

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

#### December 2021

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Hello People of First Church! Advent blessings to you all!

This Season of Advent, some of us are gathering on Tuesday evenings to discuss and reflect on Adam Hamilton's book, *Incarnation: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas* which is this year's "Presbyterians Read" book study for Advent. As we do so, I'm amazed once again by the fact that there are always new insights and perspectives that bring me new understanding of Jesus' birth and life and God becoming flesh in our world.

The first chapter focused on the royal titles given to Jesus: Christ, Messiah, and King. We learned that "Messiah" is an anglicized version of the Hebrew word *mashiach*, which literally means "anointed." It refers to an individual or object upon which special oil has been poured as a way of setting the object or person apart for God's purposes.

Israel's kings were anointed by their prophets and priests. The anointing happened at God's direction and on God's behalf. And it signified that the king was holy to God, set apart for God's purposes, ruling on behalf of God, representing God, and doing God's work.

So Jesus wasn't the first one to be called the "Messiah" or "Christ" (which means the same thing). Many others like King David, and those who followed after him as monarchs, were anointed and then crowned as king. But whereas King David was a good man who was loved by God and empowered to rule justly, some of the others that followed did not do so well. Yet God promised that there would be a king raised up from David's descendants who would rule over God's people with justice and righteousness forever. This was the Messianic hope of the people - the hope that Jesus came to fulfill.

There are many ways of understanding who Jesus was and many titles by which we know

him: The Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the Lamb of God, the Son of God and Son of Humanity, the Way, the Word, the Resurrection and the Life. But one important aspect of his identity was that he is the King of kings and Lord of lords – the one anointed by God to rule over all.

One of the insights I appreciated in reading the first chapter of *Incarnation* was that Jesus' was actually anointed and crowned as king. It didn't happen in a formal ceremony like it would have done with the kings of Israel (or even the kings and queens of England) but Jesus was anointed by women (some of them nameless women) who loved him and recognized who he was. And Jesus was not crowned by an official in a palace, but he received only the crown of thorns that was placed on his head by the Roman soldiers just before his crucifixion.

He was certainly a different kind of king for those who knew him and followed him on the Way. He is a different kind of king for us also – not necessarily honoured or respected by the world at large – but held dear in our hearts. And when we worship him, and listen to him, and seek to follow him with our lives we receive the blessings that come from being his people. For he is the one who rules justly and righteously, with mercy and love for all his children.

I'm looking forward to more insights and inspiration as we continue through our "Presbyterians Read" study together. Whether you're participating in the reading group or not, I hope that this Season of Advent will give you an opportunity to spend time in prayer, study, giving, and drawing close to God in a variety of ways. May you also rediscover the significance of Christmas this year, and be blessed and encouraged as you follow Jesus on the Way.

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 the 2020 annual congregational meeting included "That the terms of elders currently serving on the Session all be extended by one year."

In 2022, we have three elders completing 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 was established to prepare a slate of nominees for election at the 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 serves on one of the committees of Session. 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 Sheila Wilson or Aksa Yakemchuk.

Jo Szostak  
Clerk of Session

## **WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

~ Isaiah 9:6

The first Sunday of Advent was celebrated on Sunday, November 27. Thank you to Asher, Shazia and Alfred Ferozdin for lighting the Candle of Hope and sharing our First Reading in the Season of Advent. Thank you to those who have agreed to participate in the Advent Services going forward.

The Christmas Tree and Advent Banners now adorn the Sanctuary. Thank you to Jeannie Macfarlane, Joyce McKersie and Will Ireton for looking after these important details.

Holy Communion will be celebrated on Sunday, December 5<sup>th</sup>.

Will Ireton has planned a Special Choral Project in collaboration with members of the University of Regina Choir. Several have expressed interest in contributing to our music ministry. Will has asked that they join the Chancel Singers in preparing our Christmas repertoire.

First Church choir member Paula Weber and Bill Sgrazzutti have been hosting Voice Masterclasses in the sanctuary on Sunday afternoons since the beginning of November. One of Paula's students, Cora, sang a solo during Worship on October 31, and has since joined the Choir and the Chancel Singers. Another of Paula's students will be singing a solo for us during the Season of Advent.

**Organ Blower:** The organ blower (motor and fan which pumps air into the organ) was replaced the week of November 1st. The organ has since been in good working condition and has been used regularly for service playing. Thank you to Will for arranging the repairs to our beloved instrument.

A pre-recorded Hymn Sing was broadcast recently and another one is planned for December and several movements (one chorus, and a few solos/duets) from Bach's setting of the Magnificat text will be presented just prior to/following worship on Sunday, December 19.

## **Special Christmas Services**

**The Blue Christmas Service** will be held on Wednesday, December 15 at 7:00 pm and will feature special music and readings. 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.

The Christmas Eve Service will be held on Friday, December 24 at 7:00 pm and will include readings and special music. This will be a Candlelight service as in the past, and the service will be in-person and live-streamed.

Thank you to our Welcome Team comprised of Ron Pugsley, Heather Mazurak, Murray Kyle and Alfred Ferozdin. Your contributions are greatly appreciated. If you are interested in volunteering for the Welcome Team for future services, please contact Marianne - [marianne@osac.ca](mailto:marianne@osac.ca)

Lectors are needed for the month of January. If you are willing to be a lector, please contact Marianne at the above e-mail address.

The members of the Worship Committee wish each and every one the Blessing and Peace of Christmas, Stay safe and know that God will bless us in the coming year.

Marianne Woods  
Worship Committee Convener

**MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

**Christmas Giving In Memoriam** A First Church Advent Project ~ Afghanistan Food Crisis

Eighteen million Afghans are facing serious food shortages as winter approaches. The UN Food Programme estimates that 1 in 3 people are hungry now. This situation will worsen over the coming months.

Why? Ongoing conflicts and the recent Taliban takeover destabilized the country and dried up international aid. Severe drought hurt crop and livestock production. The pandemic has made bad economic conditions worse.

Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWSD) is responding with emergency food assistance in partnership with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a consortium of Canadian churches. This project will receive matching funds from the Canadian Government which allows help to reach even more people.

The project gives cash to the most vulnerable families so they can buy food and pay for critical items, with the hopes of livelihood recovery in the new year. This aid is focused on women-

headed households, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Your gifts to the Christmas In Memoriam project will help people get through a very challenging season. Thank you!

**Christmas Giving In Memoriam**

Names received by Thursday, Dec. 16 will be acknowledged on Sunday, Dec. 19. Complete the form and mail it with your cheque, payable to First Presbyterian Church, to the office (2170 Albert St, S4P 2T9); or e-transfer your donation to [firstpresreginaoffering@gmail.com](mailto:firstpresreginaoffering@gmail.com) with your name, donation amount, envelop #; and the In Memory/Living Tribute name(s).

A few Christmas plants will be purchased to beautify the chancel during Advent. All other funds will be sent to PWSD.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Env. # \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please use my gift:

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In living tribute to: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating!

Mary Jesse  
Mission & Outreach Convener

**STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

Applications Welcome! Do you have a project that supports our First Church mission?

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 or more aspects 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, 2021.

Applications will be considered by the congregation at the Annual General Meeting in spring 2022.

To get an application form, please contact Shirley in the office at 306.522.9571 and she will e-mail you one or send one for you in regular mail. Once you have completed your application, please submit it to Shirley in the office, either by

- email to [firstpresregina@sasktel.net](mailto:firstpresregina@sasktel.net)
- by 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  
Stewardship Committee member

### **ADVENT HYMN SING**

Some of the members of the First Church Choir started the Season of Advent a little early when we gathered to record some of our favourite Advent hymns and songs. Thanks to Will Ireton for gathering the group together, directing, and playing the piano. Rev. Amanda spent some time editing the video recordings by adding the words on-screen and sharing some reflections on the hymns and Advent readings. We are pleased with how it turned out – a gentle entrance into this holy season with Half an Hour of Hymns. If you haven't already watched, take half an hour to do so. Or watch it again to keep you focussed on waiting, watching, and preparing as we await the day of Christ's coming.

Link to First Church's YouTube Channel (where you can find past worship services and hymn sings):

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOQAYRsq-jY5M9O4w2HPFbg>

Direct link to the 2021 Advent Hymn Sing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BMEFvVkg2c>

Rev. Amanda Currie

### **FROM THE MODERATOR**

When our children were little, we had an Advent routine. In the evening, we would light the appropriate candles on our Advent wreath. We would read from a children's book that featured a different scripture reading for each day, and then we would sing a song together.



We also created a manger scene. In the beginning, we used pieces of Duplo (a toddler version of LEGO) to create our crèche. We put the pieces together to form a manger and had animals around it. We had a figurine for Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus.

Our children would play with the Duplo manger scene and retell the story in their own way. Then, at one point, the baby Jesus was lost. We looked everywhere but couldn't find him.

Months later, well past Christmas, we heard our eldest calling loudly, with his toddler accent, "I found Jesus! I found Jesus!" (It sounded more like, "I found Jeju! I found Jeju!") When he presented the long-lost Duplo figure, we realized what he was so excited about. Indeed, he had found Jesus.

Thinking about the Christmas story, I realize there were others who needed help to find the baby. The angels announced to the shepherds "abiding in their fields keeping watch over their flocks by night" that they would, "find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Evidently, the angels were quite convincing. We read, "they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger."

That's how Luke captures things.

Matthew has Magi from the east come to Jerusalem and ask King Herod, "Where is the one who was born king of the Jews?" Herod didn't know. He called for experts and was told the ruler would be born in Bethlehem. Herod instructed the Magi to "go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him,

report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

As you well know, he wasn't really going to worship the rival ruler. He was going to kill him. The Magi, on the other hand, were led by a star and found the house where the child was living and presented him with gifts.

Many years later, and after the crucifixion, again people couldn't find Jesus. Luke tells us, “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb...when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”

The angels again tell where to find him. The women, like the shepherds, believe the angels and understand that Jesus is risen. When they (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them) tell the apostles, “They did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.”

Finding a leader in a manger or finding a grown man risen from the dead, for some, seems nonsensical.

Maybe we need the sense of a toddler. Maybe we will find Jesus during this Advent and Christmas season in ways we don't expect.

May you have a blessed Christmas.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Daniel Scott, Moderator

P.S. Be sure to follow the Synod of CNOB's interactive Advent calendar at [cnob.org](http://cnob.org) and listen for my greeting on Christmas Day.

### **KAIROS REGINA**

#### **Urges you: Support ambitious climate action at Regina City Hall**

The Renewable Regina motion of 2018 called for the city to be 100% renewable by 2050. To meet that goal, the city assembled a Community Advisory Group and brought in a consultant to help create an Energy and Sustainability Framework.

In a public forum in October, the consultant recommended making deep cuts in our carbon emissions, much sooner than 2050, to do our fair

share to hold global warming to 1.5°C. This is a courageous recommendation, urging us to bring our city's targets up to date and into line with what's needed for climate justice.

As people of faith, our voice matters in discussions of justice. Here are three key points to consider when thinking about doing our fair share.

- 1) We in North America are responsible for a large share of historical emissions that are wreaking climate havoc right now.
- 2) We are in a better position than many communities around the world to make big moves quickly to reduce emissions from our buildings, transportation and local industry.
- 3) Even as atmospheric rivers flood Canada's east and west coasts, many parts of the world have already suffered far greater losses from tropical storms, sea level rise, and severe droughts, and will continue to suffer worse as climate change intensifies.

The Energy and Sustainability Framework will be released to the public in January. Now is the time, as the report is being finalized, to tell city council to act with the same courage that the consultant has shown. **Please contact your councillor as soon as possible and tell them you support a 1.5°C target for the Framework.**

Resources:

Your most effective action is to email your councillor: [https://www.regina.ca/about-](https://www.regina.ca/about-regina/contact-us/contact-councillor/)

[regina/contact-us/contact-councillor/](https://www.regina.ca/about-regina/contact-us/contact-councillor/)



Or scan this QR code to use a pre-drafted template from the citizens' group, Regina Energy Transition, that addresses the 1.5°C target as well as

promoting four quick policy actions.

<https://bit.ly/RETCouncilEmail>

Find your council ward on this map:

<https://www.regina.ca/city-government/city-council/wards/>

The City of Regina website has a project page where you can learn more, and also sign up (see

box at upper right) for project updates:  
<https://beheard.regina.ca/energy-sustainability-framework> You may wish to watch these updates for an opportunity to make a presentation to Council (now through the Executive Committee), urging them to adopt the Framework.

**Come, God-With-Us**

(A Prayer by Thom M. Shuman)

Come, God-with-us:  
 who braves our rejection and hurt,  
 who holds us in acceptance and love.

Come, God-for-us:  
 who whispers in our ears  
 that we – each of us -  
 are beloved children.

Come, God-under-us:  
 who cradles us in arms that never grow weary;  
 whose lap has room enough  
 for all.

Come, God-over-us:  
 who watches in the long silence of the night,  
 that we might rest in peace.

Come, God-beside-us:  
 who steadies us when we falter,  
 who lifts us up when we fall.

Come, God-behind-us:  
 who picks up all the faded dreams  
 we drop along the way  
 and patchworks them into hope.

O Come, O Come, Immanuel:  
 and we will rejoice for ever!



**DECEMBER EVENTS**

- |                |                     |   |
|----------------|---------------------|---|
| <b>Dec. 5</b>  | <b>10:30 am</b>     | <b>Worship with Holy Communion</b><br>(In Person & Online)<br>Second Sunday of Advent<br>Sunday School (Zoom)<br>Coffee Hour (Zoom) |
|                | 12:15 pm<br>1:00 pm |   |
| Dec. 7-10      | 11:00 am            | Walk to Bethlehem (gym)   |
| Dec. 7         | 12:00 pm<br>7:00 pm | Freedom 55ers (Zoom)<br>Presbyterians Read (Zoom)   |
| Dec. 8         | 7:00 pm             | Book Club (Zoom)  |
| Dec. 9         | 7:00 pm             | Choir   |
| <b>Dec. 12</b> | <b>10:30 am</b>     | <b>Worship</b><br>(In Person & Online)<br>Third Sunday of Advent<br>Sunday School (Zoom)<br>Coffee Hour (Zoom)                      |
|                | 12:15 pm<br>1:00 pm |   |
| Dec. 13        | 7:00 pm             | Young Adult Gathering (Zoom)  |
| Dec. 14-17     | 11:00 am            | Walk to Bethlehem (gym)   |
| Dec. 14        | 12:00 pm<br>7:00 pm | Freedom 55ers (Zoom)<br>Presbyterians Read (Zoom)   |
| <b>Dec. 15</b> | <b>7:00 pm</b>      | <b>Blue Christmas Service</b><br>(In Person & Online)   |
| Dec. 16        | 7:00 pm             | Choir   |
| <b>Dec. 19</b> | <b>10:30 am</b>     | <b>Worship</b><br>(In Person & Online)<br>Fourth Sunday of Advent   |
| Dec. 21-24     | 11:00 am            | Walk to Bethlehem (gym)   |
| Dec. 21        | 12:00 pm<br>7:00 pm | Freedom 55ers (Zoom)<br>Presbyterians Read (Zoom)   |
| Dec. 23        | 7:00 pm             | Choir   |
| <b>Dec. 24</b> | <b>7:00 pm</b>      | <b>Christmas Eve Service</b><br>(In Person & Online)  |
| Dec. 25        |                     | Merry Christmas to You!   |
| <b>Dec. 26</b> | <b>10:30 am</b>     | <b>Worship</b><br>(In Person & Online)<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas  |
- No Sunday School or Coffee Hour Today
- |               |                 |  |
|---------------|-----------------|--|
| <b>Jan. 2</b> | <b>10:30 am</b> | <b>Worship</b><br>(In Person & Online) |
|---------------|-----------------|--|
- No Sunday School or Coffee Hour Today