



# *Christ is Risen!*

## *Rejoice!*

This morning as I write this letter I am working on the message for this coming Sunday. We have just gone through a winter storm when we experienced snow, rain, and freezing rain. I am looking at a passage of Scripture from Isaiah 55:10.

**"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."**

When I think about this passage from the Bible written by the prophet Isaiah I think about the water cycle that constantly supplies the needs of all living things on earth. The water that we use today has been cycling back and forth from the clouds for thousands and thousands of years and still has the power to enable life to exist on our world.

Parallel to this is the cycle of our faith that also has existed for thousands of years. We began at the birth of Jesus at Christmas and the cycle goes on to the priceless gift of his love revealed at Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Every year we experience the cycle of life as we celebrate our faith.

From the very moment of creation the miracle of God's love has been there to sustain the lives of all who have gone before us and it will be there to sustain those who come after us. In our heart of hearts we know that the message is true.

In our heart of hearts we know that God didn't send Jesus just to bless us, but to turn us into the kind of people who focus on blessing others.

In our heart of hearts we know that fear can destroy our living if we allow it to thrive in our lives. In our heart of hearts we know that without help we will never be the people God intended us to be.

We wait to see what God will do next. Like most things God does, it will surprise us.

As we prepare once again for the Easter season may the faith of those who ventured forth with Moses on the journey to the Promised Land enable us to move forward with faith in our lives as we experience the power of Christ's death and resurrection.

May this freely offered gift of love that comes to us from God be with you and your loved ones during lent and may the miracle of new life that we will celebrate at Easter this year be the catalyst that will lead to fulfillment and growth in your lives.

Please join us for Good Friday and Easter Sunday services,

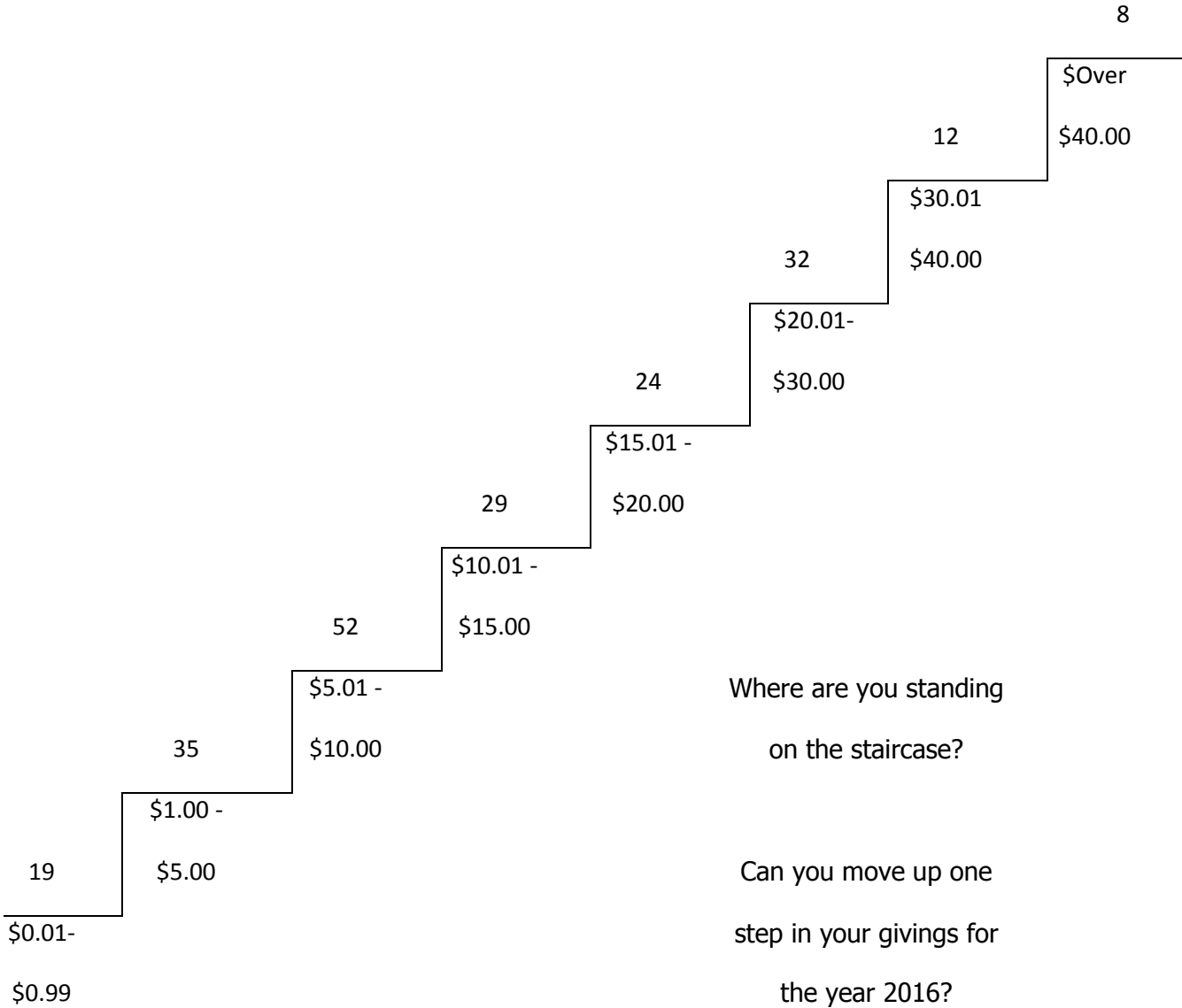
*Rev. Blair Lewis*

**Notice from Bathurst Pastoral Council**

If you feel comfortable and are able to increase your financial support the following could be used as a guideline.

These steps provide a snapshot of our congregation’s giving patterns to **Local Giving**.

Each step represents a range of dollars given per week. The number on top of each step indicates how many givers give in that range.



**God gives to us! We give to God!**

We recognize that people also donate through Time and Talent to our church.  
We thank you for your contributions.

### **West Bathurst Cemetery Committee Report**

The West Bathurst Cemetery Committee is responsible for the West Bathurst Cemetery on St. Anne Street and the St. Luke's "Old Scottish" Cemetery on St. Luke's Court.

As of December 31, 2015, the "Endowment Fund" balance was \$55,015.00 and the general operating fund was \$8,817.01 for a total of \$63,832.01. The "Endowment Fund" is set up so that only interest generated can be used. We are thankful to everyone who continues to support this fund through PAR and donations.

We have a number of projects that we hope to complete in 2016. Trees and bushes along the boundary of West Bathurst Cemetery and the railroad line will be trimmed or removed. The straightening of gravestones will also continue. A load of topsoil is needed to level a number of graves. Many of the gravestones at St. Luke's Cemetery were vandalized over the years, so we hope to be able to repair a number of these each year.

### **Refugee Sponsorship Committee Update**

As the liaison between the Miramichi Presbytery Refugee Sponsorship Committee & local UCC congregations, I am happy to report that our refugee family is well settled in their new home, an apartment in Miramichi. They arrived on February 12th & during the past month, committee members have been busy, making sure that the newcomers are well informed about all aspects of life in Canada. A translator has helped immensely with communication.

The young couple with 2 active toddler boys is so grateful to be here & for the generosity of our congregations. The parents (Marwan & Wafaa) attend language classes from 9AM-3PM (Monday – Friday) at the Multicultural Association office, while the boys (Murad & Mohammad) are at day care, providing exposure to other children, speaking English. The adults have had dental issues addressed & the most recent news is that Wafaa is pregnant!

Fundraising efforts throughout our presbytery have been supportive & to date, \$23,000 has accumulated. Gift cards & monetary contributions may be donated through our church office & will be relayed to the sponsorship committee. Meanwhile, preparations for the second family are ongoing. For regular updates & photos, see the Facebook site: *uccmp refugee family*.

With gratitude for your generous support,  
Helen Knowles

**The Communications Sub Team** recently met to review the effectiveness of our communications. We produce three newsletters per year for nearly four hundred households. We will continue to urge members to sign up for the online edition to reduce costs (paper, ink, postage) not to mention the time to fold, stuff and label.

Josh Gammon recently updated our website. Great job! I encourage everyone to visit at [www.firstunited-bathurst.ca](http://www.firstunited-bathurst.ca). You can find upcoming events, newsletters, weekly bulletins, photos and much more. We are also on Facebook! Please like and share our page.

Regular telephone talk mail messages are being sent out and the system seems to be working well.

Council highlights are prepared by Isabel MacLaggan and can be found in our newsletters. She also does a great job of updating and maintaining the bulletin board which can be found in the church entrance.

Thanks to Edie Gammon, Don Eddy and Robert O'keefe for their contributions to this team!

A final thanks to Isabel Clouston for the great job she does creating our newsletters and weekly bulletins!

Please feel free to submit items for future newsletters and don't forget to provide the church office with your email address so that we can send your newsletter and cut costs!

Financial Report First United Church Local Givings 2016			
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Jan.	\$13000.00	\$14407.83	+\$1407.83
Feb.	\$12500.00	\$12673.83	+\$ 173.83
			<u>+\$1581.66</u>
	Projected Year End <u>Deficit</u>		\$18,660.00



*Good Friday Service - March 25 - 10am*

*Easter Sunday Service - March 27 - 10am*



*Ham & Scallop Supper - April 7 - 5-6:30pm*



**St. Patrick's Celebration:** The Pastoral Care team of First United is hosting a St. Patrick's celebration to be held on March 15th (Storm date March 16) from 1:30-3:30. Come join with us for an afternoon of music, talk and light refreshments. A donation of non-perishable food items will be accepted at that time. These items will be kept on hand at First United in the instance that a request is made for groceries.

**Calling all Graduates:** If you are a potential graduate of the class of 2016 for either BHS or ESN please advise the church office. The First United Church service honoring our graduates will be held on June 19, 2016.

**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 88 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.



We have a very active Church School and are always looking for new students. Come join us on Sunday mornings at 10.

**Did You Know:** A couple of really good ways to keep updated on First United Church events are to check out our website [www.firstunited-bathurst.ca](http://www.firstunited-bathurst.ca) or to follow us on Facebook. Here you will find upcoming events as well as cancellations if the need arises. In the month of February we had 136 visits to our Web site, from Bathurst, NB to Alhaurin de la Torre, Spain.

**Newsletters:** To date, there are 64 households receiving the newsletter online. This is a \$192.00 savings. We thank all who have requested to be part of our online distribution. If you wish to have your letters in the future sent directly to your email send your request to [firstadmin@nb.aibn.com](mailto:firstadmin@nb.aibn.com). Special envelopes for Easter contributions can be found in the Narthex.



The Valentine Luncheon was once again a great success this year with a net profit of \$1660.00 being realized. Thanks to all who assisted in any way.



Our next Newsletter will be circulated in the fall, for Thanksgiving. Have something that you would like to be included that would be of interest to our church family? Send it to the office at [firstadmin@nb.aibn.com](mailto:firstadmin@nb.aibn.com). The cutoff time for submission is September 21<sup>st</sup> at noon.

**United Portrait Studios:** There are a number of photo directories that have not been picked up, if yours is one of them, they are available in the Narthex on Sundays and at the church office during regular business hours.

*Bunnies are cuddly  
The large and the small  
But I like chocolate ones  
The best of them all.  
~Author Unknown*