



A LIGHT IN THE CITY

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

MONCTON

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Apart But Together
We Are Not Alone:
We Live in God's World

A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

September 11, 2020

The last time it was this “loud” at the church we were renovating the building. What a time that was, do some of you remember? The old administrator’s office in the hall was removed and re-located into the chapel. The minister’s office became the organist’s office. The new minister’s office was placed into the second half of the chapel which was divided with a wall, and the pews sold to people who wanted a part of the church in their homes and cottages. The nursery went upstairs into the Board Room and the Norman Sinclair Room was no longer used for meetings but for Sunday School, which was a nice touch given that when we turned his picture over we saw that he had been a superintendent of the Sunday School. The upstairs kitchen was turned into a room for teens and the downstairs nursery was turned into a kitchen to better serve functions in the hall. An accessible washroom was built, and new floors put down. It was an exciting time. Then, the front of the sanctuary was “re-imagined” so that we could host a wide variety of concerts and make our own worship service more adaptable to different instruments and larger numbers of people at the front (i.e. the Christmas Pageant).

What a time it was for our church that had stayed relatively the same for such a long period of time. After all the fires we had in the early years of the congregation when we lost buildings, no wonder people didn’t want things to be different! I remember the energy that came from that experience. We were united in a common cause. The Spirit was at work among us. It felt “new”.



Now the sounds come from the brickwork being repaired. As both Hugh Gorham and Valerie Roy noted when they went by the church building, if it was that loud on the outside they could only imagine how loud it was on the inside! I know the same Spirit is at work again today – even though things feel very different right now.

I received a beautiful letter from Marjorie Richardson this week. I love getting mail from members of the church since we don't get to see each other much these days. She told me her sister in Ontario died, and Marjorie also told me that she became a great-great grandmother for the first time! As William Blake wrote, 'Joy and sorrow are woven fine.' I wanted to share that with you because it's important to grieve and to celebrate as we look forward to gathering for in-person worship once again so we can hear these things together in worship as we return to God our thanks for the blessings of this life, and our thankfulness for our church family.

This week, the Church Council will be receiving the report of the Re-Entry Committee that was established by the Emergency Preparedness Committee, which was formed by the Church Council Executive to oversee the life of the congregation in the early phase of the pandemic when directives were coming fast from the Province and the denomination, and as committees ceased their work and the congregation stayed home. Now that things are looking better for our Province, we are anxious to safely gather again. But, an Operational Plan needs to be approved by the Council in accordance with the Province of New Brunswick and The United Church of Canada. Not a simple, nor easy, task. Church Council members will be receiving information packages well before the telephone meeting on Thursday night.

Before I close this pastoral letter, I want to send our love and healing prayers to our organist, Mike Day. Mike fell and broke nine ribs which required him to be hospitalized. He is home now recuperating. A lot of people have expressed concern for him, and I wanted all of you to be able to offer prayers for Mike as he gathers his strength. You are loved, Mike. Take time to heal.

This is our ministry together: to care for our church family.

Rev. Aaron Billard



An update from Marlene Godfrey, Chair, Finance & Property Committee:

Last weekend the washing of the church was completed. Now a procedure called brick re-pointing is taking place. Some bricks will be replaced and some will just need the mortar replaced. You can see from the pictures holes where "heritage" bricks will be inserted and in other photos some bricks have already been set in place and await mortar. Was happy to see on Thursday that there is young women working away at re-pointing. Weather provided, we should have at least five good weeks to get as much re-pointing done before it gets too cold.



MEMORIALS

Donations have been made to St. John's United Church in Memory of:

Michael DeWare (ex-husband of Peggy DeWare)
by Shirley & Ronald Hicks

A. Ralph MacDonald (husband of Lois MacDonald)
by Judy Cairns, Marilyn & Mark McNeivitts and Trudy Richards

Grant MacMellon (husband of Lillian MacMellon)
by Trudy Richards

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Bruce Lawson,
Property Manager