

**FIRST THINGS FIRST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA
APRIL 2021**

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Two years ago, on April 1, 2019, we learned that I would be the sole nominee for Moderator of the 145th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This was only supposed to be a one-year commitment but the Covid-19 Pandemic turned it into two years. All the way through this experience the congregation of First Church has been extremely supportive and encouraging, allowing me to spend considerable time and energy towards my pastoral leadership role for the denomination. Thank you!

I'm very pleased to share with you that the Committee to Advise with the Moderator met on April 1, 2021 (yes, the tradition is to elect the next Moderator on April Fool's Day every year!) to confirm the counting of the ballots for Moderator. The sole nominee for Moderator of the 146th General Assembly, which will take place online June 6-9, 2021, is the Rev. Dr. Daniel Scott. Dan Scott

is the Minister at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford, ON, and an associate professor at Tyndale University where he previously served as Vice President and Academic Dean. You can find out more about Dan and watch a video interview with him here:



<https://presbyterian.ca/2021/01/21/ballot-for-moderator-of-the-2021-general-assembly/>.

Although my responsibilities as Moderator will be winding down over the next two months, I still have a number of meetings to attend, video messages to congregations to send, and preparations to make for the 2021 General Assembly. As the current Moderator, my responsibilities will include: opening the first sederunt (ie., the first sitting of the Assembly); preaching at the opening worship; reporting on my term; and convening the Committee to

Confer with the Moderator, which has work to do during the Assembly.

It will be another historic first for the General Assembly to meet online, but other denominations including the Presbyterian Church USA and the Church of Scotland have held online assemblies recently and found that they can work. Preparations are well underway to facilitate meeting differently, but effectively, and the commissioners will be well trained and supported to participate fully in the decision-making of the church.

Your prayers for the 2021 General Assembly, the outgoing and incoming moderators, and all the commissioners are appreciated. First Church will be well-represented: Dr. Jo Szostak will be the elder commissioner, I will be the minister commissioner, and Gabe Omolida will be the Young Adult Representative for the Presbytery of Assiniboia.

It has certainly been an interesting two years, and I have learned and grown so much through this experience. However, I am very much looking forward to passing along this role to someone new, and being free to devote more of my time and attention to our ministry together at First Church. After all, and despite the challenges of the last year, we have a lot going on in our ministry and mission and I am excited to see where God will lead us next!

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

The provincial government has extended the COVID-19 restrictions until April 26. In light of this, and due to the worsening situation in Regina, the Session has decided to extend the suspension of in-person worship services and facility rentals until May 6 when it will be reviewed at the May Session meeting.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

BOARD OF MANAGERS

The annual congregational meeting will be held **Sunday, May 2, at 1:00 pm**. The annual reports will be printed and mailed out next week so you will have ample time to read them prior to the meeting.

The meeting will be held by Zoom. Zoom may be used on any device – computer, tablet, smartphone – that has a webcam and microphone. To join a Zoom meeting, you can just click on the link or you can go to Zoom.us and click Join a Meeting. You will then be prompted for the Meeting ID and the Passcode.

If you haven't used Zoom before, the first time you try to join a meeting Zoom needs to download an app onto your device. Allow it to do this. Do this ahead of time so you will have the time to deal with the download as it takes a few minutes. You can use the link below at anytime to access Zoom – the meeting just won't be active.

We will be holding a practice session on Zoom on Wednesday, April 28 at 7:00 p.m. for those who may be using it for the first time. Please join the meeting so you can become familiar with using Zoom before the annual meeting (use the same link below.)

If you have questions or need help accessing Zoom, please contact Jo (jszostak@accesscomm.ca or 306-789-5071).

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/144321672?pwd=cTRvVm4yaG5nbmYzdUFNaHo4UytUZz09>Meeting

ID: 144 321 672

Passcode: 000423

If you are unable to make Zoom work, you can phone in to the gathering. You will be prompted for the meeting ID and password shown below

- +1 587 328 1099 Canada (Alberta)
- +1 204 272 7920 Canada (Manitoba)
- +1 647 374 4685 Canada (Toronto)
- +1 647 558 0588 Canada (Toronto)
- +1 778 907 2071 Canada (BC)
- +1 438 809 7799 Canada (Montreal)

Meeting ID: 144 321 672 Passcode: 000423

Jo Szostak

LENT & HOLY WEEK WORSHIP

Thank you for sharing in our worship during Lent and Holy Week. Your patience through the ongoing pandemic and engagement in the online services is so encouraging to those who plan, organize, and put their hearts, spirits, and efforts into leading the livestreamed services.

Many thanks are due to the Worship Committee and the Music Team for all the work involved in putting together our Lenten and Holy Week services. Thanks to Joyce McKersie, Jeannie Macfarlane, and assistant Donna Wilkinson for making the sanctuary beautiful and liturgically-appropriate for each Sunday and for special services. Thanks to all those who came to lead Lenten liturgies, and to Marianne Woods for organizing the readers.

Thanks also to the Music Team, congregation members, and special guests who shared their musical gifts to make each and every service very special and meaningful. Many have given significant time and care to choosing music, practising and sharing. We have been blessed by their extraordinary efforts. Thank you for proclaiming the Gospel in song so beautifully and well, not only for the encouragement of our members, but for many others who come across our services online.

Rev. Amanda Currie

P.S. Do feel free to invite your friends and family to join us online. Sharing the videos is a simple way to invite someone into the community, and a possible starting point for sharing your faith!



*Graeme Mitchell, Gabe, Rodolfo and Gigi Omolida,
Paula Weber, Rev. Amanda Currie*



Marianne Woods



Cade Eastwood



Graeme Mitchell and William Sgrazzutti



Kate Mazienko



Juan Marie Watkis



Rodolfo, Timo and Gabe Omolida

WELCOMING NEW PROFESSING MEMBERS

On Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021, the Session of First Church was pleased to present six individuals to be received into the membership of the congregation. Asher Ferozdin, Shazia Ferozdin, Ace Miller, Amber Robson, Luke Yakemchuk, and Matthew Yakemchuk participated in a church membership class with the Rev. Amanda Currie during the season of Lent this year. They explored the beliefs and practices of the church, learning more about our Reformed Christian faith, the Bible, worship, sacraments, the polity of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, stewardship, mission, and ecumenical partnerships.



Professions of Faith on Easter Sunday

The Session made a special exception to allow up to 30 people (the current provincial maximum) to gather in-person for worship on Easter Sunday so that these professions of faith could be made “live” with family members present to witness and celebrate this milestone. As we said together in our liturgy on Sunday: “With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you to share with us in the ministry of Christ, for we are all one in him.”

Rev. Amanda Currie

**EASTER WITH THE MODERATOR:
Oh look and wonder, how good it is!**

Sunday, April 11, 2021, 2 p.m. (SK Time)

You are invited to spend an hour with the Rev. Amanda Currie, Moderator of the General Assembly, and begin the Season of Easter together with Presbyterians across the country. While we continue to struggle through the global pandemic, and to endure the ongoing conflicts and disagreements in the church, the Season of Easter invites us to look for, and celebrate, the experiences of unity, compassion, and hope that are happening right now. This gathering will include a look at the early church’s witness of fellowship and sharing, and invite us to identify and rejoice in the ways in which God’s Spirit is drawing us together in unity and common mission today.

Please register for this gathering to receive your unique link to join the meeting.

<https://presbyterian-ca.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYtf-yqpzlqGNdGTbr2JMELsmRS5HQKRDD8>

Note: After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Rev. Amanda Currie

FUNDSCRIP

As the pandemic restrictions continue, you can still raise money for First Church through FundScrip orders. Place an order and you can have it mailed directly to your home. During the pandemic the cost of lettermail is waived, so you get it delivered free!

1. Go to the FundScrip website: fundscrip.com
2. Create your own account. Be sure to enter the Invitation code for First Church - 86MLRU That way, First Church will get credit for your purchases.
3. Shop for the cards you wish to purchase. Specials for April include Moxies (11%) - you can use this for takeout! (For free shipping, order up to 4 cards with a value up to \$400.)
4. When you go to Checkout it will show that First Presbyterian Church is the beneficiary. **Be Sure** to edit the Shipping (or your cards will be shipped to First Church!) Click on Edit and choose Direct Shipping. Then enter your home address. Select lettermail from the options.
5. Choose a payment method. The easiest and best is EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) where it will be transferred directly from your bank, like paying with debit! Click on the link to set up your EFT. It's easy to do - just log in to your own bank account. (You may have to click on Shop then back to Checkout for it to be an available choice).
6. Click on Checkout and you will have a chance to review your order, then click on Place Order. It will show you how much the church will receive for your order.

Thanks for your support!

**MODERATOR’S PASTORAL LETTER
March 17, 2021**

Dear Friends in The Presbyterian Church in Canada,

Sunday by Sunday, the church proclaims the sure and certain hope that is ours in Jesus Christ—that goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate, and life is stronger than death. Yet even as we prepare to celebrate Christ’s victory over sin and death at Easter, we

must acknowledge our own sin and turn our lives towards Jesus' way of compassion and grace. I write to you in this Season of Lent, with a deep awareness of the brokenness and division within our denomination. My particular concern at this time is the growing sense of fear and betrayal among those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Like others who follow the Revised Common Lectionary, I began this season by preaching about The Great Flood and God's covenant promise to never again destroy humanity and the world. I spoke about the rainbow, of course, God's own reminder of the promise and guarantee of God's gracious faithfulness going forward. Although we will never be as good as God is at keeping promises, we must strive to do so. And perhaps, just as God used the rainbow as a reminder of God's covenant, the church needs to be reminded of the promises that we have made to one another.

It was three years ago during the Season of Lent that the Moderator of the 2017 General Assembly, the Rev. Peter Bush, shared a Letter of Repentance for the church's homophobia and hypocrisy. The letter was commissioned by the 2017 General Assembly as an interim response to these concerns, with the expectation that the Special Committee re: Listening (LGBTQI People) (Rainbow Communion) would bring recommendations to a future Assembly for concrete actions addressing these issues for implementation within the church.

With terms of reference set by the 2017 General Assembly and revised by the 2018 GA, the Rainbow Communion implemented a listening process for LGBTQI people and others to tell their stories of harm done to them, and/or of God's grace experienced in the church. Recognizing that the invitation to participate in the listening process could produce a high level of fear for LGBTQI people to tell their stories and reveal their identities, especially for those who are subject to the discipline of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the 2018 General Assembly adopted the following recommendation:

"That those who are subject to the discipline of The Presbyterian Church in Canada who

accepted the invitation to serve on the Special Committee re. Listening (LGBTQI People) or who accept the invitation to tell their stories...would have potential censure with respect to The Presbyterian Church in Canada's stance on same-sex relationships suspended indefinitely in order to allow them to participate freely and honestly in the work of the Special Committee." (A&P 2018, p. 29, 462.)

Individuals who have served on the Listening Committee, or shared their stories, are given a Letter of Certification as an attestation of the decision of the 2018 General Assembly. Those who have made themselves vulnerable by sharing openly and honestly in the listening process have a certificate in their hand to remind them of the promise made to them by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is our responsibility, as the church, to remember and to keep that promise.

At the 2019 General Assembly, the Rainbow Communion's interim report indicated that "as people have found the courage to tell their stories it has become clear that the need for rebuilding broken communities and relationships and to respond pastorally to those who have been harmed cannot wait for another year" (A&P 2019, p. 486). The 2019 Assembly then adopted a number of recommendations including an encouragement to the church to find ways to give public expression to the Letter of Repentance and a commitment to develop and gather resources for those who have been harmed by these issues (A&P 2019, p. 19, 46, 486).

The cancellation of the 2020 General Assembly due to COVID-19 has meant a delay in receiving the Final Report of the Rainbow Communion and further recommendations for concrete actions. It has undoubtedly been very difficult for those who continue to be personally impacted by hypocrisy, homophobia or harm directed towards LGBTQI people in the church as they wait even longer for the church to move our repentance from mere words in a letter to changes in the ways our communities welcome, care for, and receive the gifts of LGBTQI people. My fervent hope is that the 2021 Assembly will agree to address the important and urgent work of the church,

including the Final Report of the Rainbow Communion.

Lent is a time for repentance. It begins with acknowledging our errors, as the Moderator's Letter of Repentance began to do three years ago. It continues with listening for the Spirit's guidance and turning in a new direction. I encourage the church to enact our repentance by giving public expression to the Letter of Repentance in our local contexts, by engaging with the resources being developed related to sexuality and inclusion in our church, and most urgently, by remembering and keeping the promise the church made to those who participated in the listening process.

As God has graciously kept covenant with us, may God give us the courage and compassion we need to keep our promises to one another."

The Rev. Amanda Currie
Moderator of the General Assembly

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFTS



Every year it is a blessing to witness the generosity and faithfulness of Presbyterians across Canada as they support the work of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Despite the uncertainty and chaos of 2020, congregations, individuals, foundations, estates, the Women's Missionary Society and the Atlantic Mission Society generously gave over \$9 million to the mission and ministry we do together.

- \$5.63 million was given to [Presbyterians Sharing](#) to support ministry in Canada and around the world;
- \$2.17 million was given to [Presbyterian World Service & Development](#) for international development and relief programs;
- \$391,000 was given for other special projects: [Indigenous](#), [international](#), [Canadian](#), [justice](#), the [museum](#) and more;

- \$810,000 given in bequests to The Presbyterian Church in Canada and \$1.39 million added to PWS&D's [Loaves and Fishes Fund](#) are helping support mission and ministry into the future.

These gifts are making a difference as we work together to put our faith into action. Together we are equipping congregations, starting new faith communities, supporting international partners, empowering youth, encouraging new ministers, equipping theological students, supporting Indigenous ministries, responding to emergencies, breaking cycles of poverty, pursuing justice—and so much more.

Thank you for your generous gifts!

Karen Plater, Associate Secretary for Stewardship & Planned Giving

Presbyterians Sharing video presentation:
<https://youtu.be/YO8D9pAuJvA>

ECUMENICAL NOTES

[Engage Difference! Introducing Intercultural Ministry Workshop](#)

Identify and explore tools and attitudes for leading and facilitating organizations, churches, and communities in reflecting on intercultural ministry across difference. This introductory workshop recognizes intercultural ministry as a life-long project. It offers some common language and questions to encourage deeper exploration for the art of intercultural ministry.

Thursday, April 22 and 29 from 6:30 to 8:30pm

Registration: \$40 includes both sessions

Maximum 30 people. To register, email Nick Jesson at njesson@archregina.sk.ca

This 2-part workshop is planned in the spirit of the LAURC Covenant by the Ecumenical Stewardship Committee of the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle, the Saskatchewan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina. The workshop will be facilitated by the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning of the Canadian Council of Churches.



Forum for Intercultural
Leadership and Learning

Forum pour le leadership et
l'apprentissage interculturels

Conversations About Race, Gender, Poverty and Social Change

On four Saturday afternoons, at 4:00pm EDT/2:00pm in Saskatchewan: April 17, May 15, June 12 and June 26.

<https://www.interculturalleadership.ca/programs/conversation-circles>

These interactive conversations will be led by the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (FILL) of the Canadian Council of Churches, an ecumenical agency with 26 member denominations representing 85% of Christianity in Canada.



2021 Saskatchewan Prayer Breakfast

Visit <https://www.ltgov.sk.ca> for details about this free online event on Wednesday, April 14 at 9 a.m.

Save the date: Cross-Canada Service of Prayer for Christian Unity

Led by the Canadian Council of Churches, this service on Saturday, June 5 at 3pm EDT/1pm in Saskatchewan, will draw from the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity theme "Abide in My Love" (cf. Jn 15:5-9).

Further details will be coming soon.

APRIL EVENTS

Apr. 11	10:30 am	Worship
	12:15 pm	Sunday School
	1:00 pm	Coffee Hour
	2:00 pm	Easter with the Moderator
Apr. 13	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers
Apr. 14	9:30 am	Pastoral Care Committee
	7:00 pm	Book Club
Apr. 15	1:00 pm	Bible Study
	8:00 pm	Music Team meeting
Apr. 18	10:30 am	Worship
	12:15 pm	Sunday School
	1:00 pm	Coffee Hour
Apr. 20	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers
Apr. 21	7:00 pm	Board of Managers
Apr. 22	1:00 pm	Bible Study
	8:00 pm	Choir Chat
Apr. 24	10:00 am	Worship Committee
Apr. 25	10:30 am	Worship
	12:15 pm	Sunday School
	1:00 pm	Coffee Hour
	2:30 pm	"It's Still Easter" Hymn Sing
Apr. 27	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers
Apr. 29	1:00 pm	Bible Study
May 2	10:30 am	Worship
	12:15 pm	Sunday School
	1:00 pm	First Church AGM
May 4	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers
May 5	7:00 pm	Session
May 6	1:00 pm	Bible Study