

Ukulele Church: Report to First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council - April 2024

Hello from Ukulele Church!

For those of you who might be unfamiliar with this ministry, we are a worshipping community that has been meeting weekly since October 2020 over Zoom. A ministry founded here in the Atlantic Regions, we currently have participants from NL, NB, PE, NS, ON, MB, BC, Nunavut, India, and this year, Kenya! Our membership includes folks who have regular “in person” communities with whom they worship, but for some, this is their only experience of church. We continue to be surprised when people of all ages and stages join us because of the ukulele, which we still describe as the “world’s happiest instrument.”

Leadership consists of Linnea Good from Summerland, BC, Nancy Callbeck from Borden-Carleton, PE, Isaac Jonsson-Good from Summerland, BC and me, Rev. Catherine Stuart, Regional Minister for Children, Youth and Young Adults for Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters, Bermuda-Nova Scotia and First Dawn Eastern Edge. Together, we plan and lead our programme for the 125 participants that we currently have on our email list. We meet at 12:30pm Atlantic time/ 1pm NL Time, for an hour and 15 mins of worship.

We continue to be grounded in the seasons of the liturgical year and thematically appropriate scripture stories. We choose a bible text and explore it in three-week units we like to call Mini-Series. The pattern changes in the big liturgical seasons such as Advent, in Holy Week, where we explore Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday/Good Friday, and Easter Sunday stories over the course of three weeks, and when we create a Readers’ Theatre from a particular story or parable and prepare to “perform” it with songs both sacred and from the pop charts.

This ministry is integrally intergenerational, meaning that we learn and explore in groupings based on skill, rather than age. We begin our time with Celebration: music, prayer of thanksgiving and bible story, followed by Contemplation: 4 levels of ukulele learning and art broken into two sessions, and Devotion: a short worship service gathering together all that we have learned, with prayer and song.

We follow a rubric of belief, through which we explore. We believe:

- **God is real. Jesus shows us God’s heart. The Spirit is present in all that we say and do online**
- **This is real Church - an ongoing, connected worshipping community**
- **Our faith is incarnational: We embody God’s Spirit.**
- **We use our whole body to celebrate, lament, pray, reflect and participate in the Word.**



As an extension of this online ministry, both Catherine and Linnea have been able to teach this approach in workshops, as well as provide leadership at Berwick Camp for the past three years. We have also served as music and worship resource this year for a few events across the church in both Ontario (Linnea) and BC Young Adult retreat (Linnea and Catherine). In the Atlantic Regions, Catherine has been visiting congregations to lead both workshops and times with children in worship, even having the whole team with her in the summer in First Dawn Eastern Edge Region. As a means of helping people connect with, and express, their faith through music and art process, we see it also as an outreach to the wider church. Feedback from all of our events has been positive.

One participant, who does not have a community outside of Ukulele Church said, “I love coming to Ukulele Church! It's an opportunity to have fun, make some music, do some cool arts and crafts and all in all be together as a church with one another. Also, it's the easiest way to see my cousin.”

Another said, “Ukulele Church is a refreshing space where people that love music and Jesus can gather together to play and pray in a unique way. I attend Ukulele Church because it is accessible to me even while I live in another country (Kenya). It is unlike any worship service I have ever been to before and I feel blessed by the efforts of the Ukulele Church leaders to make the gatherings engaging, spirit-filled, and fun.”

We are always open to invitations for worship, workshops, and other events where we can provide leadership and resources.

For the Atlantic Regions, Catherine has access to a 10-piece Ukulele Lending Library, so please be in touch with her (cstuart@united-church.ca) to find out how she can visit your community/ministry, or how you can make use of this resource..

We are grateful to the three Atlantic Regions who have provided funding from each region's New Ministries Funds. We are also receiving increased support through the regular offerings of Ukulele Church community members. If you're appreciative of this ministry and would like to contribute, please find us on Canada Helps, through the [regional website](https://ucceast.ca/make-a-donation) <https://ucceast.ca/make-a-donation> . Thank you for all of the ways you have supported, and continue to support, this ministry!

For more information about Ukulele Church, and to register for the programme, please visit us at <Ukulelechurch.com>

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Ukulele Church,

Rev. Catherine Stuart
Regional Minister for Children, Youth and Young Adults
& Co-Minister for Ukulele Church