

The United Church of Canada  
Bathurst Pastoral Charge  
First United Church, Bathurst  
[www.firstunited-bathurst.ca](http://www.firstunited-bathurst.ca)

December 17, 2023

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

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<u>Lectionary for today</u>	<u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u>
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 Psalm 126 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 John 1:6-8, 19-28	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38
Today's bulletins are in loving memory of <b>Ruth Knowles</b> placed by Joyce, Bill and family	

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.**

The Hope & Peace Advent Candles are lit...

**ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING** – “We Light This Candle”

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

**BOLD DISCIPLESHIP** – Joy *(responsively)*      Woods Family

What does joy feel like in the new world?

**Joy feels like everlasting love. Joy feels like the freedom to be who God created us to be. Joy feels like sharing love and kindness. Joy feels like pride.**

Advent is the beginning of this new world, a better world, where joy boldly bubbles up in unexpected places.

**May it be so.**

*The Joy Advent Candle is lit...*

**Amen.**

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

**Joy 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)*

The Spirit is upon us.

**Each of us have been anointed to be bringers of comfort and good news.**

Some of us are discouraged, others are broken-hearted.

**Some of us are joyful and filled with laughter; others long for better circumstances.**

Restore us, Holy One, to each other and to you.

**As we comfort one another and celebrate the good news, we remember God is with us and for us.**

**GATHERING PRAYER** *(in unison)*

**Just and Truthful One,  
we remember your enduring covenant that promises good news to the poor, the broken-hearted, and the captives.  
Comfort is promised to all who mourn, and a mantle of praise in place of discouragement.  
Refocus us, we pray, on our restoration in you.  
We are a people blessed, Holy One, and we rejoice.  
Grow righteousness and praise, we pray, within us this day.  
Amen**

**\*GATHERING CAROL** – “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” (Vs. 1-3)  
*(Gathering, A/C/E 2007-8 pg. 860)*

Good Christian friends, rejoice,  
with heart and soul and voice,  
in darkness we have heard a call:

**Hope! Hope!**

Gift of God for one and all.  
Light shines in the darkness near.  
We're released from all our fear.  
A candle flames in hope, a candle flames in hope.

Good Christian friends, rejoice,  
with heart and soul and voice,  
battles, wars should be no more:

**Peace! Peace!**

Harmony will be our core.  
Calls for peace and calls you all,  
in penitence to humbly fall.  
A candle flames for peace, a candle flames for peace.

Good Christian friends, rejoice,  
with heart and soul and voice.  
Now we hear of endless bliss:

**Joy! Joy!**

Jesus Christ was born for this.  
He has opened heaven's door  
and we are blessed forevermore!  
A candle flames in joy, a candle flames in joy!

**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.**

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

**\*SINGING A SONG** – “Look Toward Christmas”

Look toward Christmas! Advent is here:  
welcome December changing the year,  
whistle up, shepherds! Saddle up, kings!  
chorus up, angels, flexing your wings,

*Refrain*

*sing, sing al-le-lu-ia! sing,  
sing al-le-lu-ia!  
sing, sing out the Story  
sing about hope and peace!*

Set the world singing, make the world glad!  
Now is good reason not to feel sad,  
hear John the Baptist shout to prepare:  
Good News is coming, earth, be aware.

*Refrain*

*sing, sing al-le-lu-ia! sing,  
sing al-le-lu-ia!*

*sing, sing out the Story  
sing about hope and peace!*

Mary and Joseph soon is the day,  
ready the donkey, start on your way:  
you are the chosen, willing to trust,  
joyful your burden carrying Christ,

*Refrain*

*ENGAGING*

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

*Helen Knowles*

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalms 126

### **REFLECTION**

### **MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION**

**GIFT OF MUSIC** – “Is There Room at the Manger for Me?”

*RESPONDING*

**YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS** (*Minute for Mission*)

*Anne Wilson*

### **INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

## **THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD**

**\*OFFERING HYMN** (*Tune Old 100th*)

Joyful is how we seek to live,  
Joyful in what we each can give.  
Joyful in what we speak and hear,  
And joy in what we offer here.

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

**Holy One,  
the prayers we offer, the gifts we give,  
are like seeds sown in trust  
that love will water them  
and bring new life, hope, and joy  
to those who weep.  
Amen**

### **SHARING OUR CONCERNS**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** [*Based on Isaiah 61*]

**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** – “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” – VU #48

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King,  
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”  
Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
with the angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

**Refrain**

**Hark! the herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”**

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin’s womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail, the incarnate deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!

**Refrain**

Hail, the heavenborn Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth, Born to give us second birth.

**Refrain**

**\*BLESSING**

**\*CHORAL SENDING FORTH** –

“I Am Walking a Path of Peace”

MV #221

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

*(The Advent Candles are extinguished.)*

**POSTLUDE**

# Church News

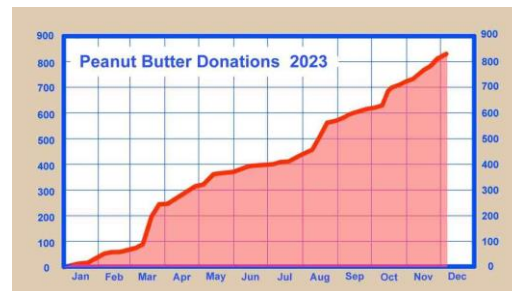
**This Week at First United –December 18<sup>th</sup> to December 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Monday	Badminton will resume January 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2024	
Wednesday	Choir Practice will resume in 2024	
Thursday	6:00 PM	Blue Christmas Service
Saturday	8 AM to 1 PM	Bathurst Community Market – DEMH

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

**Upcoming Christmas Services at First United:**

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



**Peanut Butter** – Our pledge this year to the Bathurst Volunteer Center is **900 jars**. As of December 14<sup>th</sup> **866** jars have been donated.

**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. **Please note the 2024 envelopes are not dated for each week.**

The envelope numbering/tax receipt system currently in place means we need to order 160 boxes of envelopes each year. However we only require about 80 boxes in total. By not having the envelopes dated, anyone who combines weekly donations in a monthly lump sum single donation will be able to use this new box of envelopes for 2 years (or longer), thus reducing the costs to church. For those who remit weekly, we will assign a new number to you for 2025 and provide you with a new box of envelopes.

# Church News

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.

"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

*1 Peter 4:10*

**The drive to give is as important to an understanding of humanity as the desire to receive.**

*Jacques T. Godbout*

**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***

## Community News

**The Bathurst Community Concert Band Ensemble and St. Lukes Presbyterian Church** invite you to an evening of Christmas Music on December 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. The address is 395 Murray Avenue, Bathurst. Come and enjoy the music of the season and sing along with your favourites. Everyone is welcome – No admission but free will offerings are appreciated. All proceeds are directed to our community outreach programs.



## SCRIPTURE READINGS

### ISAIAH 61:1-4, 8-11

1 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;

2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

4 They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

8 For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

### PSALM 126

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

3 The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

4 Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

5 May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

6 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

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