

The United Church of Canada
Bathurst Pastoral Charge
First United Church, Bathurst
www.firstunited-bathurst.ca

December 4, 2022

Minister Rev. Neal Palmer **Music Director** Martha Vickers
Office Adm. Margaret Daniels **Greeter** Julie Spence
Custodian Lester Scott Harvey Spence

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| <u>Lectionary for today</u> | <u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Isaiah 11:1-10 Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19 Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12 | Isaiah 35:1-10 Psalm 146:5-10 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11 |
| <i>We welcome Jennifer Oliver-Lavigne who is leading us in worship today along with Chelsey MacLaggan and the Children of Sunday School</i> | |

*The asterisk * identifies those times in the service where the congregation is invited to stand as able.*

GATHERING

MUSIC AS WE GATHER

WELCOME & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT *(in unison)*

As we gather to worship, let's respectfully pause to remember we live and work and worship on lands that are, by law, the unceded territory of the original peoples, the Mi'kmaq. May we live with respect on this land, and live in peace and in friendship with its people.

THE ADVENT OF HOPE *(responsively)*

The McLellan family (Garth, Krissy, Lia & Chloe)

The Peace candle is lit.

Today is the Advent of hope.

We light this candle to bring hope into shadows of despair.

We live in hope for the light at the end of the tunnel and the end of the pandemic.

We light this candle as our commitment to bringing healing into the world.

We are the hope for a better future.

We light this candle to reveal the Way of Jesus, the Hope of the World.

The Hope candle is lit.

"Hope Is a Star" – VU #7 *(Verse 1)*

***Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.
When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.***

CALL TO WORSHIP *(responsively)*

Imagine with us,

a world where God takes shoots and buds and uses them for large purposes.

We imagine a world,

where baby cows and baby bears play together in peace and harmony. Where lions and lambs live together in safety.

Imagine God's world,

where God's Holy Mountain provides refuge, peace, and safety.

We come to worship; we come to the mountain

to worship the One who takes the tiniest shoot and uses it to signal the peace of God.

GATHERING PRAYER

***GATHERING HYMN** – "A Journey Just Begun" – AGCS #51

Come and join us on a journey just begun
As we celebrate the life of God's own son.
The stories of his life become our stories, too,
In the choices that we make, In ev'rything we do.
Come and join us on a journey just begun.

Refrain

*Preparing the way, preparing the way,
We're preparing the way of our God.*

We will walk from the darkness to the light,
Led by the shining star so bright.
Once more with hope we wait for a baby's birth
When the love of God shall bring Peace to all the earth,
As we walk from the darkness to the light.

Refrain

We will walk in the light of all the world,
Shining for the nations to be healed.
Jesus is our friend, companion on the way,
We want to spread his love In all we do and say,
As we walk in the light of all the world.

Refrain

We will walk up the mountain of our God
With the children of the whole wide world abroad.
The hungry shall be fed, Yes, ev'ry girl and boy,
The captives shall go free, The lame shall leap for joy,
As we walk up the mountain of our God.

Refrain

*Preparing the way, preparing the way,
We're preparing the way of our God.*

PRAYER OF HUMILITY

(Time of Silence)

CHORAL RESPONSE

***O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in;
be born in us today.***

***GREETING ONE ANOTHER** *(Based on Matthew 5:9) (responsively)*

.....The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

DECORATING THE TREE

Children of the Sunday School

SHARING A STORY *(with those of all ages)*

***SINGING A SONG** – "Look to the Light"

Look to the light it's shining.
Open your eyes and see,
that there's love enough for the whole wide world,
enough for you and me.
Open your eyes and see.

Listen to the voices singing.
Open your heart you'll see,
that the Spirit sings with the whole wide world,
a song for you and me.
Open your heart and see.

Reach to the earth with loving.
Open our hands and see,
that there's food enough for the whole wide world,
enough for you and me
Open your hands and see.

Let's join our hands together.
Stretch 'cross the earth and seas.
For there's room enough for the whole wide world,
enough for you and me.
Open up your eyes and see.
Oh open up your eyes and see.

*Words and music: Pat Mayberry © 2000
Arrangement: David Kai © 2018*

ENGAGING

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READING *(Based on Isaiah 11:1-10)*

Mya Brewster

RESPONDING

MINUTE FOR MISSION

Helen Knowles

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD

***OFFERING HYMN**

(Tune – Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow)

***As we are watching for a sign
As we long for new life.
We trust your word revealed to us
Today and all year through.***

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***OFFERING PRAYER** *(in unison)*

**Holy One,
we lift up our thanks.
Can we ever catalogue all the ways our lives have been
blessed?
We dedicate those blessings to you today.
Please take our very best.
May they help bring about peace on your holy mountain.
Amen**

COLLECTION OF WHITE GIFTS

GIFT OF MUSIC - "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

(Children of the Sunday School)

SHARING OUR CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER – VU #921 *(in unison)*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
forever and ever.
Amen.**

GOING OUT (as Spirit people)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***CLOSING CAROL** – “He Is Born” – VU #50

Refrain:

He is born, little Child divine;

play on the reeds while the lutes are strumming.

He is born, little Child divine;

Join the song to announce the day.

Through long ages of the past,
prophets have foretold his coming;
through long ages of the past,
now the time has come at last!

(Refrain)

O how lovely, O how pure
is this perfect Child of heaven;
O how lovely, O how pure,
gracious gift to humankind!

(Refrain)

Lowly lodged in a stable poor,
laid on straw for his infant cradle.
Lowly lodged in a stable poor,
God came down to our mortal aid.

(Refrain)

Jesus, Lord of all the world,
coming as a child among us,
Jesus, Lord of all the world,
grant to us your heavenly peace.

(Refrain)

***BLESSING**

***CHORAL CLOSING** – “I Am Walking a Path of Peace” – MV #221

***I am walking a path of hope,
I am walking a path of hope,
I am walking a path of hope,
lead me home, I am home.***

(The Advent Candles are extinguished.)

POSTLUDE

Church News

Gifts with Vision

Are you looking for a gift to celebrate someone special for Christmas, Birthday, Anniversary, Congratulations - for that someone who has everything, or who doesn't want anything more to add to their 'clutter'?

Gifts with Vision is the perfect gift for you to give! The United Church of Canada has put together a catalogue and online 'store' of gifts that make a difference in people's lives throughout Canada and the world. Each 'Gift with Vision' provides support for remarkable Mission and Service partners for special projects that address many life-changing issues, such as hunger, poverty, anti-racism, well-building, environment, healing and reconciliation.

There are catalogues, which show a small sample of what is in the on-line store, at the back of the church for you to take - we can get more! The on-line store is at giftswithvision.ca.

Thank you for being part of these life-changing activities!

Church News

| This Week at First United – Dec 5 th to Dec 9 th | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| Monday | 9:00-11:00 AM | Badminton – DEMH GYM |
| Wednesday | 9:00-11:00 AM | Badminton – DEMH GYM |
| | 6:30 PM | Choir Practice |
| Thursday | 7:00 PM | Christian Development - Zoom |

Church office hours - Monday to Friday 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Peanut Butter Update - As of December 1st, 2022, 349 jars of Peanut Butter has been collected to go to the Bathurst Volunteer Center. **Our goal is 900 jars for the year** and we currently have **807** including what has been purchased with monetary donations.

Memorial Hymn Sing is scheduled for Sunday afternoon, December 11th, 2022 at 2 PM. Please join with us to sing Christmas Carols that mean so much to us as we remember our loved ones.



Poinsettia Fund: Once again this year we are hoping to have the beauty of our sanctuary enhanced with poinsettias for the Christmas season. Those wishing to contribute to the annual poinsettia fund may place an envelope in the offering plate on Sunday morning. Please mark clearly on the face of the envelope – Poinsettia Fund with your name, PAR or envelope number. List the names that you wish to have printed in the Christmas bulletin insert. Donations will also be received in the church office – deadline is December 13, 2022.

Broadview (Observer) Renewal is due in December. If you receive this publication and have not yet renewed your subscription at the church office please do so by Monday, December 19, 2022. If you would like to start to receive this United Church of Canada publication please contact the office at 546-3532. The annual subscription rate is \$25 (tax included).

Advent Devotional Booklets 2022 – “*What’s Left of the Night?*” are available in the narthex for a donation to First United Church. Please feel free to pick up a copy.

Church News

Annual Christmas Benevolence Fund: - It’s that time of year! Giving to this fund is even more important than ever because COVID-19 is still affecting lives. Once again this year the process is a bit different, but we hope the results will be the same or better as previous years. Should you wish to give you will find an envelope on the tree which is now in the narthex. And then you may drop it in the offering plate or drop it off at the church office during the week. Make your cheques payable to First United Church. Please mark clearly that this donation is for the Benevolence Fund. The proceeds from this fund support the Bathurst Volunteer Center and people in our congregation who need assistance.

We thank-you for you generosity
– **Community Outreach Sub-Team**

The Christian Development Team would like to thank *Gary & Elizabeth Branch, Debrah & Rick Watling, Beth Sullivan, Gwen Sturgeon, Marie Oliver* and *Lester Scott* for decorating the church for the Christmas Season. Many hands make lighter work and their talent is much appreciated.

Thank you to our volunteers in November:

Counters – Margaret Payne-Chénard and Mike Kierstead; **Greeters** – Charles Ramsey and Linda Knowles MacPherson; **Minute for Mission** – Helen Knowles, Bev Murphy and Pat MacIntosh; **Scripture Readers** – Wayne Lord, Anne Wilson, Brenda Parrott and Gary Branch; **Sharing a Story** – Mya and Cheryl Brewster; **Sound System** – Brenda Parrott, Shirley Allain, and Ralph Jamieson and **Videographer** – Don Eddy as well as to Josh Gammon for uploading our services to the website and Facebook.

Community News

St. George’s Anglican Church, 432 King Avenue, will be holding “**A Family and Community Breakfast**” on Saturday, December 10th from 8 AM to 10 AM. Come and enjoy fellowship and great food. Free-will offering at the door.

SCRIPTURE READING

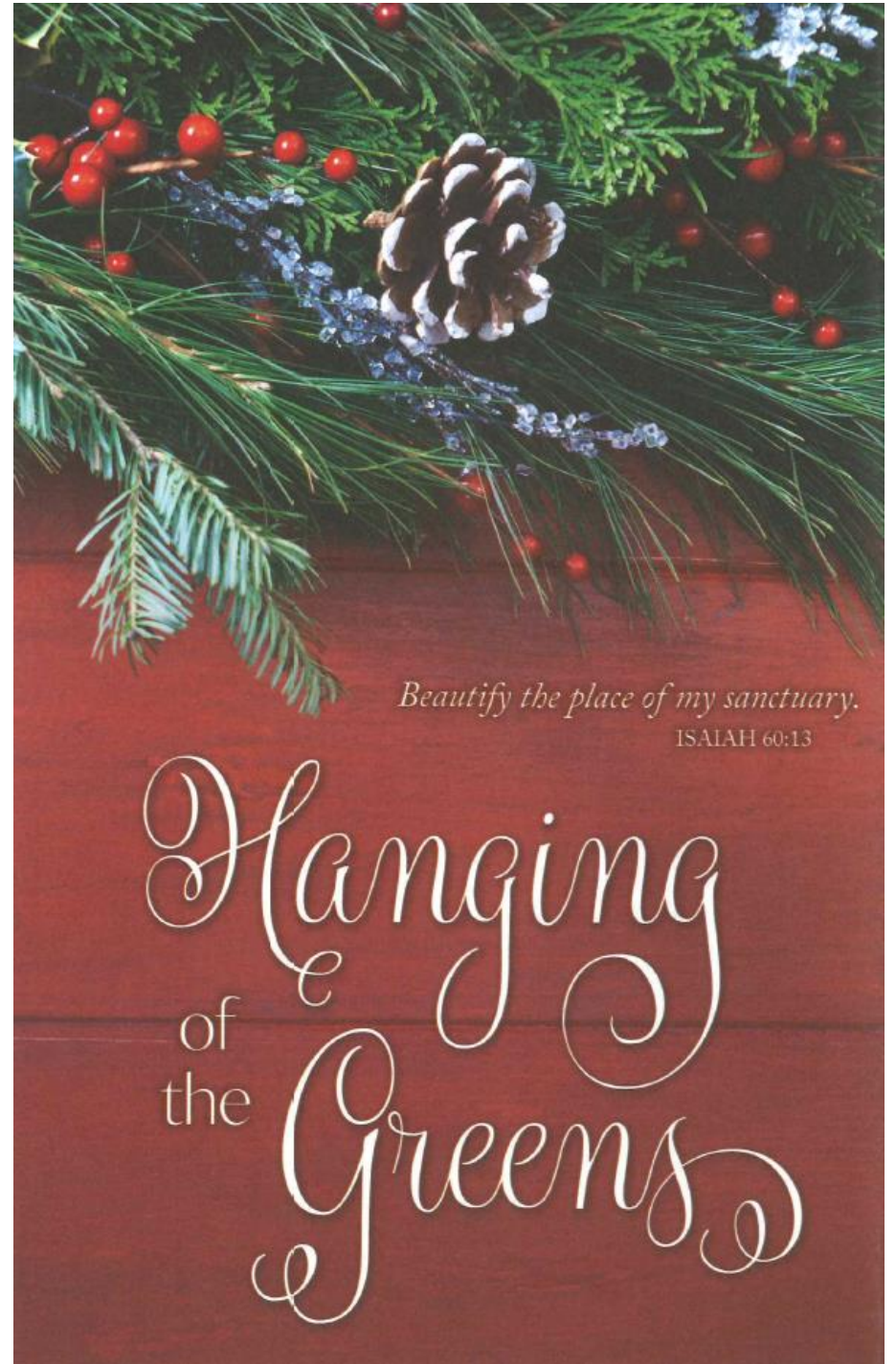
(Based on Isaiah 11:1-10)

Hello. My name is Isaiah, and I am a prophet. A prophet is someone who tells people about God. A prophet wants all the people to listen and learn about who God is and what God does. Life is difficult for the people of Judah, where I live. The people of the land are afraid and sad that other nations are trying to take over, and they feel that God is not listening to them.

I was thinking about all of this, and suddenly a picture came into my mind. I know that God wanted the leaders and people of Judah to hear about it.

The picture was of a tree that had been cut down; it was just a stump, its life and beauty gone. But from the root of that tree, a new branch would grow, and it would become a strong tree again. I told the people not to give up hope; just like the new branch that grew from the stump of the tree that seemed dead, a new leader would come. This leader would have the spirit of God and all of God's knowledge and understanding. This person would be happy and really enjoy knowing God by seeing and hearing about all the good things God has done and will do. Caring for the poor and teaching bad people to be good would be something for this person to do.

The rest of my story was about what would happen if God made all things good and safe. I told about a mountain where no one would be hurt, and all the animals would live together. No animal would hunt and kill another animal for food. All the animals would live peacefully on the mountain, and a child would lead them on the mountain. The child would teach the world about God and all the good things God can do. No one would harm or destroy anyone or anything else on this mountain. Everyone and everything in the whole wide world would know about God. They would know that God is everywhere, even in the biggest ocean. They would know that all the people have been a part of God's plan, and all the people will be a part of that plan in the future.





The United Church of Canada L'Eglise Unie du Canada

Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council
21 Wright Street, Sackville, NB E4L 4P8
Tel: (800) 268-3781 ext. 6137 • Email: info4rc14@united-church.ca



Advent Message from the President of Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council November, 2022



When I was just a lad I was afraid of the dark. For me, when the sun went down, every rug became a pool of quicksand ready to entrap me, every creak or groan from our old home meant there was an intruder in the house, and every closet contained a monster ready to pounce on me should I walk by. Now you might be thinking that lots of children are afraid of the dark, but for me it was debilitating. I regularly refused any invitations to sleepovers, my bedtime routine had to be completed before dark, and once I was in bed I refused to get out until dawn. I lived in fear most of the year, but not at Christmas. As the days of advent drew closer, beautifully lit decorations appeared on lawns and every room in the house was aglow with Christmas trees and candles in the windows. During advent and Christmas my fear was gone and it changed the way I lived and acted in this world.

I am no longer afraid of the dark, but this world is still a dark place and we have to face that darkness every day. We face dark days of disappointment. We lose a job, a relationship, or our health. Frankly, the holidays can exaggerate the disappointment. The holes in our lives can look a little bit bigger under festive Christmas lights.

We face dark days of stress. We're overwhelmed with responsibilities and with little time to complete them all. Our schedule is full. Our wallets are empty. Our bodies are exhausted.

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And again, the holidays can just make it worse. Our schedules get fuller, our wallets get emptier, and our bodies get more worn out.

We face dark days of doubt. The world around us is full of uncertainties. Inflation is robbing us of our buying power, Russia is still at war with the Ukraine, COVID is still a threat, and we live with the specter of climate change. It's easy to look at our future and doubt what it holds. We wonder if our job will be around tomorrow. We wonder if our health will hold up. We wonder if we will be able to make ends meet. And, once again, the holidays give new intensity to these concerns.

We face dark days of depression. We can feel like our whole world is ready to cave in. Maybe you faced a crisis this year that brought it on and now you wonder, "**Does anyone really care?**" Feelings of depression are so common during the holidays that we have a term for them: "The Holiday Blues."

The world is a dark place, but listen to what the Bible says in Isaiah 9:2 "**The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.**" Notice that it doesn't say from the world a light has sprung, but upon the world a light has dawned. It has come from outside. There is light outside of this world, and Jesus has brought that light to save us; indeed, He is the Light.

Throughout Advent the light grows as lights begin to appear in town squares, on Main Streets, and in homes. These lights are not merely decorative, but symbolic of the truth... the truth is that we cannot save ourselves. Thinking that we can only leads to more darkness. The only hope is if light comes from the outside, and at Christmas, we learn that Jesus is the light that has come (John 8:12), and the sun has begun to dawn (Isaiah 9:2). This light brings life, truth, and beauty. It brings life- He is the source of both our physical and spiritual life. His light brings truth, revealing things as they really are (1 John 1:5-6). It brings beauty as it reveals the heart of God (Luke 2:11).

When I was a lad, I was desperately afraid of the dark, but I knew when Advent coming there would be light; I knew that no matter what room I went into, the light would be there. The trouble is, not everyone knows this. John 1:9-11 says "**The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.**" The same is true today.

Advent means "coming," and in this season we prepare for the coming of Christ. It is a time not only for remembering the coming of Christ in Bethlehem, but also for seeking to recognize Him when he comes to us now.

Jesus lives in our own times and in our own lives. Yet, too often, He is a stranger to us, and we fail to recognize him; we are not prepared.

How can we begin to prepare?

1. **Stop** - I know it's tough to stop running and slow down during this season. It's one of the busiest times of the year. But remember what the psalmist says: "**Be still, and know that I am God**" (Psalm 46:10 NIV).
2. **Spend Time with Him** – How do you spend time with God?
 - a. **Pick up that Bible and read the Christmas story in Matthew and Luke.** There are all kinds of Advent reading lists. Find one and use one. God always speaks to the person who is willing to listen and the Bible is the Word of God.
 - b. **Take time for a Bible Study.** Often a Bible Study will allow you to hear and see very familiar stories with fresh eyes and new wisdom.
 - c. **Go to Church.** Spend time getting to know God and getting to know His family. Do you have time to spend with God this Christmas?
3. **Say Thanks** - Spend some time expressing gratitude to God for sending Jesus to the world for you. How do you do that?
 - a. **Pray** – Thank God for all the blessings you have in your life. At Christmas, God gave us the greatest gift imaginable, so let God know what that gift means to you.
 - b. **Help Others** – Jesus once said "**Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.**" So, spend some time helping others as a way to say "thank you" to God. There are all kinds of ways to help others whether it is through the United Church's Gifts of Vision, getting involved with a local soup kitchen, or shoveling a neighbour's walk, there are numerous ways to help others. Choose one closest to your heart.

When I was a lad, I was afraid of the dark, but when Advent came around, the lights dispelled the darkness. I had nothing to do with those lights appearing, but they came and they transformed the way I lived. Isaiah 9 doesn't just say "For unto us a child is born." It also says "to us a son is given." It is a gift. If you are prepared to accept this gift of grace it will change your life. It is my prayer for you that Jesus will be born in your life this year.

Thanks be to God.



Rev. Mr. J.D. Kennedy

President, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council