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Office Hours: Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

January 7, 2022

How do you start your day? What are your patterns? Are you a creature of habit? Have things changed since the world went sideways? This summer I made it a goal to start each day reading a Psalm. I think I made it to Psalm 60. I have resumed the practice. The first thing I do now when I walk into the office is to read a Psalm out loud. I'm not sure if I'm getting any wiser biblically but it does set the tone for the work I am about. It also centers me in gratefulness to God to be who I am where I am in this moment despite all of the things that are out of my control.

As I write this I'm listening to the press conference with Dr. Russell and Minister Shepherd as the snow storm starts outside. I brought books home from the church yesterday to work from home in case the storm started earlier. Last night my son Eli asked if I could make a "big breakfast" in the morning so I got up while it was still dark to have everything ready for when the kids got up. There's something about the smell of breakfast to wake up a household.

In rural ministry I would visit people who used make a big pot of tea over a wood stove, and they would keep the teapot on all day, just adding tea bags and water as the day went on until you could almost walk on it. I haven't become that level of a tea drinker just yet; however, I do admire their dedication. (Though I do not share their commitment to Carnation milk; my pallet can't accept it!)

When school is in-person our days are pretty routine. An old Roman Catholic priest I knew told me that one time after he just got up a parishioner knocked on the door. She was surprised that the priest was still in his house coat. He replied, "I'm doing my correspondence." Duncan Roach, a United Church minister from Cape Breton, told me a similar story of a parishioner knocking on his door early one morning. He answered the door and the person was shocked that he wasn't wearing a clerical collar.

A few weeks ago, after I dropped my wife off at work in Dieppe, I was driving down Main Street and I saw sitting at a table in front of a window at a restaurant a chef working on something whether it was a menu or an administrative task. It got me to thinking of all the people who rise early and contribute to the life of where we live, whether it's those in the service industry, people working in the hospitals, those who pick up garbage, those who work in offices, those who are still working from home. So many people are working so hard to keep afloat now that it isn't lost on me that the church has a role to not only stay open but to pray for our community. So next time you do take out, pray for the staff. Next time someone pours you a cup of coffee, pray for them because chances are they have been on the receiving end of some bad behaviours. Next time you call customer service, offer some humanity. When I was at the hospital for blood work a few weeks ago I was amazed at the effort from hospital staff to make everyone feel comfortable despite the outbreaks. (I'll never forget the nurse who told me that I had 'skinny Scottish veins.')

A professor and friend at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Rob Fennell, posted a graph this morning focusing on self-care. Rob is exemplary at caring for clergy. As I scanned the boxes in the graph (included with this letter) I found myself nodding. There are many things I should and can do but don't. Conversations with clergy during this pandemic time are showing that burn out is real as more and more go out on stress leave, long term disability, or leave the ministry altogether.

Our wellness as the people of God is dependent on so many things yet I do believe that it is part of our faith to encourage each other rather than to criticize. To pray for one another. To offer hope. To cheer each other on...because discipleship isn't always about saving the world, it's also about saving each other's souls, even if it is just for a moment; long enough to exhale.

May God's peace be with you all on this stormy day. You are loved by a Love greater than you can imagine. We owe it to ourselves to reflect that love in our community and with each other and in self-care.

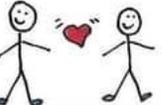
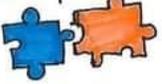
I remain faithful to the task ahead of us and to all of you,

Rev. Aaron Billard

On behalf of the Church Council and Staff

SELF-COMPASSION IN DAILY LIFE
 inspired by the work of Chris Germer

sketchnote by @Haypsych

Physical "soften the body"	Mental "reduce agitation"	Emotional "soothe and comfort"	Relational "connect with others"	Spiritual "Commit to your values"
exercise 	meditate 	journal 	meet with friends 	pray 
sleep 	watch a comedy 	daily gratitude 	send a thank you card 	walk in nature 
Massage 	read a book 	deep breathing 	play a board game 	help others 
a warm bath 	draw 	visualise a peaceful image 	join a club 	practice yoga 
a cup of tea 	do a puzzle 	listen to soothing music 	give a compliment 	go on a retreat 



*The pastoral letter is dedicated in Loving Memory of
Keir Colpitts who passed away on Jan. 14, 2003
 by Jamie Colpitts*

NOTICES, UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

Check our website at www.stjohnsmoncton.ca for on-line Worship, activity calendar, and more.

Jan. 9	Sun.		WORSHIP – online
Jan. 16	Sun.		WORSHIP – online - Celtic service with Communion 
Jan. 17	Mon.		Deadline for submissions to the 2021 Annual Report – email the Church Office
Jan. 17	Mon.	7:00 p.m.	Finance & Property Management Comm. (teleconference meeting)
Jan. 18	Tues.	7:00 p.m.	M&P Committee (teleconference meeting)
Jan. 25	Tues.	7:00 p.m.	Church Council (teleconference meeting)

SOBEYS & SUPERSTORE GIFT CARDS are once again available and will be sold each Sunday in the Sanctuary after Worship and at the Church Office on Wednesdays between 10:00: a.m.-12:00 p.m.

We make 4% on every card sold. ~ Your support is needed & appreciated.



DEDICATE THE PASTORAL LETTER (formerly the bulletin) in memory of a loved one(s). The cost is \$50.00. Upcoming dates available: Feb. 4, Feb.11, Feb. 18, Feb.25, Mar.4, May 6, May 13, Aug. 27, Sept. 2, Sep. 9 and Oct. 21.

ATTENTION YOUTH 15-19!!!

General Council 44 is coming up, and with that, comes the opportunity for youth between the ages of 15-19 to participate in **Youth Forum!** Along with that, **Home Group Leaders are needed!** Each region will get to have four participants to the event that takes place throughout the year, starting in the winter of 2022. As you'll see, it is also an opportunity for employment!

Please email or phone Catherine Stuart, Regional Minister for Children, Youth and Young Adults, for further information, cstuart@united-church.ca 1-800-268-3781 ext 6158

Links:

[Youth Forum Delegate](#)

[Home Group Leader](#)

STEWARDSHIP SECOND

You are God's beloved people, gifted to be a blessing.



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



No in-person Worship until further notice.

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



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