

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

#### June 2019

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Thank you to the Session and Congregation of First Church for supporting my nomination to serve as Moderator of the 145<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. I have appreciated all your prayers, encouragement, and the beautiful and thoughtful gift of the Celtic Cross which I wore throughout the Assembly.

I flew to Ontario for the General Assembly on May 31 and returned to Regina on June 10. My itinerary included the following:

- Attended two pre-Assembly workshops "The Gospel at Street Level" and "Affirm2" on June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Attended worship at Knox, Waterloo on Sunday morning, June 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Was installed as the Moderator of the 145<sup>th</sup> General Assembly at St. Andrew's, Kitchener after worship on Sunday evening, June 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Moderated the Assembly (10 sederunts) from Sunday evening to Thursday noon.
- Took a break in Toronto on June 7-8, rested, visited some friends and family, and got some exercise.
- Preached at Calvin Presbyterian Church and Deer Park United Church on Sunday, June 9<sup>th</sup>. These congregations have a shared ministry in Toronto, and my friend, the Rev. Emily Bisset is the Presbyterian minister at Calvin-Deer Park.
- Flew home to Regina on Monday, June 10<sup>th</sup>.

It was an amazing privilege to Moderate the 145<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the PCC. At the same time, it was very challenging, occasionally frustrating, and certainly exhausting. Everywhere I went during Assembly, people would stop to tell me how well I was doing and to offer words of encouragement. Later in the Assembly, there were numerous expressions of thanks for my

patience, graciousness, firmness (not sure that I had enough of that quality), and sincerity.

On the night of the opening worship and official election, I held my breath when the Rev. Daniel Cho (144<sup>th</sup> Moderator) asked if there were any further nominations. There were none, and it was indeed going to be me. While I was being robed for the installation, Daniel helped lighten the mood of Assembly when he and the Rev. Mark Lewis (also a former Moderator) entertained the gathering with an Elvis impersonation, singing "Love Me Tender."

Monday afternoon marked the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the PCC's Confession to God and to Indigenous Peoples. This included a guest speaker, Terri Brown, from the TRC's Survivors' Circle. It also included a re-commitment to the confession and prayers for continued healing and reconciliation. I would recommend watching the YouTube video of Sederunt 3 to see this piece. Note: at one point in reading the Confession, my emotions did get the best of me (you won't be surprised by that!). One of the Indigenous elders came up behind me and placed some loose tobacco in my hand. He told me that it was medicine to make me strong. I thanked him and asked him to stay with me as I continued to read the confession.

Later in the Assembly we adopted several recommendations from the Life and Mission Agency with regard to repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery and that of *terra nullius*, committing the PCC to seek to engage in relationships based on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with Justice Ministries providing resources for the church to learn about, and embrace, these ideas/concepts and to work for reconciliation. An additional motion was adopted that the Inquiry Report (released on Monday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>) on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women be referred to the Life and Mission Agency and the National Indigenous

Ministries Council for study and to report on actions that the PCC can take in response to it.

Much of Tuesday was spent with the report of the Special Committee of Former Moderators. We moved into a decision-making process regarding same-sex marriage that was designed by this committee. Part of that was done as a Committee of the Whole with the Rev. Daniel Cho serving as the Convenor of the Committee. That gave me a good break so that I was ready to take over moderating the next part of the process mid-afternoon on Tuesday.

Through the discussion and ballot process designed by the former moderators, the Committee of the Whole chose Pathway B (Inclusion) as the way for the church to go forward. Many of those present (and watching the live-stream) were amazed and thrilled by this result, while a significant number of people with a more traditional perspective on marriage were devastated that their church may not have space for them anymore. (Many dissents were recorded.) Of course, choosing Pathway B through the ballot process was just the first step. Next would come the opportunity for discussion, debate, and likely amendments. I expected that some amendments would be made to make Pathway B more inclusive of a diversity of theological perspectives. Eventually that did happen. On Tuesday evening, a committee was named to work out the implications of Pathway B, and they presented their report on Wednesday evening.

On Thursday morning, amendments were made to the recommendations regarding implementation of Pathway. Once these were finally voted on there was an overwhelming majority of support for them, with only a small number of dissents. Essentially, the amendments suggested two parallel definitions for marriage so that traditional and progressive perspectives are both welcome in one church. These need to be remitted to presbyteries for approval, and if passed it will mean the freedom to conduct same-sex marriages and ordain LGBTQ+ individuals whether married or single, while maintaining freedom of conscience not to participate for those not in favour.

While our denomination is diverse with regard to our theological convictions on same-sex marriage, the Assembly's response to the report of the Rainbow Communion showed a shared concern for respect, care, and pastoral support for LGBTQ+ individuals in our churches. The Assembly approved a recommendation to circulate, discuss, and live out the 2017 Moderator's letter of repentance for the harm caused to LGBTQ+ people by the church. Two more recommendations were approved later with regard to providing resources for pastoral care of LGBTQ+ people in our churches, as well as re-affirming our statements that homosexual orientation is not a sin, and that reparative therapies do not work and should not be recommended.

Many other events occurred at the Assembly. We heard from ecumenical and international guests, we presented history book prizes, and awarded the E.H. Johnson "Cutting Edge of Mission Award" to Dr. Sheila Watt-Cloutier. We made statements on important world issues in response to the International Affairs Committee. We heard about the ministries of the WMS and AMS, our three theological colleges, and received reports about our finances, pension plan, and building corporation. We celebrated our Canadian Ministries, International Ministries, and the work of Presbyterian World Service and Development. We worshipped and prayed together often, and asked the Holy Spirit to guide all our deliberations.

The funniest moment of the Assembly for me came at the very end during the presentation of the "Courtesies and Loyal Addresses". We were out of time so the courtesies were going to be "taken as read and entered in the minutes." Then a commissioner stood up and said she had an additional motion. I replied, "Really -- you have an additional motion for the courtesies and loyal addresses report?" As it turned out, it was a motion to express thanks to the Moderator and the Clerks for our gracious and diligent work this week!! I replied, "Thank you, Maureen, but I'm pretty sure that's in the report that we didn't read out loud because of the time." Then the Assembly gave us a standing ovation. That was sweet!

Once again, thank you to First Church for your support. This will be a very busy year for me as I fulfill the ongoing responsibilities of serving as the Moderator. I look forward to sharing all my experiences with you throughout the year as I come and go between First Church and visits to churches and presbyteries across the country.

Rev. Amanda Currie

### **SESSION**

First Church will be holding a Vacation Bible Camp August 19-22. Check on the details in this newsletter. All children are welcome.

Please mark your calendars for the Welcome Back Potluck to be held on Sunday, September 29. More details will follow in the September newsletter.

The Transform team is planning a congregational workshop for Saturday morning, October 5, so be sure to mark that on your calendars too. More information will be circulated in the fall.

Have a wonderful, relaxing summer!

Jo Szostak  
Clerk of Session

### **BOARD OF MANAGERS**

The Board is pleased to announce that the lift down to the gym will be replaced during the last part of June. It will be exciting to have a new lift in place as we begin a new year of activities in the fall!

### **MISSION & OUTREACH**

Camp Christopher Appeal: A heartfelt thank-you goes out to First Church for responding so generously to our annual Camp appeal. \$1330 was raised and will be used to purchase Camp T-shirts for all campers.

*Regina Indian Industrial School Cemetery Special Event on June 25.* June 25 will mark a significant moment in the ongoing reconciliation work at the RIIS Cemetery. The property was owned by the federal government during the residential school era and passed into private ownership several decades ago. Since the “re-

discovery” of the cemetery a few years ago, the RIIS Commemorative Association has worked to secure ownership of the site. We wish to ensure that the space is properly maintained and that the 35 to 40 children buried there are honoured.

The Federal Government and RCMP have greatly assisted the Association in obtaining the land, and will host a special ceremony on June 25 at 1:30 pm at the Cemetery to accomplish the transfer. A reception at the RCMP Heritage Centre will follow. All are welcome to attend. Those attending will include Chiefs of affected First Nations, church representatives, municipal and provincial officials, and descendants of RIIS students.

This occasion is also noteworthy as it responds to TRC Call to Action #75:

*Missing Children and Burial Information*  
*We call upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This is to include the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.*

The RIIS Commemorative Association's immediate plan is to build a new fence this summer that will include 6 graves that lie outside the current fence.

Mary Jesse  
Mission & Outreach

### **FUNDSCRIP**

June 16 is the last order Sunday before we take a break from ordering. So, make plans to stock up now for the summer! Specials in June include Staples 4%, Stokes 8%, Golf Town 5%. Gas and grocery cards will be available sporadically during the summer when someone is available on Sundays. Thanks for your support!

## **VACATION BIBLE CAMP** **Athens - Paul's Journey**

Once again we are pleased to offer a Vacation Bible Camp at First Church for children age 5 to 12. It will be held Aug. 19-22 (Monday to Thursday) from 9 am to 12 noon.

Join the Apostle Paul as he spreads the life-changing truth of God's love. Learn the jaw-dropping story of Paul...straight from Paul himself!

Register online now!

([vbspro.events/p/firstregina2019](https://vbspro.events/p/firstregina2019)) or call 306-522-9571 for more information.

If you are able to volunteer to help, or to provide a snack, please contact the church office.

## **A HEALING AND RECONCILIATION TOUR**

The idea of a "healing and reconciliation tour" arose in 2016 out of the work The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) had been doing with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The first tour, organized and conducted by David Phillips of the Presbyterian Church, took place in 2017. Later this month he will lead a second tour.

The general purposes of a healing and reconciliation tour, according to David, are to allow participants to witness the effects of residential schooling, to learn more about the work of reconciliation the PCC is doing, and to witness some "positive effects" that Indigenous communities are making.

The forthcoming 11-day tour runs from Saturday June 15 to Wednesday June 26. It's first destination is Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Inner City Mission. At Kenora, Ontario, the tour's next stop, the group will visit the Kenora Fellowship Centre as well as the two sites of the former Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School the PCC operated -- the first site at Shoal Lake and the second in Kenora. The tour then returns to Winnipeg to visit the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba, as well as to see the work being done at the U of M in what David describes as its "very successful" Indigenous Business Education Program. The tour then travels to the Birdtail

First Nation north of Virden, Manitoba, near the location of the Birtle Residential School which the PCC also operated. Saskatoon is the tour's next destination where it will visit the Saskatoon Native Circle and Wanuskewin (a cultural and historical centre of First Nations), as well as attend a Sunday worship service at Mistawasis First Nation northwest of the city.

The particular focus of this year's tour will be on health, education, families, water, and housing. "I really work hard", David says, "to be sure that we do not go as spectators but rather as participants as part of a journey to reconciliation" while emphasizing that "we want to work at these sites and get 'our hands dirty.'"

Thirty-five people from various parts of Canada are participating in this year's tour. Although all happen to be Presbyterian this time, the tour is certainly open to other interested persons.

The tour is partially funded by the PCC. Costs to individual participants vary between \$997 and \$1500 depending on when they sign up.

I have been very kindly invited to join the tour group for an evening later this month when it is in Saskatoon to speak about my recently published book on the Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS). Perhaps future healing and reconciliation tours might consider a stop-over in Regina for visits to the RIIS cemetery and to the First Nations University of Canada.

Doug Stewart  
Editor

## **2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SUMMARY** **OF DECISIONS REGARDING HUMAN** **SEXUALITY**

The 2019 meeting of the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada met in Waterloo, Ontario, June 2 – 6, 2019.

After a process of prayerful discernment, the following recommendations were adopted:

1. That the following be approved and remitted to presbyteries under the Barrier Act: The Presbyterian Church in Canada holds two parallel definitions of marriage and recognizes 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. That congregations, sessions, ruling and teaching elders be granted liberty of conscience and action on marriage.

2. That the following be approved and remitted to presbyteries under the Barrier Act: 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.

The Barrier Act is a process of decision making within The Presbyterian Church in Canada that stipulates changes in doctrine or law be approved by two General Assemblies and a majority of presbyteries, whose membership represents a majority of ministers, members of the Order of Diaconal Ministries and elders on their constituent rolls.

With the approval of the above two recommendations, the first of this three-step process has taken place. Between now and the 2020 General Assembly, presbyteries will vote on the recommendations (now known as 'remits') and if a majority is reached in that step, the 2020 General Assembly may pass the recommendations into the law and policy of the church, which would be the third step.

Additional recommendations were adopted as follows:

3. That the Clerks of Assembly be instructed to provisionally prepare guidelines to ensure that calls to LGBTQI ministers and the election of LGBTQI elders are facilitated in presbyteries and congregations.
4. That the Moderator write a pastoral letter to the church.
5. That as a matter of urgency, the Life and Mission Agency provide a means for those affected by this decision to express their concerns, views and pain in a safe environment, and that these concerns be

reported back to the 2020 General Assembly before the report on remits is received and its recommendations considered.

The Rev. Stephen Kendall The Rev. Don Muir  
Principal Clerk Deputy Clerk

### **REGINA OPEN DOOR SOCIETY**

My name is Ranjit Roy, I am a practicum student with the Regina Open Door Society (RODS). We are looking for volunteers who can help the newcomer families in Regina.

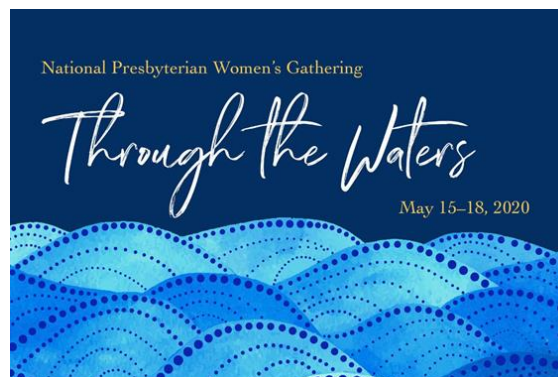
The program is called Targeted Matching where a volunteer will be matched with a newcomer family to meet a couple of times a month (around 4 hours). With support of the volunteer, the newcomers will be able to improve their English language skills, build social connections and know about life in Canada and Regina.

To learn more about volunteering opportunities with RODS please visit <https://rods.sk.ca/pages/volunteer-with-wcn>

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,  
Ranjit

### **NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S GATHERING 2020**



When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Isaiah 43:2 (NRSV)

God calls us by name as we are called to journey together. The journey can be scary, but God is with us to help us navigate the waters.

Come together, as we remember our calling and are renewed to travel through the waters. Be nourished with the water that quenches our thirst so we will never thirst again.

The fourth National Presbyterian Women's Gathering is ready for you to register. While the location and dates look like it is the same event, it is new and different! The program will include new speakers and leaders.

We hope to see you there.

### **SUMMER EVENTS**

#### **Worship on Sundays at 10:30 AM**

Rev. Amanda Currie will be leading worship through the rest of June and throughout August.

Guest preachers in July will be:

July 7 & 21 – Rev. Bob Wilson

July 14 & 28 – Arthur Lin

(Synod Summer Student Minister)

#### **Book Club meetings:**

July 3 & August 28 @ 7:00 PM

#### **Vacation Bible Camp:**

August 19-22, 9 AM - Noon