



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

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Office Hours: M-F, 9am–1pm

PASTORAL LETTER

Sept. 12, 2025

On Monday, I had a service for a family to whom I had been recommended. They had come to the church office on Friday, and we planned out the “Celebration of Life” down to the last detail, including eulogies, open mic, music, readings, and the program. Jerry Coates' widow, sitting beside me, recited the passage from John's Gospel where Jesus talked about the many mansions (or dwelling places) in his father's house. She used the King James version. I have to admit, I was impressed. But, “the best laid plans of mice and men...”

When it came time for the funeral, the family walked in together. It was a large group. After the opening song finished, I welcomed everyone. I had heard that Jerry had a “Santa Claus” spirit with a glint in his eye. He also loved to tease with an impish grin. When I was in the visitation room, a man from St. John's and another man were talking as they looked at the display on the table with Jerry's hockey stick. One guy said, “I find it hard to believe that's Jerry's stick; it doesn't have any blood on it!” (Apparently, he was an enforcer on the ice!)

There was a song and then two eulogies, at which point we opened up the podium to anyone who might want to say a few words. It took a minute, and I used my old familiar line, “I'm a minister, not a dentist!” I'm not pulling teeth! After that, people started to come forward. During one of the speeches, the power went out. Jerry's daughter-in-law, Lisa, said to the man who had been speaking, “I don't think Jerry liked your story very much!” which got a big laugh. Since there was no microphone, people just stood up where they were sitting and told a story, including Jerry's brother.

Then something lovely happened. Because we couldn't play the music over the speakers, the quick-thinking funeral home director at Fergusons, Trina Perkins, held up her laptop and the song started playing. And since it wasn't very loud, everyone began to sing “I Saw the Light” by Hank Williams as the candles flickered at the front. I mean, the place was very dark with just a bit of light coming in from the covered windows at the back. I thought to myself, “You couldn't have planned this, and yet it's so beautiful!”

Without the air conditioning, it was quickly getting hot in the chapel. I knew I had to cut my part down so we could get to the final song. Trina made a great decision by moving the reception out to the front entrance of the funeral home so that the doors and windows could be opened wide to get some circulation and light.

At the Wesleyan Union Cemetery, while the family was arriving, I overheard a man who was part of the committee that oversaw the cemetery. I asked him what was up with the graves, because rather than being buried vertically (up and down) to the stone, the graves were sideways (so that the side of the casket faced the headstone). He said, “People are buried west to east. Don't tell me that a clergyman doesn't know that?” I said, “I've heard of that, but why are the stones facing the wrong way?” He said, “Oh, don't ask me. Things have been done here the same way for generations.”

I told the family, "I find graveyards peaceful. When I visit Cape Breton, I always visit my relatives there." Jerry's son asked me, "Where in Cape Breton are you from?" I told him near the Newfoundland ferry. He told me that his sister's late husband was from River Denys, a small community. I said, "What??" I went right over to her. I knew that he had passed years ago, so I said to her, "I was the minister of the church there for five years." She told me her late husband's name and then told me his mother's name. They were MacLeod's. I said, "I knew her well! She went to my church." We hugged.

Now that I'm back in the saddle, it feels like summer was a lifetime ago: I was called back for a few services; spent time in touch with families in need; and I made some trips that did my soul some good.

When Lori-Ann and I finally got out to the beach, we walked and talked a lot. "Grillin' and chillin'" I'd say when people asked me what I was doing for vacation. I went to Reid's Newstand on Mountain Road to pick up some books for vacation. I call this finding a book "in the wild" as opposed to ordering it from Amazon. I found Ernest Hemingway's "Islands in the Stream" and "Sons and Lovers" by D.H. Lawrence. I knew I'd be on a long plane ride in a week, so I wanted some reading material.

The day before I left for Vancouver, I went to do some hospital visits. I also went to see Dale Cale. She had brain cancer, and I knew that it would be the last time I saw her. We sat side by side on the couch, held hands, and talked. She didn't have many words at this point, but she was very much communicating with her eyes. We prayed together, and I talked to her husband for a while before I left. Her son and his wife were also there. Lovely people.

The next day, Lori-Ann and Eli drove me to the airport on their way to see our daughter, who was working at Fundy National Park in the visitor's centre. I don't travel, so I was surprised when the person at the counter just asked me my last name and took my bag. I made my way upstairs and read my book. The flight to Toronto was fine, and when I landed, I learned that the flight to Vancouver was delayed by four hours. I decided to tour the airport. Then, I was hungry, so I looked at all of the restaurants. Some of the menus were posted out front. I thought, "I'm not paying \$30 for a cheeseburger." I'd rather starve. I walked by a noodle restaurant with pilots sitting there, so I figured that this must be a good spot to go, and for \$20, I had the best bowl of ramen with pork. That feeling when the spicy broth hits the back of your throat is really something.



While I was waiting at the departure gate, I happened to notice a group of Buddhist monks walking in, wearing their traditional robes. I thought, "There's a good chance that this plane won't crash." As I pretended to read, I was fascinated by them. Some of them read, some were scrolling on their phones, and one in particular kept walking back and forth with a kettle. He would go fill it, plug it in, boil the water, and then go from monk to monk pouring it into their containers. **THEY WERE EATING NOODLES.** Apparently, they weren't going for the \$30 cheeseburgers either. I felt a certain kinship with my new monk friends.

When I finally boarded the plane, I was starting to feel fatigued. I noticed that the seat I'd chosen during my online booking near a window didn't have a window. It was just a wall. Two British women sat beside me. They were married, and they were returning from a wedding in England. My ears perked up, and I decided that the only way I was going to stay sane for the next six hours was to talk about the Monarchy (and conspiracy theories), British churches and castles, and the Beatles. They did not disappoint. When they learned that I was a "Vicar," we became a mutual appreciation society because they had a go at me, too. (We're still friends!)

When I arrived in Vancouver, my brother Jason was waiting for me at the exit. He was also dropping off my niece, Logan, as she was flying out to Toronto. The Vancouver Billards travel a lot. I hugged Logan, hugged Jason, and then we took off down the highway, where we stopped in downtown Vancouver for pizza slices. I decided I would just function at the time it was there, rather than how I was feeling, to fight the jet lag.

When I turned 50, my brother said his gift to me would be to fly me to Vancouver. That night, we sat in a pizza shop and laughed as hard as we'd ever laughed. We ate amazing pizza and drank Dr. Pepper. It meant as much to him as it did to me. Jason always says to me that it's important to have something to look forward to. And here we were.

The next morning, I woke up to my sister-in-law Maria making breakfast. Their home overlooks the water in West Vancouver, so I sat outside with a coffee and their dog, Nova, sitting beside me in a chair. That afternoon, we were going on a boat ride to celebrate Jason's son Ethan's birthday. The day before, I had stopped into Chapters to buy him a book. Ethan is a successful young man working in the financial sector, so I decided to give him "The Old Man and the Sea." I wrote on the card that he would be a better person for having read Hemingway, and may even find a quote or a conversation with a client.



When we arrived at the dock, one of the staff members was a young woman who was quite friendly. Turns out, she's a student at the Agricultural College in Truro, Nova Scotia. She has a dream of being a farm animal veterinarian. I took her aside and said, "I just want to say this to you because I read a lot and I've heard that there's a mental health crisis for veterinarians. I hope you take care of yourself because loving animals is important." She appreciated what I said, and she really felt called to the work. I made a mental note to pray for people who care for animals.



Then we departed the dock. As we sailed past homes and hills, we saw a century-old power house. It's a big attraction in the area and I was fascinated by it. Ethan decided that he wanted to run up an embankment on the other side of the water and jump



off the cliff into the water. He's a bit of an adrenaline junkie, and I love him for it. I have no desire to hurl myself off of a hill, but he did it, and we all cheered. His girlfriend was sweet and asked me what it was like to be a minister. We anchored and ate the lunch that Maria had prepared. Maria has a chef's heart, and she shows her love through food. We ate well that day.



The next day, we went to the Capilano River Regional Park for a hike past the dam and then to Horseshoe Bay, where the ferries launch to Nanaimo. It reminded me of Baddeck in a certain way. As we walked along all I could think was how much my mother would love this place.



That night, there was a community potluck. When we arrived, I met the wonderful hosts. I sat in a chair and looked at the walls full of art. I saw an oyster shell depiction of the Last Supper. The food was amazing. The table was full. The hosts, a professor from Yale and his partner, were kind and good people. At the table were a couple who are wealth managers. They were so sweet. I sat next to a cardiac surgeon and his partner. They played games after the meal, and I felt



like I was in another world. At one point, I decided that my social battery was full, so I went back and took Nova for a walk, grateful for the experience.

The next morning, I received a call that Dale Cale had died. I spoke with the family and started making arrangements. I had offered a few clergy friends to do the service, but the family said they would wait until I came back.



That afternoon, we went to Fort Langley, the birthplace of British Columbia, and a town where they film Hallmark movies. I fell in love with that place as we roamed around shops and along the river. There was a giant antique store where you could easily spend a few hours. There was also a train museum. When I walked in, I told the woman working there that I used to be on the board of a train museum in Nova Scotia. She was delighted

and asked where? I said, "Oh, it's a small place you've never heard of called Orangedale." She smiled and said, "I've been there a few times!" She even knew the song, "The Orangedale Whistle." Later, we stopped to listen to a jazz band as people laid on blankets and some danced. It was a perfect day.



We continued on our way to downtown Vancouver. My brother showed me the Downtown Eastside, where people with addictions live. Jason told me that we wouldn't be stopping, as he knew I would probably try to help someone or start a church. It wasn't safe. He'd just given a woman at an intersection some money, so I know he wants to help too, but the crisis is so overwhelming when you drive through. I was shocked to see so many homeless people and so many bent over from Fentanyl addiction. It was like a zombie movie as people stood there or slowly walked across the street. There were boarded-up hotels still in use and people selling stolen goods on street corners. I made eye contact with a young man who was bent over, and I felt helpless as I wondered what led him to this moment.

We ended up in Gastown where people danced in the street to Indian music and street magicians performed. I said to my brother and his wife, "I feel like I'm in the future!" as I was so overwhelmed by the sights and sounds all around me. The street was closed, and hundreds of people were gathered. One of the things that people do is to stand around an electric steam clock that plays a song every fifteen minutes. I later heard that this is a bit of a tourist trap but at the time I thought to myself as I looked around at all of the different cultures and heard all of the different languages that this was a hopeful thing. That people all stand around a clock and wait for it to play music and blow steam and they take pictures and videos and everyone is happy to be there and then, when it's over, resume their day and keep walking. But, for a moment, we all had something in common.



Part two of my trip to Vancouver will come next week. It involves finding a secret park, the Museum of Anthropology, Lululemon, and Paul Simon.

I hope you have some good moments this weekend.

The Rev. Aaron Billard, Minister



The bulletin and pastoral letter are dedicated in Loving Memory of
Ross Weatherby
by his Family

*The Church extends its deepest sympathies and condolences
to the family and friends of*
Jennifer Johnston (wife of Will Johnston)
who died on September 4, 2025

MEMORIAL

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

Jean Cameron (sister of Evelyn Pyke and
mother of Debbie, Dannie, Robert and Brian)
by Carolyn Beers

A donation has been made to St. John's Organ Fund in loving memory of our friend

L. Maude Fawcett-Colpitts
(September 1, 1919 - February 2, 2023)
(mother of the Rev. Melvin Fawcett)
by Anne Hobbs and Carole Shaddick

IN HONOUR

A donation has been made to St. John's Choir Fund in honour of





Art & Sonja Buck's milestones
by Gerrie & Mary Baycroft



Welcome back to Sunday School!

NOTICES, UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

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

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| Sept. 14 | Sun. | 11:00 a.m.  | WORSHIP and Sunday School - Sunday School resumes (see note) |
| Sept. 15 | Mon. | 7:00 p.m. | Al-Anon (weekly-Owen Fraser Hall) |
| Sept. 16 | Tues. | 7:00 p.m. | Finance & Property Management Committee (monthly-Owen Fraser Hall) |
| Sept. 17 | Wed. | 6:15 p.m. | Sparks, Girl Guides of Canada (weekly-Owen Fraser Hall) |
| Sept. 18 | Thur. | 7:00 p.m. | Choir (weekly-Choir Loft/Fellowship Room) |
| Sept. 18 | Thur. | 7:15 p.m. | Pathfinders, Girl Guides of Canada (weekly-Social Hall) |
| Sept. 21 | Sun. | 11:00 a.m. | WORSHIP and Sunday School - International Day of Peace |
| Sept. 24 | Wed. | 2:00 p.m. | Drew Nursing Home 70th Anniversary Celebration , Sackville (see note) |
| Sept. 28 | Sun. | 11:00 a.m. | WORSHIP and Sunday School - Truth & Reconciliation Sunday; wear an orange shirt - Grocery Sunday (see note)  |
| Sept. 28 | Sun. | 4:00 p.m. | A United Hymn Sing at Mount Royal United Church (see note) |
| Sept. 29 | Mon. | 2:00 p.m. | UCW (monthly-Fellowship Room) |
| Sept. 30 | Tues. | | National Day of Truth and Reconciliation & Orange Shirt Day  |
| Sept. 30 | Tues. | | Church / Office closed – National Day of Truth and Reconciliation |
| Sept. 30 | Tues. | 7:00 p.m. | Church Council (monthly-Owen Fraser Hall) |
| Oct. 5 | Sun. | 11:00 a.m. | WORSHIP and Sunday School - World Communion Sunday  |
| Oct. 8 | Wed. | 7:00 p.m. | UCW Fashion Show (see note) (Owen Fraser Hall) |

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.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School resumes on **Sept. 14th**. Please fill out the Sunday School Registration Form located on our church website and at our two main entrances. Return the form to the church office either in person, by mail, drop off in our church mail slot (on Victoria St. door) or email stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com. Thank you.



DEDICATE THE BULLETIN/PASTORAL LETTER in memory of a loved one(s). The cost is \$50.00. Upcoming dates available: Oct. 12 and Nov. 2, 2025. If you dedicated last year, you will be contacted before your date to see if you want to dedicate again.

ART & SONJA BUCK would very much like to **THANK** those who joined us on our special day here at the church - September 6th, to celebrate our 70th wedding anniversary and Art's 90th birthday. Special thanks to Brenda McFarlane for organizing the volunteers to prepare and serve the food - Roberta Bunker, Susan Fowler, Kathy Isaac, Grace Kell, Terri Lovegrove, Susan McLeod, Phyllis Perry, Trudy Richards and Mary Ann Robertson. Thanks also to Bruce Lawson, Pat Arsenault and Karing Kitchen volunteers as well as Julie Hicks, Ann Wesselby Higgins and Marlene Godfrey for helping to prepare and decorate the day before. It was a wonderful celebration! 🎉

Join the Celebration!

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Drew Nursing Home
Coates Lounge
165 Main Street, Sackville, NB E4L 4S2

2:00 pm Welcome & Presentations

2:30-3:30 pm Food & Refreshments

Join us to celebrate the **70th anniversary** of
The United Church Home for Senior Citizens,
which opened July 15, 1955, and was officially
dedicated on September 29, 1955.



Everyone Welcome!

RSVP by September 22

office@drewnursinghome.ca

506-364-4900



GROCERY SUNDAY FOR KARING KITCHEN

(Sept. 28 – 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, soda crackers, alfredo sauce and honey-garlic sauce. *White baskets will be at the main entrance for your donations.* Thank you.



As we continue **The United Church of Canada's 100th Anniversary Celebrations**, please join us for **A UNITED HYMN SING**, to be held at Mount Royal United Church, 106 Mount Royal Blvd., Moncton, NB, on Sunday, September 28 at 4:00 pm. Bring your family and friends to join in singing lots of hymn favourites; special music will be provided by vocalists and instrumentalists.

A time of fellowship will follow and refreshments will be provided. A donation of a non-perishable item for the **Karing Kitchen** will be gratefully received and appreciated. We look forward to this special celebration as, together, we unite our voices in song!! **ALL ARE INVITED!!**

DIME BLITZ



This UCW fundraiser has now drawn to a close, and it's time to bring in the bottles of dimes you have saved over the summer. Please do this before the end of September Deposit in the offering box on a Sunday morning or drop off in the mail slot located on the Victoria St. entrance door.



Thank you for your continued support of UCW projects.
Please ensure each container is labelled with your name.

SENB Youth Group: Expression of Interest ///

Groupe de jeunes : Manifestation d'intérêt

St. Paul's United Church (Riverview, NB) would like to start a regional youth group. This [SURVEY](#) is to gauge interest in this idea and get a better sense of who may be interested in participating. For the purpose of this survey, "youth" is considered anyone ages 12 to 30. We are happy to receive responses from younger youth or young adults, as the ages of this group are to be determined based on interest.

The deadline to complete this survey is **Tuesday, September 30th, 2025**.

If you have questions or comments, contact Olivia Finnamore at ofinnamore@gmail.com



FASHION SHOW

UCW FALL FASHION SHOW will take place of **Wednesday, Oct. 8th at 7:00 pm**. Tickets are \$12.00 and available from members of the UCW and church office. Dessert and tea/coffee will be served. Door prizes. Fashions provided by Cazza.

THANKSGIVING SPECIAL OFFERING ENVELOPES

Thanksgiving envelopes are located at both church entrances. 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 place your envelope in the offering box on Sunday, mail or drop your envelope in the mail slot on the Victoria St. entrance; e-transfer also an option.

The Church thanks you for your support.



100th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL FUNDRAISER

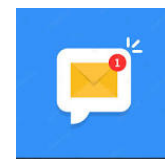


As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of The United Church of Canada, we invite you to take part in a special fundraiser — a meaningful opportunity to honour or remember someone who has shaped your faith journey. Special recognition will be held during a service later in the fall, to celebrate these lives.

Forms are located at the Church main entrances and in our Facebook files.

NEW CHURCH EMAIL ADDRESS

Please note, the church now has a new email address. The old address was sjuc@nb.aibn.com, while the new address is stjohnsmoncton@gmail.com Please adjust your correspondence as well as your Interac email transfer contacts accordingly.



ST. JOHN'S HAS A NEW PRESENCE ON INSTAGRAM!

If you use Instagram, please give us a follow! <https://www.instagram.com/stjohnsmoncton/>