

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

September 2017

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Today is my birthday, and one of the gifts I will receive later tonight is the opportunity to sing together with the contemporary and traditional choirs of First Presbyterian Church. If you haven't already noticed, you'll soon discover that I love to sing. I totally believe the Facebook meme I saw and shared earlier this week that said: "Singing daily for at least ten minutes reduces stress, clears sinuses, improves posture, and can even help you live longer."

I know that even before I was born, my mother sang to me. As a young child I was taught to sing early, followed by lots and lots of music lessons. I focussed on music in high school too, played the French horn in orchestras, bands, and small ensembles, and sang in several choirs. As a teenager it was the church choir that kept me connected to the Christian community. I had a gift to share, and a place where I belonged, and I am grateful for the difference that made in my life.

And now, as a minister, I know that music is such an important part of our worship. It is one of the primary ways that everyone who gathers is able to participate actively in the service of worship; and very often it is one of the most powerful ways that we both hear about and proclaim the goodness and love of God in Jesus Christ.

St. Augustine is reputed to have said that "When we sing, we pray twice," and I think that is true. Singing our prayers slows down the pace of the words, giving us time to reflect on them. The melodies add dimensions to the words that cannot be expressed in words alone. And when we add harmonies, descants, and counter-melodies, the beauty of the music created becomes our offering for the glory of God.

I am thrilled to have this opportunity to work with the excellent music ministry team at First Church and to be able to sing together with all of you (choir and congregation) when we gather for worship Sunday by Sunday.

When we sing in our worship, whether it is a hymn, praise song, anthem, or solo, it is never supposed to be a performance for the congregation, as if you were the audience. You are welcome to enjoy the music, of course, but that is not its purpose. We make music together for the glory of God, to express our faith and to proclaim God's love and grace. Sometimes our music expresses our sorrow, confusion, or struggle, and helps us to reach out to God for help and comfort. Sometimes our music is a wonderful declaration of our joy. It is always a part of our corporate prayer and our commitment to worship God and God alone.

I am sorry to say that my absolute favourite hymn is not found in The Presbyterian Church in Canada's 1997 Book of Praise. It is a hymn composed by the American Baptist minister Robert Wadsworth Lowry (with words attribute to Pauline T.) that first appeared in *The New York Observer* in 1868; and it beautifully expresses my faith and my desire to offer up music in response to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

*My life flows on in endless song;
Above earth's lamentation,
I hear the sweet, tho' far-off hymn
That hails a new creation;
Thro' all the tumult and the strife
I hear the music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul—
How can I keep from singing?*

*What tho' my joys and comforts die?
The Lord my Saviour liveth;
What tho' the darkness gather round?
Songs in the night he giveth.
No storm can shake my inmost calm*

*While to that refuge clinging;
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,
How can I keep from singing?*

*I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin;
I see the blue above it;
And day by day this pathway smooths,
Since first I learned to love it,
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
A fountain ever springing;
All things are mine since I am his—
How can I keep from singing?*

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

Welcome back to another full year in the life of First Church! We are especially excited to welcome the Rev. Amanda Currie as our new minister. Welcome, Amanda and Nick, to our church family!

Amanda has already visited with numerous people in the congregation and has a full slate of meetings as the committees of the church begin their work this fall. We look forward to working with Amanda as we continue our efforts to grow our congregation.

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

WELCOME BACK POTLUCK SUPPER – and **WELCOME** Rev. Amanda and Nick. Hope everyone had a wonderful summer - relaxing, travelling, getting together with friends and family, reading a good book or just enjoying the great weather we have had this year.

Now it's time to catch up on our church family's activities and adventures over the summer, so the Fellowship Committee is hosting a Potluck Supper on **September 17th at 5:30pm**. Signup sheets are available in the Narthex and in the gym to let us know how many in your family will be coming; and it is great to invite your friends to join us as well!

Don't miss out on this opportunity for a great feast, great friends and great fellowship.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

WORKBEE

First of all, a *huge* thank you to Dayton, Alex and Avery Doolittle for the tremendous amount of work they have put into repairing the walls of the sanctuary. This project turned out to be much larger and longer than first anticipated, and they are doing an amazing job. Understandably, it has created lots of dust and 'mess'. SO - there will be a MAJOR cleaning bee at the church on September 23 by which time the plastering and painting will be finished. We'll meet at the church at 10am. Please bring your dusters and brooms. We need lots of help. Many hands make light work so please come and help out. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Sheila Wilson
Fellowship Convener

BOARD OF MANAGERS

Dayton Doolittle has volunteered his time and skills to repair the walls in the sanctuary. What began as a project to repair the worst damage on the south wall grew into a project to complete all of the repairs to both the south and north walls. Dayton has been assisted by his dad, Jim, and his sons, Alex and Avery. We are grateful to all of you for all of your hard work! The work will be completed by mid-September and, as noted above, a major cleanup is being organized.

We have received a bequest from the estate of Joyce Miller and we appreciate this gift to the church from Joyce.

Thank you to those who continue to give regularly to the church! Although offerings were strong throughout the summer we continue to be in a deficit position financially. We withdrew \$10,000 from the Contingency Fund in March and another \$10,000 in May. Even with that we currently are short about \$5000 in our operating fund. In the fall, offerings generally increase as people come back from holidays, so we are hoping that our position will improve over the next few months.

In August, we transitioned from a half-time minister to a full-time minister so our expenses have increased. Also, we have also experienced

a decrease in revenue from hall rentals over the last year with the loss of the baton group which used our gym five days a week. Even so, our Church secretary, Shirley, works hard to rent our facilities.

We encourage all members of the congregation to participate in our FundScrip fundraising initiative. You can purchase gift cards to use as gifts, but also for your own regular expenses especially groceries and gas. It costs you nothing extra - for \$50 you get a card worth \$50, but the church gets a percentage back (usually 3% on groceries and 2% on gas). If our orders were larger we would get a reduction on what we pay for shipping, and the amount we earn would thereby increase. Please consider becoming a FundScrip supporter!

Jo Szostak

MUSIC NOTES

We are pleased to announce the start of this year's music program at First Presbyterian Church!

Rehearsals for both the Contemporary Music Group and the Choir will take place Thursday evenings, starting September 7, 2017. In the coming weeks, we will be singing some familiar pieces and introducing new music.

Will Ireton and Gabe Omolida are continuing as our Music Scholars and will be sharing their talents with us during rehearsals and worship services

We are delighted that Catherine Folstad (cellist) will be here on Sunday, October 8, 2017 to provide special music. Brent Ghiglione will be playing trumpet on Sunday, November 5, 2017.

Please note that the pipes in the organ chambers have been covered with plastic until the plaster work in the sanctuary is completed. This has been done to protect the instrument from being damaged by dust. In the interim, the piano will be used to accompany the singing of hymns and anthems during worship services.

We encourage members of the congregation who would like to participate in the music program to contact either William (Bill) Sgrazzutti

(306-216-0170) or Rodolfo Omolida (306-540-8872).

William (Bill) Sgrazzutti
Music Director

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship Committee met on Saturday, August 19th after a restful holiday period. First on our agenda was to welcome the Rev. Amanda Currie to our committee. We look forward to her guidance in the upcoming church year.

Communion by intinction was celebrated on Sunday, September 3rd. Traditional Communion will be celebrated on World Wide Communion Sunday, October 1st. This is the day set aside for all Christians denominations to celebrate communion on the same day. It is a time to remember our oneness in Christ.

Thank you to those who have volunteered to read Scriptures in the coming months. If you wish to participate as lay readers please contact Marianne Woods, Worship Convener.

We look forward to seeing everyone back at church during the autumn season.

God's Richest Blessings to You,

Joyce McKersie
Worship Committee

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") and on the table in the narthex. For further information contact Jim Doolittle. Please submit all applications to the church office at 2170 Albert Street, Regina, SK, S4P 2T9, or e-mail firstpresregina@sasktel.net.

Jim Doolittle,
Scholarship Committee Convener

FUNDSCRIP

The next order Sunday will be Sept. 17. Orders placed will be available for pickup the following Sunday. This is a great way to raise funds for the church so please consider placing an order. It doesn't cost you any extra and the church gets a percentage back. A wide variety of retailer cards can be ordered. September promotions include Shell 3%, Home Outfitters and Hudson's Bay 5%, Old Navy, Banana Republic and The Gap 10% and Pizza Pizza 12%. Stop by the FundScrip table in the gym after the service.

ADULT WALK

The Tuesday & Thursday Adult Walk program will begin on Tuesday, October 3 @ 9:00am in the gym.

Rev. Bob Wilson

MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

A Walk to Remember

It was a hot, windy day as a large group of people walked together along a dusty, gravel road on July 26 to a small cemetery to remember the lives of children lost at the Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS). This diverse group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and adults, elders and chiefs, church members, government officials, and police officers spent the afternoon walking, praying, remembering, and feasting.

"The children are lonely. We are here to feed them and remember them", said Elder Noel Starblanket as he began prayers at the cemetery site.

Almost 100 people gathered on Sakimay First Nation's land on Regina's west side to walk the 1-kilometre distance to the RIIS cemetery site. The occasion was the fourth and final Memorial Walk and Feast for the children buried at this cemetery. Among the walkers were several members of First Presbyterian Church, Regina as well as The Rev. Peter Bush, Moderator of the 143rd General Assembly.

Elder Noel Starblanket was pleased that our Moderator attended the event and, as a sign of reconciliation, asked the Rev. Bush to lead the walk with the organizers.

Rev. Bush was also among the dignitaries who spoke at the event. In his remarks, he recalled the words of Cindy Blackstock, Indigenous Children's Rights Advocate, who had addressed the General Assembly in June, noting that "She reminded us of the duty of adults to protect and nurture children. Our Church ignored that duty to the children of the Regina Indian Industrial School. For that we are truly sorry. Our Church was complicit in the abuse and, in some cases, in the death of children at this school. For that we are truly sorry." He also thanked the many community groups that have worked to advocate for, and protect, the cemetery site.

Special thanks go to Lisa BigEagle-Dustyhorn a Regina citizen who organized four annual memorial walks after hearing about the abandoned cemetery.

(two pictures are below – one with Moderator)



Provincial Heritage Status for RIIS Cemetery:
On Wednesday July 26, the Province of Saskatchewan declared the cemetery to be a Provincial Heritage Property. The Honourable

Ken Chevaldayoff, Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, made the announcement that day at the cemetery site. Noting the long and harmful impact of Canada's residential school system, the Minister affirmed the importance of this designation as a step in the journey towards truth and reconciliation.

The City of Regina designated the RIIS Cemetery as a Municipal Heritage Property in 2016.

These significant heritage announcements ensure that this sacred site will be protected – a major goal of the RIIS Commemorative Association.

First Presbyterian Church has been an active community member in efforts to protect and commemorate this sacred space. The Commemorative Association is grateful for the congregation's sustained interest and support for this reconciliation work.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

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| 10 | 10:30 AM | Worship Service & Sunday School |
| 12 | 10:30 AM noon | Bible Study Freedom 55ers |
| 13 | 7:00 PM | Stewardship Committee |
| 14 | 7:00 PM | Choir |
| 15 | 9:30 AM 7:00 PM | Pastoral Care Committee Youth (meet in gym) |
| 16 | 10:00 AM | Presbytery (in Grenfell) |
| 17 | 10:30 AM | Worship Service & Sunday School |
| | 5:30 PM | Potluck |
| 19 | 10:30 AM noon | Bible Study Freedom 55ers |
| 20 | 7:00 PM | Board of Managers |
| 21 | 7:00 PM | Choir |
| 23 | 10:00 AM 10:00 AM | Worship Committee Work Bee |
| 26 | 10:30 AM | Worship Service & Sunday School |
| 28 | 10:30 AM noon | Bible Study Freedom 55ers |
| 28 | 7:00 PM | Choir |