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Office Hours: Wednesday, 10am–12pm

PASTORAL LETTER

May 13, 2022

Last year as I was walking out of the church I opened the Victoria Street door. I was holding my phone and didn't see the street person sleeping on the steps and I tripped over them, launching me down the steps and my phone out of my hand and onto the pavement where the screen shattered. I asked if the person was ok but they were still soundly asleep. They seemed ok. My phone was cracked but it still worked. I never had it fixed because I could still see most of the screen and it wasn't near the button at the bottom. The image of a broken person isn't lost on me, either. Neither can be easily fixed.

I'm always amazed that this phone I was given back in 2017 still works. It has recorded 107 church services. It has edited most of them. Once we added a plug-in microphone and started using a stand, things were much better. I have recorded people reading scriptures and prayers with it. I've recorded soloists and musicians with it for church services. All of this was done with one device. Also of note, many in the congregation have used their devices to take part in church services.

The other day I noticed that my phone stopped charging. I did my best to figure it out but I had to acknowledge defeat and brought it to a store where two guys were happy to take a look. They thought they had it fixed but when I arrived home it still wouldn't charge. So back I went. We tried it again when they said, "It will need a new port" (the part where the charger plugs in). After having the screen fixed the other day I said, "How much will this cost?" They were good about it, giving me an estimate and said that it should work. I appreciated their enthusiasm and their problem solving. They fixed the phone but then the microphone stopped working. I called my minister friend in PEI and he asked, "Are you underwater?" So I have again brought it in and they assured me it could be fixed.

It's strange: not once could I ever have imagined that this small device would be as important to my ministry as it has become. As much as the pulpit, the font and my Bible, it's allowed me to offer church services in people's homes during lockdowns and it's allowed that ministry to continue to this day even though we have returned to the building while some are still at home. It's been a lot of extra work, with a steep learning curve but I am grateful to God for technology that has enabled us to stay connected in ways we couldn't have imagined.

For the most part, people rarely if ever call me now. Most communication happens over email, text message, and Facebook messenger. I get messages at midnight; I get messages at 6am. All on the same device I record sermons with and listen to music on and hear audio books. I was always told that as Protestants we bless people not things yet I have been thankful to God for the technology that has helped the church in its ministry over the past two years. (I exclude photocopiers from this blessing as they are moody and only work when you don't need them to in my experience!)

I remember years ago visiting a senior in Orangedale, Cape Breton who lived in an old farmhouse. He told me a story about his grandmother who was ill. The minister at the time, Rev. D.J. MacLeod, had heard that the woman was sick so since there wasn't a phone at the manse in those years he set

out in a snow storm and walked several kilometers to the woman's home. When he arrived there the husband answered the door and said, "She's not feeling too well today and asked if you could come back another time." A text message could have saved everyone a lot of energy!

As many of you receive this letter by email, it's now become part of our ministry as the church as we seek to send out messages to you to remind you that the church is still at work, and you are part of that ministry. God has given us so many ways to share good news with each other and ways to offer each other support. That includes our devices and our acts of kindness with dropping off casseroles. I would like to ask that if there is something on your mind, in your heart, or swirling in your soul that you would like to talk about, please reach out to me. In a congregation this size, it's hard to be present to each other all the time but by letting one another know our needs it allows our ministry to happen. I want to thank those who are part of our phone ministry at the church who do such a wonderful job connecting with people because being there for each other is what's important, as Jesus commanded us to love one another as he has loved us.

The other night, Lori-Ann and I were strolling through Walmart when I recognized a young couple. I walked up to them and said, "You may not remember but my name is Aaron." (Since I was wearing a mask I didn't want to assume.) Their faces lit up with recognition as did mine when I realized that they had a baby with them. The last time I saw them was the time I baptized their still-born child at the hospital and did the funeral for her. I leaned down and said quietly to their new baby, "It's very nice to meet you!" It was so uplifting to share in their joy having been through the valley of the shadow of death with them.

May God continue to offer ways to bring us together and to offer the Good News of Jesus Christ to one another in a hurting and fractured world. May the church be a place where people find healing, sanctuary, and a reminder that God is still with us in all of this.

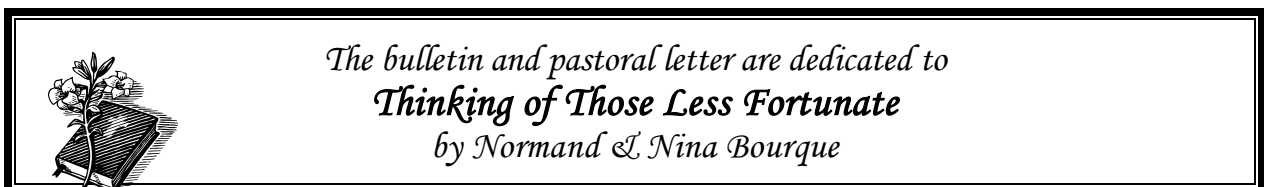
We can only pray that God will help us fix what has been broken in this world, especially people and systems of oppression.

I sat at a friend's backyard fire last night as we talked about our kids, our plans for the summer, and books and movies. I found some healing in simply enjoying the outdoors. I hope you are able to sit outside or do something good in this beautiful weather as we get glimpses of what God is going to do in our lives in the time to come. I look forward to some restorative time myself as I give more things to God that are beyond my control.



As a lyric from a song I love about brokenness called "Fix You" by Coldplay says, "Lights will guide you home." That is my prayer for you, too.

The Rev. Aaron Billard
Minister



MEMORIAL

A donation has been made to the Mission & Service Fund in memory of:

Margery Crooks (wife of Rev. Robert Crooks)
by Roberta Bunker

NOTICES, UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

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

May 15	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP – in-person (mask required) & online
May 17	Tues.	7:00 p.m.	Finance & Property Management Committee (teleconference meeting)
May 18	Wed.	10am-12pm	Church office open (weekly)
May 18	Wed.	6:30 p.m.	Choir (weekly) (changed for this week only)
May 22	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP – in-person (mask required) & online
May 23	Mon.		Church office closed – Victoria Day
May 24	Tues.	7:00 p.m.	Church Council (teleconference meeting)
May 31	Tues.	.	Deadline to submit AGM Agenda items
June 1	Wed.		Deadline to submit Scholarship Applications
June 5	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP – in-person (mask required) & online
June 5	Sun.	11:45 a.m.	SJUC 2021 Annual Meeting (Sanctuary immediately following Worship)

SOBEYS & SUPERSTORE GIFT CARDS are once again available and will be sold each Sunday in the Sanctuary before and 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.

ST. JOHN'S ANNUAL MEETING will be held Sun., June 5 at approximately 11:45 a.m. in the Sanctuary immediately following Worship. This is open to all who attend here. Come and be involved in your Church community.

AGENDA: To facilitate discussion, we are asking that items you would like discussed be added to the Agenda prior to the meeting. Please contact the Church Office by e-mail: sjuc@nb.aibn.com or phone 858-8289 with your request by May 31. Thanking you in advance for your attendance and co-operation.

SCHOLARSHIPS

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 on the church website and Facebook group, at the church office or by contacting the church office.

Applications are to be returned by June 1, 2022 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.

THE "BAKELESS BAKE SALE" has become an annual event of the St. John's UCW. This is a very popular and highly successful project. We hope you will give it your support.

We appreciate any amount you may wish to donate. Please have all donations in by the end of June. Envelopes are located at the church entrance. If you use SJUC box offering envelopes, an envelope is in your box. If you use PAR, an envelope is in your PAR envelope packet. Place your donation in the offering box on a Sunday morning, mail, drop off in the mail slot or use e-transfer.

DEDICATE THE BULLETIN AND PASTORAL LETTER in memory of a loved one(s). The cost is \$50.00. Upcoming dates available: Sept. 2/4 and Sep. 9/11. If you dedicated the pastoral letter last year, you will be contacted to see if you want to dedicate again.

STEWARDSHIP SECOND

By your love for one another, people will know that you are disciples of Jesus.

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: Masks are required.

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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Bruce Lawson,
Property Manager

