

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

### FEBRUARY 2018

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Six months have passed since I began my ministry among you at First Presbyterian Church, and I am having a wonderful time! I am still grateful for your hospitality and welcome, for your patience with me as I learn the traditions and practices of your congregation, and for your openness to welcome my suggestions and ideas.

As you have likely already discovered, one of my deep longings is for the full visible unity of the whole Christian Church. I am rooted in the Reformed Tradition and The Presbyterian Church in Canada, but I also have a particular calling towards a ministry of unity – one which recognizes we are a part of the One, Holy, Catholic Church and works towards reconciliation through Christ.

Although January is always such a bitterly cold month in terms of weather in Saskatchewan, it is also a time of spiritual warmth and joy as we are called to come together with our Christian sisters and brothers from other churches to pray together for the unity of the Church. At First Presbyterian, we had the pleasure of hosting the Regina Council of Churches' annual service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, and I want to thank you for all that you did to make it a very meaningful time of worship and fellowship.

The Worship Committee provided greeters and ushers, and Marianne Woods led one of the prayers. Will Ireton and the choir, who welcomed singers from other downtown churches, did a great job with the music. The Fellowship Committee provided a lovely time of fellowship and refreshment after worship. Jo Szostak took care of collecting and counting the offering (just under \$1000) which has gone to the ministry of the Regina Indian Industrial School Commemorative Association. Shirley Durell made labels for the offering envelopes and dealt

with all the receipts afterwards as well. Thanks to everyone for helping and to all those who attended. We counted 122 people at the service, including 24 in the choir.

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, I was invited to be the guest preacher at St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral here in Regina for their celebration of the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. They have a tradition of inviting a guest from another church each year as they celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year, they also had an exchange with Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Cathedral. On January 21<sup>st</sup> a group of parishioners from St. Paul's attended Holy Rosary, and on January 28<sup>th</sup> a group from Holy Rosary attended St. Paul's. This made for a very ecumenical gathering on the 28<sup>th</sup>, given that they also had a Presbyterian preacher! If you are interested in listening to my sermon about "Conversion to Ecumenism" from that service, you can find the audio file on St. Paul's website: <https://www.stpaulsregina.ca/> Just scroll down towards the bottom of the page.

As we move into the month of February, I am looking forward to the weather warming up a little bit (I think it will happen soon!) as well as to all the worship, learning, and sharing activities we are planning for the Season of Lent here at First Church.

We begin with our **Pancake Supper on Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup>**. Drop in between 5:30 – 7:00 pm. The cost is Adults \$5 and all children are free. Pancakes, sausages, strawberries and whipped cream will be served. Everyone is welcome.

Next, we will gather for an **Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>**. Ash Wednesday is the first day in the forty-day season of Lent (excluding Sundays).

A few things to know about Ash Wednesday:

- Ash Wednesday is the first step on our journey through Lent.
- On Ash Wednesday we are marked by ashes. Those ashes remind us of our humanity and the places where we have sinned and fallen short.
- Those ashes would not stick to our forehead without being mixed with oil. The oil is a reminder of the way God pours Himself out for us in Jesus Christ.
- When ashes and oil come together a primitive soap is made.
- Our life is made up of ashes, places we fall short; and oil, places of God's grace. When the two come together, a cleansing agent is formed.
- The psalmist longed to be cleansed as well. Psalm 51:10 cries out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me."
- Since Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day this year, it is a good time to think about working on our hearts.

The Season of Lent is a good time for drawing close to God through prayer and other spiritual disciplines. To this end, we are offering a few learning opportunities as well as one challenge to take up the spiritual discipline of "Reading for Reconciliation."

- Introduction to Spiritual Disciplines: Tuesday, February 20th at 7:00 pm in the Morris Room. The purpose of this session is to introduce and explore spiritual disciplines, help participants appreciate the origin and evolution of the disciplines throughout Christian history, and to begin writing a personal "rule of life." Classic spiritual disciplines include prayer, worship, sacraments, sabbath, study, simplicity, fasting, service, and guidance. Others may include discernment, celebration, foot washing, love feasts, singing and making music, physical exercise, pilgrimage, giving testimony, forgiveness, and healing.
- How to Pray: A two-session study on Tuesday, February 27th and Tuesday, March 6th at 7:00 pm in the Morris Room.

Prayer is something we experience every time we go to worship, but it is often something we do not do in our personal lives unless we are taught. The purposes of this study are to help clarify what prayer is, what the different types of prayer are, and to encourage one another to enjoy prayer as part of our daily lives.

- Reading for Reconciliation: A year ago, the Saskatoon Public Library invited people to #Read4Reconciliation as part of our response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Lent is a time for turning and returning to God and for putting things right in our relationships both with God and the people around us. It is often a time when we take on some kind of spiritual discipline – committing to pray every day, for example, or to study God's Word, to engage in a particular devotional practice, or even to fast from rich foods or other luxuries. Won't you consider making your Lenten discipline this year the commitment to "Read for Reconciliation"?

The Saskatoon library has also put together a very good reading list, including some books that are appropriate for children and families. You can check the list at

[www.saskatoonlibrary.ca/reconciliation](http://www.saskatoonlibrary.ca/reconciliation) or go to a local library or book store and check the sections dedicated to "reconciliation" or "Aboriginal issues". I will have a display of books and copies of the reading list on a table in the gymnasium, and you're welcome to borrow a book from my collection. There will also be copies of Doug Stewart's book (*The Regina Indian Industrial School (1891-1910): Historical Overview and Chronological Narrative*) available for \$20 each. If you haven't already read this book about our local Presbyterian-run school, please consider doing so.

Rev. Amanda Currie

## **CANADA YOUTH**

CY2018 is coming July 2 - 7! There are three tracks designed for young people. The Youth Track is for high-schoolers who have graduated Grade 9. The Discipleship Track is for young adults (age 19-25), and the Youth Ministry track is for youth leaders age 18+. Our congregation has set aside funding to pay registration fees for interested youth. The Synod pays most of the travel costs. Please contact the church office if you're interested.

This year there will also be an adult track called NEXT offered July 5-7. The focus of this track is on "congregational resiliency" - helping your congregation move ahead in these challenging times.

For more information and registration forms, visit the website: <http://presbyterian.ca/canada-youth-2018>

Jo Szostak  
Clerk of Session

## **MISSION & OUTREACH**

**PWSD Annual Appeal February 18 – March 4**  
**Give** thanks for the work of Presbyterian World Service and Development on Sunday February 18, PWSD Sunday. This worship service will highlight our agency's work and our congregation's opportunity to help kids get an education. This year's focus is "Education for Every Child".

PWSD works with our overseas partners to educate children and young adults so they can build a self-reliant life. Education is a powerful tool for eliminating poverty yet there are many barriers to getting an education, especially for girls. Three hundred dollars will send a child to school for one year in PWSD-supported programs. Let's see how many children we can send to school this year. Please make your cheque payable to First Presbyterian Church, and clearly mark it PWSD Appeal.

**Missional Church Workshop, February 3, in Calgary:** Several members of our Mission and Outreach Committee attended this one-day workshop. The event featured Dr. Darrell Guder, a Senior Fellow at the PCC's St. Andrew's Hall in

Vancouver and a former professor at Princeton Seminary. Dr. Guder spoke to a capacity audience about the task of the Church in our secularized, pluralistic North American context. His address and the discussions that day were very stimulating. Over the next few weeks our Mission Committee will be discussing his ideas and his challenge to us. We plan to share with the Session and the congregation some thoughts on how First Presbyterian might best live out our calling to be equipped and sent out in the name of Jesus. Thanks goes to Donna Wilkinson for driving us safely to and from Calgary.

Mary Jesse  
M&O Convener

## **WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

The season of Lent is fast approaching, and the Worship Committee is busy making plans for this special time in the Christian year. Lent begins on February 14 which brings us to Ash Wednesday. There will be an Ash Wednesday service at First Church that evening beginning at 7:00pm. It has been quite a few years since such a service has been held at First Church. Please plan to attend if you are able.

Also note the changing of the church season colours in the sanctuary. Sunday, February 11 is Transfiguration Sunday, the colour for which is white. From Ash Wednesday through to Palm Sunday the liturgical colour is purple, a colour that symbolizes the pain and suffering as well as the Kingship of Jesus.

Marianne Woods will be contacting members of our Church family to present the Lenten readings each Sunday until Palm Sunday. Readers will also extinguish one candle in the candelabra at the front of the sanctuary each Sunday in remembrance of the Light of Christ fading from the world until all light is gone on Good Friday. On Easter Sunday, the Christ candle is re-lit signifying Christ's resurrection.

Greeters are always needed for each Sunday and anyone who can help out in this way is asked to speak with Wendy Prior. Your assistance in this area is very much appreciated. Thanks also to those who volunteer to read Scriptures or to serve as ushers each Sunday.

If you would like to be a reader or usher, Marianne would be pleased to hear from you. We need readers for the months of April, May and June; and we are especially in need of ushers for the evening Ash Wednesday Service, February 14<sup>th</sup>.

Joyce McKersie  
Worship Committee Member

### **CANADA YOUTH FUNDRAISER**

We are hosting a supper to raise money for First Presbyterian youth to attend Canada Youth taking place July 2 – 7, 2018, at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

Where: Da India Curry House (806 Victoria Avenue)  
When: Sunday, February 25  
Time: 5 pm first seating  
7 pm second seating  
Cost: \$25 (\$10 from each ticket sale goes to Canada Youth)

70 tickets are available for each time frame. Please speak with Aksa Yakemchuk, Tammy MacDonald or Donna Wilkinson to purchase tickets or get more information.

Come out and support our fundraising efforts to send our young people to Canada Youth 2018.

Donna Wilkinson

### **PRAYER SHAWLS**

The next Prayer Shawl Gathering will be Friday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 2:30 pm at Wintergreene Estates. (4950 Pasqua Street) Bring whatever you are knitting or crocheting and join others for coffee, conversation, and prayer.

### **FUNDSCRIP**

The next order-Sunday for Fundscrip this month is February 18. When you buy a gift card you pay the face value and the church gets the percentage listed on the back. So, you can support the church with your regular purchases. Special promotions for February include The Ultimate Dining Card (Swiss Chalet, Montana's, East Side Mario's, New York Fries) 6%.

Gas and grocery cards are available at the FundScrip table in the gym following the worship service. Thanks for your continued support!

### **THE ECHO OF ASHES**

“Remember you are dust  
and to dust you shall return.”

the large brown bowl  
rests on a purple cloth  
its roundness holding ashes  
freshly burned  
black and ready for wearing.

blackened thumbs  
press the ancient sign  
upon the waiting foreheads.

I hear the message repeated  
until it haunts and hunts me down:  
remember, remember, remember  
you are dust, dust, only dust  
someday only dust will remain.

the echo of the Lent stained ashes  
speaks the truth of my humanity:  
the humbleness of my beginning,  
the simplicity of my departure.

A few wise words  
echoing through Ash Wednesday  
urge me to deeper things:  
renewed dedication,  
constant compassion  
and mindful awareness.

I leave marveling  
at how simple and sublime  
is this envelope of the soul,  
which one day returns  
to dust, dust, only dust.

~ Joyce Rupp

### **HYMN REQUESTS**

Our new minister loves hymns and other songs for our worship services, and she is unintentionally stretching us to sing more "new" hymns with some of which we may not feel comfortable. Hopefully you are discovering some "gems" in our hymn book that you didn't know were there, but you may also want to sing some of your old favourite hymns. In an effort to

include these in our Sunday worship, Rev. Amanda encourages you to fill in a hymn request form. These forms are available in the Narthex. Let her know your “favourites”, and she will endeavor to include them at appropriate times throughout the church year.

**FEBRUARY EVENTS**

<b>11</b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service &amp; Sunday School</b>
	5:30 PM	Pancake Supper
13	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	10:30 AM	Bible Study
	noon	Freedom 55'ers
<b>14</b>	<b>7:00 PM</b>	<b>Ash Wednesday Service</b>
15	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	9:20 AM	Riverbend
	7:00 PM	Choir
16	2:00 PM	Love-on-a-Plate meeting
<b>18</b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service &amp; Sunday School</b>
20	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	10:30 AM	Bible Study
	noon	Freedom 55'ers
	7:00 PM	Lenten Study (Spiritual Disciplines)
21	7:00 PM	Board of Managers
22	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	9:20 AM	Riverbend
	7:00 PM	Choir
23	2:30 PM	Prayer Shawl Gathering (at Wintergreene)
<b>25</b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service &amp; Sunday School</b>
	5:00 PM or 7:00 PM	Canada Youth Fundraising Dinner
27	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	10:30 AM	Bible Study
	noon	Freedom 55'ers
	7:00 PM	Lenten Study (How to Pray)