

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

December 24, 2023 – 10 AM

Minister Rev. Neal Palmer **Music Director** Martha Vickers

Office Adm. Margaret Daniels **Custodian** Lester Scott

Greeters Harvey & Julie Spence

Audio & Visual Technicians Shirley Allain & Donald Eddy

Today's Music Leader – Linda Knowles MacPherson

Today's Vocalist – Amanda Godin

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<u>Lectionary for today</u>	<u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u>
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38	Isaiah 61:10—62:3 Psalm 148 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:22-40
<i>The bulletins today have been placed in loving memory of George and Edgar Brown by Rita & the family</i>	

*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 & 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.

The Hope, Peace & Joy Advent Candles are lit...

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING – “We Light This Candle”

We light a candle for Love.

Await the new life within.

*May our hearts now live each day,
so love can find a way,
so love can find a way.*

BOLD DISCIPLESHIP – Love *(responsively)*

What does love feel like in the new world?

Love feels like knowing I'm a sacred piece of a magnificent whole. Love feels like acceptance and gratitude. Love feels like being cherished.

Advent is the beginning of this new world, a better world, where you, and me, and all of God's creation are treasured and beloved.

May it be so.

Amen

“Hope Shines as the Solitary Star” – MV #220

Love 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)*

We come into this place to make a home for Love. We come to create a structure, to give shelter, to craft a dwelling place for the Incarnation.

God asks, “Have I ever asked for another dwelling place than in Creation?”

We come into this place to tell the story of a woman who said, “yes”; of a stable and a manger and angels singing before frightened shepherds.

We come to celebrate the birth of one who'd teach us his life was the beginning of new life for all. We come to worship the God who asks us to say yes to carrying that which will bring justice, mercy, and peace into the world.

We come into this place to remember.

We come into this place to re-imagine our place in God's incarnation.

The Love Advent Candle is lit...

GATHERING PRAYER

***GATHERING CAROL** – "O Come, All Ye Faithful" – VU #60

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem:
come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain

*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

God of God, light of light,
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God, begotten, not created:

Refrain

Sing choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above,
glory to God in the highest:

Refrain

See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;

Refrain

Yea, Lord we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:

Refrain

*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

PRAYER OF HUMILITY

CHORAL RESPONSE – "The Advent 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.***

SHARING A STORY (Advent 4) *(with those of all ages)*

***SINGING A SONG** – "O Come, Little Children"

O come, little children, O come one and all,
to Bethlehem haste, to the manger so small,
God's son for a gift has been sent you this night
to be your redeemer, your joy and delight.

He's born in a stable for you and for me,
draw near by the bright gleaming starlight to see,
in swaddling clothes lying so meek and so mild,
and purer than angels the heavenly Child.

See Mary and Joseph, with love beaming eyes,
are gazing upon the rude bed where He lies,
the shepherds are kneeling, with hearts full of love
while angels sing loud hallelujahs above.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jini Palmer

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Luke 1:26-38

REFLECTION

MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

GIFT OF MUSIC – “O Holy Night” *Gifted by Amanda Godin*

RESPONDING

YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS *(Minute for Mission) Pat MacIntosh*

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD

***OFFERING CAROL** – “In the Bleak Midwinter” – VU #55 *(Verse 4)*

*What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him—give my heart.*

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

**Creator and Creating One,
we bring our gifts and ourselves,
our treasure and our heart.**

**Bless us, in all we offer, that our offering
might be used in your call to us:
to be shepherds, but not owners
of that which has been given,
to be places in which you abide,
but not where you are constrained.**

**Bless us, that in our giving, we might open ourselves
to your call to seek justice and mercy for all Creation—
for all that you love.**

Amen

COMMUNING

***COMMUNION HYMN** – “Come and Gather, at the Stable”
[Tune Beach Spring]

Come and gather, at the stable
They have journeyed far from home
Mary, Joseph, young and able
Travelled ways as yet unknown
With a dream of untold promise
That great things would come to pass
In the sureness of God’s blessing
They found peace and rest as last.

Come and gather, round the manger
Where the Christ child gently lays.
Open up our hearts to wonder
At the glory of that day.
Visit him with thanks and promise,
Peace and hope and love and joy
Take them daily into living
Wrapped up in a baby boy.

Come and gather, at the table
Where we seek him once again
Let us enter into mystery
Needed now as much as then.
In the breaking of the sweet bread
In the pouring of the wine,
We meet him again among us
With a love so dear, divine.

Come and gather, in his footsteps
We will tread where he once went
With the lost and lonely people
Now to them we’re also sent

Loving, working, tending, caring
In our Saviour's name we pray
In our work and in our worship
We find hope in every day.

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***GREETING ONE ANOTHER** (*responsively*)

...The Spirit of Peace and Love be with you all.

And also with you.

INSTRUCTIONS

INVITATION

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING (*responsively*)

God is with us.

We are not alone.

Christ is present here.

The Spirit is among us.

Let us give thanks to the Holy One,

in hope and in love.

...And as we watch and wait for your coming, we proclaim your goodness, singing...

"Holy, Holy, Holy" – MV #203

***O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space.
All earth and sea and sky above bear witness to your grace.
Hosanna in the highest heaven, creation sings your praise.
And blessed is the One who comes and bears your name
always!***

...Great is the mystery of faith:

**We remember Jesus' death.
we proclaim Christ arisen.
We await the full revelation of love incarnate.**

...Let's continue to pray, in a Paraphrase of the way Jesus taught us to saying together...

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo
through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed
by peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done
by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In the times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.**

**For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever...**

"Great Amen" – MV #205

***Amen, amen, O Holy One!
Hosanna and Amen!
Amen, amen, O Holy One,
Hosanna and Amen!***

The bread of tomorrow.

The cup of new life.

Congregational Response – “Amen” or “Thanks be to God”

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION *(in unison)*

**For the bread we have eaten,
for the juice we have tasted,
for the life we have received,
we thank you God.**

**Grant that what we’ve done
and been given here,
may so put its mark on us,
that it will always remain in our hearts.**

**Grant that we may grow
in Christian love and understanding,
and that ours may be lives of faithful action,
now and always.**

Amen

GOING OUT (as Spirit people)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***CLOSING CAROL – “Joy to the World” – VU #59**

***BLESSING**

CHORAL SENDING FORTH –

“I Am Walking a Path of Peace”

MV #221

***I am walking a path of love,
I am walking a path of love,
I am walking a path of love,
lead me home, I am home.***

(The Advent Candles are extinguished.)

POSTLUDE – “We Wish You a Merry Christmas”

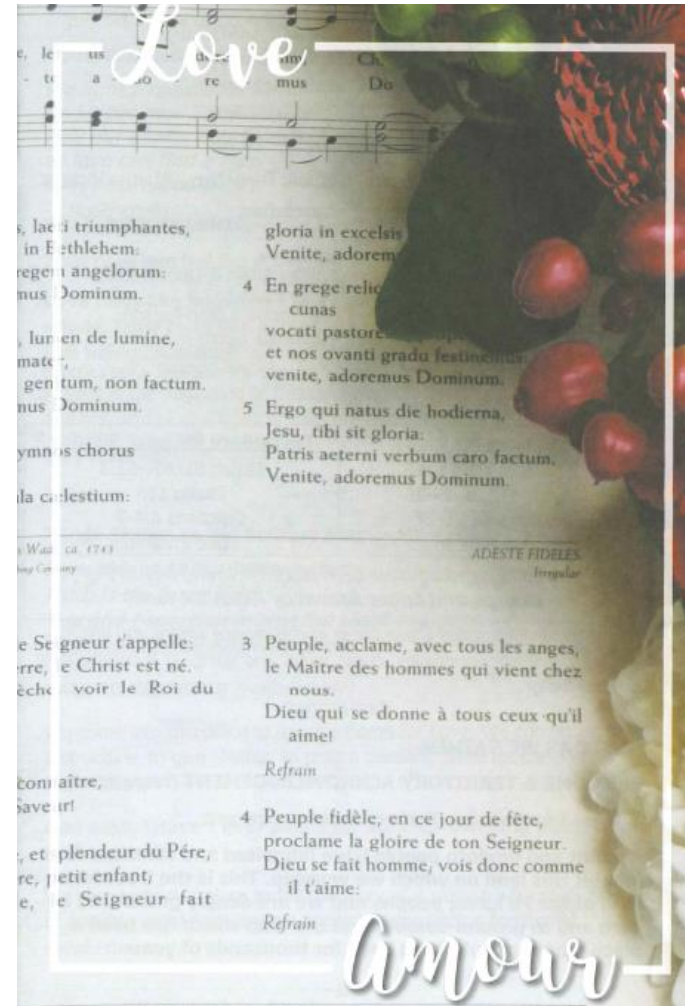
Refrain

We wish you a Merry Christmas (3X)

And a Happy New Year

Good tidings we bring, to you and your kin
We wish you a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year

Refrain



Church News

Church Office Hours this week –

Wednesday 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 21st **873** 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.

Church News

As part of our **Stewardship Program** here at First United, information on Planned Giving through Wills and Bequests will be made available to our congregational membership this fall. All members are encouraged to review this information and take the appropriate steps pertaining to your wishes. The information will be available later this year from the church office. Below you will find a stewardship scripture verse and quote relating to the same.

"...joyfully giving thanks to (God), who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light"
Colossians 1:11-12

Make a difference
to your church tomorrow with a planned gift today.
Thank you for remembering the church in your estate plans.

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.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

2 SAMUEL 7:1-11, 16

God's Covenant with David

1 Now when the king was settled in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him,

2 the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent."

3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind, for the Lord is with you."

4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan,

5 "Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?

6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.

7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'

8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel,

9 and I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly,

11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever."

LUKE 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,

27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.",

29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.

37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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