



Christmas Greeting – 2019

It's a Friday morning, November 29th, as I write this and my week of study leave is quickly coming to an end. The book I'm currently reading, *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, has been, as advertised, wonderful and rather challenging to put down. But, at the same time, I have to respect Isabel's deadline to have this piece to her by a set date so that she can put the Christmas Newsletter together.

Christmas! I find myself thinking. Where does the time go? I haven't even started my shopping yet. Even worse, I haven't even started thinking about it yet. Which, sad to say, has become somewhat habitual. Even though, pretty well every year, I say to myself, "This can't happen again!"

The question for us here at First United being, "What is our relationship to preparation? Do we prefer to be fully prepared or do we simply go with the flow? And, should we prefer the former, "What actually does it mean to prepare? How do we prepare—for a vacation, for Christmas, for visitors, for a new baby in our home? If Jesus was coming to visit us, in other words, here in our Community of Faith, would he feel welcome? And, if not, "How could we make him feel welcome?" More gifts, more food, more drink?

In the book referred to earlier, Mark Yaconelli writes, "What would it mean if the goal of our ministries was simply to be prayerfully present to young people—to allow them to be fully themselves? Could we trust that our presence is enough?" Later on, he answers those questions himself, by sharing, "Contemplative youth ministry is about deepening our presence to both God and young people. Although [it] is grounded in prayer and openness to God, the fruit of this time is our increasing ability to be present—open and available—in all our relationships. Taking time to engage... prepares us for wonder and amazement. When we slow down, we are able to see the miracle of living life... Because—when youth are seen, they feel valued. When they are heard, they feel respected. When someone is moved by their situation, they feel loved. When they receive kindness, they feel cared for. And when others delight in their existence, they sense the very breath of God." To which I'll add, "Don't we all?"

I have to admit. I like gifts and food and drink. I like them very much. But, having said that, I'd have to think long and hard before remembering even some of the gifts I received last year. At the very same time, I can tell you—without hesitation—the names of those I had the privilege of spending Christmas with.

May there be lots more of the same this year—for us all!

Merry Christmas everyone!

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

Rev. Neal

Highlights - Bathurst Pastoral Council November 19, 2019

Council met in the Eddy Room at 4pm with Sandra Boone presiding. Also present were Brenda Parrott, vice-chair, Judy Losier, secretary; Rick Watling, Ann Brooks, Patricia Brown, Ian Oliver, Wayne Lord, Isabel MacLaggan, Peter Gammon on behalf of Lester Scott chair of the Property Management Team; and Rev. Neal Palmer who opened the meeting with prayer.

The financial status to the end of October was encouraging. The predicted shortfall over the 10 months was less than expected.

The United Church Women catered to five funeral receptions since the last Council meeting in September as reported by Anne Brooks. The Presbyterian fall rally was held in September. The UCW will handle the Poinsettia Fund again.

Rick Watling said the Hospitality and Friendship Team is looking for people to help with the after service gatherings in December. Those interested should contact him.

The covenanting service for Rev. Neal Palmer will be held on Sunday, December 8 at 2p.m.

During his recent covenanting service in Tabusintac, Rev. Jean Herman gave thanks to First United for the help he received towards his ordination next spring.

The Pastoral Care and Membership Team sent 25 greeting and sympathy cards during the previous month which tends to be the typical average. Included were cards sent to the clergy and custodian in observance of their "Appreciation Day". Team chair is Pat Brown.

At least 85 Christmas cards will be sent to the elderly and shut-ins of the congregation. Council was asked to suggest others by contacting Gwen Sturgeon by early December.

The Community Outreach Sub-team is giving \$100 towards the breakfast program at the four English schools in the city. The French elementary School will be included this year.

In conjunction with the Community Outreach Team, Helen and Mick Knowles will prepare a breakfast for the Adult learning students and teachers. The UCW has expressed interest in helping the sub-team with the outreach work.

The Christian Development Team will be supporting the Community Outreach proposal to involve more First United people, youth in particular, in potential projects. The proposal was presented to the CD Team for consideration.

Also, volunteers from the CD Team agreed to help with the Choir's Christmas Concert and reception to be held on Sunday afternoon, December 15 at 2pm. The choir members will provide the food.

The Property Management Team reported on 15 items having to do with upgrading and maintenance. Included were caulking of the church windows, repair of bricks and outside doors and the replacement of the circuit board for the air exchange system. The Team's proposed capital budget for 2020 is \$7,450.

The next Council meeting will be on January 28.

Isabel MacLaggan

*Once there was a grain of sand
that wanted to become a beach,
an example of
where you can't always
do it all by yourself.
~Robert Brault~*

Thank you! On behalf of the "Lesotho Initiative" Committee of ASD-N, a special thank you is extended to the congregation of First United Church for your continued support of our recent calendar drive. A total of 181 "Help Lesotho" 2020 calendars were sold, and this will raise \$2715. for the work of "Help Lesotho" with Grandmothers and vulnerable children in the tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho, Africa. Since 2006 you have contributed generously to the \$112 611.08 raised by our committee's global citizenship projects for the work of "Help Lesotho".

Submitted by,
Gary Branch



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 16, 2019.



**Christmas Hymn Sing Concert
Joy to the World!**

The annual Christmas Hymn Sing will be held on Sunday, Dec, 15, 2019 at 2pm, First United Church, Bathurst. (Storm Date - Dec. 16th 7pm) 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 Amanda Godin, Emma Vickers, Take Note, Catalyst, BHS Choir, and our very own Children's Choir!
Cost \$10 adults, \$5 youth. Tickets are available from choir members, the church office 546-3532 and at the door.

2020 Schedule for First United Church Events Hosted by Ways and Means Sub-Team	
Thursday, January 30	Roast Pork Dinner
Sunday, February 23	Sunrise Breakfast
Thursday, March 26	Ham and Scallop
Sunday, April 26	Sunrise Breakfast
Thursday, October 1	Beef BBQ
Thursday, November 26	Turkey Supper

All Dates and Events are subject to change.

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 2020, 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 94 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.

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 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: Our number of Newsletters sent via email continues to grow. We have 96 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 250 members of our church family receive three letters yearly by mail, at the cost of around \$1.00/letter.

Check Us Out: 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.



Short Bread Cookies

Ingredients

- 2 cups butter at room temperature, 1 pound
- 1 cup icing sugar, powdered sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup corn starch
- 3 cups flour

Instructions

- Cream together the butter and icing sugar very well until very smooth and creamy. No lumps of butter should be visible.
- Blend in the vanilla extract.
- Sift together the flour and corn starch.
- Blend slowly into the creamed mixture until a soft dough forms.
- Split dough into 2 equal round portions.
- Wrap the dough rounds in plastic wrap and chill for a couple of hours at least.
- You can freeze one of the cookie dough portions for later if you like.
- This dough will also last in the fridge for 3-4 days so that you can bake a few up at a time and enjoy them fresh from the oven if you like.
- To bake the cookies preheat the oven to 350 degrees F and line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
- Roll the dough out to a little less than 1/4 of an inch on a lightly floured surface. Use a 2 inch cookie cutter (or holiday shaped cookie cutters) to cut out the cookies.
- Place the cookies on the parchment paper a half inch apart.
- Bake for 15-20 minutes or until they just start to turn brown at the edges.
- Let cool for 10 minutes on the pan before transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight container.
- These cookies will freeze quite well for several weeks.

Christmas Quiz

1. What's the name of the period leading up to Christmas?
2. How many Wise Men brought gifts to Jesus?
3. In what town was Jesus born?
4. How many presents were given in total in the 12 Days of Christmas?
5. How many of Rudolph's eight companions names start with 'D'?
6. Who was the 'King of the Jews' who ordered the babies to be killed?
7. What was Joseph's job?
8. Who were first people to visit the baby Jesus?
9. What Angel visited Mary?
10. Where did the baby Jesus sleep?

Answers!

1. Advent
2. More than one, the Bible doesn't say how many!
3. Bethlehem
4. 364
5. Three - Dasher, Dancer and Donner
6. King Herod
7. Carpenter
8. Shepherds
9. Gabriel
10. In a manger