

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

December 22, 2024

4th Sunday of Advent

Interim Minister Rev. Ivan Gregan **Music Director** Martha Vickers

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

Greeters Julie & Harvey Spence

Audio & Visual Technicians Shirley Allain & Donald Eddy

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<u>Lectionary for today</u>	<u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u>
Micah 5:2-5a Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 80:1-7 Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)	1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26 Psalm 148 Colossians 3:12-17 Luke 2:41-52
<i>The bulletins today have been placed in loving memory of Ruth Knowles by Joyce, Bill and 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 *(in unison)*

As we gather to worship, let's respectfully pause to remember we live and work and worship on lands that are, by law, the unceded territory of the original peoples, the Mi'kmaq. May we live with respect on this land, and live in peace and in friendship with its people.

***CALL TO WORSHIP** *(responsively)*

People of God, the Table is set for a meal with God.

Can God be waiting for us?

People of God, the entire creation is looking in expectation of God!

Can God be waiting for us?

People of God, the pathway is clear, all obstacles are removed.

Can God be waiting for us?

People of God, God is coming to meet us.

Let us gather to meet God.

Amen.

*** CENTERING FOR WORSHIP** "Gloria" VU #37

Gloria! Gloria! In excelsis Deo!

Gloria! Gloria! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory in the highest!

Glory to God! Glory to God! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

***LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE** *(responsively)*

O Living Christ, you are the Light of the World!

You come to us in many forms.

In the splendor of darkest nights,
when the star fields of the universe draw our attentions upward,

your Light shines!

In the warmth of friends, who like the shepherds,
come to be with us,

your Light shines!

In the revival of memories of Christmases past,

your Light shines!

Now in this House of Prayer, like in the ancient temple of Solomon,
your Light shines!

We light this candle, a symbol of your Presence!

In everything, your Light shines!

Singing:

***I am the Light of the world!
You people come and follow me!
If you follow and love, you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be!***

The Christ Candle is lit.

GATHERING PRAYER *(in unison)*

**Eternal God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One God –
You have given birth to the universe in all its glory and
wonder,
You have nursed the star fields with your light, creating
new stars, and You have wrapped your gifts in swaddling
bands and placed them in our midst.
Open our eyes to see beyond human sight into your realm
of insight, that we, like those who have gone before us,
might make haste to discover your Presence.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray, Amen.**

***GATHERING HYMN** – “O Little Town of Bethlehem” VU #64

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary;
and gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessed gift of heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in;
be born to us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.

PRAYER OF HUMILITY *(responsively)*

Holy God, Creator of all that is and lover of your creations,
**Forgive the harm we have done to all whom You love
and to all that You love,**
You who have known us since before we took our first breath
and who will love us long after the breath is gone from us,
**Forgive us when we hold our breath and refuse to
speak a word of encouragement, a word in defence,
or a word in the cause of justice.**
Merciful God, filled with compassion and patience,
**Forgive us when we stand still unwilling to shift or
change, when we refuse to move onward toward You
and the future into which You are calling us,
or when we long for yesterday
and live in the land of “the way things were”
while ignoring your Presence in this day and time.**
Ever creating God, redeeming, restoring and re-furbishing
**Re-create us and re-create your Church,
until we become the cradle that receives Christ.
In Jesus’ Name we pray, Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

CHORAL RESPONSE – “Hope Is a Star”

VU #7

*Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart.
When God is a child there's hope in our song
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong
And none shall be afraid!*

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE – LOVE

Cindy and Logan Doucet

Love is not always what we expect love to be.

It comes through unexpected people at unexpected times.

God's Love is not always what we expect it to be.

It comes in gentle whispers and in insistent voices neither of which can we ignore.

God's love seeks us out and finds us, it is present before we recognize it.,

God loves us before we love God.

The candle of love tells that God came to earth:

Is visible, present in Jesus' birth!

An angel brought good news to shepherds one night

from Bethlehem's manger God's Love light shines bright.

Lighting of the Candle of LOVE



CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE AS THE CANDLE IS LIT:

God gives us love in the midst of apathy.

God sends us love in the midst of hatred.

God says we are loved in time when we cannot love ourselves.

God is love and all who abide love abide in God, and God in them.

CHORAL RESPONSE – “A Candle is Burning”

VU #6

*A candle is burning, a candle of love,
A candle to point us to heaven above,
A baby for Christmas, a wonderful birth,
For Jesus is bringing God's Love to our earth.*

SHARING A STORY (with those of all ages)

**In peace, dear God, I come to you
through Jesus Christ who makes me new.
And while I run or play or rest,
be with those whom I love best.
Guide me in your Holy Way,
as You walk with me each day, Amen.**

*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.*

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Helen Knowles

Micah 5:2-5a

Luke 1:39-45

REFLECTION

MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

STATEMENT OF FAITH

We are not alone. We live in God's world.

We believe in God:

Who has created and is creating,
Who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,
To reconcile and make new;
Who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church;

To celebrate God's Presence,
To live with respect in creation,
To love and serve others,
To seek justice and resist evil,
To proclaim Jesus,

Crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

GIFT OF MUSIC – "Starlight Manger Carol"

YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS *formerly Minute for Mission*

Anne Wilson

INVITATION TO MAKE AN OFFERING

*ADVENT OFFERING HYMN

(Tune: Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow)

***Love fills our hearts and overflows,
Love fills our lives, expands and grows.
Love is how we're called to live,
Loving is how each one can give.***

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

RECITATION FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 11

*COMMUNION HYMN – "I Come with Joy"

VU #477

I come with you, a child of God,
forgiven, loved and free,
the life of Jesus to recall
in love laid down for me,
in love laid down for me.

I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread,
in Christ's communion bread.

As Christ breaks bread and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends,
and strangers now are friends.

The Spirit of the risen Christ,
unseen, but ever near,
is in such friendship better known,
alive among us here,
alive among us here.

Together met, together bound
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world
the love that makes us one,
the love that makes us one.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING PRAYER *(responsively)*

God is with you

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them up to the LORD.

Let us give thanks to the LORD our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Blessed are You, Eternal God,

**whom the entirety of heaven cannot contain
much less these words with which we speak of You.**

Your Eternal Word has sprung from You,

**become incarnate in our midst,
and present to us in this Sacrament of Love.**

Your life-giving Breath swirls around us,
**impregnating us with your vision of a new heaven and
a new earth.**

Therefore, with the entire company of the redeemed on earth and
in heaven, we join with the heavenly host to proclaim:

**Holy, Holy, Holy LORD,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your Light,
Glory to You our God!
Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the LORD.
Hosanna in the Highest!**

On that night, when your Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
those who were condemned by the world to be last and least
became the first and foremost in your kingdom
as they rushed to Bethlehem to behold your Presence.

**We praise You for your everlasting Light
revealed through womb and tomb,
through cradle and cross,
and through incarnation and resurrection.**

As we wait and watch for your coming among us,
we remember your faithfulness and forgiveness in times past,
we proclaim your graciousness and goodness in times present,
and your gifts of inspiration and insight for the future.
With your church throughout the world, we proclaim our faith:

**Christ has come from God,
Christ has lived among us,
and Christ will come again!**

Send forth your Spirit upon us that we may more fully become
your incarnated Presence, defending the marginalized, healing the
broken, and lifting up the fallen.

Let your Spirit breathe life into our offerings of bread and wine
that they may become vessels of your Presence entering into us
and that we may be filled with your Grace.

Remember your Church scattered over the face of this earth,
gather her in unity and preserve her in peace.

**Remember all who have gone before us
and who are now gathered with us at your Table.**

In communion with them and with all creation, we worship and
glorify You always.

**Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in your Holy Church, all glory and honour is yours,
Almighty God, now and forever,**

Singing

Amen! Amen! Amen!

(tune VU #967)

OUR FATHER ~ NOTRE PÈRE ~ AR N-ATHAIR

SHARING THE SACRAMENT – PARTAGE DU SACREMENT

All who wish to receive Communion are welcome.

**Cette table est celle de Jésus Christ;
tous ceux et toutes celles qui aspirent à s'y rassembler sont
les bienvenus.**

*Please come forward by the side aisles and
return to your seat by the center aisle.*

POST COMMUNION PRAYER *(responsively)*

May the blessing of the Maker be yours,
Encircling us, above us and within us.

May the blessing of the Son be yours,
**The Wine and the water, the Bread and the stories,
to feed us and remind us.**

May the blessing of the Spirit be yours,
**The Wind and the fire, the still small voice of calm,
to comfort us and disturb us.**

May the blessing of God, Three-in-One and
One-in-Three, be yours, this day and every day,

To protect us, defend us, encourage us and strengthen us.

And may we bless each other,

**A blessing rooted in our common pilgrimage,
the blessing of a friend.**

EXCHANGING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

GOING OUT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***CLOSING HYMN - "The First Nowell"**

VU #91

The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay a keeping their sheep
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain:

*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.*

They lookèd up and saw a star,
shining in the east, beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.

Refrain

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.

Refrain

This star drew nigh to the northwest;
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
and there it did both stop and stay,
right over the place where Jesus lay.

Refrain:

*Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.*

Then entered in those wise men three,
full reverently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence
their gold and myrrh and frankincense.

Refrain

Then let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
that hath made heaven and earth of nought,
and with his blood our life hath bought.

Refrain

***COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING**

The Christ Candle is extinguished.

***ADVENT CHORAL CLOSING**

MV #221

"I am Walking a Path of Peace"

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

POSTLUDE

Upcoming Services at First United:

December 24th at 4 PM ~ Family Christmas for Children of all ages

December 24th at 7 PM ~ Family Christmas Eve Service

December 29th ~ First Sunday after Christmas
Service lead by Wayne Lord

January 5th ~ Epiphany Sunday
Service lead by Sandra Boone

Church News

This Week at First United December 23 rd to 28 th		
Monday	9 AM to 3 PM	Office open
Tuesday	Office closed at 12 Noon	
Christmas Eve	4:00 PM	Family service for children of all ages
	7:00 PM	Family Christmas Eve Service
Wednesday	Christmas Day – office closed	
Thursday	Boxing Day – office closed	
Friday	9 AM to 3 PM	Office open
Saturday	Bathurst Market Closed – Returns January 4 th	

*The bulletins today have been placed in loving memory of **Ruth Knowles** by Joyce, Bill and family*

Peanut Butter – Once again this year we set a goal of 900 jars of peanut butter to donate to the Bathurst Volunteer Center and we have surpassed our goal! Thank you, congratulations and way to go!! The Center is feeding many more families this year especially at Christmas. Up to December 18, 2024 we have collected 1,031 jars.

If you are aware of **anyone in the hospital or needing a visit**, please let the office know (506-546-3532) and the message will be forwarded to the Pastoral Care Team.

Thank you to everyone who so generously donated to the fundraisers during this Advent Season - Benevolence/White Gift/Poinsettia! The final numbers will be posted in the bulletin in early 2025.

Community News

The Celebration of Life for Patricia Maher will be held this Thursday, December 26th, from 3 to 5 PM, at the **Bathurst Curling Club**. Please join the Maher family as we remember Pat's life.



SCRIPTURE READINGS

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

MICAH 5:2-5a

The Ruler from Bethlehem

2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth,

5 and he shall be the one of peace.
If the Assyrians come into our land
and tread upon our soil,
we will raise against them seven shepherds
and eight rulers.

LUKE 1:39-45

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town
in the hill country,

40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her
womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord
comes to me?

44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my
womb leaped for joy.

45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment
of what was spoken to her by the Lord."