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Our Mission as a congregation: *Love the Lord Your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy and love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:19-21 MSG)*

March 23, 2025- Third Sunday in Lent

GOD BRINGS US TOGETHER

Prelude

Introit: (108 VU Throughout these Lenten Days and Nights v 1)

*Throughout these Lenten days and nights
we turn to walk the inward way,
where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,
we live in hope till Easter Day.*

Call to Worship (responsive- adapted from Isaiah 55:1-9)

Come, everyone who thirsts,

come and drink from the living waters;

and all who are poor and hungry,

come, fill yourself with the riches of heaven.

Come and receive the goodness of God for your life

come, for God freely offers grace and renewal.

Opening Prayer (together)

God of love and hope, we come to you as needy people.

Our hearts need the warmth of your love.

Our spirits need the peace of your pardon.

Our minds need the light of your word.

Come, we pray, and grant us love, grant us hope,

and show us the way you open for us through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Hymn: 322 VU *O God, Whose First Creative Word*

Prayer of Confession (together)

God of mercy and grace,

Just when we think we are walking steady, we waver.

Just when we feel confident, we realize how vulnerable we are.

Just when we think we are doing well, we are humbled.

Forgive us, Lord, for our overconfidence, and teach us to find our strength, our hope, and our direction in you, Amen.

Words of Assurance

Children's Time and the Lord's Prayer

Hymn: 602 VU *Blest Be The Tie That Binds*

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Responsive Reading: Psalm 63 (781 VU)

First Lesson: Isaiah 55:1-9

Paul van deWiel

Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Alistair Hamilton

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

Anthem *Lamb of God* (Twila Paris)

Sermon: "The Answer of the Gardener"

GOD CALLS US TO RESPOND

Hymn: 507 VU *Today We All Are Called To Be Disciples*

Minute for Mission

Shaun Scott

Offertory Response (540 VU Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving)

*Grant us, God, the grace of giving, with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living we may offer faithfully.*

Prayers of the People

Hymn: 651 VU *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*

Commissioning and Benediction

Choral Benediction: (967 VU Amen)

A-men, a-men, a-men

Postlude

A warm welcome to everyone joining us for worship. May this time help you draw to closer to God and your neighbour. We recognize that we gather in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People, and we seek to be good neighbours to the First Nations.

Coffee Hosts this morning are Diane Polson and Aurelia MacDonell.

Scripture for Next Sunday

Joshua 5:9-12 • 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 • Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Council Highlights

St. James United Church - March 18, 2025

Welcome to Council Highlights! Below is information about what happened at the last Council meeting and key decisions made.

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Council welcomed the new members elected at the Congregational Annual Meeting. We are please to have Bill Marshall joining us and Shaun Scott and Dale Archibald returning to Council for new terms.

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The Council received the resignation letter from Chad Brazier and thanks were expressed for his years as our custodian. A hiring committee was formed and authorized to find a new custodian for St. James.

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The Holy Week and Easter services were discussed. Volunteers are needed to help at our pancake breakfast following the Easter sunrise service.

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The Stump Frolic will be on Saturday, May 31 this year. Committees will soon start planning for the event.

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The financial report for January to February was received and discussed. It was noted that while we are running a deficit, congregational offerings have increased over last year. Thanks were expressed to those who helped do the inventory for updating the insurance on the church.

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Plans were discussed around special Services to mark the 100th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada. The worship on June 8th will include communion and a potluck following the service.

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Thanks were expressed for the volunteers helping out in the office during Barb's absence. Until her return in April the office will be open Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings from 10 am -12 noon.

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The next Council meeting is May 21, 2025 in the Meeting Room.

THIS WEEK AT ST. JAMES

Sunday, March 23

11:30 am Please join us in the hall following the service as we thank Chad Brazier as he finishes his time with us as custodian/caretaker at St. James.

Tuesday, March 25

11:00 am Community Hot Meal Program
2:30 pm Meditation Group in the Parlour. Contact Fran for more information 902 870-1198.

Thursday, March 27

11:00 am Community Hot Meal Program
7:00 pm Choir practice

We have a new publication! A fun WELCOME packet written for those new and curious about our services at St James. This light green booklet takes you lightly though a regular service along with providing contact information. Please keep it in mind for those you know who are new and curious. It will be in the Narthex along with the Newsletter and other timely notices.

The Church Office will be open this week on Tuesday and Thursday, and Friday morning from 10 am-12 pm. Messages are checked regularly.

Do you ever feel hungry? The Social Justice Collective reminds you that increasingly there are many people in Antigonish for whom hunger is a serious growing problem. In addition to our own well utilized **Hot Meal Program** on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the **Antigonish Community Food Bank** works to reduce and eliminate poverty. [(902) 863-0611/166 College St] Also, the **Community Fridge & Pantry** works on a “give what you can and take what you need” basis. They are located outside the Farmers’ Market and in the Library. You can help stock them by visiting these locations or leaving food in the church narthex.

UPCOMING AT ST. JAMES

Sunday, April 6 - Guest speaker, Kathryn Anderson will visit us to share the story of Breaking the Silence coffee, as well as Guatemala's struggle for democracy and human rights. She has also had a chance to visit the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network's fair trade

coffee partner, the Highlands Ctee. of Small Farmers, so she will have lots to share about this amazing organization, as well. All are welcome to attend, approximately 11:45 am in the meeting room.

Saturday April 12th The UCW will be holding their **Daffodil Tea**. Posters and more information are on the bulletin boards.

Visiting at St. Martha’s. Just a reminder that because of policies in place at the hospital that patients or their families have to request visits from clergy. If you are in the hospital and would like a visit from Rev. Peter please call 902-863-2859 or tell one of the staff at St. Martha’s.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

With hopefully good weather on our side we are presenting the third of our Winter/Spring Square Dance/Ceilidh series at St Ninian’s Place on Sunday, March 23, 2025, from 1:30 - 4:00 pm. Featured performers will be Brian and Abby MacDonald, Junior Fraser, and Leona Williams. Adults - \$10.00; Students by donation; children free. All ages welcome. Light lunch provided

Catholics at X and Flourish at X present a ceilidh on Friday, March 28, 2025, from 8:00 - 11:00 pm, at St Ninian’s Place to provide a Social evening of dance, music and fellowship for students and townspeople alike. All are welcome. Light lunch provided. Admission by donation. Featured performers are : Colin Rankin, Junior Fraser, and Leona Williams and some surprise student musicians.

Lion’s Pancake and Sausage breakfast for Sunday March 30, from 9-12. Donations at the door will go towards local needs of the community.

Antigonish RCMP detachment and the Antigonish Women's Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association are hosting an event March 31st at 1 pm at the Antigonish Legion. Lynn Gallant-Blackburn will be discussing her personal journey after the murder of her sister, Paula Gallant, who was a victim of intimate partner violence. Lynn has written a book to commemorate her sister Paula. Lynn's book outlines her years of advocacy work across sectors and tells a story of how Paula Gallant's family navigated life after her murder.

