

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

March 15, 2026
4th Sunday of Lent

"Celebrating PIE Day"

Minister Rev. David Allan **Music Director** Martha Vickers
Office Adm. Margaret Daniels **Custodian** Lester Scott
Greeters Wilma Dempsey & Shirley Sealy

Audio & Visual Technician Ralph Jamieson & Lester Scott

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<u>Lectionary for today</u>	<u>Lectionary for next Sunday</u>
1 Samuel 16:1-13	Ezekiel 37:1-14
Psalm 23	Psalm 130
Ephesians 5:8-14	Romans 8:6-11
John 9:1-41	John 11:1-45

We welcome Linda Knowles MacPherson and thank her for the gift of music this morning.

*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.

***GATHERING HYMN:** "This Day God Gives Me"

VU #410

This day God gives me strength of high heaven,
sun and moon shining, blame in my hearth,
flashing of lightning, wind in its swiftness,
deeps of the ocean, firmness of earth.

This day God sends me strength to sustain me,
might to uphold me, wisdom as guide.
Your eyes are watchful, your ears are listening,
your lips are speaking, Friend at my side.

God's way is my way, God's shield is round me,
God's host defends me, saving from ill.
Angels of heaven, drive from me always
all that would harm me, stand by me still.

Rising, I thank you, mighty and strong One,
King of creation, giver of rest,
firmly confessing Threeness of Persons,
Oneness of Godhead, Trinity blest.

CALL TO WORSHIP:(responsively) *drawn from Ephesians 5:8-14*

If ever we were shadows of ourselves,
now in God we are light.
We come as children of light,
seeking all that is pleasing to God.

(Christ Candle and 3 Lenten candles are silently lit)

And so, we are diligent!
Before the world we arise, attentive and alive,
and the light of Christ shines on us all.
In the rising light and with purpose, we live and gather for
worship,
**that today and forever, we are fruitful together,
in all that we are and do.**

In grace and in light, we help make clear what love looks like, and
what love can do.

CENTERING FOR WORSHIP: "Hold Us in Your Grace"

*Hold us in your grace, O God,
Hold us in your grace.*

*Hold us in your grace, O God,
Hold us in your grace.*

*Hold us, hold us in your grace.
Hold us, hold us in your grace.*

GATHERING PRAYER:

We have gathered in your grace, welcoming God, coming into a community of care. Here and at home your people look to you, seeking meaning, understanding, peace, hope and the powerful presence of love. In all these things you provide healing and make us whole; you who are Wholly Love make us one in your light. And so, in humble gratitude we worship, and clear-eyed we look within ourselves, where too you are pleased to dwell and make new. We look within, as we continue our Lenten journey. Here, in the name of Jesus who walks with us we pray, **amen.**

***PSALM 23**

Refrain 2 - VU Page #749

The God of love my shepherd is; what can I want or need.

Refrain 2

*The God of love my shepherd is;
what can I want or need.*

God is my shepherd,

there is nothing I shall lack.

You, God make me lie down in green pastures,

you lead me beside peaceful waters;

You revive my spirit,

you guide me in right pathways for your name's sake.

Refrain

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me,

your rod and your staff are my comfort.

You spread a table for me in the sight of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup is overflowing.

Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the day of my life,

and I will dwell in God's house my whole life long.

Refrain 2

*The God of love my shepherd is;
what can I want or need.*

LENTEN CANDLE LITURGY

Randy Breckenridge & Hugh Ellis

There were those who did not hear what Jesus had to say, who despite everything that he did, despite all of the goodness and mercy, could not bring themselves to imagine something more, something different, something new, something that looked like abundant life and the kingdom of heaven. Something that would change their lives and heal their souls. Who did not therefore understand what Jesus was doing, who thought he was a heretic and a danger and a transgressor of religious and social norms. Who thought that God was a God who protected with might God's favourites and crushed enemies real and imagined, when what was needed were prophets and faithful healers. When what was needed was unconditional love.

When we find ourselves in relative comfort, when what is on the news and what is going on in our community makes us think that we're so glad to be here and not there, us and not them, we can forget that God is both here and there, calling all of our hearts. We can forget that our God is a God of reconciliation, not retribution, who explicitly invites us all to a table prepared for all. When we forget our invitation to welcome the stories, the spirits, the bodies and the gifts of all in a profoundly public and intentional way, when we shy away from clearly opening ourselves in the presence of all of humanity and Creation as witnesses to the gospel, then, a little of the light that we share is shadowed over, our light is dimmed.

The fourth candle is extinguished

As we worship, we remember, and we recommit to the way of internal and eternal light, even as the clouds move in over a distant hill. We remember and proclaim that God is Love, and who, in love, says again and again to all, "Don't be afraid."

CHORAL RESPONSE: "Don't Be Afraid" MV #90

***Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,
my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid. My love is stronger
and I have promised, promised to be always near.***

***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.

***HYMN:** "Will You Come and Follow Me" VU #567

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to re-shape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Christ, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go where your love and foot-steps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: *(in unison)*

We pray for vision, O God, to see as you see. We pray for insight, that your word and light and wisdom be revealed to us in the telling of sacred story. Grace us with these things, that we may continue the story, that we may share in the story, that your story may be ours. Through your grace may we see in new ways, in your way, the luminous way of love. Amen

SCRIPTURE READING: *Phyllis Davidson Allan*

John 9:1-41 Jesus heals a man born with blindness

SERMON: More than meets the eye

GIFT OF MUSIC: "Open My Eyes, That I May See"

YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS *Bev Murphy*

INVITATION TO MAKE AN OFFERING

In a world that often seems consumed by self-interest, in faith we open ourselves to others, we open ourselves to be changed along with the world. We hear our name, we envision the kingdom, we walk a different way. We open our lives to God that all may see, experience, understand a love that amazes. Our offerings will now be gathered.

***OFFERING RESPONSE:** VU #541
"Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures high and low;
give thanks to God in love made known:
Creator, Word and Spirit, One.***

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

Both here and in the world, with vision we give. With intention and hope we share. With clear and unconditional love, we offer all that we are. Pour out your blessings, God of grace, that we grow in spirit even as we give away, that your world be healed as we become aware of its brokenness. Continue to bless your creation's unfolding, O God, as you have blessed us here. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTORAL PRAYER

Randy Breckenridge

PRAYER OF JESUS

***CLOSING HYMN:** "Here I Am, Lord"

VU #509

I, The Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in deepest sin my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

(Refrain)

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain,
I have wept for love of them; they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?

(Refrain)

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame,
I will set a feast for them; my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?

(Refrain)

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

***COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION**

***Choral Sending Forth:** "An Old Irish Blessing"

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be ever at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face

and the rains fall soft upon your fields.

***And until we meet again, and until we meet again,
may you be held in the hollow of God's hand.***

SHARING THE LIGHT

POSTLUDE



Church News

This Week at First United Church		
Office Hours: 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM Monday to Friday		
Monday	9:00-11:00 AM	Badminton – DEMH GYM
	7:00 PM	Highland View - RMR
Tuesday	9:30 AM-11:30 AM	Quilters – DEMH Downstairs office
	1:00 – 3:00 PM	Knitting Group – RMR
Wednesday	9:00-11:00 AM	Badminton – DEMH GYM
Wednesday	4:15 PM	Choir Practice
Saturday	8:00 AM–1:00 PM	Bathurst Community Market – GYM

The Annual General Meeting of Bathurst Pastoral Charge/First United Church will be held following the church service on **Sunday, March 29, 2026**. The Annual Report is now available for pick up. If you take one home with you, please bring it with you to the annual meeting.

Affirming Questionnaire: So far, we have received 15 responses (thanks!), and we would love to have twice to three times that many to help guide your Affirming Team as we journey together in this vital aspect of our shared ministry. We are extending the deadline to next Sunday, March 22. If you need a copy, there are some on the Affirming table in the Narthex, along with a place to return them and other information that you should find helpful. If you have any questions at all, please ask a member of the Team: Randy Breckenridge, Cindy Doucet, Hugh Ellis or Bev Murphy. Rev. David would also be happy to speak with you. Thank you!

The Sunrise Breakfast is scheduled for **Sunday, March 22nd**. It will be held in the Donald Eddy Memorial Hall from **8:30 AM to 12 noon**. The tickets are available now from members of the Ways & Means team or from the church office. Prices are \$12.00 for adults and children under 12 will be \$5.00.

**Sponsored by
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Church News

Peanut Butter – Once again this year our goal is to collect 1,000 jars of peanut butter to donate to the Bathurst Volunteer Center. Up to March 11th we have received 134 jars with funds on hand to purchase another 48.

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.

Use generosity and gratitude to bring light,
truth, and wholeness.

Community News

CRA's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) will be holding clinics for those with a modest income and a simple tax situation at the KC Irving Regional Center (Paul Ouelette Room) March 17th – 20th and March 23rd – 27th from 9 AM to 3 PM each day. No appointment necessary, first come, first served.

Communion Servers Needed — Many Hands, One Holy Meal

Sharing Communion is one of the most meaningful moments in our worship life — and it runs best when there are a few extra pairs of willing hands (and steady trays!).

We are inviting **members of The United Church** to volunteer as **Communion Servers** at First United Church, throughout the year.

What does serving involve?

- Helping prepare the bread and juice (no baking required!).
- Assisting the Minister during the Communion service.
- Helping with tidy-up afterward —
because miracles aside, dishes don't wash themselves.

Who can serve?

- Full Members of The United Church of Canada.
- Training is provided — no previous experience needed, just a calm presence and a welcoming spirit.

How to sign up:

Please choose the dates that work best for you, whether that's once a year, occasionally, or more regularly. Four (4) people are needed to serve at each Communion. Please call the Church Office at (506) 546-3532, to let Margaret know the dates you are available to help.

_____ March 29th – Annual Meeting

_____ April 5th - Easter Sunday

_____ May 24th – Pentecost Sunday

_____ Confirmation Sunday, if applicable

_____ October 4th or 11th Either World Communion or Thanksgiving

_____ November 22nd – Anniversary of First United Church

Serving Communion is a quiet but meaningful way to support worship and care for one another as a congregation. If you've ever thought, **"I could do that,"** — this is your nudge!

Thank you for helping us share the table with grace, generosity, and maybe even a smile.

PIE Day: PIE is an acronym standing for Public, Intentional and Explicit. PIE Day was celebrated yesterday, March 14. It started as a light-hearted nod to the mathematical constant, symbolized by the Greek letter π (pi), that is the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. I'm sure everybody remembers this from geometry class! Pi equals 3.14.... (the decimal places go on forever), hence the association with March 14. In more recent years, Affirming ministries and congregations have chosen the date to celebrate their commitment to being Public, Intentional and Explicit in sharing who they are and their values with the world. It is not always enough to simply say that all are welcome. For many of our marginalised siblings, that has not always been experienced as fully true even as it has been repeatedly proclaimed in worship and posted on outdoor signs, with words like "unless" sometimes remaining understood but unsaid, and at other times, whispered or even shouted from the rooftops in judgement. For many of our marginalised siblings, their experience of church has been not only hurtful, but harmful spiritually, mentally and physically. By Public, we mean that we are not a private club, that our doors are open and we are open about what we believe. By Intentional, we mean that we are attentive to how in the life and work and worship of this congregation we live out our Affirming commitments. And by Explicit, we mean that we are clear about who we are and what we believe, we don't assume that words like "all are welcome" are trusted and believed. We are clear that you are welcome, valued, have gifts to share and are God's beloved no matter what is in your wallet, your wardrobe, where you come from, who you love, your questions or uncertainties or anything else. Creation and so diversity are God's doing and God's delight, and that is what we seek to affirm and celebrate, on PIE Day, and every day.

JOHN 9:1-41

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

- 1** As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.
- 2** His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
- 3** "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.
- 4** As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.
- 5** While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
- 6** After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.
- 7** "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.
- 8** His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?"
- 9** Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."
- 10** "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked.
- 11** He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."
- 12** "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

- 13** They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.
- 14** Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.
- 15** Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided.

17 Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet."

18 They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

19 "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind.

21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself."

22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"

28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!

29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.

31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will.

32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

34 To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.

Spiritual Blindness

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

36 “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

37 Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

38 Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

39 Jesus said,[a] “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

41 Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.