

He is Risen!!!

Easter Greeting 2023 from Rev. Neal

As I write this, the first three Sundays of Lent are behind us and we're preparing for the fourth. As I understand it, if everything goes according to plan, our Easter Newsletter will be in your hands by sometime next week. Just over a week, before Palm Sunday.

The question for me, then, continues to be this. At what point should I jump into the [Easter] story? Now, later, or perhaps, even earlier?

Not to worry. The decision has been made. As this piece forms part of the Easter newsletter, we'll do it all. From Lent 1 through Easter Sunday, that is, not to mention, the Season of Easter to follow.

And so, here goes...

The Season of Lent begins in the wilderness, a place that feels both familiar and dreaded. While we tend to emphasize the loneliness and desolation of the so-called *wild*, wilderness times aren't necessarily empty and barren alone. No, just as a wilderness can be swarming with life, our wilderness times can astound us with the energy they hold as well. Remembering always, our lives can feel clarifying and renewed as we find new awareness within ourselves too.

We begin, then, in the familiar landscape of the wilderness with the tempter's questions to Jesus. That growing awareness then shifts from Jesus to Nicodemus' assurance of the Spirit's deep care and self-giving love in the winds of change and new birth. From there, we continue to uncover new awareness of ourselves in the questions asked of and by the Samaritan woman and the one born blind. If we hadn't noticed before, we begin to see there are companions in the wilderness who encourage our survival as well.

Just prior to entering Jerusalem, as dry bones are called back to life and Lazarus emerges alive too, we find ourselves in the wilderness of grief, asking harrowing questions of God and ourselves. Through that, we hear the call to liberate each other. No one asks these questions alone, but having said that, we share the dream of what new life will actually look like once that's been done.

Then, with a vision and hope, we join the chorus of voices that cry for justice on Palm Sunday. There, we realize how much we've changed and continue the transformation into the fifty days of Easter.

As always, Easter arrives, dressed in white and gold and a flurry of alleluias. Its actually a feast for our senses when Mary becomes the first witness to Jesus' resurrection. Thomas, then, uses his hands to proclaim his faith, and *two* see the risen Christ, as bread is broken and shared. We, with that, come into our senses as we contemplate life continuing beyond the tomb, beyond doubt, beyond trials.

In stories from the Acts of the Apostles and the early Christian church, we reflect on what truly brings life, what it means to live in community—and—the costs and risks associated with proclaiming God's truth. Through that, we find new meaning in what it is *that* we believe, and find strength, in the prayer of Jesus for all disciples, as we continue the Christ-life.

The great fifty days, of course, culminate in celebration, as we experience, *with* the first followers, the life-giving work of the Spirit.

And there it is...

Friends, my Easter wish is that we too will celebrate, as we experience the life-giving work of the Spirit—in both seeing *and* doing. And always.

Yours in Christ, in friendship, and in thanksgiving...

Rev. Neal

Up-Coming Events at First United

April 2nd – Palm Sunday – 10 AM

April 7th – Good Friday Service – 10 AM

April 9th – Easter / Holy Communion – 10 AM

May 18th – Ham & Scallop Potato Supper

Newsletters

To date, there are 114 households receiving the newsletter online. We thank all who have requested to be part of our online distribution. If you wish to have your letters in the future sent directly to your email send your request to firstadmin@nb.aibn.com

What is the Easter Bunny's favorite kind of music?



Hip-hop!

Finance Team

Special envelopes for Easter contributions can be picked up from the church office or found in the Narthex prior to the worship service.

Church Envelopes - 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 information.

Community Outreach Sub-Team

The sub-team coordinates ongoing projects:

- peanut butter for the Volunteer Center;
- supplies for victims of abuse at Passage House;
- a pantry, from which the needy are supported; and
- encouraging folks via Minute for Mission promotion.

The above is only feasible due to the generosity of members, so all contributions are greatly appreciated.

Helen M Knowles, Chair

Ways & Means Team

The Ways and Means team would like to express a sincere thank you to all who helped in anyway with our Take-Out suppers in 2022. The generous sponsorship of the Hatheway Group of Companies, Kent & White Insurance, Kenny's Trucking, The Shine House (Division of Stothart Automotive) and McDonald's Restaurant (Bathurst) allowed the Ways & Means Team to generate close to \$20,000 overall last year.

The team is always looking for people to join their preparation, serving and clean-up crews. Even if you are available to only work a couple of functions, it would be a great help to the team. Call the church office to volunteer – 506-546-3532.

The next Ways and Means team event will be held on Thursday, May 18th - a take-out **Ham & Scallop Potato Supper**.

Calling all Graduates: If you are a potential graduate of the class of 2023, for either BHS or ESN, please advise the church office. The First United Church service honoring our graduates will be held in June, 2023.



What do you get if you give an Easter Bunny a pair of socks?

A sock hop!

Craft Idea for Children

Cardboard Tube Bunnies and Chicks

Transform upcycled supplies into these cute animal figures. Use colorful party napkins for clothes (and the chick's nose), cardboard tubes for the bodies, and card stock for the bunny ears. Draw on faces with black and pink paint pens.



Council Highlights from February 2nd and March 14th, 2023 by Isabel MacLaggan

The council has held two meetings in the New Year. At the most recent one, conducted on-line, council reviewed and approved the proposed budget for 2023. Such approval was necessary prior to the budget being presented to the congregation at the annual meeting held March 19, 2023.

At the earlier meeting council reviewed the church's financial status as of December 31, 2022. The net income last year was in the minus category.

Church treasurer, Dave Morison, explained a self-insurance arrangement proposed and supported by the United Church of Canada. This effort by the national church is aimed at reducing annual insurance premiums which have been increasing year after year thus burdening pastoral charges. (See separate story) Both our Financial Management Team and Board of Trustees have decided to embrace this national plan.

Nominations chair, Rick Watling, reported that Lester Scott has agreed to be a member of the West Bathurst Cemetery Sub-Team.

The Christian Development Team, chaired by Brenda Parrott, reported on plans to have the Sunday-school children sing at the Palm Sunday service. The minister asked members to encourage people to return to regular church attendance.

On behalf of the Pastoral Care Team, Gwen Sturgeon extended special greetings to Herman Comeau when she visited him on his 100th birthday in January.

Reporting as chair of the Ministry and Personnel Team, Wayne Lord said the annual staff reviews had been completed.

Council approved an updated policy pertaining to funerals at the church.

Lester Scott, chair of Property Management, gave an update on the new audio/video system being installed in the sanctuary that will result in live streaming.

Also reporting for their respective teams were Martha Vickers on the church's regional structure; Wayne Lord, Ways and Means Team; and Isabel MacLaggan, Board of Trustees and Communications

West Bathurst Cemetery Team

The West Bathurst Cemetery Committee is responsible for the West Bathurst Cemetery on St. Anne Street and the St. Luke's "Old Scottish" Cemetery on St. Luke's Court. Committee members include: Heidi Jansson, Byron McLean, Robert Willis, Lester Scott, Robert Branch (Chairperson), and Gary Branch (Secretary).

As of December 31, 2022, the West Bathurst Cemetery Fund total was \$82,792. We continue to be thankful to everyone who supports this fund the PAR and donations. In 2022 the donations totalled \$3,210 and the investment income was \$746.

The committee will be meeting in April or early May to explore options for the 2023 mowing and maintenance season.

Gary Branch, Secretary

Why was the Easter egg hiding?



Because it was a little chicken!

**Article taken from March 2023
Broadview Magazine
Finances / Avil Beckford**

United Church Phases in New Insurance Plan

IN THE FACE of skyrocketing insurance premiums, the United Church is committing \$3 million to a self-insurance program that was phased in on Dec. 1. The program, which eliminates broker fees and streamlines costs, is expected to significantly reduce insurance expenses. Approved at General Council 44 in July, the new plan aims to save congregations and ministries over \$1.5 million per year.

Erik Mathiesen, executive office of finance for the General Council office, estimates that insurance premiums for congregations have increased between 50 and 100 percent during the last three years. It's the third highest expense for churches, behind staff and building costs. There will be a 15 to 30 percent reduction in premiums for congregations transitioning from the older UCC Protect program.

Self-insurance means participating United churches will assume some of the risk. Still, Mathiesen says, it's a conventional practice. "Self-insurance isn't a wild, radical idea or anything. It's very common."

Nancy Gray, chair of the finance committee at Munn's United in Oakville, Ont., says she's pleased with the United Church's intention to forge ahead with the plan. "We hope to see reduced costs, with similar or better service and coverage." John Morton, the treasurer at Bella Coola pastoral charge in Bella Coola, B.C., adds, "Its financial success will rely on low claims in the early years, but also the participation of as many congregations as possible."

"All UCC Protect participants in good standing qualify and will be switched over automatically unless they expressly opt out," says Mathiesen.

Pastoral Care Pantry & Peanut Butter Drive

An appreciative audience of more than 80 people enjoyed a two-hour afternoon concert held in our First United sanctuary on March 18th.

The Treble Makers, under the direction of Linda Knowles MacPherson, joyfully sang song after song, most of which were ***Irish*** tunes.

There was no admission fee. However, donations of peanut butter for the Bathurst Volunteer Center and non-perishable items for the church pantry were requested. Those in attendance were generous in their response.

The concert was initiated by Gwen Sturgeon of the Pastoral Care and Membership Team. Community Outreach, a sub-team of Pastoral Care, saw the church pantry filled to the brim as donations included dozens and dozens of welcomed items.

In expressing her thanks to the vocal and instrumental group since the concert, Gwen also mentioned *the humour* that was part of the program. "Such a wonderful contribution of the group's time and talents was enjoyed by all in attendance who generously donated to our collection of items for those in need".

The concert attracted people from as far away as Campbellton.



Charles, Linda, Don, Julia, Ann Marie, Karen and Hazen

Flowers for Mother's Day!!

We will be having flowers placed in our sanctuary in honor of Mother's day. Those wishing to contribute to the Mother's Day flower fund may place an envelope in the offering plate on Sunday morning. Please mark clearly on the face of the envelope – Mother's Day Flowers with your name and PAR or envelope number (if you know it). Donations can also be dropped in at the office. An insert will be included in the bulletin on Mother's Day, May 14th with your dedications. Please have your dedications in by Monday May 8th. ***Thank you one and all!***

What does the Easter bunny do after he takes a shower?



He uses a hare dryer.