



Greetings of the Season to One and All!

Christmas Greeting – 2024

The poet WH Auden wrote in "For the Time Being" these words

He is the Truth.

Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety;

You will come to a great city that has expected your return for years.

Seek him in the Kingdom of Anxiety.....

Once again, we have before us a Christmas in a world that is anxious. People are stressed and cautious. We are nostalgic for Christmases past when "all was calm, all was bright." We long for the way things were.

Mary and Joseph lived in the Kingdom of Anxiety. They were teenagers, pregnant, having to pack up their belongings and head out on the road. Some of you can remember being pregnant or with little children and having to pack the car and head out on the road for 'home' for Christmas, to do your perceived or expected duty – NOT FUN. Exhaustion, snow, ice, and traffic brought great anxiety. Parents or friends awaiting our arrival were equally stressed. Everyone was in the "Kingdom of Anxiety."

At the same time, there were others who were equally anxious for different reasons. They wished that they would have a reason to be stressed, they wished that there were friends or family to await them, and they wished for the 'romanticised Hallmark Christmas feeling'. All the world seemed to live in the "Kingdom of Anxiety".

Our Church Family is presently trying to find our way in the Kingdom of Anxiety. What will be our future?

Like modern Palestinians trying to make it to Bethlehem for Christmas, the way forward seems laced with uncertainty. We don't know what the future will hold for us.

This is exactly like the first Christmas. Auden wrote, "*You will come to a great city that has expected your return for years*". Bethlehem, the City of David, awaited the return of a descendant of David for centuries. Bethlehem not only awaited – it expected – having nothing more to go on than promises made by God through the Prophets, especially Isaiah: "A young woman shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Emmanuel – God is with us".

Travelling through the Kingdom of Anxiety (that was as pressing as the times we are in) comes an unlikely pair, bearing all the weight that we feel and even more.

By the world's standards, Mary and Joseph were the lowest of the low and yet a great city was awaiting them, expecting them, and all of heaven was prepared for them. In the midst of that anxiety, a child was born. God was present. The truth of the matter is that God is always present in the midst of anxiety.

Even today, Christ is born not in Bethlehem but in every place we find ourselves; alone in an apartment, gathered with our own small family or gathered with a family of friends, or one of the few who are brave enough to venture out to greet strangers with the phrase – Christ is born for us.

Through all the anxiety of this world, God keeps his promise – I am with you – and I will come to you, dwell with you and be with you forever. "*A great city has expected your return*". Such a wonderful future awaits.

This is the truth of Christmas. God is with us – we are not alone.

Thank you for inviting me to join with you in ministry through the Fall.

Merry Christmas ~ Joyeux Noël ~ Nollaig Chridheal ~ Frohe Weihnachten ~ Feliz Navidad

The Rev. Ivan Gregan

Up-Coming Events at First United

December 22nd – Advent 4 Service/Communion

December 24th – 4 PM Christmas Eve Service for children of all ages

December 24th – 7 PM Christmas Eve Service



Community Outreach Updates

- Peanut Butter – Congratulations to one and all! We have provided over 1000 jars of peanut butter to the Volunteer Center in 2024. Donations of individual jars are always welcome or you may make a monetary donation which will be included on your annual tax receipt.
- School Supplies – generous donations were received & delivered to schools in the area.
- Coupons – During 2024 McDonald's supplied coffee & breakfast coupons.
- Breakfast Programs – cheques for current year have been forwarded to 5 local schools.
- Sock Drive – We provided several bins of socks to the Volunteer Center, Passage House and the Homeless Shelter, as well as giving pairs to many of the homeless who asked for assistance at the church office.
- Pantry – as winter is upon us the needs of the homeless, etc. will continue, so food items will help restock the pantry. We have helped at least 4 families over the past 2 months with food items, toilet paper, hygiene products, etc.

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

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



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.

"HELP LESOTHO" CALENDAR CAMPAIGN – 2024

With the support of the congregation of First United Church, 198 "Help Lesotho" Calendars for 2025 were sold. That raises \$2,940.00 for this initiative with your support. The order was sent in on October 16, 2024. On November 12, 2024, the order was sent from Ottawa by Canada Post with the assurance that it would be delivered by Friday, November 15. Unfortunately, that did not happen, so the calendar order will not be delivered until after the postal strike is settled. As soon as the order arrives, the delivery process will begin.

Submitted by,
Gary Branch

*What do you get when you mix a
Christmas tree and an iPad?*



A Pineapple!

Church envelopes If you haven't had contribution envelopes in the past and wish to have them for 2025, 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.

Property Maintenance Team

Snow removal from December 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025 will cost \$2,900, slightly higher than was 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.

The lease agreement 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 continues and is running very well with the support from our congregation.

Thanks to the Faithful Footprints Grant Application we received funding from the United Church of Canada in the amount of \$17,360 to cover two-thirds of the cost of 1 fridge for the kitchen, heat pumps for the offices and LED lights and a new dishwasher, that was also installed in the kitchen as the old one was no longer functioning and parts were not available to repair.

Work on energy reduction is ongoing and with the installation of the above-mentioned items our energy use has been lower than in 2023.

Check Us Out: 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.



Newsletters: 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.

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.

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, setting up the tables, baking, serving the food, buying and/or selling tickets to the breakfast and various suppers throughout the year. The net proceeds raised by these meals in 2024 are in excess of \$23,500. Thank you to the sponsors Web-Solutions, Jean Coutu-Beresford, McDonalds Bathurst, Bayside Automotive, Hatheway Automotive, Kenny's Trucking and The Shine House. The next event is tentatively planned for February, the **Roast Pork Supper!**

Tentative 2025 Schedule of Events Hosted by Ways & Means Team	
February 20	Pork Roast Supper
March 30	Sunrise Breakfast
May 1	Ham & Scallop Potato
September 18	Beef BBQ
November 27	Turkey Supper

Christmas Hymn Sing

On December 1st we collaborated, once again, with the choir of Central United Church in Clifton to fill the choir loft, under the direction of Martha Vickers. Thank you to the many participants who assisted with the program and to those who supported the joint fundraising event. This event raised just over \$1,700 that is shared between the two churches.



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 2025 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!!

Sunday School teachers needed!!



If you feel you can sign up for one or two Sundays a month, let the church office know. We are looking to have enough teachers to set up a rotation schedule.

Christian Development

Our CD Team requires a chairperson. Martha has been covering the position on a *temporary* basis, however we need someone to step up and assist with the planning of the worship services and hopefully get our Sunday School back up and running for the youth in our congregation.



Our congregation also needs 2 representatives for Regional Council. Martha Vickers has been one of 3 representatives since 2019. If you are interested, or would like further information, please reach out to Martha Vickers and/or Hugh Ellis.

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 – 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.

Community Events

- Every Tuesday afternoon from 1 PM to 3 PM a group of **knitters** gather in the Ruth Morrison Room for a couple hours of socializing, laughter and knitting.

Pastoral Care and Membership Team

Christmas Greetings to all our First United people as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child!

Special greetings and caring thoughts go out to those who are in hospital, those who live alone or are lonely, those who for the most part, are confined to their places of abode and to all others who are in need.

Unfortunately, due to the absence of postal service, the usual 100 or more Christmas cards that we send to seniors and others each year will have to wait for another time as will other remembrances. We will continue to keep in touch in other ways.

A recent event in our church again this year was the Advent concert that brought together the First United and Central United choirs. Organized and directed voluntarily by our organist Martha Vickers, the concert was well supported and enjoyed.

Our visiting performers included "The Treble Makers" under the direction of Linda Knowles MacPherson. In gratitude for their participation, Gwen Sturgeon of our Pastoral Care Team send a message thanking them for the inspiring musical selections.

"We are so fortunate to have your group involved with our church community" said Gwen in a message to Linda which was forwarded to the others.

Gwen mentioned Don Eddy in particular. She expressed thanks to him for having the concert available on our church website so that many other people could enjoy music of the festive season.

"Your knowledge and enthusiasm in your contributions to our church community seems never ending" she said in recognizing Don's solo performance during the concert.

We also want to thank "In Harmony" performers- Cindy Doucet, Kim Glendenning, Rhonda Chaisson, Randy Breckenridge and Hugh Ellis - as well as Isabel and John Clouston for their duet of "I Am the Light of the World" - and of course Amanda Godin for her solo performance of "I Wonder as I Wander"

Bathurst Pastoral Council Highlights

December 2, 2024

Council held its second meeting of the fall in the Ruth Morrison Room with Sandra Boone presiding and Brenda Parrott as secretary pro-tem. The meeting began with a Land Acknowledgement followed by prayer by Rev. Ivan Gregan.

In business arising from the minutes of October 29th, Lester Scott reported that livestreaming of Sunday services is in the offing.

The financial report, highlighted by Ian Oliver as Team Chair, showed a 2024 deficit of \$4,658 as of October 31st. Local givings totalled \$160,484 for the 10-month period including a \$25,000 bequest in February and \$2,450 in loose givings. Total revenue was \$238,752 including a United Church of Canada grant of \$17,361 towards repair work.

The combined choir concert on December 1st, organized by Martha Vickers, resulted in revenue of approximately \$1,700 which was shared equally between the First United and Central United churches. Thirty choristers took part including six Treble Makers under the directing of Linda Knowles MacPherson, five In Harmony singers, a duet by Isabel and John Clouston and a solo by Amada Godin. Martha mentioned that the Regional President, Sue LeMaistre, attended the concert as well as the regular church service earlier in the day.

The Christian Development Team reported there was more congregation participation for Orange Shirt Day this year. An update was given on the proposed youth group. The CD Team still needs a chairperson.

Wayne Lord reported the turkey supper in November showed a net income of approximately \$7,000. The next meal – roast pork – is tentatively set for February.

The Pastoral Care Team is looking for input from the congregation regarding persons in hospital or in need of a visit. The church office or team members should be notified of such needs.

Bill Stack said the Hospitality and Friendship Team is eager and is looking for help in providing/serving refreshments following our regular church services. He expressed concern with the lack of acceptance at times towards newcomers to the church.

Reporting for the Property Management Team, Lester Scott said everything is "in good shape" for the winter. The late arrival of snow has helped the snow clearing budget.

The annual staff reviews are completed as reported by Wayne Lord. Wayne is impressed "by all our staff". He said arrangements are being completed for pulpit supply in January.

It was noted that Mission & Service needs more financial support in order to carry out its mandate across the church.

Reporting for the Communications Sub-Team, Isabel MacLaggan said bulletin board items for Remembrance Day have been replaced by the Advent Theme.

Another topic on the agenda was in regard to an "Affirming Congregation". Rather than delaying discussion until the next meeting, Rev. Ivan offered to conduct an introduction/information session, possibly following the December 15th church service.

It was noted that the dedication of the sound/video console during a recent church service was well done. The creatively crafted piece of furniture was donated by Ed and Sandra Boone in memory of Sandra's parents, John and Verna Watling and her sister, Judy.

The next council meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 10th at 4 PM.

Although not on the agenda, Rev Ivan gave a helpful memory tip on the seven liturgical seasons within the church. He suggested ACELEAP could stand for Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost.

Respectfully submitted,
Isabel MacLaggan