

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

75 Alma Street, Moncton, NB E1C 4Y3

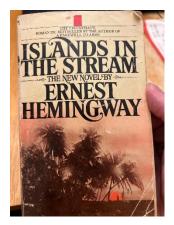
506-858-8289 <u>stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com</u> <u>www.stjohnsmoncton.ca</u>

https://www.facebook.com/groups/16465565858 https://www.instagram.com/stjohnsmoncton

Office Hours: M-F, 9am-1pm

PASTORAL LETTER

Oct. 31, 2025



I've been dipping in and out of the book, "Islands in the Stream" by Ernest Hemingway, since my visit to British Columbia this past summer. It's the last book written by Hemingway, and had he lived, it may never have been published. His wife, Mary, and Hemingway's publisher put it together with writings he'd left in the vault. But the sentences are good and the descriptions of food, nature, and fishing are him at his best.

There's one scene in the book by which I was compelled. The father, Thomas Hudson, takes his three sons out sword fishing in his boat near an island in the Bahamas, off the coast of Miami, where he resides as a painter. I am aware of the hyper-masculine themes in Mr. Hemingway's books and that he was a creature of his time. Though when he's good, he's very good.

In the story, the middle son, Davy, manages to hook a swordfish as they go deep-sea fishing. Eventually, his feet are bleeding, and he's exhausted from trying to bring in the swordfish, the largest they'd ever seen. The father keeps encouraging his son, and the son keeps speaking about the fish in their epic struggle. At a certain point in the 30-page engagement, the others on the boat offer to help him, but Thomas Hudson is focused on his son Davy's pursuit of the swordfish. Davy admits that the fish is beautiful and he just wants to see him. Near the end, he declares his love for the fish as they continue in their eternal struggle. Then, despite someone jumping into the water with a gaff as the fish slowly rises, the fish gets away. Davy is exhausted. His hands and feet are torn to shreds.

"The great fish hung there in the depth of water where he was like a huge dark purple bird, and then settled slowly. They all watched him go down, getting smaller and smaller until he was out of sight." Davy was lifted from the chair at the back of the boat and carried to a bunk. They bring him a Coke as they tend to his wounds. They speak of how famous they would have been had they caught such a fish, and that the fish would have been the most famous of them all. Davy worries if the fish is alright, and they reassure him that he is very much ok. Davy tells them that during their struggle, he began to love the fish more than anything on earth.

Davy concludes, "I'm glad that he's alright and that I'm alright. We aren't enemies."

The scene may be about fathers and sons; however, I see it from a larger perspective about the struggle that is life. It is humbling to sit with seniors and to hear their life stories. Of what it was like in the early days. Of the struggles over the years, perhaps with the loss of a child, the death of a spouse, or the end of a marriage. What it was like to be different in a rural community where people were pretty much the same. I don't think any of us escape suffering, heartache, disappointments, and life not being what we had hoped it would be...and yet, within all of that, there is something beautiful. I was speaking to someone recently who had major surgery. He said, "You should see the scar!" I remembered a line to him from a book that I had read years ago called Little Bee by Chris Cleave, which has the line, "A scar

does not form on the dying. A scar means, "I survived." We aren't enemies with the thing that has caused us pain, whether it's surgery, grief, or relationships.

I have been confessing recently that I am experiencing burnout. While our church is growing and flourishing, there is still only one me. Fortunately, I have a very good support system here at St. John's, and with colleagues I trust. There is a small group of North American clergy, of which I am a part, where if one of us signals some need, we're all there for each other with FaceTime.

One of the things that I do when I am feeling exhausted is to go visiting. I know that it is under the guise of me caring for you; however, you all give me tea, coffee, and food, and tell me stories about your lives, which I love. A sandwich, cheese, and I get to cuddle your pet? I'm there. Over the past few days, I've sat in so many living rooms of those who can't get out so much these days.

There are some themes emerging: people love the online services (at one time, if you missed church, you missed church); people love the pastoral letters (they feel so connected with the church and what's happening); and people are concerned about me, which I appreciate. One woman remembered the ministry of a former minister named Dr. Ramsay, who predated Dr. Archibald. She has seen a lot of ministers come and go, and she let me know that she worries so much about me, and how busy I am, and how lucky we all were to find each other. She got an extra hug. I always ask if people need something lifted, moved, or an iPad or laptop fixed before I leave. I spoke to a woman who told me about her father and her mother, named Hazel. She said, "My father had hazel eyes and eyes for Hazel!" because they loved each other so much.

It is not lost on my family that we have a whole congregation of people who care about us and take ownership of us. My wife and I talk about this often. You have loved our kids. Some of you are like parents to us. On Thanksgiving Sunday, we drove to church together. I said, "It feels like we're the Waltons!" because we aren't together much anymore. My daughter had her hair done for the first time in months the week before, and Eli has grown taller than his mother. Someone said after church, "I saw that Eli brought his girlfriend to church!" to which I replied, "That was his sister!"







Last Friday afternoon, I drove to Notre Dame, about half an hour outside of Moncton. It was for Connor and Mika's wedding rehearsal. I was told that there was a garage along the road and that the house was down another dirt road in front of it. As a former country minister, I understood the assignment. They don't tell you street names; they tell you landmarks. When I arrived, I walked down a long driveway and met the bride's family. Their property overlooks a waterway that was busy with Canada Geese honking their way home to the United States for the fall. Given that the US now requires photos for travelers, we'll see.

I was struck by the beauty of this place I'd never been to before. It's places like this that make our province special. As I stood there waiting for people to arrive, I took in the beauty around me. The bride's grandfather came up to me and said that he would remind people not to go close to the hill in front of the water, as sometimes it became very slippery. Dave is a good man. He'd be doing most of the service as his granddaughter had wanted to honour him. I was just there for legal purposes.



We did the rehearsal and all went well. One of the groomsmen had just returned from Las Vegas, where he'd profited. I told him that the whole gaming industry was rigged against winning, and he agreed. When the bride and groom arrived, we went through the motions, and it was beautiful. The last time I had met them was with Connor's grandfather, Neil, in the hospital. At that point in time, we all knew



that Neil wasn't coming home, so everyone was showing up for him. He was walking around a unit with a physiotherapist, and we all assumed he made the journey because he liked her so much. There are times when I visit people when I can tell it's a matter of time, and this is how I felt about Neil, though I kept encouraging him not to give up. At one point, he looked at me from his bed and said that he was tired. I held his hand. Connor had proposed to Mika before Neil died so that he could be part of it all. That's the kind of family the Frasers are.







To say that the Fraser family has had an impact on me, on all of us, is an understatement. We cannot mention St. John's without mentioning Owen and Neil. They are now part of our DNA. So, to stand with Neil's grandson

in Notre Dame, well, it meant a lot to me. I was there because of Neil. I have known and ministered to four generations of this family. Connor and Mika were lovely. I was so impressed by their generosity



and love. They cared for their guests, and they made the day special for everyone. There was a young man in charge of tea and cider who stood there in his suit for hours. I commented on that to the bride and groom, who both said how much he stepped up to his duties. The food truck made pizza for everyone. It was delicious. I talked to the chef and staff before I left and thanked them. Brenda McFarlane and I sat together for the celebration, and our only regret was that Neil couldn't be there. But, as I've said before, the veil between heaven and earth is sometimes thin, and I'd like to think that our friends were with us on that special day.

Neil's son, Darren, was there. He's a few years older than I am, but our kids are the same age. He and I spent a lot of time with his dad when he was in the hospital and in the dying process. Darren will always have my respect for stepping up to be with his dad. He's a Fraser, to be sure. They take care of things. We became close during all of that, and then when Neil passed, we both moved on with life, so when I saw him at the wedding, I gave him a big hug. He said, "You just walked past my son, Graydon." I've known Graydon since he was a baby, so I was surprised I didn't recognize him, though to be fair, he is taller than I am now. When he came over to shake my hand, he started talking, and I said, "How is it that you sound so much like your grandfather?" I was shocked! He was there with his girlfriend, and they drove the ringbearer home, who was a dog named Chloe.



When I arrived at the wedding, I had walked down a long driveway after parking my car at a garage. Three young people in their early twenties greeted me. They asked, "Who are you??" I said, "I'm the minister!" They laughed and said, "We've never met anyone dressed like you before!" So I stopped and asked them their names. They'd never met anyone wearing a clerical collar, and they were so kind.

After the wedding was over, I walked around the property. I introduced myself to people and listened to stories. Before I left, I went to the head table to thank the couple. They hugged me and we took some pictures. I told Connor that he'd always have me as part of their family since I considered myself more than a friend to the Frasers. The bride was so wonderful.

I drove home from the country back to the city, knowing that I needed to stop in at the hospital before I went home. I called my wife and said that I'd be a little late, and she understood. A young teenager from the church had been admitted, as well as three others. I'd asked the other three to pray for the young woman, whom they all knew, and they said that they would. That's what belonging to a church means. That we'll all pray for each other.

The next morning, I wish I could say that I was at my best, but I was not. I was tired. That afternoon, the Choeur Louisbourg Choir sang at the church. There was a big crowd and I snuck up to the balcony to hear them sing. I was deeply moved. Before the concert, I saw their conductor, Monique Richard, sitting in a chair, preparing herself mentally. I said to her, "I don't want to take away your time, but I want you to know that you are creating art in a world that desperately needs music."

On Friday morning, I will take my daughter for coffee in Sackville. I promised Allie that this fall, I will be there for her. In the afternoon, I have a wedding rehearsal for Molly Chase and her fiancé, Mike, at The Cidery on Lutz Mountain. Friday is also Halloween, and there is a rain and wind storm predicted. On Saturday, I have a burial in the morning, the fall indoor yard sale at the same time, and then Singing With the Saints, which starts at noon in front of the Aberdeen Centre with the Baptists and the Anglicans. Then I have the wedding for Mike and Molly that afternoon. On Sunday morning, I will join the Anglicans at St. George's for a little while as they say goodbye to their priest, Father Chris.

All of that to say, the church goes on. And we need all of you to be the church, whether online or in person. I want to thank you all for supporting St. John's as you are able. The ministry of this church extends far beyond you and me. Such an historic congregation has roots that go deep, before you and me. I'm just grateful to be the current minister who hears not only the blessings of the past, but the gratitude of the present congregation. I look forward to what we will become. Sometimes, in the struggle to be a church, we have to see the beauty in it all. That Jesus calls us to fish for people. That even though the church may not be now what it once was, there are still those who seek us out, in search of a word of hope.

Davy said that the fish he was trying to catch was beautiful, even though he was wounded in the struggle. I have to remember that. To be alive means accepting that the things that come our way are sometimes painful, but it's part of the gift of life. Stephen Colbert said that he had to "learn to love the thing I most wish had never happened" by reframing it as an essential part of his life, which he is ultimately grateful for.

I am grateful for all of you.

Happy Halloween! Keep the kids in your prayers on this stormy day, in the wind and the rain, as they trick or treat!

The Rev. Aaron Billard Minister



The bulletin and pastoral letter are dedicated in Loving Memory of

my husband and Dad, Ian, and in-laws and Grandparents, Gerald and Sybil

with much love always, Susan, Amy and Laura Fowler

NOTICES, UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

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

Nov. 2	Sun.	2:00 a.m.	Turn your clocks back on Saturday night.		
Nov. 2	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP and Sunday School		
Nov. 3	Mon	7:00 p.m.	Al-Anon (weekly-Owen Fraser Hall)		
Nov. 5	Wed.	6:15 p.m.	Sparks, Girl Guides of Canada (weekly-Owen Fraser Hall)		
Nov. 5	Wed.	7:00 p.m.	CD Committee (Minister's office)		
Nov. 6	Thur.	7:00 p.m.	Choir (weekly-Choir Loft/Fellowship Room)		
Nov. 6	Thur.	7:15 p.m.	Pathfinders, Girl Guides of Canada (weekly-Social Hall)		
Nov. 9	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP and Sunday School - Remembrance Sunday - A donation box and poppies are available at our main entrances.		
Nov. 11	Tues.		church / office closed - Remembrance Day		
Nov. 11	Tues.	2:00 p.m.	Friendship Group Guest speaker: Captain Craig Gaddess. He will speak about his life in the military and the cadet group that he runs. (monthly-Fellowship Room)		
Nov. 12	Wed.		Deadline to order baked beans and brown bread (see note/order form)		
Nov. 14	Fri.	10:30 a.m.	Worship with the Rev. Aaron Billard at Royal Court Chapel, 6 th Floor, Coverdale Rd., Riverview If you are a resident there, we ask you to help us spread the word to members of the congregation who live there.		
Nov. 14	Fri.	1:00 p.m.	Set up for Bazaar & Coffee Party If you are available to help, please advise Brenda McFarlane (Social Hall)		
Nov. 15	Sat.	9:30 a.m.	Christmas Bazaar and Coffee Party (see note) (Social Hall)		

Announcements from other United Churches, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region 14 and the community are <u>shown on the TV</u> in the Owen Fraser Hall and also located on the <u>bulletin boards</u> 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.

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.

Prices are: $\frac{1}{2}$ litre Beans + 1 loaf Bread = \$7.00

1 litre Beans + 1 loaf Bread = \$10.00

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.

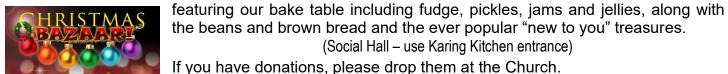


2026 CHURCH CALENDAR: A New Heaven and a New Earth

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").

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR and COFFEE PARTY on Saturday, November 15, 9:30 a.m. -12 noon



If you have donations, please drop them at the Church.

with tea, coffee and muffins. Freewill offering.

We will need lots of help on Bazaar day, so if you are available to help, please advise Brenda McFarlane.

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

Pick up your beans and brown bread orders and plan to attend the Coffee Party

located at the Church main entrances and in our Facebook files

TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP, PROFESSION OF FAITH AND CONFIRMATION

The Pastoral Care & Membership Committee, as part of their mandate, is to seek those congregants who wish to transfer their church membership or become a member of to St. John's. This requires a phone call or email to Karen at the Church Office (506-858-8289 or stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com). In case of transfer, we will contact your former church. We will receive new members on **Anniversary Sunday**, **Nov. 23**.

SCRIPTURE READERS NEEDED – If you would like to read scriptures on Sunday mornings, please contact Karen at the church office and add your name to our scripture reader list. This will help us to plan Worship and to have more people participate. Thank you so much for helping with this ministry!



CHURCH DONATION

At St. John's we do not "pass the plate" as is done in some traditional churches. Donations are collected in an offering box near the entrance to the sanctuary.

You may donate to the church in a variety of ways:

- PAR (pre-authorized remittance) application form available on our website and pamphlet/form located at church entrances and outside church office; PAR cards are available to put in the offering box
- e-transfer (use stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com no password needed)
- box offering envelopes contact church office
- Canada Helps online
- cash or cheque identified with giver's name with middle initial/address (for income tax purposes).
- mail to 74 Alma St., Moncton, NB E1C 4Y3
- drop off your donation in the mail slot on our Victoria St. door

<u>Blank offering envelopes</u> are located at both church entrances for donation purposes. Write your name and address to identify your donation in order for an official receipt to be prepared for income tax purposes. If you have any questions, contact the church office.

UNUSED OFFERING ENVELOPES - If you have any unused offering envelopes, please feel free to return them to the church. We recycle them as general purpose envelopes.

SUNDAY SCHOOL ENVELOPES - Did you know that your child can use offering envelopes for their weekly Sunday School offering? It's very easy. Blank offering envelopes are located at our church entrances; record your family envelope number or name on the envelope and make note that the offering is for "Sunday School" in the "Other" section. Then, have your child give their offering in the usual manner during Sunday School.

HYMNBOOK – Having a hard time holding the hymnbook? Do you find the hymnbook too heavy? We can print the "online" worship bulletin (with hymns typed out) for you. Contact the office if you would like an online bulletin available for you on Sunday.

KEEP YOUR VALUABLES WITH YOU - If you don't keep your coat with you during Worship, please ensure you do not leave keys, phones, or any valuables in your pockets. Please keep all valuables with you. Do not leave any electronics unattended.

HEARING LOOP - The church offers a hearing loop system for anyone who would like to enhance their listening experience during the Sunday morning service. Please feel free to speak to Kimberley Buck de Jesus on the sound board on Sunday morning

ILLNESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

To ensure the continued safety of our families and communities, any person attending an in-person Church activity should complete an Illness Self-Assessment. This list has been aligned with current public health recommendations. People who feel unwell, or answer 'Yes' to any of the below symptoms, should stay home.

- Fever/Chills
- Cough (unrelated to seasonal allergies)
- Difficulty breathing/Shortness of breath
- Runny nose (unrelated to seasonal allergies)
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat/Difficulty swallowing
- Not feeling well, headache, muscle aches, or unexplained rashes
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain

If you answered YES to any of the above symptoms:

Please self-isolate and DO NOT come to the Church until:

- 1) the symptoms are resolved, and
- 2) you are feeling well, and
- 3) you are not subject to any public health self-isolation requirements.



FRAGRANCE FREE AND TREE NUT/ PEANUT FREE ENVIRONMENT -St. John's United Church realizes an increasing number of people have developed sensitivities and allergies to certain chemicals and foods. It is our mission to limit the exposure of staff, volunteers and visitors to chemical substances and tree nut/peanut products. Our church supports the creation of a <u>fragrance and tree nut/peanut free environment</u>. We would ask that you <u>please refrain from using, wearing, bringing scented products (for example, perfume)</u> and tree nut/peanut products, into St. John's United Church. Only our 100% cooperation will give those with sensitivities and allergies a healthier place to work, volunteer and worship. Thank you.

HEALTH & SAFETY - We have a wheelchair here at St. John's and it is located on a permanent basis in the unused entrance way at the back of the Sanctuary (corner of Alma and Victoria Streets). We also have an AED - automated external defibrillator. It is wall mounted and located right outside the Church Office.

LIBRARY – Did you know that we have a library of books for you to enjoy? They are located in the hutch cabinet in the Fellowship Room. There is no sign-out for these; they are loaned to you on the honour system that you will return the books when you've finished reading them.

CHURCH PARKING LOT

As a reminder, the church rents out 12 parking spots in the parking lot, Monday-Friday, 7:00am-6:00pm. These spots are not available for church use during this period. Other spots are designated for staff as shown in the chart below. Should you need a parking spot while visiting the church, there are two spaces available for church use - spaces 21 & 22, as per the chart below:



If you are a church member and wish to take advantage of evening parking in the church parking lot, please let the office know in advance, by providing the make, model and license number of your vehicle. You are more than welcome to use the lot. However, due to issues with illegal parking, unknown vehicles may be at risk of being towed and we would not want it to be your vehicle.

BROADVIEW MAGAZINE – A copy of the most recent issue can be found on a table in the Owen Fraser Hall just outside the church office. This is there for your enjoyment, but please don't remove it from the premises so that others can enjoy it as well.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES - The Pastoral Care & Membership Committee sends **birthday** greetings to all those within our congregation who are 85 and 90 years old, then annually. **Wedding anniversary** cards are sent out to those celebrating 50, 60, and every year thereafter. If you have not received a card, please advise the church office so we can update our records.

WORSHIP SERVICES are streamed on Facebook and YouTube. Links are on our church website at www.stjohnsmoncton.ca

PASTORAL LETTER AND BULLETIN – Stay up-to-date on all the happenings at SJUC with Rev. Billard's weekly pastoral letter and online bulletin. They are posted on Facebook, the church website and emailed to those who have signed up to receive by email. If you wish to receive the pastoral letter and bulletin by email, contact the church office to be added to our email list. Printed copies of recent Worship bulletins and pastoral letters are located at our main entrances.

SERMON - Printed copies of Rev. Billard's recent sermons are located at our main entrances. Sermons are also emailed to those who have signed up to receive by email. If you wish to receive sermons by email, contact the church office to be added to the sermon email list.

ADVISE THE CHURCH OFFICE at stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com or 506-858-8289, if your email, mailing address, residence or telephone number changes. Also, advise us of your birthday and anniversary dates.

HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY:

Moncton City & George Dumont Hospitals

Please note: privacy legislation does not permit the Chaplain (or other Ministry Personnel) to randomly visit with persons who are in hospital. Chaplains and Ministry Personnel need your invitation/permission, or the permission/request of a family member.

If you would like a visit from your Minister or the Chaplain, or would like to have your Minister or Chaplain visit a family member, you may make the request through the Nursing Staff or the Chaplaincy Department, or you may contact the Chaplain directly at (506) 940-1151 (voice or text).



The **TATAMAGOUCHE CENTRE** is a United Church not-for-profit community, conference, and education centre in Tatamagouche, NS. View upcoming programs at https://www.tatacentre.ca.

STEWARDSHIP SECOND – Stewardship isn't just about keeping our congregation afloat. Stewardship is how we use ALL our resources to help change the world to be closer to God's vision.

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 siucrev@gmail.com

Supper's Ready

Homemade BAKED BEANS & BROWN BREAD

Prices are:

 $\frac{1}{2}$ 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 pre	pare 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