



## *Greetings of the Season to One and All!*

### **Christmas Greeting – 2023**

Every year it happens. It's not even Halloween and the stores put out wrapping paper and ornament displays. Then, around December 20<sup>th</sup>, pink and red hearts begin to replace the wrapping paper and we're asked to move along again... past Christmas and on to the next holiday. It makes good business-sense that department stores and online retailers want us to move from event to event as quickly as possible. The faster we do so, of course, the more we may buy.

Some part of us knows that rushing through the days and weeks of our lives is not how the Spirit wants us to live. It's *hard* to slow things down, though, when everything around us is pushing towards the *next* new thing. It's *especially* hard when we're heading towards Christmas. In order to succeed, then, we need to approach the Season of Advent with great care and strategic planning. If we simply have good intentions, in other words, society and traditions will push us along at breakneck speed.

Because adding additional planning to our already packed Advent schedule mightn't sound overly appealing, here are some ideas for slowing things down. A little, at least. :o)

All five Advent candles are not lit at once. Tradition, instead, calls us to light one each Sunday, so the light grows slowly throughout the season. What else, then, could be attempted gradually to mark the coming of Christ? Our trees, perhaps, could be decorated progressively: completely bare to begin, lights added on Advent two, and so on. As for nativity scenes, characters and animals could be added throughout the season, instead of putting everything out at once. [The baby Jesus works better like that in any event.] Hold back certain songs, certain recipes and/or certain traditions for later in Advent, or perhaps, consider waiting until after Christmas Day. There are, after all, twelve days in which to celebrate Christmas then.

The idea for slowing down, however, might not be popular for a number of reasons, including taking time to discern what might actually be dropped. What tradition, for instance, no longer holds significant meaning for us? What have we done every year just because someone told us "we're supposed to" or "it's what we do at Christmas." Many of these activities/traditions may have been meaningful at one time, so it mightn't be easy to let go. Releasing them, then, should be done with great care.

Never forgetting, though...

Space and time and peace are gained by letting go of things no longer *life-giving*. That space, time and peace, theoretically at least, will allow us to relish a slower Advent—with its precious gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love.

May it be so.

A blessed, safe and *very* Merry Christmas to you all!

Yours in Christ, in friendship, and in our ministry together...

*Rev. Neal*

## Sound system update

The console to house all of the sound and camera equipment has been build and installed. All of the volunteers involved hope you are enjoying the significant improvement in the quality of the sound – albeit with the *occasional blip* that is to be expected when with working with electronics and Wi-Fi.

## Up-Coming Events at First United

December 10<sup>th</sup> – White Gift Sunday

December 21<sup>st</sup> – Blue Christmas Service

December 24<sup>th</sup> – 10 AM Christmas Eve/Communion

December 24<sup>th</sup> – 4 PM Christmas Eve/Family

*What is every parent's favorite  
Christmas song?*



*Silent Night!*

**The CD titled, "Christmas on the Bay"**, is available. It features a variety of Christmas music by Linda Knowles MacPherson, with help from friends, Donald Eddy, Archie Fowlie, and Ann Marie Hocquard. A copy may be obtained with a donation to First United Church. Please contact Margaret at the church office to obtain or reserve a copy. There are also other CDs by Linda and friends, other than the Christmas theme, also available.

**Thank you! On behalf of the "Lesotho Initiative" Committee of ASD - N**, a special 'thank you' is extended to you for your support of our recent calendar drive. A total of 160 "Help Lesotho" 2024 calendars were sold, and this will raise \$ 2400 for the work of "Help Lesotho" with Grandmothers and vulnerable children in the tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho, Africa. Since 2006, this initiative has raised \$ 142,366 for the work of "Help Lesotho". (There are additional calendars available for anyone else who would like to support this cause.)

Submitted by,  
Gary Branch

**Check Us Out:** [www.firstunited-bathurst.ca](http://www.firstunited-bathurst.ca) Here you will find past services, bulletins, newsletters, upcoming events as well as cancellations if the need arises. You can also follow us on Facebook.

## Property Maintenance Team

Snow removal from December 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 will cost \$2,750, the same price as quoted for last year. Outside of this contract period each trip will be charged on a per trip basis. The snow-blowing, shovelling and salting of the doorways will continue to be completed by the custodian.

A lease agreement has been completed and signed between the Bathurst Community Market and First United Church for use of the Donald Eddy Memorial Hall on Saturday mornings from 8 AM to 1 PM. The Market continues to be running very well and includes support from our congregation.

A grant application has been filed to cover costs of step replacement for the choir room entrance and the parking lot entrance to the church and the hall.

A new fridge has been delivered for use in the kitchen by the Ways & Means and Friends of First United Teams.

Work on the energy audit is ongoing and the cost of the new fridge will be part of the submitted purchases.

## Community Outreach Updates

- Peanut Butter – donations are always welcome, as we work towards our annual commitment of 900 jars per year to the Volunteer Center.
- School Supplies – generous donations were received & delivered to Terry Fox School.
- Pantry – as winter is upon us the needs of the homeless, etc. will continue, so food items will help restock the pantry.
- Coupons – McDonald's has supplied coffee & breakfast coupons to be given to the needy.
- Breakfast Programs – cheques for current year have been forwarded to 5 local schools.

All of the listed projects are only feasible due to the generous support of the congregation. Thanks for your ongoing efforts.

***And this leads us to.....***

## 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 has become very prevalent in our area and yes, COVID-19 is still affecting lives. Should you wish to give you will find an envelope on the tree which will be set up in the Narthex starting November 26<sup>th</sup>. 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 you generosity  
– Community Outreach Sub-Team***

*What did the gingerbread man  
put on his bed?*



***A Cookie Sheet!***

**Newsletters:** Our number of Newsletters sent via email continues to grow. We have 114 households currently receiving their newsletters via email. Thank you to all you have signed up. Please consider adding your name to the list. Send your request to [firstadmin@nb.aibn.com](mailto:firstadmin@nb.aibn.com). Special envelopes for Christmas contributions can be found in the Narthex. Approximately 225 members of our church family receive three letters yearly by mail, at the cost of around \$1.00/letter.



*Christmas Eve  
Worship*

*Christmas Eve Services*

*10 AM Regular Service with Communion*

*&*

*4 PM Family Christmas Eve Service*

## Ways & Means Team

The Ways and Means team would like to express a sincere thank you to everyone who assisted, either by working in the kitchen, baking, serving the food, buying and/or selling tickets to the recent Turkey Supper. And a huge *Thank You* to Kenny's Trucking and The Shine House whose generous sponsorship allowed final net proceeds to be \$5,186.97.



The next Ways and Means team event will hopefully take place on February 25<sup>th</sup>

***SUNRISE  
BREAKFAST***

<b>Tentative 2024 Schedule of Events</b> Hosted by Ways & Means Team	
February 25	Breakfast
March 28	Pork Roast Supper
May 30	Ham & Scallop Potato
September 19	Beef BBQ
November 21	Turkey Supper

**Church envelopes** for the coming year will be available soon. If you haven't had contribution envelopes in the past and wish to have them for 2024, please advise the church office. Another way of making contributions is through PAR.

**PAR:** Pre Authorized Remittance (PAR) is a convenient way to support the ongoing work of your church. Your monthly contributions are taken directly from your bank account or charged to a Major Credit Card. Currently we have 95 households using this method of support. Signing up for PAR takes only a few minutes and can be done for you at the church office. All that is required is a void cheque or your credit card number.

### **Stewardship Program**

As part of our Stewardship Program here at First United, information on Planned Giving through Wills and Bequests are now available to our congregational membership. All members are encouraged to review this information and take the appropriate steps pertaining to your wishes. Workbooks available from the church office for perusal.

## Christmas Hymn Sing

By the time you read this newsletter our Christmas Hymn Sing will be completed. For the first time we collaborated with the choir of Central United Church in Clifton to fill the choir loft. Thank you to the many participants who assisted with the program and to those who supported the joint fundraising event.

## Christian Development

We will be providing a ***Blue Christmas Service*** on ***Thursday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 6 PM.*** In the context of the *festive season*, the darkness may heighten feelings of grief, sadness, pain and/or loneliness associated with past experience or present circumstances. The emphasis in this service will be placed on reflective carols, scripture and times of silence -- recognizing that it is not necessarily a season of joy for everyone.

### *Joyous Memories!*

*'Twas the month before Christmas  
When all in the city  
Heard our new church was opening  
Gorgeous and pretty!*

*The chancel looked lovely  
The narthex was set  
To greet all the people  
Who gladly were met!*

*The year you may ask  
When all this took place  
'Twas twenty-five years ago  
Thanks to God's grace.*

*Written by Isabel MacLaggan*

**HAPPY SILVER ANNIVERSARY**  
to our "new" First United edifice  
dedicated on November 15, 1998



## Hospitality Time after Worship

The Hospitality & Friendship Team is looking for individuals to assist with the preparation of the Ruth Morrison Room each Sunday prior to the service. This includes covering the tables with tablecloths, setting up the coffee and tea pots, putting out water, juice, napkins and other condiments and clean-up afterward. Please see the weekly volunteer sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Ruth Morrison Room.



*Everyone please feel free to join us for fellowship and refreshments after each Sunday worship service!!*

## Community Events

- ***Bathurst Community Market*** holds their weekly market every Saturday morning from 8 AM to 1 PM in the gymnasium of the Donald Eddy Hall. Many different types of vendors selling various types of products – soaps & shampoos – fresh eggs – baking including cookies, pies and bread – wool and knitted items – jams and jellies – maple syrup – wooden crafts – Pampered Chef – sea glass – just to name a few. Breakfast also served! Come for a visit and bring a friend!!
- Every Monday and Wednesday from 9 AM to 11 AM there is a ***Ladies Fun Badminton Group*** who gather and play in the Donald Eddy Memorial Hall gymnasium. Any ladies interested in joining please contact Joyce Daley for information.

*Heartfelt thank you  
to 2 long time volunteers*

**Edie Gammon**, after many, many years of service, has stepped down from the Ways & Means Team.

&

**Judy Losier** has also stepped down as secretary of Bathurst Pastoral Council and is stepping away from the team as well.

Words cannot express the appreciation to both Edie & Judy for the tremendous amount of work and the hours they have dedicated to the church. ***Thank You Both!!!***