

St. James Pastoral Charge Community of Faith Profile

Living Faith Story - March 2020

A. SUMMARY

St. James Pastoral Charge is located in a parish of the same name in Charlotte County. We are a rural two-point charge located in a beautiful pastoral setting. Driving to our church locations, one enjoys a beautiful place in nature with rolling hills, cows pasture grazing and large open spaces. We have been described as a ‘beloved rural spiritual community like no other’.

We have two Communities of Faith, Scotch Ridge and Oak Hill, but worship as one congregation. We welcome and include both long-term residents and newcomers to the area. We are open to people in all life situations and all spiritual paths. We have welcomed many newcomers to our rural community and feel privileged they have chosen us as their church family.

St. James Pastoral Charge strives to be forward thinking, welcoming, flexible, and community minded. Our church is our community, offering support to all. Our many community outreach events bring neighbours together to enjoy and celebrate each other. An important part of our worship service is sharing joys and concerns for each other and our wider community.

This document reflects the collective feedback from our congregation. The information was gathered from individual reflection on specific questions as well as a facilitated session with the Regional Minister. Throughout the process common themes surfaced as important: church family, working together, fellowship, supporting community, strong faith, caring and mutual respect.

We are delighted to be in a shared ministry with Wesley United Church with whom we share a fulltime minister. There is always a sense of warmth and community when we gather together.

B. ADMINISTRATION

The administration of St. James Pastoral Charge is intended to support our mission. Our mission statement is as follows:

“We believe we are a people of God. We strive to be God’s Love in action in our church, our community, and the world in which we live as shown to us through Jesus Christ. We seek to provide all ages opportunities for spiritual growth – to be aware of and responsive to the needs within our local and global communities – to encourage the respect of our environment – to be flexible and open to change.”

Governance:

We are a two-point charge, in which the responsibilities of governance fall to the Unified Board. The Board meets every two months and handles all matters pertaining to the Pastoral Charge. The following committees report to the Board: United Church Women, Trustees, Ministry and Personnel, St. Croix Wellness and Renewal Centre, Treasurer and Regional Representatives.

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Administrative Support:

Administrative support is shared financially with Wesley. The primary tasks of the paid support person are related to the bulletin, the newsletter and the website.

Communications:

Communication with our congregation is achieved by various means. The weekly bulletin contains announcements for both St. James and Wesley. Time is also given for announcements during the service. A “Cooperator” newsletter is emailed weekly to both congregations (St. James and Wesley), as well as to those interested within the wider community. We also share a Facebook page and website with Wesley. We are open to learning about and using other communication mediums.

Financial Position:

Our financial position is reviewed at Board meetings where a summary is shared by the Treasurer. Each Community of Faith has its own treasurer and the Pastoral Charge has a Central Treasurer. We have begun to do more fundraising. We are open hearted and responsive to community needs despite our limited resources. We need to develop a plan that identifies ways to increase our financial resources. We are in need of a concerted stewardship effort to ensure sustainability.

Buildings:

We have two buildings used consistently for worship. We use Oak Hill Hall and Scotch Ridge Church. Oak Hill has two washrooms and a kitchen. The Scotch Ridge Church is a heritage church built in 1836.

We still own another church building in Pomeroy Ridge that is in the process of being divested. We also have a hall in Scotch Ridge. All of our buildings are accessible. We have three cemeteries – two that are adjacent to our worship places and one in Pomeroy Ridge. These are maintained by volunteers.

Congregational Strengths:

Our greatest strength is our people. We are caring. We bring differing skills and talents to the table. We are always looking for ways to respond to changing times and a changing world. We feel we are adaptable and flexible—open to new visions, new realities and new ideas. We are always looking for ways to enhance our worship services and enrich our faith journey. In our 180-year old building we have used a laptop and screen. We have house church one month a year and a yearly outdoor picnic service. We honour and cherish our social times. We feel the connections created are nurtured beyond traditional service time.

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Demographics:

St. James Pastoral Charge is in an area with minimal diversity relating to race and/or ethnicity. Most people now living in the area can trace their roots back to Irish, Scottish, or English immigrants. English is the mother tongue of 98% of the residents. Eighty-eight percent of the folks are third (or more) generation Canadians. Less than one percent of residents are not Canadian citizens.

Five to 14-year-olds make up 9% of the population. Sixty-nine percent of the people are between 15 and 64 years of age. Within that group, six percent are between 15 and 19 years old. Eighteen percent of the

population is 65 and over. The average age is 44. There is an almost equal distribution of females to males.

Eighty-seven percent of residents live in a single-detached house. Twenty-four percent of people live alone. Forty-two percent live in a two-person household.

With respect to education, 25% of the residents have no certificate, diploma, or degree. Those with a high school diploma constitute 32% of the population. Seven percent of the people have a degree at the bachelor level or higher.

The average income is \$25 964.00. The area has an unemployment rate of 16.5%.

While this information is based on the 2016 Statistics Canada data, some percentages are approximations.

Going forward, these statistics should inform and direct our stewardship and how we “minister” in this community. The unemployment rates are higher than the national average. The income average is lower than the national rate. The number of people living alone is a demographic that interests us. We aspire to have our church community be more representative of our wider community.

C. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

St. James reaches out to the communities that we have traditionally served as well as the wider community. We do this through a variety of activities:

- Monthly Coffee House
- Pancake Supper
- Christmas Tea
- Community Suppers
- Yard Sale
- Easter Breakfast
- Communion to local nursing homes and shut-ins
- Community Labyrinth
- Mission and Service Fund

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We appreciate the generosity of the local men's club. The Meet Your Neighbour Men's Club supports us both financially and through in-kind donations.

We collaborate with the outreach ministry of the St. Croix Wellness and Renewal Centre. This organization was originally sponsored by the St. Croix Presbytery and now is linked to our Oak Hill Community of Faith. This group offers seniors' wellness programs. These programs include informational, spiritual and exercise programs in and around our area. The program offered for the past four years at the Garcelon Civic Centre in St. Stephen has an average weekly attendance of approximately 120. This particular program operates eight to nine months of the year.

We have one UCW group. These women work to support community endeavours such as school breakfast program, Beavers, and the local food bank. Some of our members are involved in the broader UCW organization.

In the past, our Pastoral Charge was involved with and provided leadership for the group responsible for bringing a Syrian refugee family to our area. Some people continue as mentors for this family of seven.

Our people also provided leadership in the former St. Croix Presbytery's joint worship initiative.

We encourage community use of our buildings by non-profit groups and families.

D. DENOMINATION AND COMMUNITIES

Other courts:

As part of Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region, St. James has access to all the congregational support available at the Regional and General Council courts. We have two representatives to Regional Council. One of our members, along with the minister participated in the Transition Team and Regional Commission as we moved from one governance structure to our current structure. Our people were very active in both St. Croix Presbytery and Maritime Conference.

Training:

Our people are encouraged to participate in opportunities as they present. We have a Licensed Lay Worship Leader who regularly attends regional training.

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Lay Leadership:

St. James has traditionally been quite self-sufficient as many who grow up in rural life or choose rural life tend to be. Hence we have been blessed with strong lay leadership. Some have trained to lead local worship services. Several excel at pastoral care with the congregation and at the local nursing homes. We have some talented musicians who share their gifts. We do have a pianist to whom we pay an honorarium. Still others provide leadership in social justice activities. We have people who get things done!

Community Leadership:

We are an integral part of the fabric of our communities. The line between what we do as church leaders and what we do as community is rather blurred at times. We cooperate with community initiatives, organizations and individuals.

Some of our members provide local leadership in musical events. Our members are involved in seniors' programming at the Garcelon Civic Center. Others take the lead in visiting seniors. Our members serve community and church as part of the Mens' Club – maintaining the Scotch Ridge Hall, doing roadside clean-up and looking after our community. Many of the local fire department volunteers are also members. We mutually support and respect each other.

Shared Ministry:

St. James has been in a shared ministry with Wesley in St. Andrews for five years. This relationship was initiated several years ago due to common financial concerns. Wesley oversees the financial side of this partnership with a 75/25 split. There are two autonomous Boards. Our two communities are very different. We are a rural ministry and casual in our demeanor. The two communities are relatively independent. However, we do enjoy the times we come together to celebrate and worship. Both Pastoral Charges are represented on the Ministry and Personnel Committee. Our churches have thrived under this arrangement.

Minister's Role in Leadership:

St. James is looking forward to welcoming a new minister and the unique talents and gifts that person will bring. We anticipate the minister will work with us to evolve our living faith story, strengthen our faith and enhance our impact in our community. We are seeking someone who will guide and challenge us to move beyond our current comfort zone in areas of stewardship, pastoral care and community outreach. We would appreciate someone who can share a musical gift.

We value someone with strong communication skills. We are seeking someone who is open and able to relate to the diverse needs of our people and community.

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E. FAITH FORMATION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

St. James has evolved from a traditional heritage and we continue to hold some of these faith values. We value fellowship and community. Our people cherish a sense of belonging and acceptance within our faith community and the geographic community. We value the time we spend together. Sunday liturgy supports our spiritual growth.

St. James appreciates how our former ministers have brought current issues into focus through scripture, poetry and music. We appreciate our world view being challenged. We celebrate the forward-thinking stance of the larger church on issues that face our world today.

We expect church to recharge and grow our faith through traditional and non-traditional avenues. Most attendees describe our services and demeanor as relaxed. We strive to be welcoming. We strive to be inclusive. We strive to be compassionate. We strive to be open minded. It is our hope that “they will know we are Christian” by our actions.

F. PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral Care in our St. James community is often initiated by our members. We value a minister’s efforts to visit hospital and nursing homes. We sometimes accompany the minister when communion is offered to nursing home residents and shut-ins. A minister “tuned-in” to recognizing when someone may be experiencing a spiritual wilderness time and responding to that need is invaluable to the well-being of our church family.

We participate in a Prayer Circle with Wesley.

Our people “visit” those we see on Sunday and those we do not see at a worship service. We are a community that cares. We also recognize we are in need of some “fine tuning” in this area.

G. SELF CARE

St. James has a small but dedicated cadre of volunteers. We accomplish a great deal.

Fellowship after service is very important to us. We have social time every week and we share fellowship through food and music.

We pursue opportunities for spiritual renewal through the following:

- Community Garden Labyrinth
- Participation in St. Croix Wellness and Renewal Centre Seniors’ programs
- Participation in St. Croix Wellness and Renewal Centre Spiritual Reflection Program
- Spring Equinox programs at Wesley and at Ganong Nature Park
- World Day of Prayer

These activities are primarily led by community people and lay leaders. Our members participate in many of the programs offered at Wesley.

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H. WORSHIP

Worship in St. James is centered around Sunday service. Our services alternate monthly between our two worship venues. Nine months a year we worship at 11:30 a.m. but each spring we switch to 9:30 a.m. Our people participate in the services: reading, welcoming, sharing joys and concerns. The service is led by the minister, and follows a conventional liturgy. Readings are from the Bible, other related texts, or relevant poetry. Music is important, and we use both More Voices and Voices United. We have a pianist. We look for a message that will move us forward in our theological understanding and help us relate to current issues. Our people are willing to participate in liturgy. The “Joys and Concerns” time in the service tends to be a sharing session as we give voice to these. We use the Mission and Service resources provided by the United Church of Canada. We have a couple of excellent worship leaders when the need arises.

Our church family is primarily in the 50 plus age category. Many are retired. We have some adherents who have young families and some of us bring grandchildren occasionally. On Sunday, our numbers range between 15 and 25.

Our congregation is open-minded. We are aware that some of us enjoy the traditional and others like to shake things up but we all are respectful about making our needs and wishes known.

I. OUR CHURCH IN COMMUNITY

St. James was historically several churches: Baillie, DeWolfe, Lynnfield, Oak Hill, Pomeroy Ridge, Scotch Ridge, Upper Little Ridge, and Lower Little Ridge. Time, necessity, and common sense have allowed us to evolve from these seven congregations to our current status.

We are officially two Communities of Faith: Oak Hill and Scotch Ridge who join together to be one Pastoral Charge.

St. James Pastoral Charge is located outside of St. Stephen in Charlotte County. Most of our residents access facilities in St. Stephen although St. Andrews and Calais, Maine are close. St. Stephen has a hospital, nursing home, and a seniors’ home. The town is home to St. Stephen’s University – a small liberal arts university. St. Stephen has a recreation center – Garcelon Civic Center – that offers a rink, pool, gym, walking track, and meeting rooms. Ganong Nature Park is nearby and offers programs for all ages. Our communities are situated close to the beautiful St. Croix River that is the international boundary with the United States. The river offers numerous recreational opportunities.

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The distance between Oak Hill Hall and Wesley in St. Andrews is 46 km.

The distance between Scotch Ridge Church and Wesley is 48 km.

The distance from Oak Hill to Scotch Ridge is 11 km.

Websites you may find interesting:

<http://town.ststephen.nb.ca/>

<https://garcelonciviccenter.ca/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Meet-Your-Neighbour-Mens-Club-1864092380502450/>

<https://ganongnaturepark.com/>