



NEWS AT FIRST
JUNE 2024
ISSUE#5

Welcome to our fifth issue of News At First. Our church is a happening place, and possibly one of the most exciting events was our recent visit from the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, as you will see from the article below, and our cover photo.

A Magical Morning

Submitted by Alison MacLean

On Sunday, April 14, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne joined the congregations of Colchester County in a joyful service, which took place at First United Church in Truro. The Faith Families of Brunswick Street United, Clifton Pastoral Charge, First United Church, St. David's & Valley-Greenfield United and St. Andrew's United Church gathered at 10:30 a.m. to worship together.

The Moderator was accompanied by Terry Beaumont, project coordinator for the Moderator's Flourishing project; Ronda Parkes, Director of Communications at the General Council Offices; and Rev. Dr. Sharon Ballantyne who serves as our new growth animator on the Growth & Ministry Development team for the Atlantic Region, serving UCC East. Rev. Faith March-MacCuish, Executive Minister, UCC East and Rev. Dr. Shepherd Munikwa, Justice, Mission and Outreach Minister, UCC East also attended. These folk were very present to the gathered Faith Families, particularly in conversations following the service.

Due to illness, neither Rev. April Hart, minister of St. David's & Valley- Greenfield, nor Rev. Phillip Kennedy of the Clifton Pastoral Charge were able to join us. Joanne MacIntosh and Edith Selwyn-Smith graciously stepped in at the last moment to take part in the service and to represent their respective faith families.

The choir met at 9:30 to practice the music for the service. Singers from the five congregations just fit into the loft with the benefit of added chairs. Our Minister of Music, Chris, led us with great energy and a welcoming spirit in rehearsing the morning's anthem "Deeply Rooted in a Promise", by Kingsbury/Bowman. A truly joyful noise was made!

There was an air of excited anticipation as folks arrived in the Sanctuary, greeted one another and settled into the pews to worship together and to receive the Moderator's message. First United's Rev. Cathie Crooks offered the Acknowledgement of the Land and introduced the Moderator and guests from General Council Office. Rev. John Parsons of Brunswick Street United opened the service with the Call to Worship.

Rev. Shannon MacLean, with the lively assistance of daughter Julia, offered the Story Time, introducing us to the great white shark named Nugumi, (Mi'kmaq for Grandmother), a wise guardian of the ocean and its eco-system. If she stops moving, she sinks to the bottom of the ocean and dies. Nugumi has wisdom for the church. Rev. Shannon reminded us that we, too, need to keep moving if we are to continue to flourish.

The Moderator's message was centered on "Flourishing". She shared that she wants to make "our collective flourishing a big focus" during her time as Moderator. She quoted from the theologian and author Andrew Root and expanded upon his idea: "what makes a congregation beautiful is its life and not its numbers, programs or access to resources. A community that is alive is beautiful, whether six or six hundred."

A lunch, provided by folks at First United, was served immediately following the service, allowing a time for all to mingle, visit and share common experiences. It was a gathering, very much alive and beautiful, of six to six hundred! There was a palpable and openly expressed feeling of how great it was to be together in one place! May we carry that memory forward.



MOVING FORWARD IN FAITH & ACTION

Submitted by Malcolm Macpherson, First United Church Council Chair

The first part of 2024 has seen extensive activity and change in our church mission and governance, since The Profile Team was formed to draft an ongoing action plan, looking for growth in faith into the new year. The acceptance of the Profile Report and its recommendations challenges First United to improve and adapt to the ever-changing environment and demographics of our faith family.

Even more important is the wonderful news that our Minister of Word, Sacrament and Spiritual Formation, Reverend Cathie Crooks, enthusiastically accepted the call to our charge into the future. Her dynamic persona, combined with the leadership of Music Minister Chris Bowman, gives us a " Dream Team " approach to ministry, as we continue our journey of learning what our Christian lives should be.

A new year also brought new members and a new Chairperson of Church Council (our governance model). With the Profile Report as a mandate, it will be Council's responsibility to vigorously explore the varied recommendations and implement those deemed possible, so that we can plan for the future of our congregation, manage the building and determine ways we can serve each other and the community.

There are approximately 34 recommendations before Council. Some challenging, some routine. However, Council and its committees are already implementing these ideas with many projects underway.

A few examples are as follows:

1. A working group is active in exploring how our buildings can be made more useful to us and the community, perhaps raise extra revenue, and make our Sanctuary more appealing, without major changes to its heritage.
2. An Inventory of people skills is being compiled, so that we might enhance our body of volunteers to assist in fundraising, meetings, and recruiting new and returning members.

3. A Spiritual Formation Committee has been formed to oversee aspects of worship, Sunday School, Faith Formation programs for adults, and the possibility of becoming an Affirming Congregation.

4. A new Finance Committee has been formed to oversee Church fiscal business and assist in fundraising planning.

These initiatives will mean an increased role for active committees as well as new faces at our volunteering projects. From this comes fellowship, new friends and a sense of vibrancy within the church, so that we can see possibilities and not dwell on fears of change.

First United has challenges, both financial and property related. However, there is good potential to journey forward with new faces, beneficial changes and a more positive attitude, all while celebrating our faith, being thankful in our leadership and playing an active role in our community!

Come and be a part of our mission! There is room for all!



The Profile Team presents its report.

Search Committee Chair, Jennifer Jordan, reads the recommendation to call Rev. Cathie Crooks as Minister of Word, Sacrament and Spiritual Formation. Bob Jordan calls for the vote which Tillie Armstrong records as being unanimous.





Message from Chris Bowman, Minister of Music:

Many a melody reverberates around the sanctuary and hall of First United this spring! Between seven choral concerts, weekly choir rehearsals, and other random acts of music, we are making a joyful noise! To highlight a few activities:

Resonance Youth Choir's second project is well underway, and they continue to impress. The choir was honoured to sing at the local Probus Club banquet early in May, and we will sing in the morning church service on June 9, and our full concert will be Sunday, June 16 at 3pm. The theme of this project is mental health, and donations for this concert will be in support of mental health initiatives in our community.

I had the great pleasure of leading music at the Bermuda Nova Scotia Regional Meeting mid-May, which was held at the Dal AC. Several of our youth helped in the song-leading, and local churches came together for the final service, which featured a choir of over 40 people (with strong representation from our own church choir). It was an honour to serve the wider church in this manner. One highlight of the weekend was the Region becoming an Affirming region, making an authentic commitment to a full, public, intentional and explicit embrace of LGBTQIA2SI+ people.

Our Summer Lunchtime Concerts are fast approaching! This year's concert series, held as always on Wednesdays at 12:15, begins on June 26 with a concert by our own Handbell Ensemble. Please refer to the concert poster for full details, but you'll see several Rising Stars Showcases, Long & McQuade teachers in concert, along with new and returning artists each Wednesday through the end of August.

If you haven't already done so, please buy your tickets early to see the amazing Halifax Gay Men's Chorus in concert here at First United on Sunday afternoon, June 23rd. HGMC has taken the province by storm, and their spring show "Pride Anthems" will be a pops concert filled with toe-tapping tunes that will inspire and impress. HGMC is known to sell out their Halifax concerts, so please get your

tickets soon - they are available at <https://www.hgmc.ca/shop/truro-pride-anthems-you-are-beautiful-300-pm-june-23-2024/>

I'm looking forward to returning to Berwick Camp as music leadership team (with Laura) this summer.

Thank you for your continued support of the musical life of First United Church.



Message from Rev. Cathie Crooks, Minister of Word, Sacrament and Spiritual Formation:

As summer approaches and many of us will pause to catch our breath after a busy fall, winter and spring, the evocative words of Mary Oliver, poet of blessed memory, call out to us from her poem entitled 'The Summer Day' ~

Who made the world?
 Who made the swan, and the black bear?
 Who made the grasshopper?
 This grasshopper, I mean —
 the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
 the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
 who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down —
 who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
 Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
 Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
 I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
 I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
 into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
 how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
 which is what I have been doing all day.
 Tell me, what else should I have done?
 Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
 Tell me, what is it you plan to do
 with your one wild and precious life? *

Oliver never fails in her conviction to center Creator and Creation, the immediacy of the Divine, the place of prayer ~ attentiveness, astonishment and proclamation ~ and to invite us to examine the purpose of our human lives. Congruent with the spirituality of our Celtic ancestors, she knows that the cathedral of earth, sky and sea is often the place where we sense the Presence most deeply and are inspired and made whole.

My prayer for each of us and all of us together as summer draws nigh is that we will be enfolded by the beauty and wonder and majesty of Creator and Creation; and experience the immediacy of the Divine; and carve out moments to pray ~ to be attentive, astonished and to share those moments with stranger, family or friend; and to reflect on the purpose of our lives, no matter how old we are or how young. May we be refreshed and renewed. May we return in the fall to the fullness of our ministry together with bodies rested, hearts wide open, and minds receptive to the Spirit's call. Blessings, all!

*Mary Oliver, House of Light, Beacon Press, 1990



Message from Tracy Boutilier, Office Administrator:

The hummers are here! The hummers are here! It seems like forever since I've heard the hum of their wings, and the little chirps they make as they flit and flutter around our feeders. There are only one or two right now, and according to the map these are the first arrivals. They will move further north with the majority arriving in the next couple of weeks.

You all know my love of the birds, and with the exception of the cardinals, hummingbirds are my favorites. They are so small and fast, but oh so fierce! They are very protective of their feeders and will often chase other hummers away. They sit on the clothesline, or in the honeysuckle tree out of sight, then chase away anyone who comes in for a feed. If they would only share, then everyone could have some food. We replenish the feeders every couple of days, after a good cleaning of course.

From the camera in my office, I have a perfect view of Ida's Cupboard in the parking lot, and very much like my feeders, it draws in those who are seeking food. At first it took some time for people to find it, but we now have regulars who check the cupboard every day and take just what they need. One young man came into the office and asked if he could exchange something he had too much of (Kidney beans I think it was) and asked he could leave the beans and take some Kraft Dinner. Of course, I said yes, and thanked him for his donation.

Unfortunately, there are others, who will take everything they can carry and leave almost nothing for anyone else. People are just as territorial as my hummers. One day I was afraid I was going to have to call the police as one gentleman was standing guard and wouldn't let others access the cupboard. Eventually the others talked him into sharing, and everyone got something to eat.

The cupboard isn't kept full for this very reason. We try to spread it out, so everyone gets a chance to find something to help them out. We do the same thing for the feeders on our deck. We don't fill them, just a little bit every day or so. The birds aren't totally dependent on our feeders and seek food elsewhere when it is low. This gives a chance for others to drop in for a visit.

The cupboard's motto is "Take what you need, Leave what you can". If we could all keep this in mind not just when it comes to sharing food, but in life as well. You don't have to give it all, and you don't have to take it all. Every little bit helps.



Twenty-five Years of Crafting,

Submitted by Lynn Macpherson

Whether you knit, crochet, weave, do other crafts or just like to talk, the craft group might just be for you. The group started in 1999 with Judy Richards gathering some crafting friends for coffee and conversation while they crafted.

Over time the group has grown to where there are 35 names on the contact list.

Many members, including some who are new to town, have come for the friendships that they have made at this “beautiful group.” Some have come “seeking new ideas for crafts or needing help with their current project.”

“I am inspired by the work of others” and it “encourages me to work on my own projects.” The conversation is always engaging. “I often don’t get much done on my project due to the good conversation.”

The group runs itself. You come when you can and stay as long as you want. Anyone who wishes to do so, brings along a treat to share at the coffee break. This group meets in the church hall on Tuesday mornings and would welcome anyone who wishes to join, just drop in!



CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES



Benjamin Parker Bonnell, son of Kelly and Jamie Bonnell, graduated from Mount Allison University on May 13, 2024 with a B.A. with Distinction. He is the grandson of Lois and the late Gordon Benjamin.

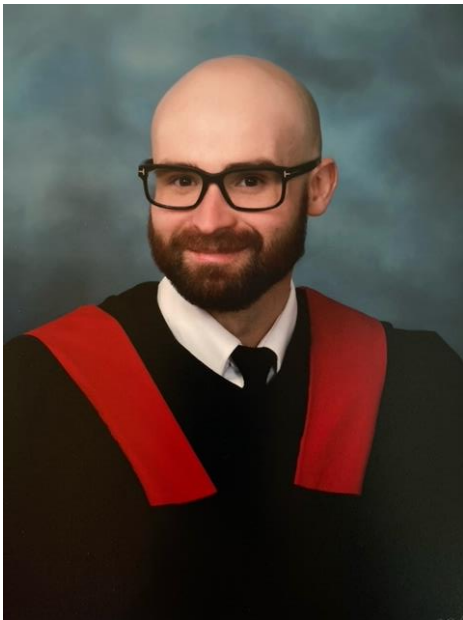
We wish Ben success as he continues his studies in the fall.

Brooklyn Elizabeth Brown graduated from St. F.X. University with her Bachelor of Education Degree. Brooklyn is the daughter of Martha and Winston Brown and the Granddaughter of Tillie Armstrong and the late David Armstrong. Brooklyn plans to teach in the local area.



Dr. Mackenzie Cook is the grandniece of Mona Smith-Pike. Mackenzie was raised in Roachvale, Guysborough County by a single Dad until she was 10 years old. She attended local schools, receiving the Governor General's Medal upon graduation, and went to the United Church with her Dad and sister.

Thomas McDowall: Next year I will be attending the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus, pursuing a bachelor's degree in science. Since I'll still be in Truro for another year, I am planning to return for another year of apprenticeship and I'm very glad. To be able to continue singing in talented choirs after high school is a real treat.



Christopher Power: We, Shelley and Robert Power, along with his grandparents Winston and Judie Weir, and Great-Grandmother Elva Archibald, are so very proud of our youngest son, Christopher Power, who is graduating in May from Acadia University with his Business Degree with a Major in Accounting. He made the Dean's List each Semester. He starts a full-time position with the Federal Government when he graduates and will be living back in Truro.

Alicia Anne Terfry will graduate in June from Rothesay Netherwood School. Alicia is the daughter and of Sarah and Glen Terfry, and the Granddaughter of Tillie Armstrong and the late David Armstrong. Alicia plans to attend Queen's University in the Fall.



Each year First United participates in the Christmas Index program. After receiving the generous donations from the congregation, it takes a team of dedicated workers to sort, assemble and deliver the food and gifts!





Thanks to our volunteer decorators as we enter into the Advent Season. The Sanctuary always looks beautiful!



Chris invited singers from the congregation to join the choir in singing the Hallelujah Chorus from Messiah on Easter Sunday. Many were delighted to respond.



Pictured is Marie Braedley with author Jay Johnson, who spoke to the UCW about Louisburg and Grand Pré.



Additional photos from the Moderator's visit to First United Church.





Each year First United's Pastoral Care Team hosts a Seniors' Social, a time much appreciated by those who attend.



Rev. Cathie Crooks with Honorah Shepherd after May's Evening Pause on the topic of Living Gratefully. Thirty folk were registered, and a lovely evening was shared by all.



Did you know that Truro's First United Presbyterian Church (now First United) had a winning baseball team? Well indeed we did! And here is the photo and the trophy to prove it. (Hint: the cup, along with a copy of the photo, can be seen in the glass fronted cabinet on the east side of the balcony.) The inscription reads "Church Baseball League, Truro, NS, 1921, Won by First Presbyterian Church".



The back row is identified (left to right) as Derrick Willard, ?, Clarence MacDonald, Rev. John Mutch, and Lou Christie. Can you identify any of the players?

What Happens in Berwick Doesn't Always Stay in Berwick

One year ago a much beloved member of First United Church's family, Reverend Alexander (Sandy) F. MacLean, celebrated 60 years of ordination. Sandy, along with his wife Lila, had the privilege of serving the following pastoral charges: Red Bank, NB; Nashwaaksis, Fredericton, NB; Woodlawn, Dartmouth, NS; Gower Street, St. John's, NL; Bridgewater, NS; and Central United, Moncton, NB. He also served as Retired Supply in Trenton, NS and Bermuda.

Although Sandy was also involved at the Presbytery and Conference levels, as well as being a commissioner to two General Councils, his passion was with the local congregation – preaching, providing pastoral care, and tending to the spiritual needs of the people.

Sandy and Lila also share a love and commitment for Berwick Camp, having served in various capacities, and attended there for over 60 years. For after all, this is where they first met as teenagers. Initially it was a summer romance, kindled each year upon their return. But this love story was meant to be! It's a heart-warming story, and I'm sure Sandy and Lila will be happy to share it with you, if you care to ask.



The MacLeans: Al, Sandy, Lila, Hugh, and Ian

Now if you have read this far, you could be led to consider only the deep spiritual nature of the 70-year Sandy and Lila relationship. However, this roving reporter has been privy to other tales, such as:

- Sandy working a summer-student job in Toronto, digging the under-street tunnels for the then new gas lines and hearing language never heard before. (Hint: it wasn't Portuguese!)
- Sandy protectively guiding Lila to the mission field manse outhouse, in the dark, only to be pushed into the surrounding brambles on his backside when Lila burst through the door on hearing what turned out to be a raccoon in the bushes.
- Sandy nearly drummed out of the parish, and hearing even worse bad language for calls he made against the ball team for which Lila was pitching, as he acted as Umpire.
- Sandy replacing numerous basement windows in the church next to the manse after teaching a son (un-named) how to throw a baseball.

- Sandy and Lila playing 45's with their Clerk of Session in their first parish, with every curtain drawn, within a community of 'born-again-ers', where they were rumoured not to be.
- Sandy holding up a groom with a straight arm at the throat. The groom had fainted and *may* not have heard the bride's vows.

We at First United are so blessed to have these delightful people as part of our congregation. Thank you for sharing your gifts, your warmth, and your love with us.

Summer Lunchtime Concerts 2024

First United Church, 711 Prince St., Truro 902-895-8098

June 26 – Ring in the Summer!
First United Church Handbell Ensemble

July 3 – Rising Stars Showcase – Lily Arthurs, Charlotte Barron, Erica Bowman, Mason Eisner, Olivia Gouthro

July 10 – Rising Stars Showcase – Piano Students of Lorraine Brocklehurst

July 17 – Rising Stars Showcase – Holden Hoover, Emily LaBonte, Sienna Lindsay-Pike, Chiara Zwicker
Spotlight Musical Theatre cameo

July 24 – Consort Recorder Ensemble
Joy Miller, Susan Greaves, Ken Henderson, Brett Dill

July 31 – Long & McQuade Teachers in Concert
Rhonda MacLellan (fiddle/piano/voice), Ibukun Olomodosi (piano/organ) and Danielle Richard (voice)

August 7 - Long & McQuade Teachers in Concert
Chris Ryan (drums), Ryan White (bass/guitar) and Craig Wood (guitar)

August 14 – "Bits and Bops" Video Game Hits Meet Contemporary Classical
Dawson Gillis and Caitlin Strong, voice and piano

August 21 – Rising Stars Showcase – Will Hazelton, Thomas McDowall, Jessica Porter and Sappho Thompson

August 28 – Rising Stars Showcase – Molly Hiscock, voice, Chris Bowman, piano

Every Wednesday at 12:15 pm. Bring your lunch!
Donations in support of church music programming appreciated. Tax receipts available for donations above \$10; cash, debit and credit now accepted.