

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

#### January 2020

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year, Friends!

We are already a week into this New Year of 2020 and into a New Decade. I feel a mix of emotions as I think about how this year is going so far. In and around First Church we are getting ready for a wonderful celebration this weekend. It is our 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a congregation, and we're marking the occasion with a special worship service on Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup> with guest preacher, the Rev. Dr. Jean Morris, followed by a celebration dinner with a catered meal, fellowship, and an anniversary program. I am thankful to the Fellowship Committee and all those who helped to plan and prepare for this wonderful day to "Listen to the Past" and "Look to the Future" together as First Church.

At the same time, we are well aware of the troubles of the world around us. Australia is on fire. Iran and the United States are on the brink of war. A terrible plane crash in Tehran killed 176 people including 63 Canadian citizens and well over a hundred people who were on their way to Canada. Many parts of the world are experiencing political upheaval and civil unrest. We are concerned about the environmental crisis that is threatening the planet as a whole. We hear of violence in our own city and of the continuing struggle against poverty and hunger. Some of our own families are suffering with grief over the loss of loved ones in these last few weeks, or with injury or illness that make daily life more difficult.

In this context, I wrote a prayer that was shared this week on the website and social media of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. May God be our refuge and strength in the midst of trouble, and may God sustain us to walk with courage and hope as we continue our ministry and mission in Jesus' name in this community.

#### **A Prayer for the World During Tumultuous Times**

O God,  
you are our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear,  
though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake  
in the heart of the sea;  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

In this time of wars, and rumours of wars, and threats of wars, we place our trust in you, O God.  
And we pray for peace.  
For peace in the world and for peace in the hearts of your people.

In this time of violence, and terror, and political upheaval, we cling to you  
for courage and hope, O God.  
And we pray for compassion.  
For compassion for our friends and compassion for our enemies.

In this time of fires, and floods, and one natural disaster after another,  
we look to you for help and strength, O God.  
And we pray for healing.  
For the healing of the Earth and the healing of your people.

Give wisdom to those who govern the nations of the world, and guide them to work for peace with justice for all.

Give courage to those who are working to help others in need, and ensure that they have all the resources that they require.

Give comfort to those whose hearts, lives, and communities are broken, and sustain them with your love until they can see hope for the future once again.

We pray for people around the world, especially those in Australia and Iran;  
Yemen and Venezuela, Hong Kong and Lebanon; Syria, the United States and Canada.

We pray for every place where your children are at war, in danger, in hunger, or in grief. We pray for those who are seeking you or doubting your presence.

With the psalmist, we remember and trust that you make wars cease to the end of the earth; you break the bow, and shatter the spear; you burn the shields with fire.

You say to us: "Be still and know that I am God!" And so we pray:

Still our hearts, O God, and calm our fears. Use our prayers and our lives, our gifts and our acts of service to touch this hurting world with your love and healing.

O God, you are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Amen.

Rev. Amanda Currie

## SESSION

### **Election of Elders**

The Session is composed of 12 elders for 6-year terms, with 2 elders elected annually. This year 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 Bette Kelly or Tammy MacDonald.

Jo Szostak  
Clerk of Session

## MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

This Christmas, the sanctuary Christmas tree was piled high with gifts for the **Giving Tree Advent Project**.

Approximately \$3000 was raised for our refugee sponsorship fund and many boxes of children's and adult socks, mitts, hats, winter coats, diapers and toiletries were

delivered to Carmichael Outreach in early January, along with over \$400 in gift cards. Many thanks to everyone at First Church for your generosity and thoughtfulness.

**Freedom From Freezing** knitting program winds up at the end of January. One batch of kids' knitted wear has been delivered and all remaining items will be sent along at the end of the month. Knitted items can be left in the wool bin in the Narthex.

February 2 marks **PWSD Sunday** and the start of our annual 3-week appeal. This year your contributions to Presbyterian World Service & Development will support leprosy work in Nepal. Leprosy is a contagious disease that affects Nepalese people two and a half times more frequently than the global average. Those with leprosy are often shunned because others fear they may catch the disease. PWSD supports The Shining Hospital's leprosy program that helps people overcome illness and get back to their normal lives. This year the hospital has



given over 15,000 people hope for a healthier future. You will be able to contribute to the appeal between Feb 2 and 16 through special Sunday envelopes, and also by participating in a special *Souper Sunday* lunch on Feb 2. Watch for more details.

Mary Jesse  
Mission & Outreach Committee

### **FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

#### **“Souper” Bowl Sunday**

As you know (or maybe don't know) the NFL Super Bowl is coming up on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Fellowship Committee decided that we would celebrate in our own way here at First Church. The Mission and Outreach and Fellowship Committees are hosting a “Souper” Bowl Sunday soup and bun lunch and – of course – dessert, following our church service that day. This will be a free-will offering event in support of Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWS&D). Sign-up sheets will be available in the Narthex and in the gym if you are able to bring a pot of soup. It will be a great and delicious event. Mark your calendars!!

Sheila Wilson  
Fellowship Committee

### **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CLASSES**

Are you a new Christian, new to the Presbyterian Church, or new to First Church? Are you a youth or adult who has not yet made a personal profession of faith and become a member of the church? Do you have questions about what the church believes or about how we are called to live according to our faith?

You are invited to participate in the upcoming series of membership classes at First Church. Please speak to Rev. Amanda to indicate your interest and ask any questions you may have. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings during the month of February at 7:30 pm in the Morris Room (Tuesdays, Feb. 4, 11, 18, & 25).

Rev. Amanda Currie

### **FUNDSCRIP**

Welcome back! The next order Sunday is January 19. The special this month is Gap/Old Navy at 7%. Gas and grocery cards are available at the FundScrip table following worship. Thanks for your continuing support!

### **PRESBYTERY OF ASSINIBOIA**

Greetings from the Presbytery of Assiniboia!

The Presbytery of Assiniboia met at Grace Yorkton on September 21 and in Norman Kennedy Regina on November 16. We enjoyed wonderful hospitality and appreciated the chance to connect with ministers and representative elders.



The Presbytery is pleased to welcome Reverend Sunny Lee to the Presbytery of Assiniboia as the Minister of Word and Sacrament at Knox, Whitewood. Rev Lee was ordained in her home church in Eastern Han-Ca Presbytery on October 27. Shown in this picture is Rev Sunny Lee and Rev Amanda Currie following the induction service at

Knox Whitewood on November 30, 2019.

Reverend Katherine Bretzlaff from the Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan has retired and relocated to Regina. Rev Bretzlaff is now a member of the Appendix of the Roll of the Presbytery of Assiniboia. Welcome Katherine!

The Synod of Saskatchewan met Oct 18 and 19 in Knox Briercrest and St Mark's Moose Jaw where elders and ministers enjoyed time to do the work of the Synod as well as time for fellowship and worship. Highlights included the installation of our new Moderator, Spencer Hanson, St Andrew's Saskatoon, the adoption of a conflict of interest policy, approval of several grant applications and consideration of options

for Camp Christopher to become more financially secure. The next meeting of the Synod of Saskatchewan will take place in Saskatoon, Oct 15-17, 2020 and will include an educational component.

With the receipt of Conor Barker's, St Andrew's Swift Current, resignation as Treasurer, Jo Szostak, First Church, Regina, graciously accepted the responsibilities of Acting Treasurer until January 1 when Barb Vennard, Knox Whitewood will assume that role. Thanks to Jo and Barb for your dedicated service.

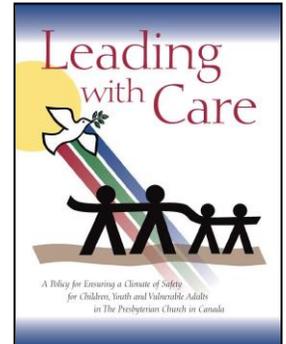
At the November meeting of the Synod Executive, Martha Fergusson, Synod Youth Coordinator, indicated that she would move on from this position, and therefore not wish to sign a 2020 contract. Martha has graciously agreed to a short-term contract to oversee Saskatchewan Presbyterian Youth and Canada Youth 2020 for the first part of 2020. Dr. Jo Szostak has agreed to plan and coordinate the Vacation Bible School program in the Synod this year, in addition to her other duties. These arrangements have been made to assure that these ministries continue while we search for a new Synod Youth Coordinator. As soon as a new Coordinator is ready to assume these roles, Martha and Jo will willingly step aside. The Youth Coordinator position is posted on the Presbyterian.ca website and has been circulated to all of the Saskatchewan Presbyterian congregations.

Our commissioners to the 145th General Assembly of the PCC in Waterloo, Ont. in June 2020 will be Rev Amanda Currie, First Regina with the Representative Elder to be named early in the New Year. The Presbytery of Assiniboia will have the opportunity to send Gabe Omolida from First Presbyterian Church, Regina as our Young Adult Representative (YAR) to General Assembly.

The Presbytery received the good news that two of our churches have received Sustaining Ministries Grants: St Andrew's Swift Current (\$28000) and Knox Weyburn (\$30,000). It was unfortunate that St Andrew's Moosomin's Sustaining Ministry Grant, St Andrew's Swift Current's New & Renewed Ministry Grant and Trinity Grenfell's New Beginnings Grant were declined.

Presbytery granted permission to Grace Yorkton to sell their church building if and when deemed necessary. Approval was also given to Knox Weyburn to use their manse fund to finance future operating costs.

A Leading with Care Workshop was facilitated by David Phillips, the PCC's Program Administrator, in Saskatoon October 26. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss how to operationalize the practical issues relating to implementation of the policy to ensure that all of our church programs provide a climate of safety for everyone.



Due to the significant financial challenges that our Presbytery is facing, cost saving measures such as Presbyter's providing their own lunch at Presbytery meetings and increased carpooling were adopted at the November meeting.

Update from Jo Szostak, Congregational Development Coordinator and New Church Development Coordinator:

**Congregational Development:** Jo has provided a variety of workshops and follow-up meetings with congregations throughout the Synod focusing on the Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations. Most congregations are working on Radical Hospitality and two congregations have goals relating to Worship and Intentional Faith Development. She is currently booking times for January and February, so please contact her if you would like to meet.

[jszostak@accesscomm.ca](mailto:jszostak@accesscomm.ca)

Jo is also beginning to get things organized for VBS for the summer. Watch for an initial email soon and let her know if you are interested. March 6 & 7 are the tentative dates for a VBS seminar in Regina. Jo encourages every congregation to send representatives to this important event. All expenses will be covered by the Synod Events Fund. Also, if anyone would like help working on their Leading with Care plans, please contact Jo!

**New Church Development:** Plans are continuing this year with an ecumenical group providing ministry in the White City/Emerald Park area. December 15 is their Christmas Carols and Songs event. They are also planning a Bible Fun Camp again in the summer.

At the November meeting the Presbytery considered one study and report and three Remits from the June 2019 General Assembly.

**Study & Report:** The policy and procedures for addressing harassment in the church were discussed and Presbyteries feedback will be provided to the national church.

**Remit A:** The motion to approve a change to Term Service for Elders to be less than 6 years but no less than 3 years with Presbytery Approval was carried.

**Remit B:** The motion to approve that the Presbyterian Church in Canada hold two parallel definitions of marriage and recognize that faithful, Holy Spirit filled, Christ centred, God honouring people can understand marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or as a covenant relationship between two adult persons and that congregations, sessions, ruling and teaching elders be granted liberty of conscience and action on marriage was carried.



**Remit C:** The motion to approve that congregations and presbyteries may call and ordain as ministers and elect and ordain as ruling elders LGBTQI persons (married or single) with the provision that liberty of conscience and action regarding participation in ordinations, inductions and installations be granted to ministers and ruling elders was defeated. More information regarding these remits can be found online at [www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca).

This newsletter is one initiative of the Congregational Life Committee, as we work to connect our congregations across the Presbytery of Assiniboia. We have also set up a Facebook Group for sharing and discussion between Presbyterians across the whole province.

Join the group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/147648962767626/?ref=bookmarks> and stay in touch with other Presbyterian congregations.

The next meeting of the Presbytery of Assiniboia will be March 14, 2020 at 9:30 am within First Church, Regina. Presbytery meetings are open to all Presbyterians who are welcome to attend, listen, and observe. It's helpful to let the Clerk of Presbytery know if you plan to attend so that accommodations for space, food, etc. can be made. The Clerk, Dr. Jo Szostak, can be contacted at [jszostak@accesscomm.ca](mailto:jszostak@accesscomm.ca).



“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.”  
– Luke 2:16

May the peace of Christmas fill your life now and throughout the New Year. Merry Christmas!

### **WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, to be celebrated 18-25 January, Christians across the world will pray and reflect on



what it means to “show unusual kindness.” This year’s theme, “they showed us unusual kindness,” is taken from Acts 28:2, and draws on the story of Paul finding safety in Malta after a shipwreck. The resources for the week have been prepared by members of different churches in Malta.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been jointly organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church since 1968. In the southern hemisphere, where January is a vacation time, churches often find other days to celebrate it, for example around Pentecost, also a symbolic date for unity. “The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has become quite simply a regular part of the faith year now for many Christians as we continue to pray, with Jesus himself, for the gift of unity,” reflected Rev. Dr Susan Durber, moderator of the WCC Faith and Order Commission. “It is always so moving to imagine Christians

throughout the world from so many traditions sharing in these same reflections during the week.”

In Durber's own town, Taunton in the UK, the biblical story has a particular resonance, she said. “Christians have recently been brought together through a shared response to the needs of refugees from Syria,” said Durber. “In our island nation we have been challenged to act together, despite our present theological and political differences, to offer kindness and hospitality to others. The urgent needs of the world work to draw us together in unity, so that even while ecumenical enthusiasm seems to wane, it is blown into life again by the Holy Spirit!”



Msgr Prof. Hector Scerri, chair of the Malta Ecumenical Council, said he hopes the Week of Prayer will be a “wake-up call.”

“If we confess to our Christian origins, then it is

our duty to welcome the stranger,” Scerri said. “There are leaders now speaking about quotas and about building walls, while at the same time they have a crucifix or an icon sitting on their desk. These, our prime ministers, presidents in some countries, who occasionally display Christian symbols, but who at other times prefer to act as populists, to build walls. It doesn't add up.”

In Regina, we will gather to pray for Christian unity on **January 26, 3pm at All Saints Anglican Church**, 142 Massey Road, Regina. Our preacher will be Pastor Joel Russell MacLean (First Baptist, Regina). All are welcome.

As an island nation, boats are an important part of Maltese life. The Scripture reading in this service describes a perilous sea voyage by the Apostle Paul. A boat is also symbolic of the sometimes-tempestuous journey Christians make together towards unity.

Another opportunity for ecumenical prayer: **Taizé Prayer Service** Friday, Jan 17th at 7 PM Blessed Sacrament Church, 2049 Scarth Street, Regina.

Come join us for candlelight services of meditative music and quiet reflection as we place our joys and concerns before the Lord. The Taizé prayer service is from an ecumenical community founded in Taizé, France in 1940. A Taizé service provides a form of prayer much admired for its simplicity and focus on Christ. At a Taizé service, we pray as we sing, as we reflect on the Scripture reading, as we sit in silence, and as we offer our prayers to Christ. All are welcome.

### **WORLD RELIGION DAY 2020**

Regina Multi-Faith Forum invites you to this event to be held on Sunday, January 19th at 2 pm. Regina and area faith traditions will be sharing on the theme of “Relationship” and will be held at Pearl and Max B. Herman Centre, Beth Jacob Synagogue, 4715 McTavish Street. For Further information, please contact 306-586-1722.



### **INSTRUMENT OF PEACE**

*After St Francis*

To the ice of hate  
may I be an axe of love

to frostbitten injury  
the salve of pardon

to cold waters of doubt  
a bridge of faith

to the dark soil of despair  
a seed of hope

to the snowstorm of sadness  
a shelter of joy

to long nights of darkness  
a lantern of light.

~ Mary Palmer

## JANUARY EVENTS

- Jan. 12 10:30 am Worship & Sunday School**  
*95th Anniversary Celebration*  
*The Rev. Jean Morris will be preaching.*  
*A congregational group photo will be taken after worship followed by a catered dinner (advance tickets only).*
- Jan. 13 10:00 am Funeral for Donna Smith
- Jan. 14 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers
- Jan. 15 7:00 pm Board of Managers
- Jan. 16 10:00 am Adult Walk  
7:00 pm Choir
- Jan. 19 10:30 am Worship & Sunday School**  
*Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*  
11:45 am Mission & Outreach
- Jan. 21 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers
- Jan. 22 7:00 pm Book Club @  
Denise Jenkins-Folstad's home
- Jan. 23 10:00 am Adult Walk  
7:00 pm Choir
- Jan. 26 10:30 am Worship & Sunday School**  
*Rev. Bob Wilson preaching*  
11:45 am Christian Education Cmt
- Jan. 28 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers
- Jan. 29 7:00 pm Joint Session/Board mtg
- Jan. 30 10:00 am Adult Walk  
7:00 pm Choir

## EARLY FEBRUARY EVENTS

- Feb. 1 1:00 pm Funeral for Evelyn Ireton
- Feb. 2 10:30 am Worship & Sunday School**  
*Holy Communion/PWS&D Sunday*  
noon Souper Bowl Sunday
- Feb. 4 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers  
7:30 pm Membership Class
- Feb. 5 7:00 pm Session
- Feb. 6 10:00 am Adult Walk  
7:00 pm Choir
- Feb. 7 2:30 pm Prayer Shawl Gathering  
@ Wintergreene

## WE WOULD LET GO OF THE PAST

Eternal God,  
Creator, Son and Spirit,  
at the start of this new year,  
with your help,  
we would let go of the past.  
We would lay down our failures,  
guilt and shame,  
and lift up our eyes,  
and look to the future.

Let the grace of your presence  
strengthen our resolve,  
enlighten our minds,  
clarify our wills,  
and inflame our hearts  
with love for you  
and for all people.

So may we live dedicated lives  
in peace, and with courage,  
faith and cheerfulness,  
until the year's end.

Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

~ John Harvey