

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

February 2014

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Why Issues Surrounding Residential Schools Should Matter to Us

I don't believe I have ever personally mistreated a native person on the grounds of race. I never personally created any rules restricting First Nations people. When the Presbyterian Church in Canada set up its Residential Schools I wasn't even born. I had nothing to do with it. In fact, I'm an immigrant. I didn't even come to Canada until 1999. I didn't join the Presbyterian Church in Canada until 2005. What exactly do I have to apologize for? I don't like being blamed or taking the blame for things I didn't do. Who does?

I was born in a small community in the State of Kansas. "Bleeding Kansas" is its nickname due to corruption in the White House at the time which led to a change in the number of entered "Slave States". You see, there weren't just Union States and Confederate States. There were Union States covering the North East as well as Nevada, California and Oregon. Then there were Union States not permitting slavery (which is different). There were also Border Union states between the Union and "Deep South". Then there were three Union States which permitted slavery (bet you didn't know that). That was Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona. Then there was Kansas which simply entered the Union (sort of). So what happened? People above us permitted slavery and people below us did not. People North East of us did not and people South East of us did. People North West of us permitted slaves and the people South West of us were confederates. We were surrounded. So they all met in Kansas for 8 years of fighting while tensions grew within the state itself and neighbours simply started killing neighbours in the middle of the night. I'm not a Yankee! Only people from 20 Union

states are. I'm not a Southerner. And I'm not a Confederate. I'm just "bloody".

As you might imagine, race and racism is often just under the surface of what's really going on. But am I a racist? I never owned a slave. In fact, I didn't grow up thinking about race the same way that my grandparent's generation or my parent's generation did. When I was little I just didn't notice it. My brothers' best friend (then and still) is Black. My best friend was Japanese. Early on in life the only racism I ever encountered was when I was the target. The other kids at my Amish school hated me because I was "The English". Eventually I had to be pulled out and switched to other schools. But me? I'm not a racist. I didn't own a slave or set up a "separate but equal" water fountain. I know slavery was wrong but, just what exactly do I have to feel sorry about when it comes to slavery?

Well actually, quite a lot. It's true I may not be a racist... but I've sure benefited from it. The fact is, the rapid prosperity experienced in the United States occurred on the backs of slaves and on land first claimed by the Europeans though Native Americans were already living there. Even people that belonged to the Union had investments in the South, wore clothes made by slaves and had sugar for their tea that came from free labor. They might not have been racist themselves but they sure benefited from it. Even today, many major companies still exist that were slave fueled at one time (part of The Canadian National Railway Company, for example, claimed the loss of dead slaves for insurance purposes). They still thrive today because of money they made with slaves for future investments.

My family moved to the United States legally at a time when people from Asia, Africa and other areas were restricted. The best land of course was gone by the time immigration opened more

broadly. My ancestors might not have been racists but they benefited from it. Once here my ancestors were never relocated forcibly. When they died they passed down money earned on land not made available to other races. Later on they lived in better communities where non-whites were discouraged from living. If I have any inheritance coming to me, that's where it's coming from. My grandparents received small business loans unavailable to non-whites. They voted in elections and voted for people that best represented them and their particular class as to be expected but those politicians and their platforms had little interest in representing non-whites. In their newer neighborhoods police protection appeared easier to come by. My parents were safer. They had public swimming pools, libraries and playgrounds close to them. No one stopped them from using these facilities. They were encouraged to.

My parents attended segregated schools that received more funds and drew interest from more and better teachers than non-white schools would get. They got newer materials, up-to-date books and better facilities. They were trained better to get higher paying jobs. They learned from textbooks that reflected their race, religion, class, opportunities and spoke more favorably to issues than would text books written by non-whites. Little to no mention of non-white heroes were anywhere to be found. They had tons of people that looked just like them to look up to that made it clear that they too could be doctors and scientists and engineers. People told them they could someday be the "president of the United States". My parents might not have been racist but they sure benefited from it.

When my parents and grandparents went to college they were eligible to receive student loans. No one stopped them or protested their education. While they were training to be the boss, others were being kept for labor. When co-workers of color were hired often they would be paid less, leaving more money for white workers. When cuts were made, often people of color were cut first saving white jobs. My father might not be racist but he benefited from it. He built a house with a higher wage because of it. He bought my Sunday dinner with it, my shoes

too. I may not be racist but I benefited from it whenever I got new toys someone else didn't.

Very few of us would ever consider ourselves racist and yet there is no doubt that we in fact benefit from racism. We were born into or inherited a system which restricted some and propped up others and helped create a cycle which can be escaped from but that isn't as easy to do as it is to say. Today I own a house built on land that long ago was taken from someone. When the government first sold that land to a homesteader the homesteader didn't steal that land and wasn't a bad person for buying it... but that homesteader sure benefited from racism and so have I. I benefit from it every time I shop at a store or buy gasoline made with oil pulled up out of the ground. I may not be a racist but I benefit from it.

When I joined the Presbyterian Church in Canada the residential schools were all closed, an apology in the form of a "confession" had already been issued** and people by and large just wanted to forget about it and move on. And that makes sense. After all what did most of us ever have to do with those schools anyway? Well, in truth it sort of doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if they were closed. It doesn't matter if, rather conveniently, the United Church of Canada inherited the "problem" from Presbyterians seemingly freeing us from the past. It doesn't matter at all. Because I call myself a Presbyterian now. I joined this Church and I don't just get to identify with this denomination and its rich heritage when it suits me. I don't get to celebrate with it without admitting its faults. I don't get to be a part of the "Continuing" Presbyterian Church without being a part of the history it's continuing on from.

I may not be a racist, but I've benefited from it.

In the coming months we at First Presbyterian Church are going to be talking a bit more about the residential schools here in Saskatchewan that the Presbyterian Church in Canada had a hand in. And we will be talking a bit about the newly discovered grave site where possibly the remains of 70 children lay unmarked.

I hope you will join me in learning more about these issues. Because you don't have to be a

racist to feel some measure of guilt. You don't have to be a racist to have benefited from it.

I hope you will join me.

Bradley Childs

Rev. Brad Childs

** For the convenience of readers, our national Church's formal Apology is again reproduced later in this issue.

SESSION

Plan on staying for lunch and the Annual Congregational Meeting on Feb. 23. It's an important time to look back on the successes of 2013 and look forward with hope and anticipation to the good things that God has in store for First Church. As well as approving the budget for 2014, we will be electing elders to an important leadership role on the Session. Our new Planned Giving program will be coming to the congregation for final approval - thanks to the team for two years of hard work putting it all together! Our congregation is vibrant and growing. Don't miss this important event!

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship Committee convened January 11, our first meeting for 2014. Happy New Year to everyone and may the New Year at First receive many blessings as we look to new and meaningful ways to worship God.

The Christmas Eve services were reported as being well attended. The afternoon service at 4:00 PM saw about 50 in attendance. It has been suggested that rather than advertise it as a children's service, perhaps it should be promoted as a family service with advertising in the local area stores, etc. Several families as well as individuals were in attendance. The evening service at 7:00 PM saw a good attendance of approximately 120. The new posters displaying our church year are in place in the Narthex for all to view. We are

presently in the process of acquiring a frame to support the posters and protect them from the wear and tear that happens when on display. Progress is being made on where to best display the Flagon and Chalices that are in our possession from the former Knox Presbyterian Church in Regina. Hopefully these items will be placed in the south transept for all to view and enjoy a piece of our heritage here in Regina. Plans are also in the making to have a picture of Knox Church displayed along with the Flagon and Chalices.

The church season color is green, as this is classed as "ordinary time" in the church year.

Lectors are needed for March through June. If anyone would like to be a lector, please speak to Marianne Woods. She would be delighted to hear from you.

BOARD OF MANAGERS

First Presbyterian Church will be holding its Annual General Meeting Sunday, February 23, 2014, right after church. Lunch will be provided and then the meeting.

Reports will be available to pick up in the Narthex February 9, 2014.

Donna Wilkinson
Board of Managers

MISSION & OUTREACH

Freedom from Freezing: The last instalment of knitted items was taken to Kitchener Community School this week. It was an amazing assortment of beautifully crafted mitts, scarves and hats! School Principal Angie Balkwill expressed her gratitude to First Church for its generosity. This project is now concluded - many thanks to everyone who provided wool and knitted for the kids.

Annual PWSD appeal: Sunday, March 2 will be PWSD Sunday, and the start of a three week appeal for Presbyterian World Service and Development. We'll be sharing details about PWS&D's initiatives in the newsletter and bulletin next month.

Regina Indian Industrial School Cemetery:

As noted in the January Newsletter, our committee is working jointly with Knox-Met United Outreach Committee and local concerned citizens to learn more about an abandoned cemetery near Regina. The cemetery contains the remains of many children who attended a Presbyterian-run Indian residential school about 100 years ago. We are discussing ways we can honour the children who were buried here in co-operation with First Nations people. We have recently learned that almost 50 children from Mistawasis Reserve near Prince Albert attended this school. Many of them were probably Presbyterian kids. Mistawasis reserve was then, and still is, closely linked with our denomination. Our next meeting with Knox Met folks is on Sunday, Feb 9 after worship.

We have recently become aware of an abandoned cemetery near Regina which has associations to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. From 1891 to 1910, the PCC operated the Regina Indian Industrial School for the federal government. During that time, several aboriginal children died and were buried there. Recent archeological work located 22 unmarked grave sites, as well as three marked graves for children of a school principal. Experts feel there are probably more graves in the cemetery area. School records indicate that 75 children died while attending our residential school.

Recently, our Mission and Outreach Committee and the Mission committee of Knox Metropolitan United Church met with aboriginal elders and historians to learn more about the school, the cemetery site, and possible ways to preserve this site and to honour the children who were buried there. Knox Met members are concerned about this cemetery because the congregation had close connections with the school when it was Knox Presbyterian Church. First Church's Mission and Outreach will continue to meet with this group and explore ways to find reconciliation with those whose relatives attended the school and died there. We also want to share information about the school and cemetery with you over the coming weeks and months. Also, if any of you know

information about the school or people connected with it, please share this with us.

As you probably know, in 1994 the Presbyterian Church in Canada confessed its role in the tragic legacy of the Indian residential schools. The church is committed to walking with Aboriginal people on a journey toward reconciliation, and with living out the spirit of the confession. The confession is included below. More information on our church's work in reconciliation is at ww.presbyterian.ca/healing.

Submitted by Mary Jesse

The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada as adopted by the General Assembly, June 9th, 1997

The Holy Spirit, speaking in and through Scripture, called the PCC to confession. This Confession is our response to the word of God. We understand our mission and ministry in new ways in part because of the testimony of Aboriginal peoples.

1. We, the 120th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God, and aware of our own sin and shortcomings, are called to speak to the Church we love. We do this, out of new understandings of our past not out of any sense of being superior to those who have gone before us, nor out of any sense that we would have done things differently in the same context. It is with humility and in great sorrow that we come before God and our Aboriginal brothers and sisters with our confession.

2. We acknowledge that the stated policy of the Government of Canada was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the dominant culture, and that The Presbyterian Church in Canada co-operated in this policy. We acknowledge that the roots of the harm we have done are found in the attitudes and values of western European colonialism, and the assumption that what was not yet moulded in our image was to be discovered and exploited. As part of that policy we, with other churches, encouraged the Government to ban some important spiritual practices through which Aboriginal peoples

experienced the presence of the creator God. For the Church's complicity in this policy we ask forgiveness.

3. We recognize that there were many members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada who, in good faith, gave unstintingly of themselves in love and compassion for their Aboriginal brothers and sisters. We acknowledge their devotion and commend them for their work. We recognize that there were some who, with prophetic insight, were aware of the damage that was being done and protested, but their efforts were thwarted. We acknowledge their insight. For the times we did not support them adequately nor hear their cries for justice, we ask forgiveness.

4. We confess that The Presbyterian Church in Canada presumed to know better than Aboriginal peoples what was needed for life. The Church said of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, "If they could be like us, if they could think like us, talk like us, worship like us, sing like us, and work like us, they would know God and therefore would have life abundant." In our cultural arrogance we have been blind to the ways in which our own understanding of the Gospel has been culturally conditioned, and because of our insensitivity to Aboriginal cultures, we have demanded more of the Aboriginal people than the Gospel requires, and have thus misrepresented Jesus Christ who loves all peoples with compassionate, suffering love that all may come to God through him. For the Church's presumption we ask forgiveness.

5. We confess that, with the encouragement and assistance of the Government of Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada agreed to take the children of Aboriginal peoples from their own homes and place them in residential schools. In these schools, children were deprived of their traditional ways, which were replaced with Euro-Canadian customs that were helpful in the process of assimilation. To carry out this process, The Presbyterian Church in Canada used disciplinary practices which were foreign to Aboriginal peoples, and open to exploitation in physical and psychological punishment beyond any Christian maxim of care and discipline. In a setting of obedience and acquiescence there was opportunity for

sexual abuse, and some were so abused. The effect of all this, for Aboriginal peoples, was the loss of cultural identity and the loss of a secure sense of self. For the Church's insensitivity we ask forgiveness.

6. We regret that there are those whose lives have been deeply scarred by the effects of the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. For our Church we ask forgiveness of God. It is our prayer that God, who is merciful, will guide us in compassionate ways towards helping them to heal.

7. We ask, also, for forgiveness from Aboriginal peoples. What we have heard we acknowledge. It is our hope that those whom we have wronged with a hurt too deep for telling will accept what we have to say. With God's guidance our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God's people.

Mary Jesse
M&O Convenor

FELLOWSHIP

Birthday Sunday was held January 26 and once again a delicious variety of cakes were provided. \$378.50 was raised for Canada Youth. Thanks to everyone who participated and supported this worthwhile cause.

Please mark your calendars now! A St. Patrick's Day supper will be held on March 16. Don't miss this opportunity for a delicious meal and an evening of fellowship.

Sheila Wilson
Fellowship Committee Convenor

FUNSCRIP

Thanks to everyone for your support of this program over the past year! It's a great way to make money for the church and it doesn't cost you a penny! If you buy gift cards and use them to buy gifts, or to buy groceries and gas, they work just like money, and the church gets a percentage back.

A single person who buys all their groceries and gas with FundScrip cards makes about \$100 for the church. Imagine if 100 people did that! - It would raise \$10,000 for the church!

Visit the FundScrip table at coffee time - you can order from a wide variety of retailers, or pick up cards at the table for groceries and gas. FundScrip now carries cards for Shell gas as well. One of the promotions for February is la Vie en Rose (just in time for Valentine's Day!) - 11% would come back to the church!

Now you can even shop online for your FundScrip cards! Watch for the information coming out soon.

PLANNED GIVING

Proposal to Annual General Meeting:

After many months of work, a Planned Giving proposal is almost ready to be presented to the First Church Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Sunday, February 23rd, 2014.

It has been nearly two years since Session agreed that First Church should become a member of the Provisionaries Network -- a network of congregations who covenant to make planned giving an integral part of their Stewardship and their vision of ministry. Since then, First Church has formed a Planned Giving Team and the Reverend Herb Gale, Associate Secretary for Planned Giving for the Presbyterian Church in Canada, has been providing support and advice to the team and the First Church community as the Planned Giving proposal has been developed.

This Proposal will be presented to Session and the Board of Managers before the AGM. Most elements of the proposal should be familiar to the First Church community, as the Planned Giving team has worked with several First Church committees, provided regular updates to Session and has kept the congregation informed through this newsletter and presentations to the congregation including a report to the AGM in February 2013.

Here are some key elements of the Planned Giving Proposal:

- Program name: Growing our Vision: Seeds of Abundant Joy
- Management of the program: by a committee of the congregation, the Planned Giving Committee, composed of:
 - 2 members appointed by Session
 - 2 members appointed by the Board
 - 2 members from the congregation
- Funds to be established to receive, manage and use planned gifts:
 - a General Endowment Fund whose principle is to be maintained, with interest earned flowing to action funds;
 - a Property Fund that will replace the current Property Fund;
 - action funds to support the First Church congregation in putting our mission into action: Joyful Worship, Tender Together, and Daring Outreach Funds.
- Monies previously, and in the future, designated for scholarship programs will remain separate from the Endowment and Action Funds.
- Planned gifts accepted: both designated and undesignated gifts. Gifts can be designated for the endowment fund (used only to generate income) or put into the action funds – Joyful Worship, Tender Together, Daring Outreach, or the Property fund. Undesignated gifts will be divided between the funds according to a formula.
- Requesting money from the Action Funds: Applications may be completed by individuals or groups/committees and are to be received by October 31. The Planned Giving Committee reviews applications, develops recommendations, and presents applications and recommendations through the Stewardship Committee to a joint Board/Session meeting in January/February. Applications are forwarded by Session with recommendation for consideration of the congregation at the annual meeting.
- Other applications arising during the remainder of the calendar year may be considered as funds are available. For amounts up to \$2000, Session may

approve projects. For amounts over \$2000, congregational approval is required.

- Policies provide for use of the Endowment Fund principal in case of emergency. An emergency is defined as anything that endangers the viability of the congregation. Such a decision would be made by the congregation.
- The Planned Giving Committee will be responsible for active promotion and education through literature, newsletter, website as well as congregational events.
- It is important to celebrate planned gifts and a variety of activities will be considered including:
 - a thank you card provided at the time of gift
 - a thank you notice published in the newsletter, bulletin and on website
 - an annual event celebrating the gifts, telling stories, having families involved, and explaining how funds were used
 - establishing a memorial wall or book
- The Planned Giving Committee will review the program policies annually and prepare recommendations for any proposed changes to go through a joint Session/Board meeting to the congregational AGM.

If you have questions about the proposed Planned Giving Program for First Church, contact one of the following Committee members: Donna Wilkinson (Chair), Tammy MacDonald, Jane Powell, Ron Pugsley, Jo Szostak, Gordon Wiles, Lisa Ann Wood or Rev. Brad Childs (ex officio).

Lisa Ann Wood
Planned Giving Committee

AWARD RECIPIENT

Graeme Mitchell, well-known and active in First Church, is the recipient of the Canadian Bar Association's Distinguished Service Award for 2014. An official announcement (and citation) appeared in the Leader-Post on February 3rd and is reprinted here. Congratulations Graeme on this high honour!

"The Canadian Bar Association, Saskatchewan Branch, is pleased to announce that Graeme Mitchell, QC, Director of the Constitutional Law Branch with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice, has been selected as our 2014 recipient for the Distinguished Service Award. Over the years, Graeme has earned a national reputation as one of the leading public lawyers in the country. Regarded by many as one of the outstanding constitutional lawyers in Canada, he has appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada more times than any other counsel practicing law in Saskatchewan - over 40 cases that were addressed from 1985 to 2013.

Showcasing exceptional commitment to continuing legal education within his field, Graeme has provided an annual talk to CBA Saskatchewan's Criminal Law Section since 1989, summarizing important criminal cases with constitutional issues; a true testament to his expertise in this area.

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes exceptional contributions of CBA Saskatchewan members within the legal profession in Saskatchewan; to jurisprudence in Saskatchewan or Canada; to the law or development of the law in Saskatchewan; or towards a significant law related achievement for the benefit of residents of Saskatchewan."

LETTER FROM PWS&D

Dear First Presbyterian Church,
Thank you for your generous gift of \$2,590 in response to Typhoon Haiyan. Individual donations towards Typhoon Haiyan relief made between November 9 - December 23, 2013 will be matched by the Government of Canada, meaning your donation will have an even greater impact.

Typhoon Haiyan is one of the strongest typhoons to ever hit land. Estimates say that over 11 million people in the Philippines have been affected, nearly a million forced from their homes and over 6,000 reported dead.

In response to urgent needs, PWS&D is helping bring relief to 250,000 people. Together, we are:

- Delivering emergency food packages of rice, canned goods, legumes, sugar and cooking oil;
- Providing non-food assistance to help families find safety and comfort following the disaster;
- Offering early rehabilitation support to families whose sources of livelihood were destroyed;
- Assisting churches and communities to prepare for and mitigate the risks of future disasters.

This life-saving work is only possible thanks to your prayers and financial contributions ~ Thank you!

With sincere appreciation,
Kenneth Kim,
Director

**LETTER FROM INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
CANADA**

(Funds raised from Doug Garner's birthday request)

Dear First Presbyterian Church,

Thank you for your cheque for \$237.25 designated for the New Ministers' Start-Up Library Fund, formerly Gifts of Change Project IMMA06.

Your gift will equip 10 ministry students from the 2012 graduating class of Zomba Theological College in Malawi with seven basic theological books. This gift also gives them a stronger sense that God has blessed them to preach and bear witness to the life-giving presence of Jesus Christ among us. This gift bears witness to the truth that we are one in Jesus Christ.

Yours truly,
Gladys Stover,
Administrative Assistant

ART FROM THE MORRIS ROOM

The third painting to be discussed from the marvelous collection of Larry and Elizabeth Kitson will be:

John Constable's
(1776 - 1851)

"The Cornfield"

Constable was the son of a grain merchant in the rural area northeast of London, England.

He painted what he knew best, the English landscape and no one has since painted it better. His favourite Suffolk country side, gently rolling, lighted by ever-changing skies, and laced by canals, came to be known as "Constable Country".

He initiated an entirely new style: large 6'x6' pastoral scenes with a naturalism his contemporaries found "crude". He was first appreciated in France and then in England. His landscapes shine with light, rich foliage and panoramic skies.

In 1826, at 50, Constable in "The Cornfield" paid homage to the lush, well-kept farmlands where he grew up. Like the shepherd boy, he probably drank in the book as he walked along the lane between his home in East Bergholt and Dedham (our own Bob MacDonald's father is buried in Dedham's churchyard, and Bob sang in the choir in this church depicted in the painting.)

Constable felt the sky was the "chief organ of sentiment" in any landscape.

John Macfarlane

BURST FORTH

Isaiah 35:1-10

National Presbyterian Women's Gathering

Information & Registration
May 16-19, 2014

Sheraton Parkway Hotel, Richmond Hill, ON

For more information visit:
womengathering.ca

FEBRUARY EVENTS

2	10:30 AM	Worship Service (Holy Communion) & Sunday School
4	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
5	7:00 PM 8:00 PM	Session Choir
6	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
9	10:30 AM Noon	Worship Service & Sunday School M&O meeting
11	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
12	7:00 PM 8:00 PM	Session/Board/Planned Giving meeting Choir
13	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
16	10:30 AM	Worship Service & Sunday School
18	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
19	8:00 PM	Choir
20	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
23	10:30 AM 11:30 AM	Worship Service & Sunday School ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
25	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
26	8:00 PM	Choir
27	9:00 AM	Adult Walk