

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

December 2020

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

I enjoyed the last couple of months when at least some of our congregants were gathering for in-person worship on Sunday mornings in the sanctuary. Although I know it was the right decision at the time, I'm still sad about our return to only on-line worship just as we enter the Season of Advent. This is such a special time of year when, in pre-Covid times, our pews would be filling up more and more each Sunday until we reached the big celebration on Christmas Eve.

Still, just as I know that Christmas is not really about shopping, decorations, or family gatherings with food and presents, I also know its true meaning is not fulfilled in the hustle and bustle of a busy church calendar and more people gathering in the church building.

Christmas is about the great mystery and wonder of God coming into our world as a human child. God loved us so much that God could not remain distant, but entered into our reality to live among us, to show us love and to draw us back into right relationship with God and one another. The good news is that we can remember, celebrate, and ponder in our homes, with our families, from a distance, and even online in our times of worship and praise.



For the first time ever, Nick and I put up our Christmas tree on November 30th, the first

Sunday of Advent. We have never put it up that early, but this year I felt I just needed a little more light, beauty and Christmas cheer to encourage me while I continue to work from my living-room. I hope that you will also find small ways to be good to yourself and to encourage one another in these challenging days of the ongoing and worsening COVID-19 pandemic.

The first Christmas that we celebrate was very simple. Things weren't normal or convenient or comfortable for Mary and Joseph on the night their first child was born. But they were okay. They were safe and warm, and they were blessed with the help they needed and with some interesting visitors too.

So, if your Christmas is very simple this year, let it be so. Don't let the strangeness or inconvenience of these days discourage you. Remember that when God came into the world 2000 years ago, God came to express God's deep and abiding love for you. Know that you are not alone, and receive the gifts of this season. No, not the gifts you buy at the mall, or even the gifts of Christmas baking or of family gatherings and special events. Receive the gifts that come from God in Jesus Christ – the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love which are ours no matter what our present circumstances.

I do hope to see many of you on-line over the next few weeks. Although we cannot gather in-person, our worship, fellowship, and service will continue. Although the pandemic has closed our building once again, it cannot close the church as we continue to love God, to love our neighbours and follow the Way of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christmas blessings to you all.

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

Election of Elders

The Session is composed of 12 elders for 6-year terms, with 2 elders elected annually. The consent agenda approved for our 2019 annual congregational meeting included the following: "That the terms of elders currently serving on the Session all be extended by one year."

In 2021, we have three elders completing their terms - Jo Szostak, Graeme Mitchell, Doug Stewart. They are eligible for re-election. We will be electing two elders to 6-year terms and two elders to 1-year terms.

A nominating committee has been established to prepare a slate of nominees for election at the 2021 annual meeting. All members of the congregation are invited to nominate members of the congregation to fulfill this role.

The Session is responsible for supervision and oversight of all activities of the congregation. Elders attend Session meetings on the first Wednesday of each month from September to June. Each elder also serves on one of the following committees of Session: Christian Education; Fellowship; Mission and Outreach; Pastoral Care; Stewardship; and Worship. As well, each elder is assigned a group of approximately ten people/couples with whom to maintain contact.

According to the Book of Forms...

"Election to the eldership is the call of God, through the congregation, for service in Christ's Church.

Since the eldership is a spiritual office concerned with the rule and pastoral oversight of the congregation only suitable men and women should be considered. They should be committed Christians, in regular attendance at public worship, persons of sound judgment and upright character, and either knowledgeable or prepared to learn of the government of the church."

If you would like to nominate someone, please contact either Bette Kelly or Tammy MacDonald.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship Committee met virtually on Saturday, November 7, to consider the form of services at First church so as to comply with the regulations for worship as we deal with the pandemic. Up to Sunday, November 22, we were blessed to be able to open the church doors for in-person worship.

We acknowledge, with heartfelt thanks, all who agreed to assist Marianne Woods in volunteering as a welcome team on Sunday mornings to ensure the protocols set forth by the SHA were carried out: Ron Pugsley, Murray Kyle, Matthew Yakemchuk, Asher Ferozdin, Alfred Ferozdin, Carole Cann, Aksa Yakemchuk, Heather Mazurak, and Isaac Kwarteng, our Sunday caretaker. You are all very much appreciated. We pray we will be able to meet again for in-person worship very soon.

During October and November, we celebrated Communion on the first Sunday of each month. This was administered with the greatest of care. Thanks to Marianne, the Rev. Amanda, and Andrew Donovan for their careful preparation of the Communion elements, and to the Elders who served the elements. Your efforts made us all feel safe and secure in our sharing in Communion.

We observed Christ the King Sunday on November 22, which is the culmination of the Church year as we celebrate the life and ministry of Christ. Sunday, November 29, marked the beginning of the Advent Season, looking forward to the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Plans are being made for the upcoming Christmas season. We will continue with decorating the sanctuary, as has been done in the past, for those in attendance and for those participating virtually from their homes. Hopefully, we can maintain our worship as normally as we can.

Individuals have been contacted to participate in the lighting of Advent candles. Our thanks to all who have agreed.

Special Christmas Services – the Blue Christmas and the Christmas Eve services will continue as in past years. An announcement will appear in the Leader Post regarding these services.

Blue Christmas, December 16 at 7.00 PM. If you are especially feeling the loss of a loved one or even the loss of your usual way of celebrating Christmas, this service is for you. It will also be available virtually.

Christmas Eve, December 24 at 7.00 PM. This will be a Candlelight service as in the past. All going well, we will be able to meet in-person, but the service will be live-streamed as well.

Members of the Worship committee wish each and every one the Blessing and Peace of Christmas, especially as we all pray for an end to the COVID pandemic that has changed our lives in so many ways. Stay safe and know that God will bless us in the coming year

Joyce McKersie
Worship Committee Member

MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

This Advent, First Church is supporting two worthy causes: Regina's **Indigenous Christian Fellowship (ICF)** and our congregation's **Refugee Sponsorship Fund**. You can give to one or both projects until December 17 in memory of a loved one or in living tribute. See the Christmas Giving in Memoriam details below on page 7.

You may not be familiar with the Indigenous Christian Fellowship (ICF) even though it has been active in north-central Regina since 1978. This urban ministry is operated by the Christian Reformed denomination and is also supported by several local churches. ICF serves its neighbourhood with Wednesday soup and bannock, Saturday family breakfasts, prayer and talking circles, after-school children and youth programs, along with other activities to meet social and spiritual needs. Their ministry encourages individuals to increase skills and self-confidence while at the same time uplifting neighbours and friends.

Our Refugee Fund has been growing steadily and we are getting closer to our goal to support the two families we have sponsored. We still need \$28,000 to ensure we can provide one year of financial support for their resettlement in Regina. Although we do not yet know when each family will arrive, it will be wonderful to welcome

these 10 individuals to our community. Please pray for their safety and health as they wait.

Mary Jesse
M&O Convener

PLANNED GIVING

Applications Welcome for Planned Giving Projects:

Our First Church Planned Giving Program is inviting 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, 2020. Applications will be considered by the congregation at the Annual General Meeting in spring 2021.

To comply with COVID safety precautions, we have attached an application form to this newsletter if you are receiving it by email. If you receive the newsletter via regular mail and need a planned giving application form, please contact Shirley in the church office at 306.522.9571 and she will mail you one. Once you have completed your application, please submit it to Shirley by:

- email to firstpresregina@sasktel.net, or
- regular mail to First Presbyterian Church, 2170 Albert Street, Regina, SK, S4P 2T9, or
- by dropping your application off at the registration table if you are attending church in person on Sundays.

We welcome your proposals to further the mission of First Church!

Lisa Ann Wood
on behalf of the Stewardship Committee
(* See the application form at end of newsletter)

FROM MULTI-FAITH SASKATCHEWAN

The **2021 Multifaith Calendar** is now available. Those of you in Regina can purchase the calendar for \$20 from greg.thomas@sasktel.net. Arrangements can be made for delivery to Regina addresses. For those outside Regina, please contact your local multifaith group, the

Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, or the publisher at <https://multifaithaction.jimdo.com/multifaith-calendar/>

Multi-Faith Saskatchewan News is published as needed for the information of the multi-faith community of Saskatchewan. Please submit comments, contributions, requests for additions to, or deletions from, the distribution list to mfsask2007@yahoo.com

Covid Alert App

Contact tracing is key to limiting the spread of the coronavirus. Faith communities have been asked to assist public health officials to promote the use of the **COVID Alert App**. Friends, please do take a moment to download this App onto your phone, tablet, and other mobile devices. Also, please talk about it with your friends and colleagues to encourage others to do the same. The app works well when a high proportion of community members are using it. The app is available for free on Android or iPhone. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/covid-alert.html>



ADVENT HYMN SING

Advent Hymn Sings continue on Sunday Dec. 6 and Dec. 13 at 2:30 pm, livestreamed on the FirstPresbyterian Regina Facebook page. Tune in, sing along, and share with your friends!



Bob & Sheila Wilson, Rodolfo Omolida



William Sgrazzutti and Cade Eastwood



Rev. Amanda Currie



Paula Weber and Marianne Woods

IN MEMORIAM

Shirley Rowley Mumford

Please note the following post by Rob Rowley regarding the death of his mother and our friend Shirley Rowley-Mumford. She was a beloved member of our church, and is dearly missed:

Shirley Mae Rowley-Mumford passed away peacefully at Helping Hands Home October 8, 2020.

A wonderful woman, mother, grandmother, died at the age of 98 years young. Giving a lifetime of community service to charities and the arts, she will sadly be missed by all of her family.

This photo was taken on her 98th birthday with our daughter and her granddaughter Ashley.

Rest In Peace, Mom.



MANY THANKS!

Several people that have received a Christmas Care Package called to express their appreciation to the Pastoral Care Committee. Thank you, Emily Ireton, Carole Cann, Rev. Amanda, and Donna Wilkinson, for making the season merry and bright for so many!



ONLINE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: JUNE 6 - 9

The Assembly Council has approved the calling of an online General Assembly between June 6–9, 2021. With the cancellation of the 2020 General Assembly due to the pandemic, and the ongoing restrictions that are anticipated to continue in most areas of Canada well into 2021, an on-line Assembly will provide a means for delegates/commissioners to consider together the matters affecting the ministry and mission of our national church.

This decision followed a survey-consultation with presbyteries in which various scenarios were suggested, including meeting in person as soon as possible, holding an online General Assembly in 2021, or waiting until 2022. The consultation gathered substantial feedback, including a number of concerns about how an on-line General Assembly would be able to function well. This feedback is appreciated and will help to inform ongoing planning for the Assembly. Overall, the majority of presbyteries indicated that holding an on-line General Assembly in 2021 was preferred.

The General Assembly Office will regularly share plans for the online General Assembly as they develop.



Clearly, the General Assembly will not be a direct translation of a “normal” Assembly to an on-line format. For example, while four days are reserved for the 2021 Assembly, our experience with on-line meetings has taught us it would not be productive to have full-day meetings on-line. The schedule will need to take into account different time zones and provide ample time in between sessions. In addition to the business, the Design Team (a sub-committee of Assembly Council) will plan for shared worship experiences on-line. Since this will be a new format, extensive orientation and preparation for commissioners will be arranged.

Letters to presbyteries calling for commissioners will be sent out shortly from the General Assembly Office. Presbyteries may name the same commissioners who were to attend the 2020 General Assembly, but this will not be assumed, so each presbytery will need to provide a slate of commissioners for the 2021 Assembly. Young Adult Representatives will be named by the same presbyteries as last year. Since the Assembly will be on-line, it will be important for commission members to be able to access appropriate computer resources and have sufficient skill to maneuver the on-line experience. The General Assembly Office will endeavour to assist in any way it can. It is likely that the 2021 Assembly will be held with two platforms running simultaneously: a Zoom platform to see and hear presentations and to speak; and a business platform that will deliver, in real time, all the business that will be considered as well as facilitate voting, tracking business and speaking requests.

Other churches which have used such platforms have recommended that two screens be used by each participant -- such as a computer along with a tablet or a mobile phone -- in order to have both the Zoom and the business readily available. A normal high-speed Internet connection will be needed but nothing beyond what is typically required to participate on Zoom. Orientation will be provided to ensure that all commissioners can participate.

May God be our guide as, together, we seek the mind of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in this new way.

You may contact Terrie-Lee Hamilton in the General Assembly Office with any questions.

DECEMBER EVENTS

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Dec. 6 | 10:30 am | Worship (online) |
| | 12:15 pm | Sunday School |
| | 1:00 pm | Coffee Hour |
| | 2:30 pm | Advent Hymn Sing |
| Dec. 8 | 7:30 pm | Advent Book Study |
| Dec. 9 | 7:00 pm | Book Club |
|
 | | |
| Dec. 13 | 10:30 am | Worship (online) |
| | 12:15 pm | Sunday School |
| | 1:00 pm | Coffee Hour |
| | 2:30 pm | Christmas Hymn Sing |
| Dec. 15 | 7:30 pm | Advent Book Study |
| Dec. 16 | 7:00 pm | Blue Christmas Service (online) |
| Dec. 17 | 7:00 pm | Board & Session meeting |
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 | | |
| Dec. 20 | 10:30 am | Worship (online) |
| | 12:15 pm | Sunday School |
| | 1:00 pm | Coffee Hour |
| | 2:30 pm | Online Christmas Pageant |
| Dec. 22 | 7:30 pm | Advent Book Study |
| Dec. 24 | 7:00 pm | Christmas Eve Service |
|
 | | |
| Dec. 27 | 10:30 am | Worship (online) |
| | | No Sunday School or Coffee Hour today |



“And there is where I complied with social-distancing guidelines.”

Christmas Giving In Memoriam

We invite you to include one or both of these projects in your Christmas giving this year. One project assists our international neighbours and the other shares with our local neighbours.

First Church Refugee Fund

Our congregation is sponsoring two refugee families who had to flee from civil war and religious persecution.

- The Mathiang family escaped South Sudan in 2014 and live in a UNHCR refugee camp in Sudan.
- The Saleem family fled Pakistan in 2016, and are living in Malaysia. Though not in a camp, their situation is also difficult.

Each family includes five members ranging across three generations - grandparent, parent, child.

Your gifts will help us be ready when the families arrive. \$28,000 is needed to reach our financial goal.

Regina's Indigenous Christian Fellowship

Located in North-Central Regina, ICF ministry serves the spiritual and social needs of urban Indigenous people. ICF offers community programming, weekly soup and bannock lunches and family breakfasts, prayer circles, talking circles and pastoral support. The agency partners with other local groups to provide skill building programs.

Your contributions will allow ICF to extend its small budget further and meet larger community needs during this pandemic.

Christmas Giving In Memoriam

Names received by Thursday, December 17 will be acknowledged on Sunday, Dec 20

1. Complete this form and mail with your cheque (payable to First Presbyterian Church) to the church office (2170 Albert St, S4P 2T9).
or
2. a) E-transfers can be sent to:
firstpresreginaoffering@gmail.com
+ Please make the security question:
"The street the church is on"
and then
2. b) E-mail firstpresregina@sasktel.net
With your name, donation amount, envelope #; and the In Memory/Living Tribute name or names.

Your Name: _____

Env. # _____ Amount \$ _____

Please use my gift for:

___ Refugee Fund

___ Indigenous Christian Fellowship

In memory of: _____

In living tribute to: _____

Thank you!

We Three Kings

Pandemic Parody

Words: R. G. Huff
A Serious Hymn-writer Gone Rogue

John Henry Hopkins, Jr.
KINGS OF ORIENT



1. We three kings are six feet a - part. We'll Pur - ell be fore we de - part.
2. Mel - chi - or is now quar - an - tined! Stuck in Per - sia, so ___ it seems.
3. Bal - tha - sar has lost ___ his taste. Eat - ing food is such ___ a waste.
4. Cas - par left the car - a - van. He post-poned his star-gaz - ing plans.



We've been test - ed as sug - gest - ed. Care - ful are we, and smart!
No more trav - el on a cam - el 'til there's a good vac - cine.
How dis - quiet - ing, now he's diet - ing. Life now is slow - er paced.
No more roam - ing; Cas - par's hom - ing, scrub - bing his red - dened hands.

REFRAIN

Sing Only after Stanzas 1 & 4



O ___ Do our masks go with our gowns? Do these face shields hide our crowns?
Still our masks clash with our gowns! Face shields hide our top - pled crowns!



We've had plen - ty twen - ty, twen - ty! Still we head t'ward Da - vid's town.
We've had plen - ty twen - ty, twen - ty! Soon we'll head t'ward Da - vid's town.

Optional Stanza 4:

Caspar blames it all on Amahl--
One night's visit on the long haul.
Coughs and sneezes,
Short-breaths, wheezes.
Li-co-rice cures it all.

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Growing our Vision: Seeds of Abundant Joy

Application Process

- This process is designed to align with the annual congregational planning process.
- Applications are to be received in the Church office by December 31st.
- The Stewardship Committee reviews applications, considers money available, and develops recommendations.
- The Stewardship Committee presents all applications, with recommendations, to the joint Board/Session meeting in January/
February.
- All applications are forwarded from the joint Board/Session meeting, with recommendations, to the congregational Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- Applications are considered for approval by the congregation at the AGM.
- Other applications arising during the remainder of the calendar year may be considered as funds are available. For amounts up to \$2000, the Session may approve projects. For amounts over \$2000, congregational approval is required.

**Growing our Vision: Seeds of Abundant Joy
Application Form for Funds**

Name/Group _____

Contact: (Person Responsible) _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Project: _____

Describe your Project: (Attach supporting documents if necessary)

How does this further the Mission of the Church:

Joyful in Worship _____ Tender In Life: _____ Daring in Outreach _____

Amount requested: _____

Signature

Date

Forms due December 31st of each year to the office of First Presbyterian Church, 2170 Albert Street, Regina SK S4P 2T9. Completed forms can also be emailed to firstplannedgiving@sasktel.net