

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

March 22, 2026
5th Sunday of Lent

Minister Rev. David Allan **Music Director** Martha Vickers
Office Adm. Margaret Daniels **Custodian** Lester Scott
Greeters Gayle Ferron & Shirley Sealy
Audio & Visual Technician Shirley Allain & Lester Scott

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Lectionary for today	Lectionary for next Sunday
Ezekiel 37:1-14 Psalm 130 Romans 8:6-11 John 11:1-45	Zechariah 9:9-10 Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Matthew 21:1-11
<i>We welcome Linda Knowles MacPherson and thank her for the gift of music this morning.</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.

***GATHERING HYMN:** "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" VU #382

Breathe on me, breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou would do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until my will is one with thine,
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
till I am wholly thine,
until this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
for thine eternity.

CALL TO WORSHIP: (responsively) *drawn from Romans 8:6-11*

We set our minds on many things, death, distractions and delays.

**But when we set our minds on the Spirit,
we know promise and peace.**

The Spirit of God dwells in us, the Breath of God gives us life,
and in the Spirit of Christ we have our belonging.

Light and love are ours;

in this we have our eternal hope.

(Christ Candle and 2 Lenten candles are silently lit)

In this we rise, in this we have abundant life,
and so we come to worship, blessed for this day,

**blessed to love the world into newness,
in the nearness of our God.**

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:

God of grace and of our living, on this holy day of rest when we remember your compassionate and creative presence, we draw close to you. We snuggle up and we lean in, listening for your heartbeat, listening for your word. Your word is life. Your word is love. Lift us into the beauty of our being. Bless us in our worship; bless us in this time together with wonder, as we bless your holy name. **Amen.**

***PSALM 130**

Refrain 2 - VU Page #853

Out of the depths I cry to you; my hope is in your promise true.

Refrain:

*Out of the depths I cry to you,
my hope is your promise true.*

Out of the depths have I called to you,
Oh God, hear my cry!

Let your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy.

If you should keep account of what is done amiss,
O God, who could stand?

Refrain:

*Out of the depths I cry to you,
my hope is your promise true.*

I wait for you, God;
my soul waits, and in your word is my hope.

**My soul waits for God
more than the watchers long for morning,
more than the watchers long for morning.**

O Israel, wait in hope,
for with God there is love unfailing.

**With God is great power to redeem,
to redeem you, Israel, from all your sins.**

Refrain:

*Out of the depths I cry to you,
my hope is your promise true.*

LENTEN CANDLE LITURGY

Jennifer Oliver

There were those who did not hear what Jesus had to say, who seemingly could not escape and evolve from a spirituality eroded by a sense of judgement, toward others, toward themselves. Who were dismayed that Jesus dined with those labeled sinners and invited himself into the home of a tax collector, who flinched as he talked and listened to the sick and the shunned, and touched them with tenderness. 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 kept a list of those deemed naughty and nice, imagining that God did the same, when what was needed were prophets and faithful healers. When what is always needed is unconditional love.

It is easy to judge others, and it is easy to judge ourselves. It is tempting to keep a list, to stack up the errors and regrets and foolishness and sins, creating a seemingly impenetrable barrier to the forgiveness that heals us all. God is Love, God's ledger is love, and Love, as Paul writes, keeps no record of wrongs. When we forget to forgive one another, when we neglect to forgive ourselves, when we object to the mercy and grace that are gifts of God, then, a little of the light that we share is shadowed over, our light is dimmed.

The fifth 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.

Remain standing for hymn

***HYMN:** "In the Bulb There Is a Flower"

VU #703

In the bulb there is a flower,
in the seed, an apple tree,
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning,
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing,
in our life, eternity,

in our death, a resurrection,
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: *(in unison)*

**As we listen for your living word, O God, breathe into us
wisdom, breathe into us hope, breathe into us new life.
Join us together through your word as the Body of Christ,
alive for the sake of the world, risen into life in you. Amen**

SCRIPTURE READING:

Jennifer Oliver

Ezekiel 27:1-14 The valley of the dry bones

John 11:1-45 The raising of Lazarus

SERMON: Life abundant

GIFT OF MUSIC: "When We Are Living"

YOUR GENEROSITY MATTERS

Anne Wilson

INVITATION TO MAKE AN OFFERING

The world waits for healing, the world waits for love, the world waits
for abundant life. Even as we too wait, we respond, gifted to give,
breathed into to be a blessing. 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)*

**Bless our offerings of money and of self, God of
restoration, bringing flesh to our faith, bringing together
your longing people with the ligaments of love.**

Through you, all of us and these gifts which are of you,
may all know you and life renewed. May all truly know
your gift of abundant life. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTORAL PRAYER

PRAYER OF JESUS

*CLOSING HYMN:

VU #586

"We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection"

We shall go out with hope of resurrection;
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;
we shall go our and tell our stories boldly;
tales of love that will not let us go.
We'll sign our songs of wrongs that can be righted;
we'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed;
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within the vision of new life in Christ.

We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;
we'll make the tunes for those who sing to longer,
expressive love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who still are weeping,
raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story,
including all in circles of our love.

*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
	9:00 AM	Ways & Means - RMR
Tuesday	11:00 AM	Gillis' funeral service
Wednesday	9:00-11:00 AM	Badminton – DEMH GYM
	3:30 PM	Affirming Team – RMR
Thursday	1:00 – 3:00 PM	Rug Hooking Group – RMR
	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 16 responses (thanks!), and we would love to have more to help guide your Affirming Team as we journey together in this vital aspect of our shared ministry. We are extending the deadline to today. 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. Thank you!

The Affirming Team will meet on Wednesday, March 25th at 3:30 PM in the Ruth Morrison Room.

The Sunrise Breakfast is scheduled for this morning. It is being held in the Donald Eddy Memorial Hall from **8:30 AM to 12 noon**. 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 19th we have received 136 jars with funds on hand to purchase another 48.

The Ways & Means Team will be meeting on Monday, March 23rd at 9 AM in the Ruth Morrison Room.

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.

Our stewardship reflects our relationship with God;
our relationship with God transforms our stewardship.

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.

How to teach faith to our children and grandchildren.

Join us on **Saturday, April 18th, 2026** at **St. Andrew's United Church, Miramichi** from 10:00-12:00 with the Rev. Catherine Stuart, Regional Minister for Youth and Young Adults who will discuss on-line curriculums, purchased programs, and events to which we can bring our children. This is open for all interested people including parents, grandparents, as well as present, pondering and potential Sunday School Teachers and or Youth Group Leaders.

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!

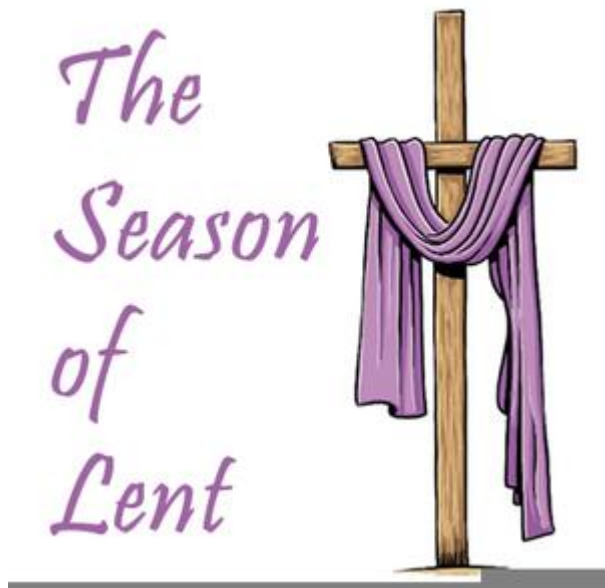
Thank you for helping us share the table with grace, generosity, and maybe even a smile.

Upcoming Services at First United

March 29th – Palm Sunday / Communion / Annual Meeting

April 3rd – Good Friday Service – 10 AM

April 5th – Easter Sunday / Communion



SCRIPTURE READINGS – New International Version

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

NIV

1 The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.

3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!'

5 This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.

6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord."

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone.

8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

9 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'"

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet - a vast army.

11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'

12 Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.'

13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.

14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.”

JOHN 11:1-45

NIV

1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.)

3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

4 When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”

5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days,

7 and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

8 “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?”

9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light.

10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

12 His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.”

13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

14 So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead,

15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem,

19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;

26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.”

29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

39 "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days."

40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

