



First United Church, Truro, NS

Community of Faith Profile

THE PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE

of our Living Faith Story

February 2024

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A Letter to the Congregation

Dear Friends:

In the fall of 2023, a new profile team was assembled to gather information about the inner workings of First United Church in all of its capacities and was tasked to write a report that would explore a pathway for a sustainable future. The profile team hoped that in doing its work, it too was guided by a compass with The Spirit acting as its True North. Every meeting began with this prayer, composed by one of the members of the team:

Creator God who fashioned the Earth and its inhabitants,

ground us in our work of creating a faith profile for First United.

Source of Living Water,

slake our thirst for your guiding Wisdom as we set about our task.

Winds of the Spirit,

blow away our doubts and fears so we hear only Your Voice and speak Your Truth.

Eternal Light,

illuminate our path as we go forward and lead us in the direction YOU want us to go.

*We ask this in the name of Your Son, Jesus, who is humanity's model for following YOU.
Amen.*

The team has done its best to listen to everyone who provided input and, at the same time, listen to the Voice of The Spirit as we were guided in our task. It is our hope that after collectively listening as a faith community, we can all follow Jesus on the path he would have us trod together for our future.

In Peace and Love,

Alison MacLean, Chair

Grant Langford

Jud Pearson

Kathy Mack

Preamble

It's hard to believe that two years have passed since the last Profile Report was presented in October 2021. In it, the strengths at First United were outlined and ways were suggested at that time about what might be done to allow us to go "boldly into the future."

A lot has changed since then. Changes made by the Council, the committees of the church, and by individual members of the congregation have enhanced what is done here. The staff, until recently, included one-and-a-half ordained ministers, the Minister of Music, and a part-time lay leader of youth. Since July 2023, it transitioned to only one ordained ministerial position to work alongside the Minister of Music and there is no longer a part-time lay youth leader.

The congregation has told us that this staffing transition has gone well over the past year. The youth work has been redistributed to the laity and the ordained minister. Spiritual formation has been reduced in hours and included in the job description of the ordained minister. The laity has stepped up to assist with the Sunday School program and with the ministry to Families with Young Children. A strong Pastoral Care Committee works diligently to help support the minister in meeting the pastoral needs of the congregation.

There is an old saying: "God moves in mysterious ways". Some of the suggestions made in the last Profile Report have been whole-heartedly adopted, and there has been an amazing rejuvenation of the laity in recent months, evidence that the mystery of The Holy Spirit is alive amongst us. Going forth, we will need to be vigilant, flexible, and encouraging to one another as we take the next steps on our journey of faith.

THE PAST (Our History)

The formation of First Presbyterian Church was begun in 1760 with the arrival of settlers from New Hampshire. Their first task was to establish a church in which to worship but it wasn't until 1769 that they were able to attract an ordained minister from Scotland, the Reverend Daniel Cock. The church was erected on a site which is now the Robie Street Cemetery. As the center of activity for the town shifted, property was purchased and a new church erected on the corner of Lorne and Prince Streets. The new church, erected in 1854 faced Lorne Street.

In 1913 the church burned to the ground and was rebuilt on the same site but this time, facing Prince Street. The new church was opened in 1916. This was a remarkable achievement as Canada was in the middle of World War 1. First Presbyterian became First United at the time of Union in 1925. A church hall was built in 1951. The hall and the church continue to stand today. At its peak 1000 souls worshiped weekly in its sanctuary.

Fourteen years ago, the church switched to a Council system of governance from the Official Board style. This resulted in a reduced number of required attendees at Council meetings. As intended, it also resulted in a wider involvement of the congregation in the work of the church through the members of the various committees. Committees were empowered to carry out their work and the chairs reported to and attended Council meetings. Council included the Chair of Council, the Vice Chair, the Treasurer, the Council Clerk, the Chairs of the Committees that make up the Council, and a First United Church minister.

There have been many capital expenditures on our heritage church sanctuary building in the last twelve years. An engineering study of the church structure in 2012 indicated a number of areas of concern including the windows, the tower, the fascia at the roof line and the roof. This resulted in a fundraising campaign from 2013-2018 to pay for these much-needed repairs, raising in total 1.1 million dollars. Since 2018, the sprinkler system and the heating system were replaced with the work being completed in the fall of 2023.

There have also been several changes in staffing since 2021. The Minister of Faith Formation, Rev. Roger Moore, passed away in early 2021. His part-time position was filled shortly after by Rev. Cathie Crooks. Then in March 2023, Adam Braye, the Youth Co-ordinator resigned and in June 2023, Rev. Valerie Kingsbury, the fulltime Minister of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care, accepted a call to another church. Rev. Cathie Crooks, the part-time Minister of Faith Formation was appointed to the position of full-time short term supply Minister.

THE PRESENT

RESOURCES

First United Church presently employs one fulltime, ordained Minister (appointed for one year as a short-term supply), who has a number of responsibilities. In addition to worship leadership, providing pastoral care, facilitating faith formation programs, and overseeing Sunday School as well as a monthly program for Families with Young Children, the ordained minister has guided the church through a time of discernment as its next chapter is contemplated. First United also employs a fulltime Minister of Music, and an Office Administrator. Additional staff, supervised by the Property Committee, include two part-time people in charge of maintenance and upkeep, as well as three individuals who each work three hours/week to clean the Sanctuary (in total nine work-hours).

The staff work collaboratively, using a team model approach, supporting one another in the ministry of the church. The ordained minister, the minister of music and the office administrator meet weekly to plan services and deal with other matters pertaining to their ministry within the faith family. First United operates using a Church Council model of governance, where there are fifteen committees involving approximately fifty-five people who work in partnership with the staff to facilitate the work of the church.

First United is comprised of two buildings: the sanctuary and Memorial Hall. The sanctuary houses a 3-manual Casavant organ, a Yamaha C7 grand piano, and 5 octaves of Schulmerich handbells. The sanctuary seats approximately 850 people, is wheelchair accessible, and is equipped with an audio-loop projector system. There are three large screens mounted in the sanctuary which are used during every service to project announcements, the order of service, words to hymns, and enhancement photos. There is a small kitchen at the back of the sanctuary that is used to facilitate fellowship time following worship. Upstairs, there is a toddler room that parents are free to use; otherwise, there is a station at the rear of the sanctuary for children and for nursing mothers.

The second building, Memorial Hall, has three floors. The main floor comes with a gymnasium (and a stage) that is used by the faith family and groups from the wider community for a variety of programs. Behind the gymnasium is a large, fully equipped kitchen. Also on the main level of Memorial Hall, there is one large office shared by the Ordained Minister and the Minister of Music, and a second office for the Office Administrator (equipped with computer, internet, photocopier and all other office supplies). Lastly, the Ladies Parlour, housing a large screen TV, is located beside the staff office spaces, and it serves as a gathering place for small groups and

committees. The lower level of Memorial Hall contains the designated Sunday School area and the Choir Rehearsal Room. There is a Kawai baby grand piano, a Yamaha U1 upright piano, and an electric keyboard in the rehearsal space. In addition, there are two large rooms, a storage room, several classrooms and two washrooms. On the upper level, there is a third office space (furnished and with internet and phone), the church Library, the Archives, a space for a Youth Room, and three additional rooms available for use. There is also a large room over the kitchen.

There are several written resources used regularly by First United for worship and Christian education. The congregation uses two hard cover hymn books, "Voices United" and "More Voices", as well as "Our Story, Our Song", a compilation of hymns written by Valerie Kingsbury and Chris Bowman, copyrighted under Tidal Bore Music. The Sunday School uses the curriculum "*God's Blue Earth, Caring for Creation*", an interactive, biblically-based resource published by The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio.

Financial Resources held by the Trustees, allow the congregation to offer support to initiatives within the faith family and within the wider community. For the congregation there are funds available for building maintenance and innovation, audio-visual needs and capital preservation. For the youth of the congregation there are monies for camps and conferences, scholastic scholarships, and support for those pursuing the study of ministry. For the wider community, monies are set aside for Mission and Service, individuals in need, for Scouting, for the Youth Apprenticeship Program in Music. There are also funds for the church's general outreach towards youth in the community.

WHO WE ARE

We are a people of faith striving to enhance the lives of those in our church, our community and our world. That engagement happens through worship, through in-church groups and activities, or in events that integrate other faiths or community groups outside the membership of First United. We strive to welcome all people, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability or economic circumstance in connecting to God and each other in everything we do.

First United is a long-established Church with an older and a very active population coming from varying backgrounds. We are attempting to add a new and vibrant component of young families and young people. In recognition of busy schedules where Sunday morning church attendance is difficult, First United has a supper on a weekday once a month for families with young children. Here, everyone can have a healthy supper which is then followed by activity time for the children and a closing ritual for the families, young and old.

At First United, we endeavor to create opportunities for fellowship. Although this was difficult during the years of the Covid-19 pandemic, we offer fellowship once again after our services, with coffee and treats served at the back of the sanctuary, providing newcomers a chance to get to know other members of our church family. There are also special opportunities during the year to get together for lunch after church, organized by the fellowship committee. One example is the annual Sunday School BBQ. For the other end of the age spectrum, there is a Spring Fling held in June for elderly members of First United. Finally, there is a luncheon at the congregational meeting where the annual report is delivered.

First United has been successful in establishing and encouraging many mid-week groups within our facilities, some of which include the following: Rangers, chair yoga, Yoga in Harmony, 2nd Truro Guides, Tai chi, Alzheimer's support group, Happy Harmonies, New Horizons Band, the Craft and Conversation Group, Stagecoach North, and the Eagle Sunrise Breakfast Club (held at Smitty's Restaurant).

There are also opportunities for learning and spiritual growth, engaging directly with our ordained minister in theological discussion. One example is the morning Faith Formation program, where a book study over a 6-week period forms the basis of the discourse. In addition, there are eight monthly "Evening Pause" sessions which focus on a particular topic through minister-selected text, videos and/or music.

Theological education for children happens in two forums. First, there is a team of volunteers who each commit one month to delivering a short lesson to the children in the sanctuary during Sunday morning worship. Second, after the story time in the sanctuary, the Sunday School program follows in the church hall. It is currently being delivered by another group of dedicated volunteers who teach a lesson and/or engage the children in an activity or craft.

Under the banner of the UCW, many women gather monthly for fellowship, planning, prayer and/or study on topics both secular and religious. The women offer invaluable support to many aspects of the church's life such as: fund raising for the M&S fund as well as special projects within First United; decorating the sanctuary for special occasions or holidays; helping to care for and maintain the church facilities; and participating in many outreach programs like the community giveaway of free items after their annual yard sale. The UCW recognized that even the food bank could not keep up with the local need for an adequate food supply. The UCW recently constructed an enclosed box with shelves stationed in the church parking lot, called "Ida's Cupboard". Here, food can be dropped off by donors and picked up by those in need, anytime. Many UCW members currently occupy positions on other Church committees.

At First United, there is a Pastoral Care Team which provides regular visits, cards and/or phone calls to elderly church members and others who are homebound. The team has also, on occasion, arranged transportation for members wanting to attend Sunday worship but who were unable to get there otherwise. In addition, there is a small but dedicated group outside of the Pastoral Care team who provide monthly ministry and music to three of the nursing homes

in Truro. This reduces the demand on the ordained minister's time while still allowing focus on visitation with those in special circumstances.

Music is an integral part of our worship at First United and it has a long history of excellence. The current Minister of Music is an enthusiastic, dedicated, and gifted individual who has created a dynamic and varied music environment that reaches out to people of diverse backgrounds, interests, and ages. The Mixed-Voice Church Choir and the Handbell Ensemble take turns providing music for the Sunday morning services under his direction. During the summer months when the handbell choir and church choir take a break, he directs a pickup choir called "Joyful Noise", made up of individuals who like to sing and who deliver the anthem that week during worship. He also coordinates summer lunchtime concerts in the church sanctuary, showcasing local talent. The Minister of Music has recently initiated a Choral Apprenticeship Program for four high school student musicians who sing in the church choir and have the opportunity to sing solos, play instruments, and lead in other aspects of church life, according to their interests. In addition, he reaches out into the community working with other choral groups (a new social justice youth choir affiliated with First United called Resonance, and the Cantabile Singers, a mixed voice community choir of which he is the artistic director). These choirs, along with The Cantabile Youth Singers, rehearse at First United and perform concerts in the sanctuary for the community of Truro. The Minister of Music helps to coordinate the use of First United as a concert venue for other community performers during the year. All of these music events facilitated by the Minister of Music are significant fundraisers, either for First United or for local social justice initiatives. One example is the event called "Choirs For Comfort", with proceeds going towards local charities.

Our Outreach Committee enthusiastically and tirelessly reaches out to help those in our community who are disadvantaged. Twice a year, First United's Outreach group participates with other churches in Truro to prepare food and provide kitchen help for free community dinners. Each year, through the Colchester Christmas Index Program, the Outreach Committee coordinates the assembly of food hampers with gifts to local families who are experiencing poverty. First United Outreach works to support other local community organizations in Truro such as Haven House, Lotus House and Transition House. In addition, Outreach continues to host Food Bank Sundays where food is collected at church and brought to the Colchester Food Bank. The Outreach Committee supports and advocates for the UCW's "Ida's Cupboard" initiative. Besides local initiatives, the Outreach committee raises awareness of projects or causes embraced by the UCC Mission and Service organization, and it submits the contributions to M&S from both the congregational donations and the UCW. Outreach also oversees First United's 'Change for Change' program, which supports three young girls to attend New Hope High School in Rabinal, Guatemala.

First United is most decidedly a church where the congregation endeavours to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serving one another with whatever gift each has received" (1 Peter 4:10), thereby connecting its members to God and to each other, but also engaging in the wider community in an atmosphere of caring and service.

TRURO, A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE

First United Church is centrally located in Truro with its congregation attending from many bordering areas. It is a quiet but active town with city life only 60 minutes away in Halifax. It is a safe, beautiful place to live.

While the population of Truro is only 13,000 people, surrounding communities boost the number to approximately 50,000 people. Truro is known as the Hub of Nova Scotia and is easily accessed by major highways. Halifax International Airport is only 45 minutes away. A variety of shopping is available in the historic downtown core, at the three mall locations and at the Power Centre Development.

A full education program is offered in Truro with pre-school and modern public schools. Our high school, Cobequid Educational Centre, has a fine reputation for sports, music, musical theatre, art and academic excellence. French Immersion, Acadian and a private Christian School are found within the community. Truro has the Nova Scotia Community College and the Dalhousie Agricultural College. Truro provides a complete range of health services to meet any requirements including alternative health. A full service hospital, The Colchester East Hants Health Centre, opened in 2013 and is located within the town.

Truro's entertainment has an inviting small town atmosphere with amateur theatre, choirs, bands, music festivals and art programs. The Marigold Cultural Centre provides vibrant encouragement of the arts in our community. Our own Music and Concert Committee hosts its own busy concert series which draws its audience from the community, as well as the congregation.

Truro boasts the beautiful Victoria Park in the centre of town, with trails and biking trails, winding through more than 3,000 acres of natural woodland and past cascading waterfalls. On the edge of town, the Cobequid biking and hiking trails wind their way along the Salmon River. For those who like winter sports, skiing at Wentworth is only 30 minutes away. The Rath Eastlink Community Centre is a multi-purpose sports facility in Truro with an NHL sized arena and competition-sized swimming pool. Within Truro, or nearby, are several golf courses, tennis courts, skating and curling rinks, bowling alleys and opportunities for hunting, fishing and boating.

Further information about the town and surrounding area can be found at the following websites:

Truro - <http://truro.ca/>

Millbrook First Nation – <http://www.millbrookfirstnation.net/>

Glooscap Heritage Centre: <http://www.glooscapheritagecentre.com/>

Statistics Canada Community Profile of Truro – <https://www12.statcam.gc.ca/census>

STATISTICS

First United currently has 428 listed persons under Pastoral Care as outlined in the 2023 Annual report. There are 330 members and adherents as of December 31st, 2023. The average number of envelopes used for local givings during the year was 27 while 84 persons were on PAR. The church is a strong supporter of M&S, usually equaling or exceeding the budgeted amount each year. The year 2023 saw 1 wedding and 10 funerals.

After covid restrictions lifted, people began to return to church each Sunday. With on-line streaming, and the help of a young student technician, attendance has improved but it has not yet returned to the level of the pre-covid period, of around 100 to 150. In 2023, Sunday attendance (in the sanctuary) was closer to 75 to 100 people. Statistics for online followers show an average of 70 followers per Sunday.

At the initiative of our ordained minister, and with the aid of volunteers, the ministry of *Families with Young Children* was launched. Currently, 13 families are invited to a monthly get together and supper, with an average attendance of 4 families and 8 children at each event. There are 10 children in the Sunday School program, with varying weekly attendance.

THE FUTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the last profile report was written, First United has seen many positive outcomes in spite of the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic created for the life and work of the church, and the departure within the last year of two of its ministerial staff. The ability to livestream worship services vastly improved because of the addition of a technician, drawing the congregation closer to those who cannot presently come to church. There is a feeling of renewed commitment and energy in the numerous lay volunteers who have stepped up to actively participate in worship services, teach Sunday school, and engage in numerous Outreach projects. The dedicated church musicians and the return of many concert events demonstrate that First United serves as an important community hub for culture and the arts. The vibrancy of the Resonance Youth Choir, a group spawned from the enthusiasm of four young musical apprentices in the church choir, has generated a feeling of hope and possibility for the future of the church's outreach into the community.

The profile team has identified five areas where we believe action is to be **essential** in order to sustain the future of the church. These five areas are not listed in any particular order; they were considered equal in their degree of importance. **Priority items for immediate consideration are indicated in bold blue type.**

Changing the attitude about change itself

Several members of the congregation participated in a faith formation program in the fall of 2023, centred on the book "Turning Ourselves Inside Out: Thriving Christian Communities" by Rob Fennell and Russell Daye. This book was an excellent resource in helping church members who are faced with the challenge of changing circumstances like finances, personnel, community membership, and so on. The book provided many ideas on how to engage in the process of reimagining or reinventing the life and work of any church, and how to steer it in a better direction. The first major recommendation of the profile team is:

- **To engage the Church Council, committee members, and other interested members of the congregation, in a half-day or full-day training session using the book "Turning Ourselves Inside Out" as a resource base to foster a "YES" mindset needed for change. It is also recommended that one or both of the authors be retained to deliver this training session as it will help to lay the groundwork for the future direction of the church.**

Staffing

While a change in the mindset of the congregation is the start of imagining the future of First United, the leadership role of the ministerial staff is also central in importance. The profile team heard unanimously that the current ministerial team comprised of a full-time ordained minister and a full-time designated congregational minister of music currently operates together like a well-oiled machine. A significant number of committee members and congregants expressed their wish that the same members of the ministry team remain in their current positions. The words used by committees and members of the congregation at large to describe the present team were “calm, creative, cooperative, collaborative, supportive, encouraging and spiritual”. Because of the reduction in staffing within the last year, the current ministerial team has clearly demonstrated its ability to inspire and empower the laity to step up into new roles and act as partners in carrying on the work of the church. The second set of recommendations of the profile team is:

- **To maintain the current staffing complement of one full-time qualified and eligible minister, one full-time designated congregational minister of music, and an office administrator.**
- The revised job description for the fulltime qualified and eligible ministry position follows in the last section of the report.
- To require that job descriptions, interviews and hiring be done in full consultation between the M&P committee, finance committee, and (for cleaning/custodial positions only) the property committee before any contract is signed.
- To determine if the cleaning/custodial staff need WHMIS or GHS training, and to ensure that if such training is necessary, it is provided.

Building Use

One of the central concerns heard by the profile team lay in the fact that the church sanctuary, as a heritage building over one hundred years old, is costly to maintain and repair, especially over the last few years where new roofing, windows, sprinklers and heating systems have been required. The church hall, grounds, and parking lot also require maintenance and repair from time to time. Instead of considering the two church buildings as financial “drains”, the buildings at First United are places where the community gathers to work, eat, worship, enjoy the arts, practice music, and engage in fitness. Churches that have been successful in turning themselves around from financial decline have done so when they engage in partnerships with the wider community, and repurposing buildings is one way in which that can happen. Kindred Works is a United Church affiliated organization that specializes in helping communities of faith make decisions about how to turn their buildings into multi-purpose shared spaces or into much needed housing, an issue of central concern across Canada at present. The third set of recommendations of the profile team is:

- **To contact Kindred Works, The Town of Truro, as well as any provincial and federal government agencies connected with housing initiatives, to explore the possibility of**

converting church property into revenue generating housing and/or community based multi-purpose spaces.

- **To continue to engage in active discussion with The Marigold Centre of the Arts and to discuss the possibility of an informal partnership regarding the use of the church sanctuary as a potential concert venue and revenue generator. Any possible changes to the sanctuary (removal of all pews to an alternate type of seating, changing the choir loft, etc), would also necessitate an acoustic audit.**
- To make better and more inclusive use of the church buildings by:
 - improving the washrooms and making them accessible for potential tenants/clients.
 - installing an elevator so all floors in the hall can be accessed by potential tenants/clients.
 - replacing several pews in the sanctuary immediately with chairs for the benefit of those with physical challenges who are currently unable to sit in the pews for worship or community concerts. This will also allow more flexibility in the use of the space within the sanctuary.
 - studying current market trends and revising all current rental contracts and rates in light of the rising costs for building and parking lot maintenance.
 - exploring the possibility of installing some EV chargers in the parking lot.
- To update the assignment of security codes for the alarm system, the call list for the alarm system, and the list of who has keys to access to the buildings.
- To proceed with fundraising measures to offset heating system expenses.
- To establish an ad hoc committee for the writing of grant applications.

People

It is not only buildings that require maintenance, care and attention. The people using those buildings also require care and attention. The profile team was made aware that the pandemic had a negative impact on the faith community, where isolation and disconnect resulted from the widespread practice of social distancing. Now that the world is learning to live with Covid and vaccinations as an inconvenient but seasonal regularity like the cold or the flu, after-church coffee and treat rituals are once again helping to re-establish those lost social connections. The monthly dinners that draw in young families are another important example of how younger members are able to connect with each other and with the faith community. People reaching out to each other to work for “the common good” is at the heart of why the church exists. Fostering that connection with other church members and with the community at large is essential. Truro is a community with a great deal of diversity. First United could act as an ally to marginalized communities and provide safe space and support to their members. The fourth set of recommendations of the profile team is:

- **To create a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place for persons of any ethnicity, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or economic status by:**

- regularly lifting up social justice centred concerns during Sunday worship, in the bulletin, and on the church website.
 - continuing to celebrate the diversity of God’s people on occasions such as Black History month, Pride Day, National Truth and Reconciliation Day, during worship, in the bulletin, and on the church website.
 - having an existing church committee or an ad hoc committee actively investigate the possibility of becoming an Affirming Congregation.
- To place more emphasis on highlighting First United’s ministry, welcoming new members and connecting better with others during Sunday worship using the following practices:
 - posting greeters or ushers at church entrances weekly (with clear guidelines on greeting/ushering in a simple guidebook of instruction)
 - asking newcomers to sign a guest book
 - placing “pew cards” with pencils in the pews so people can request contact or ask questions
 - asking new people to stand up during the service so they can be recognized by everyone
 - “passing the peace”/shaking hands/fist bumping during the service so people get to know others sitting nearby
 - making nametags that could be worn during the service
 - providing church bulletins, pamphlets or “flyers” (sponsored weekly or monthly by members of the congregation to offset cost) with written announcements, as well as information on church programs and church contacts
 - To reinstate a “welcome dinner” for new members
 - To “follow up” on families who have had a child baptized at First United, by sending birthday cards for the child, extending invitations to the monthly family dinners, providing information about Sunday School
 - To find opportunities for youth to assist with church tasks or outreach projects (i.e. decorating the sanctuary, singing or making cards for nursing home residents, helping with initiatives to benefit Maggie’s Place, connecting with Guatemalan students supported by the congregation)
 - To contact previous members of First United who are no longer attending to inquire about their well-being and to find out how to reconnect
 - To provide rides to homebound members who may wish to attend church in person but lack transport
 - Using the resource “Sharing the Ministry Program”, compile a congregational “inventory of skills” whereby every church member can be canvassed for what they might be able to offer the church in its life and work (e.g. baking or cooking, trade skills, preaching when the minister is away, painting rooms, teaching Sunday school, praying at home or in a prayer circle for specific intentions, donating tickets to a concert at the church, etc)
 - To improve and update the church website, and to post short video clips online about ongoing projects or groups within the church

- To continue to connect regularly with other local churches and community groups, as well as the township of Truro and local schools about potential outreach projects of mutual interest (i.e. school supply or breakfast program drives, socks and toiletries for the homeless, community dinners, etc)
- To continue to collaborate with the Central Colchester United Churches (CCUC) about sharing programs or resources

Governance

When a church has a vision for its future, strong ministerial leadership, a building to engage in its work, and people to do that work, that church then requires a mechanism to oversee the entire process, to make sure it runs efficiently and is tracking on its proper course. At First United, that mechanism is called the Church Council. The Church Council model of governance was adopted over fourteen years ago, and its structure and function are currently under review. The last profile report two years ago indicated that changes were needed to improve the way that Council functioned, and some of these changes are still required. Most important for the operation of the “church machine” is good communication, in all of its forms. The fifth set of recommendations of the profile team is:

- **To have the new council chair and vice-chair oversee the compiling of the updated, accurate and comprehensive Church Council handbook as soon as possible. This handbook should:**
 - **name all of its existing committees by their proper names and include the finance committee**
 - **provide realistic numbers of members and guidelines on membership**
 - **provide an accurate list of responsibilities or duties**
 - **be sent in its entire, updated form to the office administrator (both in a hard-copy and electronic format) for filing**
- To improve the practise of church record keeping, all minutes of the committees and Council are to be sent to the church office for filing and so they can be accessed for future reference. The official minutes of the Council along with the committee minutes are currently kept by the Clerk of Council and are periodically sent to the Archives in New Brunswick. These documents can only be sent after approval by Council.
- To consider removing the requirement of UCW membership to serve as liaison on other Council committees. Instead, those committees would forward their minutes to the UCW after they hold meetings. The UCW could then determine how they wish to assist that committee with projects of mutual interest.
- To improve dialogue between the Council, its committees, and the Office Administrator so that items that require action between them are clearly communicated (i.e. making announcements, booking meeting space, report filing or compiling, etc)
- To assure equal treatment of all Council committees, it is recommended that separate bank accounts for the operation of church committees be closed (with the exception of

- the UCW) and the funds placed into the central account for church operations, with each committee having full independence within their budgets set at the annual meeting
- To more frequently highlight the M&S fund and the work it supports during worship, in the announcements and on the website.
 - To consider fundraising as a responsibility of the Council, not of any one committee or group, and to list this responsibility appropriately in the revised Council handbook.
 - To clarify any procedures and protocols in performing various tasks. (e.g. issuing receipts for all funds coming to the office, having cleaners contact property chair and not office administrator about duties, overtime, office hours, how often bills are dealt with and cheque runs are done, etc.)

In conclusion, the profile team believes **it is the responsibility of the entire Church Council to decide how best to move forward and follow up on these recommendations in order to secure First United's future.** Some may be acted upon with the help of specific committees or individuals. Some may be more difficult to assign to any one committee, like the exploration with Kindred Works or Marigold Centre for the use of the church buildings in creating housing or a centre for performing arts. The Council may decide to solicit help from interested congregation members as well as existing committee members to form ad hoc committees to study certain issues. If First United Church is to have a long future, everyone will need to work together – congregation, committees, Council and staff. Change is inevitable in response to a changing world, but it is part of a natural, evolutionary process that governs creation. To reach any significant goal, one must leave one's own comfort zone. It is time for us as a faith family to leave our comfort zone and engage with the wider Truro community in a different and perhaps more meaningful way.

Seeking revelations for new opportunity means that members of the church must engage in "deep listening" through prayer and dialogue, when God moves from being just a concept to an active Presence. A sense of direction and a course of action are easier to discern if members of the church listen with an open heart. Taking action for the future requires courage and involves risk-taking. It may involve looking at difficult circumstances, but trying to see new perspectives and acting regardless of the risk. A way forward may begin in uncertainty, but then God's Presence moves through and with the church as it journeys forward in its work to connect us with the Divine and with each other. It is the hope of the profile team that the members of First United will read the recommendations for its future with an open heart, listen to what it is the Spirit is calling us to do, and act with conviction as we go forward.

The Proposed Ministry Team

We recommend that the congregation keep in place the full-time position of Minister of Music, a Congregational Designated Ministry Position. It is our hope that Mr. Chris Bowman would remain in this post.

We recommend that the Congregation seek a full-time Minister of Word, Sacrament and Spiritual Formation. We request that the Regional Council approve the creation of this position.

We recommend that the Council and/or Congregation dissolve the Profile Team and form a new Search Committee for the position of Minister of Word, Sacrament and Spiritual Formation.

Position Description for the Minister of Word, Sacrament and Spiritual Formation.

This is a full time (40 hours per week) position description.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Worship:

- a) In collaboration with the Minister of Music, plan and preside at the Sunday morning worship: work collaboratively with the Office Administrator, the Audio-Visual Technician, and the Music, Worship and Concert Committee as appropriate.
- b) Prepare and deliver reflections/sermons that are relevant for First United Church and to the wider world, sensitive to our faith tradition.
- c) Deliver the reflection/sermon twice a month.
- d) In collaboration with the Minister of Music and the Music, Worship and Concert Committee, to co-ordinate a 'College of Preachers', i.e. guest preachers to join us once a month from not-for-profit organizations aligned with the vision of the United Church of Canada, and/or from among faith leaders within or outside of the United Church of Canada, and/or from lay members of the congregation.
*This will continue to require a budget item to cover honoraria of a minimum of \$200 plus expenses per preacher.
- e) In collaboration with the Minister of Music and the Spiritual Formation Committee and the Music, Worship and Concert Committee, plan and support a variety of worship experiences.

Sacraments and Related Duties

- a) Administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- b) Provide opportunities for receiving new members into our Congregation through Professions of Faith and Transfers of Membership and Confirmation.
- c) Preside at marriages and funerals for members and adherents.

- d) Meet with parents, couples and families in preparation for the above commitments.
- e) Support the work of Regional Council.

Pastoral Care

- a) Maintain a close, collaborative, and supportive working relationship with the Pastoral Care Committee.
- b) Provide spiritual support/pastoral care for First United Church members and adherents who are seriously ill, bereaved, or in crisis.

*Please note: the ongoing non-emergency pastoral visitation of the Congregation will rest in the capable hand of our Pastoral Care Committee.

Administration of Congregation

- a) Act as a resource for Committees of Council.
- b) Attend all meetings of Church Council and of the Trustees. Attend meetings of the Spiritual Formation Committee and the Music, Worship and Concert Committee as needed to support the worship service and Spiritual Formation for all ages.
- c) Attend other committee meetings as the work of the committee might require from time to time.
- d) Attend weekly staff meetings.
- e) Provide communication to the Congregation using traditional and electronic media, e.g., Anniversary, Christmas and Easter letters and our electronic church newsletter.
- f) Empower the laity through “Sharing the Ministry” and other supporting initiatives.

Spiritual Formation/Outreach

- a) In collaboration with The Spiritual Formation Committee, develop and/or support Faith Formation programs for all ages, including a four-to-six week Spiritual Formation group in the Fall and another in the Spring for members of the Congregation and other interested persons. To continue to facilitate occasional “Evening Pause” sessions, which serves as Spiritual Formation for those who cannot attend daytime sessions.
- b) Work with The Spiritual Formation Committee to recruit and train teachers for the Sunday School, and to select resource materials.
- c) Support the recently established *Families with Young Children* Ministry. These families gather once a month for a meal and time together. Work with laity to develop a project-centred program for the children as part of this experience.
- d) Support outreach efforts including working collegially with relevant committees of First United Church, and with individuals, committees, and ministerial staff of other faith communities upon request and as supported by M&P.
- e) Support and encourage the work of the Council as it 1) continues to explore the five areas of action described in the 2024 Community of Faith Profile, and 2) as it continues to build relationship with other First United Churches in the area, through involvement in the Central Colchester United Churches (CCUC).

- f) In collaboration with Council plan and facilitate a half day session for the Congregation around the theme of “Changing the attitude around change itself”. This might be organized around the book “Turning Ourselves Inside Out: Thriving Christian Communities” by Rob Fennell and Russell Daye. *Alternatively*, explore the same theme through a series of sermons.

Time Allocations

- a) Worship and Sacraments – 40% - 16 hours
- b) Faith Formation/Outreach – 25% - 10 hours
- c) Pastoral Care – 20 % - 8 hours
- d) Administration – 15% - 6 hours

It is understood that these time allocations, which reflect the relative importance of the specific categories, are meant as a guide. It may be necessary to revise the specific time allocations in collaboration with the Ministry and Personnel Committee, given the challenges inherent in a church community.

Accountability

The Minister is accountable to the congregation through the Church Council and Ministry and Personnel Committee.

Personal Qualifications

The applicant must possess:

- a) The ability to work productively in a team setting with the Minister of Music and the Church Administrator, and to recognize and promote the skills and gifts of all team members; the ability to work collaboratively with church committees and members of the congregation.
- b) The ability to motivate, encourage and support lay leaders within the Congregation and to inspire their participation.
- c) The ability to be forward thinking, to be inclusive and to lift up those marginalized by gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, disability or economic status.
- d) The ability to offer clear, calm, thoughtful and creative leadership.
- e) The ability to manage time and prioritize work, knowing strengths and asking for assistance as needed.

Professional Qualifications

- a) Qualified and eligible ministry personnel in the United Church
- b) Theologically progressive
- c) Skilled and knowledgeable in programming for Spiritual Formation

Remuneration

- a) Remuneration is based on the table of minimum salaries for ministry personnel in the document “2024 Minimum Salaries & Reimbursements for Ministry Personnel” available on the United Church of Canada website, and as negotiated with the Minister.
www.united-church.ca/leadership/church-administration/compensation-model
- b) The Minister is entitled to two days off per week (consecutive or separate).
- c) The Minister is entitled to five weeks of vacation a year, including six Sundays.
- d) All statutory holidays (12) in Nova Scotia are recognized by First United Church as a day off or a day off in lieu depending on the day of the week that they fall on including: New Year’s Day, Nova Scotia Heritage day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Benefits

- a) Study Leave of three weeks per year as defined in “The Manual of the United Church of Canada”. The dates of continuing education will be negotiated with the Ministry and Personnel Committee
- b) Continuing education and educational resources including the cost of attending workshops/conferences, purchasing books, attaining electronic and other resources relevant to providing ministry leadership will be reimbursed as defined in the United Church document “Minimum Salaries for Ministry Personnel”

*Please note: the 2024 full time annual amount of \$1,640.

- c) Travel remuneration will be at a rate established in the current United Church of Canada, Salary and Allowances Schedules and Moving Costs.”

*Please note: the 2024 rate of \$0.55 per km.

- d) Basic phone/cell package for church business outside the office
- e) Secretarial Support – The pastoral charge employs an Office Administrator
- f) Moving expenses where applicable
- g) Internet service in the office.

Performance Reviews

The Ministry and Personnel Committee will conduct annual performance reviews of the Minister. A wide range of individuals may be consulted for the review, such as committee chairpersons, congregation members, and other staff.

Financial Analysis

The annual budget is in the order of \$400,000 with salaries, heating fuel, United Church assessment, insurance and utilities being the five major costs, representing about 85% of the budget. Pre covid, the church operating expenses were supplemented each year by \$50,000 to \$90,000 from the Trustees, of which about \$38,000 came from dividends and interest from investments, with the balance coming from capital. Remarkably, during this period, share values increased substantially with the result that the capital did not proportionally decrease. However, in 2023 the church required about \$180,000 from the Trustees to cover the operating deficit. In 2024, due to a reduced staff compared with other years, this figure is expected to decrease.

At the beginning of 2023, total discretionary capital held by the Trustees amounted to about \$1,400,000. This sum does not include what is held in several non-discretionary accounts such as the Moffat or Caudle funds. A total of \$400,000 was spent last year on covering the deficit and the final cost of the heating system. At the beginning of 2024, the discretionary capital had only dropped to about \$1,100,000; the apparent discrepancy in the balance is explained by a simultaneous increase in the value of the RBC shares. As a result, there are currently sufficient funds to continue the ministry at First United Church, but not indefinitely. It is time to “turn ourselves inside out” on a foundation of financial sustainability. It is our hope that by achieving this goal, First United will remain a vibrant church family long into the future.

References:

Pastoral Relations: Guidelines for a Community of Faith Profile, The United Church of Canada, 3250 Bloor St., West Suite 200. Copyright April 2020.

Turning Ourselves Inside Out: Thriving Christian Communities, Russell Daye and Robert C. Fennell, Fortress Press, 2021.

Holy Bible, NRSV

Websites:

<https://kindredworks.ca>

<https://united-church.ca/leadership/church-administration/kindred-works-and-united-property-resource-corporation-uprc>

Documents:

2021 Community of Faith Profile, First United Church, Truro

2022 Annual Report, First United Church, Truro

Church Council Booklet, First United Church, Truro. Amended 2023.