



Advent and Christmas greetings to the First United Church family.

As I write my greetings to you I am thinking about one of the readings that were used in the lectionary for the first Sunday of Advent. In Luke 21 verse 25 we find the following:

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

These are challenging words that were written in the challenging time in the history of our faith and our world; challenging words that are still quite relevant in our world today.

Life can and does present significant challenges and it also does open up the opportunity to experience possibilities at the beginning of a new church year, a season of longing, waiting, promise, and preparation.

Sometimes the most challenging times in life are open doors to what can be. I recently saw a news account of refugees who had traveled many thousands of kilometers to northern Russia, their goal was to reach Finland and only way to their destination was a long highway where pedestrians were not allowed. To travel on that highway you had to have a vehicle.

The refugees use their ingenuity to purchase used bicycles that they could legally use to travel on their journey down the highway. As they traveled down the road you could sense that they had a purpose and hope for their journey.

It was like that this morning for the children from the Sunday school at our church service. I asked them the question: what does Jesus expect us to do as we celebrate the Christmas season? A number of them replied that he wants us to play with our toys and have fun! When we set a direction for our lives that includes having fun all kinds of possibilities can be realized.

The members of the confirmation class at Waterville – Hatley – North Hatley United Churches in Québec wrote the following:

**“God is colour: seen in different ways by many different people.
God is unconditional love: though we may come in various unique packages,
God loves us all, just the same.
After the storm, God is the rainbow of differences.”**

In this holy season God’s love enables us to experience colour and possibilities in our lives,

May the joy filled expectation of the birth of the Christ child give colour to our lives as we prepare for the coming New Year.

Rev. Blair Lewis

Highlights – Bathurst Pastoral Council
November 24, 2015

Attending Council's second meeting this fall were Sandra Boone, chair; Brenda Parrott, vice-chair; Judy Losier, secretary; Ian Oliver, Rick Watling, Linda Newell, Don Nelson, Elna Scott, Pat Brown, Aldra Carson and Isabel MacLaggan.

Also present were Rev. Blair Lewis who opened the meeting with prayer and the church treasurer, Dave Morison, who gave a comprehensive and alarming report on First United's 2015 financial status to date.

Dave reminded Council that the 2015 deficit budget approved at the annual congregation meeting was for a significant loss.

Considering the fact that finances are still falling behind despite many fundraising projects, Council agreed that an urgent appeal should go out to the congregation as soon as possible seeking a much needed increase in local givings through PAR and regular church envelopes.

The last 'Celebrate Stewardship' appeal was carried out in 2010. The comment was made that if everyone gave a little bit more the need would be met.

The Property Management Team reported on many repair and maintenance projects carried out since the last Council meeting in September. Included among others were the replacement of lights, hot water tanks and hand rails, wiring changes, work on the air exchange system, as well as the repair of pews and hot water leaks. The snow removal quote for the coming season is \$2,000, plus tax the same as last year. Ice control is budgetted at \$75.00.

A proposed capital budget for 2016 in the amount of \$7,450 involves maintenance of the building, equipment, lights, heaters, sound system, chair lift and alarm system.

The Christian Development Team reported on plans for the upcoming Choir Concert on December 16. The Hospitality and Friendship Team will host a reception following the concert with the help from choir members. Confirmation of new members in 2016 will be held on Easter Sunday. The CD team accepted the membership transfer of Joan (Faulds) Jones from Smiths Falls, Ontario.

The Pastoral Care Team continues to deliver church service CD's to shut-ins and to send greetings and condolence cards to members of the congregation. Lunch was provided for the Musical Tea held on October 28.

As chair of the Community Outreach Sub-Team, Lynne Moffitt reported on support given to the schools, the Volunteer Centre and needy families of the congregation. This year's jar commitment of peanut butter for the Volunteer Centre is down (762 as of November 30).

A UCW donation of \$2,000 was given to the General Fund in early October. Lunch was supplied at Elhatton's Palliative Commemorative Service on November 17.

Council agreed in principle to support Miramichi Presbytery in its sponsorship of a refugee family. The family will be accommodated in Miramichi. Other pastoral charges will be asked to consider ways of assisting through financial donations or in-kind support. There will be further information on how First United can help.

The 2016 annual meeting of the congregation was set for Sunday, February 7. The next Pastoral Council meeting will be held on January 12.

Isabel MacLaggan

*May Peace be your gift at Christmas
and your blessing all year through!*

~Author Unknown~

Christmas Schedule of Events

Christmas Hymn Sing
Dec. 16, 2015 7pm
Christmas Eve Services
4:00pm
7:00pm



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, 2015.

Annual Christmas Benevolence Program: For those interested in supporting this benevolence program, donation envelopes are available, on the Christmas tree located at the entrance to the sanctuary. The White gift service will be on Sunday, December 6 and the envelopes can be returned at that time. Any personal cheque may be made payable to First United Church. Donations to this fund will be used to support the volunteer center as well as those people in our congregation who find it difficult, financially, throughout the year.

Newsletters: We have 51 households currently receiving their newsletters via email. 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 350 members of our church family receive three letters yearly at the cost of around \$1.00/letter.



**Christmas Hymn Sing
Waiting for Bethlehem's Light**

The annual Christmas Hymn Sing will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 16th, (storm date Dec. 17th) at 7pm at First United. Come join with us as we celebrate the Christmas season with familiar carols as well as new selections you are sure to enjoy. The choir will be joined by Take Note, BHS Choir and other special guests. Cost \$10 Adults \$5 Children. Tickets are available from choir members and the church office 546-3532.

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

Check Us Out: We have a new Website design thanks to the talents of Josh Gammon and his team at Web Solutions. Check it out at www.firstunited-bathurst.ca. You can also follow us on Facebook. Here you will find upcoming events as well as cancellations if the need arises.

2016 Schedule for First United Church Events Hosted by Ways and Means Sub-Team	
Thursday, January 28	Roast Pork Dinner
Sunday, February 21	Sunrise Breakfast
Thursday, March 31	Ham and Scallop
Sunday, May 1	Sunrise Breakfast
Thursday, September 29	Beef BBQ
Thursday, November 24	Turkey Supper
All Dates and Events are subject to change.	