

NEWS AT FIRST
DECEMBER 2025
ISSUE #8



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Welcome to our 8th Edition of News at First. Your Communications Committee is delighted to share with you some of the many news items and events taking place in First United Church, Truro. Thank you to our many contributors! Photo credits to Don MacQueen, Carolyn Hunt, Ann MacCormack, Judy Richards, Audrey Jordan, Grant Langford, and Pam Bowman.

We begin this issue by celebrating one of our heroes, Krista McNutt, brought to you by our *Roving Reporter*, **Honorah Sheppard**.

FAITH IN ACTION

How one parishioner's call to serve through the Canadian Red Cross became a journey of compassion, purpose, and living faith.



As I sat across the table talking with Krista McNutt about her experiences volunteering with the Canadian Red Cross, I couldn't help but be deeply impressed by her enthusiasm, high energy, and unwavering desire to help others. Listening to her remarkable history with the Red Cross, I felt that Krista stands as a true example of humanity at its best.

When I asked how she first became involved, she told me that nineteen years ago — after serving as treasurer of the UCW — she

was called into action by an ad in the First United Church bulletin requesting volunteers for the Canadian Red Cross. Her first experience began with a couple of hours during her lunch break from a local law firm, helping to loan health equipment to seniors and clients recovering from surgery or injury.

Later, she took courses in Disaster Management, which led her on a journey of compassion in action. It might be a call in the middle of the night from the Red Cross call centre, giving her only a few hours to pack her belongings, but Krista is always willing to go — to be a helping hand where she's needed most. If that means sleeping on a cot in a local shelter, working long hours and night shifts, or traveling great distances, she's prepared. Over the years, she has helped countless people find accommodation, meals, emergency clothing, and comfort in the midst of loss and uncertainty.

Her list of deployments reads like an impressive travel log of service and humanity. From British Columbia to the Maritimes, she has been there to help — one catastrophe after another — including the Williams Lake fires in BC (2017), the Portapique, NS, tragedy (2020), Hurricane Fiona in NS (2022), the Halifax, NS, fires (2023), and more recent deployments — all fire-related — in Saskatoon, SK (May 2025), Winnipeg, MB, Middleton, NS (Long Lake Fires, September 2025), and Lake George, NS (October 2025).

Krista's willingness to serve shines through in everything she does. She has a deep appreciation for the sense of purpose that comes from helping others and being part of something greater than herself.

The Canadian Red Cross volunteers respond to emergencies and disasters by providing essentials like food, shelter, and clothing. They also offer ongoing community support — from assisting older adults through programs like Friendly Calls to helping with health equipment loans, safety training, and recovery planning.

As I took notes and marvelled at the depth of her service, Krista's phone rang. She answered without hesitation — it was the Red Cross call centre with yet another request for help. This time, it was a local need, so she could offer assistance without traveling far. But whether near or far, simple or challenging, Krista is always ready to take on the call.

So, the next time you see a request for volunteers in your church bulletin, think of where it could lead you — perhaps to a life of purpose and fulfillment, just as it has for Krista. Thank you, Krista, and thank you to all the “Kristas” who are living symbols of our shared humanity.

CELEBRATING OUR CHORAL APPRENTICES

This year we are delighted to have five Choral Apprentices joining our Choir, both for rehearsals and for worship. These positions are made possible by the Ann MacIntosh Gourley Memorial Music Fund and the Moffatt Fund. Additionally, we wish to offer thanks to Olivia Gouthro, who has had to withdraw, but who has added greatly to this program in the past.

Danah Kim



I am a Grade 10 student at CEC. This year, I am grateful to begin a new journey as a member of the choir at First United Church. I carry with me a love for my family, for the gentle beauty of autumn leaves, and for penguins, whose loyalty and warmth remind me of trust. I find joy in drawing the world around me, capturing its colors and shapes, and in reading quietly when the season turns bright with falling leaves.

I try to keep my heart away from unkindness, prejudice, vanity, dishonesty, laziness, and division, because I believe music does not allow such things to take root. When we listen, when we sing, or when we play, music softens us. It teaches us to be tender, to be open, and to be

together. To me, music is not only sound but also a friend—faithful, honest, and always near. I love the piano for its harmony of many voices at the same time, the flute for its endless soaring notes, and the cello for its deep and steady strength. I love to sing all kinds of songs, from hymns and sacred music to art songs and even popular melodies, because every song holds its own truth.

What amazes me most is how music can unite us. It does not ask about our language, our age, or where we come from. In choir, many voices become one, weaving harmony out of difference, showing us how unity can be born out of diversity.

Music walks with me everywhere—while I eat, rest, study, or even fall asleep. It reminds me that life is never empty. And in every note, I hear a promise: that beauty can heal, that voices can connect, and that harmony is always possible if we choose to listen!



Erica Bowman

Erica is 14 years old and is in grade 9 this year at Bible Hill Jr High. She takes Piano lessons with Lorraine Brocklehurst, Voice lessons with Brenna Conrad, and takes part throughout the year in Choirs. She performs in Theatre, Concerts, and Music festival, and was the recipient of a few awards this year, as well as recommended for Nationals.

Aside from Music, Erica enjoys writing and reading. She is happy to be joining the choral apprentices for her second year.

Lily Arthurs

Lily is in grade 12 at CEC. She is very excited to be returning for her third year as a choral apprentice here at First United. She takes voice lessons with Brenna Conrad and sings in her school choir. She is part of the leadership team of Resonance youth choir and has been in the CEC musical and Spotlight theatre for 3 years each. She plays piano with Lorraine Brocklehurst and oboe with Brett Dill, as well as playing in her school's band. This year she is one of the two music presidents at CEC. She also runs the Relay for Life event at her school in support of the Canadian Cancer society. She is very passionate about making a difference in her community, and is delighted to share her love of music with you this year.





Matthew Davis

Matthew is 15 years old and is in grade 10 at CEC. He has been in various musical and theatre groups including the Cantabile Boys Choir, Stagecoach and the Marigold's Spotlight Theatre program. This fall he is starting his second year as a choral apprentice at First United Church, and has also joined the leadership team of Truro's Resonance Youth Choir. In addition to his voice instruction with Brenna Conrad, he is also a piano student of Joy Miller. He is looking forward to following up last year's production of Mamma Mia with another exciting CEC musical in the Spring.

Owen McDowall

Hi, I'm Owen, I play trumpet in the CEC band, and I was in Mamma Mia the musical at CEC last year. I've been singing in the Resonance choir for 2 years, and am excited to be a part of the First United Choir now.



Message from Chris Bowman, Minister of Music

It has been a full and fulfilling fall at First United! Highlights of my fall have included:

- welcoming the Nova Scotia Youth Choir back to First United for a dynamic and delightful concert this past September
- hosting several workshops on the new hymn resource "Then Let Us Sing" for our congregation and several other local congregations this past October, as well as introducing several pieces from this book throughout the fall
- guiding the talented Resonance Youth Choir on their fifth project, centred around the theme of Peace, which culminated in a presentation during worship and a concert mid-November
- rehearsing with the handbell ensemble as they prepared for a weekend bell festival and conference in Halifax, performing with over 90 bell ringers at Bethany United
- making music weekly with the church choir and our choral apprentices, in preparation for weekly services and for the Candlelight Christmas Concert and Advent season
- working with members of the congregation and staff in several meetings each week, exploring everything from worship to future planning
- And now, my focus turns to the Advent and Christmas season, where Cath and I are hard at work preparing our weekly services for Sundays, and along with the members of the worship, music, and concert committee, we prepare to host seven concerts before the end of 2025. These include:



Fri, Nov 28, 7:00 PM — *The Midnight Clear* (James Hill & Anne Janelle)

Sat, Dec 6, 7:00 PM — Candlelight Christmas Concert | Admission by donation

Tue, Dec 9, 7:30 PM — *Christmas At Home* (Measha Brueggergosman-Lee)

Sat, Dec 13, 7:00 PM — *Winter Songs* (Cantabile Society) tickets at the door

Wed, Dec 17, 6:30 PM — Brenna Conrad Voice Studio Christmas Recital
Admission by donation

Fri, Dec 19, 7:00 PM — *A Brigid Christmas*

Sat, Dec 20, 3:00 PM — *Our Canadian Christmas* (Creative Voices)

How fortunate we will be to welcome such high calibre music in our space. Hope to see you there! Yours in harmony, Chris

PHOTO GALLERY



Truro's Pride Parade



Joyful Noise



Pulpit Exchange, Rev. Phillip Kennedy

SUMMER LUNCHTIME CONCERTS



Doors for Open Churches

HERITAGE TRUST OF NOVA SCOTIA
Preserving Nova Scotia's Built Heritage

One of the highlights of this day was a tour of the steeple. The photos may show an area of our church which you have never seen. Thanks to the many volunteers who helped to make this day happen.





UCW Fall Yard Sale



Presentation to our students from the Carroll Davis Fund and the Helena and Haldane Reynolds Fund.

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

...and the Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth. John 1: 14

Christmas Eve 1971 will rise in my memory forever. My father had suffered a brain aneurysm two months before, and my siblings and I – ages 12, 10, 7 and 5 – were welcoming Dad home after his stay in hospitals in



Halifax and Moncton. Mum had been by his side throughout but, in those days, children were not allowed to visit the hospital. We were bursting with excitement that Dad was finally coming home and Mum with him.

That Christmas Eve, a light snow was falling when the car, with Mum in the driver's seat, pulled into the driveway beside the manse in Moncton. Wearing flannel pajamas, his blue and black plaid bathrobe and slippers with a coat over top and galoshes below – his head shaven post-surgery, his face pale and thin – Dad slowly emerged from the passenger's side of the car. His dear friend and colleague, Fred Burrell, took Dad's right arm and Mum his left, and they moved ever so carefully to the front door. Then, step by step, Dad ascended five stairs into the house, where we four children awaited him.

Mum had prepared us to be still and to talk softly, behaviours, we learned, that were essential 'round one who had suffered a brain trauma. And, so, we stood quietly, barely able to contain ourselves as Dad's eyes embraced us, each one, before his arms were free to do the same. The warmth of the late afternoon sunlight outside and the glow of the Christmas tree lights inside framed the happiest moment of my childhood – a moment to which I return every Christmastide. It was not only the warmth of the afternoon sunlight and the glow of the tree lights that framed that moment but Love Incarnate.

During those two long months, I came to know Love Incarnate in a deeper way. Aunts and cousins living in other cities came – moved in with us, week by week. They cared for us and kept the home-fires burning. Mum was welcomed in by family in Halifax. Uncles came on the weekends, leaving their own congregations to preach in the church to which Dad had been called just eighteen months before. Neighbours, congregants, United Church colleagues, the Roman Catholic priest and the local rabbi prayed for Dad and drove us to piano lessons and swimming lessons and helped us with our homework.

Through a very frightening and uncertain time, we were enfolded by Love made known to us in Spirit and in Flesh. We were sustained and given strength, and at the ripe old age of ten, I experienced the power of *'the Word becoming flesh, living among us, full of grace and truth,'* and isn't that the very essence of this holy season?

Blessings, dear friends, as memories of your own rise within. May there be at the very least one that sustains you and strengthens you this Christmastide.

With love, Cath

FIRST UNITED CHURCH AFFIRMING COMMITTEE

Contributed by Lisa Annand

The Affirming Committee of First United Church formed in the spring of 2025 and has been meeting regularly since then. Members of this committee are Betty Darby, Rhonda Gallant, Susan Gallant, Jennifer Jordan (co-chair pro tem) and Lisa Annand (chair).



The United Church of Canada requires several steps for the congregation to declare itself an Affirming Congregation.

- A Vision Statement concerning the inclusion of people of all gender identities and sexual orientations in the life and work of the ministry.
- Use of symbols inside and outside the church buildings and in all facets of church life to show that you are an Affirming Congregation.
- An Equal Marriage Policy.
- A continuing plan of action for the ministry once you are Affirming.
- Once these things have been approved by Affirm United (www.ause.ca) we need to hold a congregational vote which must pass by at least 75% in order to be declared an Affirming Congregation.

On September 28, the committee led the service which focused on the importance of welcoming. Each member talked about why they wanted to be on this committee. Betty Darby gave a history of the changes that have taken place over the years, the “kerfuffle” caused by tackling some of the unfair practices of the church, and the importance of embracing these changes in spite of the “kerfuffle.” We passed out a short survey to assess the comfort level of the congregation in becoming an Affirming Congregation.

On October 26, the committee did a short skit to explain the letters LGBTQIA2S+. The committee will continue to meet regularly and work on preparing the congregation of First United Church for this important next step in the life and work of the church. For 2026 we are seeking one or two additional members. You can contact us at affirmingfirstunited@gmail.com or speak to any of the committee members.

CELEBRATING 265 YEARS – ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY – NOVEMBER 16.

Contributed by Alison MacLean



It was fitting as we celebrated our anniversary and looked towards a new year, that we marked the occasion by welcoming New Members to our Family of Faith! Rev. Cathie Crooks led us through the Commitment ceremony and Chair of Music, Worship and Spiritual Formation, Lynn Macpherson, extended a warm welcome to the

new members. We also recognized “A Special Gift” from life-time member of First United, Charlotte MacQuarrie of ‘blessed memory’. Two of her children, Martha and Rod, were present and spoke of their mother’s life-time association with the people of First United, her commitment to preserving the history of the congregation and of her life-long love of, and participation in, the choirs and music of the church, from the time she was a young child.

Following Scripture read by Jud Pearson, we were privileged to be introduced to Rev. Dr. Susan MacAlpine-Gillis, Academic Dean at Atlantic School of Theology, and who, as Rev. Cathie was delighted to point out, “was both her classmate and a long-time camper at Berwick United Church Camp”. Her Reflection, entitled “How’s Your Vision?” led us on a thoughtful journey, focusing on significant historic moments, leading into the present, bringing us to the brink of the future and leaving us inspired as we lean in to discern our pathway.

Chris Bowman led the congregation in the singing of two hymns from The United Church's new hymn resource "Then Let Us Sing" and the Adult Choir sang Mark A. Miller's "Roll Down Justice". What better dream for our future?!

"The Anniversary Hymn", by Kingsbury and Bowman which was sung by all, mirrored Rev. Dr. Susan's message reflecting the past, present and future of our community of faith.

After the Benediction and Music for Going Forth, the Anniversary Cake was cut by Martha MacQuarrie and Rylie Pinkney. Cake, refreshments and conversation were enjoyed at the back of the Sanctuary by guests and visitors, new members and old. A chance to meet new friends and old as we celebrate this remarkable milestone together.



FIRST UNITED'S MINISTRY IN ENHANCED CARE FACILITIES (NURSING HOMES)

Contributed by **Grant Langford**

Worship Services in the local facilities date back to about 2006 when they were started by Rev. Gordie MacLean. They originated at Cedarstone but later were expanded to other homes. Don Simpson, a former member of our church, also played a role in



organizing this ministry. I became involved and conducted my first service at Cedarstone in 2010.

I recall a service Gordie conducted at Munroe Court when we were singing “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands. We came to the part in which the words were “He has you and me brother”... Gordie noticed that all the residents’ names were displayed on an adjacent wall, so he began singing “He has Betty Smith in his hands”. (Not a real name). We went down the entire list, and the residents loved it! We lost Gordie in 2008, but this ministry has continued.

Eventually, services were coordinated by a town clergy member so that all homes wishing to participate would be covered year-round. In 2011 Rev. Valerie arrived and began taking part in worship at Edinburgh Hall and Townsview Estate. I assisted her with Communion for years. We developed a great rapport with the residents, spending time talking with them before and after worship.

Covid changed everything in 2020 and made it impossible to continue to provide services. In late 2021 and 2022, they resumed, but with severe restrictions. For example, The Mira allowed only one person to officiate, which meant no choir. By 2023 we were able to return with fewer restrictions, providing services in three homes each month. Some restrictions still exist when sections of the facility are experiencing Covid or flu outbreaks.

The residents enjoy our worship times because we sing a lot of hymns – eight at each service. I keep my sermons to a minimum as I am sure they would rather sing than hear me speak.

There is always a choir, an accompanist, a leader of singing and a scripture reader. I deliver the sermons, benediction etc. Accompanists over the years have included Chris Bowman, Heather MacLeod, Audrey Burrill and Moira Moore. Roger Moore always supported these services, occasionally even playing the violin. I really loved that guy.

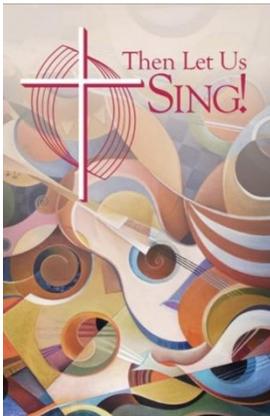
Today our dedicated group includes: Lee MacLean who reads scriptures and leads the singing with his strong, deep voice; Lisa Annand and John McElhiney at the piano; Robert and Audrey Jordan along with Ruth Hiltz, Barb Main and Ab Annand

make up the choir. One of the Choral Apprentices and Resonance members, Lily Arthurs, will be also joining us on occasion.

We go to Cedarstone on the first Sunday of each month, The Mira on the second Sunday and Vimy Court on the Thursday in between. For one recent service at Vimy Court John was caught in two construction zones in Truro. He arrived about 10 minutes late. Marie Cooper, who is legally blind, a resident of Vimy Court, and an adherent of First United, agreed to play for us, and so played the first two hymns. She also sings the hymns without the use of the song sheets Tracy prepares for us each month.

All the team agree that it is fun and enjoyable to be providing these services monthly. We try to use as many of the old hymns as possible, and it is fun to watch residents singing the old hymns without glancing at the song sheets.

If anyone is interested in joining our group, please let me know. The bigger the choir the better.



You have no doubt noticed several new hymns being sung recently. ***Then Let Us Sing*** is the latest book of new music from the United Church of Canada.

Perhaps you attended one or more of the sessions which Chris Bowman held, where we sang, starting at #1, and making it to # 99. We will pick up where we left off in the spring.

In addition to contemporary pieces, there are hymns in a variety of languages, including English, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Punjabi, Korean, Tagalog, Hindi, Arabic, Japanese, German, Portuguese. As you may surmise, this resource is intended to be inclusive of the many cultures represented within the United Church of Canada. (Contributed by ***Pam Bowman***)

CHRISTMAS CRAFT MARKET



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Worship with music by Resonance Youth Choir, followed by lunch



Burt Amiro reading the list of names of those who lost their lives in World War I and II



Carvell McNutt laying a wreath in memory of his uncle, Frank McNutt



Lunch prepared and served by many volunteers

RESONANCE YOUTH CHOIR CONCERT, NOVEMBER 16



Rock the Fiddle Events Presents

Live In Concert

MEASHA BRUEGGERGOSMAN-LEE:

Christmas At Home
with AARON DAVIS, MIKE ECKERT and STEVE LEE

December 6th 2025
CUB Boardmore Playhouse
Sydney, Nova Scotia

December 8th 2025
St. Andrew's Church
Halifax, Nova Scotia

December 9th 2025
First United Church
Truro, Nova Scotia

Presented by Rock the Fiddle Events
Find us online at rockthefiddleevents.com



TICKETS GO ON SALE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH

Cantabile
Cantabile Choral Society Presents

Winter Songs

Featuring the Halifax String Quartet and the music of Ola Gjeilo

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13

7:00 PM

FIRST UNITED CHURCH, TRURO

TICKETS \$20 ADULTS, \$5 STUDENTS
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
[HTTPS://TICKETSTRIPE.COM/EVENTS/2988107483496311](https://ticketstripe.com/events/2988107483496311)
FIRST UNITED CHURCH OFFICE
AT THE DOOR



First United Church's Annual



Candlelight Christmas Concert

Sat., December 6th 7pm

A Brigid Christmas



Special Guests:
CEC Choir
Molly Thompson

Friday, December 19th, 7pm
First United Church,
711 Prince Street Truro
Tickets \$25, Students \$10

CREATIVE VOICES
Presents
Our Canadian Christmas

SAVE the DATE

Dec | 20 | 3pm
First United Church, Truro

