

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

#### December 2011

#### **MINISTER'S MESSAGE**

In his book, *When You're All Out of Noodles*, Ken Jones tells about an interesting discovery he made.

He writes, "When I walked into my office, I noticed something I had never seen before. It was round, about the size of a dessert plate and plugged into the wall, giving off a strange but constant noise. It wasn't loud noise, just continual.

Finally I asked the receptionist about this strange contraption. She said 'It's an ambient noise generator. If it's too quiet in here, we can distinguish the voices in the counselling office across the hall and we want to protect their privacy so we bought this noise generator to cover the voices.'

*Interesting* I thought, *very interesting*: one kind of noise to cover the sounds of another. Her explanation made perfect sense to me but didn't it need to be a little louder I asked? 'No' she replied, 'It doesn't have to be very loud at all. The constant sound tricks the ear so that what is being said can't be distinguished unless we turn it off.' *Interesting* I thought."

In the book of 1 Kings there is a very similar story about God and the prophet Elijah. In it God tells Elijah that he is going to reveal his presence to his servant and asks Elijah to climb a small mountain to prepare for this encounter. Elijah does as he is told and soon a great and powerful wind comes tearing through the mountain shattering rocks and bringing down an avalanche. And the word says, "But the Lord was not in the wind". After this a great earthquake comes but likewise the word says, "the Lord was not in the earthquake". After this comes a massive fire but once more, "the Lord was not in the fire". Immediately following the blast of fire a

small and gentle whispering sound is faintly heard. When Elijah hears it he knows... he has heard the still small voice of God and felt God's presence.

We live in a very busy world and for many of us this is perhaps the busiest season of the year. It is easy when the snow falls and the cold breezes blow to become overwhelmed by all the little things in life that seem to pile up on us. There is a constant hum of things to do and tasks to complete ringing in our ears. It seems we all have a little ambient noise generator following us around.

Saul Bellow once said, "Happiness can only be found if you can free yourself of all other distractions." Perhaps Elijah would similarly say, "God can only be found if you can free yourself of all other distractions."

This hectic Christmas season, as the stress begins to mount and the distractions of our lives burry us in clamor, may we all find a way to sit in silence with our God, block out all the noise and listen for that still small voice that's always there, always talking, but too often drowned out by other things.

Rev. Brad Childs

#### **CLERK OF SESSION**

On behalf of the Session, I would like to wish everyone a blessed and joyous Christmas! Enjoy the holidays, take a break from the usual activities of life, and spend time with those you love. 2012 will be a hopeful and busy year for First Church. We look forward to growing our church community.

The Stewards by Design team returned from Orillia (Ont.) with lots of enthusiasm to share

what we learned with the congregation at First. A lot of good ideas related to stewardship and these will be shared with the Stewardship Committee. But the conference had a larger focus – church growth and development. The keynote speaker was Kennon Callahan, author of 12 Keys to an Effective Church. Callahan’s message was to identify and build on your strengths as a congregation.

At the potluck dinner in November, we circulated a survey that asked people to rate First Church on the 12 keys. The results of the survey indicate that the areas of strength for First are worship, accessibility, and visitation.

Session has commissioned the members of the Stewards by Design team – Rev. Brad Childs, Rev. Bob Wilson, Donna Wilkinson and Jo Szostak – as a special task force of Session to provide leadership to Session and its committees as we explore together the possibilities for building on these strengths in our congregation.

To this end, a special workshop will be held on Saturday, January 14, 2012, from 9 am to 1 pm (including lunch) for all members of Session, the Board of Managers and all committees of Session. This event will begin the process of explaining, discussing and implementing a plan to move forward.

Have a wonderful holiday and let’s have a great year in 2012!

Jo Szostak,  
Clerk of Session

### MUSIC AT FIRST

The Remembrance Day Sunday service, November 6, had trumpet soloist Brent Ghiglione playing very effectively the Last Post and Reveille.

Tenor soloist Rodolfo Omolida sang “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace on Sunday, November 13.

The Senior Choir sang “Past Three a Clock”, an old English carol, and “The Colors of Christmas”, a new Christmas anthem by British composer

John Rutter at the 71<sup>st</sup> Rotary Carol Festival. Piano accompanist was William Sgrazzutti. The performance, Wednesday November 30, was telecast by Access Communications, Channel 7, and will be rebroadcasted throughout the Advent season.

At the December 11 service the Senior Choir will offer special Christmas music. Catherine Folstad, cellist, will perform “Canticle for an Angel” by Michael Conway Baker, and piano/organ selections will be presented by David Lewicki, piano and Jack Partridge, organ.

The Children’s Choir, conducted by Sheila Wilson and accompanied by Emily Ireton will join the Senior Choir in the performance of two Christmas anthems on Sunday December 18.

Each Sunday during Advent the Children’s Choir is presenting “An Advent Proclamation” in which different verses are added for each of the four Advent Sundays.

Plans are being made for music for the Christmas Eve service and the Christmas Day service on Sunday December 25.

Jack Partridge  
Director of Music

### SPECIAL SERVICES IN DECEMBER

During the Advent and Christmas Season two special services will be held in our church. The first of these is a Blue Christmas service on Wednesday evening, December 14, beginning at **7:00 pm**. This quiet service of prayer and meditation -- while primarily for those who, through loneliness, hardship, or bereavement, may find Christmas a rather difficult time of year -- is open to any one who would like to attend. The second special service is our traditional Christmas Eve service of readings, music, candle-lighting on Saturday December 25. It begins at **7:30 pm**. Please tell families, friends, neighbours about these services and plan to attend one (or both) of them. Please also note the **different** start times for each!

## **BOARD OF MANAGERS**

Finance: The financial statements from the end of October, 2011 indicate the following:

Total revenue:	191,947
Total expenses:	<u>222,702</u>
Net deficit	(30,755)

While many of our fixed expenses have already been paid (ie., insurance, presbytery and synod dues) we depend on the generosity of the congregation to end the year well.

Jo Szostak,  
Board of Managers

## **BOARD OF MANAGERS (Cont'd)**

The Board would like to thank the following people for working to clean up our church on Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011: Wendy and Keith Prior, Gordon Wiles, Pat Fyffe, Joyce Rivers, Glenn Wolfe, Karen Schmeidl, George Madeley, Bob Wilson, Jo Szostak, Violet Lochore, Bob and Delores Nelson, Joyce McKersie, Margaret Purse, Maddie and Tracy Childs, Tammy MacDonald, Tom Ireton, Ray and Vera Sisson and Bette Kelly.

The following work projects have been completed: pigeon spikes installed in the courtyard, broken windows repaired in the front entrance and classroom, electricity fixed in the gym, new mats placed at the front door, and locks changed on office doors. The work of repairing the south wall of the sanctuary continues, and the graffiti on back of church building has been painted over.

The Board is most grateful to Joyce McKersie, Wendy Prior, and Ron Pugsley for the new blinds that have been installed Kennedy Room, and to Jane Powell and Gary Belore for the updating of the church sign at the Albert Street entrance with the addition of the Rev Child's name.

Finally, please note that your 2012 offering envelopes are available for pick-up in the Narthex.

We would like to thank the congregation for its generosity to the ministry of First Presbyterian Church this past year, by giving of your time, talents and treasure in so many ways. Have a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

Donna Wilkinson  
Board of Managers

## **PRESBYTERIAN DAILY E-DEVOTIONAL**

All through the month of December, the PCCWeb *Daily* Devotional features wonderful Christmas devotionals. Join more than 6000 subscribers around the world and enjoy devotionals each day from our Presbyterian Church, delivered free by e-mail to your inbox. Subscribe at <http://daily.presbycan.ca/email/subscribe.html>.

## **FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Advent party was a great success. Sixty enthusiastic people gathered for an evening of fun and games and -- of course -- food. The children did a fantastic job of painting the characters for the Nativity scene. Be sure to check out their handiwork at the front entrance to the Church. It looks terrific. Special thanks to Lauren and Sarah for leading the Carol Singing - budding choir directors there! Sheila's jokes were -- well -- groaners but people were polite enough to laugh anyway. Jeannie, Wendy and Marg did a great job -- so many thanks to them for their hard work. All in all it was a great time and we hope to do it all again next year.

The next Fellowship event will be a special Valentine's Dinner on Feb 12 -- so mark your calendars. Watch for more information in the New Year.

Christmas blessing to all,  
Sheila Wilson,  
Fellowship Committee

## **STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

Thanks to everyone for their support of our FundScrip initiative! For the month of November, First Church earned just over \$400 in rebates. Our last order before Christmas will be Sunday, December 11. Then there will be a break until we start up again in the new year, with the first 2012 order on January 8. So please plan ahead and order enough cards on December 11 to last until January. Think about the shopping you are likely to do and stock up on your cards now.

Jo Szostak,  
Stewardship Committee

## **MISSION & OUTREACH**

Congratulations on two very successful projects this fall: Freedom from Freezing, and Christmas Care Kits.

A special thank you to all the knitters and wool donators. As a result of your efforts, 103 pairs of mitts, 34 hats and 9 scarves were delivered to Kitchener Community School this week - just in time for more cold weather. There is still more wool, and we will collect your knitting until the end of January.

We're delighted with the response to the new Care Kit project. We've received MANY donations of travel-sized toiletry items. Your last chance to donate items is Sunday, Dec 11. The children will be assembling kits that morning and we will deliver everything to the Salvation Army for distribution to their clients.

Mission notes:

CANADA: Meeting needs in the inner city. Your gifts to Presbyterians Sharing help St. David's Inner City Outreach Ministry to meet the needs of families in Hamilton's inner city. Their outreach activities, including after-school programs for children and teens, adult and seniors' programs and a teen mom support group are geared towards not just alleviating, but actually preventing poverty. Let us pray for St. David's outreach ministry as it works to develop

a safe and healthy community for children, youth and families in Hamilton's inner city.

CANADA: Supporting seminary students. Our gifts to Presbyterians Sharing help seminary students gain valuable experience with the unique issues in rural and remote congregations. Each summer up to five congregations are paired with a student from one of our three theological colleges. Dennis Howard, a student at the Vancouver School of Theology, worked at Knox church in Winnipegosis last summer. He writes, "I would like to thank the Presbyterian Church in Canada for supporting me in what was an amazing summer experience. I taught and I learned; in retrospect I think I learned much more than I taught!" Please pray for these theological students as they discover the joys and challenges of rural ministry.

Mary Jesse,  
Mission & Outreach Convenor

## **NOTES OF THANKS**

To the Congregation of First Presbyterian, On behalf of the participants of the Saskatchewan Presbyterian Youth (SPY) event held at First Church in April, we would like to say "thank you" for your warm hospitality! The space you provided was perfect for our event, the lunch on Sunday scrumptious, and the opportunity to worship with you on Sunday was wonderful.

Thank you for your continued support of youth events in the Synod. We would love to come back again soon!

Blessings,  
SPY (May '11)

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Dear Friends of First,  
This fall we received a donation to our general fund ~ what a wonderful gift. Meeting day to day expenses can sometimes be a challenge, but gifts to our operating fund help us to carry out our ministry without having to worry about the little things.

Thanks again for your continued support.  
Blessings from Camp Christopher (Nov. '11)

Dear Friends of First Presbyterian Church,

What a delight to receive your gift of Canadian Tire money earlier this year. It is with great excitement that I share with you, that because of congregations like First and faithful individuals, we have received enough Canadian Tire money to purchase a new kayak for our waterfront for 2012! The kayak will allow our lifeguard to better serve our canoeing program and will be a great addition for campers to use during their time at camp.

Your support is a gift to the ministry at camp and we are thankful for your commitment to us.

Blessings on your ministry,  
Your Friends at Camp Christopher (Nov. '11)

### **DECEMBER EVENTS**

- 11<sup>th</sup> 10:30 am Worship Service  
Sunday School**
- 13<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
Noon Freedom 55ers  
7:00 pm Board of Managers
- 14<sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm Blue Christmas Service**
- 15<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am Adult Walk  
8:00 pm Choir
- 18<sup>th</sup> 10:30 am Worship Service  
Sunday School**
- 24<sup>th</sup> 7:30 pm Christmas Eve Service**

**25<sup>th</sup> 10:30 am Christmas Day Service**  
Please note: the Rev. Childs will be away from December 27 - January 4<sup>th</sup>. The Rev. Wilson will be providing pastoral care during this time.