



Greetings of the Season to One and All!

Christmas Greeting – 2022

It seems like no time ago that I was writing last year's Advent, Christmas and Epiphany greeting. As I said then, and will repeat now, "The days, weeks, and months sure rush by, do they not?"

This time around, the prophet Isaiah leads us into the Season of Advent. He, offering visions of a world of peace and harmony and a child leading the way. Then, we sing a song of justice and joy with Mary. Then, we hear the promise of a child from Joseph's point of view. And finally, we take courage from Joseph's example of faithful living in troubled times.

Then, when the blue/purple colour of Advent swirls into the white/gold of Christmas, the twelve days of Christmas begin with a hymn of praise. Finally, the Season of Christmas ends with the Magi entering the story and beckoning us to embrace the hope in the gift of a child.

Then, the Season after the Epiphany begins and ends in mystical encounters, with the words of affirmation: "You are my beloved."

Friends, the call of Isaiah and the call of the disciples have us reflect on our own call, decision points, and clarifying light. We spend three weeks, the truth be told, savouring a collection of Jesus' sayings presented in the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes, needless to say, bend our understanding of the world around us and turn our world view upside down, as we glimpse a re-imagined realm. With that, we're reminded we are salt and light in a world in need, and taken into the heart of the law and the gospel. Or, at the very least, we *could* be.

What, then, do these visions mean for us today? And how, might we live into them?

The answers, of course, are there before us. In Joseph's example, precedent has been set. And, as challenging as *faithful living in troubled times* may be, we need to act. That, after all, is what *faith* calls us to.

May it be so.

*In the meantime, a blessed, safe and **VERY** Merry Christmas to you all!*

Yours in Christ, in friendship, and in our ministry together...

Rev. Neal

Sound system update

In December 2021 Sandra Boone and Brenda Parrott, with significant technical assistance from Margaret Daniels, made an application for a federal government grant under the New Horizons for Seniors program. Our wish was to update the quality of the sound system in the sanctuary, as the current system was almost 25 years old and many congregants were struggling to hear. In March we were ecstatic to hear our application was approved in the amount of \$25,000. An ad hoc committee of Martha Vickers, Lester Scott, Don Eddy, Dave Brewster and Shirley Allain worked with a Miramichi company, Millbank Music, and made the decisions of what would suit our sanctuary the best. It took many months for the equipment to arrive, but the sound portion was finally installed in October. It includes new microphones, speakers and amps. The new sound mixer is back ordered, however we are using a loaner in the meantime. We will also soon be taking delivery of a camera to enable the services to be broadcast in real time. We are hoping the equipment will be installed before Christmas. That way folks at home can enjoy the service on Sunday morning instead of waiting until it is uploaded on Monday. The console to house all of the equipment is being made and hopefully will be completed before Christmas as well. All of the volunteers involved hope you are enjoying the significant improvement in the quality of the sound. We thank the federal government for this investment.

What kind of Christmas music do elves like?



Wrap Music!

Memorial Christmas Hymn Sing

We will be hosting our first Memorial Hymn Sing since 2017 on Sunday afternoon, December 11th at 2 PM. The deadline has already passed for your requests, however please feel free to join us to enjoy the many familiar carols you are sure to enjoy.

Check Us Out: www.firstunited-bathurst.ca You can also follow us on Facebook. Here you will find past services, bulletins, upcoming events as well as cancellations if the need arises.

The CD titled, "Christmas on the Bay", is available. It features a variety of Christmas music by Linda Knowles MacPherson, with help from friends, Donald Eddy, Archie Fowlie, and Ann Marie Hocquard. A copy may be obtained with a donation to First United Church. Please contact Margaret at the church office to obtain or reserve a copy. There are also other CDs by Linda and friends, other than the Christmas theme, also available.

How do Christmas angels greet each other?



Halo!

Thank you! On behalf of the "Lesotho Initiative" Committee of ASD - N, a special 'thank you' is extended to you for your support of our recent calendar drive. A total of 200 "Help Lesotho" 2022 calendars were sold, and this raised \$3,000 for the work of "Help Lesotho" with Grandmothers and vulnerable children in the tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho, Africa. (There are additional calendars available for anyone else who would like to support this cause.)

Submitted by,
Gary Branch

Property Maintenance Team

Snow removal from December 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 will cost \$2,750. This is a slight increase from previous years, however, still quite reasonable. Outside of this contract period each trip will be charged on a per trip basis. The snow-blowing, shovelling and salting of the doorways is being completed by the custodian.

Newsletters: Our number of Newsletters sent via email continues to grow. We have 111 households currently receiving their newsletters via email. Thank you to all you have signed up. Please consider adding your name to the list. Send your request to firstadmin@nb.aibn.com. Special envelopes for Christmas contributions can be found in the Narthex. Approximately 225 members of our church family receive three letters yearly by mail, at the cost of around \$1.00/letter.



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.

Ways & Means Team

The Ways and Means team would like to express a sincere thank you to all workers and those that purchased tickets. Because of the generous sponsorship of the Kenny’s Trucking and The Shine House, the Ways and Means team realized a profit of approximately \$5,625.



The next Ways and Means team event will hopefully take place on March 23, 2023

ROAST PORK SUPPER.

2023 Schedule of Events Hosted by Ways & Means Team	
March 23 rd	Pork Roast Supper
May 25 th	Ham & Scallop Potato
September 21 st	Beef BBQ
November 23 rd	Turkey Supper

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 in the narthex. 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, Passage House and people in our congregation who need assistance.

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

Church envelopes for the coming year are currently available. If you haven’t had contribution envelopes in the past and wish to have them for 2023, please advise the church office. Another way of making contributions is through PAR.

PAR: Pre Authorized Remittance (PAR) is a convenient way to support the ongoing work of your church. Your monthly contributions are taken directly from your bank account or charged to a Major Credit Card. Currently we have 95 households using this method of support. Signing up for PAR takes only a few minutes and can be done for you at the church office. All that is required is a void cheque or your credit card number.





*Christmas Eve
Worship*

December 24th
4:00pm & 7:00pm

Donation Recognition

The Council and congregation of First United Church would like to thank an anonymous donor for a very generous donation of 175 shares of Bank of America stock, valued at \$10,700. Donating to First United in this manner, with mutual funds or shares, has a significant tax advantage for the donor. Anyone wishing to donate in this manner and realize the tax advantage is encouraged to discuss this with Dave Brewster, chair of the ad hoc Stewardship team. Stay tuned for more ways to give to the life and work of our church.

Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council

Martha Vickers is one of Bathurst Pastoral Charge representatives on the Regional Council. This body embraces pastoral charges in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the Gaspé Coast. Martha is a member of the regional executive as well.

Our pastoral charge is entitled to 3 representatives so a third member is being sought to join Martha and Jini Palmer in the role.

A very enlightening Advent message from the Regional President, Rev. JD Kennedy, is available on the Fundy St. Lawrence website or at the following link - <https://ucceast.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Advent-Messagefrom-President-of-FSLDW-4.pdf>

*How can Santa drive his sleigh
in a thunderstorm?*



His sleigh is driven by Rain, dear!

Christian Development

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.

West Bathurst Cemetery Team

Since our last update in the Thanksgiving Newsletter, a number of projects have been completed. Two monuments were straightened at West Bathurst Cemetery with the help of Donald Eddy. Trees along the borders of both West Bathurst Cemetery and St. Luke's "Old Scottish" Cemetery were trimmed and fallen limbs were removed from both cemeteries after our two tropical storms this fall. Markers were placed along the fence and gate at St. Luke's Cemetery to hopefully prevent damage from winter snow plowing on St. Luke's Court.

Audrey Ronalds, Community Engagement, Coordinator for ASD – N and a number of students from the district placed small Canadian flags on the graves of veterans the week of Remembrance Day. This act of remembrance is much appreciated by our committee.



Appreciation is expressed to Dan and Jeff Gregson and Chris Astle for their thoughtful donation to the West Bathurst Cemetery in memory of their grandmother, Martha (McGee) Carroll. The McGee Monument was repaired this summer after being toppled from its base by a car accident which also damaged the cemetery fence and gate in June 2021. Donations to the cemetery fund so far this year total \$3,015. Appreciation is expressed to everyone who contributed by PAR or at the church office.

Our committee would love to have some new members. If you are interested in joining our committee, please contact Gary Branch.

Cool Whip Cookies

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

1 box of any flavour cake mix – chocolate, red velvet, lemon, etc.

8 oz. Cool Whip

1 egg

1/2 cup powdered sugar

Mix all ingredients in a bowl with a mixer; drop by teaspoonful into powdered sugar; place on cookie sheet.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, cool before removing from cookie sheet – **Enjoy!**