County's Sustainability Department representative and had quite a display about Antigonish's new green/active transportation corridor. Marian Turniawan fielded questions about the new Climate Hub project and Sue Adams represented the Marie Michael Library and explained how people could borrow from their extensive selection of books – many of which are environmentally themed.

There were also a whole selection of free seeds to be had assorted wildflowers, squash, cilantro, red spruce, etc. And there was a generous donation of TruEarth laundry strips which proved to be very popular. Overall, the committee was pleased with how the service was received and the participation of so many folks.



To quote the benediction that closed the service, "Go and act, for the care of Creation. Go and learn, for the sake of Creation. Go and pray, for the love of Creation."

- Michèle Ashby

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW? GINA CLIFTON

Hello and happy spring!

My name is Gina Clifton and I'm the owner of the small local business, The Posh Peppermint Home and Gifts, right across the street. I am happy to say we've made it through what was hopefully the worst of the pandemic and things are looking up again. I hope the same is true for you. It's been so nice to see familiar faces out and about again and connecting with each other after so much isolation. It's been a long haul for all of us but it feels as though we are finally coming out on the other end of this and that's an awesome feeling. For my store, this is largely thanks to the continued support and patience showed by all of the locals we were lucky enough to receive, when permitted, and when times were not ideal for any of us.

We've all had struggles and challenges of varying degrees in the face of the pandemic but that community support remained. It was amazing how we were able to work together to make the best of a bad situation and I am grateful to live where we do!



## PHOTO GALLERY





## DAFFODIL TEA!

It may have been rainy, cold and windy outside, but inside warm thoughts and ideas for spring were flowing over as people attended the Daffodil Tea on Saturday, April 1st. The hall was decorated in spring pastels and with flowers on each table.

A delicious lunch of assorted sandwiches and sweets, (including Gluten Free and Vegan alternatives) were served. This was the first fundraising project for the UCW since we were closed by Covid in 2020. A huge thank you to all who baked and supported this project. It gives hope for future endeavours as well as the coming of warmer days and taking time to slow down and have a cup of tea with a friend.

- Pam Cunningham



## WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Your Social Justice Committee thought it might be a good idea to remind everyone what Social Justice means.

In the mid-1800s, an Italian Jesuit first introduced the term as an economic concept. Seeing extreme levels of inequality and economic distress caused by the European class system, Father d'Azeglio used the term based on Thomas Aquinas' idea that, in addition to doing the right thing, we should strive to do what is necessary for the betterment of others.

The United Nations says that "Social Justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. This work is about opening doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need."

Others say the five principles of Social Justice include:

### Access

Access to resources and programs is a fundamental principle of Social Justice.

### Equity

Meaning fairness, justness. It's easy to confuse the terms 'equity' and 'equality', but those things which are equitable are not always equal. As an example, the effort and resources required for two different people to achieve a common goal can vary widely.

### Diversity

This is about acknowledging the differences

that exist between community members. To be effective in creating a more inclusive society, policy makers must recognize factors that create barriers and work on ways to overcome them.

### Participation

All members of society should be able to participate equally. Exclusionary policies are created when diverse voices are not at the table.

### Human Rights

are one of the most important principles enshrined with all aspects of Social Justice.

Your Social Justice committee works on networking and communication about these issues, especially as they relate to poverty and the environment. Contact the office if you want to get involved!

- St James Social Justice Committee

*Jesus announced the coming of God's reign—  
a commonwealth not of domination  
but of peace, justice, and reconciliation.  
He healed the sick and fed the hungry.  
He forgave sins and freed those held captive  
by all manner of demonic powers. (A Song of Faith)*

The United Church has been active in the public arena since its earliest days. The founders of this church believed that ours is a living faith and a witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ that is expressed in active, thoughtful involvement in society. The combined voices of people of faith bring forward the message that every individual, and Earth itself, must be cherished and respected.

[united-church.ca](http://united-church.ca)

## THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

### How is our church helping to protect God's life-giving Creation?

Watch a video of what some United Churches in the Maritimes have been doing.

[tinyurl.com/UCCclimatejustice](http://tinyurl.com/UCCclimatejustice)

What ideas does this give us? What else can we do?!

### Connecting on Climate Action

Many individuals and groups in/around Antigonish town and county are concerned about the climate crisis and want to take action.

Many are also currently working on climate action or on issues that intersect with addressing climate change (e.g., poverty reduction, affordable housing, regenerative agriculture). Through these gatherings, we hope to connect people to facilitate communication, collaboration, and action where our interests and work intersects.

We see the climate crisis not as a single issue area, but rather the context in which we are all living... Any interests, passions, and experiences you have can be connected to climate action, so we welcome anyone and everyone to the discussion!

For more information, contact  
Marian Turniawan: [mturniaw@stfx.ca](mailto:mturniaw@stfx.ca)

### Did you know...?

The United Church of Canada has a new, ambitious policy to address the climate emergency! The whole church is committed to the goal of an 80% decrease in carbon emissions by 2030!

The United Church's Faithful Footprints program ([tinyurl.com/UCCfaithfulfootprints](http://tinyurl.com/UCCfaithfulfootprints)) is currently working with 260 congregations to make their buildings more energy efficient. This is more than half way towards the goal of reaching 500 communities by 2025. For the 56 completed projects, carbon equivalency savings are equal to the annual energy of 147 homes (i.e., 628 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub> saved).

The United Church is also committed to stronger advocacy at both the provincial and the national government levels for bold climate action. The church is continuing its disinvestment from fossil fuels. We want to strengthen our work with Indigenous communities, global partners, ecumenical organizations, and relationships with young people who have shown great moral climate leadership.

What steps do you propose we - our congregation - take to live up to our commitment as the United Church of Canada? Send your proposals for action to our Regional Council.

Email: [info4RC15@united-church.ca](mailto:info4RC15@united-church.ca) or  
call 1-800-268-3781 x6137 or  
to the St James UC office.

- Joan MacGillivray, Regional Council Rep.



## BOOK REVIEW

**A Journey of Love and Hope, The Inspirational Words of a Mi'kmaq Elder**, by Sister Dorothy Moore, illustrated by Gerald Gloade, 164 pages

This book is a compilation of lectures, prayers and ceremonies by renowned Mi'kmaq educator, Elder, residential school survivor and human rights activist Sr Dorothy. She hails from Membertou and was the first Mi'kmaq to enter a Roman Catholic order, taking her vows with the Sisters of St Martha in 1956 and becoming an educator in Nova Scotia's public elementary school system. She became a developer of Mi'kmaq Studies programs at the University College of Cape Breton (UCCCB) and an assortment of Mi'kmaq language programs. She was awarded both the Order of Nova Scotia and the Order of Canada and multiple honorary degrees.

Sections of the book address the topics of Culture and Language, Spirituality, Racism, Education, and Prayers and Ceremonies. It concludes with a timeline of her life events.

One thing I particularly enjoyed were the forwards and the *Ikanteks* or

introductions from an assortment of fellow educators and other Mi'kmaq writers. These taught me more about Sr Dorothy. I have had the pleasure of encountering her on various occasions, but she is quite modest and doesn't talk a lot about her accomplishments. She believes strongly in education and fought to obtain her own education despite multiple barriers.

She has spent her life encouraging fellow Mi'kmaq to become educated also, and she stresses the importance of retaining their mother tongue. I was interested in her explanation of how and why negative stereotypes about First Nations arose historically and developed into racism. I would have enjoyed more detail about her personal life and journey, and while these were addressed in the original talks, they are for the most part left out of the book.

Because she is usually speaking to fellow educators, there is a certain amount of repetition. However as one of the *ikanteks* says, "retelling a story also plays an important role in Mi'kmaq culture, providing emphasis to core stories and tenets, and demonstrating nuance as the stories evolve in different settings".

Generally, this is a positive, enriching book that can teach "settlers" much about our neighbours, the original peoples of Nova Scotia. It is available in our church library.

- Michèle Ashby

## LEGO ST JAMES



won the People's Choice Award. More than 600 people cast votes in person and online for the latter award, sponsored by Antigonish 5 to \$1. The other prizes were sponsored by the Heritage Association of Antigonish, the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, and John and Laurie Blackwell. More than 200 people visited the Museum on March 16th to view the entries and to celebrate the efforts of all participants. The Museum's hope is that the contest - which will become an annual event - will serve to highlight the importance of preserving and protecting our architectural heritage.

- Barry MacKenzie

Antigonish Heritage Museum  
20 East Main Street  
[www.antigonishheritage.org](http://www.antigonishheritage.org)



## MORE DAFFODIL TEA!



Do you enjoy reading *CONNECTIONS* newsletter?

We are always looking to improve! If you have any suggestions for the production team, please write in to the email address below, or submit to Patsy in the church office.



Your *SUBMISSIONS* and *PHOTOS* are especially appreciated!



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