

**FIRST THINGS FIRST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA
FEBRUARY 2022**

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Friends, I am grateful for all of you – the people of First Church – for your patience, generosity, care, and perseverance over the last 23 months of the Covid-19 Pandemic. While some of you have been worshipping together through YouTube and participating in church programs by Zoom, others have continued to stay connected by reading newsletters and sermons and phoning one another for support.

Meanwhile, some of you have gotten sick and a few have even lost loved ones from this virus. Your lives have been impacted by interruptions in work and school, and so many disappointing cancellations of gatherings and events that would normally have brought meaning and joy into your lives. Although we've now used to this new normal in some ways, it continues to be very difficult, and like other Canadians we are longing for it to end.

As I have been watching the so-called "Freedom Convoy" and protest-turned-occupation in Ottawa over the last week, and as we anticipate something similar happening in Toronto this weekend, your ongoing patience and concern for the common good is encouraging me. I am appalled that people from across the country, many of whom claim the identity of "Christian" and who prayed together on Parliament Hill last Sunday, have so blatantly chosen their self-interest over the health and well-being of their neighbours and the most vulnerable people in our society.

We live in a democratic society where protest is perfectly appropriate, and citizens are welcomed and encouraged to speak freely and let our political leaders know what we think and what we hope for our society going forward. However, free speech is not an excuse for hate speech, for personal threats against politicians and police officers, harassment of fellow citizens, and desecration of special sites like the Terry Fox statue, the National War Memorial, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

In the face of all this, I can do little more than pray. So, I am praying for the political leaders and the police services, that they may have divine-inspired wisdom to de-escalate these situations and respond to the underlying fears and frustrations that have led to such inappropriate behaviour. And I am praying for the vast majority of Canadians who are continuing to endure the impacts of this pandemic, while making personal sacrifices to protect one another and end this thing. I thank God for everyone who is getting vaccinated, wearing masks, reducing contacts, and following other public health directives that may limit our personal freedom for the sake of the common good.

May God bless and keep us all until this pandemic ends which, we are assured, that it will! I am blessed to be going through it with all of you – the people of First Church.

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

The Session has decided that it is prudent to continue the suspension of in-person worship services until the end of February and then to re-evaluate.

The date for the annual general meeting has been set for Sunday, May 1, following worship. We anticipate being able to gather in person for this meeting.

The wedding policy and application have been updated in light of the changes to the definition of marriage made at the 2021 General Assembly, and are posted on-line. A Welcome and Inclusion team has been created to make recommendations for First Church.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

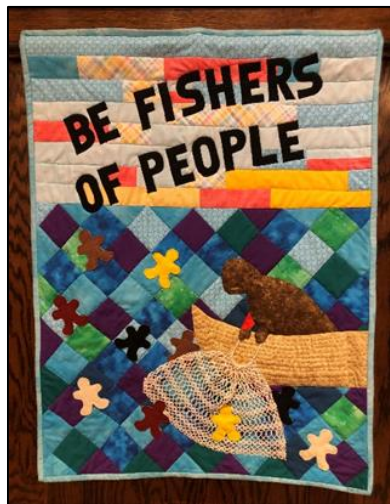
Dear Friends, let us love one another
For Love comes from God
Everyone who loves has been born of God
And knows God.
1 John: 4-7

Members of the Worship Committee met remotely on Saturday, January 29.

Session decided at its February 2nd meeting to continue with on-line Sunday worship through February and re-assess in early March. The Season of Lent begins on Sunday, March 6. The Ash Wednesday service will be held on Wednesday, March 2 at 7:00 pm. The Maundy Thursday service will be held April 14 at 7:00 pm, and the Good Friday Service on April 15, at 10:30 am.

New Banner in the Sanctuary

We would like to thank Joyce McKersie for the beautiful banner she made, which is displayed in the Sanctuary. Thanks for your beautiful handiwork, Joyce.



From Our Director of Music:

Thank you to all the musicians who provided special music in December; and to the ensemble that provided Christmas music in an on-line performance. Your gifts are greatly appreciated.



Choral activities at the church will resume after in-person group singing has once again been deemed safe by the Session. While we cannot feature choral ensembles, selections for the Ministry of Music will continue to include vocal/instrumental solos. Gabe Omolida and Bill Sgrazzutti will be providing music for our services. Thank you Gabe and Bill for your gifts to our congregation. Since our transition to online worship only, Will Ireton has been selecting the music in collaboration with our soloists, and with reference to the upcoming Sunday worship themes provided by the Rev. Amanda.

Will has recruited Gracie Podbielski and Vynz Hippolito as Music Scholars to co-direct the choirs while he is studying in Vancouver. However, they will not be appointed until choral activities at the church resume.

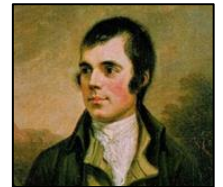
The Worship Committee wishes you God's Blessings – stay safe and well.

Marianne Woods
Convener, Worship Committee

CAMP CHRISTOPHER: THANK YOU

Many thanks from everyone involved with Camp Christopher to those who took part in the Burns Supper on January 22nd.

Those of us on the organizing committee had lots of fun preparing the meal, and the reports to date indicate it was enjoyed by all. From ticket sales this year, along with individual donations, we were able to raise over \$2,000 for the Camp. These proceeds will go into the Furnace Replacement Fund.



Thank you again for your continued support of Camp Christopher.

Donna Wilkinson

GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETS ONLINE IN 2022

The year 2021 will be remembered, among many other things, as the first year in our history that the General Assembly was held online. The

global pandemic continues to move much of the life of the church online and, in 2022, this will once again be the case with the General Assembly.

The Assembly Council, on January 19, agreed that the Moderator be requested to convene an online General Assembly to be held during the dates of June 5–8, 2022. After discussions with the university where we had hoped to meet in person, and following prayer and discussion, the Council could not, with confidence, recommend planning to meet in person this year, much as we would have liked to.

Since this is not our first experience holding an on-line General Assembly, the learnings and feedback from the 2021 Assembly will inform the format of the 2022 Assembly.

As always, commissioners will be responsible for the business of the Assembly and its decisions. There will also be worship, ecumenical and interfaith guests, young adult and student representatives, and new opportunities for fellowship. The wider church will have the opportunity to follow the Assembly through live streaming.

The General Assembly Office continues to work with the General Assembly Design Team on making the Assembly as meaningful and effective as possible under these circumstances.

In 2021, very significant items of business came before the Assembly, along with a backlog of overtures, reports and recommendations from 2019 and earlier. This resulted in a great many decisions to be made during the time we spent together. We do not expect this to be the case this year. Standing committees are being asked to tailor their reports for an online Assembly by, where possible and reasonable, limiting the number of recommendations and scope of business to those things that need to be considered this year. Committees will also be asked to prepare a list of consent recommendations consisting of items they think could be decided together and possibly without debate. Commissioners will be permitted to ask that recommendations be removed from any Consent Agenda.

Commissioners are ultimately responsible for the Assembly. They will need to authorize its very

existence when it starts, decide on the business to be considered, and approve any procedures that will be necessary to facilitate the online Assembly.

PC-Biz.org, the online platform that we used last year, will be used again for presenting the reports and recommendations to commissioners in real time and for voting. Every commissioner will be trained in its use and provided briefing opportunities related both to the reports and the functioning of the online Assembly in order to ensure a sufficient level of confidence in this important work.

The General Assembly Office once again looks forward to working with a team of volunteers and staff to help the Assembly be a positive and memorable experience. As plans continue to develop and unfold, the Assembly website will be updated via the [General Assembly 2022 web page](#).

Stephen Kendall,
Principal Clerk

BALLOT FOR MODERATOR OF THE 2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

I am pleased to announce that The Rev. Dr. Bob



Faris, Associate Minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., is the individual who has received nominations from more than one presbytery to be Moderator. He has agreed to stand in nomination.

Normally, ballots with the names of all nominees with more than one presbytery nomination, and who have agreed to stand, are sent to presbyteries for members of presbytery to vote. Ballots will not be needed this year.

The [Committee to Advise with the Moderator](#) will meet in order to prepare a recommendation for the 2022 General Assembly.

The 2022 General Assembly is scheduled to convene Sunday, June 5, 2022. The Assembly

Council met on January 19 to confirm the format of the Assembly.

The Rev. Stephen Kendall,
Principal Clerk

SACRED PLACES AND SPACES:
March 2022 seminars
on Ecumenical Stewardship

You are invited to join in our March 2022 series of Ecumenical Stewardship seminars. We're thinking about the use of sacred buildings and properties in new ways. Join us Thursdays, March 3, 10, 17, and 24 at 3pm (SK time).



Mar. 3: From Maintenance to Mission

The Rev. Dr. Iain Luke will help us consider the factors in moving congregations to a more missional approach in their ministry.

Mar. 10: Greening Our Churches

Norman Lévesque will explore with us the various ways our facilities and our grounds can reduce their impact on God's beautiful Creation.

Mar. 17: Sharing Sacred Spaces – Facilities and Ministries

The Rev. Dr. Sandra Beardsall will discuss the many and varied ways denominations can work together in ministry and in the sharing of facilities.

Mar. 24: Loving Our Neighbours! (again)

Carla Leon and Zoë Chaytors will engage us in the question of how we practically interact with our communities and use our physical resources in mission for the good of all.

Registration required:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpd uiurjluHdE69wl-4LGI5vIHO0mGqViK>

For further information, contact Archdeacon Cheryl Toth at stewardship@sasktel.net

All are welcome. This webinar 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

ELCIC, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina.

INTERIM REPORT OF THE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE
re. Confession to LGBTQI+ People

The Special Committee re. Confession to LGBTQI+ People was established by the General Assembly in 2021. It arises from **Recommendations No. 3 and 4** of the [Final Report of the Rainbow Communion](#), "Not All are Welcome," both of which were approved by the General Assembly.

Recommendation No. 3 is: That the Presbyterian Church in Canada offer a public confession to all individuals and congregations that have been harmed by the church in excluding and marginalizing people who identify as LGBTQI+. The confession would acknowledge the church's responsibility for the harm done, seek forgiveness from God and from those who have been harmed, and commit the church to a true change of heart and behaviour.

Recommendation No. 4 is: That a Special Committee be appointed by the General Assembly, to prepare the Confession for harm done to LGBTQI+ people before the next General Assembly. The Confession will be given public expression in a Service of Worship led by the Moderator which will be live streamed and recorded and made available for use in the church.

The following individuals are members of the Committee: The Rev. Paulette Brown, Lela Burt, The Rev. Daniel Cho, The Rev. Dr. Charles Fensham, Chris Fischer, David Robinson, and as chaplain, The Rev. Linda Patton-Cowie.

The Committee held a meeting on November 9, 2021, during which considerable progress was made on fleshing out our plans for both the Confession to LGBTQI+ People, and the report to the 2022 General Assembly that will accompany it.

We commenced the meeting by welcoming Chris Fischer as a member of the Committee, and The Rev. Linda Patton-Cowie as our chaplain. Both immediately began proving their value as members of our team, bringing very useful

perspectives and suggestions to bear on the issues we are addressing.

We next undertook a review of the process through which the [Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to Indigenous People of 1994](#) was developed and approved. We were materially assisted in this review by The Rev. Stephen Kendall, Principal Clerk, and The Rev. Don Muir, Deputy Clerk, who provided background documentation and insights. It became clear to us in reviewing this history that the failure to adopt the initial draft Confession in 1992 arose in good measure out of the lack of an appropriate document outlining the historical context for the Confession. Once further research and supporting documentation had been done during 1992–1994 in support of the Confession, it was adopted by the General Assembly of 1994. We drew the inference from this episode in The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s history that our own report to the 2022 General Assembly should include a supporting section that outlined the historical context for the Confession to LGBTQI+ People.

In addition to our consideration of historical issues, we had a fruitful discussion about the proposal that our report include Calls to Action. It was agreed that our Confession would mark just one step in an ongoing process of reconciliation with LGBTQI+ people. It was felt that the development of Calls to Action would provide guidance to those who, having adopted the Confession, wanted to take further action to affirm our LGBTQI+ siblings and continue pursuing reconciliation thereafter. It was also agreed that the recommendations of the Rainbow Communion might suggest a number of potential Calls to Action.

These matters were followed by a useful discussion of just what, exactly, we wished to confess. A list of things to be confessed was developed, to be used as a reference in writing the draft Confession itself. The Committee also appointed a sub-committee to undertake the drafting of the first version of the Report to the General Assembly and incorporating our draft Confession. This task was entrusted to The Rev. Paulette Brown, The Rev. Daniel Cho and David Robinson.

The Committee was scheduled to meet on December 10, 2021, but this meeting was cancelled due to the unavailability of a number of Committee members. In the absence of a December meeting, members of the writing sub-committee proceeded to work on a draft Report and Confession. This led to the circulation of an initial draft in advance of our meeting on January 7, 2022.

Our meeting of January 7, at which all members were present, was a very productive one. We reviewed most of the draft Report and Confession that had been circulated. Members of the Committee brought their various and diverse life experiences and perspectives to bear on refining the draft, resulting in a much - improved document. It contains, in its present form, eight sections: (1) Mandate and Membership; (2) Nomenclature and Abbreviations; (3) Background; (4) The Meaning of Confession; (5) Our Confession; (6) The Public Expression of our Confession; (7) The Importance of Calls to Action; and (8) Resources.

Various members of the Committee volunteered to produce refined wording on some of the more problematic aspects of the draft, and report to the next meeting, scheduled for January 28, 2022. The Rev. Stephen Kendall offered, and the Committee gladly accepted, the assistance of Carragh Erhardt, LMA Program Coordinator, Sexuality and Inclusion, in developing our approach to nomenclature and abbreviations for sexual and gender minorities. We hope to balance a desire to be as inclusive in our language as possible, with the aim of producing a document, especially a Confession text, which is both readable and relatable.

We continue to ask for the prayers of The Presbyterian Church in Canada as the Committee works on the important task that it has been given. The Committee is working very well, and intends to have a finalized draft document ready for submission to the national church by March 15, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

David Robinson,
Convener

FEBRUARY EVENTS

- Feb. 6 10:30 am Worship (YouTube)**
12:15 pm Sunday School (Zoom)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
- Feb. 8 12:30 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
7:00 pm "The Spirit Prays" Study
(Zoom)
- Feb. 9 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
7:00 pm Book Club (Zoom)
- Feb. 12 10:00 am First Church hosting Bag
Lunch Program at
First Baptist Church
- Feb. 13 10:30 am Worship (YouTube)**
12:15 pm Sunday School (Zoom)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
3:00 pm Welcome & Inclusion
Team (Zoom)
- Feb. 15 12:30 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
7:00 pm "The Spirit Prays" Study
(Zoom)
- Feb. 16 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
7:00 pm Board of Managers (Zoom)
- Feb. 20 10:30 am Worship (YouTube)**
12:15 pm Sunday School (Zoom)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
- Feb. 22 12:30 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
7:00 pm "The Spirit Prays" Study
(Zoom)
- Feb. 23 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
- Feb. 27 10:30 am Worship (YouTube)**
12:15 pm Sunday School (Zoom)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
- Mar. 1 12:30 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
7:00 pm "The Spirit Prays" Study
(Zoom)
- Mar. 2 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
7:00 pm Ash Wednesday Service
(YouTube)
- Mar. 4 1:00 pm Pastoral Care Committee
(Zoom)
- Mar. 6 10:30 am Worship (YouTube)**
- *First Sunday in Lent*
12:15 pm Sunday School (Zoom)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
Including "Learning in
Lent: TRC Calls to Action"