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Office Hours: Wednesday, 10am–12pm

PASTORAL LETTER

May 20, 2022

On Monday, I decided to take the day off so I took Eli for a walk along the beach in Grand-Barachois. It's my favourite shoreline. I love knowing that Prince Edward Island is just across the water. I love looking up and down the coast and seeing all of the homes and cottages interspersed with million dollar residences and campers. Though it was too cold for Eli and I to swim, that didn't stop our dog Halo. Lori-Ann and I were recently remembering Hugh Donald telling us how he would swim from Pointe-Du-Chene over to Shediac Island. I would perish long before I reached the island, but not Hugh. A seasoned swimmer, he turned 90 on Monday. I asked him how old he felt and he said, "28!" and I believe him. He was so excited to have his family arriving for his big day. I called him early to "beat the traffic" knowing how loved he is by so many. He's been a part of our church for such a long time. Both he and his beloved Joan have so many connections to this church and to the congregation. Hugh is never without a story or a memory to share. His intellect is only outweighed by his kindness. Happy Birthday, my friend.



It's nice walking along a beach with your son thinking about friends you know because of church. I think about you all a lot. I'll be wondering about the fish market in Cap Pele when my mind goes to someone in the church who told me something about eating oysters or mussels or lobster. When I think about the cottages in Shediac, I start remember stories people told me about their places at the shore and how they would take the train from Moncton. Or thinking about swimming and my mind drifting to what Hugh said to me years ago about his long distance swimming. There's a buoy out in Shediac Bay that I couldn't see once while out boating with Doug Bannon. He told me to stay right of the buoy and I told him I couldn't see it. Doug replied, "Don't worry, it'll be there." Sure enough, it was. Doug turns 101 this Sunday! Happy Birthday to you, Doug. You're the only person I know who has sailed from Shediac to Baddeck and PEI!

I've been feeling a weight lately, and I felt it on Monday as I breathed in that salty Beaubassin East air. As much as you all live in my heart and soul and mind after so many years together, I have to admit that my eyes and ears miss you too. Now that we have returned to worship in the building, I can't help but notice for the most part that the congregation hasn't. Part of me wonders if it's obligations on Sunday mornings? Another part of me understands that youth sports have returned full force. People have returned to life as usual in many other ways but we still haven't had the congregation come back. It's time to come back to church.

Years before COVID hit, during the amalgamations, I used to silently wonder if I would be the last minister of St. John's. I remember Milton Palmer (may he rest in peace) telling me that the congregation had really lost direction at that time and things were hard. Then, we really came alive and became quite vibrant together as a congregation. It always felt that things were good and getting better. I came across a photo last week of the last children's Christmas pageant we had. It was wonderful. The church was crowded. The kids were amazing. Now that we are "learning to live with COVID" my thoughts have returned to the question, "Will I be the last minister of St. John's?"

I was told by a woman who recently wrote me the most-beautiful letter that in his last sermon here, Dr. Archibald wondered out loud what his legacy would be as a minister. For example, he said architects are survived by their buildings. I'm not so much worried about my legacy at this stage in my ministry. Lord knows I have enough to worry about as it is. But I do look down the road and see that things will get harder and harder as things get more expensive and we all get older. With the increase in fuel costs, an addition of a staff person (let's be honest, me playing the piano and guitar was a stop gap), no fundraising during the season of COVID, and a building that is made of old bricks, I have to admit that I feel the weight and responsibility of finding a way of bringing people back.

Since the pandemic began in March of 2020, I have not taken any study leave, I have only used a small portion of my book allowance, I haven't charged the congregation any mileage, and I have made sure that worship services both online and in person were offered except when I was away in the summer.

All that to say: I am tired. I know many of you are, too. Nothing prepared us for this time.



When we were walking on the beach together, Eli was wading in his rubber boots while Halo rolled in seaweed. Eli found five dead flatfish (being a dad sometimes means trying to summon up the statement, "Wow!") and lots of shells. As my feet sunk into the wet sand, I looked in the water and at the waves. I suddenly wasn't preoccupied with the church or saving it. Only God can do that. Eli found a snail that was too far in and out of the water. It was a big one, too. He held it up and showed me as the snail reached out and then

with all of his strength Eli threw it as far as he could into the water. He asked, "Are you proud of me for saving that snail, Daddy?" I said I was proud. Very proud.

I was reminded of a poem:

Once upon a time, there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach every morning before he began his work. Early one morning, he was walking along the shore after a big storm had passed and found the vast beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in both directions.

Off in the distance, the old man noticed a small boy approaching. As the boy walked, he paused every so often and as he grew closer, the man could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea. The boy came closer still and the man called out, "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young boy paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they can't return to the sea by themselves," the youth replied. "When the sun gets high, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water."

The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference."

The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one."

Things are different now but the need is still there for the Good News. Sometimes, the grace of God is like one steady drip of water changing the shape of a stone. God will be graceful with us in this time as the church learns once again how to show a new heaven on this new earth.

I remain faithfully your minister,

The Rev. Aaron Billard
Minister



*The bulletin and pastoral letter are dedicated in Loving Memory of
Loved Ones
by Marjorie Richardson*



*The flower arrangement is dedicated in Honour of my Father,
Doug Bannon on his 101st Birthday
with love from his Daughter, Sheila*



MEMORIAL

*A donation has been made to the Mission & Service Fund in memory of:
Margery Crooks (wife of Rev. Robert Crooks)
by Alberta MacLellan*

IN HONOUR

*A donation has been made to the Mission & Service Fund to celebrate the
101st Birthday of Doug Bannon
by Roberta Bunker*

NOTICES, UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

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

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 25	Wed.	10am-12pm	Church office open (weekly)
May 26	Thur.	6:30 p.m.	Choir (weekly)
May 29	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP – in-person (mask required) & online
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.

BOOK SALE IN CHURCH HALL

Rev. Doug MacEachern is known among many of us as a very pastoral and scholarly minister. Doug has donated many books from his personal library to be shared with the congregation in return for a small donation to the Mission and Service Fund.

After church, go to the hall and take a look through the many books he has donated and we know you'll find something interesting! All proceeds from your donations will go to the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada.

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.

STEWARDSHIP SECOND

Look around you and see Creation's broken places. How are you called to mend them?

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.

Join us every week for **online Worship** 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