

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

March 2014

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

That time is coming around again. It's the time when people give up chewing gum and soda-pop for Jesus. Sorry if I'm tongue-in-cheek a bit here. And I want you to know that I'm not making fun of anyone. I'm actually critiquing a 15 year-old me and my early attempts at Lent. But really what is Lent anyhow?

This season of Lent which is just upon us devolved gradually in the church. From what historians can tell, one of the earliest traditions was fasting for forty hours between Good Friday and Easter morning. People understood that Christ was in the tomb for forty hours, so a period of fasting and remembering the sacrifice Christ made for us became part of the observance. Over time, the fasting was extended from forty hours to all of Holy Week (only one small evening meal per day would be eaten, much as Muslims do today during Ramadan). Then as time went on, the practice of observing a period well beyond Holy Week developed, and by about the year 400 the church decided on a season of Lent lasting forty days. The way of totalling the days was unusual however; Sundays were not counted since each Sunday was considered a kind of miniature Easter celebration of its own. Lent would begin on Ash Wednesday and end on Holy Saturday.

Why ashes you may ask? Well, that is an ancient custom that comes to us from the Hebrew Bible signifying grief and mourning. In the Early Church, Christians who had committed grave faults were obliged to do public penance. Believe it or not, on Ash Wednesday the leaders of the churches blessed the uncomfortable hairy shirts that they wore during the forty days of Lent and sprinkled them with ashes. Then, while the faithful recited the psalms, the penitents were turned out of the holy place because of their sins, just as Adam

and Eve had been turned out of the Garden of Eden because of their disobedience. The people did not enter the church again until Maundy Thursday after performing certain acts of charity. As years went on and as the truth of the scripture that says "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" came to be known, all people (not just religious leaders) began to wish for the application of the ashes. Soon everyone was doing it.

To understand the season of Lent as a time of introspection and spiritual discipline we look back to the way new converts were initiated into the Early Church. Lent became the special time during which new Christians prepared for baptism. As Easter Sunday approached, an all-night vigil would be held and, just before the sun rose on Easter morning, all those who so desired and had proper instruction would be baptized. It did not take long for all Christians to set this time apart to recommit themselves to the vows of their baptisms. Eventually Lent was seen as a time to remember Christ by seeking out self-denial. People began to give up all kinds of things (eventually even bubble-gum and fizzy-drinks).

We arrive at this time of recommitment once again. And one must ask: What will Lent mean for you this year? Consider a suggestion that may sound blasphemous in the context of Jesus' warning about public piety: "Beware of practicing your piety before others". Even so, this year I wonder if you might consider being very public with your piety. Jesus, you see, wanted to guard against hypocrisy. That was the point of not allowing people to be public with their spiritual practices. But the hypocrisy of our day in the mainline church is not that people are parading their piety around in public – it is exactly the opposite. The faith is there no

doubt, but it is kept carefully private... too private!

It has been noted that Christianity is always just one generation away from extinction. The truth is that the faith must be shared. So this Lent, I wonder if perhaps we might take something on rather than give something up. I say be public in your faith, not for recognition, but simply to declare your love of God and your fellow travelers in this world. I can't promise you much but I can promise you this: if you do it, Lent will be very different this year than the last time around.

Bradley Childs

Rev. Brad Childs

SESSION

The Session is pleased to announce that Bill Sgrazzutti will be the new Music Director for First Church, effective immediately. Bill has a very strong musical background and is highly involved in Regina's music community, so he brings a lot of strengths to First. We appreciate his willingness to fill in as Interim Organist and now we look forward to working with him in the future. We'd like to thank the Music Committee (Sheila Wilson, Marianne Woods, Bette Kelly, Rodolfo Omolida, Jeff Perry) for their diligent work in advertising and interviewing for this position.

Lisa Ann Wood was elected as an elder at the annual meeting on Feb. 23. Lisa Ann's ordination as an elder will take place during the service on March 16, 2014.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

COMMISSIONED VISITORS

There will be a meeting April 15th at 10:00 am in the Morris Room. New visitors welcome. Call Donna (586-4026) or Emily (584-2002) for more information.

Donna Wilkinson
Commissioned Visitors

FELLOWSHIP

It's not too late to sign up for the delicious and fun filled St Patrick's supper to be held on March 16th at 5:30pm. Tickets are \$10 for adults and children are free. You can sign up in the Narthex or downstairs in the gym. We just need to know numbers so that we can prepare enough food and set enough places.

Good Food, Good Fun Good Entertainment.
Don't miss it!!!!

Sheila Wilson
Fellowship Committee Convenor



PRESBYTERINA WORD SERVICE & DEVELOPEMENT

Our Annual PWS&D appeal: where your givings go

It has been said that undesignated giving ensures that "all people in all programs are supported all the time". That's what we hope to do with our PWS&D annual appeal. Here are a few examples of the work your gifts support:

In Afghanistan, Huma relied on her husband's income to support their three children until he died five years ago. With support from PWS&D, local partner Church World Service is reaching out to women like Huma by providing poultry kits. A poultry kit includes 17 chickens, a feeder, a drinking bowl, medicines, vaccines, chicken feed, and mesh wire. With these kits women are able to gain economic independence and improve their family's nutrition. Huma says she is now able to produce approximately 300 eggs a month. She sells 200 eggs in the village to earn income and then saves the extra 100 for her family's needs.

Through PWS&D's "Building Sustainable Livelihoods" program, groups of Malawian women are being supported as they form self-help groups. Although they are often the poorest in their communities, they are learning to save and lend amongst themselves in order to build better futures. Prior to joining her self-help group, Mary Jere cut grass and sold thatch for income. She often struggled to afford enough food to feed her family. Today, Mary's main source of income comes from the group. Two small loans totalling about \$30 allowed her to grow vegetables and buy fertilizer. She has used the profits to build her family a new brick house and help others in her community as well.

At the age of five, John suffered from meningitis and a stroke which left him paralyzed from the waist down. Years later, feeling dejected, helpless and hopeless, John finally received the care and support he needed to realize his full potential. Through the PWS&D-supported Garu Centre in Ghana, John received a tricycle so he could move independently. The program also offered him agricultural training. Today, John is a successful farmer and grows more than enough food to feed his wife and children. Recognizing his tremendous achievements, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture has earmarked him for their "best farmer" award.

Mary Jesse
M&O Convenor

PLANNED GIVING

Growing Our Vision: Celebrating Planned Giving

First Church now has an approved Planned Giving Program! "Growing Our Vision: Seeds of Abundant Joy" -- the document that provides the policies and procedures for receiving, investing and using planned gifts to enhance the life and mission of our church -- was approved at the Annual Congregational Meeting last month.

Early in 2014 as the elements of our program were being reviewed and finalized, First Church received another planned gift. The donor has

requested anonymity but is pleased to have the fact of this gift communicated and celebrated. We thank the donor for their generosity and support. This individual has chosen to make a planned gift as a part of their legacy which, in turn, will help ensure that First Church has a solid foundation and the means to fulfill and expand our mission. We are thankful for the generosity of this most recent donor.

There are many ways to provide a planned gift to First Church. A financial planner, for example, can advise you about estate planning and help you facilitate your planned gift. Also, "Growing Our Vision" enables us to recognize planned gifts in a manner that honours the wishes of the giver or their family members. Whether a giver's name is disclosed or kept private is entirely up to the individual(s) concerned. There is no obligation to disclose. The donors' wishes in these matters will be respected and honoured.

Now that the "Growing Our Vision: Seeds of Abundant Joy" Program has been approved, 2014 will be a year of transition. The Planned Giving Team will give way to the new Planned Giving Committee that will be responsible for the administration of the program. The new structure of funds will be set up, educational materials such as a brochure produced, and you will continue to hear about planned giving through this newsletter.

If you are contemplating a planned gift as part of your spiritual legacy, you can start by contacting a member of the Planned Giving Committee for more information. If you or a group of individuals has an idea to further the mission of First Church please take the next few months to consider and develop an application to one of the action funds: the Joyful Worship Fund; the Tender Together Fund; or the Daring Outreach Fund. Planned Giving gives First Church a wonderful opportunity to grow in God's grace as donors and as we further the mission of our church.

Lisa Ann Wood,
Planned Giving

KIRK SESSION AND COMMITTEES, 2014

For those who were unable to attend the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday February 23, and for others as well, here is an up-to-date list of First Church committees and those who serve on them. Please note that the membership for the new Planned Giving Committee (as distinct from the Planned Giving Team that designed and promoted the planned giving initiative) has yet to be fully determined.

Session

Rev. Brad Childs, Moderator; Jo Szostak, Clerk; Jim Doolittle, Bette Kelly, Tom Ireton, Margaret MacDonald, Malcolm MacDonald, Graeme Mitchell, Doug Stewart, Gordon Wiles, Sheila Wilson, Lisa Ann Wood; Marianne Woods (on leave)

Christian Education

Bette Kelly, Convenor: Jim Doolittle, Lillian Forsythe, Emily Ireton, Tammy MacDonald, Sharon Miller, Sheila Wilson, Rev. Brad Childs (ex officio)

Fellowship:

Sheila Wilson, Convenor: Stella Becker, Paula Dvernichuk, Margaret MacDonald, Wendy Prior

Mission & Outreach

Mary Jesse, Convenor: Rev. Brad Childs, Elizabeth Magee, Coleen Rankin, Donna Wilkinson

Pastoral Care

Emily Ireton, Convenor: Rev. Brad Childs, George Madeley, Tom Ireton, Donna Wilkinson

Stewardship

Jo Szostak, Convenor: Rev. Brad Childs (ex officio), Margaret MacDonald, Gordon Wiles, Donna Wilkinson, Rev. Bob Wilson

Worship

Marianne Woods, Convenor: Rev. Brad Childs (ex officio), Andrew Donovan, Jeannie Macfarlane, George Madeley, Joyce McKersie, Jeff Perry, Wendy Prior, Doug Stewart, William Sgrazzutti (ex officio)

Memorial & Scholarship

Jim Doolittle, Convenor: Andrew Donovan, Alfred Ferozdin, Mary Jesse, Bill Kelly, Ron Pugsley, Sandra Fyffe

Board of Managers

Donna Wilkinson, Convenor: Gary Belore, Dayton Doolittle, Rodolfo Omolida, Jane Powell, Keith Prior, Jo Szostak, Lisa Ann Wood, Gordon Wiles

Planned Giving

Ron Pugsley, Gordon Wiles, Donna Wilkinson, Lisa Ann Wood, plus two others to be named (one from the congregation and one from the Board)

ART FROM THE MORRIS ROOM

The fourth painting I'll be discussing from the wonderful Kitson collection later this month is Jacob van Ruisdall's

"The Mill at Wijk bij Duurstede"

which he painted at age 40 in 1670. Ruisdael was the supreme genius of the Dutch landscapists, the only one who fully mastered every type of landscape from the broad panorama to the most delicate, intimate view. Ruisdael manipulated reality in a subtle, almost imperceptible way to serve his artistic purpose. This painting shows his genius for reshaping nature to create art. The contrasting of colours and of light and dark, as well as a clever use of verticals and diagonals has made the simple mill monumental.

He projected his feelings for nature's grandeur, in which the clouds and sky predominate, with the greatest skill. The feeling of reality is so strong in Ruisdael's landscapes that it comes as a surprise to learn that he and his contemporary landscapists never actually painted outdoors.

They all made sketches on the scene but painted in the studio, relying on sketch books and memory.

Ruisdael's sense of the power of nature led him to reduce man in his painting to the role of bit player, and his treatment of the sky set him

above his fellow painters and later influenced the 19th century landscapists John Constable and J.M.A. Turner.

He lived from 1630 - 1681.

John Macfarlane



Friends with Robins?

The other morning I stood on the balcony,
on the lawn was Mrs Robin looking at me.
I spoke first, "good morning, you came home.
Did you bring your mate or are you alone?"

Very insecure she kept on staring,
I could see she felt, better not to be daring.
This is the person, who did not let me build my
nest,
and kept telling me, she knows best.

Softly I spoke, birds built their home in a tree,
not on my veranda, where you like to be.
Another month or so, it will be very hot,
and your precious family will be roasting on the
spot.

Remember last year, three times you tried,
you were very fast, but I won that fight.
You started inside the garage, but it had the
same fate
I heard you sitting on the wire, trying to
negotiate.

I know you remember my mate,
who would feed you, sometimes late.
He could reach your nest, because he was tall,
now he is gone, and I am scared I might fall.

Please this year let us be a friend,
and do not keep up this useless trend,
it's okay to sing in the morning at four,
I'll join you, cheer up, cheer up and more.

Violet Lochore

MARCH 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	Worship Service & Sunday School
11	9:00 AM 10:30 AM Noon	Adult Walk Bible Study Freedom 55ers
12	8:00 PM	Choir
13	9:00 AM	Adult Walk
16	10:30 AM 5:30 PM	Worship Service & Sunday School St. Patrick's Day Supper
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	Worship Service & Sunday School
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
30	10:30 AM	Worship Service & Sunday School