

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

January 2014

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

One More Year

Greetings to you all in the name of the Lord! And thank you for all the cards and gifts and most of all for your prayers and support this Christmas season. I hope your Holydays were as filled with blessings as were mine.

As you may have come to know, I am a lover of stories. And so with that in mind I'd like to tell you a particularly silly one:

There once was a sorcerer who fell into disfavour with the king of his land and was sentenced to death. On the day of his scheduled execution, the sorcerer told the king that if His Honour would allow the sorcerer to live for just one more year, he would make the king famous the world over. The sorcerer, in fact, "guaranteed" to do so. But how, one might ask? Well, the sorcerer promised to make the king's horse talk. And in so doing the sorcerer would make the king a man of worldwide fame. If the sorcerer failed, the king could have him killed at the end of the year and the sorcerer would not object.

The king agreed to this and the sorcerer was spared for one year and placed in the palace dungeon. A duke who was a friend of the sorcerer, loving him despite knowing him to be little more than a swindler, sneaked into the dungeon one night and said to the sorcerer, "You are indeed a fool. I know and you know that you don't have the power to make the king's horse talk. You have no hope at all of success. In a year you will surely die!"

"But", the sorcerer replied, "I have one year to live. And many things can happen in one year. Perhaps the king will die. Or I may die of natural causes. Or who knows, I may even teach a horse to talk! Regardless, I still have one more year to live!"

It's true. Indeed the sorcerer was a scammer. But he had one thing right. A lot can happen in a year. In Philippians 3:13-14 the Apostle Paul writes, "*No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.*" (New Living Translation)

A lot can (and indeed will) happen in one year. And so there is really only one question right now worth asking: What will **you** do with the coming year that God has given to you?

Bradley Childs

Rev. Brad Childs

May the Lord bless you and keep you and may you seek out all that God has in store for you this 2014.

BOARD OF MANAGERS

What Is Pre-Authorization Remittance?

Pre-Authorized Remittance (**PAR**) is a means by which church offerings are made through automatic monthly debits from individuals' bank accounts. **PAR** is convenient for the donor and offers a reliable income for First Church.

Benefits of PAR

Receiving regular donations through the **PAR** plan is beneficial to our congregation in several ways:

- it provides a convenient and effective way for you to give faithfully in a consistent manner, as you have determined
- it encourages you to think through your giving pattern
- it increases the regularity of offerings
- it reduces the seasonal low giving periods
- and it provides a substantial foundation for budgeting

How to Sign Up

You can join **PAR** simply by:

- (a) completing an authorization form (available from a table in the Narthex);
- (b) attaching a **void cheque for your** account(s) to be debited each month;
- (c) returning the completed form and void cheque to the church office, attention Donna Wilkinson.

Your account will be debited on the 20th of every month.

If you have any questions please contact Donna at donnaw@sasktel.net or 306-586-4026.

Donna Wilkinson
Board of Managers

MISSION & OUTREACH

We have recently become aware of an abandoned cemetery located on Pinkie Rd. near the Paul Dojack Centre. The cemetery was part of the Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS), one of eleven boarding or residential schools operated by the Presbyterian Church in Canada for the Federal Government. Records kept by the school during its years of operation, 1891-1910, indicate that 75 of the students died during that time. It is not known how many were buried in the school cemetery though recent archeological work has located 22 unmarked grave sites of Aboriginal children, with indications there may be more, as well as three marked graves where the two children and the wife of the school's first principal, the Rev. A.J. McLeod, are buried.

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 are buried there. Knox Met members are concerned about this cemetery because the congregation, in its former existence as Knox Presbyterian Church, had close connections with the school. The Mission and Outreach

committee of First will continue to meet with the Knox Met Outreach Committee to jointly explore ways of reaching reconciliation with those whose relatives attended the Industrial school and died there. We also want to share information about the school and cemetery with our own congregation over the coming weeks and months. If any of you have information about the RIIS or know of people connected with it, please share this with us.

As you may recall, 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 living out the spirit of the Confession (reprinted below). For more information on our National church's work in reconciliation please visit www.presbyterian.ca/healing.

The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada as adopted by the General Assembly, June 9th, 1994

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

PLANNED GIVING

As the Christmas season ends, Epiphany celebrates the visit of the Magi to baby Jesus. These wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ child, commemorating the manifestation of God in human form.

These gifts were considered highly valuable, recognizing the significance of Jesus' birth.

Gold is a symbol of kingship on earth. Frankincense, a type of incense, was used in religious ceremonies to represent the prayers of the people rising to God. Myrrh, a type of perfume, was typically reserved for scenting the cloths used to wrap bodies for burial.

It is easy to lose sight of the true meaning of gift giving during the modern Christmas season.

Advertising and retailing emphasize buying and exchanging gifts as a major economic driver, one that can be an exhausting, even competitive activity. But in spite of being bombarded with commercial messaging leading up to the Christmas season, we are still moved by the example of the Magi, who traveled a great distance and gave what was precious to them to honour the recipient, and what his birth, life and death would mean to the world.

In the short story, Gift of the Magi, the writer O. Henry tells of a young couple who have little in the way of material possessions. To celebrate Christmas, unknown to each other they both give up the most precious possession they each have left to buy one another a truly special Christmas present. Although written in an age of hair combs and pocket watches, the story has a timeless aspect in that the couple look to material possessions to symbolize their love for each other, and instead discover it is not the gift itself but the intention of the giver that make the gift truly precious.

As Epiphany commemorates the gifts of the wise men, we can also take the opportunity to once again give thanks for the greatest gift of all – God’s gift to us – his only Son. And we can choose to honour the true meaning of giving with a planned gift that will help First Church further our mission and vision for years to come.

The Planned Giving Team has almost completed its work to put together a program that will offer you assistance in making a planned gift. The program will be ready for final review and approval at First Church’s Annual General Meeting in February. Once you ensure your planned gift meets your own goals and objectives, the Planned Giving program will have in place the policies and procedures necessary to ensure First Church receives, manages and uses your gift effectively.

Lisa Ann Wood
Planned Giving Committee

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Birthday Sunday is coming up on January 26th. Please plan to join us after church for this ‘sweet’ event.



Advance Notice: Mark your calendars and plan to join us for our St. Patrick’s Day “Wearing ‘o the Green” supper which will be held on March 16th. More information will follow.

Sheila Wilson
Fellowship Committee Convenor

ART FROM THE MORRIS ROOM

The second painting in Larry & Elizabeth Kitson’s collection to be displayed and discussed on Sunday, January 19, 2014 following the morning service, is Jan Vermeer’s “Woman in Blue Reading a Letter”.

Vermeer painted only 41 masterpieces and was undiscovered and under appreciated for 200 years, only to be rediscovered and greatly admired in 1866.

Although he painted exquisite landscapes, he specialized in small depictions of domestic scenes distinguished by their serene perspective and clever use of light.

This palette consists of blue, lemon yellow, pearl gray, black and white and has amazed artists, especially Van Gogh, ever since.

Vermeer’s light diffuses itself evenly throughout space and as it does so it creates its even and unerring record. It flows around objects and gives shape to them making them supremely beautiful.

Vermeer died in 1675 in Delft, Holland, at 43, poverty-stricken, leaving eight children and a wife.

John Macfarlane

DECEMBER EVENTS

5	10:30 AM	Worship Service (Holy Communion) & Sunday School
7	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
8	8:00 PM	Choir
9	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
12	10:30 AM	Worship Service & Sunday School
14	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
15	8:00 PM	Choir
16	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
18	9:00 AM	Presbytery Meeting
19	10:30 AM	Worship Service & Sunday School
21	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
22	8:00 PM	Choir
23	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
26	10:30 AM	Worship Service & Sunday School
28	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
29	7:00 PM 8:00 PM	Board of Managers Choir
30	9:00 AM	Adult Walk