



St. John's United Church, 75 Alma Street, Moncton, NB E1C 4Y3
 T: 858-8289 E: sjuc@nb.aibn.com W: www.StJohnsMoncton.ca
 F: St. John's United Church, United Church of Canada

A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

October 8, 2021

I was at the grocery store recently when a woman came running up to me and yelled, “Your shoe is untied!” I smiled and said thank you and she replied, “I’ve been trying to catch you! I almost yelled “Father!” because you look like a priest!” I laughed and she said, “You just need the dog collar!” and she chuckled as she walked away. Note to self: don’t wear a clergy shirt when getting groceries.



I’ve been thinking all week about the Zoom Sunday School that I had with the kids. I wasn’t sure how many would show up but we ended up with 22 little souls – with several more indicating that they either forgot or couldn’t be there. It was like witnessing a controlled explosion! The kids’ energy was wonderful. They were quiet when we prayed and when we stopped praying they were loud. It was glorious to behold. I saw a few pets, I heard some wonderful and weird stories about their lives, and we even tried to sing a song which didn’t work out as smoothly as I had hoped since it ended up with me singing a solo. The kids eventually caught on to the chorus!

They all had their food and drink ready for communion too. I talked about it a bit and then told the story of the last night that Jesus shared with his friends. Then I had to talk about bread being like his body and the juice being like his blood. It’s funny how something you’ve talked about for so long can sound so strange when it crosses your lips. But, we got through it. They were so good about it, too. I was impressed. As our time drew to a close I asked the kids if they had anything they want to ask, or add. One girl jumped in right away wondering if anyone else had wheat allergies. Then someone shouted that their mom was gluten free. Another kid was lactose free and for some reason that’s all they wanted to talk about. Parents have since told me they had to walk away laughing a few times during our time together!

The thank you’s I received were wonderful to hear. It was certainly a bright spot in my day, and I’m glad that they were able to feel the same way. We’ll continue each week. A few adults have said that they wished they could join in too – which I may make happen at some point later in the fall to have people come and spend time with the church kids over Zoom.

Jesus was clear about the role of children in the Kingdom of God: they are at the centre of it. As a church, we are finding new ways to reach children and young families. What we have to offer are

stories of hope and resilience in the face of adversity, and the message of kindness and compassion when things get challenging. My hope is as a church we will find ways to be there for our kids during this time as we await the vaccine to be approved. We pray with bated breath.

So here we are in our household bubbles this Thanksgiving, trying to make the most of it. People are cutting turkeys in half and freezing them with the new rules put in place and empty chairs at the dinner table. We'll find ways to connect with each other in meaningful ways. We will once again do what our province is asking of us, trusting in their wisdom and in the science as they understand it. We may not like it much, and it may feel like a step back, but we are still connected in so many ways. Our pastoral care team has been phoning households and catching up with people. I've had a lot of laughs over the past few days as I hear of aches and pains and then deep concern as I hear about genuine health scares. My constant refrain is, "Don't go getting old on me!" to which the response is always, "It's too late for that!" Some of you are younger than I am when it comes to your spirit, and I love you for that. The elders of our church have faced adversity many times before and it shows up in your humour and memories.

All of that to say, Happy Thanksgiving to you. Whether you spend this holiday alone, or with some special people, know that you are not alone as you are held in prayer by your church. Each one of you reading this letter receives it for a reason: because you are part of this historic congregation that has had its fair share of times of trial over the decades. Whether you realize it or not, you are part of a legacy of faith in trying times that goes back to 1838 when the first families gathered around the Gospel at the Bend, facing adversity. The church moves and fires that burned our house down but not our household. The rebirth of the vision on the corner of Alma and Victoria. Now, the second global pandemic of our church's existence, following the Spanish Flu from February of 1918 to April of 1920.



All the while faithful members and ministers along the way who met each challenge with their belief in each other and a deep and abiding faith in God through Jesus Christ. Indeed, this is a refining fire and a moment of rebirth for us, too, as we do what's right to keep each other safe and be a model of caring community to the city around us. We have decided to move to online worship as a result of the state of emergency declared and the shift of Moncton into a circuit breaker. We aren't alone in this decision, and we make it in recognition of the seriousness of the situation.

As usual, the links will be up by Sunday morning for worship. I invite you to join with me and our friends leading worship as a way to generate some peace in our hearts. God is still speaking.

In thanksgiving for all of you,

The Rev. Aaron Billard
Minister



The pastoral letter is dedicated in Loving Memory of
Daughter, Karen Mills and
Daughter-in-Law, Lisa Richardson
by Marjorie Richardson

*The Church extends its deepest sympathies and condolences to the family and friends of **Aynsley Lee Anne Richard** (wife of Yves Richard and niece of Lee Geddes) who died on October 1, 2021.*

MEMORIALS


A donation has been made to St. John's United Church in memory of:

Marilyn Butland (sister-in-law of Carolyn Beers)
by Carolyn Beers & Bob Smith

Patricia Van Norden (mother of Debbie Creaghan)
by Debbie Creaghan

NOTICES, UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

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

Oct. 10	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP – online only - Thanksgiving Sunday	
Oct. 11	Mon.		Thanksgiving Day – church/office closed	
Oct. 12	Tues.	7:00 p.m.	M&P Committee (teleconference meeting)	
Oct. 17	Sun.	11:00 a.m.	WORSHIP – online only	
Oct. 17	Sun.	4:00 p.m.	Virtual Sunday School	
Oct. 19	Tues.	7:00 p.m.	Finance & Property Management Committee (teleconference meeting)	

THANKSGIVING SPECIAL OFFERING ENVELOPES - If you use SJUC box offering envelopes, a Thanksgiving envelope is in your box. If you use PAR, your Thanksgiving envelope is in your packet of envelopes. You can mail or may drop your envelope in the mail slot on the Victoria St. entrance. The Church thanks you for your support.



Our **2022 CALENDAR** features colourful photos of United Churches from across the country and notes special days and church seasons.

The Church Office is taking orders for this calendar. Cost is **\$6.50** (tax included). If you are interested in ordering one or more, please contact the Church Office. Payment may be included in your offering envelope - on the bottom line titled, *“Other”* - please note *“2022 Calendar”*.

STAY UP-TO-DATE on all the happenings at SJUC with our weekly pastoral letter. It is posted on Facebook and Church website, emailed to those who have signed up and mailed to those with no email access. If you wish to receive our weekly letter, leave a message on the Church Office telephone at 858-8289 or email sjuc@nb.aibn.com

DEDICATE THE PASTORAL LETTER in memory of a loved one(s). The cost is \$50.00. Upcoming date available: January 2, 2022. Contact the Church Office.

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



Rev. Aaron Billard, *Minister*
email: sjucrev@gmail.com



Karen Geldart, *Office Administrator*
email: sjuc@nb.aibn.com



Rev. Dr. Douglas MacEachern
Minister Emeritus
email: douglasimaceachern@gmail.com



Branden Olsen, *Music Director*
email: bwcolsen@mun.ca



Pat Arsenault, *Custodian*



Bruce Lawson,
Property Manager

