



St. John's United Church, 75 Alma Street, Moncton, NB E1C 4Y3
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F: St. John's United Church, United Church of Canada

A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

April 16, 2021

There are so many signs of spring all around us.

Since there was no school on Wednesday, we took the kids to the beach where we camp in Grand-Barachois. We also took our dog, Halo. As some of you know, Halo suffers from neurological blindness after having a reaction to medication following her spay surgery. As my daughter discovered, dogs tend to rely on their nose just as much as their sight so Halo has been navigating this world remarkably well all things considered. One place of pure joy for her is the beach. She runs and runs and since there is nothing to run into she is totally free (although she did collide with Allie while she was picking up golf balls out of the water, and knocked her in! Cold!) Halo runs in the water, rolls in the sand, and she's in her glory.



One of the things my wife has done since I met her is jump into the water when spring returns. She's done this for most of her life, jumping off the wharf where she grew up, even if there was a thin layer of ice. So I have to say I wasn't totally shocked on Wednesday when she said she was going to do a "rip and dip" into the water, as I stood there with my winter coat and boots on. Eli, never one to miss an opportunity for fun, decided he wanted to do it too so the two of them "ripped and dipped". As they were running back out of the water I could hear them laughing and shouting how cold it was but it just felt like one of those moments where you see people fully alive. (I carried Eli to the car on my back wrapped in my coat.)

When I was bathing Halo when we got back home she was facing me as I poured warm water all over her fur to rinse the sand out, patiently sitting there in the tub as I held her face and called her a good girl. Because of her impairment, she needs to be very close to us at all times to feel safe. If she can't sense my presence she starts to cry a bit so I'm always reassuring her how close I am either by petting her or with my voice.

As we navigate these times, it's hard to know what to feel, and I suppose this is why I felt such joy on Wednesday watching my family living in the moment. Joy seems elusive over this past year as we are reminded time and time again what we are missing, most specifically: each other.

Last Sunday as we were in church I taught the congregation to sign the name "Jesus" using ASL (American Sign Language). When I saw three kids in the front pew on my right enthusiastically signing the name Jesus I went further and showed them, 'Jesus Loves Me'. I miss those moments with kids,

and I am so grateful for the teachers among us who have had to step up and help these little ones work through their own path through COVID-19.

I think the adults enjoyed it as much as the kids as we later did it in the service as a “sign of the peace”. Rather than shaking hands, we formed the word Jesus with our hands to our neighbours.

Signs of spring, signs of peace, and signs of Jesus are all around us. They are in the call of a friend, the care of a nurse, the kind conversation with a stranger at the grocery store as you both insist the other goes ahead in a crowded aisle, in the flowers in your garden, in the blooming plant on your window sill, in the medical staff at a pop-up vaccination clinic, in the meals handed out at the Karing Kitchen as people sit and talk on church stairs and fill empty stomachs.

This is what I am reminded of this week as I see the world around me. Or, even if I can't see the world around me (like Halo) I can still hear a voice that assures me that I am loved, and that I am not alone. Thank you for being the church, and for sharing in that divine love with the world around you.

The Rev. Aaron Billard
Minister



Announcements:

ARRIVAL OF SYRIAN REFUGEE FAMILY IS DELAYED.

The arrival of the Syrian refugee family (mother and four daughters) in Moncton, expected on April 16th, has been delayed. The mother and two daughters tested positive for COVID-19. The entire family is together and being taken care of in a UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) hospital. The mother and daughters have very mild or no symptoms, so we are hopeful they will recuperate quickly and be able to travel to Moncton soon. Please keep the family in your prayers.

DEDICATE THE PASTORAL LETTER in memory of a loved one(s). The cost is \$50.00. Upcoming dates available: May 2, June 13, June 20 and Sept. 5.

The **Pastoral Care & Membership Committee** is seeking names of those who will be **GRADUATING** from universities, colleges and local high schools this academic year. The Committee wishes to recognize these graduates. Please submit names to Roberta Bunker (382-6270), Lois Weatherby (856-8899) or the church office. Thank you.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The following scholarships are available to students who have been active, and are currently participating, within the congregational life of St. John's United Church.

Applications are available by contacting the church office via email at sjuc@nb.aibn.com

Applications are to be returned by May 17, 2021 to the church by: email, dropping the submission into the mail slot in the door or by bringing it along with you on Sunday morning.

Henrietta Potter Scholarship is available to students currently in high school and pursuing first-year studies at a post-secondary educational institution in the upcoming year.

Robb Scholarship is awarded to students (children included) to further his/her studies in music. He/she is to be actively participating in formal music programs or music performances (i.e. choirs).

Charles E. Woodrow Memorial Music Scholarship is available to students currently in high school and pursuing first-year music studies at a post-secondary educational institution in the upcoming year.

SERMONS are available by email every week. Email the church office if you want to be added to the email list.

PLEASE ADVISE THE CHURCH OFFICE at sjuc@nb.aibn.com if your email, mailing address, residence or telephone number changes.

ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH CARES... To notify the Minister of personal concerns, anxieties, illnesses, hospitalizations or deaths, or to pass along a prayer request, contact Rev. Aaron Billard at 858-8289 or sjucrev@gmail.com



In-person Worship – April 18, 2021

Registration is now open and closes on Saturday, April 17th at 5:00 p.m.

Here is the link to register to attend:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/april-18th-third-sunday-of-easter-tickets-148916229451>

(The link changes every week.)

In-person Worship – April 25, 2021

Registration opens Sunday, April 18th at 12:00 p.m. and closes on Saturday, April 24th at 5:00 p.m.

Here is the link to register to attend:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/april-25th-fourth-sunday-of-easter-tickets-150323494619>

(The link changes every week.)

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Have you watched our **online Worship**? If not, join us every week online using one of the links below:
via our Church website - <http://www.stjohnsmoncton.ca>
via our Church Facebook page – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/16465565858>
via YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNHB60ajQtwsf7-vCfXGHBw>

CHURCH MINISTRY PERSONNEL AND STAFF



Rev. Aaron Billard, *Minister*
email: sjucrev@gmail.com



Mike Day, *Music Director*



Karen Geldart, *Office Administrator*
email: sjuc@nb.aibn.com



Pat Arsenault, *Custodian*



Rev. Dr. Douglas MacEachern
Minister Emeritus
email: dougjune@nb.sympatico.ca



Bruce Lawson,
Property Manager

