



MISSION STATEMENT

We strive to be a welcoming community,
open and inclusive for all.
We seek ways to experience and recognize
the Divine in the fullness of our lives
and to share this in our personal
and community relationships
through liturgy, music, action and reflection.
We try to live Christ's message of love,
compassion, justice and peace,
in harmony with the natural world.

COMMUNITY OF FAITH PROFILE

St. John's United Church, Halifax, NS

Following Jesus, Embracing Difference, Making a Difference



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LIVING FAITH STORY

THE HOME OF OUR FAITH COMMUNITY

Since 2009, St. John's United Church in Halifax has been worshipping in the beautiful Lilian Piercey Concert Hall of the Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts. Located in the geographic centre of peninsular Halifax, this site borders the West End and North End of the city and is on a major artery just minutes from the downtown core. The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is the largest capital region in Atlantic Canada. The city is situated on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, on the unceded lands of the Mi'kmaq people. With a population just over 400,000, HRM is large enough to offer the advantages of a vibrant urban center, yet small enough to preserve the warmth and relaxed atmosphere of the East Coast lifestyle.

Founded in 1749 as a British military post, the city continues to enjoy the benefits of its deep, natural harbour – the focal point for the naval dockyard, shipbuilding, a world-class container port and a thriving cruise ship tourism industry. The historic waterfront and downtown core are currently undergoing significant growth including a new convention centre and many mixed-use residential and commercial buildings.

Tagged as “Canada's Smart City,” Halifax is home to many schools of higher learning including Dalhousie University, King's College, Saint Mary's University, Mount Saint Vincent, Nova Scotia Community College, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and the Atlantic School of Theology. This concentration of educational institutions supports a strong culture of innovation in science, technology and the arts.

Halifax has a reputation for great dining including a strong “local food” movement., an eclectic music scene and diverse cultural venues, theatres, museums and galleries. The city's commitment to maintaining green spaces across the peninsula – the Public Gardens, Halifax Commons, Fort Needham and many smaller community spaces – promotes a wide variety of recreational and leisure activities.

In its location at the centre of the Halifax peninsula, St. John's United Church is surrounded by quiet residential enclaves comprised of middle-class families, working couples, seniors, singles and students. Many are close-knit neighbourhoods that host summer street parties and community-wide yard sales. The nearby Ecole Oxford School (est. 1909) serves the immediate neighbourhood for children in Grades Primary to 6; and then draws from wider and more diverse communities at the Junior High level when it also offers French immersion. Opened in 2007, the modern, state-of-the-art Citadel High School replaced two aging school buildings as the public high school for the Halifax Peninsula.

The West and North ends of the city are also experiencing trends in growth and development. Quinpool Road is an established West End commercial district of more than 100 shops, small businesses and restaurants. The North End is home to the historic Hydrostone Market and the rapidly evolving Agricola Street with unique independent retailers, trendy eateries and modern condo developments.

There are six United Church congregations on the peninsula of Halifax and many other communities of faith. St. John's nearest United Church neighbor geographically is Hope United Church, created by an amalgamation of three congregations over the last decade. The closure of United Memorial Church on Kaye Street in 2015 left a void in the physical presence of the denomination in the North End of the city, although a small congregation continues to worship at Brunswick Street United. St. John's, along with its sister churches on the peninsula, strongly supports the work of the Brunswick Street Mission.

Halifax is a multicultural city with indigenous Mik'maq people, an African Nova Scotian population that dates to the founding of the city, and a long tradition of welcoming immigrants, in particular through Pier 21. A yearly influx of students to the area's universities, along with small but active cultural associations, contribute to the colour and depth of the city's cultural fabric. Growth in community diversity is evident to worshippers at St. John's as they stroll past the nearby Buddhist temple and neighbouring Saint Antonio's Antiochian Orthodox Church on the way to Sunday service, or gaze out the windows of the Lilian Piercey Hall at the copper domes of the adjacent Ummah Mosque.

THE JOURNEY OF OUR FAITH COMMUNITY

In 2017, St. John's United Church celebrated its 224th birthday. More than just a party (although we never pass up a chance to have cake!), this yearly anniversary celebration recalls the deep roots of the congregation tracing back to 1793 and the earliest days of the Presbyterian faith in Halifax. It is also a reminder that St. John's is not a static, unchanging entity but a living, evolving community of faith that has never been defined by a location or a building but by its people, its vision and its message.

St. John's United Church was formed at the time of church union in 1925 by the amalgamation of St. John's Presbyterian and Park Street Presbyterian. The new congregation's home was an imposing and spacious brick church built in 1918 (church hall) and 1921 (sanctuary and bell tower) at the corner of Willow and Windsor streets in the heart of the city. Longtime members of St. John's fondly recall early days in the venerable Willow Street church building when "the church was always so crowded... upstairs and downstairs." (Doris Sweet, Oct 2008) However, these elders of the church also consistently describe a community that always welcomed diversity and innovation: "Even in those days, St. John's was known as being a church for all people." (Doris Steeves, Sept 2008)

In the 70s, the church was on the vanguard of "new worship styles" as it hosted a weekly 10 am lay-led family service in which everyone attending was involved in leading worship. Rev. Frances MacLellan, one of the first female ministers in the United Church and the first female president of Maritime Conference (1969), was called to St. John's in 1974. In a church history compiled for the 50th Anniversary of St. John's United, MacLellan noted that the congregation was "ready to move into new and untried worlds, not with sorrow for the loss of the familiar, but with joy that the past prepared them for each new experience."

Frances MacLellan would have been proud to witness the resounding positive vote in 2007 as St. John's United Church became the first affirming congregation on the Halifax Peninsula. St. John's continues to be a strong and consistent voice for inclusion and diversity, "paving the way for LGBTQIA-friendly religious spaces in the city." (*The Coast*, July 16, 2015)



On Epiphany Sunday, January 4, 2009, after years of careful examination and discernment under the guidance of Rev. Linda Yates, this ground-breaking congregation took another leap of faith and left the Willow Street building to worship in rented space at the nearby Maritime Conservatory. St. John's embarked on a well-conceived but ambitious redevelopment project: *Spirit Place*, a proposed affordable seniors' residence with worship and community space. The congregation, and particularly its Implementation Team, poured enormous time, energy and resources into the *Spirit Place* vision, but ultimately the proposal was rejected by HRM Council in July 2013.

For many people at St. John's, the grief and loss of their beloved church building was revisited and compounded by the painful decision to let go of the dream of *Spirit Place*. When Rev. Yates accepted a

call to another pastoral charge in 2014, St. John's intentionally entered a period of Interim Ministry to enable the congregation to figuratively "catch its breath," re-examine its mission and vision, and allow a period of simply "being church" together. During this transition period, St. John's was ably led by Martha Martin, Interim Minister, and a dedicated Transition Team with representatives from Halifax Presbytery.

Although the transition time was a period of reflection and discernment, the congregation of St. John's did not stand still. The faith community has been striving to continue its work in serving the needs of the faith community and the wider community, even as it redefines and shapes a vision for the future.

Sale of the Willow Street church building was finalized in April of 2016 with proceeds invested to provide funds for new initiatives in the congregation. The Ministry team and lay leadership pulled together to make the Conservatory space viable for the needs of the church on Sunday mornings and throughout the week. Worship remains the heart of spirituality and community for St. John's, with both traditional elements and creative options such as monthly Taizé Prayer services.

The strong music program, led by Minister of Music Ray Grant, supports and enhances Sunday worship through the leadership of the Senior Choir. In addition, St. John's is fortunate to have many skilled singers and musicians who contribute regularly to worship and concerts including the Hand Bell Choir, Kidz Choir, String Ensemble and Sanctuary Band.



Through its Outreach Team, St. John's contributes funds and donations to Brunswick Street Mission, Parker Street Food Bank, ARK centre for street-oriented youth, and Manna for Health, a special needs food program run by St. John's for those living with HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses.



Faith formation for all ages has continued under the direction of a part-time Faith Formation Minister including Footsteps (our Sunday School program), Bible Study, seasonal retreats, workshops of reconciliation with the Mi'kmaq, and confirmation classes which led to the confirmation of five youth in 2017.

In response to the Syrian crisis, in the fall of 2015 the congregation of St. John's raised funds of \$25,000 in just three weeks to bring Masoud and Hamide Alissou with their children, Leyan and Levand, to Halifax in May of 2017. Members of St. John's supported the family in various aspects of daily life and learning as they adjusted to their new lives in Canada. In April 2019, the congregation once again pledged the necessary funds to begin the process of sponsoring a second newcomer family from Syria.

St. John's embraces and supports community diversity, including an ongoing relationship of faith and friendship with the nearby Ummah Mosque. Ecumenical opportunities during the year include shared Good Friday services and combined summer services with St. Andrew's United, First Baptist Church and the Presbyterian Church of Saint David's.



Learning to “be” church without a church building presents challenges and frustrations; but St. John’s has continued to promote social interaction through activities such as Coffee Time before worship, monthly Book Club, home dinners and twice-monthly after church luncheons.

The reports of the Transition Team emphasized that the future of St. John’s depends on investing in people rather than bricks and mortar. This is evidenced by the strength of small group development at St John’s, and faith formation that supports individuals at all stages of their faith journey. The Team also carried out extensive exploration of opportunities for shared spaces within the community – forging connections and building relationships with groups who share common or complementary goals.

In September 2018, St. John’s welcomed Rev. Hubert den Draak as our new Principal Minister. An energetic yet thoughtful leader, Hubert shares with St. John’s a passion for engaging in new ways of ‘being church.’ In a recent newsletter to the faith community, he says,

“St. John’s has learned it can thrive without a building of its own. We have found a new identity and new strengths, and are preparing to move forward into new directions – again... We are currently working on an External Consultation process together with Common Good Solutions, a Social Enterprise consultancy on Cunard St., to help formulate a long-term plan for our future. What are the direct needs in the community around us? How can our strengths benefit that community? What skills do we already have and what do we need to work on?

...That’s what church is about: to not stay put and hold on to what you’ve got, but to go where the Spirit calls us and grow in faith and in viability.”

Statistics

	2016	2017	2018
Households under Pastoral Care	157	150	136
Child Baptisms	0	0	0
Marriages	2	2	1
Funerals	5	5	4
Membership	235	230	232
Adherents	100	100	100
Financially Supporting Households	145	140	115
Average Weekly Attendance (Fall)	90	80	80
Candidates in Training	3	3	1
Confirmations	0	6	0

RESOURCES

Although we sometimes describe St. John’s as “a church without walls,” in fact, the Lilian Piercey Concert Hall where we worship is a beautiful, bright and spacious room that seats 150 people. The space features many design elements that enhance worship including movable seating, a concert grand piano, good lighting, audio/visual capacity and excellent acoustics. On Sunday mornings this versatile space is truly transformed into a sacred space of sanctuary for morning worship. Footsteps (Sunday School) has meeting rooms on the same floor. The social time, including Sunday luncheons, takes place on the main level where an appropriate room and small kitchen are available. The church’s rental contract with the Maritime Conservatory includes shared office space for the church administrator and minister, rehearsal space for singers and bells, with a corner office space for the music director and basement storage space. Other rooms are made available throughout the week as needed for meetings.



In 2018, the church’s governance structure changed to a unified board to streamline and better reflect and serve the work and needs of the congregation. There is tremendous congregational involvement in the work of the church evidenced by data from a 2017 congregational questionnaire, where 90% of respondents were involved in at least one group or committee and more than a quarter indicated involvement with three, four or more. Currently there are committees for Trustees, Ministry and Personnel, Worship and Music, Outreach, Pastoral Care, and Christian Development as well as task groups for Manna for Health (food bank for those living with HIV/AIDs) and Refugee Sponsorship.

Staff Support:

Our ministry team includes a long-serving Minister of Music who is employed for 14 hours per week but also contributes countless volunteer hours, not only to weekly rehearsals with the various choirs and instrumental groups, but also to the worship planning, set-up and staging of the sanctuary space.

The Office Administrator (20 hours/week) has been with St. John’s for more than 15 years.



Budget for 2019

Revenue

Current	\$174,950
Other	\$ 6,000
Money for others	\$ 35,850
Proceeds from Investments	<u>\$ 85,000</u>
Total	\$301,800

Expenses

Payroll/Premises	\$220,700
Programs	\$ 44,750
Money for others	<u>\$ 36,350</u>
Total	\$301,800

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A. The 2017 JNAC was fortunate to have a wealth of analysis from the extensive work completed by the Transition Team during the Interim Ministry period. The Transition Team Reports provided clear guidance on the need to invest in people, particularly through the support of small group development and mentorship, with the recognition that “church” is not confined to Sunday morning. The vital outreach work of the Transition Team in cultivating community connections and potential partnerships for the future must be supported and grown by the Ministry Team.

B. The Congregational Questionnaire (Fall 2017) provided evidence that we need to put more emphasis on the following three areas (percentage of respondents):

1. Providing child and youth programming outside of Sunday service (53%),
2. Communicating the vision and mission of St. John’s to the wider community (39%) and
3. Offering Christian education to children/youth (35%).

In addition to these areas there were five areas 20% of the respondents felt needed more emphasis:

1. encouraging responsible stewardship of time, talent and treasure,
2. committing to continuing education about and response to the Truth and Reconciliation Report,
3. providing crisis counseling for members,
4. providing opportunities for socialization among the congregation, and
5. supporting renewal of spiritual life and programs through the New Initiatives Fund.

C. Consultation with the youth group and families with children provided additional input.

The report from the youth consultation advised: “They are very concerned with membership and with the aging population of our congregation and all were moved by the comments on Sunday for the strong need for our younger members to pick up from where once they have left off, they say that they want to do this.” It is time for renewal of our Congregation.

The parents’ discussion group identified the following needs:

- ◆ Effective leadership and coordination of children and youth activities - an overall framework and workplan for the year to be developed and communicated for children and youth programs, including Sunday school.
- ◆ Excellent communication with parents and children/youth in terms of the workplan for the year, what is happening in Sunday school and other opportunities for youth.
- ◆ To move beyond curriculum to provide outreach/community service experiences.
- ◆ Better training for Sunday school volunteers to ensure consistency and quality teaching. For example, providing step by step instructions for leading a class.
- ◆ Increased engagement of parents/families currently attending Church and efforts to re-engage with families who are no longer regularly attending.

D. The Official Board Executive also provided input. They recommend redefining both the Principal Minister’s position and the second position of Children and Youth Worker to meet the current identified needs of the congregation. In particular, that the second position be upgraded in terms of skills, expectations and time commitment.

Position Title: Spiritual Growth & Outreach Minister

Position Profile:

We are a faith community who offers meaningful, engaging worship, an outstanding music program, substantial pastoral care and support, youth and children's programs, and many social justice and outreach programs. As a member of our community of faith you will work alongside our Ministry team to expand our program of faith formation to people of all ages and stages in their faith journey, while also engaging the wider community in our programs and activities.

This position is a unique opportunity to use your talents to develop a long-term vision for this ministry while working with a community of faith that is committed to being Affirming, welcoming and fearless as they develop new partnerships and new ways of being church.

As an affirming congregation (<http://affirmunited.ause.ca/>) that celebrates diversity, St. John's welcomes applications from all qualified candidates regardless of sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, age, ethnicity or disability. St. John's encourages applications from those in under-represented groups such as the LGBTQ2+ community.

This is a full time (40 hour per week) position, with all the benefits offered through the United Church. St. John's United Church (SJUC) offers salary that is 10% above the minimum rates required by the UCC. We strongly promote a healthy work/life balance and actively support you in achieving this.

Position Summary: The Spiritual Growth and Outreach Minister will:

1. develop strategies and programming to expand faith formation that will encompass all age groups at St. John's United
2. develop new initiatives that promote congregational growth and community engagement
3. develop wider community interest in SJU through such tools as social media, a/v technology, podcasting, media releases, etc.

Accountable to: As a team, the Principal Minister, Spiritual Growth and Outreach Minister and Minister of Music are accountable to each other and to St. John's United Church Official Board, through the Ministry and Personnel Committee.

A part-time, paid administrative assistant position provides support to all members of the Ministry team (photocopying, reception, scheduling rooms, typing, creating bulletin).

Program Development and Volunteer Support (35%)

1. Developing intergenerational programs to increase engagement across the different age groups at SJUC, especially elders.
2. Facilitating and expanding programming to engage the young adults of SJUC through community, regional or national church activities (e.g. pilgrimages, service/education projects, etc.)
3. Coordinating and maintaining a resource centre of materials, supplies and teaching aids for the Christian Development Program.
4. Developing and supporting Christian Development events that will involve all ages (e.g. retreats, Bible study, prayer groups, intergenerational services, plays, pageants).
5. Supporting cooperative programming with other Youth Groups within the community.

6. Ensuring that congregational volunteers working with vulnerable children, youth and adults obtain the necessary police record checks.
7. Developing and leading workshops to facilitate volunteer learning for Children and Youth programs (Footsteps Program).
8. Sourcing, distributing and introducing curriculums for Sunday morning Footsteps program volunteers. Being present during Sunday morning Footsteps program for assistance.

Faith Formation and Worship (35%)

1. Collaborating with the Principal Minister through small group work. This may include current groups (e.g. Book Club, Bible Study) and/or new groups that you may develop.
2. Preparing and conducting services that are creative and diverse while engaging an intergenerational group of participants. You will be expected to conduct 6-8 services per year.
3. Preparing and facilitating Children's Time during the weekly service, in collaboration with the Principal Minister.
4. Collaborating with the Principal Minister in the support and further development of our Pastoral Care Team. Providing Pastoral Care to members of the church community in the absence of the Principal Minister.
5. Developing strategies to attract, connect, and engage new people and families in order to build a bigger church family.
6. Participating in weekly staff meetings, monthly Christian Development meetings and monthly Music and Worship meetings.
7. Collaborating with the Principal Minister in the preparation and delivery of intergenerational and "themed" services (e.g. family Christmas worship service, Holy Humour Sunday, Candlemass, Blessing of the Animals, etc.).

Community Engagement (15%)

1. In collaboration with the Principal Minister, developing new programming promoting congregational growth and engagement and deepening spirituality while also seeking to fill the need for spirituality with the less-churched in the community.
2. Working cooperatively with faith formation ministries at other churches for joint projects.
3. Connecting with other churches, social justice groups and faith groups
4. In collaboration with the Principal Minister, developing new and maintaining current relationships with partners and stakeholders in the wider community
5. Is actively involved in the life of the Regional Council and/or General Council.

Communications (15%)

1. Promoting upcoming programs for CD, Music and Worship functions via social media, church bulletin, posters, e-Newsletter, and the church website (internal communications).
2. Using social media to promote and encourage participation in the Children and Youth Ministry.
3. In collaboration with the Principal Minister, sharing and promoting all the programming, events and activities that SJUC has to offer to the wider community outside of our church family, via social media, a/v technology, podcasting, media releases, etc. (external communication).
4. Overseeing/assisting volunteers with SJUC's "digital ministry".

Continuing Education

Pursues personal, vocational and professional goals for continuing education in consultation with M&P committee.

Knowledge and Skills

- Order of Ministry (Ordained or Diaconal) in the United Church of Canada. We are open to other educational and life experience backgrounds that may be considered as equivalent for this position.
- Comfortable being outside the church, meeting with people to determine their needs, discussing what St. John's United is all about and meeting with potential community partners.
- Open-minded and curious about how SJUC can fill a spiritual void with people who are less churched.
- Enable SJUC to deliver innovative programs, worship, outreach and pastoral care for a younger demographic.
- Ability to build partnerships and work collaboratively and effectively with our Principal Minister who has congregational oversight and with our skilled staff team.
- Preaching skills that serve to connect the everyday world to the Bible's teaching.
- Sensitivity to diverse and traditional perspectives of our existing congregation; honour SJUC's strengths and traditions and weave them into new programming.
- Organizational and lay volunteer development skills. Ability to prioritize.
- Excellent interpersonal verbal and written communication skills.
- Warm, engaging person with ability to listen.
- Strong computer skills and social media knowledge is highly advantageous. Have a strong personal spiritual life, and ability to encourage spiritual life in others.
- Have a positive mindset and ability to encourage enthusiasm in others.
- Confident and willing to take initiative, suggest new ideas and provide direction to volunteers.
- Able to engage in strategic thinking and provide innovative leadership.
- Flexible, open to change, and able to lead change.
- Able to fulfill this role as a team player, while at the same time able to delegate responsibilities to volunteers within the church.