

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

**December 24, 2023 – 4 pm**

**Minister** Rev. Neal Palmer    **Music Director** Martha Vickers  
**Office Adm.** Margaret Daniels    **Custodian** Lester Scott  
**Greeters** The MacLaggan family  
**Audio & Visual Technicians** Brenda Parrott & Donald Eddy

**Today's Music Leader** – Linda Knowles MacPherson

*All musical selections reprinted under license #4-606499, One License for Churches*

<b><u>Lectionary for today</u></b>	<b><u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u></b>
Isaiah 9:2-7	Isaiah 61:10—62:3
Psalms 96	Psalms 148
Titus 2:11-14	Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:1-20	Luke 2:22-40

*This afternoon's bulletins have been placed in memory of*

**Edgar Brown** with all my love Helene

*My parents **Imogene & Gordon Graham,**  
brothers **Donnie** and **Hughie** and sister **Jeannie**  
by Bette and family*

*My husband **Sprague,** daughter **Joy** and grandson **Trevor**  
by Bette 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**

**CAROLS AS WE GATHER**

**CALL TO WORSHIP & 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 first Advent Candle is lit...*

**GATHERING PRAYER**

**\*GATHERING 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***

**PRAYER OF HUMILITY** (*Adapted from Titus 2:11-14*) (*responsively*)

We, Holy One, don't feel ready.

We don't feel ready

**to forgive others who trespass as we have trespassed before others.**

We don't feel ready

**to share the good news of Christ's birth.**

We don't feel ready

**to live into a new life that lets go of our broken pieces.**

**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.***

*The second Advent Candle is lit...*

**\*GREETING ONE ANOTHER** (*responsively*)

The Peace of Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

*ENGAGING*

### **OPENING THE WORD**

**Isaiah 9:2-7** (*responsively*)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. For those who lived in a land of deep shadows –

**Light! Sunbursts of light!**

*The third Advent candle is lit...*

You repopulated the nation, you expanded its joy. Oh, they're so glad in your presence! Festival joy! The joy of the great celebration, sharing rich gifts and warm greetings.

**Light! Sunbursts of light!**

The abuse of oppressors and cruelty of tyrants is gone, done away with, a deliverance as sudden and surprising as Gideon's victory over Midian.

For a child has been born – for us!

The gift of a son – for us!

**Light! Sunbursts of light!**

*The fourth Advent candle is lit...*

He'll take over the running of the world. His names will be: Amazing Counselor, Strong God, Eternal Father, Prince of Wholeness. His ruling authority will grow, and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings. He'll rule from the historic Davidic throne over that promised *kingdom*. He'll put that *kingdom* on firm footing and keep it going with fair dealing and right living, beginning now and lasting always.

**Amen!**

### **MOVING INTO THE CHRISTMAS STORY**

**Luke 2:1-7**

*...The Christ candle is lit...*

**\*CAROL** – “Away in a Manger” – VU #69

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.  
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,  
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay  
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,  
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

**Luke 2:8-20**

**GIFT OF MUSIC** - “Light a Candle for Peace”  
*(Children of the Sunday School)*

*RESPONDING*

**INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

**THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD**

**\*OFFERING CAROL** – “In the Bleak Midwinter” – VU #55 *(Verse 4)*

***What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him—give my heart.***

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

**Holy One,  
thanks for the gift of love  
that breaks through  
the most difficult of times.**

**May these gifts be used  
to show Christ’s light in the world  
well beyond our imagination.  
Amen**

**SHARING OUR CONCERNS**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**THE LORD’S PRAYER** (A Translation) – VU #916 *(in unison)*

**Our Father-Mother, who is in the heavens,  
may your name be made holy,  
may your dominion come,  
may your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today the bread we need;  
and forgive us our debts,  
as we have forgiven our debtors;  
and do not put us to the test,  
but rescue us from evil.  
For yours is the dominion, and the power,  
and the glory forever.  
Amen**

*GOING OUT (as Spirit people)*

**SHARING THE CHRIST LIGHT**

*...The sanctuary lights are dimmed...*

**\*CLOSING CAROL** – “Silent Night, Holy Night” – VU #67

Silent night! Holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace,  
sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight:  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heavenly hosts sing Hallelujah,  
Christ the Saviour is born,  
Christ the Saviour is born.

Silent night! Holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from thy holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

**\*BLESSING**

**\*THE CHRIST CANDLE IS EXTINGUISHED**

**\*POSTLUDE** - "We Wish You a Merry Christmas"

*Refrain*

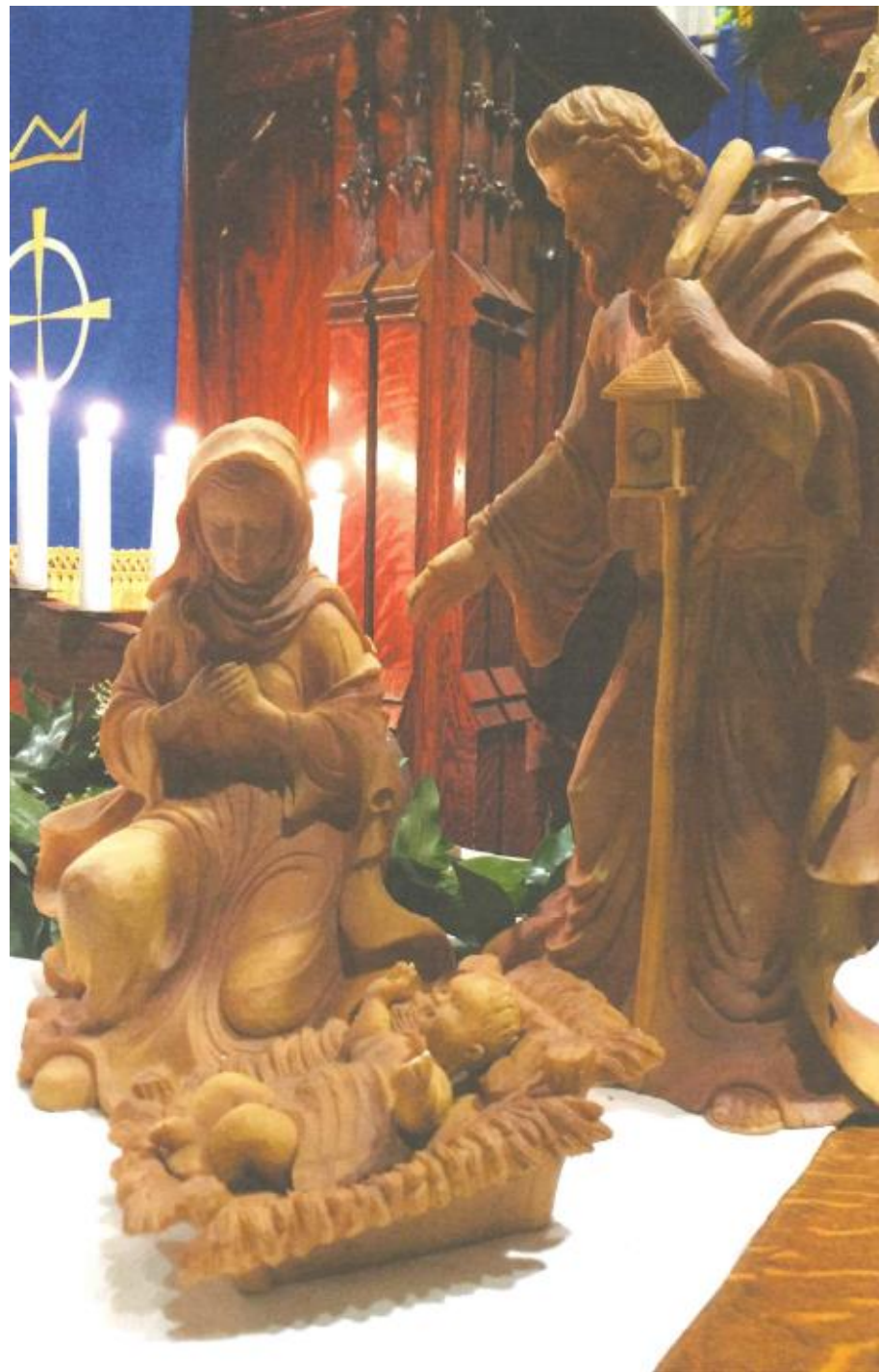
*We wish you a Merry Christmas (3X)*

*And a Happy New Year*

Good tidings we bring, to you and your kin  
We wish you a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year

*Refrain*

*(The Advent candles are extinguished.)*



## SCRIPTURE READING

### Luke 2:1-20

#### The Birth of Jesus

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 All went to their own towns to be registered.

4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

#### ***Hay is added to the manger...***

6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

#### ***The baby Jesus is added to the manger...***

#### ***The Christ candle is lit...***

\***CAROL** – “Away in a Manger” – VU #69

#### The Shepherds and the Angels

8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:

11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

#### ***A blanket is added to the manger...***

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace!”

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger.

17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child,

18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them,

19 and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

*May the Spirit bless to our understanding these significant parts of our faith story...*