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# CONNECTIONS

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**For this purpose God called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. -2 Thessalonians 2:14**

Dear Friends in Christ,

My hearts sank when that terrible snow storm hit the first weekend of February. Three days of continual snow led to snow banks higher than I had ever seen in Antigonish. I was afraid that more snow was in our future and assumed that winter was going to hold on well into June. Yet it didn't. The rains and warmer temperature arrived and the snow banks disappeared quicker than anyone imagined. We expected the worst but experienced something quite different.

The death of Jesus on the cross filled with disciples with despair. They watched their hopes and dreams die on Good Friday and could not see anything different ahead of them. Yet that first Easter with the message that Jesus was alive changed everything as they realized that the death of Jesus was not the end. For those disciples, the announcement of the resurrection changed their mourning into celebration, their



photo credit Hilde Van Den Heuvel

despair into hope.

The message of the resurrection was also important to those who had not experienced what the disciples went through on Good Friday for the empty tomb meant that life changed for everyone. The grip of sin and fear had been broken for all people and the promise and reality of a new tomorrow extended beyond the original disciples of Jesus into the world.

The good news of Easter is that God is changing our lives and that the power of God's love and grace is reaching into our world to change fear and death into confidence and life. So let us come together and follow the risen Christ into the new life God has waiting!

May God bless you and your family and may God continue to bless our church this Easter season.

Yours in Christ's Service,

The Rev. Peter A. Smith



### Service Learning and the Community Hot Meal Program

This fall we are pleased to have a student from St Fx's Service Learning joining us at the Thursday Hot Meal Program.

Kennedy is a second year student from Ontario who is sharing her time to help us serve others. Pictured with Kennedy (in the middle) are Derek and Lelitha two familiar faces who help out with the meal.



## Warming Around the Campfire

As we check off the signs of spring that come our way, there's one that a certain group looks for. That is the very real prospect for summer camp. Because Antigonish itself doesn't hold one, we would need to ask those with a rich heritage of camps to learn.

I know several people who rave about where they went as a child. There are families that have gone together over generations, and still go. It would be wonderful to hear some stories about these camps.

Have you had camp experiences, especially ones with a church orientation? **Outreach and Communication** would like to host a session after church some time in late spring inviting those who have experienced camps with those who are curious. We might hope there grow to be a set of families who look happily to signs of Spring each year, suggesting the promise of great times ahead. Look for more in the bulletin and don't hesitate to let yourself be heard.

Fran Wittgens

### YOU ARE NEVER TOO OLD FOR CAMP

It may not feel like it, but summer is approaching. For some of us with young families, it is the time of year to plan for summer camp! Bible Camp, Family Camp, Retreat Weekends, and other spiritually oriented camps are a great way to build connections with other families and peers, and create memories that can last a lifetime. St. James maintains a Spiritual Fund to help reduce financial barriers to attending camp, no matter how old you are! Here is a list of relatively local organizations (between Pictou, Annapolis, and Tatamagouche) that offer camps that enrich the soul.

[Home - malagashbiblecamp.com](http://malagashbiblecamp.com)

<https://campgeddie.ca>

[Berwick Camp](#)

[Tatamagouche Centre](#)

<https://dorjedenmaling.org>

Please see Fran Wittgens or Rev. Peter for more information about the Spiritual Fund, or to let us in on other summer opportunities for spiritual growth and connection.

Claire MacDonell

## Lenten Pilgrimage for Ceasefire in Gaza and Israel

On March 2, 20 enthusiastic walkers gathered at the mall to prepare for the first of two 18-kilometre walks in support of a Gaza-Israel ceasefire. Organized by Rev. Tasha Brubaker, Sara Avmaat, and Linda Darwish, the Antigonish group was just one of 145 Lenten Pilgrimages taking place around the world under the auspices of Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage (<https://www.gazaceasefirepilgrimage.com/>). In addition to raising awareness, the pilgrimage also aimed to raise money for three Gaza-related causes (more about this below). One week later, a slightly smaller but no less enthusiastic group gathered to begin the second 18-kilometre route. For that one, we recruited the leadership of veteran pilgrimage leader, Dr. Matthew Anderson, Chair of Christian Studies at StFX.

After an introduction to the origins and purpose of the global initiative, we began the first of four 9-kilometre routes, up Church Street, where we stopped outside of St. James, where Linda led us in a brief time of reflection and prayer for Gaza. We then headed westward along Main street to Hawthorne, up Hawthorne to Whidden Street, stopping for a well-deserved break at Hawthorne Convenience before heading back down Hawthorne to West Street, from which we turned right on Highland Drive to walk as far as the Junior School where we took another water break. The route then took Greening Drive to join up with James Street. A left on James took us to the intersection of the university, where we turned right to catch the new walking/bicycle path along Hwy 4. Before you knew it, we were back to square one, only to start the complete route one more time. On each 9-kilometre leg, we were accompanied at various points by a two-person car, complete with extra water and a First Aid kit just in case. All done, we had walked 18 kilometres, or approximately 25,000 steps, in one day.

Completed twice, the 36 kilometres matched the distance between Gaza City and Rafah, a walk that over a million Gazans – young, old, able-bodied, sick and injured – have done on foot, car, and donkey cart, over rubble-filled roads, carrying everything they now owned, with little potable water, and under the constant threat of Israeli bombardment. Not merely a threat, being shot and killed along the way, or being stopped at Israeli checkpoints where men have been arrested in scores and families separated is a real occurrence. And, at the other end, there was no car to take them back to their comfortable homes for an evening of rest and relaxation. Instead, safe arrival in Rafah meant it was time to start setting up a large tent to accommodate the whole family, and to start looking for some type of fuel to cook whatever food they might have purchased at exorbitant prices in Rafah or had managed to obtain in aid.

Though our pilgrimage was envisioned as a quiet and prayerful walk, it was hard not to take up the opportunity for conversation, catching up with colleagues and friends from StFX and the community, or getting to know people we had met just that day. It's amazing how quickly 18-kilometres on foot can pass when one is engaged in good conversation (and doesn't have to worry about snipers and bomber jets).

There was a different prayer service each Saturday. On March 2, Linda patched together a few poignant thoughts from Rev. Munther Isaac, Lutheran priest of Bethlehem Christmas Church, along with several prayers from Sabeel, Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre, Palestine, based in Jerusalem. On March 9, Linda played two videos: the Lord's Prayer in Arabic (also played on March 2); and a beautiful prayer composed by Palestinian Christians of Christ at the Checkpoint, based in Bethlehem.

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Links for the two videos are provided here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZSARIfxGOA> (The Lord's Prayer)

<https://youtu.be/ZkWcxAMK14c> (Gaza War Prayer: A Cry for Peace and Hope)

If you would like to make a contribution to any of the three recipients, you may always do so. The Canadian Red Cross; The Defence of Children International Palestine; and a GoFundMe page to help Linda's dear friend, Najlaa Alzaanin, bring her family of 10 adults and 10 children from Gaza to Nova Scotia on three-year temporary visas: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/brining-najlaas-family-to-safety-in->



Photo credit to Natasha Brubaker

## Theatre Notes

St James United Church always has good representation at our local Bauer “Theatre Antigonish” and “Festival Antigonish Summer Theatre”. From cast members to the musical director, folks who serve on the Board of Directors and frequent patrons and donors – we’re participants and supporters in many ways!

The theatre has recently begun screening the occasional film. The 2021 movie “*Dawn, Her Dad and the Tractor*” by former Antigonish resident Shelley Thompson was one topical hit.

Jan 20<sup>th</sup> there was a showing of the 1987 Rob Reiner directed cult classic “*The Princess Bride*.” This totally enjoyable event once again saw many members of our congregation not only in attendance, but some brave fans really got into the act by dressing as assorted well known characters from the film. Featured below are L > R, Paul Davie as “Vizzini”, Amy Hendricks as “Princess Buttercup” and son, Jonathan Davie as “The Man in Black”. A fun evening was enjoyed by all.



Next up on April 13<sup>th</sup> is “*Bernie Langille Wants to Know What Happened to Bernie Langille*”, a documentary movie about a grandson’s efforts to solve the mystery of his grandfather’s death over 50 years ago at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, NB.



### Introducing Carol Burley

Carol Burley has been supporting the Hot Meal Program by regularly baking biscuits, loaves, cookies, and even fudge on Valentine's Day. Carol has been happy to be involved and she says, "It has made a difference in my life." We appreciate your work in the kitchen, Carol, and to all those who support the Hot Meal Program in any way.



### Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

Are you familiar with Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? It's a wonderful way to meet your fellow congregants in a relaxed setting, while enjoying good home cooking. The concept is easy and fun! Some folks offer to "host" and others become "guests". After random draws, guests show up at the hosts' homes at a set time to enjoy a simple meal. Hosts don't know who to expect until they show up – just the number they've stated they're willing to host. You get to meet people you may not normally have a chance to chat with at church, so you make new friends. Hosts are not expected to make gourmet meals. Whatever you would usually serve is fine. We used to do this in "pre-pandemic" days, to all the participants' enjoyment, but like so many things, it succumbed to the pandemic. If you'd like to see this delightful practice resurrected, please let Michèle Ashby know. Contact her ASAP via email [timich@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:timich@ns.sympatico.ca) or phone 232-3474. It would be nice to hold another event this spring – but we'd need *your* participation to make it work!

## Social Justice!

Passionate about social justice issues? Poverty, homelessness, equality for all (regardless of race, gender, creed or sexual orientation), world peace, environmentalism, climate change, etc. Like to learn and do more? We will be holding a meeting of the Social Justice Committee after church on 7 April in the meeting room and would love to have you join us for it. We will be discussing and updating our mandate and planning for our Earth Day Service to be held on 21 April. New members and ideas welcome. Please plan to attend.



## Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council The United Church of Canada

May 10-12, 2024 ~ Dalhousie Agricultural Campus (Truro, NS)

What is YOUTH@REGION? Y@R is a place of community and a place of faith where United Church youth, between grade 6 and grade 12, meet from across Nova Scotia and Bermuda. It takes place during the Annual Meeting of Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council (BNS), which is a gathering of representatives who make decisions and set policies for the United Church of Canada. The group creates an inclusive, diverse and safe community for youth in the name of Christ. Youth@Region provides a place for youth to explore their faith and to learn more about the United Church of Canada while sharing in music, worship and fun in a spirit-filled community. Are you interested in attending this year? Speak to Rev. Peter or May Mackenzie.

### Who decides when Easter will be each year?

Unlike Christmas which is always the same day on the calendar, Easter moves from year to year. That's because the early church tried to keep it close to the time described in the gospels as being near the Jewish festival of the Passover. The exact method of deciding the date of Easter is quite complicated but basically it usually works out that Easter falls on the Sunday after the first full moon in spring -and when the first full moon is a Sunday it's the next Sunday. That means that Easter can come as early as March 22 and as late as April 25. Normally though, our celebration of the resurrection of Jesus falls on the first week of April. This year though we are a bit earlier as the full moon after the start of spring (March 20) which is actually March 25 this year which is why Easter falls on March 31st.



## **We're turning 100!**

The United Church of Canada came into being on June 10, 1925. So this June the United Church is beginning a year of events, some national, some local, to celebrate our century of witness, work, and faith. It all starts with a worship service at Metropolitan United Church on June 9, 2024. Save the date! Join us for a worship service to kick off a year-long celebration of the 100th anniversary of The United Church of Canada, June 9, 2024, 4:00 p.m. EDT. While the 100th Anniversary kick-off service will be held at Metropolitan United Church in Toronto it will also be live-streamed. Watch for more details soon.

<https://united-church.ca/events/united-church-canada-100th-anniversary-kick-worship-service>  
#UCCan #UCCan100 #DeepBoldDaring

## **Schedule for the Holy Week/Easter Services**

### **March 24, 2024 Palm Sunday.**

10:30 am We shout our Hosanna's as Jesus enters Jerusalem and we consider the events which follow as we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

### **March 28, 2024 Maundy Thursday**

7:00 pm Come gather around the Table in the hall as together we break bread and share the cup to remember the events in the Upper Room.

### **March 29, 2024 Good Friday**

10:30 am As disciples of Jesus, we experience through story and song the emotions, events, and meaning of the crucifixion.

### **March 31, 2024 Easter Sunday**

6:30 am As the sun rises, our voices and prayers blend to give thanks for the Resurrection.

A pancake breakfast will follow back in the church hall.

10:30 am We celebrate the resurrection with our Easter Sunday service filled with the music and readings of the day.





ANTIGONISH  
CHORAL ENSEMBLE

**SPRING  
HARMONIES**



TUESDAY APRIL 9, 2024  
7:30PM

JANICE ALCORN, DIRECTOR  
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS

THE ROSE	THADDEUS MORDON	THE BLUE SKIES
STRING QUARTET	CELLIST	JAZZ TRIO

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ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH  
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SUGGESTED DONATION \$20







