

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

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

As the New Year began, Saskatchewan was just beginning to experience the fifth wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic that we have come to know as the Omicron wave. We could see it coming from a long way off because most other provinces were already being impacted quite severely even before Christmas.

We received the small gift, however, of being able to go ahead with our Christmas services pretty much as normal. Not everyone felt comfortable coming out to worship in-person, of course, but I was very pleased with the attendance of 74 people on Christmas Eve. We sang some favourite carols, lit our candles, and celebrated the Light of Christ coming into the darkness of the world. What a blessing it was to be assured of that promise as we began another long winter and the ongoing challenge of the pandemic!



Pockett Family



Christmas Eve 2021 - Congregation

In early January, as we began to get news of the rapidly rising Covid case numbers in our city and

province and Dr. Shahab, Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer, advised us that "this is not the time for any gatherings at all," the Session of First Church decided that we would return to online services only at least until the end of January. This decision will be re-visited at the Session's next meeting on February 2nd, and we hope to be able to open up again as soon as possible, while keeping in mind the safety of our members and adherents.

As I continue to lead worship at First Church in the weeks ahead, together with just a few musicians and Nick doing the livestreaming, I am going to hold on to the memory and the feeling of the sanctuary on Christmas Eve. I will remember the warmth and joy of the community gathered and trust that the Spirit will continue to bring us together spiritually even when we need to stay apart physically.

Please do join in worship on YouTube each Sunday morning (or watch it later if you need to miss), consider attending our Coffee Hour gatherings on Zoom, as well as Wednesday Bible Study, Freedom 55ers, young adult gatherings, First Church Book Club, and the "Spirit Prays Within Us" program in February. If you need links or information about any of these opportunities to gather for fellowship, learning, and connection, please call, text, or email me: revfpc@sasktel.net, 306-580-8095.

Rev. Amanda Currie

THE SPIRIT PRAYS WITHIN US: A Learning Opportunity for Elders and Others who Pray

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has recently published a prayer workbook that is designed to help ruling elders explore the practice of prayer in their role as congregational leaders. It is an excellent resource, written by the Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks, which is relevant not only for elders, but for all Christians who pray with and for one another.

Prayer is a multi-layered practice in Christian life, a powerful dynamic in Christian worship and, for

many, the heartbeat of our personal relationship with God.

You are invited to join Rev. Amanda in a February journey through the workbook, including learning and exercises to help us expand the ways we lead in prayer in pastoral encounters.

We will meet by Zoom video conference on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm from Feb. 1st to Mar. 1st, 2022.

SESSION

To keep the folks in our congregation as safe as possible in these uncertain times, the Session has decided to suspend in-person worship until we can review the situation at the next Session meeting on Feb. 2.

Will Ireton, our Music Director, will be attending classes at UBC from January to March. During that time, he will still be coordinating the music program at First. Music for worship will be provided by Gabe Omolida and Bill Sgrazzutti. When we are able to gather in-person again, Will has arranged for two U of R music students to provide leadership to the choir. We wish Will all the best in his studies!

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

WEDDINGS AT FIRST CHURCH



The Gospel text this Sunday, January 16th is the story about the time when Jesus attended a wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). When the wine for the celebration runs out, his mother prompts him to perform his first miracle and he turns water into fine wine to keep the party going. There's a lot of symbolic significance to what Jesus does at that community wedding. It's not just about him using his power to solve an embarrassing problem. He is beginning his

public ministry, demonstrating the wonder of God's grace and the abundance of God's love, revealing his glory with a miraculous sign, and giving his disciples a reason to believe in him.

Reflecting on this delightful story this week has got me thinking about weddings. I've been remembering the joy and significance of my own wedding 20 years ago, including the homemade wine we shared that was made by my mother and Nick's mother (and didn't run out). I've also been thinking about the weddings I've been privileged to participate in at First Church since I became your minister: Jeff Perry & Paula Dvernichuk, Pradith Quangtakoune & Andrew Donovan, Graeme Mitchell & Bill Sgrazzutti, and Heather (Findlay) Pockett & Mitchell Pockett. Each one was a wonderful celebration of love and commitment, and it was so good to witness and support these covenant relationships being formed and affirmed by the community.

The other reason why weddings have been on my mind is that the Session of First Church has been revising our congregation's wedding policy and related documents. As you likely know, the 2021 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada adopted two parallel definitions of Marriage as follows: "The Presbyterian Church in Canada holds two parallel definitions of marriage and recognizes that faithful, Holy Spirit filled, Christ centered, 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. That congregations, sessions, ruling and teaching elders be granted liberty of conscience and action on marriage." (Remit B, 2019 – Definition of Marriage, A&P 2021 p. 27)

In November 2021, the Clerks of Assembly reminded us that the session of a congregation is responsible for all policy and procedures with respect to the use of church buildings and property, subject to the oversight of presbytery (Book of Forms 109.2). That means that the question of whether the church will host same-sex weddings rests with the session.

The Session of First Church has had several conversations about same-sex marriage and paid attention to the denominational study, debate, and discernment about this matter over the last few years. At the November 10, 2021

meeting of Session, the following motion was carried unanimously: "In accordance with the policy of The Presbyterian Church, the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Regina has determined that for our congregation, marriage is a covenant between two people and, subject to this policy, is pleased to be a part of weddings on that basis."

Following up from that important decision, the session has been working on revising our wedding policy and related documents to reflect the full inclusion of same-sex and opposite-sex couples seeking marriage in the church. At the December meeting of session, we also agreed to form a "Welcome and Inclusion Team" to consider how we can make our church a more intentionally and visibly inclusive community for all people – not only in terms of weddings, but in every aspect of our church community.

If you have questions about First Church's new wedding policy or would like to get involved in the ministry of welcome and inclusion, please be in touch with me.

Rev. Amanda Currie

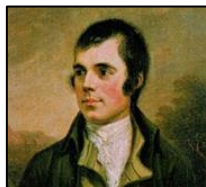
MISSION & OUTREACH

Christmas In Memoriam Gifts A good huge thank you to all who made a Christmas contribution to the Presbyterian World Service and Development Afghanistan relief project. A cheque for \$2,969.95 was sent to PWS&D recently. This gift will support many Afghan families who need food assistance to feed their families through the winter.

Mary Jesse,
M&O Committee Convener

CAMP CHRISTOPHER: Robbie Burns Fundraiser Supper

Join us on Saturday January 22nd, 2022, for a Robbie Burns Night Fundraiser in support of Camp Christopher. Meals will be available for pick up in Saskatoon and Regina. A virtual program will take place on Zoom at 6:00pm. Deadline to order meals is January 18th.



Meal + Zoom Entertainment - \$30 each
Zoom Entertainment Only - \$20

Pick up at First Presbyterian Church - Regina -
Saturday January 22nd 4:00 - 4:30pm

Payment can be submitted either by E-TRANSFER to campchrisevent@gmail.com (Please indicate the number of registrations in the "message" of the transfer), or by cheque, made payable to Camp Christopher c/o Sheila Coulter, 210-930 Heritage View, Saskatoon, SK S7H 5S6.

WORLD RELIGION DAY 2022 Our House on the Prairies: Origin Stories of Regina's Faith Communities

You are cordially invited to the virtual celebration of World Religion Day 2022 on Sunday, January 16th at 2 p.m. This year we will explore the variety of worship spaces there are in our midst with the theme: Our House on the Prairies: Origin Stories of Regina's Faith Communities. Faith groups participating will share a brief story of their worship space, their location, when and how they became a community here in the area in and around Regina. There will be a short accompanying slide show.

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9681317913?pwd=K2E1cnd3bmxVR3JhdURhb2V1TWZ6UT09>

Meeting ID: 968 131 7913

Passcode: WRD2022

Contact: Stephanie Molloy, Chair, Regina Multi-Faith Forum, 306.536.0722 (for calls and texts)

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 8-Day Online Bible Study series

"We saw the star in the East and we came to worship him" (Matthew 2:2)

January 18-25, 2022

12:15-1:00 pm daily except Sunday Jan. 23 which will be at 3 pm (Saskatchewan time)

Presented by the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism and the Regina Council of Churches.

Register here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEkd eGhrzqtEtd2wehNGffCCV1v3D_2PfZ6

The 2022 theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, "We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him" (Mt 2:2), was prepared by the Middle East Council of

Churches, based in Beirut, Lebanon. The international theme and resources speak to our world's urgent need for solidarity and transformation in the face of political, economic, and social turmoil, including the challenges and injustices highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As we join the Christians of the Middle East in the journey to Christ's manger, may we become a sign of the unity that God desires for all creation, and may we return to our home, our churches, and our world by new ways.

Themes and Bible study leaders are:

Day 1, Tues, Jan. 18th: Raise us up and draw us to your perfect light: "We observed his star in the East" (Mt 2:2)

Rev. Mitchell Anderson, St. Paul's United, Saskatoon

Day 2, Wed, Jan. 19th: Humble leadership breaks down walls and builds up with love: "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?" (Mt 2:2)

Rev. Karen Stepko, Christ Lutheran, ELCIC, Rhein, SK

Day 3, Thu, Jan. 20th: The presence of Christ, turning the world upside down: "When Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him" (Mt 2:3)

Queens House Retreat and Renewal Centre – Simon Lasair and Ana Gheysen, Saskatoon

Day 4, Fri, Jan. 21st: Though small and suffering, we lack nothing: "And you, Bethlehem... are by no means least" (Mt 2:6)

Rev. Paul Matheson – First Mennonite, Saskatoon

Day 5, Sat, Jan. 22nd: Guided by the one Lord: "Ahead of them went the star that they had seen at its rising" (Mt 2:9)

Rev. Amanda Currie – First Presbyterian, Regina

Day 6, Sun, Jan. 23rd: Gathered in worship around the One Lord: "They saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage" (Mt 2:11)

Gertrude Rompré, St. Thomas More College, Saskatoon

Day 7, Mon, Jan. 24th: The gifts of communion: "Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Mt 2:11)

The Ven. Cheryl Toth, Anglican Church of Canada, Archdeacon of St. Cuthbert, Diocese of Qu'Appelle, Regina

Day 8, Tues, Jan. 25th: Beyond the familiar routes of separation to God's new paths: "They left for their own country by another road" (Mt 2:12)

Father Warren Dungen, St. Basil's Ukrainian Catholic Church, Regina

For further details, contact Cathryn Wood at admin@pcecumenism.ca

CONSECRATION OF BISHOP-ELECT **Helen Kennedy: January 22**



In October 2021, the Venerable Helen Kennedy was elected as thirteenth Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle. Bishop-Elect Kennedy is to be ordained to the episcopate at St. Paul's Cathedral, Regina on Saturday, January 22, 2022, with the Most Rev. Greg Kerr-Wilson, Archbishop of Calgary and Metropolitan of Rupert's Land, presiding.

The service may be viewed online at 2 p.m. on January 22 at

<https://www.facebook.com/StPaulsAnglicanCathedralRegina>

JANUARY EVENTS

- Jan. 16 10:30 am** **Worship (YouTube)**
12:15 pm Sunday School (Zoom)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
- Jan. 17 7:00 pm Mission & Outreach Cmt.
(Zoom)
- Jan. 18 12:00 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
- Jan. 19 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
7:00 pm Board of Managers (Zoom)
- Jan. 22 6:00 pm Robbie Burns Supper (Zoom)
Camp Christopher Fundraiser
- Jan. 23 10:30 am** **Worship (YouTube)**
12:15 pm Sunday School (Zoom)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
- Jan. 25 12:00 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
- Jan. 26 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
- Jan. 29 10:00 am Worship Committee
- Jan. 30 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. 1 12:00 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
7:00 pm "The Spirit Prays" Session
- Feb. 2 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
7:00 pm Session Meeting (Zoom)
- Feb. 6 10:30 am** **Worship (YouTube)**
12:15 pm Sunday School (Zoom)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)