



**GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH
FALL NEWSLETTER 2024**

Message from Rev. Pamela

Dear Friends in Faith,

As I take this time for sabbatical, I want to pause and express my deepest gratitude for each of you. Though I may be physically distant, my heart remains with our vibrant faith community.

Thanksgiving is a beautiful reminder of the blessings we share. I am thankful for the kindness, support, and encouragement you have all shown me. Your commitment to one another and to our vision and mission has been inspiring and uplifting. We are indeed an inspired and inspiring group of people with open hearts, open minds and open arms!

During this sabbatical, I am reflecting on our shared journey and the ways we have grown together. I am grateful for the moments we have celebrated, the challenges we have faced, and the faith that binds us. Each of you plays a vital role in our congregation. I am continually amazed by the ways you embody our values in your daily lives.

My days have been filled with reading books, long walks in the woods with my dog Max, a few last sails with Scott out the bay, a trip to Gambo Pond to admire the colors of the season, and spending time with my children Sophie, Nathan and Julia. I have been listening to some interesting podcasts and series recommended by my colleagues across the country.

While on sabbatical I continue to meet with the National Church. Momentum and excitement continue to build around the 100th anniversary which will be held at Gower Street United Church on Sunday, June 8 at 7 pm.

As we approach the Thanksgiving season, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on the blessings in your own lives and to express gratitude for the people around you. Let us continue to support one another, fostering a spirit of love and unity within our faith community.

This is also a time to pause and take account of how we can share our wealth and blessings with our community at large; both in St. John's and around the world. We give to others in many ways. Our community locally is hurting. Regions in our world are experiencing violence and hunger. A gift to the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church of Canada will help our partners locally around the globe help others.

Please continue to work for justice for those who are marginalized. A guaranteed livable income, safe, affordable housing, a **“hand up”** not a **“hand out”** are needed through adequate and meaningful job training and employment, uplifting relationships in community, accessible health care, safety and care for those who suffer deeply from addiction and mental and physical illness. Let’s keep our doors and community open wide, as we provide a safe gathering place founded on faith where ALL are welcome. We can and do make a difference!

I look forward to returning from my sabbatical with renewed energy and fresh perspectives.

Until then, know that you are in my thoughts and prayers.

Below is a photo of my friend and colleague Laurie MacCuish from Cape Breton. The last time I saw her was 25 years ago when we both graduated from the Atlantic School of Theology! Both of us were ordained two months later and then settled on our pastoral charges. Laurie and her husband Rick spent a week with Scott and me this past September in St. John’s. Laurie is now retired after serving her last pastoral charge in Vernon Bridge, Prince Edward Island. We had a lot of catching up to do, both personally and professionally. The gift of renewed friendship is one of the blessings I have had, amongst many others from sabbatical time!

With deep appreciation and gratitude,
Rev. Pamela



Message from Rev. Rebecca

Thanksgiving is often seen as a time to pause, gather with loved ones, and express gratitude for the blessings in our lives. But for those of us on a faith journey, Thanksgiving is much more than an annual holiday—it is a spiritual practice that aligns our hearts with God's grace and abundance.

Faith calls us to recognize that everything we have—our families, friendships, opportunities, and even the beauty of creation—flows from God's love. As the psalmist writes, "The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it" (Psalm 24:1). A heart filled with faith responds to this truth by being grateful for the good things and trusting God through times of uncertainty and challenge. This message is crucial in a world that can sometimes feel overwhelming, where pressures mount from all sides; faith invites us to see beyond the immediate and trust in the enduring goodness of God. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus reassures us not to worry, reminding us that just as God cares for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, so, too, will God care for us.

This Thanksgiving, let us encourage each other to practice gratitude for the things we can see and the unseen ways God is at work in our lives. May we all see Thanksgiving as an act of faith, trusting in the present and hope for the future.

If you want to explore this with your loved ones, during Gower Youth, we made a Faith and Gratitude tree. We each decorated leaves with things we are grateful for, including the reason we are grateful for these gifts (Example: I am grateful for my family, who supports me when things are tough, and I am grateful for my dog, who always makes me feel seen). This simple act creates a visual representation of all the ways love and God are present in our lives, even when things are hard.

In faith and thanksgiving, we are reminded that we are part of something greater, something sacred. May we hold this truth close and live out our gratitude each day.

Blessings to all as we journey together in faith.
Rev. Rebecca

thankful



**Food for the Body
Food for the Mind
Come and Learn About GUARANTEED LIVABLE INCOME
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2024, 11 a.m.
PULPIT EXCHANGE WITH ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH
WORSHIP, LUNCH AND LEARN**

Submitted By: James Ravenscroft, Minister, St. James United; Marion Pardy, Minister Emeritus, Gower Street United

As Gower Street United welcomes The Rev. James Ravenscroft, St. James United welcomes The Very Rev. Dr. Marion Pardy in worship leadership followed by a “Lunch and Learn” on Guaranteed Livable Income. The “Lunch and Learn” will be informative and informal. Accompanying James at Gower will be Josh Smee; accompanying Marion at St. James will be Deputy Mayor of St. John’s, Sheilagh O’Leary. JoAnna Bennett is coordinating the Gower luncheon. Josh Smee is the CEO of Food First NL, serves on several related Boards and is passionate about the power of collective action. Sheilagh O’Leary, St. John’s native of Irish/M’ikmaq ancestry, in addition to being Deputy Mayor, is an award- winning photographer and cultural producer; in 2024, she was named the National Honouree for the Municipal World ‘Women of Influence in Municipal Politics’.

The United Church of Canada has been advocating for a Guaranteed Livable income since the 1970’s. Politicians from different parties, CEO’s, economists, physicians, academics and many others have endorsed the need for a guaranteed livable income.

The City of St. John’s and Municipalities NL, together with some 23 other Municipalities throughout Canada, have advocated for a Guaranteed Livable Income. **Health Accord NL**, co-Chairs Sister Dr. Elizabeth Davis and Dr. Patrick Parfrey, named Poverty as the greatest social detriment to Health and recommends a guaranteed livable basic income as an effective solution. In NL we have an All Party Committee on Basic Committee and we are awaiting its Report.

**FOOD FOR THE BODY; FOOD FOR THE MIND
FOOD PLUS ALL OTHER BASICS FOR LIVING FOR ALL
JOIN US ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20TH FOR WORSHIP, LUNCH AND LEARN**

“We need to connect political action to actions of kindness. For instance, food banks are an important service but the next time you go to one, reach out to your elected representatives and ask them what they’re doing to eliminate the need for that food bank in the first place.” Josh Smee, Broadview Magazine, July/August 2023

In 2017 the Ontario government implemented a Basic Income Pilot with the leadership of the late Honourable Hugh Segal. Unfortunately, this Pilot was cancelled by a new government in 2018, despite promises that, if elected, the Pilot would continue. Sufficient data was collected and analyzed, however, to confirm the effectiveness of a guaranteed livable basic income in lifting significant numbers out of poverty. Here are a few ‘testimonials’:

Couple with one child: “The Basic Income Program helped us move to a better apartment in a safer neighbourhood and feel financially secure enough to go back to school together.”

Male Adult: “Basic Income helps me stay healthy with good food. I am ill.”

Adult Female: “Basic Income helped me with buying medications. It helped me with self-esteem. Also, it helps me with paying rent, food, etc., for diabetic needs.

(Source: Jessie Golem, Ontario Photographer, “A Human Picture”, documenting the basic income project in Ontario in 2017. Website: www.jessiegolem.com)

Gower Street United Church Choirs

Submitted by R. Carl Goulding, Organist and Choir Director

The Senior Choir

The fall is an exciting season for the Gower Street United Church Choir family, as we gather again to prepare anthems and hymns for our weekly worship. All in all, it's a musically rich time in the church calendar, and we're looking forward to a great year.

The choir family continues to grow, and we really appreciate the musical talent present within the choir, and as the choral director, I certainly enjoy working with the choir family.

The church choir currently has 26 singers, 23 returning singers and 3 new choir members this year. Our choir consists of a group of dedicated longtime singers, who have faithfully provided the very base of our worship for many years, and younger singers who are now engaged in the church choir at Gower Street Church. Choir members include, in alphabetical order, Amber, Clay, Deborah, Diane, Emma, Gabrielle, Jack, Joanna, Jonathan, Jordan, Justin, Karen & Ken, Ken, Lia, Liam, Linda, Lucas, Marilyn, Marion, Maude, Megan, Riley, Sue, Tony, and Ty.

The Young People's Choir

Music teachers, Justin and Megan, teach the Young People's Choir each Sunday morning, and we are looking forward to the Christmas Eve Family Service when we will hear them sing. The rich choral music heritage within our church community is certainly present in this generation of young choristers.

The Choral Bursary Program

The choral music program of Gower Street United Church is richly diverse, and celebrates a musical heritage that makes us all very proud. The young people who are the recipients of the choral scholarship program enhance the choir and we are very grateful for the continuing donations to the fund that makes this bursary possible.





First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Meetings Report

Submitted By: Jonathan Stevenson Gower Street UC Delegate



The following is my report of the Annual FDEE Annual Meeting (2024). It provides a summary of the major items presented and discussed that I thought would be of interest to Gower. For a complete record, minutes for the Regional Council meeting are available [here](#).

Introduction

This was the first face-to-face annual meeting of the FDEE since the COVID-19 Pandemic forced these meetings to be online-only. This year's meeting was held at the St. John's Memorial University Campus and was well attended by approximately 125 delegates in person, including a significant youth delegation and several guest speakers including the current Moderator of The United Church of Canada, the Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne. Yours truly served as one of the Duty People and in my role as the Parking Shuttle driver I had the pleasure of meeting many delegates during our short drives between MUN Parking Lot 15 and Gushue Hall!

Theme: "When We Say Yes!"

The theme this year was "When We Say Yes". This theme was always in the background as matters concerning the organization, goals, and future of our Region and the UC were presented and discussed. Our Moderator set the tone during the opening worship. In her Reflection she highlighted the many ways that the UC has said "Yes!" at the national and local level. She challenged the attendees to consider what exactly it means to "Say Yes to God" and what we are "Saying Yes To", especially as the UC enters its centennial year.

Priority Setting

Priority setting for the region was discussed at length, including multiple table-discussion sessions by the delegates. We were challenged to consider the various priorities presented, rank them by priority and select at least one concrete action to take back to our faith communities to implement. I chose the priority "Nurturing Communities of Faith" as Top Priority - especially considering the very real threat to the continuance of Gower as a viable faith community and in light of recent closures of nearby church communities in our downtown area. The "concrete action" I feel is needed is to strengthen connections and communications between Gower and the Region. More two-way communications are needed. The Region does have resources that could assist us. Cooperation (not competition) between UC churches in our local area is key to our survival. We need to be open to the idea of sharing resources.

Pastoral Units

Future Directions Team members Calvin Ginn and Corey Paul presented the idea "Pastoral Units" was presented as a possible concrete action that the FDEE faith communities should consider to promote more cooperation and dialog between church communities. It was stressed this would not be another formal governance level. The proposal organized faith communities into Pastoral Units grouped by geographical area. Gower is proposed to be part of The Northeast Avalon Pastoral Unit unit which also includes Cochrane Street, First United, Gower Street, Portugal Cove - Bell Island, Pouch Cove- Bauline, St. James, Topsail and Wesley.

The Pastoral Units met in smaller talk-group sessions mostly as an introduction and to discuss the proposal. Ours was one of the larger groups and there was a lively discussion on such things as sharing ministerial staff and musical researches (such as space) and holding joint events. The formal adoption of Pastoral Units was not voted on at this time. Instead it was moved that a pilot project involving at least five (5) Pastoral Units would be conducted over the next year, with the results presented at the 2025 FDEE annual meeting.

Gower's Clergy Highlighted

Gower's current and former clergy were featured prominently at this year's Regional council. Rev. Pamela was elected as one of the five (5) clergy commissioners allowed for FDEE for the 45th General Council which will meet in-person on August 7-12, 2025 in Calgary, AB. Rev. Marion Davis was honoured at the banquet dinner for her 30th anniversary as an ordained UC minister. Rev. Rebecca was very active as one of the youth organizers and introduced the Go Project that was hosted by Gower this past Summer. The Very Rev. Dr. Marion Pardy presented details and progress on creating a Guaranteed Livable Income across Canada.

Evaluation of the Regional Council Structure

The Executive Minister for FDEE, Faith March-MacCuish, presented a process for the planned evaluation of the regional council structure as we approach the five (5) year mark of living into the new structure. The Executive has approved a process, a consultant and the evaluation question: "Does the Regional Council structure enhance the vitality and engagement of faith communities and leaders in the purposes and covenants in The Manual of the UC?" Rev. Dr. Jenny Stephens has been engaged as the consultant who will prepare three reports; one for each region, based on the results of interviews, questionnaires and focus group meetings with staff, members of the region, the Executive and divisions/committees. The final report, with recommendations as necessary, will be brought to the 2025 annual meeting of the regional council.

Available Resources

Throughout the many presentations, I noted there are National and Regional support programs (including grants) available to assist in supporting, promoting and growing faith communities like Gower. These include:

- National Insurance Program: the UCC has a national "group insurance" for helping churches with escalating insurance costs. This centralized insurance does not yet cover NL - but there are plans to update and extend it to include our region.
- National "modernization grants": there are national grant programs available to assist with the cost of church modernization projects (e.g. furnace/electrical system updates).
- Growth Animator: there is a Growth Animator (and resources) available to guide faith communities beyond the current worry over building costs and empty pews to a more positive and growing future.
- Stewardship: there are Regional resources available to guide local stewardship efforts and help develop/brainstorm new ideas.
- Workshops/Webinar: due to a protest on campus over the Gaza situation, the workshops offered at the Annual Meeting were condensed from the original schedule. Lunch and learn webinars will be scheduled this Fall to offer additional opportunities for the workshop presentations.

As part of my pledge as mentioned in the Priority section, and as Vice Chair I will make sure all of these have been properly and fully explored within the Gower Board over the following months.

Summer 2024 Events

The Go Project

This July hosted a Go Beyond Youth Mission Program for Youth aged 12-16. Also three Gower Youth attended a Go Beyond Youth Mission Program in Toronto, ON.



Chinese Association Flower Service

This August, Rev. Pamela joined the Chinese community again for their Annual Flower Service. It is a pleasure for Gower Clergy to join this community for this gathering each year.



Connecting with Creation

Due to weather and fire regulations we were only able to have one beach fire this summer. It was a wonderful evening of community and creation.





Coming Up at Gower ?



GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH

ALL OCTOBER FOOD DRIVE FOR BRIDGES TO HOPE

TO MAKE A DONATION
BRING A NON-PERISABLE FOOD ITEM OR MONETARY GIFT TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY MORNING OR
DROP IT OFF DURING OFFICE HOURS



Traditional Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols

SAVE THE DATE

SAVE THE DATE

On **Sunday evening, December 1st**, the 41st Traditional Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols will take place in the sanctuary of Gower Street United Church, at 6:30pm. The mass choir features singers from the performance groups at the Music Studios of Etcetera Productions: the Junior Show Choir, the Show Choir, and the Ensemble. The performers' families and the music studio teachers, Carl Goulding, Justin Goulding, Megan Barnes, and Rebecca Goulding Arsenault, look forward to another beautiful musical celebration of the Christmas season. Admittance is \$20, paid at the door, and doors open for concertgoers at 5:30pm. The profits of the evening are donated annually to Gower Street United Church.

Everyone is welcome to attend on December 1st, and we hope to make this evening a wonderful beginning to the Christmas Season, and a significant fundraiser for Gower Street United Church.

Following this performance, singers from the Music Studios of Etcetera Productions will be travelling to Walt Disney World on December 2nd for a week, to perform in its Annual Christmas Tradition of Lessons and Carols, "Candlelight Processional." The singers from the Music Studios of Etcetera Productions will perform with the Walt Disney World Orchestra, the Liberty Singers, Celebrity Readers and the Candlelight Choir.