

NEWS AT FIRST

JUNE 2026

ISSUE #9



Welcome to our 9th edition of NewsAtFirst. It's hard to believe that what was an unskilled attempt in June 2022 to create an e-newsletter has grown legs and continues to update and inform. No one is more surprised than your Communications Committee! We hope you find something of interest, perhaps something new, and also a reminder of how much actually happens at First United Church. Please feel free to make suggestions for future issues. Your committee members are: Alison MacLean, Carolyn Hunt, Robin Diether, and Pam Bowman. Enjoy!

CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES



Lily Arthurs

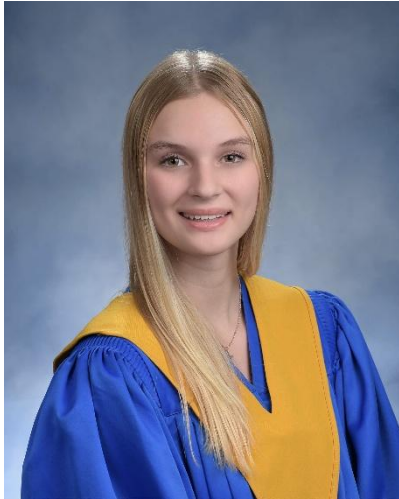
Lily is an International Baccalaureate graduate of Cobequid Educational Centre. She will be attending Mount Allison University in September with a major in biopsychology. She plans to pursue a career in the medical field. She is looking forward to continuing her involvement in music through Mount Allison musicals and band program.

Ella Braedley

Ella is graduating from Cobequid Educational Center (CEC) June 2026. She will be attending Mount Allison University in September 2026, Majoring in Political Science with minor in French, and with interest in Social Justice & Humanities

Ella is the granddaughter of Bob and Marie Braedley, and Louise and the late Roger Reid.





Tate Marie Braedley

Tate will graduate in June from Oromocto High School in New Brunswick. She will be attending UNB in the fall, working towards a BSc with a major in Kinesiology. Tate plans on continuing to Med school to be a Cardiothoracic Surgeon.

Tate is the daughter of Ken and Neala Braedley, and the granddaughter of Bob and Marie Braedley, and Colleen and the late Greg Glasgow.

Sam Campbell

“You didn’t say you wanted a Grad Photo, Mom!” Sam is a member of the CEC 2026 Graduating class and is heading off to St Mary’s University to study Psychology. She is the daughter of Joy Hewitt and the sister of Mackenzie.



William Bruce Casey

William, the son of Bruce and Natalie Casey, will graduate grade 12, and has been accepted to Acadia University where he will be studying Industrial Engineering. Grandparents are Earl & Eleanor Casey and Bob & Noelle Brown.

Hudson Ferris

Hudson is graduating from Warwick Academy, Bermuda. He plans to attend university in September. His grandmother is Marilyn Jordan.



Olivia Gouthro

Olivia is graduating from Cobequid Educational Centre. She will be heading to Oakville, Ontario this fall, to pursue her passion, in the Bachelor of Music Theatre Honours Program at Sheridan College. She is extremely grateful to Chris Bowman and the First United Church Choir and Choral Apprenticeship Program, which has played an important role in developing her musicality and deepening her growth as a musician.

Colby Wasson

Colby is the son of Craig and Suzanne Wasson and grandson of Diane Wasson. He is graduating from Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School in Antigonish. This fall, he will attend the University of New Brunswick to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology and has also been recruited to play AUS soccer for the UNB Reds.

Throughout high school, Colby has been actively involved in soccer, basketball, cross-country, and Student Council. He has also



been a dedicated leader and volunteer within Unified Sports and Special Olympics initiatives, helping create a more inclusive and supportive school community for all students. He was honoured to receive the Angus Kell Award, recognizing athletic skill, strong academic standing, and leadership. His family is incredibly proud of the young man he has become and excited to see what the future holds for him.



Stella Mae Elizabeth White

Stella is graduating from Citadel High School in Halifax this June. She is the daughter of Cameron and Laura White; the sister of Carter and Jessie; and the granddaughter of Calder and Donna Creelman, Janet White, and George and Kathy White. She has been involved in swimming as a lifeguard, instructor and supervisor and in club volleyball as a player and assistant coach. She plays the piano and likes hiking and overnight camping, going to the movies and shopping with her friends. She plans to attend Mount

Allison University in the Fall to study science. Congratulations and Best Wishes from all her family as she takes this next step.

Then Let Us Sing!

“An investment in faith formation and spiritual health of our United Church”

The United Church of Canada’s most recent collection of songs was released in 2025 to celebrate its 100th anniversary. This collection, “Then Let Us Sing”, features over 150 new songs lifting up diverse voices, languages, musical styles and cultures, as well as issues of justice and eco-theology. It was developed by a diverse mix of



volunteers from the UCC General Council staff and from United Church folk across Canada who worked to “ensure our values of deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice” were “integrated and reflected through all aspects of this new resource”.

Our Ministry Team embraced this resource early on and for several months have included hymns from “Then Let us Sing” in our Sunday morning services.

Last Fall and this Spring, Chris Bowman gathered choir directors and choir members from seven churches in the Region for a series of 6 workshops. Pictured in the photo accompanying this article are Chris and a few of the members of the group singing together at the April 29th session.

It was a rich six-week journey through a varied landscape of tunes, rhythms, cultures, languages, blessings and prayers. It is a wonderful resource to add to our existing and well-loved hymn books, as it lifts up and celebrates our evolving faith and challenges us to be open to diversity, to change and to the exploration of challenging issues of today.

Now.... Let Us Sing!

Note: The quotes in this article were taken from the on-line resource from the United Church of Canada found at www.Thenletussing.ca

A Proud Moment for Wanalda and Her Family **and for Our Family of Faith**



This Spring, at its May 9th Convocation, Wanalda Parsons, having completed the course requirements, received her Certificate in Stewardship from the Atlantic School of Theology.

Stewardship has long been part of Wanalda's Life. In the 1980's she worked with the UCC as a medical missionary in northern British

Columbia in a small church hospital serving seven indigenous communities.

For the past eight years Wanalda has served on the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Regional Council as Region Representative. During that time, she has been Secretary to the Regional Retiree Committee and Chair of the Region Stewardship Committee. In 2022, Wanalda was a Commissioner to the 44th General Council.

We are very fortunate to have Wanalda sitting on First United's Church Council, not only as the Region Representative, but also as a member of the Nominating Committee.

Congratulations, Wanalda, on your most recent achievement!

Friends on a Journey

Contributed by our Roving Reporter, Honorah Sheppard

Rev. Sandra Carruthers founded the group *Friends on a Journey* in the fall of 2025 as a way to get to know members of the congregation. When asked where she came up with the name, she answered thoughtfully, "It arrived unexpectedly, almost as a gift," adding that she feels we are all on a journey. It is never too late to meet new people, form new friendships, and take time to truly connect.

The gatherings offer participants a welcoming mix of spiritual reflection and lighthearted activities, creating a balance of meaningful conversation and fun. Just as Sandra was "gifted" the name, we are gifted by her offering this opportunity to gather and make new friends.



The final gathering focused on the theme of "Hospitality." Sandra invited us to reflect on its deeper meaning sharing the poem *The House Guest* by Rumi, a 13th century Sufi mystic and poet. The poem reminds us that life's journey is enriched when we welcome each experience — and one another — with openness, compassion, and hospitality.

In this spirit, you are warmly invited to join us next fall for "More " *Friends on a Journey*!

John McElhiney – Musician Extraordinaire

Contributed by Carolyn Hunt



John McElhiney is a well-known member of First United Church and perhaps best known for his prowess as an organist. He has, on many occasions, filled in for Chris, taking choir rehearsals, accompanying First United Church choir in the loft and even making his way to the grand piano to play fabulous duets with Chris.

John's very early music education began when he was seven with Mrs. Helen K. Embree, a well-known music teacher in Truro. He participated yearly in the Truro Music Festival and one day while in his early teens, Mrs. Embree suggested he try the organ, presenting him with an introductory organ book which contained exercises and various short, graded organ pieces. John soon fell in love with the instrument and began playing services at various Truro churches and taking some organ lessons with Professor Douglas Baker, Organist and Choirmaster here at First United Church for many years.

John graduated from Mount Allison University in 1961, earning both a B. Comm. Degree and a B. Education Degree, and in 1965 earned a Diploma in Town and Regional Planning from the University of Toronto. While at Mt A he studied organ under Professor Allison Patterson and became an integral component of the Music Department as a rehearsal accompanist for the Mt. Allison Choral Society and accompanist for numerous vocal students.

His career as an educator began at Central Colchester High School in Onslow, and John also became the Organist and Choirmaster here at First, succeeding the long tenure of Professor Baker. In 1964 he relocated to Toronto where he eventually continued his teaching career before retiring as Head of the Business Department at York Mills Collegiate Institute in 1995. During his 31 years in Toronto, John's musical life continued to be enriched while singing in numerous choirs such as the Hart House Glee Club at U of T; St. George's United Church Adult Choir; Toronto Symphony Chorus and serving as supply organist in numerous churches in the city and nearby Hamilton.

John's unrequited love for music that fills his soul took (and still takes) him to many far-off places. He became the accompanist and chaperone for St. George's United Church Youth Choir while on Canadian tours (1967) and Europe (1970) and regaled me with wonderfully interesting tales during their travels and performances. To name a few ... St. Paul's and Westminster Cathedrals, London; The Great Church of St. James, The Hague; Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris; St. Peter's Basilica, Rome; The Duomo, Florence; St. Mark's Cathedral, Venice; singing for Pope Paul V in the courtyard of the Apostolic Palace Castel Gandolfo, and attending the famous Passion Play in Oberammergau, Germany.

In 1996, John spent the year in Prague, teaching English as a Second Language. While there, continued to execute his plan to create opportunities that would allow him to experience many extraordinarily beautiful organ and choral performances in Prague as well as throughout The Czech Republic, Germany and Austria; one highlight was being able to attend a morning service at St. Thomas Church, Leipzig, where J.S. Bach served as cantor and organist for 23 years.

When I asked him if there was a 'notable large' organ, he informed me the largest functional pipe organ in the world is The Wanamaker Organ (28,750 pipes, 451 stops and six manuals) located in the Grand Court of the former Macy's Department Store in Philadelphia, PA. In his travels he also has heard two noontime organ recitals on what is reputed to be the largest church organ in the world in St. Stephen's Cathedral, Passau, Germany (17,974 pipes and 233 stops and 5 manuals).

In closing, if ever we are fortunate enough to hear a pianist/organist in performance, perhaps we could more appreciate that this doesn't just happen; it's by their having spent both endless hours of practice as well as a considerable amount of money that has enabled these musicians to share their talent with us.

If I had the space, I would try to take you all where John took me over the course of a three-hour conversation, ... without even packing my bags!

John left me with one last quote: "The best Stop on an organ is always the acoustic of the building where it is located".



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

Saturday, September 19th : ***Save the Date!***

As many (and I trust most) of you know, we at First United have partnered with Relèven to help us envision the next phase of our life together as a congregation. With their guidance and expertise, we will clarify our vision for ministries within our buildings and how we can better steward all of our assets in service to the wider community. As part of this process, Relèven consultants, Dave Harder and Mike Wood Daly, will be conducting a workshop to support us in clarifying our identity, vision, hopes and dreams. During our time together, Dave and Mike will engage us in a series of creative exercises to listen to us, stir our imaginations, and help us think creatively and concretely about potential directions forward to live into our vision and values.

Your voice in this creative process is greatly valued. We promise this will be worthwhile use of your time! Save the Date: Saturday, September 19th in Memorial Hall.

Those of you who were in Sunday worship on May 3rd , and/or attended the post-worship gathering after worship that morning, and/or received in your inbox on May 20th the video links to both that worship and post-worship gathering along with the bios of our Building Use ad hoc Committee members, know that we have a wonderful group of First United folks steering us as we contemplate the future at First and begin to ‘re-imagine’ with Relèven. Within that wonderful group of First United folks, six of us will be meeting regularly via Zoom with our consultants, Dave and Mike. Our task as a small group is to provide Dave and Mike with the information they need to begin planning for our congregational workshop in September. We – Sheila Allan, Grant Campbell, Alan MacLean, Malcolm Macpherson, Chris Bowman and I – with the assistance of Tracy Boutilier, Office Administrator, have begun that task by gathering annual reports, financial statements, building blueprints, names of rental tenants, reports of recent upgrades to our buildings and a list of pending projects, to name but a few of the documents that will assist Dave and Mike in acquainting themselves with the ‘world’ of First United. In the coming days, we will be providing them with the names of

neighbourhood organizations, non-profits, businesses, educational institutions and elected officials with whom they will also connect as they familiarize themselves with the ‘world’ of the wider community in which we live.

Having just returned from the Annual Meeting of the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Region of the United Church of Canada of which we at First United are a part, I am tremendously encouraged that we have already discerned that partnering with Relèven is a faithful movement forward.

That which we are embarking upon is absolutely aligned with that which the Regional and the National Councils of the United Church of Canada are asking of every congregation. In the words of Relèven, now is the time for us to ‘listen to our buildings, listen to our congregation, and listen to the community’. The Spirit is at work, hope is in the wind, and the world has never been more in need of what the best of ‘being church’ has to offer. Let’s do this!

Remember: ***Saturday, September 19th : Save the Date!***



Message from Tracy Boutillier, Office Administrator

Hello everyone!

It has been a busy winter and spring, and I am more than happy to see the office move to the summer hours. I cannot remember a busier time than this past year. There have been projects that have kept me busy at home and changes at work keeping me on my toes. Even the birds seem busy, although we have taken down our seed feeders, they still seem to be hanging around longer than usual.

As I reflect on the past few months, I can honestly say I think it seems busier because I have had to change the way I do things – and we all know how I hate change. At home our routine is basically the same except that Hayden is now working in Truro and doesn’t need to get up as early in the mornings. So, we find ourselves bumping into each other as we each get ready for our day. And with the Bible Hill bridge being worked on, my travel arrangements have changed, and the lineups take forever! I usually avoid going by CEC, but with this change it is the lesser of two evils, until it’s quitting time and everyone else is trying to get home

over the Park Street bridge. It seems there are lots of folks who have had to make changes.

At the office, I have had to adjust when and how I work for the sake of others. The biggest adjustment is no longer having the uninterrupted work hour (flexible hour) at the end of the day. I have had to rearrange how I do things, and manage my time to accommodate others and still find time to run the errands for the church that I have. Cath and Chris are extra busy too with lots of comings and goings to keep them hopping as well. I find more folks are looking to the office, as they should, for assistance within the church; new congregational members, new projects, old issues and new issues keep popping up to keep the work steady.

I guess it isn't a bad thing to be busy, it has kept me so occupied that I hardly noticed that spring has flown by and summer is upon us. I am looking forward to my afternoons off, and I plan to spend a fair amount of time on the back deck reading and rocking in my chair while the hummers flit about, watching the deer that pass through and listening to the neighbourhood kids, as they too are busy with their outside play.

I want to wish you all a great summer! Stay busy, but find time for you and enjoy!

Message from Chris Bowman, Minister of Music

First United's place in our community as a concert venue remains vibrant this summer. Hot off the heels of a successful spring concert season with concerts from Cantabile, Creative Voices, Resonance Youth Choir, and the Lakeland Ringers and Singers, we look forward to a series of concerts all summer long that will impress and inspire.



On **Saturday afternoon, July 11, at 4pm**, we welcome the **Kulshan Chorus** from Washington State. About a year ago, I was sent an email from their music director, and the subject line read "Visiting Choir from Bellingham, WA (yes the U.S. but we are the kind, inclusive, peace-filled, social

justice protesting kind)". Intrigued, I explored this further and can tell you that the audience is in for a treat!

From their website: "The Kulshan Chorus is an intergenerational, multicultural community chorus that sings a broad repertoire of music from cultures around the globe. Kulshan Chorus believes that the power of music is universal. The beauty of choral music performed live is life-enhancing for all to enjoy and should be accessible to everyone without exception. We are committed to equity and diversity across race, color, age, religion, ability, cultural background, ethnicity, sex, gender identity and/or expression, national origin, sexual orientation, and experience. This commitment to inclusion and social justice is aligned with our mission and will continue to be reflected in our vision, strategic plans, and goals."

Their concert looks fantastic, and I'm sure this will be a very entertaining afternoon of singing. Please mark this on your calendar and plan to attend. This will be a fundraising concert for the Nova Scotia Choral Federation.

First United is also honoured to host internationally renowned organist Xaver Varnus on Sunday afternoon, August 16th. Fresh off several sold-out concerts in NS earlier this spring, Varnus is bringing his incredible talents to our own Casavant organ, for a program highlighting the music of Bach. This is our last chance to hear him play before he returns home to his native Europe. Ticket information will be available in the coming days; this is expected to sell out, so interested patrons are advised to buy their tickets early.

Last but certainly not least, we will be hosting **10 Summer Lunchtime Concerts** on Wednesdays this summer, **beginning on June 24th at 12:15**. As has been the case in previous years, this summer promises a combination of rising stars, music students, and music professionals alike. Please find more information in this edition of News at First, help spread the word, and read all about each concert on the church's Facebook page and through email.

50 years and Counting



On behalf of our Faith Family we take this opportunity to congratulate George White, KC, TEP, as he marks an outstanding milestone – 50 years in the practice of Law. This milestone was recently recognized by the Nova Scotia Barristers’ Society with a celebration at the Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel.

Called to the Bar in 1975, George built a distinguished career, one that has been spent entirely with Patterson Law, LLP. He first articulated with the firm (when it was known as Patterson Smith Matthews and Grant). George continues to practice, focusing on Corporate and Commercial Law and Estate Law.

Quoting Jared Chen, Director of Marketing and Communication at PattersonLaw in his recent article, George’s “advice is measured, his presence reassuring, and his contribution to the legal profession immeasurable. George’s impact extends well beyond his practice. As a former Managing Partner of the firm, he played a key role in its growth and development mentoring many lawyers over the course of his career. His commitment to the profession is reflected in his public service, including his work as legal counsel and secretary to the Royal Commission on Health Care in Nova Scotia. Appointed Queen’s Counsel in 1998, (now KC) George is widely respected for his professionalism, integrity, and thoughtful approach to both clients and colleagues.”

We at First United have also benefitted from his wise counsel as George brings that same level of professionalism, integrity and thoughtfulness to his work in the church. For the better part of two decades, he has served on the Board of Trustees, as his father, Les White, did before him. In pre-Council days, he served on the Board of Stewards and as a Cub, Scout and Venturer Leader. In the wider community, George serves on the Board of the Truro Homeless Outreach Society and has a longtime involvement with the Progressive Conservative Party.

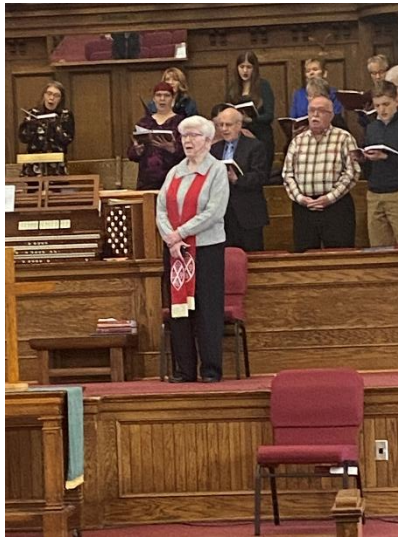
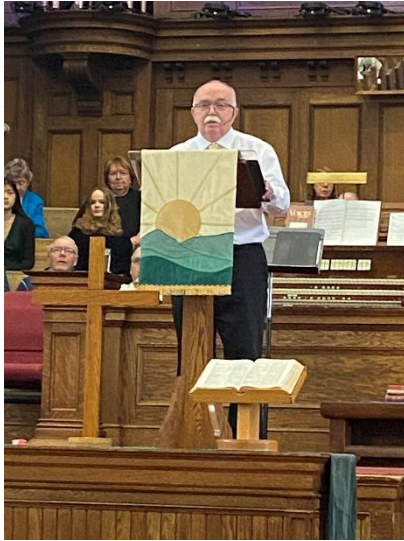
To have a more complete picture of George as a person, you need to know that he has a great love for sailing and has spent many seasons on the water out of Pictou Harbour, (near the family gathering place in Toney River), and embarked on an unforgettable odyssey off the coast of Scotland.

Congratulations, George, on achieving this remarkable 50-year milestone!
Best wishes in your continued practice and in your future sailing adventures!

PHOTO GALLERY



A few of the many wonderful folk who take leadership roles.





Eagle Sunrise Breakfast



Lenten Study Group

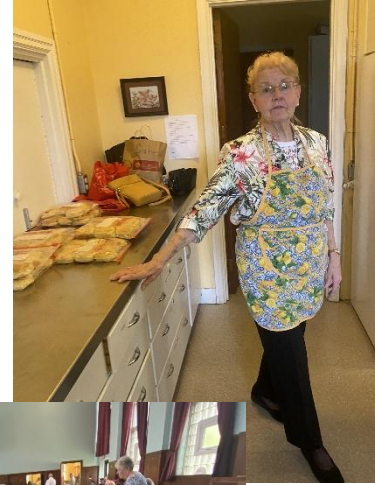


Nora Hunt, daughter of Katherine and Peter Hunt, granddaughter of Carolyn and Albert Hunt.

Carrie MacLaughlin, daughter of Laura and Andrew MacLaughlin, granddaughter of Martha MacLaughlin.

Nora and Carrie were recipients of the Lieutenant Governor's Medal. Congratulations!

Senior Social





Building Use Committee



A school musical is about to happen!



Resonance Youth Choir in Worship



Resonance Leadership Team



Grant, Master Chef



Evelyn with her prize catch



Summer Lunchtime Concerts 2026

Wednesdays at 12:15pm. Bring your lunch!

Donations in support of church music programming appreciated.



June 24

Natsumi Wakasa, flute, violin, voice
Chris Bowman, piano

July 29

Truro Concert Band

July 1

Chiara Zwicker, voice
Chris Bowman, piano

August 5

Anne Davison and "Uccello"
Robert Loughead, guitar

July 8

singers: Olivia Gouthro,
Erica Bowman, Ty Shreve

August 12

Long & McQuade Teachers
Rhonda McLellan,
Sheena Henderson, Kelsey Erskine

July 15

Lorraine Brocklehurst's
piano studio
Spotlight Theatre Camp cameo

August 19

Sappho Thompson, piano
Lily Arthurs, voice

July 22

singers: Matthew Davis,
Charlotte Barron, Sienna Lindsay-Pike

August 26

Danah Kim, piano, voice
Chris Bowman, piano



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