

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

December 10, 2023

Minister	Rev. Neal Palmer	Music Director	Martha Vickers
Office Adm.	Margaret Daniels	Custodian	Lester Scott
Audio & Visual Technicians	Shirley Allain & Donald Eddy	Greeters	Julie & Harvey Spence

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<u>Lectionary for today</u>	<u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u>
Isaiah 40:1-11 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 2 Peter 3:8-15a Mark 1:1-8	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 Psalm 126 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 John 1:6-8, 19-28

*The asterisk * identifies those times in the service where you are invited to present yourselves, body, mind, and spirit, as is comfortable for you today...*

GATHERING

MUSIC AS WE GATHER

WELCOME & TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT *(responsively)*

...Please join me in our Territory Acknowledgement...

Ancient and modern people have inhabited and continue to inhabit this land on which we worship. This is the traditional land of the Mi'kmaq people, and we are deeply grateful to be here and to ground ourselves in the land which has been a place where people have lived for thousands of years.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING – “We Light This Candle”

The Hope Advent candle is lit...

***We light a candle for Peace.
Await the new life within.
May our hearts now live each day,
so peace can find a way,
so peace can find a way.***

BOLD DISCIPLESHIP – Peace *(responsively)*

What does Peace look like in the new world?

Peace looks like a flowing river where every living thing has what they need to flourish. Peace looks like a place where those who are weak are not afraid of those who are strong. Peace looks like good conversations around big tables.

Advent is the beginning of this new world, a better world, where we can boldly build a good life together.

May it be so.

Amen.

The Peace Advent candle is lit.

“Hope Shines as the Solitary Star” – MV #220

***Peace shines as the solitary star.
Faith is the inner light.
You and I together mirror the Light of Lights,
and illumine the pathway home.***

CALL TO WORSHIP *(responsively)*

Praise the Holy One from the tops of the highest mountains!

Grant us peace, Almighty One!

Praise the Holy One from the bottoms of the deepest valleys!

Grant us peace, Merciful One!

Praise the Holy One from the bumps in the road!

Grant us peace, Gracious One!

Praise the Holy One from the still waters!

Grant us peace, Compassionate One!

Praise the Holy One of highs and lows, rough places and smooth.

We come to praise the One who brings peace to all.

GATHERING PRAYER

***GATHERING HYMN** – “Hope Is a Star” - VU #7

Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.

Refrain:

*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.*

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
Giving a promise of safety and worth.

Refrain:

Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
Telling the world that the Saviour is born.

Refrain:

Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart.

Refrain:

Christ is the Light that lightens the earth,
Guiding and saving us all since his birth.

Refrain:

PRAYER OF HUMILITY

CHORAL RESPONSE – “The Advent Prayer Song”

***Breathe into this moment of peace
with courage to let go, daring to dream.***

For the days are surely coming

when we'll rise strong together once again in peace.

***GREETING ONE ANOTHER** (*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 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

*Il est né, le divin Enfant,
jouez, hautbois, résonnez, musettes;
il est né, le divin Enfant,
chantons tous son avènement.*

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

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.*

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

*Il est né, le divin Enfant,
jouez, hautbois, résonnez, musettes;
il est né, le divin Enfant,
chantons tous son avènement.*

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

*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.*

ENGAGING

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Anne Brooks

Mark 1:1-8

Discussion [*What might preparing the way of God look like as we head into 2024?*]

[Based on] Isaiah 40:1-11

...And the people said...

That's *really* good news.

MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

GIFT OF MUSIC - "Wait for the Promise"

Senior Choir

RESPONDING

YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS (*Minute for Mission*) *Ronalds' family*

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD

***OFFERING HYMN** (*Tune Old 10th*)

Hope in our faith so filled with awe.
Hope in the promise of our God.
Hope for these gifts we offer here.
Use them and us throughout the year.

***OFFERING PRAYER** (*responsively*)

Prepare the way!

We offer our gifts, both tangible and spiritual, to level the ground and make smooth the way ahead. We prepare, not just for our individual relationships with God, but for the wider community to find comfort and nurture.

Prepare the way!

We offer ourselves, our minds, and our hearts to reveal the presence of God in our midst.

Prepare the way!

May God be revealed to us and in us.

Amen

COLLECTION OF WHITE GIFTS *Children of the Sunday School*

GIFT OF MUSIC – “Light a Candle for Peace”
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** – “Go, Tell It on the Mountain” – VU #43

*Refrain:
Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

While shepherds kept their watching
o’er silent flocks by night,
behold throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light.

Refrain:

The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Saviour’s birth!

Refrain:

Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent our salvation
that blessed Christmas morn.

Refrain:

***BLESSING**

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

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

(The Advent Candles are extinguished.)

POSTLUDE

Church News

This Week at First United –December 11 th to December 16 th		
Monday	9:00 AM	Badminton – DEMH Gym
Wednesday	6:30	Choir Practice
Thursday	9:00 AM	Badminton
Saturday	8 AM to 1 PM	Bathurst Community Market – DEMH

Church Office Hours - Monday to Friday – 9 AM to 3 PM.

Peanut Butter – Our pledge this year to the Bathurst Volunteer Center is **900 jars**. As of December 7th **832** jars have been donated

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 Fundraiser** may place an envelope in the offering plate on Sunday morning. Please mark clearly on the face of the envelope – Poinsettia Fundraiser 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 Wednesday, December 13, 2023.*

Annual Christmas Benevolence Fund: - It's that time of year! Giving to this fund is even more important than ever. The costs relating to feeding families, and having a warm place to live has become very prevalent in our area and yes, COVID-19 is still affecting lives. Should you wish to give you will find an envelope on the tree which is set up in the narthex. Then you may drop the envelope 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

Thank you to those who helped decorate for the Christmas season: Gary & Elizabeth Branch, Deborah & Rick Watling, Jini Palmer, Marie Oliver, Gwen Sturgeon, Isabel Clouston and Lester Scott.

Thank You to all who supported our Christmas Hymn Sing hosted by First United and Central United Church Choirs. Approximately \$1900.00 was raised with the proceeds being divided equally between both faith communities. Merry Christmas.

Thank you to the Sunday School for participating in the service this morning

2024 Church Envelopes are available in the narthex. If you haven't had contribution envelopes in the past and wish to have them, please advise the church office.

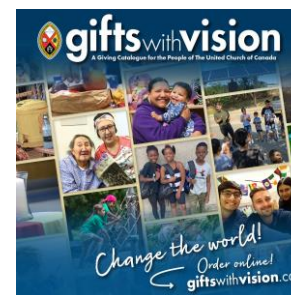
Upcoming Christmas Services at First United:

December 21st at 6PM – Blue Christmas Service
December 24th at 10AM – Regular service with Communion
December 24th at 4PM – Family Christmas Eve Service

As part of our **Stewardship Program** here at First United, information on Planned Giving through Wills and Bequests will be made available to our congregational membership this fall. All members are encouraged to review this information and take the appropriate steps pertaining to your wishes. The information will be available later this year from the church office. Below you will find a stewardship scripture verse and quote relating to the same.

For we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it. 1 Timothy 6:6

Welcome to Gifts with Vision for 2023–2024!



[Image credit: The United Church of Canada]

[Gifts with Vision](#) are opportunities for you to make a difference in someone's life—during Advent and Christmas, or at any time of year—by giving gifts from the comfort of home, with no packaging or wrapping needed.

This year's new gifts include [solar power](#) for the United Theological College in Zimbabwe, [backpacks full of school supplies](#) for children who live under the poverty line, a [biofuel pilot project](#) run by women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and making the United Church camp experience possible for children in underserved communities in the Maritimes—along with many others. You'll also recognize lots of returning gifts, like [Operation Backpack](#), [Return of the Buffalo](#), and [A Kindergarten in a Refugee Camp](#).

See all the Gifts available and find out more by visiting the [Gifts with Vision website](#), and pick up a catalogue in the narthex.

Community News

The North Shore Shrine Club is raising funds to help sick children by the sale of calendars and fruit cakes. The funds are used to pay for the transportation of sick children to the Shriners Children's Hospital in Montreal. The calendars are \$20 each and you have the chance to win a prize each day of the year. The fruit cakes - 3 cakes per box - are \$23 per box. To order a calendar or cakes please contact Harvey Spence at 506-546-2742. Thank you!

A FAMILY AND COMMUNITY BREAKFAST will be held at St. George's Anglican Church, 432 King Avenue, on **Saturday, December 9th from 8 AM to 10 AM**. Come and enjoy fellowship and great food.

Central United, Clifton will be holding a senior's card afternoon on Wednesday, December 13 at 1 p.m. Open to all seniors. Tea, coffee and cookies will be available

St. George's Anglican Church invites you to join us for a time of singing favourite Christmas carols and enjoying the spirit of Christmas on Thursday, Dec. 14th at 7:00 pm. Coffee and tea to follow in the Church Hall.

Hello from FSLDW President Elizabeth

On the road again...

On December 3rd I had the delight to visit Central United Church, New Bandon Pastoral Charge, Clifton, NB. Rev. Susan White and the choir led worship while I offered a reflection and gratitude, on your behalf, for this vibrant ministry in the Acadian Peninsula.

New Bandon is one of those successful amalgamation stories having amalgamated six congregations in 1976. Before worship, the place is alive with activity as choir members tune up before worship, disciples buzz about flipping switches, checking the sound system and screens, setting tables, while children bounce about and Rev. Susan's energy fills the space.

The day was not over. Mid-afternoon I was in the pew at First United Church, Bathurst, to join the 2023 Christmas Hymn Sing - a collaboration of the choirs of First United and Central United Churches. The event was coordinated by the very talented Martha Vickers who slid seamlessly between pulpit, piano and organ to direct a wonderful afternoon of Christmas music. Rev. Neal Palmer of First United and Rev. Sue White of Central United read scripture. And I, with my shepherd's crook (a symbol of the President office), said hello on your behalf.

After the concert David and I drove home to the Kingston Peninsula - referred to as the 'south' - with hearts filled with Christmas Spirit and gratitude for the many people from across the Region who serve God through this United Church of ours.

Thank you to Rev. Sue and Martha Vickers for the invitations to be among you on this special season. Thank you to all for the gracious hospitality... including a delicious feast after worship and treats for the road.

Pictures of both events can be found on the Region Facebook page.

In Peace,
Elizabeth

President FSLDW Region

An Affirming Region

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SCRIPTURE READINGS

Mark 1:1-8

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way,

3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight,'"

4 so John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

5 And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals.

8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Discussion [*What might preparing the way of God look like as we head into 2024?*]

[Based on] Isaiah 40:1-11

Comforting Words

*(Practice the refrain "**That's really good news**" beforehand. How many ways can we emphasize "really"?)*

Long, long ago many of the people of Israel had to live in a country not their own. Soldiers had taken them to Babylon and forced them to work for the king. For many, many years, the people were broken-hearted and wept tears of sorrow.

Just as everyone began to think they would have to live in Babylon forever, someone came along who gave the people hope. It was the prophet, Isaiah. Isaiah had a special message from God – a message of comfort and hope.

"Listen, people. I have comforting words for you. We have God's love. Your hard times are over. You have been punished enough."

And the people said...

That's really good news.

"We will leave Babylon and return to our homeland – to the heart and center of our faith."

And the people said...

That's really good news.

"We must make ready. God will help us. The pathway is so sure that it seems the valleys will be lifted up and the mountains levelled. Nothing will stand in our way."

And the people said...

That's really good news.

"God will lovingly look after us just as a shepherd gathers the flock together, cradling the lambs and carrying them to safety and rest."

And the people said...

That's really good news.

The people looked at each other. How comforting these words felt! God will always be with us.

And the people said...

That's really good news.

How wonderful to be reminded of God's everlasting, comforting love!

May God bless to our understanding these significant parts of our Christian story...