

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

December 2017



MINISTER'S MESSAGE

A friend of mine, writing on Facebook at the beginning of December, encouraged her friends: "Remember, you drive your season. You choose how to spend your time in Advent and Christmas." Although she appeared to be offering advice to her friends with busy and hectic lives, I expect she was mostly reminding herself to be intentional about her own choices during this very special, but very full, season of the year.

Family, friends, work, church commitments, and social functions can fill up our schedules and keep us running from one thing to the next; or we can choose to forego some activities and savour some others, allowing the joy and peace of the season enough time and space to settle in our hearts.

This Christmas I encourage you also to be intentional about how you celebrate. If you decide to host a dinner or have a party, to send cards or give presents, to make a special donation to a charity, to volunteer your time or talent for a good cause, or if you decide to attend a special worship service or add a devotional practice for Advent... then do these things because doing them is meaningful for you or allows you to express love and care for others. Don't do them because you think you HAVE to do them. Don't do them because you ALWAYS do them at Christmas or because you think that everyone is SUPPOSED to do them.

A number of years ago I really cut down on the practice of buying a lot of Christmas presents. I have to admit it was easier for me to do this because I don't have any kids and my extended family lives quite far away. Some years Nick and I didn't buy any presents at all, and other years we would just get something small for each other – some good books to read over the holiday, for example. And I have to admit that it's been several years since we've put up a Christmas tree at home. We were busy with church activities and hardly home, so we wouldn't have really appreciated a tree that much.

But this Christmas I want to put up a Christmas tree. Not a really big one, but one that we can decorate together, cover with lights, and sit by in the living room while we read, pray, and experience this holy season. I think it's going to be wonderful!

I hope that as you make your Christmas plans you will include some time for worship and drawing close to God. Jesus is the reason for the season. It is his birth that we celebrate, and his coming again that we anticipate. Perhaps the following prayer may be helpful for your reflection:

Nativity – A Prayer by Pat Bennett

(Source: Ruth Burgess, *Hay & Stardust: Resources for Christmas to Candlemas*, Wild Goose Publications, 2005.)

Incarnate Christ,
be born in me this Christmas!

May my will be as Mary's,
saying 'yes' to your ways;
my mind as Joseph's,
open to your unfolding revelation.

May my voice be as the angels',
joyfully proclaiming Good News;
my knees as the animals',
quietly bent in adoration.

May my feet be as the shepherds',
running eagerly to find you;
my hands as the wise men's,
offering up all that I have.

May my heart be as the manger, poor yet
containing heaven's greatest treasure;
my life as the stable,
hallowed and expanded by your presence.

Incarnate Christ,
be born in me this Christmas!

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

There are a number of dates to be aware of as we move through the next few months:

- December 20, 7:30 p.m. - Blue Christmas service
- December 24, 7:00 p.m. - Christmas Eve Service
- January 21, 2018 - 3:00 p.m. – the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service at First Church
- January 28, 2018, after church - Birthday Sunday - plan now to stay for delicious cakes!
- February 11, 2018 - Pancake Supper

As well, on Saturday, February 10, 2018, the Presbytery of Assiniboia will be holding a special meeting to study the referrals from General Assembly related to human sexuality. That meeting will be from 10am to 4pm at First Church. Members of all congregations in the Presbytery are welcome.

Have a blessed Christmas and a relaxing holiday season!

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

This is the time of the Christian year known as Advent, when we look forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are kept busy with all the secular things that have become a part of the celebrating. However, let us not forget the true meaning of Christmas.

Our church sanctuary is decorated in Advent colors. We choose to use royal blue for the Advent season, but purple or gold are also correct as any one of these colors is considered a color for a King.

Of course, there is the annual Christmas tree all decorated in gold and lit up to give a feeling of festivity and the arrival of a promised King. As the season progresses, the red poinsettias are added along with a creche to complete the theme. Let us not forget the advent banners at the front of the sanctuary as well. On Christmas Eve we have a special banner depicting the visit of the shepherds to the stable where Jesus was born.

During each Sunday of Advent, we have a family reading and lighting an Advent candle at the beginning of the service. Thanks to all who are participating in this way.

Rev. Amanda Currie has planned a Blue Christmas service for Wednesday, December 20 at 7:30 pm, especially for those who are finding this time of year sad due to a bereavement of a family member or close friend. If you are finding yourself feeling the need, this is for you. Please come and share in the service.

We also look forward to the Christmas Eve candle light service to be held Sunday, December 24 at 7:00 pm. Special music and a presentation are being planned for this service. There will also be an opportunity to join in a carol sing before the service begins. Come early and enjoy this special time.

Thanks goes out to our youth choir for its lead into Advent with their musical presentation. As we prepare for Christmas, we will be singing "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord." in place of "Hallelujah"; and singing verse 6 of "O Come Emmanuel" in place of the Aaronic Blessing. We will return to singing the original lyrics to the Aaronic Blessing after Christmas.

A special thanks to all those who assist in reading scriptures, greeting at the door, or ushering. Your participation in our Sunday morning service is very much appreciated. Anyone wishes to help in any one of these ways should please contact Marianne Woods (for reading or ushering) and Wendy Prior (for greeting at the door).

The Worship committee would like to wish you a Very Merry and Blessed Christmas.

Joyce McKersie
Worship Committee

PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

We are pleased to announce that we are formalizing a program we have been doing for quite some time and giving it a name: *Love on a Plate!* This program provides meals to those who may need them (e.g. after having surgery, going through a difficult time, etc.). You can be part of this program in either of two ways: (1) by letting us know when you may be in need of a meal or if you know someone else who could benefit from this assistance; (2) by being part of the team of people who prepare the meals when needed.

“Providing” a meal means making a meal (you will be informed of any allergies etc.) and then delivering it to the person who needs it.

If you are interested in this program, please let Donna Wilkinson know at donnaw@sasktel.net or by phone at 306-586-4026.

Donna Wilkinson,
Pastoral Care Committee

STEWARDSHIP

Offering envelopes for 2018 will be available in the narthex beginning Dec. 10. Please pick yours up as soon as you are able.

FundScrip We have placed our final order for 2017. The order was for a total of \$5000 which earned \$174.60 for the church! Thank you for your support throughout this year. It's a really easy way to make money for the church. If you haven't been ordering, please consider trying it out. Using gift cards for your regular grocery and gas purchases doesn't cost you any extra, and it makes good money for the church. Our first order Sunday in 2018 will be January 7.

Jo Szostak,
Stewardship

CAMP CHRISTOPHER

Your Canadian Tire Money is greatly appreciated at Camp Christopher! When it is all added up we can buy amazing things for the Camp, from kayaks to craft supplies to kitchen pots and pans.

Donna Wilkinson
Camp Administrator

CAN TABS FOR HOSPITALS

If you have any tabs at home please bring them to the church. Funds raised by the hospital go towards purchasing wheel chairs.

The History of the Can Tab: As the story goes, the collection of can tabs started as a hoax at a Legion in Ontario in 1988. Through persistence, those who had been “hoaxed” found a buyer for their aluminum tabs and they used the proceeds to purchase a wheelchair the following year. The idea took hold across the country and others started collecting tabs.

Initially, the Pasqua Hospital Auxiliary collected the tabs and purchased 19 wheelchairs for the front entrance of the hospital. Eventually these chairs were moved to the wards, so they could be cleaned and “owned” by the wards. The auxiliary then purchased a bank of wheelchairs that is housed at the front entrance.

In a ten-year period of collecting tabs, the Auxiliary has raised just over \$10,000 – not enough to buy a wheelchair. The cost of a specialty type of wheelchair (bariatric or broda) has gone up dramatically. Therefore, our funding from the tabs is no longer kept separate but goes into general funds that are donated to the Hospitals of Regina Foundation “Wish List” for needed equipment.

Donna Wilkinson

This
 Christmas
 end a quarrel.
 Seek out a forgotten
 friend. Dismiss suspicion,
 and replace it with trust.
 Write a love letter. Share some
 treasure. Give a soft answer. Keep
 a promise. Find the time. Forgo a grudge.
 Forgive an enemy. Listen. Apologize if you
 were wrong. Try to understand. Examine your
 demands on others. Think first of someone else.
 Be kind; be gentle. Appreciate. Laugh a little. Laugh a
 little more. Express your gratitude. Gladden the heart of a
 child. Welcome a stranger. Take pleasure in the beauty and the
 wonder of Earth.
 Speak your love.
 Speak it again.
 Speak it yet
 Once again.

DECEMBER EVENTS

10	10:30 AM	Worship (Advent 2) & Sunday School
12	9:00 AM 10:30 AM 7:00 PM	Adult Walk Bible Study Advent Study
14	9:00 AM 7:00 PM	Adult Walk Choir
16	10:00 AM	Christmas Baking for Homebound
17	10:30 AM	Worship (Advent 3) & Sunday School
19	7:00 PM	Advent Study
20	7:30 PM	Blue Christmas Service
24	10:30 AM 7:00 PM	Worship (Advent 4) Christmas Eve Service
31	10:30 AM	Worship Service

Please note: The Office will be closed from
 December 25th until January 2nd.