

# St. John's United Church Fall River

## Community of Faith Profile



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Community Profile	3
Waverley Pastoral Charge Profile	5
St. John's United Church Profile	6
Children and Youth Program Leader Position Description	10

## Introduction

St. John's United Church (SJUC), Fall River is one of two churches making up the Waverley Pastoral Charge. Rev. Dr. Sally Shaw was appointed as full time minister for the Pastoral Charge in 2019 following a year of interim service resulting from the departure of Rev. Matthew Fillier (currently the lead minister at Bedford United Church and former clergy at SJUC from 2012 to 2018).

It is important to acknowledge that due to the public health restrictions that have been in place since March 2020, our congregation continues to be very much in a state of transition. Visioning, planning and projects that were just beginning to take shape have been heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Efforts were shifted to provide online worship opportunities and energies were refocused to provide access to creative and engaging children and youth programming that respected Covid restrictions. As we move forward and begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel, we are optimistic and excited about what the future holds for our faith community.

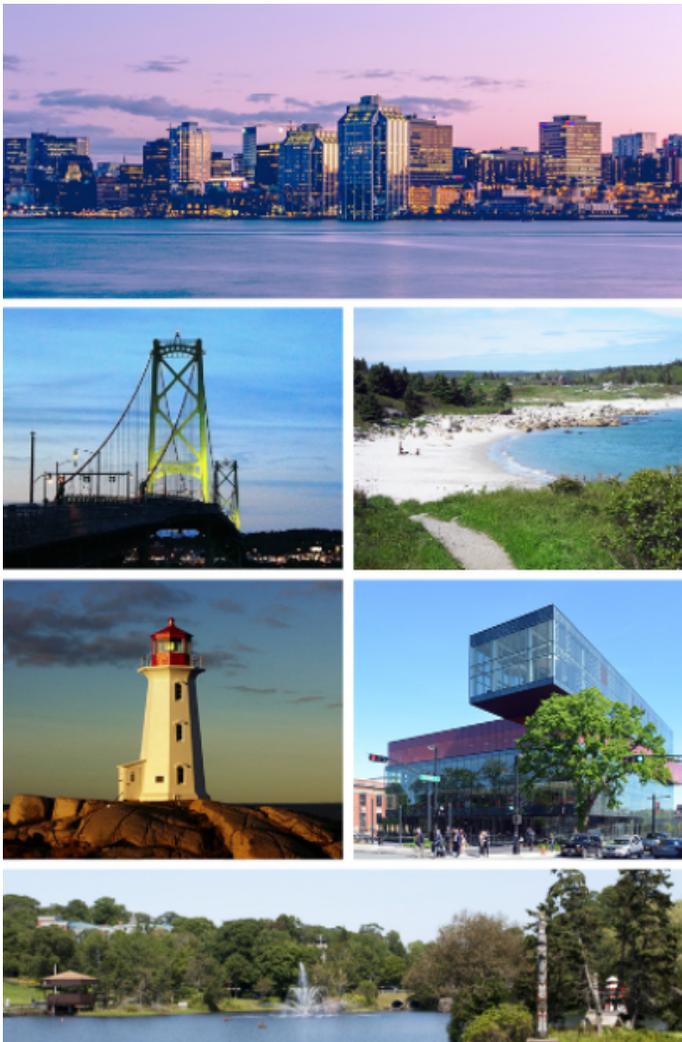
Both our intention and hope are that this report will introduce prospective candidates to SJUC in a way that is engaging and authentic, helpful and intriguing, inclusive and friendly. As those who continue reading will see, we are a diverse Charge, with many gifts. We invite you to read on to explore what possibilities emerge for you - or for others whom you think might be a good fit for St. John's United.

Finally, while we have done our best to describe who we are and what we are seeking, we acknowledge that as a community of faith, we are continuing to learn, grow and discern who we are called to be. At times, we have more questions than answers and we have struggled at times to find the courage to take necessary risks. Yet, we can promise that the people in this community, of this St. John's congregation are prepared to step up to address the challenges before us while celebrating what's right with the world.

## Community Profile

We would like to begin by acknowledging that we live and worship in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) people first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. We are all treaty people.

The Waverley Pastoral Charge includes the areas of Waverley, Fall River, Windsor Junction and Wellington, all of which are part of the greater city of Halifax. This suburban community nestled among trees and sparkling lakes has a multi-purpose recreation centre, restaurants and shopping amenities. The Waverley Pastoral Charge is 20 minutes from both downtown Halifax and downtown Dartmouth. Halifax-Dartmouth is a bustling modern port city undergoing rapid expansion which is home to many renowned universities, high-quality health-care facilities, historic parks, fine museums, and many first-class sports facilities.



The Fall River-Waverley area has a rich history... literally! Waverley was a gold mining town; gold had been discovered in the late 1800's in small workable deposits. Although Waverley's background was in farming and logging, a lively community grew up to exploit the mines

The communities of Waverley, Fall River, and Wellington lie along the route of the Shubenacadie Canal System, through which it is still possible, with a few portages, to paddle a canoe from Dartmouth to the Bay of Fundy. The Mi'kmaq were known to have inhabited Fall River prior to European settlement, using the waterways for a portage route connecting with the Shubenacadie Valley. The arrival of railways put an end to the dream of shipping on the Shubenacadie Canal.

With the railways came Windsor Junction, the main hub between local and trunk lines and the work yard. Farming, timber, and the ready source for gravel promoted the growth of this community. Notwithstanding, as Halifax and Dartmouth grew, this area became part of a prospering bedroom community. Today, with two main access highways nearby and with the settling of many employees of the airlines and industries of the Halifax International Airport, this has become a lovely suburban area. It is an area of energetic young men and women, choosing to live here as much for the vibrant, intergenerational community as for the convenience and more affordable mortgages.



Gordon R. Snow Community Centre



Laurie Provincial Park

Within the communities of the Waverley Pastoral Charge lie two pristine provincial parks; Laurie Park and Oakfield Park as well as the trail system and ball field at Charles MacDonald Sportspark. The Gordon R. Snow Community Centre is also nearby, offering year round local access to Parks and Recreation Programming. There are a growing number of restaurants and cafés as well as several professional centres (including an optometrist, dentists, physiotherapists and physicians); three elementary schools, one junior high and one high school. The current population for the area is over 6500.

## **Pastoral Charge Profile**

The Waverley Pastoral Charge is a two-point Charge with churches in Wellington (Wellington United) and in Fall River (St. John's United). Wellington United was built in 1955 and is a small, close-knit church of approximately 40 families. About 5 kms from Wellington, St. John's United is a larger facility, which opened in 1994, to replace the smaller churches of Waverley and Windsor Junction. It has approximately 225 families on the rolls with a typical Sunday attendance of 80-100 adults, 10-15 teens and 20 children. The Children and Youth Program Leader serves the St. John's congregation.

### **Collaborative Initiatives and Action**

**Funeral Ministry:** As a Pastoral Charge, we understand that at the time of death families are most vulnerable. We are called to bring hope and light during this difficult time. The funeral ministry team consists of individuals called to this ministry who will walk with families and assist the minister. We have created a brochure designed to help families make preparations from the writing of an obituary to creating a service of celebration and thanksgiving. Members of the team may be called upon to talk with families, prepare the church for visitation and the service and be present to help with those events. Together, with the minister, we smooth the pathway and provide a sense of the Holy during this most difficult time.

**Administration and Governance:** The Ministry and Personnel Committee includes members from both congregations and is responsible to the Official Board of the Pastoral Charge. The Committee manages the Pastoral Charge's relationship with the clergy and administrative staff who serve the Charge as well as those who work only for St. John's. A Treasurer oversees financial accounting for the Pastoral Charge. In addition, each congregation manages its own financial matters.

**Shared Worship and Programs:** From September to June, the Pastoral Charge provides two Sunday worship options. Wellington United gathers at 9:30am and St. John's worships at 11am. Sunday school and youth programming is usually held during these times. Over the summer months, July services are typically at Wellington United and August worship takes place at St. John's, both at 10am.

During the year, the two churches collaborate for several events such as bible study, discussion groups and Spirit of Advent ecumenical worship.

# St. John's United Church, Fall River

## Our History

St. John's United, Fall River, opened its doors on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1994. We celebrated two births that night.



Christmas 2017

## OUR VISION / Living Faith Story:

*With God's loving help, we gather as community to nourish the soul and compassionately care for the world.*

### *Worship*

*All are welcome. We gather on Sundays to remember life is full of meaning, wonder, joy, sadness and hope. We gather to ponder difficult ethical questions in an increasingly complicated world. We gather to connect to thousands of years of God's stories of love in action through scripture and song. In a calm, warm light-filled church sanctuary, in which people see through clear windows to surrounding forests, we gather to dream of a healed planet and a peaceful world.*

*We gather to see familiar neighbours and make new friends. Some want to sit alone and ponder. Others want to connect. All hope to leave with their souls fed for the work of being a loving person in the world.*

### *Nurturing Community*

*St. John's has many groups and events designed to nurture small and large community. We have family movie nights, pot-luck suppers, music concerts, coffee houses and so on. We have study groups to learn about things that matter and to strengthen us. We provide community space for various sports groups, Guiding groups, and other events that community members may wish to celebrate. The church has also provided space for blood donor clinics and for civic authorities to hold information meetings.*

### *Compassionate Care*

*In times of grief and bereavement, the church provides spiritual care and outreach through its highly trained clergy, our pastoral care team and our full-option funeral service ministry. Our clergy and leaders provide a calm public presence. They distribute accurate information and referral in times of public crisis. They are trusted. For times of quiet comfort, we have an active prayer shawl ministry.*

### *Souls Nourished For Action*

*The congregation of St. John's acts to care for the world. We continue to sponsor refugees. We nourish bodies by providing nourishing lunches for high school-aged students. We have food drives for Beacon House Food Bank. We take our turn making suppers for Metro Turning Point Men's Shelter and St. George's Soup Kitchen in Halifax. We support the initiatives of many other community organizations that seek to alleviate poverty and suffering.*

### *Children and Youth*

*We believe all children are gifts to the world. We invest in them. To support and strengthen them, we have an active Sunday School, Youth Group (known as KOGA, Kids on God's Adventure), and sponsor many events which support the life and work of youth in the community, including the KD lunch program. We believe children and youth are today's and tomorrow's leaders.*

**Governance Structure:** St. John's has a Council structure. In addition to the committees described below, the following committees are also actively supporting the work of the church: Trustees, Finance, Stewardship, Church and Property Management.

**Council Executive:** The Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary along with the Minister are empowered to act on behalf of Council as needed between Council meetings.

**Christian Life and Growth Committee:** The mission statement of this Committee is "To provide a Christian environment where people of all ages can experience and grow in God's love." This committee oversees Christian development for all ages, including Confirmation Classes. It oversees the Sunday School and KOGA (youth) programming. It also supports the work of the Children and Youth Program Leader and the minister., who share responsibilities related to Christian Life and Growth.

- **Sunday School:** Our Sunday School programming is currently centered around the GO project curriculum. Learning centers are planned and prepared by the Children And Youth Program Leader in collaboration with 6 volunteers (mostly parents of the children attending these programs). A center approach is engaging for the children and allows them to learn in multiple ways. The centres range from baking to puppetry to games and science.
- **Kids on God's Adventure (KOGA):** KOGA, the youth group at St. John's United Church, meets every Sunday during the service to discuss world issues, the church and their relationship with God. This group engages in many outreach projects in the broader community including Sunday Suppers at St. Andrews United Church (Halifax), Honk for Hunger and the 30-hour Famine.

**Spiritual Oversight:** This committee oversees the worship and sacramental life of the congregation and the use of the sanctuary. It is responsible for admissions and transfers of membership, as well as Marriages and Baptisms. This committee also organizes lay readers, greeters, and communion servers.

**Music Ministry:** St. John's has a part-time music director. The choir (pre-covid) typically consisted of 12-15 regular singers attending weekly rehearsals on Wednesday evenings and providing leadership for hymns and anthems during Sunday worship. We are also blessed to have singers and musicians of all ages in the congregation who share their musical gifts at special services and throughout the year.

**Pastoral Care Team:** Members of the team offer emotional and spiritual support alongside the minister.

**The United Church Women (UCW)** is active in supporting SJUC women through small group ministry as well as supporting the church through fundraising activities. They host several annual events, including a Strawberry Festival and Turkey à la King Luncheon. All these events rely on volunteer leadership and support.

**Sign Language Interpreter:** Sign language interpretation is provided in worship every second Sunday, starting in September and running until the end of June. We have several members of the congregation who rely on this service. However, all members of our faith community benefit from this unique opportunity to learn and better communicate with others.



Fish Banner on back wall of sanctuary by Donna Hogan and SJUC members

**Church in Action:** This committee oversees the many events and actions in which we, as a church family, reach out to others both near and far to offer comfort, compassion and caring. Projects that this team has led in recent years include the following:

- **Beacon House** - continued support of this local food bank with funding, volunteers, as well as food and other donated items for their store
- **Refugee Sponsorship** - ongoing support of a Syrian Family with other local churches called the River Lake Syrian Refugee Project since 2017
- **Prayer Shawl Ministry** - handcrafted shawls prepared for those in need of comfort

- **Clothing Drives** - mitts & socks for those living on the streets during the winter
- **Ubuntu Grannies** - support events which educate, raise funds and help African grandmothers raise their grandchildren due to the AIDS crisis
- **Kraft Dinner Free Lunch** - for Lockview High School students, to simply welcome the youth of our area for a social time together
- **Camp Kidston / Berwick Camp** – financial and volunteer support
- **Great Escape** - free child care available for children 6 months to 10 years after worship several times a year
- **PD Day Camp** – a new program where art, games, music and fun are offered to children for a minimal fee