

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

#### December 2012

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Sometime in the mid-1880s Christina Rossetti penned the poem, "Love came down at Christmas". It is a short and pretty little work that lends itself easily to melodies. But it's also a strange piece in many ways.

Rossetti, you see, was the daughter of a political exile who had lost his sight, succumbed to tuberculosis, and fell into depression after having to leave a prominent teaching career. Christina herself suffered her first nervous breakdown at the age of just 14 and was also diagnosed with manic depression. When in her twenties her fiancé left her and she, in turn, turned down two marriage proposals of her own. She was also the model for the Virgin Mary in two famous paintings but had "a major religious crisis" in 1857. Though highly intelligent she was against women's suffrage and her first two published poems were titled "Death's Chill Between" and "Heart's Chill Between". Later in life Christina suffered from Grave's Disease, had a near fatal heart attack, and developed breast cancer. At the time that "Love came down at Christmas" flowed from her pen, Christina Rossetti had become a recluse. Like many writers she suffered greatly and wrote most often in a way that showed her scars. Yet Rossetti never lost faith. She wrote:

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus:  
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,  
Love shall be yours and love be mine,  
Love to God and to all men,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Through all her turmoil, the good and the bad, Christina saw hope in "Love Incarnate, Love Divine" as God's love became a physical reality, living and breathing in our world and our lives. In some ways this is a strange poem because it is a strange sort of love of which she speaks. What sort of God would want to enter into human life with all of its complications and sorrows, and finally into death itself? The Answer: Our God. A God who loves so much that he would be anything and do anything just for the subjects of his love – You.

This is the God we proclaim at Christmas and every day throughout the year.

No matter where you are this Christmas season, no matter whom you are with or without, no matter what your personal circumstances are, no matter what strife you face, the birth of Jesus tells us that God loves you and that God is here. Merry Christmas!

Rev. Brad Childs

#### SESSION

2012 has been a very busy and full year. Our congregation continues to grow in faith and fellowship! A number of special events will be occurring during December, as we celebrate Advent and Christmas.

I've just listened to our First Church Choir perform in the Rotary Carol Festival - and they sounded wonderful! Be sure to hear their performance on the Access Cable channel throughout the Season. Did you know that First

Presbyterian Choir has sung in the Carol Festival every year since its inception 72 years ago?!

Our annual Advent party will be on Dec. 9 from 4-7 p.m. Be sure to bring your whole family to enjoy the fun. A chili supper will be served... just let us know how many are coming!

Two special services this month will be our Blue Christmas Service and our Christmas Eve service. Watch for dates and times to be announced in the near future!

Have a blessed and joyful Christmas holiday!

Jo Szostak,  
Clerk of Session

### **BOARD OF MANAGERS**

**FINANCES:** As of the end of October, First Church financial statements show that we have a deficit of almost \$10,000. We had borrowed \$10,000 from our investments for cash flow over the summer, but we didn't need it, so have paid it back. Since our budget for 2012 projects a deficit of \$14,310 we are on line with the budget. But wouldn't it be great if we ended up without any deficit this year?! We budgeted \$200,000 for identified contributions and by the end of October we had received just over \$148,000.

Thanks to everyone for your generous contributions so far this year. If we could meet our budget on contributions we would have a surplus, which would put us in great shape for the start of 2013. Let's work together to see if we can make it happen!

The Board would also like to thank you for your generous givings this year to the other ministries we support:

▪ Presbyterians Sharing:	3,885.00
▪ PWS&D:	3,269.56
▪ Women's Missionary Society:	500.00
▪ Camp Christopher	185.38

Offering envelopes for 2013 are available and may be picked up in the narthex.

Board of Managers

### **MUSIC AT FIRST**

On Remembrance Sunday, November 11, the Chancel Brass, consisting of Stuart Beatch (trumpet), Richard Burdick (French Horn). Alison Thiele (French Horn) and Julie Atter (trombone), played the Prelude and Postlude, and accompanied the hymn "From Ocean Unto Ocean". Stuart Beatch played the Last Post and Reveille. It was a very impressive service.

Jason Yuen (Bass), Rodolfo Omolida (Tenor) and Graeme Mitchell (Bass) sang solos in the anthem "Somebody's Knocking At Your Door", Sunday November 18.

Although choir practice was cancelled on November 22 due to blizzard conditions, choir members arrived ready to sing on Sunday November 25. They presented a fine performance of "Gloria" from the Twelfth Mass by Mozart as part of the "Christ the King Sunday" service.

On December 2, first Sunday of Advent, the choir sang the Prelude as well as two carols prior to the service -- "Love Came Down at Christmas" and "The Snow Lay on the Ground" -- accompanied by William Sgrazzutti on the piano. The choir had performed these same two works at the Rotary Christmas Carol Festival on December 5. This program will be re-telecast on Channel 7 during the Advent Season. .

Throughout the Sundays of Advent the first verse of "Carol of the Advent" (Book of Praise #125) will be sung by the choir during the Entry of the Written Word.

"This Christ Child", composed by Sir Philip Ledger, will be presented at the Sunday service, December 16. This will be a world premiere and is particularly meaningful because of the passing of Sir Philip, November 18 at age 74. Guest soloists will be Lynn Channing, soprano, and Dominic Gregorio, baritone, both from the Department of Music, University of Regina.

A Christmas Carol Sing-along will be held from 10 - 10:25am at First Church on Sunday, December 23. Please fill out your two carol requests in the form included in the order of service for the next three weeks. Here is an opportunity to sing your favourite carols. Even if you are a few minutes late in arriving please join

us at the front of the sanctuary and lend your voice to the Sing-along!

The guest soprano soloist on December 23 will be Beth Miller. Beth has a degree in voice from McGill University. She and her husband, Jared Miller, live in Grenfell where Jared is minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church.

Plans are being made for the Christmas Eve Service, December 24 which will begin at 7:00pm.

Jack Partridge  
Director of Music

### **FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**



It isn't too late to sign up for the Third Annual Advent Party on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012 from 4-7 pm at the church. Please see Sheila Wilson after the service Sunday morning. There will be some Christmas games, carol singing ... and a lot of fun... followed by a chili supper. This year we are also planning on having mac 'n cheese for the kids and those unable to have chili. So, plan on joining all the other fun-loving people at First for this event. Hope to see all of you there.

Sheila Wilson,  
Fellowship Convenor

### **FUNDSCRIP**

December 9 is the final order for FundScrip gift cards before the Christmas ordering break. Orders will be available for pickup on Dec. 16. We will have basic gift cards (grocery and gas) available for sale for the next few weeks if either Lizz or Jo are available. The first orders in the New Year will be taken Jan. 6 with delivery Jan. 13. So stock up now! The December promotions are: PetroCanada 3% instead of 2%, Winners/HomeSense 7% instead of 4% and The Gap (Baby Gap, Old Navy) 7% instead of 5%. We had a great first year with \$3000 raised for the church! Thanks to everyone for your faithful support!

## **PLANNED GIVING AT FIRST CHURCH**

### **What Does It Mean To Be A ProVisionaries™ Congregation?**

With our decision to develop a more intentional Planned Giving program, First Church took its first step to become part of the planned giving initiative of the Presbyterian Church in Canada called ProVisionaries™. The name is a combination of two words: provision and visionaries. It is intended to recognize that those who make planned gifts to the church have experienced God's gracious provision in their own lives and are visionaries who see what the church can do through the grace of God and the generosity of God's people.

When the Reverend Herb Gale, Associate Secretary for Planned Giving for the Presbyterian Church in Canada, spent a week with our congregation and commissioned our Planned Giving team, First Church became part of a network of congregations which have covenanted to make planned giving an integral part of their stewardship and mission. It is called the ProVisionaries™ Network. Congregations which covenant to become a part of this network commit themselves to:

1. Developing policies and procedures for receiving, investing and using planned gifts;
2. Educating the congregation about the various ways of making a planned gift;
3. Promoting planned giving and the stewardship of accumulated resources within the congregation on an ongoing basis;
4. Sharing their learnings in the area of planned giving with other congregations in The Presbyterian Church in Canada and with the national Planned Giving Office.

As the Reverend Gale explained during his visit, some people think of the concept of planned giving as "fairly new", but really it is as old as the Gospel and as old as the church itself. Planned gifts have generously enabled First Church to carry on its ministry throughout the years.

First Church's Planned Giving Team has met twice since the Reverend Gale's visit and it is

busy developing policies and procedures to ensure that individuals who are interested in making a planned gift can understand the various options available for providing gifts, the tax advantages that may be offered by the government for making a planned gift, and, most importantly, see how their generosity can support various ministries of First Church or the national church for years to come.

Lisa Ann Wood,  
Planned Giving Committee

### **WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Worship Committee met November 10 with a busy agenda for consideration. We addressed once again the Worship Workshop document and noted that most items we were asked to consider have been addressed. We also discussed updating the existing "Terms of Reference" for the Worship Committee and this will be done in the New Year.

Readers are needed for the Advent Liturgies as well as for Scriptures throughout the Sundays of December. If you would like to participate, please speak to Marianne Woods. Marianne will also be seeking Lectors for early in the New Year. The Committee also looked at inviting congregants who have not previously participated as a lector. We would like to encourage more people to take an active part in the service in this way if they should so desire.

Thanks to Elizabeth Kitson for the donation of flowers November 25, in memory of Larry, who was a very active member of our congregation.

With the arrival of "Christ the King Sunday," November 25, the Chancel colour changed to White. The Advent Season began on December 2 for which the colour is Royal Blue, signifying the expected coming of a King. Blue remains on the Chancel table and Pulpit until Christmas, when it changes to White and remains as such for the Twelve Days of Christmas ending with Epiphany. The theme centers on the Visit of the Magi and continues with the Baptism of Jesus. Following the first Epiphany, the color is Green.

Joyce McKersie,  
Worship Committee

## **PCCWeb DAILY DEVOTIONAL**

### **What A Pleasing Surprise!**

**Question:** What joins 6000 readers in 55 countries every day of the year?

**Answer:** The PCCWeb *Daily* Devotionals are available online and by e-mail every day and they are free of cost.

The *Daily* Devotional has been published by volunteers every day for the past 16 years. Here is what readers are saying about it:

In an increasingly troubled world, the PCCWeb *Daily* Devotional reminds us of what is truly important: the love of God and His active presence in our lives. I have started every day for the past year with the *Daily* and the Bible reading selections. While the world remains troubled, *Daily* is helping me to live "in the world" and not "of the world." – Robert Foster, Escondido, California, USA.

I love these devotions, and every morning, it is the first thing I read. Because of the devotions, I see God more and more in the ordinary things of my daily life, and I find myself asking what God is teaching me here now in this time. I see God in everything. I am amazed how often the message is just what I need to hear as I hear God speaking to me through the devotions. – Liz Samis, Drayton, Ontario, Canada.

I find the *Daily* to be a calming reprieve in the hubbub of day-to-day earthly matters that cause us stress and concern. Whether I read the *Daily* in the morning, evening, or somewhere in between, I find it calms my thinking and reminds me that God is in control, that I am one of His children, and that He loves me in spite of my sins. – Peter Morrison, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Although the *Daily* website is provided by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, writing is not restricted to Canadians or Presbyterians. Devotionals are submitted by volunteers from all over the world, from places like Uganda, Brazil, Australia, Mexico, India, Sri Lanka, and Britain, as well as Canada and the USA, making the *Daily* truly an on online community with

friendships throughout the world. The sincerity of the writers is obvious. A "PrayerLine" is also part of the *Daily*, where readers can ask for prayer, or pray for the concerns of others.

There are some 6000 known subscribers by e-mail, but there are several untrackable formats besides e-mail, such as webpage, text feed, podcast, Facebook, Twitter, and smartphones. In addition, subscribers find the devotionals useful to take to meetings of ladies, men, elders, trustees, and study groups. Readers pass them on to friends and relatives by e-mail or word of mouth, and use them for children's stories and sermon illustrations, so the grand total of beneficiaries is impossible to calculate accurately.

Check it out at [www.daily.presbycan.ca](http://www.daily.presbycan.ca). We really hope that you will subscribe! The season of Advent and Christmas is a time of particularly pleasant devotionals.

Submitted by Jo Szostak and Donna Wilkinson

**REGINA AND AREA SUPPORT SERVICES (RASS) ONLINE COMMUNITY DIRECTORY**

Over the past few months *First Things First* has carried short articles on various social issues written by Yan Khan, coordinator of the Regina and Area Support Services -- the online directory of human support listings. For example, in the November issue of our newsletter he wrote about homelessness and the dearth of affordable housing for people in low-income groups in cities like Regina.

Recently, Yan sent a letter to the church office in which he lamented the fact that funding for RASS, originally provided by the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, has run out and that his office has been closed. He has since found a new job as a consultant for the United Way. Here is a brief excerpt from Yan's letter.

"I'd like to take this opportunity to thank First Presbyterian Church for including my articles in its newsletter. The last two months saw a noticeable increase in RASS's usage statistics,

and I've no doubt that my articles in your newsletter helped to spread the word about the online directory.

Have a Merry Christmas!  
Yan"

We wish him well in his new position.

**Joseph's prayer**

"Why me Lord?" Joseph asked,  
I'll be honored to do that task;  
Take care of his mother too,  
If you are sure, that I will do  
The angel told me, what you have in mind,  
Oh Lord I trust you, you are being kind;  
I shall be a parent, if you so choose,  
please guide me, I can't refuse.  
I am a poor man, I will try my best,  
I'll protect them without any rest;  
together we will walk hand in hand,  
you know, I must go to my homeland.  
A long trip ahead, the land is rough and wild,  
But Mary is happy, she is with child;  
It is your Son, we are chosen to bear,  
Truly we are blessed, together we share."  
Violet Lochoire

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year. ~ Violet Lochoire

**DECEMBER EVENTS**

9 <sup>th</sup>	10:30 am	<b>Worship Service &amp; Sunday School</b>
11 <sup>th</sup>	9:00 am	Walk
	10:30 am	Bible Study
	noon	Freedom 55ers
12 <sup>th</sup>	7:00 pm	Session
13 <sup>th</sup>	8:00 pm	Choir
16 <sup>th</sup>	10:30 am	<b>Worship Service &amp; Sunday School</b>
20 <sup>th</sup>	8:00 pm	Choir
23 <sup>rd</sup>	10:30 am	<b>Worship Service &amp; Sunday School</b>
24 <sup>th</sup>	7:00pm	<b>Christmas Eve Service</b>
30 <sup>th</sup>	10:30 am	<b>Worship Service &amp; Sunday School</b>