

CONNECTIONS

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

-Ecclesiastes 3:1

Fall 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

The red, orange, and yellow leaves are a sure sign that the seasons are changing. While it may seem too soon for autumn to arrive, the truth is that if it remained summer forever no fall harvests would ever come in, no crisp winter scenes would ever be experienced, and no spring growth would ever take place.

The Bible tells us that there is a time and a season for everything under heaven. That familiar passage from Ecclesiastes is a reminder that part of God's plan is change in our world. We see that in the cycles of nature and we experience that within our life of faith.

The groups and activities of our church happen because people share their gifts and abilities. The time and skills devoted to weekly worship, our various committees and groups, fundraising activities, and social events make St. James a community of faith. That has always been true and is a normal part of our life together.

What is also a normal part of our life together is change. The ongoing life of the church changes as responsibility and work are passed on to new people. New activities and projects begin even as older activities and projects conclude. We remain vibrant and active by always listening to hear how God is calling us in this season to be the church.

This fall, I'd invite you to pray and consider how you share your faith within our congregation. Perhaps a faithful response to God is to continue what you currently are doing. Perhaps a faithful response is to become part of another group or activity. Perhaps a faithful response is to join others in beginning something we've never done here at St. James.

As individuals and as a church let us prayerfully consider what God asks from us as Christ's people in this time and in this place. For no matter what the season, we are the people of God when we faithfully respond to Christ's call by living the gospel message.

Yours In Christ's Service,

The Rev. Peter A Smith

New Staff Member

We welcome Elena LeBlanc as our new custodian!

Elena tells us she got the call about this position while she was on her knees praying for a job specifically: (1) for Godly people, (2) with flexible hours and (3) near her house.

Seen around the church in her signature long, teal dresses, Elena lives nearby the church with two of her daughters, Dahlia, and Bodhi – who are named after types of trees. They also have a dog, Lovey, (who is occasionally seen “guarding” the backdoor of St James), and three sphynx cats. Elena originally hails from “la belle province”, but came to Antigonish twelve years ago. She has a background in health care and is bilingual – so you can practise your French with her.

Elena says she “absolutely loves cleaning up messes other people make” and if you tip-toe by when she’s working in the empty church you just might hear her pretending to be an opera singer!”.

Elena is very happy to be working for St James and we are very happy to have her – with her strong work ethic, dedication to duty and willingness to learn. She has accomplished many things in a short period of time. One of the most recent can be easily viewed – the repainting of the cemetery fence.



Thank you to the congregation of St. James United Church for your generous donations to the Antigonish Community Fridge & Pantry. Matthew 26:11 ‘For there **will** never cease to be **poor** in the land; that is why I am commanding you to open wide your hand to your brother and to

Save the Date

Highlighting Sunday is a time to shine a light on what is going on in the life of St James. Our many groups give an invitation for you to explore more and even sign up to be contacted.

Come browse and grab someone to learn more on Sunday after church,

Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council Annual Meeting 2025

This year because of the Anniversary of the United Church the decision was made to hold our Regional Meetings in a different way. We did the business over two nights of meetings via Zoom in May and then we gathered at Mount Allison University with Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council (NB and PEI) in the last weekend of May for in-person events.

The business meeting in mid May was pretty routine. We reviewed Committee reports, examined the financial reports and budget, and heard submissions from the President of the Region, the incoming President, and the Moderator of the United Church. We also heard the initial report from the consultant who is helping us evaluate the new structure which the church adopted in 2019 to see how our Region is functioning. There was also time for worship and small groups to talk about the year past and to discuss the 100th Anniversary events in our congregations.

One thing that many people commented on was how smoothly the online meeting went compared to the confusion during the pandemic years as we struggled to learn how to meet using Zoom. As always it was great to gather as the wider church and to see colleagues and friends from around Nova Scotia.

The in-person combined gathering in late May was filled with education, historical presentations, conversations, and worship. The educational component was led by the Rev. Janet Gear from Vancouver School of Theology titled “Theological Banquet” which over five sessions helped us identify and understand the different ways that faith is lived out by individuals and the strengths, shadows, and connections those expressions of faith bring to the church. The lectures, the panel discussions, and the small groups helped us delve deeper into our own ways of living faith and how diversity within the church helps us better be God’s people in the world.

The 100th Anniversary of the United Church was highlighted by engaging and creative skits- most which looked at our history and one which looked at our future which was written by our youth that weekend! We remembered a great deal of who we are and what we have done and were reminded of where we are going with humour, insightful comments, and more than a few familiar and beloved songs.

There was worship throughout each day and hearing hundreds of voices praying and singing together is always an incredible experience. The youth led our worship to finish the sessions on Saturday and as always were enthusiastic and excited (and they creatively incorporated ‘glow in the dark’ paint with each delegate to show how we needed to shine with the light of Christ).

The Celebration of Ministry Service on Sunday Morning focused on the Anniversary of the United Church of Canada and we ordained nine new ministers in Bermuda-Nova Scotia Region.

As always it was wonderful to gather with so many people and to have opportunities in the meeting and in the dining hall and around the campus to connect and reconnect. I always appreciate the time during the meetings to meet new people as well as to see old friends from across the Maritimes.



June Tour Of Goat Island, Eskasoni

On a beautifully sunny Friday the 13th in June, Members of the Saint James Meditation Group and friends travelled by bus and by car to Goat Island in Cape Breton for a delightful outing and guided cultural tour.

Located on the Bras d'Or lakes in Eskasoni First Nation, Goat Island has a well-maintained 2.4 km walking trail and local Mi'kmaq interpreters, dressed in colourful ancestral costumes, guided us as we visited several little camps and demonstrations set up along the scenic trail.

Presentations included hunting and fishing techniques, as well as the arts of basketry, drumming, dance, and story telling. There was also the opportunity to participate in a smudging ceremony, and a "hands on" activity at the end of the tour where we each made a bookmark from ash wood and native twine. We were also served freshly baked Mi'kmaq biscuits and tea.

The day was indeed most worthwhile and enjoyable, and provided a special opportunity to become aware of the rich heritage of the First Nations people in Nova Scotia, and to see how their culture has survived for thousands of years.





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Note from Paul Strome of The Antigonish Climate Action Hub:

We are working with partners in the region to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous Elders and youth for bold climate action. We envision that “Two-eyed Seeing” and other Indigenous concepts will be centred in our work and will be put into practice through co-learning how to weave Indigenous and Western knowledge together, to draw on the best of multiple perspectives in our collective response to the climate crisis.



Note: Our St James group benefited from the efforts of The Antigonish Climate Action Hub which applied for and received a grant from the Tamarack Institute. These funds helped secure a charter bus to the event reducing the environmental footprint and enabling the participants to experience Two-eyed Seeing.

Note: The Mi'kmaw name for Antigonish is "Nalikitquniejk", which translates to "place where branches are torn off".

Coming up!

About 16 months ago St James began planning projects, the purpose being to deepen our understanding of the Indigenous experience. We did it with day trips to The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre, the Millbrook Heritage Centre, the Alan Syliboy Gallery and The Goat Island tour. Last spring Antigonishers were invited to the book launch of Marie Wilson's North of Nowhere. Our own Kathryn Anderson accompanied the author and saw the dynamic of this powerful story. Over 100 study groups sprung up afterward. On our part, we'd like to add to our recent efforts by inviting our community to read this book. We have three individuals who have offered to facilitate the sessions in early 2026.

You will hear much more over the next weeks. In short here are the details.

What: Read and reflect on North of Nowhere

Led by: Kathryn Anderson, Claire MacDonell and Joanne Patience

When: Sundays 12-1:30 January 4th, 18th and 25th. Location to be announced.

(14 books to be on hold in Antigonish TownLibrary from mid November thru mid December. Can take out the book any time before that date also. Available for purchase locally.)

Must register by: early December. Limited to 20 persons.

Fran Wittgens

North of Nowhere by Marie Wilson

Marie Wilson Guides readers through her years as a commissioner for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, witnessing survivor testimony across the country, providing her perspective on the enduring public value of the commission. Through her words she honours the voices of survivors who have called Canada to attention for what was done to them.

Draw the Line Rally

On Saturday, September 20th, tens of thousands of activists mobilized from coast to coast to coast around our country. For People. For Peace. For the Planet. The local rally was organized by the Seniors for Climate Antigonish, but was supported by over a dozen organizations including our St James Social Justice Collective. At least eight congregants attended, including John Hamilton who piped at the head of the march and Andrew Murray who represented Town Council with a speech.

Canadians wanted to send a clear message. They demanded that Prime Minister Carney and the Canadian government take action for a just and safe future for all of us. We refuse to stand by as our government and Canada's richest corporations hoard wealth, gut our public services, fuel climate collapse, attack migrants, exploit Indigenous lands, and prop up a genocide in Palestine.

From rallies and marches, to teach-ins and gatherings, 70+ communities participated to say “This world is ours to build. This is our line to draw. We’re just getting started.”

Here in Antigonish we began with a smudging ceremony at Coady Gardens, StFX. There was a rally with speeches from local activists, youth groups and elected representatives including our MLA Michelle Thompson. There was also some music – one performer being St James’ own Gabriel Bertrand. After this we marched to Candid Brewery where there was a Social with information tables from all the local organizations. Many of the speeches were very inspiring. They touched on topics from poverty, ongoing colonialism towards First Nations, migrants’ status and rights, support for Palestine and Ukraine and other areas of conflict, homelessness and climate change – specifically demanding an end to our dependence on fossil fuels.

One interesting point, that was made quite strongly by Councillor Adam Baden-Clay, representing the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, was that they rarely hear from their constituents! He knows there are topics out there that people care strongly about, but no one bothers to send an email, phone or write a letter. This is surprising to me as I have everyone from the PM, my MP, my MLA, etc on a regular list of folks I contact with my kudos or complaints. It sounds like we all need to contact them more often!

Most impactful for me personally was a speech by a young StFX student who spoke passionately in support of Palestine. She concluded by reading a heartbreaking poem by an articulate Palestinian child – who has since been killed, along with her entire family.

Approximately 100 people attended the rally, which is an exceptional turnout for Antigonish. It was a excellent event that hopefully will inspire more concrete action in the future!

submitted by M. Ashby

Antigonish, Nova Scotia



In front of Antigonish Town Hall with our signs



At the Coady Garden, St. F.X., listening to the speeches

UCW Welcomes Changes!

The United Church Women held a Special Meeting on September 9th. In May 2025, Christine Briand had stepped down as chair. She did a remarkable job over several years, keeping us all on track and running “tight” meetings! Regrettably, over the four month interval since then, no one has come forward to tackle the role. So this meeting was held to answer the question – where does our UCW go from here? This is becoming an issue across the entire country as ladies age and many congregations’ numbers dwindle.

No one wants to see our UCW close, so we decided, (as we have full authority to do), that we will evolve. We will continue holding our two major fundraising events: the much beloved Holly Tea & Sale in late November, and a spring event – the Daffodil Tea Luncheon. Each will have its own planning committee, but all the ladies will contribute to the events as time and talents allow. We will limit our business meetings to two yearly. However, we would like to encourage other members/branches of the church to take on increased fundraising. Perhaps Council could assist with this?

Without dropping our purpose (To unite the women of the congregation for the total mission of the church, and, to provide a medium through which they may express their loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ in Cristian worship, study, fellowship, and service.), we’d like to focus a little less on fundraising and more on fellowship – making time for social and recreational opportunities. Any member, (which includes ALL women who attend St James United, not just those who have regularly attended meetings), who has an idea they find interesting should bring those forward. There will be no restrictions on what people want to suggest to the group – speakers, games afternoons, a restaurant dining experience, fun auctions, etc. The sky’s the limit! We will doubtless continue to hold some form of year end and Christmas social events, and organize our “cheer baskets” for shut ins at Christmas time. To ensure these events don’t overlap, a new “Social Chair” role will be developed. Their responsibility will be to maintain a calendar coordinating all the activities.

Christine Briand has offered to be the Business Chair and organize and run meetings. Claire MacDonnell has offered to be the Social Chair. Sheryl Chapman has agreed to stay on as Treasurer and Diane Theuerkauf has agreed to stay on as Correspondence Secretary.

We continue to welcome new members and new ideas! There’s no limit to what we can explore together, whether that’s worship, fundraising or fellowship activities. Please join us!



2025 is a Jubilee Year!

What does that mean? According to KAIROS Canada, who are leading the campaign in collaboration with Citizens for Public Justice, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada, the Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology, and The Canadian Council of Churches. Together, we are mobilizing communities of faith and conscience to demand:

- debt cancellation for unjust and unsustainable debts,
- global financial reform to prevent future crises, and
- a debt resolution framework within the United Nations that is transparent, binding and fair.

Join us in signing the Jubilee 2025 Petition! Our goal is to collect 100 thousand signatures in Canada and 10 million worldwide by the end of 2025. Every signature strengthens the call for transformative change!

Jubilee 2025 is a global ecumenical initiative that builds on the transformative success of Jubilee 2000, which canceled \$100 billion of debt for 36 low-income countries.

The Global South and Indigenous communities face a devastating debt crisis, with many nations spending more on debt repayments than on healthcare, education or climate action.

Debt cancelation and systemic financial reform are not just economic solutions; they are a moral imperative rooted in the theological principle of justice for all.

KAIROS' Jubilee 2025 campaign emphasizes ecological justice, and the urgent need to address ecological debt – the exploitation of resources and lands in the Global South and in Indigenous communities worldwide. Amplifying Indigenous voices, the campaign also calls for land restitution, climate justice, and the transformation of exploitative systems to uphold dignity, equity, and sustainable development for all.

The **"Turn Debt into Hope"** petition already has 41,995 signatures! And we hope to add many more from the St James congregation this month.

The petition states simply that "We, the undersigned, together with people all over the world, call on

public, private and multilateral creditors, along with political leaders, to:

- stop the debt crisis now by cancelling and remedying unjust and unsustainable debts without economic policy conditions
- prevent debt crises from happening again by addressing their root causes, reforming the global financial system to prioritize people and planet, and
- establish a permanent, transparent, binding and comprehensive debt framework within the United Nations”.

<https://www.kairoscanada.org/jubilee-2025-canada/petition-turn-debt-into-hope>

Note: Signing this petition on line will add your email to the Kairos Canada email list, but you can unsubscribe at any time.

More than 3.3 billion people live in countries that are spending more on debt payments than on health or education, standing in the way of sustainable development. In many countries, debt repayments far outweigh spending on climate action and addressing the impacts of the climate crisis. For heavily indebted countries, public debt has grown so large that repayment is impossible, burdening future generations.

Meanwhile, wealthy countries, (including Canada), and corporations exploit resources from heavily indebted countries and from Indigenous communities causing human rights violations and severe ecological harm. This creates an “ecological debt” owed to those countries and to Indigenous peoples.

This can change. Public, private and multilateral creditors must cancel or reduce debts, and political leaders must support a multilateral framework for debt resolution.

This would be a transformative shift for billions of people, moving us from a model focused on profit and enriching creditors, to one that prioritizes a just society, centring people and the planet.

Report : Children’s Worship & Youth

2025 has been a busy year for Children's Worship and the Youth of St. James. In May, four youth from our congregation attend Youth @ Region at Mt. Allison University. The theme of the weekend was '100 Years of Love' to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of The United Church of Canada. With over a 100 participants, the youth learned about the history of the church, what it looks like today and dreamed BIG of its future. Many did an amazing job performing skits for the large crowd of delegates. Their talents, confidence and joyful excitement were wonderful to witness. As always, they enjoyed connecting with old friends and building new connections.

The Children's Worship service continues to follow the Godly Play model that offers a strong foundation in Christian education and reflection on the stories of the Bible. Pulling from the talents of volunteer

leaders, our young participants are happy to participate in skits based on Biblical stories and contribute to music worship on Sundays. Any members of the congregation who are interested in theatre and music are welcome to help the children develop their performances. Music and theatre help children feel the messages; Godly Play helps them think about the messages of the Bible. We hope to have the children participate in service through skits and music regularly.

A new crop of participants in Children's Worship has sprung up in 2025, and we can expect 10 young people per week on average. All youngsters are welcome!

We want to grow our pool of volunteer leaders to support the main leader each week. It enhances the sense of safety when there are two adults, or one adult and an older teen, present during Children's Worship. If you are able to offer a hand occasionally, or are open to being a last minute replacement, please reach out to a member of the CF&D Committee, Rev. Peter, or the CF&D Coordinator May MacKenzie.

Blessings,
Claire MacDonell

National UCW Holds Discussions About Becoming “Affirming”

On 3 September I sat in on a ZOOM call with 32 other members of United Church Women's groups from across Canada. The purpose was to discuss whether the National UCW should become an “affirming” organization or not. Note that this decision, when and if it's taken, will not impact individual UCWs. They can each make the decision for themselves, should they choose to do so. Both Maritime regions, (Bermuda - Nova Scotia and Funday St Lawrence Dawning Waters), have already voted to become affirming.

What does this mean? “The United Church affirms that gender and sexuality are gifts of God, and that all persons are made in the image of God. We welcome into full membership and ministry people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The United Church is opposed to discrimination against any person on any basis by which a person is devalued.” In practical terms, it often means displaying the rainbow flag or progress pride flag, and other public ways of letting all people know that they are welcome in our church and will find a safe space there to be fully themselves.

There was considerable discussion about the term affirming being used to include everyone – not just those of different sexual orientations. Should it include those of differing abilities, refugees, newcomers to Canada who are not necessarily refugees, and people with dementia?

There was also discussion about pronouns and their use, the acceptability of the term “ladies”, a resource called “Open Hearts”, how becoming affirming would actually change the NUCW, how could education be carried out, could there be an “Affirming” Workshop, etc.

I'm personally interested in this question as I'd like to see St James consider becoming an affirming church. It is a lengthy process, but one I'll be asking our Council to consider in the future.

The bottom line is that this process will not happen overnight either for the NUCW or for St James. We were asked to mull over the various questions that were raised and reconvene in January 2026 to continue discussions.

Michèle Ashby

Blessing of the Pets Service

4 October saw the 15th Annual Blessing of the Pets service take place at the Garden of St Theresa on the old Bethany grounds. The weather, which had been forecast to be perfect, turned a bit threatening. Nonetheless several dog owners, their dogs and two cats attended this simple, delightful service. They all played well together! After some readings and hymns, blessings were provided to the pets by Fr Tom MacNeil, Chaplain to the Srs of St Martha. Many enjoyed a stroll around the beautiful garden afterward. Photos provided by Rosena MacDonald, Carma volunteer.



Laura Teasdale as her dog is blessed by Fr Tom MacNeil.
(left)

Unknown owner with Clyde. If you look closely, you can find our secretary *extraordinaire*, Barb Shea, along with her sweet, little dog Paloma.
(right)



Spring Adopt-A-Highway Clean Up

On Saturday, 24 May, seven stalwart souls from St James enjoyed a short break in the “May rains” to get out and clean the St James Adopt-A-Highway interchange, Exit 32. In two hours we picked up fourteen bags of trash and three bags of “refundables”. The money from the latter goes to the church’s “discretionary fund”. There were no particularly remarkable “finds” this time around, just the usual fast food wrappers and coffee cups. This was our 19th clean up in thirteen years!

We all feel there is somewhat less garbage than in previous years, probably due to the DNA company, (Dexter Nova Alliance), keeping the area better maintained. We actually had a pleasant interaction with one of their employees on this occasion. One of the “Litter Clean Up in Progress” signs that we put up around the area when we’re working, was giving us difficulty as the stand we place them in was bent to the point that it was useless. As we debated what to do, a DNA employee stopped by and came over to thank us for our work!

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We complimented one another on our mutual efforts to keep the area tidy and commiserated on the unfortunate mentality of those people who can't be bothered to take their coffee cups, etc home to dispose of in the trash, but prefer to toss them out their car windows, making an unsightly mess. When he noticed the problem we were having with the stand, he offered to get one of his company's stands and fix the issue. He was as good as his word and the sign was properly installed when we next went by. This was much appreciated.

We also appreciate the generous assistance of our local radio station, (98.9 XFM), who kindly publicize our clean up on the day we're doing it. And all the friendly honks of motorists passing by!



L > R Liz Millett, Hope Graham, Michèle Ashby, Tim Hinds, Stewart MacPhee and Marlene Groenenberg (taking the photo – Jerri Groenenberg)



The closing UCW dinner at the Maritime Inn in June.

Mavis Murray pays tribute to Christine Briand for her excellent leadership as president for the past number of years.



Why You Should Sing – Carolyn Curry

September has arrived and almost gone again. Just as school is underway, for me, your friendly choir director, so too is choir rehearsal. After service I often hear from you about the songs you like. But when the question of singing yourself comes up I am met with the reasons why *not* to sing. Generally, I don't push the issue, but as a teacher, and life-long learner, I don't really see your lack of experience as a proper defence. (Can't you see joining the choir would gradually alleviate the aforementioned deficiency?)

So, I've been assured, it is my time to offer my arguments. Time to hear the other side and implore you to consider why you *should* sing. So, if you were to ask me why you should sing I, my father's daughter, would have several anecdotes come to mind.

The first, shared with me and my classmates by a favourite professor, is that the Plains Indigenous language has no word for "artist". Not because they have no artists; hopefully this is obvious. They have no word for it because the art of creating is inseparable from the culture of their daily life. There's no need for another word for something they already all are.

One of my favourites is that when you sing in a choir your heart rates synchronize with your choirmates. It's not just hearsay, you can read about it in Anna Haensch's 2013 NPR article "When Choirs Sing, Many Hearts Beat As One". Not only that but the extended exhale happening when you sing has a calming effect, slowing down your heart rate.

Finally, a favourite of my father's, is the story of an opera singer and a priest indulging in a friendly singing competition before a crowd. They each sing the same hymn, but the professional goes first. He sings it beautifully, beyond a doubt; strong, confident, technically proficient with tasteful flourishes. He ends his performances to enthusiastic applause. The priest gets up to sing the same tune. He knows it well and sings it earnestly and humbly. He means every word. When his performance ends there isn't a dry eye among their listeners. Whatever else he may lack, his whole soul went into his performance.

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ST. DAVID'S UNITED CHURCH CAPE GEORGE

David Ballantyne (one of my ancestors) came to Nova Scotia with the 82nd Highland Regiment and from his farm he deeded a parcel of land to be used for church purposes. The deed was drawn up, signed and sealed, and given the name of St. David's United Church on the 19th day of October, 1929, 196 years ago!

Church services were held in a barn owned by David Ballantyne until the construction of the new church was completed. Even after the church was built, some services were still held in the barn especially communion services and the Gaelic language was always used in the barn while English was used in the church.

In 1808 the Cape George ministry became part of the congregation of St. James United Church in Antigonish and remained so until 1886 when it became a separate mission field and was served by a succession of student ministers. In 1951 a cottage was built to be used as a residence for the student minister. I have fond memories of attending St. David's as a child, attended Sunday School, Sunday Church (morning and evening services) and Vacation Bible School - I remember the treats served at the end of each day of bible school (cookies delivered by my great Aunt Peggy MacPhie).

In 1929, St. David's celebrated its centenary and we are just four years from celebrating its bicentenary. The church has continued to be maintained over the years and despite its years it continues to stand proudly in the community and years ago the cemetery has been enlarged with burial plots still available. Services are now held during the months of July



and August together with a Thanksgiving service and Christmas Eve service - this congregation feels very fortunate to have Rev. Peter Smith and organist Carolyn Curry (along with various lay ministers) keep this church opened seasonally.

The trustees past and present have been instrumental in keeping this beautiful little church a welcoming place to worship - A large amount of damage from Hurricane Fiona caused us to rely on our insurance for repairs to the interior of the church and the removal of numerous locust trees and we do have some ongoing clean up to the cemetery grounds and locals are generous with their time to assist with ongoing work required. Visitors are always welcome!!

Respectfully submitted by Valerie Haskett (Chugg) - Trustee





ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE

The Siege of Quebec 1775-76

Imagine if you can, that you're a farmer from Virginia or a Fisherman from Massachusetts, or a Woodsman from Pennsylvania, and you've just enlisted in the newly formed Army of the Continental Congress. It's the summer of 1775, and you've been picked to take part in a momentous expedition to be lead by none other than Benedict Arnold, the hero and capturer of the Gibraltar of North America – Fort Ticonderoga. The objective: to travel north, overland, through the wild frontier-land from Boston, up along the Kennebec river northwards all the way to the Chaudière river and up the St. Lawrence seaway in an attempt to oust the British from their other major stronghold – the fortified city of Quebec. Sound possible? Try next to IM-possible, yet the attempt was made none the less.

Earlier during the month of September, I had a great opportunity to go to the Plains of Abraham in the City of Quebec to take part in a Grand re-enactment which commemorated not only the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, but specifically the failed Invasion of Quebec by member of the Continental Congress and allied free-French partisans . This great enterprise was led by a hero of the Continental congress (subsequently later turned famous traitor) Benedict Arnold, who took a large group of militiamen with few provisions and supplies, and marched them overland through the swamps of Maine and lower hinterlands of the Mohawk river following the river systems up to the St. Lawrence river valley. This opportunity was such a wonderful experience, and to know that the regiment which I portray in my re-enacting here in the Maritimes, the 84th Regiment

of Foot, or Royal Highland Emigrants, was a prominent unit on the British line during this attack. But now back to the Invasion.

So, you've disembarked from your supply ships at Newburyport, Massachusetts, and now have a daunting several month-long forced march through thick wilderness and frontier land where there are no roads, very few landmarks to guide your way, and the only the word of your commanding officer, Benedict Arnold to lead you on. Yet you somehow push on, though things are not looking the best from the word go –disease, very little food and provisions, no maps, or guides nor support from native tribes push morales to record lows. About a third of the men decide to turn back for home. But Arnold's words of encouragement push you onwards, and eventually you reach the St Lawrence just outside of Pont-Levi in late November where you get some resupplies and provisions from the French civilian population. The fortified walls of the City of Quebec are just ahead of you. But with a very heavy Canadian winter setting in and the troops inside the city have well fortified with plenty of supplies and provisions, your army has little to no rations, very little gunpowder left, and hardly sufficient winter provisions. BUT you're patriotic fervor couldn't be stronger, because you've succeeded against all odds just getting here. The invasion takes off on the night of December 31st in a blinding snowstorm.

Back to modern day. So, my re-enactment unit, the 84th Royal Highland Emigrants, historically were part of the main forces present defending the city of Quebec, specifically the 1st battalion. I am a member of the 2nd battalion, which was stationed in Nova Scotia, but I had the correct uniform so we all turned out as the 1st battalion. The defending force of the city at the time was roughly about 1200 troops made up of 150 RHE's, and roughly 500-armed militia plus some 400 marines from the two Royal navy vessels defending the River. The greater majority of the forces stationed at Quebec had been withdrawn to Fort St. Jean by the British commander in Chief, Sir Guy Carleton (yup, the same guy that Guysborough county is named after) in order to strengthen the defences there to repel a joint American invasion being led by Richard Montgomery. There were units from many different re-enactment groups, both from Canada and the United States, who had come up for this three-day event, representing three various timelines of Quebec's history – the Seven Years war, The American Revolution, and the War of 1812. The battlefield of the Plains of Abraham was set up into three different zones each representing their own time period. Overall I would say there was about 1500 re-enactors on site for the entirety of the weekend, and each group was given different time slots for either single group drill demonstrations, or a mock battle/skirmish between two opposing forces on two separate battle ranges.

Part of the weekend was an extra special ceremony, mainly for members of my group, in that we found the gravestone of a Lt. Colonel of my regiment, a John Nairne who was a commander of the British forces while under siege at Quebec. We held a small graveside ceremony for him on the Sunday of that weekend which was very moving. But now back to the outcome of the invasion.

So, you and your rag-tag army have succeeded where many others thought you would fail, by trekking overland through buggy swamps and deep, rocky river valleys, overcame near starvation and desertion, yet had prevailed through grim determination and true grit. But the overall outcome turned out disastrously. Try as you might, the Continental Congress forces cannot breach the walls of the fortifications, and get hopelessly bogged down fighting desperate skirmishes in the snowy filled streets of the city of Quebec, all the while having to deal with stalwart British and French-Canadian troops

defending their home. The eventual outcome of the entire enterprise was a sad retreat back to the American border with no victory in sight. Had it gone the way of victory though, Quebec may have become the 14th State of the newly formed United States.

One of the reasons that I enjoy doing historical re-enactments is being able to take part in grand events such as this. Plus the fact that I love history, and theatre which go hand in hand with being a Living historian. So it was an amazing experience to take part in this grand encampment which commemorates our vast nation's history.



The Legacy of John and Charlotte Geddie

In the old meeting room of St. James' Church is a photograph of Dr. Alexander McDonald who was not only the first specialist physician in Nova Scotia but was also the founding President of the Antigonish Highland Society which was formed in 1861. The photograph was done around that time as he died in the mid 1860s. He was a younger son of the chief of the MacDonalds of Sleat growing up in Armadale Castle. He had studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh and did further studies resulting in a degree of MD which was rare at the time. Most graduates of medical schools received degrees of M.B. and Ch. B. and to secure an MD required 4 or 5 years of postgraduate study and a thesis much like a PhD today. He was, after a number of adventures, convinced to come to Antigonish by Father Alexander MacDonald who was the priest in Arisaig although Dr. Alexander was Presbyterian. Father Alexander gave Dr. Alexander the land at Mount Cameron as an enticement to assume practice in this locality. The present large house on the hill was built by his son Dr. Bill (William MacDonald). He pursued a very intense practice in this area in both English and Gaelic and indeed Doctor's Brook is named after him; was asked to become a member of the Provincial Council in Halifax (equivalent to the Cabinet before Responsible Government) but turned it down as he was more concerned about the welfare of his patients. After his arrival in Antigonish, he married Charlotte Harrington whose father had a mill on Wright's River approximately behind the present location of Keltic Motors.

To take up another strand of this, as one goes along Highway 245, in Merigomish, one will encounter a sign indicating Camp Geddie along the shore. This is a summer camp run by the Presbyterian Church in Canada and has been in existence for well over a century. So who is it named after and what relationship is that to St. James' Church?

John Geddie was born in Banff, Scotland in 1815 and emigrated with his family at the age of one to Pictou, Nova Scotia. His health was always fragile but he graduated with distinction from Pictou Academy and studied theology locally and in Edinburgh as the University of Edinburgh had automatic entry to its programs for graduates from Pictou Academy. His health is not good but he was ordained in to the charge at Cavendish, Prince Edward Island in 1838 and was a minister to the growing Presbyterian community there for 7 years. During this time, in spite of the fractious debate amongst

the various branches of the Presbyterian Church in the Maritimes, a subscription was taken up to the fund a missionary venture to Samoa and what was at that time called New Hebrides and is now Vanuatu. This was the first foreign mission launched from anywhere in what is now Canada. In 1846 a ship is built and sailed with Reverend Geddie and his family initially to Samoa in order to learn the local languages and become accustomed to life in the Pacific Islands. The link with St. James is that his wife, Charlotte MacDonald, was a daughter of Dr. Alexander MacDonald mentioned above. She and her husband had 5 children: 4 daughters and 1 son.

The Mission in was fraught with challenges as the language which he had spent time learning in Samoa was not the same language which was used on the island to which he went. Also there was considerable tension in the early years between the community and the missionaries as the missionaries were unfamiliar with many taboos which were taken very seriously including a number of normally fatal ones resulting in the Mission being burned down on several occasions. Often enemies of the community were killed and eaten ritualistically. As well, the island was being exploited by European traders who were enslaving the local population in order to dig sandalwood root which was used in the production of incense particularly in India and Arab countries. This led to significant destruction of the forests. The trader group was particularly murderous and did not hesitate to kill those who opposed them. After rebuilding the mission, Rev. Geddie learned that the traders were planning to burn the mission down and kill the missionaries, but hoping to pin the event on the local population. The community and the Mission rapidly organized to pre-empt this event with the result that the British Government intervened and removed the traders from the Island so that for this first time in about 30 years the local population was not threatened by these people. This was unfortunately followed by a measles epidemic which killed about a third of the population and was a period of extreme hardship on both the community and the Mission. Rev. Geddie's health broke down and he left the mission in 1863 for Australia, dying in Geelong, Australia in 1863 following a stroke. His daughter Charlotte also became a missionary in Australia.

Charlotte (MacDonald) Geddie retired to Melbourne, Australia, dying there in 1916.

History has tended to be written from a masculine perspective, but Charlotte MacDonald Geddie had to be a woman of great fortitude to endure the threats both

biological and physical in her mission field , raising 5 children and being a witness to her family's mission. It has been written that when the Giddies arrived there were no Christians and when they left there were no heathen. Our perspectives have changed but that accomplishment is remarkable. Thus Antigonish and Saint James may take pride in vicariously being part of the first Canadian Foreign mission. So salute Camp Geddie when you travel Highway 245!

contributed by Dr. John Hamilton



Income Assistance in Nova Scotia

The St James Social Justice Collective was pleased to welcome two guest speakers on Sunday, September 21, 2025: Madeleine McCarron, a recent St F X graduate from Public Policy and Governance, and Reaghan Sylvester from the Antigonish Women's Centre and Sexual Assault Services.

Income Assistance is provincial financial assistance that, according to the government's website, "helps you when you are not able to support yourself or your family". An individual with no children, who has a rental accommodation, can expect \$726.00 per month. A couple in the same position - \$ 1,419.00 per month.

Suppose you add a child to that calculation. In that case, the single individual with one child can expect an increase of \$292 per month for that child, totalling \$ 1,018 per month for a family of two. Unfortunately, the couple does not fare so well. They would see an increase of only \$54.00 per month, for a total of \$ 1,473.00 for the family of three. I collected these numbers from the provincial website. <https://novascotia.ca/coms/employment/basic-needs-assistance/> I mention the rates so you are aware of the working capital of the population we are discussing.

Madeleine discussed the history of income assistance in our region and the changes that have occurred over the decades. Our income assistance originated from the UK's Poor Laws, which initially created a

system similar to indentured service, with municipalities responsible for disbursing funds. Rural communities, having less financial resources to begin with, offered lower payouts and created more stringent requirements to access the program, including pressures on women to enter any marriage so they would no longer need the help of the welfare system.

By the mid-1960s, the federal government began a dollar-for-dollar cost-sharing arrangement with provinces to provide income assistance. In NS, municipalities continued to administer funds for those considered the “able-bodied”. They received some provincial reimbursement for this purpose. The province directly managed some cases for those deemed more deserving of support.

Madeline explained that individuals would need to navigate this patchwork of various levels of government to determine what, if anything, was available to help them. The application for help, at all levels, was guided by older views of morality, meaning that in large parts of the province, neither a person living as a single individual nor a single mother were eligible to receive benefits at any level. In the mid-1970s, Family Benefits began at the provincial level, and funds were issued only if children were living in the home and attending school. It was a focus on the children, rather than the mother, that drove that benefit.

Some job training elements were eventually added to the programs. These employment requirements reinforced the idea that assistance should be a stopgap, a ‘welfare-to-work’ concept. Employment requirements created a significant barrier for rural mothers who faced limited access to retraining, available jobs, transportation, or childcare options in smaller communities.

Any employment a person could find would result in assistance funds being withheld, often meaning that accepting a job and paying for childcare would decrease their benefits to the point where they would effectively lose money by going to work. You may keep \$350 to \$450 in earnings per month before deductions. And remember that a single mother with a child receives only \$ 1,018 per month; any amount over \$350 will trigger clawbacks. Once they reach a combined income from assistance and employment of \$ 1,368.00, they will start to see any extra funds heavily deducted.

By the 1990s, the federal government stopped matching provincial dollars, so the provinces had to reconfigure their assistance plans. In NS, the provincial government took the responsibility for all income assistance. The policy changed to some degree, and some of those changes affected education and employment. The province created new allowances to assist with travel to community college and to provide financial support for education for up to two years. Another policy the government implemented allows seasonal workers to receive extra income before deductions.

While these policies apply to all recipients, they are more beneficial to men than to women. Madeleine explained that while there seems to be no intention to disadvantage women, there is also no intention to check bias and ensure the women are not at a greater disadvantage.

Some of the examples Madeleine included were:

- Community college is an excellent launch pad for employment, and assistance with costs and transportation for a two-year program can be a huge help. However, there is a significant wage disparity between jobs in male-centred fields and those in female-centred work. Many skilled labour and trade jobs, such as carpentry, sheet metal work, and plumbing, can be completed within the two-year window and can lead to well-paid, often unionized jobs. While training for more female-centred work, such as hospitality, education, and healthcare, can put graduates at the lower end of the pay scale in those fields, careers like education assistant or physiotherapy assistant are examples. Suppose a woman wants to pursue a career as a nurse or a teacher, both of which are higher-paying professions that require university programs. In that case, she may be ineligible for any income assistance. In fact, if you enrol in a program longer than two years to train for your chosen field and try to apply for student loans, there are further hurdles that may limit your eligibility for even the monthly allowance.
- Seasonal employment income can be kept at a higher rate, not \$350 per month, but \$ 3,000 for the season. However, in parts of rural NS, tourism may create the only jobs in the region. Employment as a cashier or cleaner at Inns, or as a server, which is predominantly held by women, may be seasonal in rural areas but does not qualify for this larger allowance. Male-centred work, such as agriculture or forestry, does qualify.
- There is a one-car policy. For a family, having more than one car can trigger an asset review that may impact your eligibility for monthly income. In the case where a family has only one car, and work is often available in lower-wage shift work, having one car can mean that only one person can work. Men tend to work outside the home, while women stay at home with the children.

Reaghan then spoke to the group about how these policies show up in the clients who access the Antigonish Women's Centre and Sexual Assault Service. Regarding the one-car policy, she mentioned that if a person is in an unsafe home, it is difficult to leave if their spouse/domestic partner has the car at work and there is no public transportation.

Both speakers agreed that even if someone can take the car to go, they are often hesitant to take the only means of travel, because that can limit the spouse's ability to work, which can heighten an already volatile situation.

Reaghan pointed out that if a person does leave, they have to find a place to go. There are no shelters in Antigonish. Port Hawksbury and New Glasgow have facilities, but if you have children in school, a job, or a local support system, then a move to a new community may not be practical. There are waitlists at the facilities in both our neighbouring towns, so you might not even have that as an option. The group also discussed that, in addition to these complications, if a family has pets, no shelter can accommodate them. Now you must separate from the animal, which can be hard, as a pet may be a source of comfort and support in a difficult home.

The group also discussed that some other residential spaces may not be suitable for someone leaving a violent home. How can you protect all the tenants in an entire apartment building if the abuser arrives with a weapon? How do you protect smaller property owners who may be harassed or targeted by an abuser for giving shelter?

Once you find a way to leave, and find a place to go, and find a home for your pets, you now have to work with your case worker to separate the family file into two files. Income Assistance requires that you seek any available source of income, which means you have to navigate a court system for spousal or child support from the meagre earnings.

Reaghan further mentioned that when the funds are so limited, and one partner is working, we can see the incidence of financial abuse with one partner getting “an allowance” to buy groceries and nothing else.

Reaghan noted that financial, verbal, emotional, physical abuse and coercive control can happen in any age group, in any economic class and in all kinds of relationships. An abuser can be a domestic partner of any gender or any relative abusing an older adult.

You might wonder what can be done. Well, so did those in attendance.

- Policy makers must include rural women and the groups that support them (like the Women’s Centre) at the table. So reach out to your provincial government to express your concerns.
- We must address a lack of community resources. So reach out to the town and county councils.
- We must rethink the way income assistance is viewed. A brief discussion of livable income was raised. Some resources to learn more about that include: the websites ubiworks.ca or basicincomecanada.org, or if you prefer, Hugh Segal’s book *Bootstraps Need Boots: One Tory’s Lonely Fight to End Poverty in Canada*, available at most bookstores (including the United Church Bookstore).

The Social Justice Collective is grateful that these two speakers took the time to share their knowledge. We also thank the many attendees who came to share ideas and stories.



Madeleine McCarron, a recent St F X graduate from Public Policy and Governance, and **Reaghan Sylvester** from the Antigonish Women’s Centre and Sexual Assault Services.

March to Ottawa: Vigil

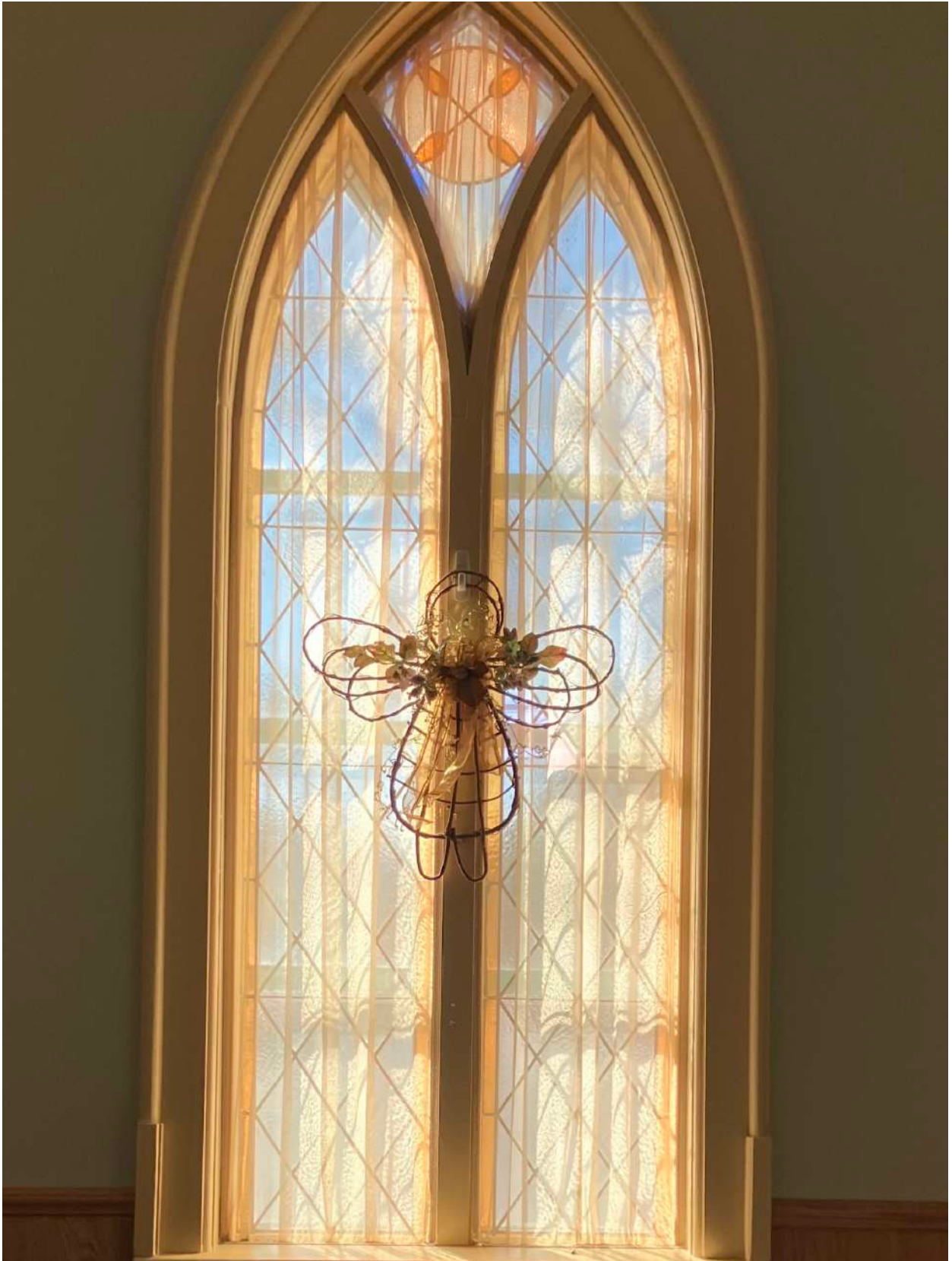
From Najlaa Alzaanin, a Gazan-Canadian friend of Linda Darwish in Canada since 2019:

I was invited to join this meaningful vigil by the group who had previously traveled to Egypt in an unsuccessful attempt to break the siege of Gaza. From September 15–19, 2025, people from across Canada gathered on Parliament Hill in Ottawa for five days of actions. We demanded an end to Canada's weapons exports, its political cover for Israel, and its complicity in genocide. Every day from noon until 7 PM, we honoured and read the names of 18,500 murdered Gazan children killed by the Israeli army. It took us 35 hours to finish reading these names, although there are thousand of names still unregistered because they're still under rubble. We stood for truth and demanded accountability from our MPs for the Palestinian people. During the vigil, I took part in three press conferences at the Parliament building with three different NDP MPs:

- **First press conference:** With MP Alexandre Boulerice (Montreal) and the *March to Ottawa* group. I spoke about the Canadian government's failure to evacuate our families who are eligible under the Gaza Special Measures program.
- **Second press conference:** With MP Heather McPherson (Edmonton) and the Health Worker Coalition. I highlighted the devastating toll on children in Gaza, thousands killed, many orphaned, and countless others injured or amputated. I emphasized that Canada has failed to evacuate these urgent medical cases or provide protection, leaving vulnerable families stranded despite the supposed special program.
- **Third press conference:** With MP Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East) and the Gazan Canadian Family League. Together with three other families, I shared our personal stories about the dire situation of our loved ones in Gaza. I spoke about my mother's deteriorating health and the fact that she has already completed her biometrics, an essential requirement for a visa, yet the Canadian government has done nothing to evacuate her or bring her to safety.

What you can do to help reunite Palestinian Canadian Families with their loved ones:

- **Email Minister Lena Diab:** Lena.metlege.diab@parl.gc.ca
- **or** ircc.minister-ministre.ircc@cic.gc.ca
- **And/or call and leave a voicemail as often as you can:** 1-613-996-3085
- **Contact the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anita Anand:** Anita.Anand@parl.gc.ca / 905-338-2008
- **Simply tell the Minister (Diab & Anand) that Gazan Canadians have been waiting far too long for the Canadian government to evacuate their family members under the Gaza Special Measures Program while these families are facing death and disease every day**
- **Visit the Gazan Canadian League website for more information:** gazancanadians.ca
- **(Linda's addition): Visit/Support Najlaa Alzaanin's GoFundMe page**



The meeting room window on a sunny afternoon.