

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

December 31, 2023

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

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<u>Lectionary for today</u>	<u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u>
Matthew 2:1-12 Luke 21:1-4	Genesis 1:1-5 Psalm 29 Acts 19:1-7 Mark 1:4-11

*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 AND INTRODUCTION

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.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

As we pause at the door of a new year and prepare to cross its threshold, let's carry the peace of Christ's love in our hearts and our lives, so we may make peace possible in our time.

The Christ candle is lit...

Let this candlelight shine throughout our daily lives that all may know we follow in Christ's way.

May the light of peace shine through us to Creation.

CENTERING FOR WORSHIP – MV #220
"Hope Shines as the Solitary Star"

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)*

What a past year this has been!

So much has happened; some wonderful and some very challenging.

In all of this, God journeyed with us, guiding, healing, comforting, and rejoicing.

We are filled with gratitude for God's presence with us.

Today we're on the precipice of a new year.

In all that's to come, we commit to trusting in God's love.

Together, we walk into this future

as a faithful community of generosity, compassion, and joyfulness.

GATHERING PRAYER

*GATHERING HYMN – “The First Nowell”

VU #91

The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay a keeping their sheep
on a cold winter’s night that was so deep.

Refrain:

*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.*

They lookèd up and saw a star,
shining in the east, beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.

Refrain

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.

Refrain

This star drew nigh to the northwest;
o’er Bethlehem it took its rest,
and there it did both stop and stay,
right over the place where Jesus lay.

Refrain

Then entered in those wise men three,
full reverently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence
their gold and myrrh and frankincense.

Refrain

Then let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
that hath made heaven and earth of nought,
and with his blood our life hath bought.

Refrain:

*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.*

PRAYER OF HUMILITY

CHORAL RESPONSE – “The 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 CAROL – “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

VU #58

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
Noels ringing, tiding bringing:
Christ the babe is born for all.
Christ the babe is born for all!

Flocks were sleeping; shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tiding of a gospel true.

Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing greet the morrow:

Christ the babe was born for you.
Christ the babe was born for you!

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Wayne Lord

Matthew 2:1–12

Luke 21:1–4

REFLECTION

MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

GIFT OF MUSIC - "In the Bleak Midwinter"

RESPONDING

YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS (*Minute for Mission*)

Judy Losier

INVITATION TO MAKE AN OFFERING

THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD

***OFFERING RESPONSE** (*Tune Old 100th*)

Hope in our God so filled with love.

Peace in the symbol of a dove.

Joy in the coming of the Son.

Love fills us up and makes us one.

Catherine MacDonald 2007

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

**Gracious and loving God,
bless these gifts and those offered through PAR or online,
that through them we transform lives,
inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world.
Remind us that in giving freely as you do,
we embody your self-giving nature.
Thanks be to you.
Amen**

RENEWAL OF STEWARDSHIP COVENANT (*responsively*)

...We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others, by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

"When We are Living" – VU #581 (*Verses 1 & 2*)

When we are living, it is in Christ Jesus,

and when we're dying, it is in the Lord.

Both in our living and in our dying,

we belong to God, we belong to God.

Through all our living, we our fruits must give.

Good works of service are for offering.

When we are giving, or when receiving,

we belong to God, we belong to God.

A covenant is a promise we make with God and others to live God's way. I ask us now, do we renew the covenant with God and with each other to walk in the Way of Jesus?

In the presence of God and one another, we renew our covenant as we give thanks for the example and lasting love of Jesus Christ, who shows us how to generously offer our gifts as an expression of our gratitude and faithfulness.

We remember today promises made at baptism to support one another and all of God's people as we grow in faith. We commit again to honour and fulfill these promises.

Do we promise to participate in the ministry of the church and to use our resources to support others in need locally and through the Mission and Service of the United Church of Canada?

We share in the life and ministry of the church. We commit ourselves to share our resources so we may joyfully live out the ministry that Jesus calls us to follow.

In your image, Holy One, we are created.

Be with us as we reflect on that image in our work and play, as we sing and pray, laugh and cry, give generously and serve others.

Help us accept our responsibility as members and adherents of this congregation and as followers of the Way of Jesus Christ.

We ask for the Spirit's encouragement and the energy of your love, as we live out this covenant together.

"When We are Living" – VU #581 (*Verses 3 & 4*)

*'Mid times of sorrow and in times of pain,
when sensing beauty or in love's embrace,
whether we suffer, or sing rejoicing,
we belong to God, we belong to God.*

*Across this wide world, we shall always find
those who are crying with no peace of mind,
but when we help them, or when we feed them,
we belong to God, we belong to God.*

SHARING OUR CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kindom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kindom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for 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 Christ candle is extinguished.)

POSTLUDE

Church News

Church Office Hours this week –

Tuesday to Friday – 9 AM to 3 PM

Badminton will resume January 8th, 2024

Choir Practice will resume in 2024

Peanut Butter – Our pledge this year to the Bathurst Volunteer Center is **900 jars**. As of December 29th **889** 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). For those who remit weekly, I will assign a new number to you for 2025 and provide you with a new box of envelopes.

Community News

A FAMILY AND COMMUNITY BREAKFAST will be held at St. George's Anglican Church, 432 King Avenue, on **Saturday, January 13th from 8:00 – 10:00 am.** Come and enjoy fellowship and great food.

Happy
New Year
2024



SCRIPTURE READINGS

MATTHEW 2:1–12

The Visit of the Wise Men

1 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,

2 asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him;

4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.

8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

LUKE 21: 1–4

The Widow's Offering

1 He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury;

2 he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.

3 He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them,

4 for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

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