

SHARING OUR STORIES



Brenda Bottrell takes flight and scratches one more adventure of her Bucket List!

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.



Thank you to 4-H participants who catered a Coffee and Tea Hour.



Chad and Sarah hosted newcomers to Antigonish for Thanksgiving—for most guests this was their first taste of Canadian Thanksgiving.



St. James United Church • 197 Main Street, Antigonish, NS
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CONNECTIONS

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

By the Outreach & Communications Committee

Fall 2023

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"

- Psalm 122:1

Fall 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

St. James United Church is an exciting place this fall. We have always been a vibrant and active congregation but as the activities resumed this September, I could almost see the energy and excitement in the air. People are returning to church not simply as an inevitable result of the calendar changing or a return to normal as we leave Covid-19 behind but in anticipation of our time together in worship and our life together as a church.

The Sunday School commencement saw our church energized by the eagerness of our children and teens to learn, to hear, and to express their faith but it's not simply the young people who are expressing the joy of being the church. The conversations before church, during coffee hour, the activities planned for the rest of the fall, and even our business meetings all express the feeling of celebration in our church at being the

church- at worshipping together, learning together, and being Christ's people together.

Psalm 122 speaks about the excitement and joy of being part of a worshipping and witnessing community of faith. I feel that excitement and joy this fall in our congregation. We have the good news of Jesus Christ surrounding us, the Holy Spirit moving within us, and the presence of God guiding us to be a faithful and active church and we are responding with excitement and enthusiasm.

The pages of this newsletter are filled with information about activities happening at our church, opportunities for us as individuals and families to grow in faith, and personal witness to the great things God has done for us. There are wonderful and exciting things happening at St. James as together we walk Christ's way of peace, justice, and joy.

May God continue to bless our life together as the church and may God bless you and your family.

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

WELCOME BARB - ST JAMES SECRETARY

I'm very pleased to have been hired as the new secretary of our congregation. My name is Barb Shea, and I'm a long time member of the congregation. I was at a juncture in my life, where I still wanted to work at a job where I was giving back to community and to use my talents for good, but on a part time basis. I've worked for the past 25 years as Program Administrator for NS Early Childhood Development Intervention Program.

David and I live in town with our son, Stephen and pups, Auggie and Stella. Our oldest, Kevin and his wife Kallee live in St. Andrews with our grandkids Mark and Adrianna. Our daughter, Sarah, lives in Dartmouth with her husband Evan and our grandson, Max and finally, our youngest, Andrew calls Calgary home with his partner, Leah.



Thanks everyone for being so welcoming and patient. To say that Patsy Farrell's shoes are big to fill would be an understatement. I was pleasantly surprised to see

what a busy hub St. James is all week long. It is indeed humbling to witness the goodness of people doing the work of the Lord and I am happy to be a part of it.

- Barb Shea

WELCOME AUGGIE - ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Barb's little assistant adds a second smiling face and warm welcome to the St James Office. Auggie can be found snuggled up in her bed underneath Barb's desk. She's friendly and likes pets and attention. Drop by the office Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm to say hi to Barb and Auggie—both working hard at keeping our church running smoothly.

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.

BLESSING OF THE PETS

30 September saw the 13th Annual St Francis of Assisi/Blessing of the Pets Service held under sunny skies in the beautiful St Theresa's Garden on the grounds of former Bethany. There were fourteen attendees, eleven dogs and two cats, with two clergy participating. Dozens of dragonflies also joined us! All the animals played well together and received blessings from priests. It's such a charming location with the tinkling of the fountain and the leaves blowing in the trees providing background music.

Blessing of the Pets/Animals services are usually held close to the 4th of October - the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi. The services are meant to honour and acknowledge the important role our companion animals play in our lives. St Francis was a wealthy Italian, (1181 - 1226), who chose to live a life of poverty. He was an early environmentalist with a great love of nature and wildlife. He shared a special bond with God's creatures and is the patron saint of both animals and ecology.

Anyone who has ever been "owned" by a dog, cat or other small furry, feathered or

finned creature knows how much joy and love these animals can bring to our lives. They share our good times and our bad. They are considered "therapeutic" with good reason!

People, dog and cat snacks were enjoyed by all after the service and planning has already commenced for October 2024 when we will no doubt celebrate our loyal pets once again!

- Michèle Ashby



Adopt-A-Highway News!

Our stalwart group of “trash talkers” had another successful Adopt-A-Highway clean up the evening of Mon, September 25th. The weather was perfect despite a threatening forecast. Ten people collected seven very large bags of garbage and two bags of “refundables”. Interesting finds included two advertizing signs and one pair of jeans!?! Allan Farrell, Hope Graham, Gerrit Groenenberg, Tim Hinds, Joan MacGillivray, Barb Shea and Tommy Smith participated. We were delighted to have the managers of our local A&W, Jennifer Baudoux, and McDonald's, Erwin Buela, join us. Jennifer was especially to be commended as her daughter was in labour with Jen's first grandchild at the time - she left a little early when her daughter's contractions became two minutes apart!

Keeping to the new guidelines specific to interchanges makes our area a little smaller which gets us done a bit faster – under two hours. We also found the area to be cleaner than in past years which was a pleasant surprize. We were disappointed to find both our signs missing, but we suspect one is due to the ongoing construction and will hopefully be replaced when that's completed. The other one has been reported to the Department of Transportation for the 4th time.

Huge thanks to all the participants!

**“Green town, clean town,
my dream town!”**



THE CLEAN-UP CREW

Left to Right, Tim Hinds, Michèle Ashby, Hope Graham, Allan Farrell, Gerrit Groenenburg, Barb Shea, Joan MacGillivray, Tommy Smith

Foreground, McDonald's Manager Erwin Buela

Missing, Jennifer Baudoux

WHITE ENVELOPE APPEAL

As we approach the final two months of 2023 and have a look at the financial bottom line, we see that once again our expenses are more than our income from our Sunday Offering.

The white envelopes we have been giving out the last few Sundays are for a special offering to help dissolve our debt. All extra offerings are welcomed no matter how large or small.

The envelopes can be placed on the offering plate, dropped off in the office, through the door slot or skip the envelope and use the e-transfer at eft@stjamesuc.com

Grief is strength in these times

Recently (October 12th) our Tuesday Meditation Group had a chance to be involved in the fourth Earth Crisis Forum. By Zoom it came from British Columbia. Close to 100 participants viewed and were involved from around the world. Ourselves included. I'd like to share some of the ideas that stayed with me. Thankfully, there's a video to return to. I'm including the link for those interested.

The topic was Ecological Grief. I think most of us feel a sadness, an exhaustion from a downward spiraling scene. Are we running out of time? It's so huge! And we feel we can't do enough.

But we hear in this session more about grief and our response to loss.

It resonated with us. First, “grief is strength in these times. It keeps us in contact with the truth”, says Jennifer Atkinson. “Beneath everything, “ she adds,” it opens our eyes to the profound love we feel for the fabric of life that's under threat.” It is a direct expression of our connection.

Other ideas were shared by key speaker, Jason Brown, who teaches spirituality, religion and the environment at Simon Fraser University. We learned about Radical Joy for Hard Times, (Google it!) about a group that gathered after a hike at a place where the glacier had melted. Another time gathering at a stark clear cut area, being together and also seeing a forest in the distance. Hiking, togetherness, a time for contemplation. He suggested times like this are a good

fit for when events are beyond words. Words are not capable of holding your thoughts and feelings.(like our feelings in the current Gaza/ Israeli crisis) What can we do in our own backyards? Jason Brown has a website called Holyscapes where you can read more.

Jason Brown drew from The Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl: “At the end of uncertainty comes the uncertainty of the end.” Meaning, Brown says, that it is not the end of the world, full stop. It's the end of an era, one that had been dominated by the fossil fuel paradigm. We need to “ sit with our discomfort.” He quoted Stephen Jenkinson

“Grief is a way of loving what has slipped from view. Love is a way of grieving that which has not done so.” Love and grief, in other words are sisters.

There's much meat in this forum. We enjoyed togetherness, too, with break out groups as well as a chance for comments



From: goodgriefnetwork.org

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

GRIEF

Continued from page 3

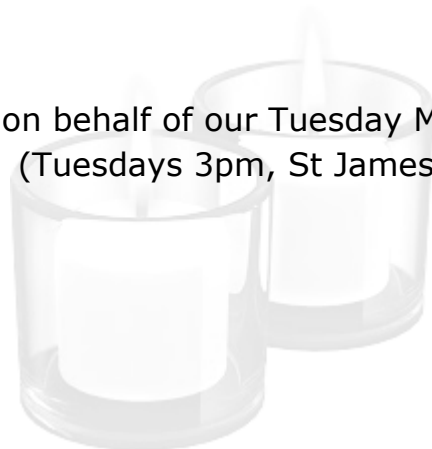
at the end. As a meditator, I'm learning more and more that these regular times for stillness let the need for community be clear. The heart speaks.

Below is a chart where steps are outlined to help achieve personal resilience when in a state of grief. At the end of this is the link to the session if you want to experience it yourself.

- 10-STEPS TO PERSONAL RESILIENCE & EMPOWERMENT IN A CHAOTIC CLIMATE**
- 1 Accept the Severity of the Predicament
 - 2 Be With Uncertainty
 - 3 Honor My Mortality & the Mortality of All
 - 4 Do Inner Work
 - 5 Develop Awareness of Biases & Perception
 - 6 Practice Gratitude, Witness Beauty, & Create Connections
 - 7 Take Breaks & Rest
 - 8 Grieve the Harm I Have Caused
 - 9 Show Up
 - 10 Reinvest in Meaningful Efforts

- Fran Wittgens

on behalf of our Tuesday Meditation Group
(Tuesdays 3pm, St James Meeting Room)



STEEPLE REPAIRS

The refurbishment of the steeple is nearing completion by Tate Construction. The work had two phases: structural reinforcement of the steeple base completed last fall, and the rebuild of the bell area.

The structure was reinforced with the addition of steel cross bracing. The eight structural posts of the steeple were still sound but the cladding, trim and louvres surrounding the bell were rotted and were fully replaced with a PVC product which does not require painting. In addition, the area below the steeple was re-roofed and heavy duty cage wire was installed inside the louvres to keep the birds out.

The steeple will now be structurally sound and waterproof for years to come.

- Dale Archibald



Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? 2024?

Long time congregants will be familiar with this delightful program. For those new to our church, this is an informal event wherein people sign up to either "host" or "guest". On a specific evening guests arrive at St James and are given their host's name and address. Hosts tell the organizers what number of guests they feel they can receive.

The idea is to be a "mixer" so that we meet people we don't always have an opportunity to get to know during services or afterward at coffee hour. It's not a gourmet style competition! Regular home cooking is just fine. Some people can host five or six guests, others just two. It's all good. We find ways to accommodate food allergies, pet allergies, mobility issues, etc.

In the past this has been a huge, fun success. However, COVID led to its temporary closure.

We've historically held this event in the fall, but with the outlook for COVID, RSV, etc this year it was thought wise to forego it until the spring. We are looking for a few people to help spearhead the program

at that time enable it to go ahead.

There are only one or two short meetings, most of the organization is done via email. And we need folks to be present on the evening in question to help out. You don't have to "host" or "guest", although often the organizers do end up as one or the other.



If you are interested in participating as an organizer, please let Michèle Ashby know either at church or (902) 232-3473.



Chad and Sarah hosted Hope and Andrew in 2019

STANDING WITH PALESTINE

Three members of the congregation initiated a rally calling for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the occupation of Palestine. A statement by the organizers read in part: "Hamas' surprise attack on Israel resulted in a vastly disproportionate response. We condemn the violence and hostage-taking, while emphasizing that it did not come out of nowhere. For over seven and a half decades, Palestinians have been living under heavily oppressive conditions following the establishment of the state of Israel when 700,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes into Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, and beyond." [...] "We believe that the only path to lasting peace is an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages.



The international community must call for an end to the siege of Gaza and the West Bank. Canada must not arm, or fund the arming of, Israel. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to enter Gaza. Access to water, medicine, food and electricity must be restored. The Israeli airstrikes on critical infrastructure in Syria and Lebanon must also end. The international community, including Canada, must come together and negotiate a long-term solution that allows both Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security. Those who seek peace and the flourishing of life for themselves must seek it even more for their neighbours."

Rallies will continue to be held, keep an eye on your social media for more information.

To learn more and find verified information sources see: cjpme.org, unrwa.org, or aljazeera.org.

—Sarah Armstrong

SUMMER TRAVELOG

Gerrit and I visited England and Scotland via Insight Vacations tour company July 8-20, 2023. We had a direct flight from Halifax to London. We each brought 2 carry-ons, no lost baggage, no waiting. This was our first time to the UK, so we chose a tour where we could explore many areas, but go back another time for a closer look. Our tour enables us to stay in hotels for 2 nights each visit, we were advised that one night stays are too busy for us "older" folks. We were on vacation not a stress test!



Most hotels do not provide face wash cloths, so buy beforehand & laundry facilities are few & far between. Bathroom sinks & heated towel racks to the rescue, another reason for two night stays.

Unless you want staff to wash your socks for 6 pounds!! Our tour was called "Elegance of Great Britain" which started in London heading north via train to Edinburgh. The train station is where Harry Potter was filmed. After Edinburgh we traveled by tour bus. A big highlight for me was the Lake district. My Teasdale relatives came from there. River Tees flows across some of the country. Why did they ever leave?? As we drove along these roads,

wow upon wow was the scenery, picture N.S. with a whole lot less trees and sheep everywhere, but hills higher. History really showed itself with castles, decor of local shops & houses, gardens, bridges you name it. Of course we were taken to tourist places such as Gretna Green (already married ha) and daily we could sign up for extra tours, but we explored the villages on foot. Yes, the weather changes every 5 minutes, carrying an umbrella essential, especially in Scotland. Proper walking shoes for all those stone steps. We were very impressed with public transport, small cars, not one half ton truck in sight. Local shops, no big box stores in our face. The most amusing sight of all was when joining our tour in London, we saw a tall guy wearing an X hat, yes you read correctly X, they grew up in Mulgrave! Overall we had a wonderful visit to England & Scotland, but while in Bath, two days left of our trip, we got the call that my father Lowell Teasdale had unexpectedly passes away. It was advised to take our regular flight back to Halifax. With heavy hearts our trip ended while making communications with family. Most of us have ancestors from other countries, if anyway possible try to broaden your views of the world by visiting these countries, you will get a real appreciation for what we have here in our own young country of Canada.



- Marlene Groenenburg

FUNDSCRIP IS BACK!

Buy gift cards and support St James

Fundscrip is back **just in time for Christmas** card mail-outs!

How it works:

Buy gift cards for your favourite stores, restaurants and online retailers St James receives a percentage of your purchase from the Fundscrip program to support the church's activities. You can order both plastic cards, or digital e-cards that can be scanned at checkout from a phone or used for shopping online.

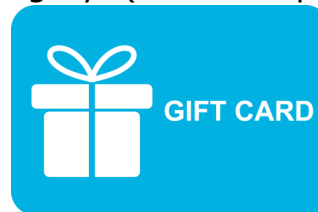
You can order online anytime and receive your cards in 3-5 days (pay by credit card, bank transfer or online bill payment)

You will receive the gift cards for the full amount that you purchased. Fundscrip donates back to St James at no cost to you!

Many cards are reloadable. So, if you, for example, send someone either a plastic or digital card to their favourite grocery store, you can top up the card by reloading it instead of reordering a brand new card.

To place an online order:

1. Go to www.stjamesuc.com/fundscrip
2. Set up an account and verify it by clicking the link that will be sent to your email;
3. Choose your cards. I found the easiest way is to look by category (in the top menu bar) or simply use the search to find the store or online retailer that you want;
4. Once you are ready, check out and pay by credit card, electronic funds transfer.



If you have any questions or need help with your first order contact:

fundscrip@stjamesuc.com or the office at 902-863-2001.

Full instructions on the St James Fundscrip website (above)



FUNDSCRIP
Gift card fundraising is back!

How it works:

Buy gift cards for your favourite stores, restaurants and online retailers

St James receives a percentage of your purchase from the Fundscrip program to **support the church's activities**

How to order:

Visit stjamesuc.com/fundscrip follow the link and simple instructions to create an account and place an order.

Plastic cards arrive in 3-5 business days. Digital cards links are sent to your email in 15 minutes. Both are reloadable.



CHOOSE AMONG 230+ GIFT CARD OPTIONS!



MAKING PRAYER SHAWLS

I have been a knitter since my early teens, taught by my mother. I consider my work with the Prayer

Shawl Group at St. James as an opportunity to "give back" to the community through a relaxing and calming activity that I like to do.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry was started at St. James in 2011. Members of the ministry knit or crochet shawls and lap robes to give comfort, consolation, love and hope to those who are ill, grieving or in despair. Chaired by Mavis Murray (the initiator of the ministry at St James), the committee meets monthly during the work year. We bring our shawls (completed and in progress), we start with a prayer and end the meeting by blessing any completed shawls. For the hour in between, we share our work, patterns and ideas, and our stories. At present there are eight people who contribute their beautifully knitted or crocheted shawls and we would be happy to welcome more.

Mavis keeps accurate account of the shawls in our inventory and gives us a monthly report. This report includes the number of shawls given out since our last meeting, and letters that may have been received by grateful recipients. Since 2011, a total of 441 shawls/lap robes have been lovingly and prayerfully created. Much of the yarn is purchased through donations

and distributed to the knitters.

As with any crafting project, sometimes I mess up or lose my count and have to undo my work. This can be very frustrating. However, when that happens, I think about the trials and tribulations of the individual who will eventually wear the shawl and I say another prayer.

I was fortunate to receive a prayer shawl when I had some recent health issues, as have at least four of my family and friends. It is a very comforting garment. One of my friends said that when she wears it, "it feels like God has His arms around me".

- Liz Millett



HONOURING THE MEMORY AND LIFE WORK OF REV BONNIE FRASER

Rev. Bonnie Fraser was by all accounts, loved by all who knew her. She was a woman of great humour, great humility and great faith. The beginning and end of her life was spent in Antigonish, where she had deep family ties and lifelong friends. Bonnie dressed up as the UCW Santa Claus fondly reminds her dear friends in the UCW of all the ways, big and small, that she brought smiles and laughter so easily to those around her. Bonnie was not one to side on the sidelines. She boldly pursued further education throughout her life. Indeed, she came to ministry later in life with the support of St James. From her dedication to the Ruth Unit to decades of annual get-togethers with cherished friends, Bonnie expressed her finest joy in life: acting in service of others. Through her connections at Hillcrest United in Montague PEI, Bonnie was introduced to the Arms of Jesus Children's Guatemala Mission. Bonnie's intention to join the congregation members traveling to Parramos, Guatemala was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, then by terminal illness.

Bonnie's memory endures. A bench installed outside the Mission is dedicated in her honour.



From Corinne Ellsworth with the Arms of Jesus Mission in Guatemala:

Today a bench was dedicated in Rev Bonnie's memory. I am sure she would be pleased to know she is providing a respite from work, a quiet place to rest, pray or contemplate outside the chapel. As a former teacher she would be proud to be remembered on a school campus with hundreds of children. I can imagine her arms thrown wide to embrace the little ones hugging her.



THANKSGIVING WINDOWS



Thank-you to all who contributed to decorating the Sanctuary windows for Thanksgiving. Each unique creation reminds us to ground ourselves in gratitude.



STEEPLE REPAIRS

