

CONNECTIONS

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

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

- Psalm 118:24

Summer 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

Summer is here. I say that not because the calendar says that it is July or because the weather is hot but because for the first time in many years it actually feels like summer. There are crowds from all over the world here for the Highland Games and other special events. Summer visitors who usually join us at St. James and St. David’s have finally returned to their cottages and vacation homes. Activities and events which have been paused since 2019 are finally resuming.

I also find that the fear and worry which was present for the last few years finally seems to be gone. People are going about their lives and enjoying the possibilities which are ours when the days are long and schedules at work are quieter. For the first time in what seems like forever, it actually feels like summer has arrived.

So this year, I hope you are able to join in the special church services and the events



and activities around the town and county. I hope you are able to find some time to relax and visit with friends old and new. I hope that you are able to enjoy some quiet and experience the beauty which makes summer a wonderful seasons that God has given us to enjoy.

May God bless you and our church over these warm months.

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



Honouring Bob Murray (1930-2021)

Following the worship service on June 18 which happened to be the closing of Sunday School for the summer, family members and friends gathered outside the Christian Education building for the dedication of a Burning Bush shrub which had been planted in memory of Bob Murray. Rev. Peter dedicated the shrub and spoke of the many positions Bob had held at St. James. It is fitting that the shrub is planted outside the CE building as Bob had taught the senior Sunday School class for twenty years. Mavis has shared that during those years Bob always devoted his Friday evenings to the preparation of the lesson for the coming Sunday.

The Burning Bush appears in our United Church crest as it represents the Presbyterian Church, one of the three churches which in 1925 joined to form the United Church of Canada. So it could be said it is a nod to Bob’s Presbyterian upbringing in New Glasgow. But it was in 1964 upon moving to Antigonish that his membership was transferred to St. James United Church where close to sixty years he served as chair or member of many



Above: Bob Murray
Right: Burning Bush in front of the CE Building

committees. But perhaps he will be most remembered for his gift of music which he shared with so much joy.

He was a good and faithful servant.



Region 15 Update

The weekend of June 9 to 11, I attended the Regional Council meeting in Halifax at Mount St. Vincent University. It was a good meeting although Friday night did go a bit late. It was after 11 when I finally got back to my room. But there were many memorable and meaningful moments throughout the meeting including the worship services in which the youth, including 2 from St. James, had a major role in 2 of the services. The music was also great and got us out of our seats and moving.

The meeting began Friday afternoon with the theme of Discipleship and the theme speaker was Michael Blair, General Secretary of the United Church, who gave 2 memorable and thought provoking presentations on Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship and Daring Justice. Michael talked about the future of the United Church, where it will go and our need to lead with boldness as unapologetic Christians who follow Jesus through discipleship. He talked about the importance of sharing our stories of how Jesus makes a difference in our lives and in all our relationships.

During the business part of the meeting, we reviewed and voted on the proposals, approving all with some editing. These included making our Region an Affirming Ministry ensuring that all are welcome and no one is excluded as well as giving our Region a name. We are now members of Bermuda, Nova Scotia Regional Council. We also voted on the

remit which will also be coming to Church Council. This remit is to amend the Basis of Union to establish an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada and the vote was unanimous in favour of the remit.

We had presentations by many groups that are working in the Region including one by the EcoJustice Working Group which is part of the Justice, Mission and Outreach Committee. They reviewed some of the commitments of the United Church including reducing our carbon emission 80% by 2030. They are currently working with 260 congregations to make their buildings more energy efficient and hope to increase the number to 500. This presentation was a good introduction to the workshop I attended on Churches addressing the Climate Emergency. We heard how 3 churches in Nova Scotia including Beacon United Church in Yarmouth and St. Andrew's United Church in Halifax have got rid of oil heat, installed heat pumps and upgraded their appliances resulting in reducing their costs as well as their footprint dramatically. This was all possible through grants provided by the federal and provincial governments plus grants from Faithful Footprints and the Hunter Fund of the United Church. St. Andrew's also has a garden with produce donated to the Food Bank.

The other workshop I attended was Breaking the Silence and how the United Church has been working since the 70s to help the Mayan and Indigenous peoples of Guatemala. Tatamagouche Centre has been working with Breaking the Silence as well as Amnesty International to help the local farmers in Guatemala who have been

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Honours & Awards

Several members of our congregation have recently received distinguished honours and awards.

The Canadian Paediatric Society Life Membership Awarded to Dr. Minoli Amit

(reprinted with permission from the CPS)



Life Membership is an honour reserved for members who have made a significant contribution to the CPS. Life members have demonstrated tremendous dedication to advancing the health of children by supporting the work of the CPS.

In addition to being an active member of our church, Minoli was a pediatrician at St Martha's Regional Hospital. She graduated from Dalhousie University and is certified by the Physician Executives of Canada. She led the Children and Women's Service for many years until her retirement in 2021.

You can read more about Dr. Amit's achievements and contributions at cps.ca



The MacLeod Group has announced that their founder **Brian MacLeod was a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for Nova Scotia.** Brian has been recognized as an exemplary member of the Antigonish community and a dedicated volunteer for various organizations such as Nova Scotia Community College and Festival Antigonish. He was also recognized for fostering a vision with the MacLeod Group to be a leader in high quality retirement living and senior care built on the foundation of family values and a sense of community. He graduated in 1974 from Mount Allison University. Brian and his wife, Irene, raised four sons in Antigonish. The MacLeod Group Health Care Services was founded back in 1984 and the organization operates in 13 locations providing care to 724 residents and employs over 1000 people throughout the Maritimes. The MacLeod Group is honoured to have Brian MacLeod as their founder, and they are proud to see him recognized for all his hard work and dedication to the community.

Brian received his QPJ medal from the Premier of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Tim Houston, with the Honourable Michelle Thompson, MLA for Antigonish, in attendance.

Dr John Hamilton, also of our congregation, was likewise awarded the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal** for his volunteerism and community work. Over the forty years John has been in Antigonish, he has been a generous supporter of many organizations, including but not limited to: StFX University (assorted campaigns - the Coady Institute, the Millenium Centre, etc), The Highland Society, St Martha's Hospital, the Liberal Party, a variety of performing arts organizations, (including both Antigonish's Bauer Theatre and the Chedabucto Place Performance Centre), and many other worthy causes. He was presented his QPJ medal by Nova Scotia's Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Arthur Leblanc, at Government House in Halifax. In attendance were his wife, Minoli Amit and son, Alistair.



CONGRATULATIONS to Patsy Farrell on her well-earned retirement. Thank you Patsy for your years of dedication and service as St James Secretary.

We are pleased to welcome Barb Shea, who will be taking over the Secretary role this Fall.



Scott Williams

UCW & Mens Club Bursary was split this year between two congregation members graduating from High School and pursuing secondary **school studies this Fall. Congratulations to Kiera MacDuff and Cameron Bell** and best wishes as they move into a new stage of their lives.

The first **Scott Williams Performing Arts Scholarship** was awarded to **Kiera MacDuff** who will be studying Music at Mount Allison. The fund is named for congregation member Scott Williams in recognition for his contributions to the growth of music education opportunities for high school students in Antigonish

Wild Church

I've used a regular umbrella lately. How else to tolerate the sun midday in July?

We're lucky to find shelter, even if it's just under an umbrella. Here on this planet that isn't the case for all. Even water isn't available to cool off in some places. Or finding a place in the shade.

There is a monthly gathering that gently allows me to meet and reflect on my own relationship with Planet Earth. This July it was in Antigonish County at Bayfield Provincial Beach. In June it was Bethany Gardens. Started in June, this gathering is not a conventional church service, though it is spirit driven. I guess it's for the many of us who feel close to God when we're outside in nature.

It's called Wild Church and was introduced and led by Rev. Natasha Brubaker from St Paul's. She'd been leading these back in Alberta and wanted to continue here in Nova Scotia. This is how it works:

Gathering

-the carpooling we did for Bayfield was a real help. In August it will be in Country Harbour on the grounds of Holy Trinity Anglican Church. Call 902-863-3546 if interested .

Check In

A 10-15 minute check in, sharing something from our experience or thoughts about nature was done the first two times. It could be different. But it basically made us comfortable being there and setting the tone.

There aren't hymns, sermons or music as this is very simple and letting us be the receivers of nature.

Holy Wander

Then for about 30-40 minutes we're invited to have a holy wander, of our own choosing. We individually sought out the beach.. A rock or log to sit on, the low tide to wade into , the quiet shore to walk.

I found a long white log, bleached out by the elements for decades. It was so smooth and gave me a perch to take in the larger scene. Somehow quiet met joyful when I could absorb from afar the boats gently bobbing, the families prancing knee high in the water, Sunday calm on the blankets, midway into our summer. Balance and a heart grateful.

Then I noticed a tiny green seedling that had made a home in a little crevice in the log I was sitting on. . New life from the old! After thinking about this, I stood up to see if there were other such signs. Soon, along this stretch of sand, I saw how within the eelgrass were new shoots of dune grass making a hold . This is how it starts, I mused. Plants holding onto the sand, helping to conserve the beach from erosion. This was my own mini sermon. Each of us, in our own way, had gone out to listen and receive what nature had to share.

Sharing and Closing

Then back to our shaded picnic bench where we did share. Not compulsory, but it was seamless with what came before.

Prayer and poetry were a perfect fit.

And then back home, feeling refreshed.

Adopt-A-Hwy Clean Up

On the evening of Wed, 26 April, a dedicated band of volunteers spent two hours cleaning up the "St James" area of Exit 32 - the intersection and roundabouts at Highways 104 and 7. Fifteen bags of garbage and four bags of "refundables" were collected by Sarah Armstrong, Sara av Maat, Bill and Jessie Detweiler, Hope Graham, Gerrit and Marlene Groenberg, Liz Millet, Barb Shea and Michèle Ashby. There were many appreciative honks from the passing public to put smiles on our faces! This was our 15th clean up and our first strictly following the latest regulations from the Adopt-A-Highway organization. These have cut back our area somewhat and made it a little easier and certainly safer to perform the activity. We'll be going out again in the fall and would love to have some newcomers join our ranks!



In addition to the number of bags collected and their weight, volunteers are asked to report the most common brand names, most common items, and most unusual items that they pick up during their cleanup.

- Michèle Ashby

Litter Programs 2022-2023 Data Overview	
Total cleanups completed	1,326
Number of volunteers	11,007
Time spent cleaning up litter	45,330.5 hours
Distance of shoreline cleaned	51 km
Distance of roadway cleaned	862.27 km
Total garbage bags collected	4,073
Total recycling bags collected	582
Total weight of bags	383,412.97 lbs.

Commonly Reported Brand Names	Commonly Reported Litter Items	Most Unusual Litter Items Reported
Tim Hortons	Cigarette butts	'We Haul Junk' sign
McDonalds	Cans/bottles	Elvis Presley vinyl record
Pepsi	Lobster claw bands	Unopened case of beer
Budweiser	Plastic	Colostomy bags
Robins	Rope	Human ashes (remains)



THE LIFE AND WORK OF OUR CHURCH



Square Dancing Class graduates



Highland Games Closing Service



Preparing for the Pancake Brunch



Stump Frolic fun



Brass quintet



Young leaders



The St James Choir



Book Reviews

By Michèle Ashby



GraceFull – Growing a Heart that Cares for Our Neighbors, by

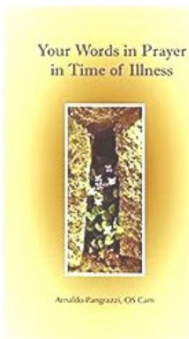
Dorena Williamson, illustrated by Geneva B, 2019, 30 pages.

Two young friends, Hope and Anna, enjoy their encounters at church. However when a Sunday “grace offering” is taken up to assist Anna’s refugee family, Hope begins to ask questions and has a special opportunity to learn what grace looks like, both for her and for Anna’s homeless family. This endearing story teaches youngsters that God showers grace where it is meant to be shared – allowing everyone to be GraceFull! The book compassionately addresses tricky subjects such as inequality and poverty, and gives children ideas on how to show God’s love and caring to those whose home life or homeland may look quite unlike theirs. **Dorena Williamson** is an author and speaker who enjoys writing Christian stories for children. She has served at a multicultural faith community for the last twenty years.

Bible Readings for Caregivers by Betty Groth Syverson, 108 pages, published in 1987.

Written by an empathetic, retired nurse, who also worked in hospice care for many years, this book looks

at assorted bible passages, adds stories from her own experience and offers suggestions for both medical professionals and lay people alike in their role of “caregiver”.



Your Words in Prayer in Time of Illness by Fr Arnaldo Pangrazzi O.S. Cam, 68 pages, published 1982.

In keeping with his Order’s focus of ministering to the sick, (*Order of St Camillus*), Fr Pangrazzi’s slim volume shares forty-four prayers, suggestions, and readings for those who are ill and those who are caring for them. They cover topics for people dealing with cancer, long hospitalizations, surgeries, pain, families, the addicted and the dying. Although it’s an older book, the advice is timeless.

WANTED

St James is seeking a volunteer to step up to take on the role of “Church Librarian”. Once a few years of neglect is rectified, this job could take as little as an hour every few weeks to keep our little library running in an orderly manner – and it would be greatly appreciated.



STUMP FROLIC—FISH GAME

Wild Church

Continued from page 6

Wild Churches are interdenominational and can be found throughout Canada. You can go on the internet to read more. Or go to Wind From the Sea on Facebook where Rev. Natasha Brubaker has a local site.

As I’ve heard from Joan MacGillivray, the United Church has environmentally based worship groups, too. Maybe we’ll hear more about them. It’s all good when we can tune in!

- Fran Wittgens

Wind from the Sea
Wild Church

(part of the Wild Church Network)

A ministry of the Parish of Three Harbours (Anglican)

Meets the 3rd Sunday of each month.

Next gathering is Sunday, August 20, 3:00 pm, at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Country Harbour.

Gatherings last about 60-90 minutes depending.

Facebook page: Wind from the Sea

www.wildchurchnetwork.com
email Natasha for more info at rector3harbours@gmail.com

Region 15 Update

Continued from page 3

pushed off their lands by palm oil producers. Just Us coffee is one of the products that the Breaking the Silence organization has helped the local people grow as well as permaculture so that people can save and grow their traditional seeds. By purchasing Just Us coffee we are supporting Mayan farmers.

The meeting concluded on Sunday after the worship service that included an ordination, recognition of a Designated Lay Minister and the installation of the new president of Bermuda, Nova Scotia Regional Council.

It was a wonderful meeting and thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend.

- Joan MacGillivray

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A Treasure Under Our Feet



Maybe you've heard of the Bethany Gardens. In case you haven't visited, there is a real treasure for the mind, body and spirit. The pool and steeple have benches nearby to sit, gaze and absorb the sound of water gently falling. Winding paths

through trees and perennial beds take you peacefully around. The labyrinth is in a grove of young oak trees. It's further encompassed by larger trees and shrubs, giving it a feeling of protection.

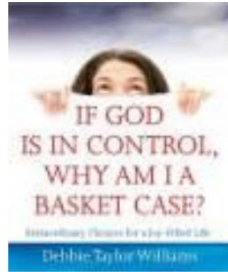
In a busy time of your week, this space gives you room. Room to breathe and collect.

- Fran Wittgens



Book Reviews

By Michèle Ashby



If God is in Control, Why Am I a Basket Case? Extraordinary Choices for a Joy-Filled Life, by Debbie Taylor Williams, 222 pages, published in 2009.

We all have our occasional "basket-case" moments, and may wonder how these fit with God's plan for us? Debbie Taylor Williams offers an in-depth, eight-week examination of the Book of Colossians, in which she takes her readers to an understanding that "basket-case" living is not what God has in mind for us. She uses her personal experience, (author, cancer survivor, 30 + years of marriage, workshop and retreat leader, keynote speaker, etc) to draw meaning out of the Bible verses written by Paul.

There is a spiritual wisdom and biblical knowledge that adds greatly to her writing. This book is suitable for either individuals or small groups. But I must confess that if I'd had more time to peruse her book prior to purchasing it, I might not have, as she's coming from a very fundamentalist perspective. There's an interesting section on marriage! And unlike the United Church, she equates homosexuality with sin. However, her writing on other topics such as forgiveness, relationships and anger is helpful at prompting a more profound look at the state of our own minds and thought processes.

Amy MacCarron Fleming

Duke of Edinburgh's Commonwealth Study Conference Delegate



Princess Anne (left) with delegates

Our daughter, Amy McCarron Fleming, was a delegate in June for the Duke of Edinburgh's Commonwealth Study Conference, which was hosted by Canada this year. It brought together almost 300 leaders from across 34 commonwealth countries, covering business, government, community and social sectors. Princess Anne, who is now President of the conference, attended and spoke at the opening gathering.

The theme of this year's conference was "Leadership for Inclusive Change". When delegates arrived in Calgary for the opening plenary, they heard visionary speakers from across the globe speak on topics such as climate change, healthcare, food security and leadership.

The delegates were then divided into 15 study groups and were sent to different provinces and territories across Canada for an intense 8-day study tour. Amy's group was made up of 18 individuals representing 11 countries. Her group was sent to beautiful British Columbia. Each day they had a variety of different meetings, ranging

from indigenous leaders, politicians, environmentalists, community activists to business leaders.

Amy found that one of the most meaningful meetings was at a former residential school. The group met a former chief who had attended school there. They heard about the experiences of some survivors and stayed overnight in the school. Other highlights included meeting with the Lieutenant Governor of BC, Janet Austin, at Government House in Victoria and cooking a three-course meal for more than 80 people, many of whom were homeless, in the Vancouver Eastside.

All the delegates merged back in Montreal to present their learnings from the study tour and to share how it had broadened their perspectives on leadership. Another

Une lettre d'adieu

Chers Amis(es),

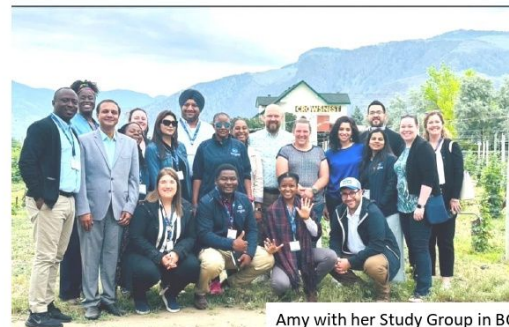
J'ai trouvé une famille ici à St James. Je garderai dans mon coeur et pour toujours un souvenir doux et tendre de chacun et chacune de vous.

Merci de votre accueil chaleureux et que Dieu vous bénisse.

God bless Rev. Peter and Rev. Doug.

I will miss you all.

- Nicole Beaulieu



Amy with her Study Group in BC

Maritime United Church Conference

28 > 29 April of this year, I was fortunate enough to attend the Maritime United Church Women's Conference at Visions United Church in Moncton NB. The church itself is very interesting. Twelve years ago, four dwindling congregations started planning how to move forward in changing and challenging times. While two of the congregations eventually dropped out and amalgamated, the remaining two tried a variety of formats – from holding services on Saturdays, to holding services in a movie theatre. Ultimately, in partnership with the John Howard Society, (who generally provide support for incarcerated men during and after their prison terms, and men "at risk"), they designed and constructed a multi-purpose building that includes, but is not limited to, a 20 unit housing complex for men, government outreach agencies, offices and a large room that can be opened up or divided into three smaller sections. The room in its larger format is used for their Sunday services. The altar, pulpit, etc, are all on wheels for ease of movement and as there is little storage space there are few Bibles or hymnals, instead the entire service is projected on three screens around the room. Our conference was held in this space, making effective use of the facility.

The conference theme, selected by our keynote speaker, Rev Alice Finnamore, (of Prince William Pastoral Charge in New Brunswick), was "Tuning into Purpose".

Some conference highlights included:

- an interesting welcome from the minister of the church we were meeting in, Rev Shawn Redden, a friend of Rev Peter and Rev Meredith's. She explained the concept of the building. They have multiple excellent public outreach projects such as a community garden, "Fresh For Less" – a \$20.00/monthly Food Box Program anyone can use, etc. A "lay visitation" team maintains contact with shut-ins at home and those in hospital. The main room's window ledges were all full of starter plants, mostly for an upcoming plant sale whose slogan was "Divide & Conquer"! In a change from the typical post-service coffee hour, they hold a "Conversation Café" in the hour prior to their service.
- a touching memorial service where the names of all the UCW ladies who had died in the past year were read out and a candle was lit in their memory
- a communion service where we partook of bread and "wine" in the form of grapes in individual cups!
- as we were seated with other ladies we might or might not know, we played a few icebreaker games. One involved candies (yummy!) and another was a quiz to test our knowledge of the UCC, the Maritime UCW and various well known UCW members.
- Saturday morning our key note speaker, Rev Alice Finnamore spoke on the theme "Tuning into Purpose – living tuned and turned, face to the Son", with a sunflower logo. We did a physical exercise channeling our inner sunflower, practised some centring prayer and

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Maritime Conference

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did an exercise where we got in touch with our inner jelly fish!

- Saturday afternoon we met in breakout groups for a well organized table top discussion sparked by focus questions. We looked at the UCW pillars of study, witness, fellowship and service, and discussed how different UCWs, (and churches), are dealing with the issue of dwindling attendance. It was interesting and exciting to hear what other UCWs are doing. There were many suggestions that I hope to share with our UCW when we meet again in the fall.
- we enjoyed an excellent talk from Rev Faith March MacCuish, the Executive Regional Minister. She's quite a speaker and very motivational!
- of course there was a small amount of business that had to be taken care of: acceptance of agenda, minutes of the last regional conference, etc
- one topic that was floated for future discussion is the possibility of doing away with the "UCW regions" and simply having each unit report directly to the MUCW. Many regions no longer have executives which makes it difficult for them to feel connected to the



MUCW. This was tabled for further discussion.

- there was an artifact of considerable historical interest present at the Conference – a gavel that dates from 1906, originally used by the Presbyterian Foreign Missionary Society!
- a lot of singing and worshipping was enjoyed
- there was a book table with books for sale and also exchange. I picked up two exchange books and purchased two more. These are reviewed elsewhere in Connections.
- we enjoyed a delicious supper on Friday evening and a lovely lunch on Saturday
- a collection was taken up for the National UCW's latest five-year project, the Healing Fund. \$222.25 was raised in support of a variety of Indigenous women's projects.
- we learned about the UCW's Cookie Cottage at Berwick United Church Camp. All are welcome to attend the next event there on Wednesday, 2 August.
- select photos of the Maritime UCW Regional Conference can be seen at: <https://bit.ly/maritimeconf23>

[note that I managed to avoid all cameras as is my norm]

- Michèle Ashby

UCW Closing Dinner

The United Church Women (UCW) of St James gathered to mark the closing of the 2022-2023 year on June 13th at Gabriel's. The women had the opportunity to hear from guest speakers Dr. Carolyn Rideout and Maria Van Vonderen from the Antigonish-based organization A Partnership in Caring. Since 2010, healthcare workers from St

Martha's have sent delegations to Rwanda to support ongoing capacity building projects in both hospitals and community organizations. The UCW will resume its meeting in September. Its mission is to love God; foster Christian commitment, faithfulness, and spirituality; and promote respect and love for all God's creation.

All women of the congregation are welcome to join.

Learn more about A Partnership in Caring at apartnershipincaring.ca



Coady Welcoming

On May 24th the community had a chance to meet this year's Coady Diploma participants. Andrew Murray, sitting at our

table along with Social Justice Committee members Barbara DeMarsh, Linda Darwish and Fran Wittgens, shared how as a child he was used to having a Coady student each Sunday to visit with his family. That's a great tradition to follow!

- Fran Wittgens

- Brenda Rose



DOGGY THERAPY



Richard Parker, a greyhound, is a Saint John Ambulance therapy dog that visits the R.K. every week to spread smiles (and fur) to residents who want to run their fingers through his thick pelt. He loves his work and already knows many of the residents by name. He never met a person he didn't love, and he apologizes for all the sweeping that has to be done once he's completed his walkabout.



CHILDREN'S WORSHIP

(SUNDAY SCHOOL)

SEPTEMBER-JUNE

Sunday School is a vibrant, happy place every week of the school year, where children and youth gather to learn lessons from the Bible, embrace the creativity of faith in action, and participate in community-building volunteerism.

All children and youth are welcome to attend! The children begin service with the congregation. They gather at the front for children's time and the Lord's Prayer, after which they head upstairs for their lesson.

DID YOU KNOW?

Connections is available on the St James website in PDF so you can share it with friends and family!

All articles are submitted by congregation members. Share your stories and reflections in the next issue.

Email stjamesconnections@gmail.com or talk to Chad or Sarah.



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