

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

December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent - Love

Minister Rev. David Allan **Music Director** Martha Vickers
Office Adm. Margaret Daniels **Custodian** Lester Scott
Greeters Julie & Harvey Spence
Audio & Visual Technicians Ralph Jamieson & Lester Scott

All musical selections reprinted under license #4-606499, One License for Churches

<u>Lectionary for today</u>	<u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u>
Isaiah 7:10-16 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25	Isaiah 63:7-9 Psalm 148 Hebrews 2:10-18 Matthew 2:13-23
<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 stand as you are able.*

MUSIC AS WE GATHER

WELCOME

***TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** *(in unison)*

As we gather to worship, let's respectfully pause to remember we live and love 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)* *(drawn from Romans 1:1-7)*

Grace to you and peace from the Creating One!

We are called to be servants,

and called to be saints, living sacraments of love.

We are called into belonging with Christ,

and called into our being, our holy blessing in Love.

We are called to worship,

to be fed in a time set apart,

a time when we are strengthened to proclaim to the world,
even as we wait:

We are not alone. We trust in God.

CENTERING FOR WORSHIP: "As We Are Waiting"

Tune While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks

As we are welcoming to Christ.

When he is born anew.

We trust your word revealed to us

Today and all year through.

© Catherine MacDonald 2010

GATHERING PRAYER:

Compassionate, Advent God, we have gathered in hope, sought peace and laughed with joy, and now we come to share the great love that you have for us. Be with us in our worship and in our witness this week as we wait for the child. Be with us every day. Help us to bring your love to the world, especially into broken and forgotten places and to people who feel unlovable and unlovely. It is for this that you came to us in Bethlehem, and for this that you come to us now. It is for this that we are here. **Amen**

*Prayer drawn from one by
Catherine Tovell, Kilworth UC, London, ON.
Gathering, A/C/E 2022/23, p. 28. Used with permission.*

***GATHERING HYMN: "Angels from the Realms of Glory" VU # 36**

Angels , from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:

Refrain:

*Come and worship, come and worship
worship Christ, the newborn King.*

Shepherds in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant Light:

Refrain:

Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
ye have seen his natal star:

Refrain:

Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In his temple shall appear:

Refrain:

LIGHTING THE 4TH ADVENT CANDLE: *(responsively)*
Ian Oliver & Grace Lavigne

Today we light a candle of love.

**It is an expanding, gathering love, where hope, peace
and joy come together.**

Love grows and stretches us, widening our hearts and reshaping
our lives. Together, we love one another.

**Love is made real when we prepare for the coming of
the light of love.**

Love is made real as we look for the light of the world.

**Love is made real as we share the light with all who
are waiting.**

(The fourth candle is lit.)

CHORAL RESPONSE: "We Light This Candle"

We light this 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.***

Words and music: Pat Mayberry © 2016

Arrangement: David Kai © 2016

WE OPEN OUR HEARTS: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Refrain:

(VU 794)

Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace.

Eternal Listener, give heed to your people, You, who are our Guide
and our Light!

**You, who dwell amidst the angels, shine forth into the
hearts of all nations!**

Enliven your people with compassion that peace and justice might
flourish.

**Restore us, O Holy One; let your face shine upon us,
teach us to love!**

Refrain:

Gentle Teacher, help us to turn to You in prayer, fasting from our
negative thoughts.

**In Your steadfast Love, You weep with our tears,
tears that arise from fear, doubt and illusion.**

You uphold us when we feel the sting of pride,
when our anxiety threatens to paralyze us.

**Restore us, O Holy One; let your face shine upon us,
teach us to love!**

Refrain:

May we always walk with and co-create with You;
receive the gratitude of our hearts, as we share in the Great Plan!

**Restore us, O Holy One! Let your face shine upon us,
teach us to love!**

Refrain:

Your face, God, shine on us and give us peace.

*Psalm 80 paraphrase by Nan C. Merrill,
Psalms for Praying: An invitation to wholeness.
(New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 159-161*

We pause for a moment of reflection...

OUR HEARTS ARE FILLED:

We *are* taught to love, it is within us from before we are born, and it comes to us when we open ourselves to one another and creation. Within and among us all, Love is the transformative, connecting and creative word of God, the way and very being of God in the world, and the way that Jesus our teacher invites us to follow. Together, growing into and through such Love, we find our salvation.

Thanks be to the Holy One, the face and fount of Love!

CHORAL RESPONSE: "Breathe into this Moment of Peace"

***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 THE PEACE OF CHRIST: *(responsively)*

...The peace of Christ be with you all!

And also with you!

Please share with one another words and signs of peace.

***ADVENT HYMN: "Come and Gather, at the Stable"**

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.

© Catherine MacDonald 2005

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: *(in unison)*

We have opened our hearts and joined our voices in prayer and song. We will open ourselves at the table of communion with you. Open us now, God of new life and of new possibilities, to new understandings as we listen for your word and as we wait to share your dream. Open us to Love's adventure. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

Helen Knowles

Isaiah 7:10-16 The sign of Emmanuel

Matthew 1:18-25 Joseph's dream

REFLECTION: Waiting, wondering and witnessing

GIFT OF MUSIC

YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS

Anne Wilson

INVITATION TO MAKE AN OFFERING

Today we give, open to Love's emergence, to realms of grace...
Our offerings will now be gathered.

OUR OFFERINGS, BREAD AND CHALICE ARE BROUGHT FORWARD

***ADVENT OFFERING RESPONSE:** *(Tune Old 100th)*

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

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

Mothering God, you have taught us to love. Midwife God, you have coached us as we birth generosity. We offer it through our labour and our love; we share it through our time, talent and treasure. Bless our birthing in this Advent time, that it may grow and mature while inspiring transformation within this world of need. Amen

*Prayer drawn from one by Gord Dunbar,
Kincardine PC, Kincardine, ON.
Gathering, A/C/E 2022/23, p. 31. Used with permission.*

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

(see page 12 & 13)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***CLOSING HYMN:** "Joy to the World"

VU#59

Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns:
let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods,
rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the earth with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

***COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION**

***CHORAL SENDING FORTH—**

"I Am Walking a Path of Peace"

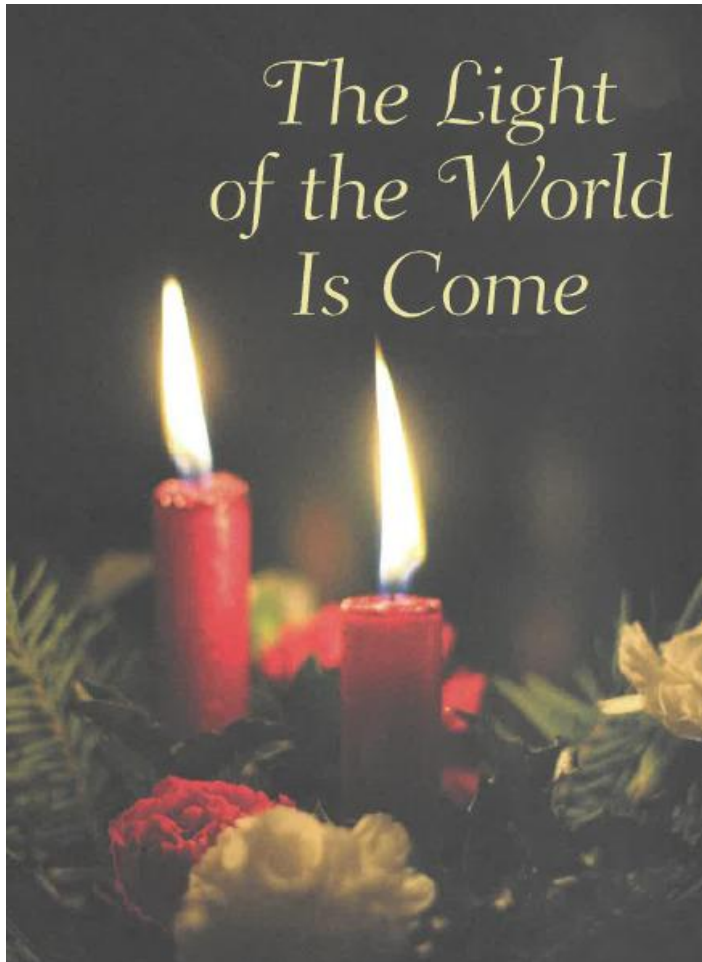
MV #221

*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.*

SHARING THE LIGHT

(The Advent Candles are extinguished.)

POSTLUDE



Church News

This Week at First United Church

**Office Hours: 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM Monday & Tuesday
Wednesday, December 24th the office will close at 12 noon
and will reopen on Monday, December 29th.**

Christmas Eve - 4:00 PM Family & 7:00 PM Traditional

Sunday, December 28th (the First Sunday after Christmas) the 10 AM worship service will be presided over by Sandra Boone.

Badminton, knitters, quilters and Bible study will all resume in January.

Peanut Butter —Our quota for 2025 is to collect 1,000 jars of peanut butter for the Volunteer Center. Up to December 17, 2025 we have received 974 jars.

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

Rejoice in being able to use your gifts
to do God's work.

Time for Fellowship - The 2026 Hosting Sheets are in the Ruth Morrison Room. Would you like to assist the members of the Hospitality & Friendship Team to provide/serve refreshments following our church services? We are looking for families, individuals and youth interested in contributing to this enjoyable fellowship opportunity. Please feel free to add your name to the sign-up sheet in the Ruth Morrison Room and talk with a member of the team.

Many thanks to everyone who has volunteered in 2025!

*Your Hospitality & Friendship Team,
Bill Stack, Nancy Jagoe, Shirley Sealy, Gayle Ferron*

Church News

Annual Christmas Benevolence Fund: - It's that time of year! Giving to this fund is even more important than ever. The costs relating to feeding families, and having a warm place to live is still very prevalent in our area. Should you wish to give you will find an envelope on the tree which is set up in the narthex. Then you may drop the envelope in the offering plate or drop it off at the church office during the week. Make your cheques payable to First United Church. Please mark clearly that this donation is for the Benevolence Fund. The proceeds from this fund support the Bathurst Volunteer Center and people in our congregation who need assistance.

***We thank-you for your generosity
– Community Outreach Sub-Team***

Thank You - We would like to thank anyone who helped in any way to make our **Christmas Memorial Hymn Sing**, held on Sunday, December 7th, a huge success. With your generous donations we have been able to contribute approximately \$4900 towards the life and work of First United Church. *Wishing you all a Merry Christmas!*

White Gift Contributions - 264 items were donated to the church for the Volunteer Center and/or our pantry including mittens, toques, toys, personal hygiene items, gift cards, school supplies.

Thank you one and all for your generosity!!

Community News



SHRINERS – Give help and hope for kids

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for purchasing the calendars, fruitcakes, and chocolate nuts. We raised nearly \$1000 from the sale. All money raised is used to transport New Brunswick children to Shriner's facilities for world class medical treatments at no cost.

***Thank you again and Happy Holidays
to each and every one of you!
Harvey Spence***

ADVENT COMMUNION LITURGY

As we come to this table, we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ, a banquet prepared for everyone. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith, all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice, are welcome here. God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift our hearts in prayer.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, Breath of peace, Giver of all life, Source of love that knows no boundaries. Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began...

...We join in the Advent prayer of all your people,

"O come, Emmanuel."

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

All sing the Sanctus:

**O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,
God's story of Love's pow'r to tell.
Come glory of your light of peace,
as in you all divisions cease.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you;
in all God comes to dwell.**

At this time, we also remember all with whom you would have us share your feast. We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain...

all who are ill or alone...
all who are close to our hearts...
all our siblings who live with fear, oppression, or hunger...
all whose lives have been blighted by violence, racism, or poverty...
for all whom the world counts as last and least...

...At this time, we remember Jesus, who on the night before he died, took a loaf of bread, gave you thanks, broke it, and said, "Take and eat; whenever you do this, remember me." Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, saying, "This is the new covenant; remember me."

Gracious God, Breath of peace, Source of love,
we pray for your Spirit.

Make us, while many, one.

Make us, though broken, whole.

Make us, despite death, alive.

And so we pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

We sing:

O come, O come, bright Spirit soar.

Our re-creation you adore.

**With hope and joy our healing's giv'n,
and all hearts know on earth your heav'n.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you;
in all God comes to dwell.**

We join with our siblings around the world in the prayer of Jesus...

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

The body of Christ,
the Bread of life.

The lifeblood of Christ,
the cup of blessing.

Let us eat and drink together for our strengthening in the faith,
and for the sake of the world.

Communion is served

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**We thank you, God,
for breaking into our world and pouring into our
lives and our experiences.**

**We thank you, God,
for this meal of thanksgiving
and the stories of love, grace, and hope that it tells.**

Amen.

Adapted from a liturgy written by Alydia Smith, Program Coordinator, Worship, Music, and Spirituality, General Council Office. Her prayer was inspired by "Blessed are you, gracious God..." by William Kervin and Lillian Perigoe in Celebrate God's Presence, page 276. Used with permission. Sung words of the Sanctus and Invocation by David Allan.

SCRIPTURE READINGS – New International Version

Isaiah 7:10-16

NIV

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,

11 "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."

13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also?"

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The young woman will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

15 He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right,

16 for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

Matthew 1:18-25

NIV

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.