

**FIRST THINGS FIRST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA**

March 2026

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

As you all know, I enjoy singing. And as many of you know, I've been supplementing the singing I get to do in church by singing in a wonderful choir in the community called the Ignite Chamber Choir. We had a fundraising concert for the choir last weekend, and the Director, Dorianna Holowachuk, invited a few of the choir members to share a brief testimonial about our experience singing in the choir. I was delighted to be able to share with the other choir members and the audience about what singing in the choir means to me.

Like other choir members, I enjoy the community of the choir and meeting diverse and interesting people from the community. I appreciate the challenge of learning the diverse music and the opportunity to improve my skills. I love the feeling of making music together, and I enjoy the beauty of what we are able to create.

But in addition to those benefits of singing in a choir, there's also a spiritual aspect to the experience for me. Although not everything we sing in the Ignite Chamber Choir is Christian music, in contrast to the church choir repertoire, many of the pieces we sing are from the historic Christian tradition, and almost everything we sing is thoughtful, reflective, prayerful, or celebratory in nature.

In this season in particular singing in the choir has led me to engage in theological reflection about the music as we are rehearsing for a performance of Johann Sebastian Bach's St. John Passion with the Regina Symphony Orchestra on Saturday, March 28th.

Bach composed the St. John Passion to be shared in worship on Good Friday. Based on chapters 18 and 19 of the Gospel of John in Martin Luther's German translation, the piece is set for orchestra, choir, and several soloists, who both recount the Passion story and reflect on its meaning and significance.

When this piece was shared on Good Friday in Bach's time, the first half would be shared in worship. Then there would have been a pause for a sermon to be delivered, followed by the second half of the Passion story in music. Last month, when Maestro Gordon Gerrard visited one of our choir rehearsals to run some of the movements with us, he mentioned that there would have been a sermon in the middle when it was first performed. And when I got home that evening, my mind was swimming with ideas for what that sermon could include.

The next day, I sat down and wrote a sermon about the Passion story, about Bach's setting, and how Bach interprets the text of John 18-19. I plan to share a version of that sermon at First Church on Good Friday, April 3rd.

When you come to worship on Good Friday, you won't have to have heard Bach's St. John Passion in order to follow or appreciate the worship that day, but it may be particularly meaningful if you do have an opportunity to listen to the piece. You can buy tickets from the Regina Symphony Orchestra for the performance at Holy Rosary Cathedral on Saturday, March 28th at 7:30 pm by phoning 306-586-9555 or online at

https://purchase.reginasymphony.com/Events?attribute_EventAttributes=MainStage If you are unable to attend, you could also listen to this excellent version by the Netherlands Bach Society on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMf9XDQBAal&list=RDzMf9XDQBAal&start_radio=1&t=15s

I look forward to sharing in worship with you on Good Friday this year, as well as the other special worship services that we are planning for Holy Week.

Palm Sunday: March 29th at 10:30 am.
Worship will include a Palm Parade, as well as the baptisms of Nyson and Boga, sons of Cari Kooger and Gavin MacLean.

Maundy Thursday: April 2nd at 5:30 pm. We will gather for a combined worship service and potluck supper in the gymnasium.

Good Friday: April 3rd at 10:30 am. The sermon will be inspired by the Passion story in John 18-19 and Bach's interpretation. We will sing some hymns that have their origin in the German Lutheran tradition of Bach's era.

Easter Sunday: April 5th at 10:30 am. We will gather for a joyful intergenerational service including the Lord's Supper. After worship, there will be an Easter Egg Hunt for all who want to participate.

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

This has been a busy winter season... as we move through Lent toward Easter, please mark the dates on your calendar for the Maundy Thursday potluck and Communion April 2 at 5:30, Good Friday service April 3 at 10:30 and Easter Sunday intergenerational service and Communion on April 5. Coming up in March is Birthday Sunday on March 22. If you can donate a cake, please sign up in the narthex. It will be a great birthday celebration for everyone!

Our annual congregational meeting will be held on Sunday May 3 following worship. Annual reports will be out two weeks ahead so you can read through, but please mark the date.

Looking ahead there's another date to mark on your calendar! On Saturday, May 30 at 3:00 pm First Church will be holding a concert, so that will be an exciting spring event!

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

VISIT FROM THE MODERATOR

On Sunday, February 8th, we were honoured to receive a visit from the Moderator of the 150th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Rev. Jeffrey Murray.



He preached at worship and shared about his experience visiting Palestine in September 2025. After worship, the Fellowship Committee organized a wonderful Souper Sunday Lunch. Thanks to the Committee and all the volunteers who made delicious soups for us to savour!

Jeff was able to spend a few days in Saskatchewan, including visiting the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry, meeting with ministry leaders from both the Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan and the Presbytery of Assiniboia, in addition to his visit to First Church. If you missed it, you can watch and listen to Jeff's sermon on the First Presbyterian Church, Regina YouTube page. This link will take you straight to the Scripture readings, followed by the sermon:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPIADdw4JPs&t=2173s>

Rev. Amanda Currie

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Looking for a sweet treat?? Come and join us on March 22 for Birthday Sunday – the 'sweetest' day of the year! You are welcome to sample more than one birthday cake. Please join us as we celebrate all of our birthdays together.



Sheila Wilson
Fellowship Committee Convener

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

Our Sunday School has been growing with joy and energy since expanding our classes. After gathering for a Bible memory verse and singing together, the children and youth move into three age-based groups for their lessons. We're grateful for our committed Sunday School teachers whose steady care creates a welcoming space for every child. And of course, everyone loves the snacks at the end!

I haven't been able to capture every special moment since last September, but I hope these photos give a glimpse into our ministry and invite you to keep our children of God in your prayers.



YeChan (David) Kim and DaMin (Daniel) Hwang, who led a meaningful art therapy session, inviting us to reflect on our past, present, and future with God. In Bible discussion, January focused on Isaiah 43:18–19 and the hope of new beginnings, while February explored Mark 1:9–15 and one more step toward God during Lent. We rounded out a joyful winter with an outing to the Regina Frost Festival, a fun change from our usual gym day.

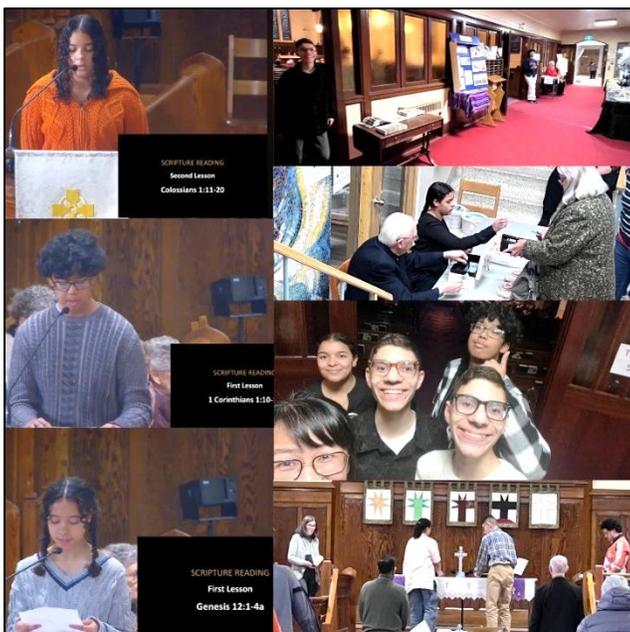
Beginning in February, you may have noticed more youth participating in worship on the first Sunday of each month through scripture reading and other leadership roles. They will remain in the sanctuary for the entire service, including Holy Communion. Instead of attending Sunday School on these Sundays, youth are invited to pick up a 'Youth Activity Sheet,' available in the Narthex, with questions related to the day's scripture. They can use it during worship and revisit the questions together the following week. On all other Sundays, youth will continue with their regular Sunday School class after the children's message.

We still have openings for volunteer Sunday School teachers. If you feel called to serve, or if you'd like to learn more about how you can support our Sunday School, please speak with Sumi or sign the sheet posted beside the Kennedy Room.

Our youth began the year with a yummy taco potluck lunch in January and, in February, enjoyed **Cari Kooger Vixamar's** warm, nutritious soup along with a lovely assortment of snacks from **Mary Okumura**. We are grateful for the delicious support that keeps our young people energized. We also welcomed two new leaders, Souls Harbour interns



We are grateful for their willingness to volunteer, especially evident at the recent Rory Allen fundraising concert, which helped make the event meaningful for our church community.





Our all-ages “The Chosen” Bible Study has begun, and it’s already been a meaningful time of learning and growing together. We especially hope to see more families with children join us as we explore the life of Jesus and strengthen our hearts and minds as God’s beloved people.

Bursting with creativity, hands-on crafts, songs, stories, and a shared meal, **Messy Church** continues to be a joyful space where all ages can explore faith in a relaxed, welcoming environment. The next one will be March 14th from 10:30am – 12:30pm on the theme “The Lost Sheep.”

Spread the word to your family, friends, and neighbours about those lovely events for everyone! These gatherings are designed to bring our community together in Christ’s love, and there’s always room for more at the table.

Youth and Family Ministry,
Rev. Sumi Jung

FUNDSCRIP

April 5 is Easter Sunday, but it will also be FundScrip order Sunday, so plan ahead to order your cards! If you haven't ordered before, please consider trying it this time. The church makes money and it doesn't cost you any more. There is a wide range of retailers who participate, so check the order form to see if you could buy cards for the places you will be

shopping. If you buy a card for \$50, you get to spend \$50 and the church can make between 2 and 10% or more. So, it really helps the church. Thanks for your support!

LUNCH BUNCH

Join the Bunch for Lunch on Tuesdays! We start with Forever in Motion at 11:30, then lunch at 12 and a program at 12:30. Looking ahead, Marianne will be singing for us on March 17.

COME TOGETHER

Dear friends,

Lenten greetings to you all! May the God of peace be with you as we pray and meditate on the last days of Jesus’ life on earth. Jesus came to bring peace. Let us continue to pray for God’s people everywhere, for world peace!

The next Come Together event will be on Wednesday March 11th, 2026, 11:00 am to 12:30 pm (CST). We will worship together with women around the world on the World Day of Prayer. Ms. Cath MacKeil, Executive Director of the Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC) will join us and introduce the video. The theme this year is “I will give you rest: Come”, prepared by the women of Nigeria, based on Matthew 11:28-30.

Please contact me at skim@presbyterian.ca if you would like the Zoom link, and I will be glad to send it to you.

Sarah Kim, Executive Director
Women’s Missionary Society

A PRAYER FOR PEACE AND A HEALING OF NATIONS

With conflict breaking out in Iran and surrounding regions, The Presbyterian Church in Canada remembers our grounding in the Prince of Peace and God’s call for the healing of the nations. We pray for healing for all those impacted by renewed violence, and that lasting, equitable peace will prevail instead.

*God of mercy and love, we remember before you those impacted by conflict and war.
Watch over those whose lives are in danger, especially those in Iran and the surrounding areas.*

Comfort those who are anxious for themselves or loved ones; and gather into your loving arms those who will die.

Soften the passions in the hearts and minds of people that keep alive the spirit of division and war, guide the nations of the world into ways of peace, justice, and truth, and establish among them a spirit of unity and cooperation, that all people in this world might have abundant life.

In your grace, restore peace within and between us; in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CUBA **From the PCC Social Action Hub**

The people of Cuba face a dire humanitarian crisis that has worsened in the wake of U.S. President Donald Trump's threats to impose tariffs on any nation that exports oil to Cuba.

On February 25, the government of Canada announced a further \$8-million contribution to relief efforts, but much more is needed – especially fuel – to ensure aid can reach people in need. Numerous non-governmental organizations including churches and trade unions are doing what they can to help. You can call on the Canadian government to:

- support all necessary actions to prevent an avoidable, human-made crisis, including a humanitarian carve-out for oil and aid free of U.S. interference.
- increase food and medical aid to Cuba beyond current levels and make diplomatic efforts with other countries to end the U.S. blockade on oil and ease the impact of ongoing U.S. sanctions.
- work with the United Nations, Mexico, Colombia and other countries to get fuel to Cuba.

Cuban partner organizations and recent visitors say conditions in Cuba today are much more difficult than in the early 1990s when the implosion of the Soviet Union led to a massive deterioration in living standards. The pandemic shuttered the tourism industry, a main source of revenue used to acquire food, medicines and fuel from abroad. Cuba has also suffered a

series of hurricanes, droughts and floods, leading to lost crops and food shortages. Energy shortages limit public transit and even the collection of garbage. Punitive U.S. measures under both Trump and Biden have also reversed the many gains delivered by the easing of such measures by the Obama administration.

The return of Trump in 2025 and appointment of Marco Rubio, a vocal proponent of increased sanctions on Cuba, as U.S. Secretary of State, means additional measures against the Cuban people may be imposed. U.S. measures not only prevent U.S. citizens and businesses from providing support to the Cuban people, they also interfere with the delivery of humanitarian aid by other countries because banks limit transactions; suppliers face risks of U.S. retaliation; and shipping of freight becomes more complicated and costly.

Try to imagine what living conditions are like for the average Cuban:

- Daily power outages
- Spending 70% of income on food
- Inflation rate of 31%
- Monthly salary of US\$16-23, enough for 3 kilos of powdered milk or a tray of 30 eggs
- Pension for seniors is about US\$5/month
- Ration book supplies cut drastically: no coffee, bread rolls reduced from 80 to 60 grams
- Cuba imports 80% of its food as national production dropped
- 10% of the people lack sufficient water
- Hospital conditions have deteriorated: the infant mortality rate has increased 50% in recent years; 12,000 doctors (with a similar number of nurses) have left the profession
- Cuba is short 24,000 teachers in the 2024-25 school year
- Insufficient fuel means fewer garbage trucks and buses
- Friends and family are leaving: 1 million since 2020, mostly from 15-49 age cohort

Fortunately, asking Canada to support Cuba in this way is consistent with Canada's history of

strong relations with Cuba and the fact that Canada has maintained an independent foreign policy:

- Canadian non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, trade unions and civil society groups have worked continuously with Cuban partners to maintain strong people-to-people connections and to provide humanitarian and development assistance.
- In 2024, Canada contributed \$1.7 million in humanitarian assistance in response to several emergencies, including Hurricanes Oscar and Rafael. Funds were shared via multilateral agencies, including the World Food Program and UNICEF, along with NGOs, including CARE Canada, the Canadian Red Cross and Humanity and Inclusion.
- Canadian “blocking legislation” seeks to protect Canadian corporations from U.S. measures that aim to prevent foreign countries from engaging in international trade with Cuba.
- Canada and Mexico were the only two countries in the Western hemisphere in the 1960s to preserve diplomatic relations with Cuba.
- Cuba was the first country to be granted permission to fish in Canadian waters when Canada extended the 12-mile territorial limit to 200 miles.
- Today, Canadians comprise the largest number of tourists to visit the island (34%).
- Cuba is Canada’s top market in the Caribbean/Central American sub-region and Canada’s largest merchandise export market in the region.

Prayer:

*God of life and hope.
You have shown us what is good
and what is required of us.
In this broken world
where so many are suffering
from hunger, poverty, and sickness,
help us act justly, love kindness, and walk
humbly with you.*

*We especially lift up the country of Cuba,
which has faced its most significant
humanitarian crisis in more than 60 years.
Help us to stand in solidarity with Cuba and
its people during these difficult times through
prayer, material support, and advocacy.*

*We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ, who walks with the weak,
Amen.*

SAFE CHURCH

The Presbyterian Church in Canada aspires to be and is dedicated to creating a safe church environment, free from harm and harassment. Building a safe church involves preventing and responding to harm through policies, training, police record checks, transparency, clear reporting, and investigation procedures for misconduct, and offering pathways to justice, redress, and healing when harm occurs.

“Safe Church” is the name of a new section on the PCC’s website. Clicking on “Safe Church” in the top menu across all web pages of the PCC website will lead to information about the church’s safety policies. Here, you will find details on how to raise concerns about bullying, sexual harassment, and harassment based on race, national or ethnic origin, skin colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, ancestry, disability, and more.

It is the policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that all individuals, especially children, youth, and vulnerable adults, who take part in the denomination’s programs, ministries, or use its facilities, will be cared for with Christian compassion and kept safe. The procedures for creating a safe environment among people and in places where the church gathers are outlined in the Leading with Care policy. Most church bodies must review this policy at least once a year.

It is also the policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and harassment of any kind by church leaders, staff, or volunteers will not be tolerated. All complaints will be taken seriously and handled in accordance with the denomination’s policy. Best practice

encourages Sessions, presbyteries, denominational committees, and the boards of ministries, camps, and colleges to review harassment policies annually. Notably, the Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church must be reviewed by all denominational courts, boards, and committees every year.

Staff at the denomination's offices regularly and enthusiastically provide guidance on policy implementation and interpretation, along with training sessions and webinars.

The Safe Church section on the PCC website will expand over the next few months to help people learn about the church's policies and how to raise concerns. Please visit the web page for contact details to ask questions, request information, or suggest features to improve this new service. Visit presbyterian.ca/safe-church to access the Safe Church information.

CLOTHED WITH THE QUALITIES OF CHRIST

The desire to focus on Lent as a time of being "clothed with love" leapt in me one evening at a gathering for Celtic studies. That night two of our members led us in a ceremony to honour the feast of Brigid (Feb. 1). They told stories about the legend of Brigid and how the Celts celebrated the protective, curative powers of her mantle. The Celts would take a cloth at sunset on her feast and place it outside their home. That night Brigid would hear their prayers and bring healing and protection for all in the house. They kept this cloth in the home until the next year's feast.

Then we were each given a small lace cloth as a "mantle of Brigid" and asked to reflect on what protective and healing powers we needed in our lives. I felt myself needing to be clothed with loving-kindness. As the ceremony was nearing completion, the scripture from Colossians suddenly came to my mind. I took my "mantle of loving kindness" home with me that night and it became my Lenten practice that year.

"Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with

one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other. . . Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."
- Colossians 3:12-14

Jesus, Mentor and Friend, your life and ministry were constantly clothed with love.

I hold the image of your loving qualities and virtues close to me as I pray:

When my spiritual clothes are soiled with negativity and neglect, may I have the desire and energy to clean them.

When my spiritual clothes droop, sag, and do not fit, may I have the wisdom and determination to let my words and actions fit my values and beliefs.

When my spiritual clothes need changing, may I have the ability to make good decisions and the courage to follow through with the necessary changes.

When my spiritual clothes are torn and need mending, may I make amends and be open to forgiveness and reconciliation.

When my spiritual clothes are not accepted by others, may I have the self-affirmation to be my true self and not give in to the demands of others.

When my spiritual clothes become thin and frayed, may I strengthen them with a garment of loving-kindness.

Jesus, transform all I am and all I do into the kind of love that permeated your presence. Clothe me with your love and grant me grace to be truly kind and caring. May my spiritual clothes be spun from the gold of your goodness and last into eternity.

Joyce Rupp
from the book "Out of the Ordinary"

March/April Calendar

Mar. 8	10:30 am	3rd Sunday in Lent Sunday School	Mar. 31	11:30 am	Forever-In-Motion (Gym)
	11:45 am	Coffee Hour (Gym)		12:00 pm	Lunch Bunch
Mar. 10	11:30 am	Forever-In-Motion (Gym)		6:30 pm	"The Chosen" Bible Study (Sanctuary/ Kennedy Room)
	12:00 pm	Lunch Bunch	Apr. 1	12:30 pm	Bible Study (Zoom)
	6:30 pm	"The Chosen" Bible Study (Sanctuary/ Kennedy Room)	Apr. 2	5:30 pm	Maundy Thursday Worship & Potluck Supper (Gym)
Mar. 11	12:30 pm	Bible Study (Zoom)		7:00 pm	Band Practice (Sanctuary)
Mar. 12	6:30 pm	Band Practice (Sanctuary)		7:30 pm	Choir (Sanctuary)
	7:00 pm	Choir (Sanctuary)	Apr. 3	10:30 am	Good Friday Worship
Mar. 14	10:30 am	Messy Church (Gym)	Apr. 5	10:30 am	Easter Sunday Intergenerational Service with Holy Communion
Mar. 15	10:30 am	4th Sunday in Lent Sunday School		11:45 am	Coffee Hour (Gym)
	11:45 am	Coffee Hour (Gym)	<i>Rev. Amanda will be on holidays April 6-20.</i>		
	12:15 pm	Youth Gathering (Kennedy)	Apr. 7	11:30 am	Forever-In-Motion (Gym)
Mar. 17	11:30 am	Forever-In-Motion (Gym)		12:00 pm	Lunch Bunch
	12:00 pm	Lunch Bunch	Apr. 8	12:30 pm	Bible Study (Zoom)
Mar. 18	12:30 pm	Bible Study (Zoom)		7:00 pm	Session Meeting (Zoom)
	7:00 pm	Board of Managers (Zoom)	Apr. 9	6:30 pm	Band Practice (Sanctuary)
Mar. 19	6:30 pm	Band Practice (Sanctuary)		7:00 pm	Choir (Sanctuary)
	7:00 pm	Choir (Sanctuary)	Apr. 12	10:30 am	2nd Sunday of Easter Sunday School
Mar. 21	9:30 am	Presbytery Meeting (Zoom)		11:45 am	Coffee Hour (Gym)
Mar. 22	10:30 am	5th Sunday in Lent Birthday Sunday! (Gym)			
	11:45 am	Christian Ed. Cmt. (Kennedy Room)			
Mar. 24	11:30 am	Forever-In-Motion (Gym)			
	12:00 pm	Lunch Bunch			
Mar. 25	12:30 pm	Bible Study (Zoom)			
	7:00 pm	Book Club (Zoom)			
Mar. 26	6:30 pm	Band Practice (Sanctuary)			
	7:00 pm	Choir (Sanctuary)			
Mar. 29	10:30 am	Palm Sunday Sunday School			
	11:45 am	Coffee Hour (Gym)			

