



# St. James United Church Annual Report 2025



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## **In Memoriam**

Mary Grace Howell	January 3
Nina Mae Abbott	January 22
George Smith	February 23
Martha Verna Celeste Howse	March 4
Ruth Peckham	March 8*
Carol Marie Smith	May 14
Winnifred Daniels	June 11
John "Jack" Head	July 6*
Boyd Day	August 1
Marjorie Clarke	August 3
Samuel Butt	August 26*
Vincent Wiltshire	August 30
Raymond Cook	September 7
Bertha Jean Hunt	October 7
Maxfield Short	October 25
Catherine Bradbury	December 5

\*We have been advised of passing but did not officiate funeral.

**We would like to extend condolences to all families and friends and to many others who have suffered loss during the past year.**

**Information about Formatting of the Annual Report:** This year's Annual Report has been formatted a bit differently than in year's past. Following the usual reports from the Chair of the Church Board, the Minister, and those pertaining to the work of the church board, reports of various committees, teams and groups have been divided into sections that are reflective of our governance model. This keeps together the reporting on related aspects of our life and work as a congregation.

## **Message from the Chair, St. James United Church Council**

The congregation of St. James United Church has had an eventful year. We have welcomed new faces into our fellowship and sadly said goodbye to some long-standing family and friends. We have watched our neighbourhood grow and develop around us - new people arriving, new buildings next door, and even a new visual boundary on our perimeter as the city began its revitalization plan for our area.

There are times when you have to assess where you are and where you are headed. To this end, St. James has tasked the "Strategic Planning Committee" with examining ways in which we can move securely into our future. They have recommended a right-sized, sustainable ministry - a ministry that nourishes both our congregation and the surrounding community. This initiative, called "Our Next Chapter," will find a way to ensure our long-term future, with Congregational input, support, and stakeholder consultation.

Change has featured prominently here in recent years. We have transitioned from a team ministry to a single ministry. We have grown in the role of an affirming ministry. We have adopted a new governance model.

This past year has seen us pilot the implementation of our Church Board. The purpose of this new governance model is to create a more nimble and responsive structure that can adapt to changing needs. The size and roles of committee representation have shifted to focus on a streamlined, smaller teams structure. The intent is to lighten the load and time commitment for each position, but it does require more Volunteers to fully flesh out the structure. One year into the pilot, the basic systems are in place, but we are looking to fill the remaining positions. In doing so, it is essential that we rebuild core groups such as Christian Education/Faith Formation and Stewardship/Fundraising. These groups are undergoing a form of renewal within the governance structure, giving new energy to these foundational elements of our church.

It is so very encouraging to highlight that we have seen a surge of activity in our Stewardship and Fundraising groups. A new team has emerged to make a vibrant and significant contribution to the life, work, and fellowship of this congregation.

In keeping with our intent to grow in new ways, we have also acquired new technology to support our fundraising efforts.

Our fundraising has also reached beyond St. James as we have endeavored to partner with Gower St. United Church and Cowan Heights United Church to bring Spirit NL dinner theatre to the tables of our community.

There has also been a growth in our use of space. We have developed a new relationship with the St. John's Methodist Church. Their church planting led them to offer a weekly service in the

Sanctuary before ours on Sunday mornings. We have had occasion to participate in a joint service with them, and their enthusiasm is truly invigorating.

Quadrangle has outgrown their rooms here and have moved to premises better suited to their current needs. In the meantime, we have welcomed a new group into our rooms. "Bridge on the Edge" is a not-for-profit bridge organization that has chosen to call our space "home."

The more we change, the more we stay the same. At our core is our spirituality, our faith, our fellowship, and our care for the community. This will remain at the heart of our mission as we look optimistically toward a brighter future.

I would like to thank the tireless support of the valued members of our church community. It is because of you that we are able to continue our ministry.

I would also like to thank you for your collective voice. Your input is critical as we forge new pathways. Whether it is supportive or constructive, it is important that we hear from you, and we encourage you to contribute throughout this process.

We are here to serve,

Pamela Norman  
St James United Church Board, Chair

## **Rev. James Ravenscroft, Minister**

It is a long-standing joke that ministers only work one day a week. That is, of course, not true, with a minister focused on multiple tasks over a given week, month, and year, especially when you are in solo ministry as the role has become at St. James United Church in recent years. The joke, of course, comes from the one day of the week most congregants see their minister, including at St. James. Given that, I do take much time and energy to prepare to preach and lead Sunday worship and other gatherings for prayer. Thankfully, these are parts of my week that I enjoy. Plus, at St. James, we have branched beyond Sunday mornings to offer various gatherings for prayer and worship, such as Taizé (a monthly reflective service), Tapestry (one Saturday evening a month), InsideOUT (a bi-weekly LGBTQIA+ spirituality circle), Wild Light Spiritual Oasis (a group that gathers outside to connect with God in nature) and throughout 2025, a monthly "Silent Vigil for Peace and Justice" (this last offering shifted to a weekly meditation group held on Wednesdays).

As a solo minister, it is also my responsibility to support faith formation across generations at St. James. The focus over the last year has been on adult and younger adult opportunities for faith exploration. I have continued facilitating a monthly Pub Theology group, started to lead a young adult Bible study focused on Isaiah (2026 revived this group with a Pauline epistle focus) and also lead a post-Sunday worship lectionary study (this grew out of a gathering for Lent 2025 that looked at the cross and how we understand it theologically). We also have our family space (playground) so that children who come on Sunday can stay in the sanctuary to worship with their families.

Another important role for me is offering pastoral support. I do this in three ways. First, I respond to moments of crisis like an illness or death, going to the hospital or a home to visit someone, joining with a grieving family to plan and then lead a funeral service, following up with them

afterward, and offering times of prayer like the Blue Christmas service (gratitude to Canon Tom Mugford of the Anglican Church for his co-leadership this year). I also offer support long term, again, making visits and phone calls, leading a hymn sing with Doreen Brown at Kenny's Pond Retirement Community, and checking in with the UCW and AOTS as they support their older members. On this last front, 2025 saw the Pastoral Care Team taking a pause as members took on other tasks. Finally, I like to connect with newcomers to St. James, to welcome them into our community and get to know them. We have been blessed again over this past year with a number of new people coming to worship, along with some other folks returning after an extended absence. A big part of this continues to be our commitment to be a warm and inclusive community. Thank you for making this who we are.

You would think that worship leadership, coordinating faith formation and offering pastoral care were enough, but there are a couple of other roles a minister does, the key being giving leadership and support to the future vision and ongoing governance of a congregation. This is a part of my role that I take seriously, and at St. James we are blessed with many leaders and volunteers who do the same. As I do this part of my work, I am struck by the courage and hopefulness that defines St. James. It would be tempting to look at lower numbers than across our history, not just in terms of Sunday attendance but overall budget, and feel nostalgic for the past and pessimistic about the future. But that isn't who you are. Instead, you continue to be open to new possibilities as a faith community. I would like to focus on a few examples of this in the remainder of my report.

First among these examples is how last year you opted to trial a new governance model, the church council refashioned into a governance board focused on long-term strategy and oversight, leaving day-to-day operations to various teams and committees along with ministry personnel and staff. The model is not fully functioning yet, and the clusters not yet coming together as hoped. We're seeking liaisons for the Spiritual Growth and Discipleship area of our shared work, and Congregational Life and Leadership as well. Not having those roles filled has resulted in less communication between groups than we are used to. Another setback has been the slow development of the neighbourhood groupings envisioned in the model. It was ready to launch until we noticed there were a number of households left out. If you are someone who likes to work with databases and spreadsheets, then reach out to me at [james@stjamesuc.org](mailto:james@stjamesuc.org). We could use your skill and enthusiasm to get this task done. Despite these setbacks, I see an overall willingness to grow into the model, and that stems from the "we can do it" attitude that defines the ethos of St. James. I am so grateful for that.

A second sign of your courage and hope is the creation of a Strategic Planning Team. You will see a report from this group later in this document, not just outlining what they have been doing but what they have planned moving forward. Toward the end of 2025, they announced the beginning of a "Listening Phase" in the consultation process, beginning internally as a congregation to hear what members and adherents of St. James United Church are hoping to see in our future ministry, before seeking input from neighbourhood stakeholders and regional council and denominational partners. This willingness to cast a vision builds on what you have articulated in the Mission Articulation Plan. Again, I am grateful for your openness to discern where God is calling us as a spiritual community.

I saw this too in the willingness to join with others as they discern what God is calling for them. We were approached early in 2025 by a congregation affiliated with The Methodist Church, Ghana. Over the last few years, St. James United Church has been approached by new congregations seeking a place to meet for worship, and each time you welcomed them. This time we took it a step further, creating a covenant to guide the relationship, including assurances that community members who identify as LGBTQIA+ continue to feel safe and

supported at St. James. This was accepted and thus far it has been a fruitful relationship with a shared worship service and time for fellowship. They are a young congregation with lots of children that you hear laughing and playing each Sunday. As we welcomed St. John's Methodist Church, we said goodbye to Quadrangle NL as they moved to new and larger quarters closer to downtown. They left with much gratitude for the physical start we gave them and a desire to maintain a relationship into the future as we do our own discernment.

These two relationships are part of a growing openness I see at St. James to community as well as church partnerships. We have a relationship with the Islamic Circle of Newfoundland and Labrador as they rent 10 Paton Street for a drop-in centre, with a few Twelve Step groups as they offer support to folks in recovery, with community groups like "Bridge on the Edge" which soon will be meeting in the basement, and of course with other United Church congregations. Traditionally, we have joined with others for prayer and worship, but last year we teamed up with Gower Street United Church and Cowan Heights United Church for a successful dinner theatre event with Spirit of Newfoundland. This was more than a fundraiser, but one more way we lived into our MAP commitment to partner with others. We look forward to other events, especially shared confirmation preparation sessions.

This last item points to the final role of a minister and that is offering support to the wider church. I am tasked with a few jobs in this regard. I am in my last year of sitting on the Advisory Board for "Gathering" (the United Church's worship resource periodical), I continue to sit on our Regional Council Executive, I am the facilitator of the Regional Council's Affirm Committee (we voted to become an Affirming Region and will be holding our public celebration this coming May), and was recently asked to be part of a Commission for a congregation that is having internal governance issues. This is important work as we support one another as followers of Jesus. Thank you for your support in these various roles, all ways that you in turn offer support to the wider church.

As you can see above, a minister's role in a congregation is so much more than one day a week or even preparing to lead worship on that one day. It is multifaceted, especially when you are in solo ministry. But a solo minister is never alone. Instead, they work collaboratively with many leaders and others, each and every one working together as a community of disciples. That is the real joy of ministry and I continue to be grateful for being able to share it with all of you.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. James Ravenscroft

# **Summary of Ministry Priorities for 2025-2026**

On June 21, 2025, members of the Church Board and chairs of various committees and teams came together for a full-day retreat at Queen's Theological College (gratitude to the team there for letting us use the space). Through discussion and prayerful discernment, a series of priorities were identified. They are collected together in the following list, in combination with ideas generated at a previous autumn retreat.

## **1. Develop Strategic Plan and Communicate it to the Congregation**

- Discern how to use our property more extensively and strategically. Complete the property analysis and contact a rental consultant to help us increase rentals.
- Communicate our financial position with the congregation, being sure to cast a wide net in communication, sharing information not just with those who attend worship regularly but with our affiliates and those who live away. Make sure that what is communicated is a positive message, sharing what we have accomplished and so communicating what good work donations will support.
- Promote giving beyond Sunday contributions and fundraisers. Share information about bequests and annuities. Launch a deficit-busting donation drive.
- Reestablish a Stewardship Committee and launch an annual stewardship campaign. This committee is separate from one tasked with coordinating fundraising. It acts as an umbrella for 5 related tasks: facilitating a yearly campaign of connection and discernment with members and adherents regarding their level of giving, overseeing the separate fundraising team, encouraging volunteerism via a small team of volunteer animators, promoting the Mission and Service Fund, and raising people's awareness of giving through wills and bequests.
- Consider borrowing money to fund increased programming, i.e., invest in the transition that we are in. Look at funding youth programs plus young adult/university events.

## **2. Nurture Community and Enable People to Share their Gifts**

- The focus of this priority is on community connection. The more people feel a part of the community, the more they are enabled to share their gifts.
- Small Groups: Develop small groups, both via neighbourhood groupings as well as shared interests. Encourage members to start their own as well.
- Volunteerism: There is also a need to link people with opportunities to volunteer. In this, the aim is to create a Volunteer Development Team, a small group of two to three animators who will connect with people to help them discern where their talents are best matched with the needs of the congregation.

## **3. Engage with our Neighbours and Community Partners**

- The focus here is making connections in the neighbourhood, with special attention paid to people in the local area who attend Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic. To this end, strategize with current members who are part of these institutions regarding how to promote the church with students and faculty.
- Establish a Neighbourhood Connection Team: This team is tasked to walk in the neighbourhood to pray for our neighbours, meet people in the area and to be attentive to what is going on. In this, the team discerns where the congregation can join with others doing good work or where we may be called to start an initiative.
- Meet with the Growth Animator for our region to help us discern how best to connect with our neighbours, including reviewing the neighbourhood profile that can be requested from the General Council Office. These profiles provide useful demographic and social data about the local area and so help us to discern where best to focus our efforts on outreach to our community.

- Appoint liaisons for each of our community partners. They are tasked with nurturing the relationship and responding to any concerns they may have. Over time, we could set up a Partnership Council, representatives from each partner coming together on a regular basis with congregational leaders to troubleshoot issues.



## Strategic Planning Committee: Report to the Annual General Meeting (2025)

### 1. Mandate and Formation

The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was established by the Church Board in early 2025 to navigate the complex challenges currently facing St. James United Church. Our mandate is to conduct a thorough, fact-based review of the church's situation and develop viable long-term options for the consideration of the church board and the congregation.

### 2. Financial Assessment and Historical Context

The committee's initial work focused on a comprehensive review of the church's financial health over the past two decades. Our findings revealed several critical trends:

- **Structural Deficits:** For several years, St. James has faced consistent operational shortfalls where regular expenses exceed our core income.

**Declining Core Revenue:** Congregational giving has seen a steady, long-term decline, dropping from over \$263,000 in 2012 to approximately \$176,245 in 2024.

- **The "Pandemic Mask":** Operational deficits were temporarily masked by one-time government funding during the pandemic; since that funding ended, our structural deficit has become increasingly clear.
- **Infrastructure Limitations:** While the committee investigated the potential for significant increases in rental revenue, we concluded that our current aging infrastructure is not conducive to major rental growth without substantial capital investment.

### THE WIDENING GAP

-  Declining Offerings
-  Structural Deficits
-  Rental Limitations

### 5 YEAR PROJECTIONS

 IN EVERY SCENARIO, OUR OPERATIONAL DEBT GROWS.

INCREMENTAL CHANGES BUY US TIME, BUT THEY DO NOT STOP THE DECLINE.

### 3. Strategic Projections

To understand the gravity of our situation, the committee developed 5-year financial projections. These models demonstrated that even under optimistic "business-as-usual" scenarios involving increased fundraising or minor rental growth, the church's debt would continue to grow significantly. When accounting for necessary capital reserves—such as the eventual replacement of our 1960s furnace—the financial gap becomes critically large.

#### 4. Church Board Recommendations and New Direction

Based on these findings, the SPC submitted an initial report to the Church Board. The Board accepted the committee's evidence-based recommendations and has now charged the SPC with a broader, more transformative mission: **to investigate any and all potential long-term options and consult with all relevant stakeholders**

#### 5. Current Activities: The Listening Phase

We are now entering the "Listening Phase" of our consultation process. This involves:

- **Internal Consultation:** Engaging with the congregation to understand your vision for the future of our ministry and our physical property.
- **External Stakeholder Engagement:** Meeting with community partners and regional authorities.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Committee members recently met with the **First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council** to discuss the long-standing **Kindred Works** property development proposal.

The committee is reviewing this potential development through the lens of a cohesive, long-term plan for the entire St. James property. We believe it is essential to have a clear understanding of our overall strategic path before proceeding with the development of any specific portion of our land.

### THE FULL REALITY OF OUR PROPERTY

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-  **Looming Costs**
-  **No Capital Reserve Fund**
-  **Growing Maintenance Burden**

Our current facility is much larger than our current needs, meaning a significant portion of our budget goes toward heating and maintaining and maintaining empty or underutilized space.

#### 6. Commitment to the Congregation

We wish to reiterate that the SPC is only authorized to investigate options and bring forward proposals. No final decisions regarding the church property or building have been made. Per the rules of The United Church of Canada, any major decision regarding property can only be made with the approval of the congregation at a formal meeting.

We look forward to walking this path of discovery and renewal with you in the coming year.

**Respectfully submitted,**

The St. James Strategic Planning Committee

### Teams and Committees that were paused over 2025

Over 2025, there are a few teams and committees whose work has been ongoing, although the teams themselves have been paused because of a drop in volunteer capacity.

1. Faith Formation Team: Following the governance restructuring, there was an attempt to merge the work of the Faith Formation Team and the Worship and Sacraments Team. The scope was too large, but it has resulted in some restructuring of mandates. For example, much of ministry with children takes place on a Sunday during the time of morning worship, especially with children participating in worship through activities in the Family Space. As a result, these activities are facilitated by the Worship and Sacraments Team. Likewise, this team makes sure that confirmation sessions are held with youth and adults, along with preparation for baptism or marriage. The focus of faith formation has thus shifted to adult-focused activities like bible study (both after worship and monthly with young adults),

Pub Theology and prayer practice. A Christian meditation group was launched in January 2026. The other focus of faith formation moving forward will be on nurturing small groups.

2. Diversity Team: The work of being an inclusive congregation is ongoing, facilitated mostly through the pastoral work of our minister. An example of this is “InsideOUT,” the LGBTQIA+ Spirituality circle that was started in 2024. Further to this, he was asked to help launch a support group called “Midlife Courage” for people who come out later in life. Supporting people who are new to Canada, especially anyone seeking asylum, is coordinated by our Social and Eco Action Team. We would like to relaunch the Diversity Team in 2026 to ensure that we continue to discern new ways to live out what it means to be an Affirming Ministry.
3. Pastoral Care Team: This team, tasked with coordinating support to members of St. James United Church during times of pastoral need, met regularly through 2024 but did not meet as a group in early 2025. This does not mean that this important work has not been happening. The UCW continues its work supporting older members, as does the AOTS, with Rev. James regularly visiting members of the congregation, especially those who may be sick or recently bereaved. St. James also held the annual Blue Christmas Service for anyone who finds the holiday season difficult, hosted a quiet come-and-go service on Christmas Eve and coordinated a few Christmas visits for people who had a hard time over the year. We’re seeking volunteers for this work, both to visit members and help coordinate activities.

If you are interested in facilitating Faith Formation activities, coordinating pastoral care initiatives or supporting our commitment to diversity and inclusion, or simply have an idea for other activities, contact Rev. James ([james@stjamesuc.org](mailto:james@stjamesuc.org)) or Pamela Norman ([pn.stjamesuc@gmail.com](mailto:pn.stjamesuc@gmail.com)).

# Spiritual Growth and Discipleship

## **Worship and Sacraments Team**

Part of the Spiritual Growth & Discipleship cluster at St. James, the members of the Worship and Sacraments Team are dedicated to the ongoing ministry and work of our community of faith. We are a small, dedicated group of volunteers. We are always looking for people to join us. If you are interested in the planning and preparation of worship at St. James, please contact me anytime to join our team. We would love your input into planning our worship services for St. James.

**Worship Schedule:** The worship services continued on a regular basis in person and online for 2025. Our regular Sunday morning service is at 11:00 am with various styles of prayer and worship held monthly at other times, including Taizé, Tapestry, Wild Light Spiritual Oasis, and a Silent Vigil for Justice and Peace. In addition, InsideOUT, a LGBTQIA+ Spirituality Gathering is held twice a month. We were fortunate to hold a joint worship service this year with St. John's Methodist Church, and we look forward to celebrations again with them in 2026. Thank you, Rev. James, for your continued support and initiatives to grow our congregation.

**Communion Report:** The Sacrament of Communion is an integral part of our expression of faith. Marilyn Adams continued to ensure the Sacrament is prepared on pre-selected dates and cleaned up following the service. She retired from this position in November. Her dedicated leadership in this area was certainly appreciated, and we are forever grateful for her many years of service and commitment to this ministry. In December, Harv and Paul Diamond committed to take on this task, and we are certainly thankful for their service.

**Discernment and Candidates:** Katie Vardy is a recognized Candidate for Ordained Ministry by the Office of Vocation and is in their final term of their Master of Divinity. They continue to work through their final placement requirements with ordination in this coming June 2026 here in NL as part of the First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council meeting. We hope you can join us at the Celebration of Ministry service for Katie's ordination.

**Ushering Report:** Ushering is more than handing out bulletins or taking up the offering. Ushers are the first people you meet as you enter the church and ensure everyone feels welcome and comfortable for the worship service. They answer many queries each Sunday as people come for worship and provide up-to-date information for all their needs. As the Acting Usher in Charge, I am truly grateful for the support of **Jean Thompson** and **Marilyn Adams** these past years for their tireless support helping me usher. In addition, many, **many heartfelt thanks to those who have volunteered** to assist in this important role of ministry and the extra support of the **AOTS** and **UCW** when called upon. Our Usher in charge position remains vacant. Ask me about this role if you would like to help, or simply to be an usher during the service.

**Readers and Worship Assistants:** Thank you to **Marilyn Adams** for arranging readers for every service until December, when she also retired from this position. Thank you to **Barry Cutler** for stepping up to find our weekly readers. Rev. James introduced **Worship Assistants** in 2025. We are very grateful for the many people who have signed up and joined Rev. James each Sunday to celebrate worship with the congregation. **Many heartfelt thanks to those who have volunteered** to assist in these important roles of ministry.

## **Music Ministry**

The music ministry of St. James continued to flourish under the capable leadership of **Amy Dalziel** and **Bob Rose**. Working closely with Rev. James, they coordinated worship services that featured

a wide range of music groups and soloists, ensuring a varied, meaningful, and enriching musical experience for the congregation.

Throughout the year, music played a central role in many special services, including the Memorial Hymn Sing, Good Friday Service, Easter Vigil Service, Blue Christmas Service, a pop-up choir service of music, the Family Christmas Eve Service, and the Candlelight Christmas Eve Service. In addition, the Taizé worship service held on the first Wednesday evening of each month included music leadership at the piano.

A highlight of the year was the 100th Anniversary Hymn Sing, held on June 29 in collaboration with Islington United Church (Toronto, ON). This special event celebrated beloved hymns from the past century while also offering a preview of selections from the new hymnal, *Then Let Us Sing*. Senior choirs from both congregations greatly enjoyed preparing and performing the collaborative anthems “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” and “The Old Hundredth.” Our Senior Choir also participated in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary national celebration service which was held at Gower Street United Church in June.

We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing contributions of the **St. James Senior Choir** and the **St. James Guitar Group**, who shared their musical gifts through worship services and concerts. Appreciation is also extended to **Doreen Brown** for her accompaniment in worship and hymn sings led by Rev. James at Kenny’s Pond Retirement Home, as well as for her continued support of Rev. Rebecca Pike in offering a similar monthly service at Tiffany Village.

Many thanks to the members of the congregation who support the Music Ministry at St. James through musical participation, assistance with music events, and/or donations. Your support is deeply appreciated by the Music Team as we continue to “make a joyful noise” together.

**Livestreaming:** Thank you to **Jake Thompson** for ensuring the PowerPoint and livestreaming platforms are available each week. We continue with upgrades and improvements in 2025. We are deeply grateful to **Trevor Bartlett, Keith Le Feuvre, Joel Le Feuvre, Skyler Simpson and Jake Thompson** for the many, many extra hours for carrying out this work behind the scenes. We will soon have a volunteer working alongside Jake in 2026 to help the livestream and sound tasks flow easier and consistently on a regular basis.

**Children in Worship:** This year our committee took on the integration of inclusivity of children in the worship space. Rev. James includes all children in worship, and we provide colouring sheets and other activities for children as appropriate with the liturgical seasons and other topics.

**Closing Remarks:** 2025 has been another busy year in our church life. While new membership, baptisms and weddings have been few, we continue with a larger number of funerals as my Clerk of Session report indicates.

I would like to thank the members of our **Worship and Sacraments Team** for their input and support during the year. **Marilyn Adams, Marina Adams, Ruth Baker, Skyler Simpson, Rajash Massey, Bob Rose and Amy Dalziel**. We have had the pleasure of **Harv & Paul Diamond** joining us this fall. Thank you to you all.

**Rev. James**, thank you for all your support, input, and leadership this year, and we look forward to your leadership again in 2026.

Thank you to **Stephanie** and **Bruce** for having my back each time I would reach out for help.

We are a diverse group of individuals with a true commitment to St. James and look forward to serving the committee and our church for the next year.

As always, a special thank you to all those who have volunteered or participated in the presentation of worship services.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Pike,  
Clerk of Session & Chair of the Worship and Sacraments Team

## **Clerk of Session Report 2025**

### **OUR NEWEST MEMBERS**

#### **BAPTISM:**

No baptisms

#### **CONFIRMATIONS:**

No confirmations

#### **PROFESSION OF FAITH:**

No Professions of Faith

#### **TRANSFER IN:**

No Transfers In

#### **REMOVED BY TRANSFER:**

No Transfers Out

#### **MARRIAGES:**

Kyle Justin Perry Winter and Rev. Rebecca Dianne Pike  
Edward Francis Fleming and Samantha Danielle Uribe

January 4  
August 19

#### **CANDIDATE FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY:**

Katelyn Vardy

## **Social and Eco Action Team**

In keeping with our church's mission and following Jesus's example, St. James staff and congregants helped many people in our area again this year. Our congregation is welcoming, empathetic and very generous! Many newcomers and NL-born residents alike are in unfortunate financial situations for many reasons, struggling to survive the extremely inflated costs of living. They are in great need and very stressed. Individual congregants and our various church groups volunteered, fundraised, and donated very generously during the past year. Here are a few examples:

- money and loads of food items to Bridges to Hope,

- a car-load of toiletries, kitchenware, articles of clothing and accessories, and other gifts to Stella Circle's clients for Christmas
- loads of groceries to a couple of desperate families whose single mothers had to quit their low-paying jobs for medical reasons
- a car-load of used and new clothing items, including nice winter coats and two new children's snowsuits, kitchenware, and bedding to two large Sudanese families and four Ukrainian ones (who have attended our English Conversation Circles at St. James)
- a large load of musical instruments to the Kate Sullivan Instrument Library for school children facing financial barriers, to enable them to participate in music programs
- invited/included new people to our church's soup lunches and events

Furthermore, St. James in collaboration with Teachers on Wheels (TOW) and the Ukrainian National Federation-Avalon (UNFA), continue to be a welcoming gateway for newcomers to help them to settle and to integrate into our community. In addition to the lack of recognition of their professional credentials, their lack of understanding of English, and proficiency in speaking it, are huge barriers to employment and financial security, as well as a social one. In my volunteer roles as leader of St. James' Social and Eco Action, and president of Teachers on Wheels, I initiated two weekly, Welcome/English Conversation Circles for free, at St. James with the help of volunteers from both charities, from December to June '24. It was a success! Last year, thanks to the help of congregant, Sarah Stoodley, MHA for Mt. Scio, and then, Minister of Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Jobs, TOW received a grant for expenses in August, to run our program again from September '25 to June '26. St. James is benefitting from paid room rentals and supplies this time, in addition to continuous weekly publicity on Facebook. We are now half-way through, having fun with 34 learners, with half being regulars, and new ones coming all the time.

Our learners are diverse, interesting, lovely people from Ukraine, Ecuador, Columbia, China, Japan, Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, Portugal, Eritrea and more. Most are in their late 20s to 40s, are well-educated and experienced, and came here for a variety of reasons: as war refugees or asylum seekers; to study in graduate programs; to work and live a better quality of life; and to be with their spouses or other family members who had already immigrated here to work or study here. This diversity leads to interesting, enlightening conversations on many topics! By asking each learner questions about themselves and their culture, we make everyone feel welcome, appreciated, included, and we learn so much. We orientate them a lot about our province and country too.

Whenever I meet and help newcomers, or deliver donations, I receive big smiles, hugs, and expressions of deep gratitude! My heart is full of the warmth of your gracious kindness and generosity. Your gifts have a significant impact. When everyone gives a little of their "time, talents or treasures," together, we make a big difference in people's lives! Thank you so much!

Looking ahead to plan for this spring and the year, I invite you to contact me to discuss social or environmental concerns which interest you, and ideas for projects. With more people pitching in, we can achieve so much more!

Thanks again! May God bless you!

Robin Bartlett

## **Bridges to Hope 2025 Annual Report to our Supporting Congregations**

Dear Supporters,

Because of your generosity and commitment, Bridges to Hope continues to be a vital lifeline for individuals and families across St. John's. We are grateful to share an update on the impact your support has made throughout 2025.

So far this year, our Food Bank has recorded **17,910 client visits**, serving **5,541 unique individuals** in our community. The need remains significant, particularly for families with children—**31% of those we served were children aged 1–17**. At the same time, **seniors accounted for 7.1% of total visits**, reminding us that food insecurity affects people at every stage of life.

Your support also made several key programs possible:

- Our **Bag to School Program** helped **900 Kindergarten to Grade 12 students** start the school year with essential supplies, easing the burden on families and setting students up for success.
- Our Christmas Hamper program, **Miracle on Cookstown Road**, provided holiday support to **665 households**, ensuring that families could experience dignity, warmth, and hope during the holiday season.

These numbers represent more than statistics—they represent neighbours, children, seniors, and families who were able to access nutritious food and meaningful support when they needed it most.

Thank you for standing with us. Your compassion helps ensure that Bridges to Hope can continue responding to growing needs in our community with care, respect, and hope.

With sincere gratitude,

**Ken Peters**

Chair of the Board-Bridges to Hope

## **Congregational Life and Leadership**

### **Stewardship Committee**

The Stewardship Committee, part of the Congregational Life and Leadership cluster in our new governance model, is responsible for overseeing the management of time, talent, and the resources of the church. This long-standing committee of our church has been undergoing a process of renewal. At our last Annual Congregational Meeting, Pamela Norman stepped away as chair of the committee to begin her role as chair of our church board, leaving only one member. At the end of the year, the committee welcomed Grace Marcoux. As we began 2026, she and Jennifer Whitfield, have been meeting and are engaged in study and planning to launch current United Church best practices regarding the means and methods of stewardship. We look forward to moving forward with our initiatives in the coming year.

Submitted by Rev. James Ravenscroft on behalf of the Current Stewardship Committee:  
Jennifer Whitfield and Grace Marcoux

### **Fundraising Team**

The Fundraising Team has been on an exciting journey this year! It grew from a mandate from the board to launch a dedicated team focused on fundraising initiatives to support St. James alongside events facilitated by groups like the UCW, AOTS, and the Finance Committee. First coordinating our monthly soup luncheons, the team grew after a brainstorming session in the Fall that set out an inspiring vision for the rest of 2025 and into 2026. The successful Harvest Tea was the first of other events such as a Pop-Up Boutique, and a Spring Concert, with a Rummage Sale on the horizon!

Submitted by Rev. James Ravenscroft on behalf of the Fundraising Team:

Barbara Butt  
Sheilah Beckett  
Catherine Rose  
Linda Babstock  
Randy Butler  
Barry Cutler  
Clyde Flight

### **United Church Women (UCW)**

The UCW held seven regular meetings during 2025. Our meetings were held on the second Monday of the month at 12:30 pm, beginning with a light lunch of sandwiches and cookies, provided by our members, along with a cup of tea or coffee. We had on average 12 members attending each meeting. During our meetings we had a worship time with various themes appropriate for the season. We are always open to new members joining our group, and this past year we had one new member join. In March, Donna Downey was presented with a life membership pin for her dedication to our UCW group. The Senior's Advocate, Susan Walsh, gave a very informative presentation to our group during our March meeting. Members of our group provided leadership for a church service in May and assisted with ushering when called upon. This year, we had our closing lunch in May at Jack's Restaurant with 15 members present. Our delicious Christmas Dinner, catered by Pat and Sue, was held on December 10, along with the

AOTS men’s group and some members of the Guitar Group. The Guitar Group provided entertainment after the dinner.

This year we held a Spring Tea and Bake Sale, and through funds raised we were able to donate \$4000 to the church, as well as donations to the M&S Fund, Stella’s Circle, Bridges to Hope and Iris Kirby House to the total value of \$1000. We would not be able to put off our annual fundraisers without the help of the congregation, and for that we are truly thankful.

During the year, we were saddened by the deaths of Nina Abbott, Shirley Simmons and Flora Clouter who were long-time devoted UCW Life Members, and donations were made to the Memorial Fund in their memory. Many of our members, due to health or other reasons, are unable to attend our regular meetings, and our members keep in contact with them through phone calls and visits.

We welcome new members to our meetings on the second Monday of the month at 12:30 pm in the Fellowship Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Pilgrim (President)

**ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH WOMEN**  
**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS & EXPENDITURES**

Year Ended December 31, 2025  
With Comparative figures for 2024

<b>RECEIPTS</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
Envelope Collection	550	816
Birthday Barrel	29	21
Fall Sale		4,348
Spring Tea	4,253	2,996
Christmas/Closing Dinner	1,298	475
Donations	720	320
	\$ 6,850	\$ 8,976
Total Receipts	\$ 6,850	\$ 8,976

**ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH WOMEN**  
**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS & EXPENDITURES**

Year Ended December 31, 2025  
 With Comparative figures for 2024

<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
Mission & Service	160	500
East District - Membership Fee	280	300
East District – UCW – Life Membership	40	
East District – Annual Meeting	90	
East District – Burry Heights	50	50
East District – Chaplaincy Fund	10	10
St James Church:        Memorial Fund	150	150
Operating Fund	4,000	7,000
Bridges to Hope	250	400
Iris Kirby House	250	
Stella Circle	240	200
Honorarium & Recognition's	25	25
Christmas/Closing Dinner	1,300	475
Spring Tea	32	28
Fall Sale		39
Miscellaneous	31	117
Service Charges	33	37
	6,941	9,332
Total Expenditures	6,941	9,332
Receipts over/(under) Expenditures	\$ (91)	\$ (356)

**ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH WOMEN**  
**STATEMENT OF CASH POSITION**

Year Ended December 31, 2025  
 With Comparative figures for 2024

	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
Cash in Bank January 1	\$ 1,590	\$ 1,946
Receipts over/(under) Expenditures	\$ (91)	\$ (356)
Cash in Bank December 31	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,590

**AUDITORS REPORT**

I have examined the Statement of Cash Position of St. James United Church Women as of December 31, 2025 and the Statement of Cash Receipts and Expenditures for the year ended. My Examination included a general review of the accounting procedures and such tests of accounting records as I considered necessary in the circumstances beyond accounting for the receipts in the books.

With the exception noted in the previous paragraph, I report that in my opinion the accompanying Statement of Cash Position and Statement of Cash Receipts and Expenditures present fairly the Cash position of St. James United Church Women as of December 31, 2025, and the results of its cash transactions for the year then ended, on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

Aubrey Hill

### **A.O.T.S. Men's Club (As One That Serves)**

The Men's Club held eight regular meetings during 2025. Our meetings were held midday on the third Wednesday of each month, with the usual meal and program topics of interest to our membership. Guest speakers included the following: Fred Hollett, Fire Chief in St. Phillips-Portugal Cove, who recounted interesting stories of his experiences with various Fire Departments, Les Dean, who spoke on Families and Communities in NL and Vernon Whelan, who told the story of the loss of the Water Witch.

Members of our club, and indeed the whole congregation were deeply saddened to learn of the death of long-time member Jack Head on July 6, 2025. Jack was a very active member of AOTS, and his presence has been greatly missed.

In addition to our regular meetings, members hosted the pancake supper on March 4th. We also catered the Easter Sunday Breakfast on April 20th. With the help of a few volunteers from the congregation, we were able to successfully arrange the ever-popular fresh fish and brewis dinner on two occasions. The events were well attended, and we are currently planning another for the spring of 2026. On December 10, members of our club joined the UCW for a Christmas dinner, with entertainment provided by the Guitar Group.

Clyde Flight (President)

# **St. James AOTS Men's Service Club**

## Statement of Receipts and Expenditures

For year ended December 31, 2025

Bank Balance as of January 1, 2025			769.24
<b>Revenues</b>			
Dinner meetings			
Revenues	1,048.00		
Expenditures	<u>419.34</u>		
NET		628.66	
Easter Sunday Breakfast			
Revenues	175.00		
Expenditures	<u>60.00</u>		
NET		115.00	
Pancake Supper			
Revenues	1,320.00		
Expenditures	342.62		
NET		977.38	
Fish Dinner			
Revenues	6,480.00		
Expenditures	<u>1,946.37</u>		
NET		4,533.63	
Membership Dues		225.00	
Donations		<u>550.00</u>	
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>			7,029.67
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>			
Donation - Church		6,500.00	
- Memorial Fund		50.00	
Guest Speakers			
Bank Service Charges/Cheques		22.50	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>			6,572.50
Revenues over (under) expenditures			457.17
Bank Balance as of December 31, 2025			1,226.41

# **Administration**

## **Ministry and Personnel Committee**

The Committee consisted of the following members: Heather Hickman, Verna Worbleski, David Adams, Barry Robbins (Secretary), and Clyde Flight (Chair).

The committee met on a regular and required basis to carry out its duties as set out in the Policy Manual of the United Church of Canada. All decisions made were submitted to the Board for ratification.

The members of our Church Personnel have created a harmonious work environment, and it is indeed a pleasure to work with them.

Clyde Flight (Chair)

## **Property Committee**

This Property Committee report presents an overview on the operations and maintenance activities for the 2025 year, and actions we have taken to preserve our assets with our own resources, with the exception to a liability requirement for certified contractors where necessary. The committee's aim this past year was to look to manage the budget approved by the St. James Board, plus address any specific or Health and Safety requirements. Due to budgetary restraints, no major projects or unnecessary repairs were carried out to support the overall church budget and still maintain asset integrity.

The property budget for 2025 did give consideration for inflation, potential tariffs, normal operation, and maintenance to keep the church moving forward in a positive direction with reduced repairs unless necessary. We did have two small floods in the basement this past year, but they were addressed, and the basement was back to normal operations without major delay or cost.

Property concerns arise when planning for future capital works funding and the church does not have the capacity to budget for major capital expenditures or an allowance for emergency expenses. For example, the furnace and its associated piping is a growing concern and will have a significant price tag if the equipment becomes an issue.

The oil/heating cost this year was \$25,463 (reduced approx. \$5,000 from 2024) through energy management measures. The heating set points were reduced due to the building not being used to its full capacity for services and/or rentals. The oil furnace is inspected annually to decide its present condition for regular servicing and to predetermine through inspection if any potential major repairs are eminent.

## **Energy initiatives 2026**

Property has started and will continue the change over of basement lights to LED.

The old manse (10 Paton Street) did generate significant full-year rental revenue in 2025 with little maintenance required. The plan for the Paton Street manse for 2025 was to continue annual rental to generate an income to support church operations. The old manse (10 Paton St) was leased to the ICNL for 2025 with a renewed lease for 2026. Hopefully, both parties can continue the

agreement into future years. Quadrangle remained to be a regular renter until November when they moved on to larger facilities. Other smaller organizations, a number being outreach clients and Tae Kwon-Do martial art training, continue to operate weekly in the auditorium.

The ongoing building maintenance, lawn mowing, snow clearing at the main entrances and exit doors and office management/administration of the property were performed for the most part by hourly paid staff.

Property has investigated a number of potential grants this past year:

- 1 Provincial Government grant - Accessibility basement washroom - Not approved - Potential for 2026.
- 2 UC Faithful Footprints grants – Hopefully, this program has been reactivated, and it may cover a good part of the LED lights installed in 2025 and proposed in 2026, thus the continuance of LED replacement.
- 3 Nil funding is available for the changeover from oil to other forms of energy for the church category. The Federal government hopefully will have a program for such organizations as churches. The over all project cost to complete an appropriate total change over would be in the vicinity of \$300,000 - \$400,000.

Due to the past requirements during Coronavirus, the practicing a safe indoor environment, the church pews, sanctuary, bathrooms, offices and print rooms are all cleaned as required.

The snow clearing and ice control agreement in place with MUN for several years has continued very well without any major difficulty to St. James congregation, rentals, visitors and MUN. The St. James parking stalls are limited to the first two rows towards Elizabeth Avenue. Parking passes were available for special occasions, plus MUN limits student vehicles to the parking lot for St. James funerals and other special functions where appropriate.

This year St. James congregational members continue to nurture the flower gardens with perennials at the entrance to the office and four other gardens on the west side. The winter salt at the office entrance /ramp is a little harsh on the growth on the perennials but they are surviving.

The committee's goals for 2026 are as follows:

- To maintain the integrity of our St. James assets to the standards that will provide safe, long-term viability for staff, congregational members and external rental users, and address any new and all Coronavirus/variants safety recommendations.
- To seek any funding/grants available to assist with energy conservation, such as converting the oil to electric, LED lighting, Mini split if workable. Maintenance will install new seven-day thermostats.
- To research and remain current on new products and equipment used in the maintenance and operation of the buildings, and to seek our own congregational resources to assist with related work requiring attention.
- To look at other avenues to support the financial efforts of the church through other long-term programs or initiatives.
- To continue to have the Rental committee seek additional rentals and space that may be available.
- To assist with the preparation of the annual operational budget and provide input into any minor/major capital expenditures required for the buildings within the next 5 years.
- To repair wood framing deterioration and paint the west large stained-glass window is proposed for 2026.
- Consideration for the installation of an accessibility washroom in the Auditorium.

I would like to thank the St. James staff members of the Property Committee, Bruce Winsor for ongoing operations and maintenance and Stephanie for assistance booking and invoicing, rental schedules, parking lot administration and many other property related requirements along with their regular duties.

A note of thanks to Heather McMasters for assistance with the office entrance garden. Also, I would like to thank all others that help the property committee when called on to assist and others who identify any items that need attention in management of our property.

A note of thanks is also extended to those who assisted in other aspects of keeping the facility and grounds in good condition. Thank you to the church congregational members for their continuous support complimented with our own St. James Ministry, Chair of Council/Council members who keep us all informed through long hours of discussions in the past year and as such also assisted in property requirements with concerns and or recommendations/solutions.

Also, I would like to thank the Board of Trustees for their guidance and oversight from time to time.

The Property Committee is always looking for new members, either to serve on a separate task or just for an individual repair and/or an opportunity that has been identified.

I refer you to the annual report by the Treasurer when comparing the property budget to the expenditures, both current and past years, plus the proposed budget for 2026.

Respectfully submitted.

Bill Legge (Chair Property 2025)

## **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees of St. James United Church is currently comprised of: Rev. James Ravenscroft (Chair), Aubrey Hill, Clifford Smith and Donna Downey. That said, during the past year, Cliff took a step back from his role as a trustee because of personal matters.

The Trustees, in consultation with the Church Board and Property Committee, are responsible for the oversight of the congregation's church property to ensure that it is well maintained and adequately insured and to interface with the Church Board and Regional Council on capital improvements and the lease or sale of church property. In accordance with this mandate, the Board of Trustees met for its annual meeting on February 19, 2026.

The trustees reviewed the Audrey Fillier Trust Fund and the Bethany Danielle Pike Memorial Trust Fund, both of which are externally restricted church funds. As of December 31, 2025, the balance in the Audrey Fillier Trust Fund was \$9,363.00, and the balance in the Bethany Danielle Pike Memorial Fund was \$104,289.00. Both Funds are audited in conjunction with the annual audit of St. James United Church.

The Bethany Danielle Pike Memorial Fund Oversight Committee liaises with the Board of Trustees on the Fund's ongoing administration and regularly disburses funds based on the terms of the trust. The trustees approved their recommendation that \$4,000.00 be disbursed to the Go Project in support of 2026 Summer Youth Programming and a new Audit Program that helps congregations assess their youth programming. Monies from the Audrey Fillier Fund were disbursed based on

recommendations of the UCW, with a total of \$1,200.00 disbursed evenly between Naomi House, Just Us Women's Centre and Iris Kirby House. The amount is determined based on interest accrued from the \$7,000.00 principal.

In addition to the above, the trustees note with sadness the departure of Quadrangle NL as they take up new space closer to downtown. Quadrangle outgrew their space and left with both gratitude to St. James United Church for giving them their start and a commitment to maintain a partnership into the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. James Ravenscroft (Chair)

## **Regional Representation**

I had the pleasure of representing St. James at the annual meeting of the First Dawn Eastern Edge (FDEE) regional council, held on May 2-4, 2026, in Corner Brook, NL.

The meeting was very well attended and it was exciting to see such a large contingent of 20 youth. They were very much engaged in the future of our church and spoke with great thoughtfulness and insight. They were a great compliment to their respective congregations!

One focus of the meetings was engaging and supporting youth and children in our congregations. Inclusion fosters a sense of belonging and community. Various congregations practice this by inviting children and youth to participate in readings and other aspects of worship. Children are being invited to accompany the Minister at the beginning of the service and bring forward the collection plates, a bible or other items that might have meaning for them. Let their imaginations lead them. Invite them to bring a special item with them and tell us its importance to them. Supporting engagement will keep them engaged. Leadership is important to supporting children and youth initiatives. Fostering this leadership is critical to creating and maintaining programs and supports.

A proposal was put forward by Rev. Paula Gale that the FDEE become an Affirming Region. This would not require congregations to follow suit. Time was given for each table group to discuss thoughts, concerns, advantages, and disadvantages of this proposal. Following these discussions, there was an open mike period. Some attendees used this time to seek clarification of what this would involve and mean on both the regional and congregational levels. Others used the time to express why this proposal was timely and important. The final vote was 88.9% in favour of the motion.

Another highlight of the meetings was the nomination and acceptance of Rev. Susan Sheppard becoming our President-Elect. Rev. Susan will assume this position in 2026, and we could not have been more excited or proud to celebrate this achievement with her.

One hundred years of celebrating our unity as the United Church of Canada is a great milestone, and we look to our future with a motto of being Deep, Bold and Daring. Together with our youth, we look forward with excitement and anticipation to the continued growth and work of our United Church.

Submitted by,  
Michelle Skinner