



St. John's United Church of The United Church of Canada

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Office Hours: M-F, 9am–1pm

PASTORAL LETTER

Oct. 10, 2025

It was a beautiful, sunny day last Saturday morning as I drove to Salisbury to do the funeral for Jerry Germon. I was covering for the minister at Mount Royal who was away due to a family emergency. As I got closer to Salisbury, I drove behind a tractor, which wasn't going very fast. Soon, there were cars behind me. I noticed the time and started to feel anxious. Then I thought, "This is Salisbury. They've got tractors here. The funeral doesn't start until I get there..." so I relaxed, rolled down the window, and rolled it back up again when I smelled the manure.



When I arrived, the funeral home parking lot was full, including four Studebakers parked there. Jerry had restored cars over the years, and his beloved Studebaker, which he drove across Canada with his wife, was parked near the door. I walked in, met the staff, and noticed an old, wooden pulpit in the foyer. I'm a sucker for pulpits, so I went over to take a look and saw that it was the original pulpit of the Petitcodiac Methodist Church from 1881. I held the

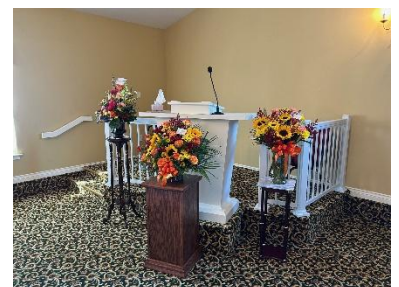


wood with both hands on each side and nodded. I told the funeral home director that it was still preacher-approved. They use it for the guest book now, but I imagined the thousand fiery sermons preached from that pulpit. Wood holds memory, whether it's simply touch, prayer, or intent. Souls were saved by sermons delivered from this pulpit. I'm convinced of it.

That's why I love the pulpit of St. John's so much. That when I enter our pulpit, my predecessors and successors stand with me. It's a spiritual time in the pulpit, which Baptists sometimes refer to as 'the sacred desk.'



After that little lecture to an unsuspecting funeral home director, I went to meet the family, who were all in the side room. I had my notes, which were given to me by Jerry's son, Tim, who is a fine writer. In fact, I told him that a few days before, when I read what he sent. I asked him, "What do you do for work, Tim?" He said, "I'm an accountant," to which I replied, "Well, that doesn't line up!" He laughed. It's in the family. He said that his grandfather was a beautiful writer who had beautiful penmanship. They still have his letters.



The warmth present in the congregation gathered that day was obvious. This family was known, and they were loved. Tim's words received lots of laughter and tears. His sister, Kim, read beautiful words



from Ecclesiastes. Afterward, a man came up to me and said, "Thank you for not being long-winded!" which made me wonder what funeral services were typically like in Salisbury. Lots of people thanked this Moncton minister, and it was good to meet so many. There were two other clergy there, so I said hi to them.

As I was eating an egg salad sandwich and drinking a cup of coffee, a man decided to sit next to me on a bench and tell me all that was wrong with churches. "I don't disagree with you," I said, as I sat there and chewed and prayed for deliverance. He told me about a church service he had been to recently where they passed the plate, and when it was discovered that they didn't get enough money, they passed the plate again. When he later objected, the pastor replied, "You should be glad you weren't here on a Sunday when we pass it around three times."

It reminded me of the time in Big Harbour Island, Cape Breton, when I attended the birthday party of a nearly-deaf 95-year-old Presbyterian who, when he was told the minister was here to see him, replied, "Ministers? All they want is your money!" The woman said, loudly, "Alfred! THIS IS THE MINISTER!" to which he graciously replied to me, "Oh! Very nice to meet you!" On the day he died, he sang Gaelic songs in the ambulance all the way to the hospital until he lost consciousness.

When I was standing in the lobby of the funeral home, a man asked to speak with me. He had to sit down on a bench because he was having trouble breathing. His name was Angus Dowling whose father was from Cape Breton near the Allan J. MacEachen Regional Airport outside of Port Hawkesbury who was somehow connected to Matt Minglewood's father at CN Marine in North Sydney and used to know Martin Boston (who was a fixture at the train station where I lived in Orangedale) at the railroad station in Grand Narrows (Angus knew the Barra Lodge that my great uncle used to own, where I did my brother's wedding) and he was friends with a police officer from Sydney Mines named Jimmy Evans. I knew one out of three, which wasn't bad. I was very pleased to meet Angus.

Later, we drove to the cemetery in a procession as people respectfully pulled over, which doesn't happen much anymore these days. I said prayers, shook hands, and hugged people, and I talked to an emotional grandson (which warmed my heart), and made my way. I stopped at one grave for a woman I had buried years ago, and I was re-traumatized by how crazy the family was at the time, with all of the fighting. At this other person's burial, they played the theme song to the children's show Fraggle Rock and threw Pop-Tarts instead of roses onto the casket. There were unopened cans of beer still there, too, just to give you an idea of the chaos. Chacun à son goût.

On Monday, I visited a few people and met with Alberta's son, Alan, to plan the service for his mother's service on Friday. Not a good sign when it's me crying in front of him instead of the other way around, but he was gracious, and I loved him for it. I loved Alberta like she was one of my own. Alan and I laughed and told stories about Alberta. The service will be a beautiful reflection of her life. She chose the scriptures and the songs with lots of handwritten notes for her wishes. She even left a benediction for me to say. I always love it when people write something to the effect of, "I would like Rev. Aaron Billard to do the service, or whoever the current minister of St. John's is at the time."



That night, Lori-Ann and I drove down to Sackville to see Allie. We walked along the marsh and talked about our days. It was chilly, and there was a "Hunter's Harvest Moon" lighting our path, which was beautiful. There were so many students walking along the paths around the marsh, as we heard other students playing sports in a field nearby.



Our dog Halo came with us, and she loved each and every step we took.

The next morning, I had coffee with Linda Leighton, whom I always refer to on my phone as my spiritual advisor because she's so real. She asks wonderful questions. Linda spends a lot of her time helping



people become better versions of themselves through AA, and I always feel cared for in her presence. She's in the business of helping to keep people alive, one person at a time. She's the kind of person who, if your life fell apart, she'd be the first one to open her door and invite you to sit beside her fireplace. She's respected by so many people, myself included. We have a mutual friend online who is a writer and an artist who inspires both of us, Meredith Gould, so we decided to take a selfie and send it to her.

People have blessed my family this week with kindness after the rough week we had, so thank you for that, from the bottom of our hearts. In the Maritimes, we tend to show our love with food. Thanks for all of your care and concern for my wife. On Tuesday, I took Lori-Ann to the hospital to get a blood pressure cuff/monitor that she had to wear for 24 hours. We visited the Rev. Doug MacEachern while we were there. Lori-Ann gave him a hug and said, "I love you, Doug." When we first arrived in Moncton, Doug and June took us out to dinner at Pastallis. I thought of that as the two of them talked. That night, the dog wouldn't leave Lori-Ann's side, as every half hour or hour, the cuff would inflate and take her blood pressure. She even wore it to the gym!

This week we went to Parent-Teacher Night at our son's school. As we sat in the auditorium, students were handing out muffins in the foyer. The Principal welcomed all of the students and parents there and mentioned that when he started at Harrison Trimble, there were 1000 students, which was a lot at the time. Now there are over 1600! The hallways were packed with confused parents making their way to and from classrooms. They had students available to help with directions, and there were lineups to see teachers. There's a show that I like to watch called Deadliest Catch, and when they haul up the nets filled with crab, they cram them into a compartment down below. Walking through the corridors reminded me of what it must be like to be a crab on one of those ships.

Lori-Ann did most of the talking that night. One teacher was explaining how French immersion works in her classroom. I recognized her Newfoundland accent. I wanted to tell her that we are a unilingual Anglophone family. Meaning, Eli doesn't have any French language support at home for homework. Except Rev. Billard said to her, by mistake, "We're a unilingual Anglican household." **ANGLOPHONE!** I thought Lori-Ann was going to die laughing.

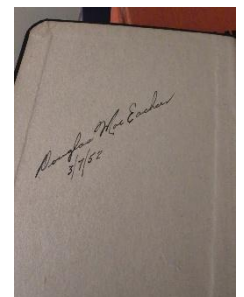
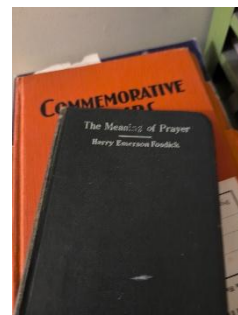


When I had dropped Lori-Ann off at work in Dieppe the next morning, I did the thing I do when I am feeling stressed and in need of spiritual strength: I went to one of my churches here in Moncton, The Great Canadian Bagel, which has just moved to its new location across the street from the old one. You know I need to get right with the Lord when I order a Lox with cream cheese Everything Bagel with tomatoes, capers, and onions. I then made my

usual trek down Main Street and turned up Alma Street only to discover that a car had rammed into the side of the Aliant building. I have no idea how that happened based on the angles. I pray no one was hurt. I later Facetimed with a colleague in Ontario, the Rev. Nic Coates, as we caught up with our lives and talked about the church.



That night, we celebrated a friend's birthday at the Pumphouse Fill Station as Clinton Fernandez played guitar. Brett Reidpath had texted me a few days before to say that he was reading a book that had once belonged to the Rev. Doug MacEachern, called "The Meaning of Prayer" by Harry Emerson Fosdick,



which Doug bought in 1952. Brett knows Doug. I told him that Doug was in the hospital, and Brett responded, "Maybe I'll pick a prayer out of this book and say it for him." That's the kind of guy Brett Reidpath is. I also love that Doug was reading books about prayer twenty years before I was born.

Brett invited us to his birthday, and of course, we said yes. He said, "Don't come without Lori-Ann." I replied, "It must be your 51st birthday because you didn't invite me to your 50th!" to which he offered, "I didn't have a 50th birthday party!" Brett comes to church from time to time with his wife, Denise. Lori-Ann and I adore them both. His mother is the Rev. Pam Reidpath, a well-loved United Church minister who currently serves in Rexton. His sister, Darcy, owns Oulton's College.

He has been a wild blueberry farmer for several decades and is a close friend of mine. He's one of the most interesting people I've ever met. We often discuss books, movies, and life. The day before, he had been interviewed on the CBC national radio program, "As It Happens," to talk about the crisis in the blueberry industry here in New Brunswick after the intense heat and lack of rain this summer. His fields bear the same fruit that First Nations people ate 10,000 years ago. His fields are also susceptible to Mother Nature.

When the journalist, Nil Koksai, asked him what has kept him going for so long, Brett replied (as only Brett could), "Foolish optimism, by times, I think." He clarified, "Not only are there a lot of easier ways to make money, there's a lot of easier ways to lose money than farming."

He continued, "These years are difficult but on an average day I look forward to waking up every morning and coming to work and doing what I do and trying to get better at it, and in the back of your head you always love doing the berries the way you did the berries with your dad and your grandfather back in the day but at the same time it's a challenge to keep up with the industry."

Nil Kostal asked, "This year, these losses, are they what are making you decide whether to stay in this business or not, or are you going to keep going?" Brett said, "I'm going to keep going. My family's been doing wild blueberries since 1933. I'm fortunate enough that I'm in a position that today is not the day that's going to get me."

Brett and I have talked about generational land. Of what it means to be the current farmer who has to sell because of the market. Or, what it's like to be the current minister when the church closes. There's a level of pressure that neither of us anticipated, and we work against it, as best we can. But we both feel it. That it ended on our watch. Hence, the bagels and the blueberries. Lord, have mercy. I do not want to be the last minister of St. John's, and it will cost me to not be. I accept that. Grey hair and all. When I arrived home the next day, Brett had left a pumpkin for Eli. He grew it on his farm.



On Friday, we will gather with the MacLellan family at Fergusons. Alberta walked among us for 96 years. People knew her both as a nurse and as an advocate for our community. She was part of the creation of the Karing Kitchen here at St. John's. She made it a point to meet new people, and they loved her for it. I noticed when we posted her obituary on the church Facebook page how many young people commented on it. We all thought of her as our friend.

When Alberta's son Alan and I were talking at the church, he told me that as they had gathered with Alberta before her passing, she asked, "Am I dying?" Alan gently said to her, "Yes, mum. You are dying." She asked, "Why?" He replied, "Well, mum, you always told us that everyone has to die, and now it's your turn." She said, "Ok!"

Those of us who knew Alberta remember her always saying, "I don't know why I'm still here!" She was also aware that her time was very limited, so she may have been wondering if she was in the dying process. But it speaks to the practicality of her acceptance of how things were and that, yes, one day we will all die. While we know all of that to be true, we who are the church will still cry for her, laugh in

her memory, be inspired by her advocacy, and gather among the people she loved the most, her children and grandchildren, to remind them that nothing can separate us from the love of God, not even death.

She said to me once when I visited her, "Aaron, we're turning you grey!" I earned my grey hair just as she earned hers, just as she has earned her reward. Now, she is part of the legacy of St. John's. We will still do the things that Alberta knew and trusted we would do. We will baptize babies, marry couples, stand up for the unloved and lost, sing hymns, pray, be friends to the lonely, and be grateful for this opportunity to be the church here and now. This Thanksgiving Weekend, we will bless backpacks and bring communion to seniors. Though we will miss her terribly, just as Jesus wept at the grave of a friend, our tears are not in vain.

I thank God for Alberta MacLellan. May her memory be a blessing.

The Rev. Aaron Billard
Minister

The flower arrangement on the Communion Table is placed in loving memory of
Alberta MacLellan
and with gratitude and thanksgiving for her church family and friends.
Given with appreciation by Alberta's children and family.

MEMORIAL

Donations have been made to St. John's United Church in loving memory of

John MacDonald

(son of the late Ralph & Lois MacDonald and husband of Darlene Vautour)

by Nancy & Wayne Vogan

Alberta MacLellan

(wife of the late Dr. Donald MacLellan)

*by Art & Sonja Buck, Grant & Shelley Dayton, Kimberley & Luiz de Jesus, Susan Fowler,
Phyllis & Gordon Hicks, Clare Morris, Gail Nickerson, Fred & Monca Plant,
Trudy Richards, Deborah Rinzler, Valerie Roy and St. John's UCW*

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

Alberta MacLellan

(wife of the late Dr. Donald MacLellan)

by Roberta Bunker,



NOTICES, UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

Check our website at www.stjohnsmoncton.ca
for **Sunday online Worship links**, calendar, and more.

Oct. 12	Sun.	11:00 a.m. 	WORSHIP and Sunday School - Thanksgiving Sunday - Blessing of the Backpacks We are sending our students and teachers back to school with our prayers and blessings. All kids, preschool through college, are invited to bring their backpacks to Worship and join us for this special time of blessing as they begin an exciting new school year.	
Oct. 12	Sun.	2:30 p.m.	Worship with the Rev. Aaron Billard at Peoples Park Tower Chapel , 960 St. George Blvd., Moncton. If you are a resident there, we ask you to help us spread the word to members of the congregation who live there.	
Oct. 13	Mon.		church / office closed – Thanksgiving Day	
Oct. 13	Mon	7:00 p.m.	Al-Anon (weekly-Owen Fraser Hall)	
Oct. 14	Tues.	2:00 p.m.	Friendship Group (monthly-Fellowship Room)	
Oct. 15	Wed.	6:15 p.m.	Sparks, Girl Guides of Canada (weekly-Owen Fraser Hall)	
Oct. 16	Thur.	7:00 p.m.	Choir (weekly-Choir Loft/Fellowship Room)	
Oct. 16	Thur.	7:15 p.m.	Pathfinders, Girl Guides of Canada (weekly-Social Hall)	
Oct. 18	Sat.	4:00 p.m.	7:30pm Pierre Bensusan Concert	
Oct. 19	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP and Sunday School	
Oct. 20	Mon.		Deadline to submit names for All Saints Sunday (see note)	
Oct. 21	Tues.	2:00 p.m.	Pastoral Care & Membership Committee (Owen Fraser Hall)	
Oct. 21	Tues.	7:00 p.m.	Finance & Property Management Committee (monthly-Owen Fraser Hall)	
Oct. 22	Wed.	7:00 p.m.	Choir – moved from Oct. 23 (weekly-Choir Loft/Fellowship Room)	
Oct. 22	Wed.	7:00 p.m.	Christian Development Committee	
Oct. 23	Thur.	6:00 p.m.	6:30pm Choir Louisbourg Rehearsal	
Oct. 26	Sun.	11:00 a.m. 	WORSHIP and Sunday School - All Saints Sunday (see note) - Grocery Sunday (see note)	
Oct. 26	Sun.	1:30 p.m.	3:30pm Choir Louisbourg Concert	
Oct. 27	Mon.	2:00 p.m.	UCW (monthly-Fellowship Room)	
Oct. 28	Tues.	7:00 p.m.	Church Council (monthly-Owen Fraser Hall)	
Oct. 31	Fri.	1:00 p.m.	Set up for Indoor Yard Sale	
Nov. 1	Sat.	8:30 a.m.	Indoor Yard Sale (see note) (Social Hall)	
Nov. 1	Sat.	12:30 p.m.	Singing with the Saints at Aberdeen Park (see note)	
Nov. 15	Sat.	9:30 a.m.	Christmas Bazaar & Coffee Party	

Announcements from other United Churches, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region 14 and the community are shown on the TV in the Owen Fraser Hall and also located on the bulletin boards located at the Alma St. entrance and outside the Church Office.

SOBEYS & SUPERSTORE GIFT CARDS are sold each Sunday in the Sanctuary before and after Worship and at the Church Office M-F, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

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



WELCOME!

We would like to warmly welcome any new faces to our church family today! Please feel free to introduce yourself to a fellow member or reach out to our minister if you have any questions. We invite you to stay after the service for fellowship. Fill in the "welcome" envelope located on the table at our two main entrances and place in the offering box (no money required) or email the church office at stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com to let us know you are worshipping with us.



THANK YOU to everyone who supported our Fashion Show on Wednesday. It was a fun evening and over \$800 was raised. Special thanks to our six models, to those who provided desserts, to those who helped with setup and worked in the kitchen. Thanks to Tammy and Tina from CAZZA who provided the fashions, gift cards and prizes. *Brenda McFarlane*, President, St. John's UCW

DELIVERERS NEEDED

We need help to drop off envelopes to shut-in on a weekly/bi-weekly basis. The areas are: Argyle St., Cambridge Place, Shannex-Gordon Hall, Moncton Residence, Hennessey Rd., The Briarlea and McNair Manor. If you can help, contact the church office.



Saturday, November 1

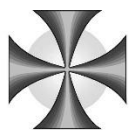
8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

(Social Hall – use Karing Kitchen entrance)

You'll find clothing, books, toys, linens, household goods, and many more items for sale.

You Don't Want To Miss It!

We welcome your donations of 'slightly used' clothing, books, household items, etc., in good, saleable condition, for this UCW fundraiser. Please bring your donations to the Church before the sale (Monday-Friday from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm), but no later than noon on Thursday, Oct. 30. If you can help set up for the sale, please come to the Social Hall on Friday, **Oct. 31** at 1:00 pm. We also need volunteers to pack up on Sunday after church on **Nov. 2** and on Monday morning, **Nov. 3** at 9:30 a.m.



*All Saints
Sunday*

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY will be held on **Oct. 26**. Names of friends and family who died during the past year will be read during the service. We will be going through our Burial Register for some of these names; however, we appreciate that there are people you have loved and lost this past year whom you would like remembered, whether or not members of St. John's. If you would like to have someone's name read on All Saints Sunday during the service, please email Karen at stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com or call 506-858-8289 by **Oct. 20**.

GROCERY SUNDAY FOR KARING KITCHEN

(Oct. 26 – last Sunday of the month)

The Outreach Committee would like to bring your attention to the Karing Kitchen's need for these groceries: cornstarch, can milk, alfredo sauce and honey-garlic sauce. *White baskets will be at the main entrance for your donations.* Thank you.



† Singing † WITH THE SAINTS

Come sing with the Saints at Aberdeen Park in Moncton on All Saints' Day, **November 1st** from 12:30-2:30 p.m.

This free, ecumenical, Christian gathering is open to everyone. We will gather outdoors, together, for an old-fashioned hymn sing; so dress warm! If you wish, bring a lawn chair, and don't

forget your singing voice! A children's focus is set for 1:30 pm with children's songs and a simple craft. Looking forward to seeing you there!

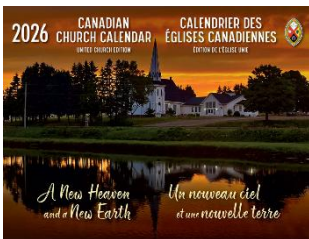
IT'S BEANS AND BROWN BREAD TIME AGAIN! Use the form in your pastoral letter or blue form located at church main entrances. Place the form in the offering plate or give to one of the UCW ladies or contact: Brenda McFarlane 506-852-3550, Phyllis Perry 506-852-4761 or Church Office 506-858-8289 / stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com.



Deadline for orders is Wed., Nov. 12.

Pick up is Sat., Nov. 15 between 9:30am-12 noon.

If you are able to help us by making a pot of beans, please contact Brenda McFarlane or Phyllis Perry.



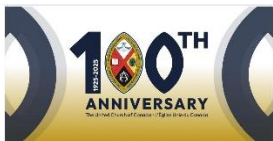
2026 CHURCH CALENDAR:

A New Heaven and a New Earth

Celebrate United Churches across Canada! Focusing on the theme of A New Heaven and a New Earth this bilingual calendar features colourful photos from communities of faith across the country plus all the special days, church seasons, and lectionary dates.

The Church Office is taking orders for this calendar. Cost is **\$9.50** (tax included). If you are interested in ordering one or more, sign the order sheet located at the main entrances or contact the Church Office. Payment may be made by mail (mail slot on door), e-transfer or included in your offering envelope (on bottom line titled, "Other" - note "2026 Calendar").

100th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL FUNDRAISER



As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of The United Church of Canada, we invite you to take part in a special fundraiser — a meaningful opportunity to honour or remember someone who has shaped your faith journey. Special recognition will be held on **Anniversary Sunday, Nov. 23**, to celebrate these lives. Forms are located at the Church main entrances and in our Facebook files.

STEWARDSHIP SECOND – Gratitude and thanksgiving are fundamental to our life as Christians. Remember to give, and to give thanks.

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 506-858-8289 or sjucrev@gmail.com



Supper's Ready
Homemade
**BAKED BEANS &
BROWN BREAD**

Prices are:

½ litre Beans + 1 loaf Bread = \$7.00

1 litre Beans + 1 loaf Bread = \$10.00

Place your order by one of these methods:

- a) Return the form below in the offering plate
- b) Give it to one of the UCW ladies
- c) Call: Brenda McFarlane at 506-852-3550
or Phyllis Perry at 506-852-4761
or the Church Office at 506-858-8289 or
stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com

Deadline for orders is Wed., Nov. 12

Your order must be **picked up** at the
UCW Bazaar on Sat., **Nov. 15**
between 9:30am-12 noon at 75 Alma St.

HOMEMADE
BAKED BEANS & BREAD

Please prepare for me:

___ (qty) ½ litre Beans + 1 loaf Bread =
\$7.00

___ (qty) 1 litre Beans + 1 loaf Bread =
\$10.00

Name: _____

Phone: _____

**I will pick my order up at the
UCW Bazaar on Sat., Nov. 15**