

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

December 2016

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Matthew's unique version of the birth of Jesus traces his family tree all the way from Father Abraham to Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. And then with an astounding departure, says: **“and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.”**

Matthew says that Joseph nearly divorced Mary on the quiet, he was so distressed by her pregnancy, until the angel of the Lord straightened him out about the nature of her birth. No wonder the line of succession shifted from the father to the mother! Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus!

Yet Joseph proved to be a gracious and loving man. He accepted Mary as his wife and Jesus as his son. And life went on, but certainly not without excitement!

The birth of Jesus brought many fundamental shifts in the beliefs of His day. One was acceptance. He always emphasized openness and a welcoming of absolutely everyone who wanted to be part of His Kingdom. It was a radical departure from the rules and regulations-ridden beliefs of the time. They were more focussed on keeping the unworthy out than on letting them in. Jesus' Gospel is open and welcoming. If you're not against me, I count you as for me - was his approach.

Where are we as His Church today? Are we open and welcoming? At the door of our churches? At our Lord's Table? At the baptismal font? Are we willing to challenge the system, to let people know that they count with us, that we respect each one as God's chosen child, whether we are big or little?

This is a major piece of Matthew's account of the birth of the Christ Child. Isn't it important for us to note and to act accordingly?

May the Christ of Christmas bless us, one and all!

Rev. Bob Wilson
Interim Minister

SESSION

As Christmas approaches, we want to make you aware of some important dates.

- * Our Christmas Eve service will be held Saturday, Dec. 24 at 7:00 p.m.
- * Sunday services on December 25 and January 1 will be held at 10:30 a.m. as usual.
- * Holy Communion will be celebrated on January 8, 2017.

We wish you and your families a blessed Christmas! Relax and enjoy the holiday season.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

ELECTION OF ELDERS

The Session is working toward having 12 elders for 6-year terms, with 2 elders elected annually. This year we have two elders completing terms and one vacancy so we will be electing elders with varying terms to balance out the Session. A nominating committee has been established to prepare a slate of nominees for election at the annual meeting. All members of the congregation are invited to nominate members of the congregation to fulfill this role.

According to the Presbyterian Book of Forms...
“Election to the eldership is the call of God, through the congregation, for service in Christ's Church. Since the eldership is a spiritual office concerned with the rule and pastoral oversight of the congregation only suitable men and women should be considered. They should be committed Christians, in regular attendance at

public worship, persons of sound judgment and upright character, and either knowledgeable or prepared to learn of the government of the church."

If you would like to nominate someone, please contact either Jo Szostak or Bette Kelly.

BOARD OF MANAGERS

Thank you for your generous contributions to the life and mission of First Church throughout the year!

Over the last two years we have replaced all of the roofs on the church buildings. Our pledge campaign ends this month and we were able to raise the budgeted amount from the congregation. However, we did spend the majority of our Property Fund, so any contributions to help replenish that fund are appreciated. A full accounting of the roof project will be provided in the new year.

Our Operating Fund is running at a small deficit currently. As you may remember, we set up a contingency fund within our planned giving investments at the last congregational annual meeting. We withdrew \$25,000 from that contingency fund to cover the 2015 deficit. During 2016 we have withdrawn \$15,000 for cash flow purposes and still find ourselves with a deficit. If you are able to make additional contributions to help offset the deficit, that would be appreciated.

Board of Managers

MUSICAL NOTES

The choir will be presenting Henry Mollicone's "A Christmas Celebration" on Sunday, December 18, 2016. We are delighted that Kelly Handerek will be joining us as the Narrator. This lovely piece includes selections for chorus, vocal solos and duets, and instrumentalists. During this time of Advent we are planning to have one or two Carol Sing-a-longs before the start of Sunday services. As well, we are looking forward to hearing musical selections from our Choral Scholars, Gabe Omolida and Will Ireton, and contemporary music led by Rodolfo Omolida.

William (Bill) Sgrazutti
Music Director

OUR CHORAL SCHOLARS

We are delighted to have Will Ireton and Gabe Omolida as our Choral Scholars for the 2016-17 year.

As a returning Choral Scholar, Will is applying what he is learning in the areas of choral conducting, service playing and music selection to enhance our music program and our worship services. Will is majoring in music through Luther College at the University of Regina while also taking lessons on the pipe organ under the tutelage of Hart Godden, Music Director at Knox Metropolitan United Church. He is a member of the U of R Concert Choir and the New Music Ensemble, a group that performs works by contemporary composers, including some of his own compositions. In 2015 he joined the Halcyon Chamber Choir which recently performed with Per Sonatori, Regina's Baroque Ensemble; and in June 2016 Will earned his ARCT (Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Toronto) in Piano Performance. He is active as a pianist in the Regina music community, he competed in the Saskatchewan Music Festival (2016) and is a performer at U of R receptions and ceremonies. In his 'spare' time, Will currently is a lab instructor in keyboard/music theory at the U of R, a piano teacher, and an accompanist for Karen Fransden's voice students.

Gabe Omolida is our newest Choral Scholar. During this his first year as a Choral Scholar, Gabe will gain experience in accompanying the choir and contemporary music groups and will learn basic choral conducting techniques. As a Grade 12 student at the Regina Christian School, Gabe is member of his school's 'select' choir (Grades 9 to 12); and sings and plays the piano as a member of his school's worship team. Gabe has performed at City Hall, Knox-Metropolitan United Church and other churches including the Avonhurst Pentecostal Church. He also performs at other Christian schools and various care facilities in the Regina area including the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre. As well, he participates in his high school's musicals where last year he did a terrific job as Bert in the production of Mary Poppins. Gabe has been taking piano lessons with Gilbert Proulx since 2009, performing in recitals, studying music

theory, and competing in the Saskatchewan Music Festival. He periodically performs for the Freedom 55ers.

We are fortunate to have such young musical talent at First Presbyterian Church!

A focus of the Choral Scholars program is to reach out to the wider music community. We will continue to explore ways to connect with this community and to promote the Choral Scholars program at First Church.

William (Bill) Sgrazzutti
Music Director

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Greetings to all. How quickly we have arrived at another Advent season. As we go about our busy schedules of shopping and preparing for Christmas, this is also the time to renew ourselves and remember what life is really all about.

Your Worship Committee is looking forward to this wonderful season with plans for each of the four Sundays of Advent.

Advent banners, colors and wreath are all in place. Readers for the Advent liturgies and candle lighters are arranged for the month of December. Thanks to those families who have agreed to participate.

Also, our thanks go out to the Rev. John Ferrier and the Rev. Henry Friesen who filled in during Rev. Wilson's absence on the first two Sundays of Advent.

Our Christmas Eve service of Lessons and Carols, Saturday, December 24, begins at 7:00 pm. Please join us and bring your families and friends to celebrate Christ's birth.

Christmas Day this year is on a Sunday and the Rev. Wilson will be conducting a regular service on December 25. Everyone is invited to attend this service as well.

On November 13, Jill Lanigan and her nine month old daughter, Willa, were baptized. Over the last several years it has been our practice to present a rose to babies and young children when they are baptized in celebration of such

important occasions. This time it was decided to present Willa's mother, Jill, with a Bible to mark the occasion and we will continue this practice with all adults who are baptized.

The Worship Committee recently decided to re-introduce the more common practice of Gospel lessons being read the Minister, and the Old and New Testament lessons, by lectors (lay readers). Also, on the third Sunday of each month our lay readers will be selected from our youth in the congregation. On Sunday November 20th, for example, Matthew and Luke Yakemchuk and Ace Miller were the youth readers and they did a fine job. We look forward to their participation again, and to that of other youth readers as well. Any youth who would like to participate should please speak to Marianne Woods.

Communion by Intinction will be celebrated January 8, 2017.

Lectors are needed for February and March. Please contact Marianne Woods if you would like to read.

Christmas Blessings and All the Best in 2017!

Joyce McKersie,
Worship Committee.

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Mark your calendars! The Fellowship Committee is planning a Christmas Bunwich Lunch on Sunday, December 18th, 2016 immediately after church. We will have some Christmas games, carol singing and a lot of fun. Plan on joining all the other fun loving people at First Church for this event. Hope to see all of you there.

Sheila Wilson
Fellowship Committee Convenor

FUNDSCRIP

Our last order for 2016 has been placed. FundScrip cards will not be available for sale on Christmas Day. The next order Sunday will be Sunday, January 8.

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

A Letter of Thanks

A few days ago, I returned home from the Toronto School of Theology to find a letter with exciting news from your congregation. What a wonderful encouragement! This scholarship is exceedingly generous, and will help me meet the financial demands of pursuing doctoral work in theology while supporting my family. Thank you!

As I indicated in my application, my long-term goal is to become a scholar serving the Church, either by teaching future ministers at a seminary or by resuming full-time congregational ministry. In either role, it is my hope that my current work in the Ph.D. in Theological Studies will prepare me for a meaningful ministry of teaching and writing that promises, with God's blessing, to upbuild God's people in Christ.

With this goal in mind, it is particularly encouraging and affirming to me that a Presbyterian congregation would be willing to provide this gift in support of my studies. I thank God for your generosity, and I pray that Christ's blessings will remain with His people at First Presbyterian Church, Regina.

With gratitude,
The Rev. David Clark

CAMP CHRISTOPHER

Dear Presbyterian & United Congregations,

Thank you for your support and involvement with Camp Christopher over the years. As a congregation of the Presbyterian Synod of Saskatchewan or the United Riverbend Presbytery, we are your camp!

Although the camp property is owned by the Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church oversees the site, maintenance, and development, the program at Camp Christopher has been sponsored and run jointly by the Riverbend Presbytery and the Presbyterian Synod for many years (almost 30 years).

Every summer at Camp Christopher, a significant number of Presbyterian and United Church children and youth participate in the camp program as campers, leaders-in-training, counsellors, and program staff. Church members

also volunteer in various roles such as helping out at the annual Camp Clean-up Weekend, serving as camp chaplains/Bible study leaders, health officers, maintenance or kitchen volunteers. Many of our church women also participate in the annual Women's Camp in September.

We are thrilled to continue the partnership between the Presbyterian and United Churches because Camp Christopher serves children and youth of our congregations and provides leadership training for our youth and young adults. But beyond providing a Christian camping experience for our own young people, the camp is a significant outreach to children and youth without an established connection to any church.

Through our partnership with the Tri4Kids4Camp program in Prince Albert, a large number of campers are sponsored each summer to attend Camp Christopher. This program is a partnership between St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Prince Albert together with several Community Schools and community members. They raise money every year to send about 150 children to Camp Christopher – children who would not otherwise have such an opportunity, both to experience the wonder of God's Creation and to experience the loving presence of God in Christian community.

Donna Wilkinson
Camp Christopher

A CHRISTMAS NOTE OF APPRECIATION

Merry Christmas to our good friends at First Presbyterian Church!

I just wanted to wish you all the best in this joyous season and to say thank you for all the generous gifts that you have donated for the work of Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry in 2016. God bless all of you and may He bless everything you do in the New Year.

Love from Stewart & Terry Folster and everyone at SNCM

DECEMBER EVENTS

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| 18 | 10:30 AM | Worship Service
(Rev. Bob Wilson) |
| | | & Sunday School |
| | 11:30 AM | Bunwich Lunch |
| 24 | 7:00 PM | Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service |
| 25 | 10:30 AM | Christmas Day Service
(Rev. Bob Wilson) |