



Sunday
Morning
Services
are held at the
Maritime
Conservatory
at 10:30am

JOINT NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

St. John's United Church, Halifax, NS

Following Jesus, Embracing Difference, Making a Difference



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MEMBERS OF THE JOINT NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the Joint Needs Assessment Committee of St. John’s United Church. The committee included two representatives from Halifax Presbytery and eight representatives from St. John’s United Church. The work of the committee followed the guidelines of the United Church of Canada Handbook, Pastoral Relations: Engaging and Supporting (March 2015). The assessment process involved wide consultation with the congregation, specifically through a congregational questionnaire, focus group discussions with youth and families with children; as well as careful consideration of the comprehensive reports of the St. John’s Transition Team (September 2016, September 2017). The committee also reviewed the current personnel job descriptions and budget support for ministry, and considered input from the Official Board Executive and Transition Team leaders. Through this process the committee developed a current profile of the faith community and wider community, and the required skills and qualities for the current and future leadership of St. John’s.

As a vibrant and welcoming community of faith, open and inclusive for all, St. John’s United is seeking a ministry team to work collaboratively with all personnel and lay leaders to support our vision and mission.

**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.**

SECTION ONE ~ COMMUNITY PROFILE

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.

In 1996, the former cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, along with more than 200 suburban communities, towns and smaller villages were amalgamated into the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) to form the largest capital region in Atlantic Canada. 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.

Halifax is situated on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, on the unceded lands of the Mi'kmaq indigenous people. Founded in 1749 as a British military post and a gateway for settlement into North America, 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 tourism industry that welcomes more than 200,000 cruise ship passengers each year. The historic waterfront and downtown core are currently undergoing significant growth with the construction of a new convention centre and hotel, as well as 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 experiences including a strong “local food” movement. An eclectic music scene offers anything from a Cape Breton ceilidh, to the Atlantic Jazz Festival, to Symphony Nova Scotia. Many and varied cultural venues, theatres, museums and galleries present both professional and amateur productions of exceptional scope and quality. 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.

Yet, within this “urban” profile, Halifax is a “community of communities.” 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 to become the sole public high school for the Halifax Peninsula with a student body of more than 1200.

The West and North ends of the city are experiencing trends in growth and development similar to the downtown but generally on a smaller scale. 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 its unique independent retailers, trendy eateries, colourful row houses and modern condo developments.

There are six United Church congregations on the peninsula of Halifax and many communities of faith from other denominations and religions. 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 the United Memorial Church building on Kaye Street in 2015 has 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. And 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 – an entry point for 1 in 5 Canadians from 1928 to 1971. 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. As we carry out our mission of striving "to be a welcoming community, open and inclusive for all," St. John's is engaging in sustained dialogue and education to foster mutual respect and empathy within and beyond our faith community.

SECTION TWO ~ THE PASTORAL CHARGE "THE JOURNEY OF ST. JOHN'S"

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, October 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 1970s, the church was on the vanguard of “new worship styles” as it hosted a weekly 10:00 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. (*Touchstone*, May 2003) 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 several 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 church 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 the Halifax Regional Municipal 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 has been ably led by Martha Martin, Interim Minister, and a dedicated Transition Team with representatives from Halifax Presbytery.

Change is an inevitable aspect of life for any organization that seeks to remain relevant and not only survive but thrive in its community. Although the transition time has been a period of reflection and discernment, the congregation of St. John’s has not stood still. True to its history of taking a stand, taking risks and forward thinking, St. John’s 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. This fund has already supported projects such as a Youth Reconciliation weekend with the GO Project for youth of Halifax Presbytery.

The Ministry team and lay leadership have 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 weekly through the leadership and offerings 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, Girls Trio, Youth 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 including Sunday School supported by a 10 hour/week Child and Youth Worker, Bible Study, seasonal retreats, examination of the Truth & Reconciliation Report, workshops of reconciliation with the Mi'kmaq, a messy church day for families with children, 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 support the sponsorship of a refugee family of three. After months of delays and the unexpected but joyous birth of a new baby in the family, Masoud and Hamide Alissou with their children, Leyan and Levand, arrived in Halifax on May 25, 2017. Members of St. John's continue to support the family in various aspects of daily life and learning as they adjust to their new lives in Canada.

St. John's embraces and supports community diversity, including standing in solidarity with 150 people of different faiths around the nearby Ummah Mosque following shootings in Quebec in February of 2017. The congregation also engages in ecumenical opportunities during the year such as shared Good Friday services and combined summer services with St. Andrew's United, First Baptist Church and the Presbyterian Church of Saint David's.

St. John's maintains a close relationship with the Atlantic School of Theology and welcomes student ministers. The church has a remarkable record of fostering candidates from the congregation for ministry training. In 2016, two St. John's candidates were ordained, and currently there are three candidates in training for Ministry.

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, the Lobster Luncheon, home dinners and movie nights. An after-worship weekly Sunday Soup Luncheon launched in September has been well attended and is providing an opportunity for people to connect with newcomers and reconnect as a church family.

In their Interim Report of September 2016, 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 growing strength of small group development at St John's, and the existence of a very effective mentoring environment that supports individuals along their faith journey. This September, the second Interim Report detailed

the Transition Team’s extensive exploration of opportunities for shared spaces within the community. Their work of forging connections and building relationships with groups who share common or complementary goals is an ongoing, crucial and exciting process for the congregation and leaders of the church. As the transition time draws to a close, the formation of a new Ministry Team for St. John’s is the next step on the challenging and exciting path into the future of this dynamic congregation on the Halifax peninsula.

Statistics

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Households under Pastoral Care | 176 | 182 | 157 | 150 |
| Child Baptisms | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Marriages | 5 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Funerals | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Membership | 251 | 250 | 235 | 230 |
| Adherents | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Financially Supporting Households | 162 | 143 | 145 | 140 |
| Average Weekly Attendance (Fall) | 102 | 100 | 90 | 80 |
| Candidates in Training | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Confirmations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |

SECTION 3 ~ 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. The Sunday School has meeting rooms on the same floor. The social time, including Sunday soup 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.



The current governance structure is changing from an historic Session/Stewards/Official Board model to a unified board structure 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 the 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. A recent leadership workshop on “Spirit Given Gifts” had over twelve participants with more workshops planned to develop leadership for the mission of St. John’s. Currently there are active committees for Trustees, Ministry and Personnel, Worship and Music, Outreach, Visiting, Christian Development as well as task groups for Manna for Health (Food bank of HIV and AIDS patients) and Refugee Support.

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.



Current staffing includes an Office Administrator who has been with the church for more than 13 years and will be working 20 hours per week. St. John’s has identified the need to increase support for Faith Formation with the creation of a 20 hour per week position of Congregational Designated minister (CDM). As detailed further in this report, the position will support Faith Formation activities including Sunday School, youth group and community building. Communications is enhanced by a services contract with a Graphic Designer for web design and social media advice.

Budget for 2018

Revenue

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Current | \$166,880 |
| Other | \$ 8,850 |
| Money for others | \$ 36,350 |
| Proceeds from Investments | \$ 50,000 |
| Total | \$262,080 |

Expenses

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| Payroll | \$168,436 |
| Programs | \$ 83,950 |
| Money for others | \$ 36,350 |
| Total | \$288,736 |

SECTION 4 ~ JOB DESCRIPTIONS

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A. The 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 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.

JOB DESCRIPTION: Principal Minister

Purpose

To provide spiritual leadership to the congregation to fulfill our mission of an Affirming Church which is a *“striving, welcoming community, open and inclusive to all, that works 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.”*

Accountability

As a team, the Principal Minister, Faith Formation Minister and Minister of Music are accountable to each other, St. John’s United Church Official Board through the Ministry and Personnel Committee and to Halifax Presbytery.

Work Expectation

This full-time position is 40 hours per week averaged throughout the church year.

Responsibilities

Worship

Primary responsibility for Sunday worship, working with the Worship and Music Committee and the Minister of Music and with input from the Faith Formation Minister for all ages and family services.

Leadership and Communication

Primary responsibility for leading and supporting the Congregation in fulfilling the vision and mission of St. John’s United Church. Leadership style will be collaborative, with excellent communication skills including conflict resolution. Able to communicate to the wider community our vision of an innovative, affirming, progressive church that is welcoming and open to divergent views.

Community Outreach

As a “Church without Walls,” St. John’s United is seeking a Principal Minister who can lead the Congregation in developing partnerships with a wide variety of faith communities and community organizations to show how we can *“live Christ’s message of love, compassion, justice and peace in harmony with the natural world.”*

Pastoral Care

The Principal Minister will engage the congregation in defining pastoral care needs and developing programs responsive to these needs.

JOB DESCRIPTION: Faith Formation Minister

Purpose

To engage the families, children and youth in the work of the church to fulfill our mission of a *“striving, welcoming community, open and inclusive to all, that works 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.”*

Accountability

As a team, the Principal Minister, Faith Formation Minister and Minister of Music are accountable to each other, St. John’s United Church Official Board through the Ministry and Personnel Committee and to Halifax Presbytery.

Work Expectation

This part-time position is 20 hours per week averaged throughout the church year.

Responsibilities

Education and Volunteer Support

Responsible for the development of programs of study and spiritual reflection for the Sunday School, Youth and Congregation. This includes training and supporting volunteers for teaching and leading small groups and outreach initiatives, as well as facilitating their growth.

Worship and Faith Formation

Working with the Principal Minister, the Worship and Music Committee and the Minister of Music to engage children, youth and families in the worship of the church. Working with the Ministry Team and the Christian Development Committee to ensure that all children, youth and families have opportunity to express and live their faith through the programs of the congregation.

Community Outreach

Responsible to help the youth and families foster relationships with other community groups with complementary goals. As the future of the church is through creative renewal, this outreach is necessary to realize our future that is ripe with possibilities.

SECTION 5 ~ SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED OF MINISTRY PERSONNEL

Principal Minister

Team leadership skills to collaborate effectively with the Ministry team, the Official Board, all volunteers and committee members and all in the Congregation to fulfill the vision and mission of the church.

Theological training as an ordained or commissioned Minister to provide spiritual leadership to the Congregation.

Experience as a worship leader in providing inspiring sermons that relate scripture to modern life and faith, are intellectually and emotionally engaging, and show how to bring our faith to the world.

Experience in working with a congregation to provide pastoral care and visitation to all members through small group ministry, peer support and crisis response.

A commitment to lead an Affirming Congregation which is inclusive of many cultures, forms of families, and sexual identities.

Experience in fostering a culture of respect and empathy, and accepting and welcoming divergent views.

Ability to work with other faiths, organizations and institutions to form partnerships to show how we can *“live Christ’s message of love, compassion, justice and peace in harmony with the natural world.”*

Flexible, creative and adaptable to work in non-traditional settings.

Strong communication skills including appreciation of and ability to utilize technology and social media.

Faith Formation Minister

Knowledge and experience working in team ministry to develop, implement and celebrate programs of Christian education, faith formation and outreach.

Basic understanding of underlying theology and theory derived from training and experience in implementing programs of Christian education.

Ability to facilitate and support members of the congregation in teaching, group leadership and outreach programs.

Awareness of the role of faith formation in the context of the broader mission and vision of the church in the faith community and the wider community to facilitate effective collaboration and connections.

Flexible, creative and adaptable to work in non-traditional settings.

Strong communication skills including appreciation of and ability to utilize technology and social media.

SECTION 6 ~ TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Principal Minister

The congregation of St. John's United Church is seeking an ordained or diaconal full-time Principal Minister to lead our Ministry Team. This is a 40-hour per week position, remunerated in accordance with the United Church of Canada's new compensation model for ministry personnel. St. John's will give consideration to the successful applicant's credentials and experience in determining salary that may exceed the minimum.

In accordance with United Church Guidelines this appointment includes the following terms:

- Salary minimums according to the New Compensation Model guidelines
- Cellular telephone service
- Travel allowance for required travel
- Continuing Education allowance
- Study Leave of three weeks per year including Sundays
- Vacation of one month per year including five (5) Sundays
- Sabbatical leave in accordance with United Church policy
- Benefits in accordance with United Church policy
- Shared office space
- Moving Expenses if required

Minister for Faith Formation

The congregation of St. John's United Church is seeking a part-time ordained, diaconal or designated lay (recognized) Minister of Faith Formation for our Ministry Team. This is a 20-hour per week position, remunerated in accordance with the United Church of Canada's new compensation model for ministry personnel. St. John's will give consideration to the successful applicant's credentials and experience in determining salary that may exceed the minimum.

In accordance with United Church Guidelines this appointment includes the following terms:

- Salary based on training and experience
- Cellular telephone service
- Travel allowance for required travel
- Continuing Education allowance
- Vacation of one month per year including five (5) Sundays
- Benefits in accordance with United Church policy
- Shared office space
- Moving Expenses if required

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a vibrant and welcoming community of faith, open and inclusive for all, St. John's United is seeking a ministry team to work collaboratively with all personnel and lay leaders to support our mission and vision.

The Joint Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) recommends:

1. The St. John's United Church JNAC Report be received and approved by the Official Board and by a meeting of the congregation.
2. Halifax Presbytery/Pastoral Relations Committee receive and approve the JNAC Report.
3. Halifax Presbytery declare an immediate vacancy for a Ministry Team of one full-time ordained or diaconal Minister and a half-time (50%) ordained, diaconal or designated lay (recognized) Minister of Faith Formation effective July 1, 2018.
4. Halifax Presbytery constitute a Joint Search Committee.
5. Halifax Presbytery disband the Joint Needs Assessment Committee with thanks.

