

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

#### December 2019

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

It is good to be home with my First Church family for the Seasons of Advent and Christmas. Although in some ways church life gets busier at this time of year, the usual patterns change, and we take more time to pay attention to our spiritual journey together towards the celebration of Christmas.

During this Advent, about a dozen of us are drawing close to God and each other by sharing in an Advent Book Study of Walter Brueggemann's *Devotions for Advent: Celebrating Abundance*. We meet each Monday evening in the Morris Room for Bible study, discussion, and prayer. You would be most welcome to join us at 7:00 pm. This book study is part of a denominational program called "Presbyterians Read." We're joining other Presbyterians across the country as we reflect on the same readings each day; and some of us are also participating in online discussion and sharing.

Earlier this week, after "Black Friday" and "Cyber Monday" were over, I saw several notices that Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> was declared to be "Giving Tuesday." After buying, buying, buying for ourselves and loved ones, our society was suggesting that we dedicate at least one day in this lead-up to Christmas for giving to others and to those in need.

As Christians, we make giving a regular part of our spiritual practice throughout the year. Tithing or giving proportionally of our income for the mission of the church and the benefit of those in need, is not something reserved for "Giving Tuesday" or even for the month of December when people are beginning to think about their annual tax returns. This is a good time, however, for church members to take a look at their givings to the church and its ministries. Once again, we do have a deficit budget, but your generosity in December will help us to reduce that deficit and ensure our congregation's long-term sustainability.

Also, the Mission and Outreach Committee invites us to support two critical mission projects during this Advent Season. With the "Giving Tree Project" we can donate practical gifts to those in need in our community through the Carmichael Outreach. We can also contribute to funds in support of our Refugee Family who will be coming from South Sudan to Regina likely within the next year. All the details about this project are available at the church.

Sunday morning worship and additional worship opportunities are also featured at First Church this month. Each Sunday will include lighting the Advent Candles and considering the ways we are invited to prepare for Jesus' birth and Christ's Coming again. The Choir, the Contemporary Group, and the Chancel Singers will all be offering special music, and several soloists will sing or play for our spiritual nourishment and the glory of God.

Two additional services are planned this month. On Tuesday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, we will hold a "Blue Christmas Service" starting at 7:00 pm. This can be a difficult time of year for those among us who are grieving, lonely, struggling with relationships, with job losses or other disappointments. We will remember that God came to be with us in Jesus, and that God is with us through the daily challenges of our lives. This service will include an opportunity to light a candle in memory of a loved one, or as you make a personal prayer for a particular need in your life.

Our Christmas Eve Service will be a highlight for many of us. We will gather at 7:00 pm for a Service of Lessons and Carols that will include a short homily, plenty of music and candles. Please invite your friends and family to join us.

Have a Blessed Advent, a Joyful Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Rev. Amanda Currie

## **MODERATOR MOMENTS**

Serving as Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly includes a lot of travelling. I have been on several trips since the last issue of *First Things First* and I would like to share with you some of the highlights in photos.



The Synod of Saskatchewan meeting in Briercrest (Oct. 18-19)



Presbyterian World Service & Development Committee meeting in Calgary (Oct. 24-25)



Regina gathering to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Canadian Council of Church at the Living Spirit Centre (Oct. 26)



With the Rev. Darren May and family at the 160th Anniversary of Jubilee Presbyterian Church in Stayner, ON (Nov. 2-3)



Life and Mission Agency Committee meeting in Toronto (Nov. 4-5)



At the 175th Anniversary of the founding of Knox College, Toronto (Nov. 5)



With the Rev. Jacqui Foxall at Knox Presbyterian Church, Oakville (Nov. 24)



With the Rev. Seon Ok Lee, following her induction as Minister at Knox Presbyterian Church, Whitewood, SK (Nov. 30)



Assembly Council meeting at Crieff Hills Community, ON (Nov. 24-26)

**SESSION**

Please make note of the special Christmas activities taking place this month. We hope you and your families have a blessed Christmas!

Looking ahead to 2020, we will be celebrating our 95th anniversary on Sunday, January 12. Please plan to be here!

Have a relaxing and enjoyable holiday!

Jo Szostak  
Clerk of Session

**WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Worship Committee has been busy planning services for the Fall and Christmas Seasons.

We started the Fall with Communion by Intinction on the first Sunday of September. Sunday October 6th was Worldwide Communion. This is the one Sunday a year that most Churches celebrate Communion on the same day. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated "Harvest Sunday", and gave thanks for the bounty that God bestows on us, providing for our needs.



The Presbyterian delegation at the Canadian Council of Churches, receiving a 75th Anniversary Certificate from General Secretary, Peter Noteboom (Nov. 29)

Bill Sgrazzutti, our Director of Music, presented his plans for music during the Fall. On the Sunday preceding Remembrance Day, which fell on Nov. 10th, our new Music Scholar, Cade Eastwood, played his trumpet for the "Last Post" as we remembered our Veterans' sacrifices. Thank you, Cade, for contributing to this Service. Our thanks also go out to Ace Miller and Luke Yakemchuk for their participation in the presentation of the flag at this special service.

We thank the Rev. Bob Wilson for ministering to us when the Rev. Amanda Currie is away for her duties as Moderator. The Rev. Wilson officiated at Communion on November 2nd.

We are looking forward to the Advent and Christmas Seasons. Please keep in mind the following dates.

Dec. 17- The Blue Christmas service at 7:00 pm for those mourning the loss of a loved this season, or dealing with sadness or loneliness in their lives.

Dec. 22 - The fourth Sunday of Advent service.

Dec. 24 - The Christmas Eve Candlelight service at 7:00 PM

Our thanks to those who have already agreed to read scriptures, to usher, or to greet. Your willingness to participate is most appreciated. Some of you may be asked to participate in the Advent readings, as well as serving as greeters for the special services already noted – the Blue Christmas and the Christmas Eve services. Greeters and Scripture readers will also be needed for January through to April. If you would like to assist in these areas, please speak with Wendy Prior (for greeting) or with Marianne Woods (for reading Scriptures).

The Worship committee wishes each one of you the "Blessings of the Christmas season," and a very Happy New Year.

Joyce McKersie  
Worship Committee



## MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

**Freedom From Freezing:** Knitters, please consider knitting child and youth-sized mitts and scarves for donation to Kitchener School this winter. This has been a long-standing connection between us and the school, and the warm winter woollens are gratefully received. Feel free to choose wool from the large bin in the Narthex. Your completed projects can be dropped off there too. We will deliver to the school by January 31.

**The Giving Tree:** This Advent we are supporting two worthy causes: **Carmichael Outreach** (our Regina neighbours) and our **refugee family**, the Mathiangs (our global neighbours). You can choose to give to either or both projects until December 15.

- ◆ Our refugee family of 5, the Mathiangs, have been waiting in a Sudanese refugee camp for 5 years, and hope to arrive in Regina within a year or two. We have raised \$19,000 of our \$60,000 goal. Your gift in memory of a loved one, will add to our Refugee Sponsorship Fund. Please pick up a Refugee Sponsorship tag at the church, complete the reverse side with your information, and put in the offering plate by December 15 with your donation. All gifts made In Memoriam will be recognized on Sunday, Dec 22.
- ◆ Carmichael Outreach gave us a list of most needed items for the homeless and nearly homeless people they serve in our city. You are invited to buy something from the list - winter coats, mitts, long underwear, hats, underwear or socks for children or adults; shampoo, toothbrushes and toothpaste. Bring the item(s) to church by December 15, and place under the Christmas tree in the Sanctuary. The Committee will deliver everything during the Christmas break. Have questions or not sure how to take part? Contact Mary Jesse at 306-570-8662 or [maryjesse@gmail.com](mailto:maryjesse@gmail.com).

Mary Jesse  
Mission & Outreach Committee

## YOUTH GROUP



Thanks to the parents for organizing a great Youth Group “get-together” on Sunday, November 10th after worship. We appreciated good food, games, and one another’s company.

Forthcoming events for the Youth Group include; lunch and bowling on Sunday, Dec. 8th at 12:45 pm at the Golden Mile; and a baking project on either Dec. 14 or 15 - more details available soon!

Bette Kelly,  
Convenor

## PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

**CHRISTMAS BAKING PROJECT** At this special time of year, we are remembering those from our congregation who need a little encouragement.

We require approximately 30 tins of Christmas baking by Thursday, Dec.19th. How about participating in this meaningful church project? If you would prefer, you can make up your own assortment of Christmas baking, and tins will be in the kitchen, ready for pick-up.

We are asking that those who plan to contribute baking to please bring it to the church either during the week of Dec.16th during office hours, or on Dec. 19th during choir practice. Tins will be ready for pick up on Friday, December 20th at noon, as well as on Sunday December 22nd following church, and can be delivered any time prior to Christmas. We have plenty of help putting tins together this year, but always require help in delivering the tins. We ask that commissioned visitors, elders and anyone interested to please assist. If you have any questions, contact Emily Ireton (306) 550-8705.

### **Tips for Christmas with those living with dementia**

Christmas can be an exciting time for many, but it can also be extremely difficult for those living with dementia. The hustle and bustle, change in routine and the pressure of family visits can often be overwhelming.

It can also be the loneliest time for people living with dementia and for the thousands of caregivers who will be spending this festive season looking after their loved ones.

The Alzheimer’s Society has shared its top tips to help you support your loved one (and yourself) this Christmas:

#### **1. Put decorations up gradually**

Introduce the Christmas environment slowly. Think about putting decorations up gradually over a few days so it doesn’t come as a big change to the person’s usual setting.

#### **2. Keep it simple and familiar**

Someone with dementia may feel overwhelmed during the Christmas period, so it’s best not to overdo it. Keeping the day’s activities low-key will help your loved one to relax. Sticking to a familiar routine is also a good idea whenever possible. Having meals at regular times and in familiar surroundings will also help to limit any potential confusion.

#### **3. Get everyone involved**

At Christmas time there are many ways to involve people living with dementia – from something as simple as hanging a bauble on the tree to doing a spot of Christmas shopping. The important thing is that they feel included.

#### **4. Create a quiet room**

A large number of guests can be overwhelming, so ask family and friends to spread out their visits over the festive period. If things do get busy, designate one room in your house as a 'quiet room' where your loved one can relax free from loud noise. Christmas days can be noisy so try to reduce unnecessary noise, such as party poppers, loud music or blaring television when people are also chatting.

#### **5. Bring back old memories**

Whether it's an old song they used to enjoy or a classic Christmas film, find something fun you can take part in. Making a family photo album, or memory box, could be a nice way to spend time together.

#### **6. Be mindful of food**

Although many people eat a lot at Christmas, a full plate can be daunting for someone who has difficulties eating. If you are the server, try not to overload your loved one's plate.

#### **7. Be flexible**

It's easy to get caught up in Christmas traditions, but your festive season might begin to look different as dementia progresses. It's always worth having a 'Plan B' and be prepared to change your plans if a particular element isn't working.

#### **8. Consider their needs**

Focus on the abilities of the individual not the dementia. If they don't remember it's Christmas, avoid reminding them as it can cause anxiety. A busy day can also be tiring and confusing for a person with dementia, so keep it manageable. If they are going back to their home, don't leave it too late; try to take them home in daylight rather than wait until it gets dark so that they can see where they are.

#### **9. Have a practice run**

If you are inviting a person with dementia to come to your home or want to bring a loved one out of a care home, have a few practice-runs along the way. This way you will be able to gauge if it's achievable.

#### **10. Have no expectations**

Don't worry if things aren't perfect – just try and enjoy the day!

Visit Alzheimer's Society for more information or advice.

Donna Wilkinson  
Pastoral Care Committee

### **STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

#### **Applications Welcome for Planned Giving Projects**

Every year, our First Church Planned Giving Program invites applications for activities supported by our Planned Giving Funds. The project or initiative needs to support one aspect of our mission to be:

- joyful in our worship
- tender in our lives together; and
- daring in our outreach

The deadline for Planned Giving project applications is December 31, 2019. Applications will be considered by the congregation at the Annual General Meeting in spring 2019.

You can pick up an application form in the Narthex or from Shirley during office hours. We welcome your proposals to further the mission of First Church!

Lisa Ann Wood  
Planned Giving Committee

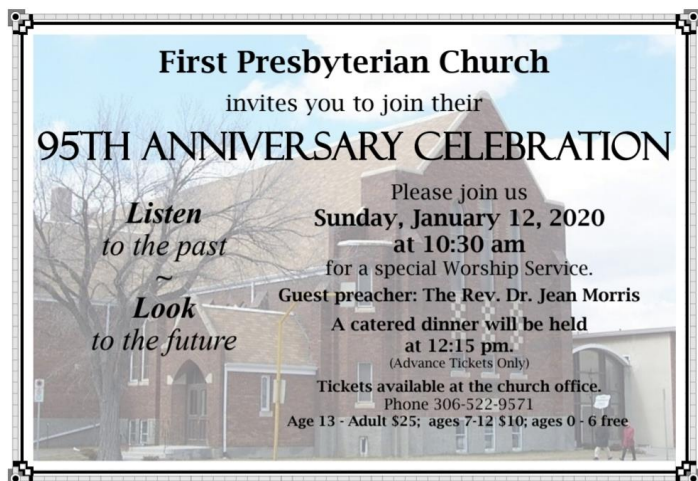
### **FUNDSCRIP**

Thank you to those who supported us throughout this year. The order Sundays for January are January 5 and 19.

### **REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP**

Thank you for your generosity this year as we prepare for our refugee family from South Sudan. To date we have raised \$19,000 towards our budget of \$60,000. Thank you!





### 95<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Celebrate! Celebrate! Celebrate! On January 12, 2020 we are going to celebrate the 95th Anniversary of First Church! WOW!!

The first service was held on January 11, 1925 and here we are 95 years later!

We are thrilled to have as our guest preacher on Sunday January 12, 2020, the Rev. Dr. Jean Morris who grew up in this congregation and still has very close ties to it.

After our worship service that Sunday we plan to have a congregational picture taken, and to celebrate this occasion further with a catered dinner immediately following in the Gymnasium. Marg MacDonald will be selling tickets for the dinner after each Sunday service over the next few weeks. Tickets will also be available from Shirley in the Church office. Tickets for the dinner will be – 13 - Adult \$25.00, 7 - 12 \$10.00, and children 6 and under – Free.

Please invite your friends and family to join us for this special event – and if you know of others who attended First Church at some time, please offer them a special invitation to join us

We are looking forward to having everyone attending and enjoying this very special event.

Sheila Wilson  
Fellowship Committee



### Come and Light the Candles: Advent Candle Song

(Tune: Glenfinlas)

Come and light the candles on the Advent ring,  
scattering the darkness till the world shall sing.

We are all God's people, waiting in this place,  
hoping that in Jesus we shall see God's face.

Prophet voices speaking clear, like a burning  
flame,  
making sure our world will never be the same.

John the Baptist telling us God wants to forgive,  
calling us to change the way we work and live.

Mary, full of courage, echoing God's yes,  
going on the journey God will greatly bless.

Jesus in the midst of us, filling us with joy,  
giving us the life which nothing can destroy.

By Janet Morley

## Celebrate!

### Christmas Songs and Carols

Join others in singing, listening, and refreshments.

Fun for the whole family!

Sunday, December 15 at 3pm at the  
White City Community Centre  
(12 Ramm Ave.)

**FREE! ALL ARE WELCOME!**

For further information, email  
[White.Butte.Christian.Community@gmail.com](mailto:White.Butte.Christian.Community@gmail.com)

## DECEMBER EVENTS

- Dec. 8 10:30 Worship (Advent 2)**  
After worship: Youth Group (bowling)
- Dec. 9 7:00 pm Advent Book Study (2 of 4)
- Dec. 10 9:00 am Adult Walk  
1:00 pm Celebration of Life for  
Lois Pearce
- Dec. 11 7:00 pm Book Club @  
Sheila Wilson's
- Dec. 12 7:00 pm Choir  
8:15 pm Chancel Singers
- Dec 14 or 15 TBA Youth Group (baking)
- Dec. 15 10:30 am Worship (Advent 3)**  
3:00 pm Caroling at White City
- Dec. 16 7:00 pm Advent Book Study (3 of 4)
- Dec. 17 7:00 pm Blue Christmas Service  
\* This special time of worship is open to everyone, especially those who are feeling a little "blue" at this time of year.
- Dec. 19 7:00 pm Choir  
8:15 pm Contemporary Group
- Dec. 22 10:30 am Worship (Advent 4)**
- Dec. 23 7:00 pm Advent Book Study (4 of 4)
- Dec. 24 7:00 PM - Christmas Eve Service  
\* Candles, carols and the Good News of Great Joy for all people!
- Dec. 29 10:30 am Worship (Christmas 2)**  
Rev. Bob Wilson preaching



### Darkness and Light: A Creed for Advent

We believe in God,  
robed in splendour,  
veiled in mystery,  
ruler alike of darkness and light.

We encounter God  
in Jesus Christ,  
who was tortured and put to death,  
but whose radiance could not be quenched;  
whose touch brings a blaze of colour  
to a dull, drab world:  
reviving the weary,  
healing the wounded,  
dazzling the satisfied.

We walk with God,  
guided by the light of God's loving spirit,  
who enters the shadowed places of our hearts  
and leads us into truth and life.

We wait for God,  
and for the fulfilment of God's promises,  
for the time when the darkness will hold no fear  
and the light will no longer blind,  
but creation will be made whole once more  
and God's peace will reign for ever.

By Cally Booker