

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

January 2019

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year, First Church!

For my minister's message this month, I was thinking of writing about New Year's resolutions. Recently I came across a great list of books to read in 2019. The list was published by a public library, but rather than recommending specific books it was recommending categories of books for us to consider, read, and check off as we move through the year. The list had categories like "a book by a Saskatchewan author", "a favourite book you haven't read in many years", and "a book by an Indigenous author".

I thought I could put together a faith-related reading list that included items like "one of the four Gospels," "a book of the Bible you've never read before," "a theological book written in the last 20 years," and "a classic theological book from the Reformation period." But then I wondered if it's already too late to be suggesting New Year's resolutions. This newsletter won't go out until January 11th.

Then I wondered if many of you might have made some New Year's resolutions (faith-related or other) and how they're going for you. It's a classic problem that we resolve to do great things, try them for a day or two, struggle, and give up. I saw a few memes online that suggested some nice manageable resolutions that included things like "get a bit older," "gain some weight," "misplace things," and "wear PJs often."

So, I think we need to land somewhere in between those two extremes – between unrealistic goals that we give up after a few days, and not bothering to set any goals at all because we don't believe we are capable of improving our lives. As Christians, we believe that God calls us to grow day-by-day in love, generosity, and all the other fruit of Spirit. We have the gift of God's grace and mercy when we fail or fall, but also a continuing invitation to

respond to God's love for us by loving God and our neighbours a little more fully each day.

So, if you've already set aside your New Year's resolutions, consider today (January 11th or whenever you are reading this) as the perfect day to start fresh. Pause to evaluate whether your goals are realistic and to see if you've included something faith-related on your list -- like reading the Bible, or coming to worship regularly, or getting involved in a ministry of the church, or using your gifts to serve or help someone beyond yourself - and then consider this as a great day to begin again with God's grace and the Spirit's help.

Canadian Christian artist, Carolyn Arends sings a great song called "New Year's Day" which is included on her album, "Seize the Day." You may want to reflect on the words below or go online and listen to it on YouTube.

New Year's Day

I buy a lot of diaries
Fill them full of good intentions
Each and every New Year's Eve
I make myself a list
All the things I'm gonna change
Until January 2nd
So, this time I'm making one promise

Chorus:

This will be my resolution
Every day is New Year's Day
This will be my resolution
Every day is New Year's Day

I believe it's possible
I believe in new beginnings
'Cause I believe in Christmas Day
And Easter morning too
And I'm convinced it's doable
'Cause I believe in second chances
Just the way that I believe in you

This will be my resolution
Every day is New Year's Day
This could start a revolution

Every day is...

One more chance to start all over
One more chance to change and grow
One more chance to grab a hold of grace
And never let it go

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

Happy New Year! As we begin 2019, let us be thankful for the many blessings we have in our congregation. So many people share their gifts to enrich the life of First Church through worship, music, program activities, caring and sharing.

This newsletter has lots of information about upcoming events, so please be sure to read through it and mark your calendars, taking note of the Rev. Amanda's new initiatives for study and discussion. Also, the Fellowship Committee is organizing a fine dining event for February 10, so check it out and buy your tickets soon!

Our Refugee Sponsorship pledge campaign officially begins this month. Pledge cards will be included in the bulletins on Sunday January 13 and Sunday January 20. Extra pledge cards will be available in the narthex or from Shirley in the church office. The December 20 special evening of Lessons and Carols by our Chancel Singers raised just over \$2000 towards the Sponsorship campaign, and to date we have almost \$3000 in our sponsorship fund so we are already 5% of the way to our goal!

The next order Sunday for Fundscrip will be January 20. Specials this month include Shell for 3% and Pizza Pizza or Pizza 73 for 12%. Stop by our table in the gym following worship to place an order or to purchase grocery cards. Sobey's/Safeway cards now earn 3% for the church. Order Sundays in February will be Feb. 3 and Feb. 17.

Thanks for your support, and please consider, prayerfully, the contributions you can make over the next two years.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session



*Thanks to the Chancel Singers and Friends
for a wonderful fundraising concert.*

BOARD OF MANAGERS

Our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, April 14 following worship. Please submit annual reports to the office by the end of January.

We have sad news to share. The "God's Little Blessings" child care centre has given us notice that they will be leaving on Jan. 31. They were unable to meet provincial regulations. We are very sorry to see them go.

Jo Szostak
Board of Managers Convener

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Fine Dining Fundraiser Event

Ticket sales start on Sunday for "*Celebration of Love*", an evening of fine dining and entertainment.



Proceeds will go to our Refugee Sponsorship initiative. The event will be held on Sunday, February 10, 2019, beginning with a reception at 5:30 p.m. and dinner at 6:00 p.m. Entertainment will follow. The meal will be gluten-free, and a vegetarian option will be available (please indicate when you purchase your ticket.)

Enjoy a glass of wine, a delicious three-course meal and a delightful variety of entertainment! Tickets must be purchased in advance and only 100 will be sold so please be sure to buy yours early! Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$10 for ages 6-18, and children under 5 are free. The deadline for purchasing tickets is Feb. 6. They may be

bought from Jo at the Fundscrip table in the gym following worship or from Shirley in the office. Plan now to be part of this wonderful event!

Sheila Wilson,
Fellowship Committee Convener

WONDERING WEDNESDAYS

Did you ever wonder about “Why is the world the way it is?” or “What is my mission in life?” or “Is suffering good for anything?” These are the kinds of big questions that come up in the midst of the challenges and joys of living, but we may not have the chance to consider, discuss, and explore them with others in community. Well, here is your opportunity!

You are invited to join with others who, like you, sometimes wonder about big questions. We'll get together in the Morris Room on the 2nd Wednesday evening of each month to discuss a couple of questions. We'll be using a video resource called “Did you ever wonder...” from the Canadian Roman Catholic – Anglican Dialogue. Members of the dialogue have reflected on these types of questions and have provided some “small answers to big questions.” We'll watch their responses, reflect on them and then consider our own responses.

Our first “Wondering Wednesday” will be Wednesday, February 13th at 7:30 pm in the Morris Room at the church. After that, you can mark your calendar for March 13th, April 10th, and May 8th. Feel free to invite your friends.

Rev. Amanda Currie

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CLASSES

Are you a new Christian, new to the Presbyterian Church, or new to First Church? Do you have questions about what the church believes or about how we are called to live according to our faith? Have you been in the church for a long time but haven't taken the step of making a personal profession of faith and becoming a member of a congregation?

You are invited to participate in the upcoming series of membership classes at First Church. Whether you are in grade 9 or are age 99 you are most welcome to attend. Please speak to Rev. Amanda to indicate your interest and ask

any questions you may have. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings during the Season of Lent, beginning on Tuesday, March 12th at 7:30 pm, and continue for five weeks, finishing on Tuesday, April 9th.

Rev. Amanda Currie

GET TO KNOW YOUR MINISTER!

As you likely know, I've been nominated for Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. There are two nominees, so we won't know until April 1st whether or not I'll be the Moderator.

In the meantime, the PCC's Life and Mission Agency asked each of the nominees to answer several questions in order that people across the national church can get to know them a little better. First Church folk might be interested in reading the Q & A as well, in order to get to know your own minister a little better.

Check it out on the PCC website at <https://presbyterian.ca/2018/12/03/ballot-for-moderator-of-the-2019-general-assembly>

Rev. Amanda Currie

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue
The annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be observed from January 20-27 in Regina. This year, the theme is "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue" (Deut. 16:18-20). Prayer for Christian unity is the heart of the ecumenical movement since the unity we seek is given to us "as Christ wills, and according to his will." You are invited you to join in the following:

Ecumenical Liturgy Tuesday, January 15, 2:30pm at Luther College (U of Regina). Planned together with Champion College, this service is open to all on campus and visitors. Refreshments and conversation following the service.

Singing into Unity Sunday, January 20, 3pm at Westminster United Church (3025 13th Ave.).

This service of traditional hymnody, contemporary songs, and global music will reflect on the role of congregational singing in promoting Christian unity.

All are welcome. This will be of particular interest to choirs.
Refreshments and conversation following the service.
Parking available at Holy Rosary Cathedral.

Ecumenical Prayer & Reflection Monday, January 21, 2:30pm at Campion College (U of Regina).

Planned together with Luther College, this service is open to all on campus and visitors. Refreshments and conversation following the service.

A Service for Children, Tuesday, January 22, 1:30pm at Christ the King Catholic Parish (3239 Garnet St.).

All are welcome to join in this short service with the children of St. Pius X Elementary School.

Beer & Bible Thursday, January 24, 7pm (Location TBA).

A study on the theme "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue" (Deut. 16:18-20). Must be 19+ to attend.
Contact Tashia Toupin, tel. 306-352-1651 or ttoupin@archregina.sk.ca.

Concluding Worship Service Sunday, January 27, 3pm at Resurrection Catholic Parish (3155 Windsor Park Rd).

A service of prayer for Christian unity in our community and throughout the world.
Preacher: Bishop Rob Hardwick, Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle.
Refreshments and conversation following the service.

The Week of Prayer is coordinated by the Regina Council of Churches using resources from the Canadian Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. See <http://weekofprayer.ca>. A free-will offering will be taken for the work of the Regina Council of Churches.

For further information, contact Nick Jesson, 306-352-1651 or jesson@ecumenism.net

A note on the theme for 2019:

Every year Christians across the world gather in prayer for growth in unity. We do this in a world

where corruption, greed and injustice bring about inequality and division. Ours is a united prayer in a fractured world: this is powerful. However, as individual Christians and communities, we are often complicit with injustice, and yet we are called together to form a united witness for justice and to be a means of Christ's healing grace for the brokenness of the world.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019 has been prepared by Christians from Indonesia. With a population of 265 million, 86% of whom are reckoned to be Muslim, Indonesia is well known as having the largest Muslim population of any country. However, about 10% of Indonesians are Christian from various traditions. In terms of both population and the vast extension of the country Indonesia is the biggest nation in South East Asia. It has more than 17,000 islands, 1,340 different ethnic groups and over 740 local languages and yet is united in its plurality by one national language, Bahasa Indonesia. The nation is founded on five principles called Pancasila [see note 1 below] with the motto Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity). Across the diversity of ethnicity, language and religion, Indonesians have lived by the principle of gotong royong which is to live in solidarity and by collaboration. This means sharing in all aspects of life, work, grief and festivities, and regarding all Indonesians as brothers and sisters.

This always fragile harmony is today threatened in new ways. Much of the economic growth that Indonesia has experienced in recent decades has been built on a system that has competition at its heart. This is in stark contrast to the collaboration of gotong royong. Corruption is experienced in many forms. It infects politics and business, often with devastating consequences for the environment. In particular, corruption undermines justice and the implementation of law. Too often those who are supposed to promote justice and protect the weak do the opposite. As a consequence, the gap between rich and poor has widened; and so, a country rich in resources has the scandal of many people living in poverty. As a traditional Indonesian saying goes, A mouse dies of hunger in the barn full of rice. Meanwhile particular ethnic and religious groups are often associated with wealth

in ways that have fed tensions. Radicalization that pits one community against another has grown and is exacerbated by the misuse of social media that demonizes particular communities.

Christian communities in such an environment become newly aware of their unity as they join in a common concern and a common response to an unjust reality. At the same time, confronted by these injustices, we are obliged as Christians to examine the ways in which we are complicit. Only by heeding Jesus prayer that they all may be one can we witness to living unity in diversity. It is through our unity in Christ that we will be able to combat injustice and serve the needs of its victims.

Moved by these concerns, the Christians of Indonesia found that the words of Deuteronomy, “Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue ...” (Deut. 16:18-20) spoke powerfully to their situation and needs. Before the people of God enter the land, God has promised them, they renew their commitment to the Covenant God established with them. The pericope (a short passage of Scripture) comes in a chapter whose central theme is the festivities to be celebrated by the Covenant people. After each festival the people are instructed: “Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns” (Deut. 16:14, see also 16:11). Indonesian Christians look to recover this same spirit of inclusive festivities across communities, which they previously enjoyed. At the end of this long chapter it may seem strange to have two verses about appointing judges, but in this Indonesian context the links between festivities for all and justice become alive. As people of the Covenant established in Jesus, we know that the delights of the heavenly banquet will be given to those who hunger and thirst and are persecuted for justice for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:6, 10).

Christ’s Church is called to be a foretaste of this kingdom. However, in our disunity we fall short. We fail to be the sign of God’s love for his people. Just as injustice has widened the divisions that have riven Indonesian society, so

injustice has also fed the divisions of the Church. We repent of the injustice that causes division, but as Christians we also believe in the power of Christ to forgive us and heal. And so, we find ourselves united under the cross of Christ, calling both for his grace to end injustice and for his mercy for the sins which have caused our division.

[1] The five principles of Pancasila are (1) Belief in the one and only God, (2) Just and civilized humanity, (3) The unity of Indonesia, (4) Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives, (5) Social justice for all People of Indonesia.

Nick Jesson
R.C. Archdiocese of Regina

JANUARY EVENTS

13	10:30 AM	Worship & Sunday School
	Noon	Mission & Outreach Cmt
15	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	10:30 AM	Bible Study
	Noon	Freedom 55’ers
16	9:45 AM	Riverbend Walk
	7:00 PM	Board of Managers
17	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	7:00 PM	Choir
18	10:00 AM	Pastoral Care Cmt
19	10:00 AM	Worship Committee
20	10:30 AM	Worship & Sunday School
22	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	10:30 AM	Bible Study
	Noon	Freedom 55’ers
23	9:45 AM	Riverbend Walk
24	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	7:00 PM	Choir
27	10:30 AM	Worship & Sunday School
29	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	10:30 AM	Bible Study
	Noon	Freedom 55’ers
30	9:45 AM	Riverbend Walk
	7:00 PM	Book Club @ Rev. Amanda’s
31	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
	7:00 PM	Choir