



This morning as I write my Christmas letter to you, I think about the coming season of Advent and the preparations for the Christmas season that we are all anticipating.

Advent is a time of preparation for the birth of the Christ child at Christmas and as we began our journey we begin with hope. As we pause to think about hope we think about our world, our country, our community and our families. We hope for so much in our world. We hope for people worldwide, but we also hope for those who are closer to home. We hope for health for the members of our families. We hope for happiness for all.

When Mary and Joseph were on their journey to Bethlehem they lived hope filled lives. Their hope was with the child who was about to be born and that he would transform our world.

We pray for peace. In many different corners of our world peace is an unknown experience for people of all ages. We also pray for peace much closer to home. Our prayer is that we will find peace in our lives this Christmas season.

All around our world may the desire for peace filled lives be more powerful than divisive conflict that separates people.

On our journey through advent toward Christmas we pause to think about the important role that joy plays in our lives. May our prayer be that we will find joy in both expected and unexpected places. We pray for joy that will reflect our desire for inner happiness in our lives

Our daughter Rachel spoke about how important telephone calls, Skype and text messages were following the earthquake that took place when she was living in Japan. Colleagues, friends and families kept in touch with each other and out of an unexpected crisis moments of joy unexpectedly were experienced.

The love of God is in the air at Christmas time. God came into this world as an infant child totally vulnerable and totally dependent upon others. The Christ child brought love into our world at the darkest time of the year.

In this Christmas season 2016, may the love that he brings into our lives empower us to discover possibilities not only in this Christmas season but in all the seasons that lie ahead.

May the love revealed at Christmas be the light to show us our way.

Merry Christmas,

Rev. Blair Lewis

Highlights – Bathurst Pastoral Council
November 15, 2016

The last regular Council meeting for 2016 was held in the Eddy Room with Sandra Boone presiding as Council Chair.

Other members present were Judy Losier, secretary; Brenda Parrott, vice-chair; Wayne Lord, Linda Newell, Aldra Carson, Rick Watling, Don Nelson, Pat Brown and Isabel MacLaggan. Also present were Dave Morison, church treasurer and Rev. Blair Lewis who had the opening prayer.

The treasurer presented the financial figures to the end of October. He said local givings were close to budget but the special Thanksgiving envelopes showed a decrease of \$800 compared to expectations. In future, extra envelopes as required will be placed in the narthex.

Dave said overall revenue was "pretty well on track" for the 10-month period, thanks to rental income from government which was received earlier than usual. Net revenue from Ways and Means projects over the period showed an increase of \$2,000 from what was budgetted. Operating expenses were under budget, due in part to the different billing dates.

In his report, Rev. Lewis said three services rather than two will be held on Christmas Eve – 4p.m., 7p.m. and 10 p.m. because there will be no regular service on Christmas Day. He said he is really pleased with the Sunday School situation having come through "a really challenging time".

The Christian Development Team reported that Heather Chamberlain, Chelsey MacLaggan, Krissy McLellan and Courtney Woods are teaching the three to five year-olds on a rotating basis until Christmas. Jennifer Oliver-Lavigne is having sessions for the older children, tabling the Youth Group idea for now. Pat Thibideau is overseeing the nursery.

Concern was expressed as to the future of UCW since members are getting older and it currently appears there will be no ready successor when Elna Scott completes her term as president in January.

The Pastoral Care Team continues to send sympathy and greeting cards on a regular basis. Christmas cards will go to the elderly and shut-ins. The team extends an open invitation to a pre-Christmas get-together on Tuesday, December 6 from 2-4 p.m. The Linda McPherson group will entertain and will play for the singing of Christmas carols.

The Community Outreach Sub-team, chaired by Lynne Moffitt, will be giving \$100 to each of four local schools again this year. The money goes toward their breakfast programs.

As usual, Don Nelson and his Property Management Team had a busy eight weeks with the necessary repairing, replacing, updating and installation projects. A security lock and buzzer switch for the church office will be installed which, together with the updating of fire extinguishers represent a cost of about \$1500. The snow removal quote is the same as last year. The sanctuary roof is about 20 years old which calls for replacement in the not too distant future.

The Hospitality and Friendship Team will be looking after the serving of refreshments following the Choir's Christmas concert/hymn sing on Tuesday, December 20 and the Policy and Planning Team will review staff job descriptions in the next few weeks.

There was considerable discussion about the proposed bylaw changes arising out of the recommended restructuring of the national church. The necessary voting by the pastoral charge will take place in the new year.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for January 17.

Isabel MacLaggan

*At Christmas,
all roads lead home.
~Marjorie Holmes*

Christmas Schedule of Events

Christmas Hymn Sing

Dec. 20, 2016 - 7pm

Storm Date - Dec. 21

Christmas Eve Services

4:00pm

7:00pm

10:00pm

No service will be held on

Sunday Dec. 25th



Christmas Hymn Sing ***Joy to the World***

The annual Christmas Hymn Sing will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 20th, (storm date Dec. 21th), 7pm at First United. Come join with us as we celebrate the Christmas season with familiar carols as well as new selections you are sure to enjoy. The choir will be joined by Emma Vickers, Kurt Hadley, Suzanne Cyr, Take Note, BHS Choir, Amanda & Larissa Godin, Linda Knowles- MacPherson and other special guests. Cost \$10 Adults \$5 Children. Tickets are available from choir members and the church office 546-3532.



Poinsettia Fund: Once again this year we are hoping to have the beauty of our sanctuary enhanced with poinsettias for the Christmas season. Those wishing to contribute to the annual poinsettia fund may place an envelope in the offering plate on Sunday morning. Please mark clearly on the face of the envelope – Poinsettia Fund with your name, PAR or envelope number. List the names that you wish to have printed in the Christmas bulletin insert. Donations will also be received in the church office – deadline is December 11, 2016.

Check Us Out: www.firstunited-bathurst.ca. You can also follow us on Facebook. Here you will find upcoming events as well as cancellations if the need arises.

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 November 30, 2016, the "Endowment Fund" balance was \$ 59, 910. 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 so that a total of \$4, 895. was donated to the fund in 2016 to date.

A number of projects were completed in 2016 in addition to the excellent grounds maintenance of the two cemeteries by Shawn's Lawn's and Property Maintenance. The straightening of many gravestones was carried out along with a general clean up of both cemeteries. Recently the records of the West Bathurst Cemetery were updated to include the names and dates on the headstones that were installed this year.

Refugee Sponsorship Update

On behalf of the sponsorship committee, I am pleased to report that all is well with the Syrian immigrants, we are sponsoring. The young family, parents & 2 young boys, were greeted by committee members in February & helped to settle into a small Miramichi apartment. For several months, the parents have been immersed in language classes, while the boys attended Day Care. The father has acquired his driver's license & proudly drives a second hand van. In late October, they welcomed a healthy baby girl into their family & since then, have moved into a small home for more adequate space. The current focus is to help prepare the family for more independent living & to find suitable employment for the father. It is important to note that the committee has been successful in achieving its financial fundraising goal & thanks all congregations for their various forms of support.

2017 Schedule for First United Church Events Hosted by Ways and Means Sub-Team

Thursday, January 26	Roast Pork Dinner
Sunday, February 19	Sunrise Breakfast
Thursday, March 30	Ham and Scallop
Sunday, April 23	Sunrise Breakfast
Thursday, September 28	Beef BBQ
Thursday, November 30	Turkey Supper

All Dates and Events are subject to change.

Some gift ideas for the Christmas season:

Available at the office (for a donation) we have 3 CDs featuring the piano and organ music of Linda Knowles MacPherson - "Notes From the Bay", "Christmas on the Bay", and her newest release, "Reflections on the Bay". They are available individually or in a 3 CD gift pack.

The UCW have for sale the "**Lets Break Bread Together**" cookbooks. The cost is \$15.00 and available at the office.

Church envelopes for the coming year are currently available. If you haven't had contribution envelopes in the past and wish to have them for 2017, 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 91 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.

An Idea for Advent

Often, our children receive candy treats from Advent calendars or the gift of a book each day during Advent. Instead of receiving, why not consider giving to help the needy in our community instead? Take an empty box & on each day in Advent, drop in an item that can later be donated to a local agency. I suggest gently used items for Second Chance, whose proceeds support the Homeless Shelter; things for abused women & children at Passage House; or perhaps, used books & magazines for the SPCA Book Store. As families, we could make a BIG impact on our community!

Annual Christmas Benevolence Program: For those interested in supporting this benevolence program, donation envelopes are available, on the Christmas tree located at the entrance to the sanctuary. The White gift service will be on Sunday, December 4 and the envelopes can be returned at that time. Any personal cheque may be made payable to First United Church. Donations to this fund will be used to support the volunteer center as well as those people in our congregation who find it difficult, financially, throughout the year.

Newsletters: We have 87 households currently receiving their newsletters via email. Please consider adding your name to the list. Send your request to firstadmin@nb.aibn.com. Special envelopes for Christmas contributions can be found in the Narthex. Approximately 350 members of our church family receive three letters yearly at the cost of around \$1.00/letter.

Egg Nog

6 large eggs, plus 2 yolks
1/2 cup, plus 2 tablespoons sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 cups whole milk
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon grated nutmeg
1/4 cup heavy cream, whipped to soft peaks
Additional grated nutmeg for garnish

Combine eggs, egg yolks, sugar, and salt in a heavy 3- or 4-quart pan, whisking until well-combined. Continue whisking while pouring milk in a slow, steady stream until completely incorporated. Turn on burner to lowest possible heat setting. Place pan on burner and stir mixture continuously until an instant-read thermometer reaches 160 degrees F. and the mixture thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Be patient. This should take about 45 to 60 minutes.

Strain mixture through a fine sieve into a large bowl to remove any accidental small cooked bits of egg. Add vanilla extract and nutmeg, stirring to combine. Pour into a glass pitcher, decanter, or container and cover with a lid or plastic wrap. Refrigerate this egg custard mixture to chill at least 4 hours or up to 3 days before finishing.

When ready to serve, pour heavy cream into a bowl and whip until it forms soft peaks. Fold whipped cream into cold custard mixture until combined.

Serve eggnog in chilled cups or glasses and garnish with a sprinkle of nutmeg.

*I will honor
Christmas in my heart,
and try to keep it all the year.
~Charles Dickens*