

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

June 2018

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

General Assembly and the Rainbow Communion

From June 3-6, 2018, I had the privilege and the responsibility of participating in the 144th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It was held at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario with the theme "Glad and Generous Hearts."

The outgoing Moderator, the Rev. Peter Bush, preached honestly at the opening worship, and challenged the church with acknowledging and dealing with the deep divisions in our denomination. He noted that many of us "don't like each other" and he used 1 Corinthians 13 as a call to LOVE one another in the midst of conflict.

The Rev. Daniel Cho was elected as the new Moderator, and conducted the meeting very well, despite the fact that it was a challenging meeting with difficult and divisive topics to discuss. There were moments for worship throughout the Assembly, and the beginning and end of every sederunt, and this helped to create an atmosphere of worshipful work. The music and prayer selections were carefully chosen and responsive to what was happening in the meeting. The preachers were pretty good too. 😊

I was very busy at the Assembly because the original plan was that I would be there as a resource person, not as a voting commissioner:

As Convenor of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, I presented a report which included recommendations encouraging local ecumenical and interfaith engagement, promoting the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and Interfaith Harmony Week, and the inviting congregations to learn more about Canadian Indigenous Spirituality.

I also introduced the Ecumenical Guest, the Rev. Dr. Willard Metzger, Executive Director of Mennonite Church Canada, and Mr. Balpreet

Singh, legal counsel for the World Sikh Organization of Canada. Both presentations received very positive responses from commissioners. Willard Metzger's presentation included sharing about how the Mennonite Church moved towards a "local option" for conducting same-sex marriages, while agreeing not to change their doctrinal standards. Mr. Singh shared several stories as he told us about the Sikh Faith, and he also spoke about his work in human rights law and religious accommodation. He has not only worked to protect the religious freedom of Sikhs, but also many other faith groups.

I assisted with the introduction of a trial process of Consensus Decision-Making during the Monday evening sederunt. Although I don't think that it went as smoothly as it might have, I still believe that it could be a helpful process for moving us out of an adversarial process of decision-making in which argument is the mode of operation. The process includes using orange and blue cards to indicate whether you are warm or cool to an idea, and to help move towards consensus in a cooperative manner.

I was invited to preach for the Monday morning worship on Acts 4:32-37. My sermon was titled "Inconceivable" and can be found online at <http://curriejesson.ca/june-4-2018-144th-general-assembly-of-the-pcc/>.

I agreed to serve as a Chaplain to Commissioners, with particular emphasis on availability to listen and support people during the challenging discussions about human sexuality. Once I became a commissioner, my availability for this became somewhat limited as I was quite engaged in the discussion on the floor. However, I did have three individuals come to me for support and prayer during the Assembly.

Finally, during the Assembly, I was asked by the Rev. Jean Morris if I would become a "Listener" for the Rainbow Communion's work over the

course of the next year. I would be available as a second person to listen (together with Jean) for individuals from Saskatchewan wanting to share their stories in person. I think this may be the most important thing that happened at the General Assembly this year. The Rainbow Communion's terms of reference were adjusted, those participating in the process were assured of their safety (in that their sharing is guaranteed not to result in censure by the courts of the church), and the work of the Rainbow Communion was ready to begin.

The mandate of the Rainbow Communion is:

To offer a safe and respectful environment in which confidentiality is assured, in order to encourage people

- *to tell stories of harm done to them within and by the church because of homophobia, heterosexism and transphobia; and*
- *to share stories of God's grace experienced by them and through them in Christian ministry, even in the midst of the challenges they have faced.*

To invite people to submit their stories orally or in writing (face-to-face, video conference, phone call, email, traditional mail, or other means).

Stories of those who have given permission to share them may be included in the committee's report to a future General Assembly.

To provide, after the listening process is completed, an appropriate response to the issue of homophobia within The Presbyterian Church in Canada with recommendations for concrete actions addressing homophobia to the General Assembly for implementation within the church.

I believe that this is very important work, and I am pleased to be a part of it. I would encourage everyone who has a story to share to be in touch with the Rainbow Communion. You can get all the information about how to participate at presbyterian.ca/listening or by emailing rainbowcommunion@gmail.com. You can also speak to me about arranging a meeting with the Rainbow Communion listeners.

Right now, we are just finishing Regina's celebration of Pride Week, with the Pride Parade

on Saturday, June 16th. Last weekend I attended a panel presentation at Wesley United Church in which three young women (one Roman Catholic, one Jewish, and one Muslim) shared about the intersection of their faith and their sexual orientation, with each one identifying as lesbian or queer. It was a remarkable presentation, with these women sharing so openly and honestly about the struggles they have experienced in their faith communities and the challenges of living their faith as LGBTQ+ people. I was most encouraged by their resiliency and their determination not to give up on God and to live and serve as faithful people despite the challenges.

During this Pride Week, and as the work of the Rainbow Communion begins, I pray for all LGBTQ+ people in our community and in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. I pray that we can make all our churches safe and welcoming communities so that all people can experience the love and grace of God, and so that our churches will be blessed by the gifts of each and every child of God, regardless of sexual orientation.

Rev. Amanda Currie

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

World Refugee Day (June 20, 2018) is a day to honour the strength and courage of refugees and reflect on ways to help uprooted women, men, and children on their journey to find peace. Work with refugees is an important part of the ministry of Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D), and at this time there is a special appeal for the Rohingya Refugees.

The plight of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people has become the world's fastest growing refugee crisis. Since August 2017, unthinkable suffering caused by escalating violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state has forced over 700,000 Rohingya refugees into overcrowded settlements in Bangladesh, where necessities like food, shelter, and sanitation are extremely limited. The approaching monsoon season will worsen an already dire living situation – flooding and landslides could demolish temporary shelters and exacerbate illness.

On this World Refugee Day, stand with Rohingya refugees. Pray for their safety and help ease their suffering by supporting relief efforts through PWS&D that address food, water and sanitation, shelter, emergency medical care, and psychosocial assistance.

Bible Verses for World Refugee Day (From Biblegateway.com)

According to The UN Refugee Agency, around the world nearly 20 people are forcibly displaced every minute as a result of conflict or persecution. An unprecedented 65.6 million people globally have been forced from their homes. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. There are also 10 million stateless people who are denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment, and freedom of movement.

What does the Bible say about helping defenseless and vulnerable people in need?

Don't oppress an immigrant. You know what it's like to be an immigrant, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt. [Exodus 23:9 \(CEB\)](#)

"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." [Leviticus 19:33-34 \(ESV\)](#)

"The sin of your sister Sodom was this: She lived with her daughters in the lap of luxury—proud, gluttonous, and lazy. They ignored the oppressed and the poor. They put on airs and lived obscene lives. And you know what happened: I did away with them." [Ezekiel 16:49 \(MSG\)](#)

Being kind to the poor is like lending to the Lord. The Lord will reward you for what you have done. [Proverbs 19:17 \(ICB\)](#)

For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore, I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. [Deuteronomy 15:11 \(KJV\)](#)

[Jesus] said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands." [Matthew 22:37-40 \(CSB\)](#)

All that the Law says can be summed up in the command to love others as much as you love yourself. [Galatians 5:14 \(CEV\)](#)

"I was hungry. And you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty. And you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger. And you invited me in. I needed clothes. And you gave them to me. I was sick. And you took care of me. I was in prison. And you came to visit me." [Matthew 25:35-36 \(NIRV\)](#)

Don't hold back—give freely, and you'll have plenty poured back into your lap—a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, brimming over. You'll receive in the same measure you give. [Luke 6:38 \(VOICE\)](#)

Don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God. [Hebrews 13:16 \(NLT\)](#)

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. [Romans 15:7 \(NIV\)](#)

Carry one another's burdens and in this way, you will fulfill the requirements of the law of Christ [that is, the law of Christian love]. [Galatians 6:2 \(AMP\)](#)

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

As activities wind down towards summer, we bring another busy year to an end.

- It's hard to believe that Amanda will complete her first year with us at the end of July! It has been a wonderful year and we are really thankful to have Amanda and Nick with us!
- The organ project is mostly completed now. There will be some more fine-tuning done in August and then it will be finished. Thank you to Hart Godden and Will Ireton for all the work you have done over the last two weeks! Thank

you to Bill for organizing everything! And thanks again to the many volunteers who helped out during the first week - it was a huge help and with so many working, it went quickly! To date, **we have received \$7425 of the \$9000** goal for this project. Thank you for your generous donations! To make a donation, you can include it in your regular offering envelope, but mark Organ under special projects.

- At the annual meeting, the Board was encouraged to arrange more rentals of our facilities. As an answer to prayer, two large rentals emerged during the month following. A volleyball association has arranged to rent the gym for a week in August and Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday evenings from November to May, which will generate about \$4000. A group starting a Muslim school for 15-20 Grade 1 and 2 students approached First Church about renting the Kennedy Room during the week (avoiding Tuesday morning), with some use of the gym. If the requirements of the City of Regina (zoning) and the Dept of Education can be met, we could potentially have a rental of about \$14,000 next year.
- Our committees have been busy with a variety of activities throughout the year and we thank everyone who contributed their time and effort to the ministry of First Church!

There are a number of things I want to share with you as we look ahead to the fall.

- Our Vacation Bible School will be held Aug. 20 - 23 in the mornings (9 - 12). We encourage our parents to register their children (online at vbspro.events/p/events/firstregina2018 or call Shirley in the office.) We also need volunteers for registration in the morning and snacks.
- September will be a busy month:
 - Sept. 2 - Holy Communion
 - Sept. 16 - "Celebrating Teachers Sunday" during worship
 - Sept. 16 - Welcome Back Potluck at 5:30
 - Sept. 23 - Meet your Elder (at coffee time after worship)
 - Sept. 29 - Rory Allen Concert
 - Sept. 30 - Presbyterians Sharing Sunday
 - Oct. 7 - Thanksgiving and Worldwide Communion Sunday

Mark your calendars for all of these important events!

- We hope to again have a Value Village FUNDrive in the fall, with the date still to be arranged. But, as you clean out closets this summer, start saving bags of clothing, small household items and books.
- At our annual meeting a year ago, refugee sponsorship of Nyabani Ngor's family was approved. But it is a long process. PWS&D of our church has approved including our family in their quota for this year. Currently the completion of forms for Canada Immigration and Citizenship is under way and then we wait. But we are going to launch our appeal in the fall to raise money for the sponsorship. In October we will hold a Global Potluck dinner on Oct. 28 where we encourage you to bring food from your heritage. More information will be coming out about that event in the fall.
- Sometime in the fall we will be having a presbytery visitation again, but the date is to be determined.
- The Session has approved sending a team from First Church to "Transform", an event hosted by Canadian Ministries and Stewardship & Planned Giving of our national church in Orillia Nov. 8-11. Funding will be provided from our Daring in our Outreach Fund. "Transform the way you live as leaders, congregations and ministries." The Rev. Dr. Grace Kim will be the inspirational keynote speaker, with a missional focus. Workshops will be shared by congregations that have experienced success in stewardship, discipleship development, community engagement and more. These will provide our team with an opportunity to consider concrete ways for our congregation to move forward. If you are interested in participating, please let Amanda know.

Have a wonderful summer and rest up, because next year is shaping up to be an active one!

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

First Church has three scholarship funds for post-secondary studies and makes awards to students each year. Application deadline is September 30; criteria and award amounts vary. Applications are available on the church website at www.firstpresregina.ca (click "Who We Serve" and then "Scholarships"). For further information contact Jim Doolittle.

Jim Doolittle
Scholarship Committee Convener

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Shipwrecked: Bible Fun Camp

Once again, we are offering a summer experience for kids age 5 to 12. Leadership will be provided by a Synod team, with volunteer help from First Church.



August 20, 2018 — August 23, 2018
9:00 am — 12:00 pm

Venture onto an uncharted island where kids survive and thrive. Anchor kids in the truth that Jesus carries them through life's storms. Register online now!

(vbspro.events/p/reginafirst2018) or call 306-522-9571 for more information.

FUNDSCRIP

June 17 will be the final order Sunday before summer so stock up as we will take a break from ordering during the summer! Specials for the month include the Ultimate Dining Card (6%). The Ultimate Dining Card is good at a variety of restaurants including Montana's, East Side Mario's, Swiss Chalet, New York Fries and Original Joe's. If Jo or Lizz are in church on summer Sundays, gas and grocery cards will be available for sale. Stop by the table in the gym after church. Thanks for your support!

SUMMER BOOK CLUB

Have some fun and share some fellowship with your First Church Family by taking part in a mini Summer Book Club. I have chosen two books that look fun and interesting. Just be sure to give them a read before we get together to discuss. Location TBA, but likely at someone's house. Maybe outside if the weather is nice! Pick up the books at your local book store, online from Amazon, or borrow them from the Regina Public Library.

Wednesday, July 11 at 7:00 pm we'll discuss *A Come From Away* by Genevieve Graham.

"In this beautifully written, meticulously researched novel of the Acadian expulsion from Grand Pre in 1755, Genevieve Graham crafts an uncompromising glimpse into the anguish of war and the eventual triumph of love. A must read for fans of Canadian history."
- Kaki Warner, bestselling author of "Pieces of Sky"

Wednesday, August 15 at 7:00 pm we'll discuss *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman.

Ove is almost certainly the grumpier man you will ever meet. He thinks himself surrounded by idiots - joggers, neighbours who can't reverse a trailer properly and shop assistants who talk in code.

But isn't it rare, these days, to find such old-fashioned clarity of belief and deed? Such undeserving conviction about what the world should be, and a lifelong dedication to making it just so?

In the end, you will see, there is something about Ove that is quite irresistible.

CANADA YOUTH



This Sunday, June 17th, we will be commissioning the participants from First Church who will be attending the Canada Youth Conference this summer (July 2-7). Please join us for worship at 10:30 am as we pray that they will truly be “Stirred Not Shaken” and have their “Faith Activated” through the conference, the program, the worship, the relationships, and the experience they have this summer.

Would you like to help welcome home our CY participants at the Regina airport? They will be arriving at 10:22 pm on West Jet on July 7th.

CELEBRATING TEACHERS SUNDAY

Plan ahead for an exciting event at First Church in September! We are planning a very special worship service on Sunday, September 16th to celebrate teachers. This is an opportunity to invite your teachers, your kids’ teachers, and your friends or family who are teachers for a celebration of their vocation and work. It will include a special blessing of the teachers for the school year ahead. We will provide invitations that you can share with your teacher-friends.

CAMP CHRISTOPHER

Camper registration forms are available on the table in the narthex or you can go on line at www.campchristopher.ca. Get yours today!

Volunteers Needed - Camp Christopher needs volunteers! Each week we need a chaplain, first aider, kitchen and maintenance helpers. Have questions? Let us know! Send us an email at info@campchristopher.ca.

Camp Open House - You are invited to join us for our annual **Open house, Saturday July 7th, 2018**, from noon until 4pm. Join us for worship as we commission the summer staff, spend time on the beach, meet the staff, visit old friends or

introduce camp to a first-timer. There will be a BBQ at noon followed by the Commissioning Service at 3pm. All you need to bring is your appetite to help us launch the summer of 2018 in style!

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

CAMP CHRISTOPHER - THANK YOU

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you so much for continuing to support our ministry at Camp Christopher. We very much appreciate your generosity, which helps us provide a great Christian camping experience, as well as leadership training and employment opportunities.

Last year the new paddle boards were a great success as was the long-anticipated gazebo. When there is inclement weather, the beautiful gazebo with its own fire pit proves a much-needed open space for activities and evening vespers.

If you haven’t visited the camp before, do join us for our Open House on Saturday, July 7th. There will be a BBQ lunch around noon, followed a covenanting service with the summer staff. Afterwards, you are free to explore our lakeside facilities and possibly even go for a paddle in a kayak or canoe.

Sincerely,
Ursula Wiig
Camp Christopher Treasurer

CAMP CHRISTOPHER APPEAL

Thank you, First Church! So far, we have raised \$950 to help buy duffle bags so kids don’t have to bring their clothes to camp in garbage bags. If you were unable to donate during the last two weeks, you can still give to this worthy cause. Please mark your offering envelope “Camp Christopher Appeal”. What a great gift for these kids!

WOMEN'S CAMP

Ask...Search...Knock Ladies, here is an opportunity to gather together and enjoy some time to connect with other women and get refreshed. Women's camp this year will be held September 7th to 9th at Camp Christopher. Cost is only \$50. You can find registration forms on the table in the narthex. Registration deadline is August 28th.

JUNE EVENTS

- 17 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Canada Youth Commissioning
- 24 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Baptism of Galilee Farrukh
- 27 7:00 PM Board of Managers
- 30 1:30 PM Wedding of Andrew
Donovan & Pradith Quantakoune.
Congratulations!

JULY EVENTS

- 1 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Canada Day
- 2-7 Canada Youth 2018 in Ontario
- 7 Wedding of Jeff Perry &
Paula Dvernichuk. Congratulations!
- 7 Noon – 4 PM Open House @
Camp Christopher
- 8 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Celebrating the Rev. Bob Wilson's
50th Anniversary of Ordination
- 11 7:00 PM Summer Book Club
- 15 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
- 22 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Rev. Jennifer Holtslander preaching
- 29 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Guy Laberge, Student Minister preaching

AUGUST EVENTS

- 5 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Guy Laberge, Student Minister preaching
- 12 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Rev. Bob Wilson preaching
- 15 7:00 PM Summer Book Club
- 19 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
- 20-23 9 AM – Noon Bible Fun Camp (VBS)
- 26 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

- 2 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Holy Communion
- 5 7:00 PM Session
- 7-9 Women's Camp @ Camp Christopher
- 9 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Sunday School Resumes
- 10 7:00 PM Stewardship Committee
- 15 9:30 AM Presbytery
- 16 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Celebrating Teachers Sunday
- 16 5:30 PM Welcome Back Potluck
- 19 7:00 PM Board of Managers
- 22 10:00 AM Worship Committee
- 23 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Meet Your Elder Sunday
- 29 7:00 PM Rory Allen Concert
- 30 **10:30 AM** **Worship Service**
Presbyterians Sharing Sunday

