

**FIRST THINGS FIRST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA
JUNE 2021**

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

As I write this message, it looks like it is going to be a really hot day with a high of 35C – the hottest day in a very hot week! I'm getting ready to preach for the Opening Worship of the General Assembly this Sunday live online from the sanctuary at First Church, and I realize it's going to be sweltering inside the church even if it starts to cool down outside by the weekend. I hope you will all join in the worship online at 12:00 pm (SK Time) and appreciate the fact that you can worship from the relative cool of your home, instead of melting from the heat in the church!

There have certainly been some benefits from online worship – no travel time, you can watch the service later or review it again, you can still tune in when you are travelling outside of Regina, and you can invite friends and family from near and far to join us. Still, it will be good to get back together again – to see each other's faces, welcome each other in person, hear each other's voices as we sing together, and share the Sacraments once again.

As you'll see in the report below from the Clerk of Session, we made the decision to begin re-opening for in-person worship with Step 3 of the Saskatchewan Re-Opening Roadmap and the lifting of restrictions. Likely that will mean we can welcome folks to come and worship in the sanctuary on Sunday July 11th, but that will be confirmed as the provincial plan moves forward and hits vaccination targets as expected.

In the meantime, please stay with us online or read the sermons that continue to be mailed out each week to those who are not able to get online. When the time comes to gather for worship in-person, use your own discretion about when you feel comfortable coming out again. Many of us will be fully vaccinated by mid-July, making our gatherings a lot safer. And since it is summer, I expect we won't have a full sanctuary, meaning that we can continue to maintain some physical distancing even if we are no longer

technically required to do so. We will be sure to keep up good sanitation practices in the church and have lots of hand sanitizer available for our use as we come and go. Coffee hours will stay on Zoom through the summer. We'll look forward to more positive changes coming in September.

This has been a long year and a half of pandemic, and it's not quite resolved yet. Here in Saskatchewan, things are getting better and better. In other parts of the world the crisis continues and even worsens in some regions. We must remain diligent in the upcoming weeks, keeping up our safe practices, and getting our 1st and 2nd doses of the vaccine when we become eligible.

As we continue our journey together through the process of re-opening, I invite you to keep in mind the Scripture verse that was highlighted in Marianne Woods' recent solo at First Church on May 30th: *"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."*

Rev. Amanda Currie

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This Sunday, June 6th, we will be worshipping together with Presbyterians across Canada in the opening worship service of the 146th General Assembly. In a way, it's kind of like First Church is hosting worship for the whole country, as I'll be preaching live via Zoom from the sanctuary, and you'll see a few other glimpses of First Church in pre-recorded videos of Scripture readings and a Ministry of Music. My sermon title, "Remembering Our Baptism," is based on Isaiah 43:1-7 and Luke 3:15-17, 21-22. Please note that worship will be at 12:00 pm (Saskatchewan time), but you should actually tune in 10 minutes early, as there will be some

prelude music from various churches before the service begins.

This is the direct link to watch live (or later) on YouTube: [Opening Worship & Sederunt 1](#)

You can also access more information about the General Assembly, read the reports, or link to any of the Sederunts (sessions) of the Assembly live or after-the-fact at this link: [2021 General Assembly](#)

Note that I don't have a bulletin to share with you for this service, but everything you need (words for hymns, etc.) will show up on-screen so that you can participate easily from home.

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

The Session has considered the provincial re-opening schedule and decided that we will re-open our worship services when the provincial restrictions are lifted for Step 3 of the Re-opening plan. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide more information when the time draws near. We will also begin to allow rentals for weddings at the same time. Rentals of the gym will be available immediately, as long as provincial guidelines are observed. We are hopeful that we will be able to have a joyful celebration in September and welcome everyone back!

Cade Eastwood's term as a Music Scholar ends June 30, although Cade will continue to contribute to our music program. The Session would like to recognize Cade's many contributions as a Music Scholar and thank him for his hard work. We have really enjoyed Cade's trumpet music ministry!

First Church has received a Chisholm Fund grant in the amount of \$14,200 to help with the cost of the basement construction. We had applied for \$25,000 in the fall and received \$10,800. We re-applied for the balance this spring and have now received it.

Our Healing and Reconciliation service, normally held in May, will be held in late fall when it will be possible for the Rev. Stewart Folster to attend in person.

The Synod Summer Student program will take place again this summer. The decision was made early this spring to continue online this summer, so worship will be held each Sunday, some based at First Church. More information will be circulated. Also, there will be a VBS program offered online for First Church children August 3-6. More information will be circulated to parents.

Have a restful, relaxing summer!

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

BENEFIT CONCERT Featuring Gabe Omolida on piano



First Presbyterian Church Presents "Gabe Omolida on Piano" - a Benefit Concert in support of the First Church Refugee Sponsorship Project – to be held on Sunday, June 13th, at 7pm.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has slowed down the arrival of our refugee family from South Sudan, but we are continuing to raise money to support

the Matthiang/Thiey family during their first year in Canada. We are more than halfway to our goal of \$60,000 but need to keep up the momentum so that we are ready to welcome them when they arrive. Gabe Omolida has kindly put together a piano recital for us to enjoy, share, and respond to with our thankful gifts for this mission of hospitality.

At age 9, Gabe Omolida started taking piano lessons, following the program of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Canada. His passion for music made him pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance with a Major in Piano. He will be entering his fourth year of undergraduate studies at the University of Regina. Gabe is an active member of the Halcyon Choir and the University of Regina Chamber Choir. He teaches piano to younger children and also provides accompaniment for other music students. He has been a member of First Presbyterian Church since 2011, and is a Music Scholar and on the Music Team. Being deeply involved with the musical aspect at First Church, he often plays for worship services and accompanies the choirs, as well as sings in them. Gabe Omolida plans to continue his studies in music in hopes of becoming both a university professor and a performer.

The concert will feature music by Bach, Beethoven, Chopin and Lili Boulanger. You're invited to watch on YouTube (link will be provided soon) on Sunday, June 13th at 7:00 pm (or later, as the concert will stay up on the site).

Your freewill offering for the First Church Refugee Sponsorship Project will be deeply appreciated. Send an e-transfer to firstpresreginaoffering@gmail.com with a note that it is designated for "Refugee Sponsorship" or send a cheque (payable to First Presbyterian Church) to 2170 Albert St., Regina, SK S4P 2T9.

MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Many thanks for your generous support of the Easter In Memoriam project. We sent \$2,265 to PWS&D to assist with Covid-19 response in Malawi. These funds will make a significant impact as our partners cope with the disease in their communities.

Mary Jesse
Mission & Outreach Convener

REFUGEE MEDICAL EXPENSES

Thank you to those who have contributed so generously to help with Nyabani Ngor's mom's medical expenses! To date \$2875 has been donated, and all but \$47 has been spent. This money has paid for diagnostic tests and hospital stay in Khartoum, guest house accommodation, meals and transportation in both Khartoum and Cairo, plane fare to Cairo and doctor bills in Cairo. Rebecca had surgery in Cairo and we are waiting for an update on her current condition. We aren't sure if any more invoices will be coming, but your help has made Rebecca's medical treatment possible. Thank you for your assistance!

CAMP CHRISTOPHER



Hello friends!

It has been a quiet year for Camp Christopher, but we wanted to let you know what we've been up to, and what to expect in 2021. Camp has always been a place where we gather together, to live in community with one another. The global pandemic dramatically changed how we are able to do that, but we have some creative ideas for the upcoming season. As in 2020, we are unable to run our regular summer programming and will not have camp on-site.

Last year, several volunteers worked hard during the warmer months to install our new water tank, build and stain the back deck, and repaint the camper cabins, craft room and kitchen. We cannot say thank-you enough for the time and energy that so many people have given to the camp over the years and especially right now.

We are blessed to have the support of our partner churches and organizations for projects and programs in 2021. There are a number of small improvement and upkeep projects being completed by volunteers. Camp Christopher was the recipient of The Presbyterian Church in Canada - Chisholm Fund - to build a boathouse. We cannot wait to welcome campers back to purpose-built facility for our water program.

We are excited to announce the Connect@Home “camp in a bag” initiative for summer 2021. We received the PCC Special Projects Fund, which is for small projects run by non-congregational ministries, to bring this idea to life. Our goal is to provide an engaging program focused on creativity, physical activity, and Christian Education. Connect@Home will provide children ages 7 – 13 with a Camp Christopher backpack filled with activities, challenges, and opportunities for faith exploration.

The activities can be completed independently, or alongside our online companion program in July and August. Connect@Home kits are available to order for individuals or groups by donation. We plan to provide over 300 kits to our Tri4Kids camp family in Prince Albert. Your gifts will allow us to share this program with more children and families beyond our churches. Finally, our Leaders in Training program received support from the United Church of Canada Vision Seed Grant. Camp Reconnect will provide leadership skill-building opportunities for youth ages 14-17. We are optimistic that there will be a blend of virtual and on-site components, pending provincial regulations and guidance. Keep an eye on the Camp Christopher Facebook, Instagram and website for further information. To order kits, e-mail info@campchristopher.ca or contact Donna.

Another new program for 2021 is Camp Caterpillar which is scheduled on-site for August 22-27. This camp program is for children ages 6 to 12 who are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, as well as their friends, family and allies.

We hope you will keep Camp Christopher in your hearts and prayers during the 2021 season. Despite the challenges of the last year, we are still committed to our mission of a safe, caring community where all may explore faith, celebrate creation, and grow in relationship with Christ.

There are many opportunities to support your ministry with gifts of time, talent, or treasure. If you would like to know more, or to volunteer, please contact Donna or email info@campchristopher.ca.

Until we meet again,

Donna Wilkinson
Camp Administrator

PCC PRAYS FOR THE LIVES LOST AT KAMLOOPS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available for any former residential school students and others needing support. That help can be accessed at 1-866-925-4419.

We grieve with the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, which has just released news that the unidentified graves of 215 children have been found on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in Kamloops, B.C. The devastating pain and loss this news triggers are not isolated to Kamloops, but are shared by all who lost family, friends or community members to Indian Residential Schools. So many Indigenous children never came home from the schools where they were forcibly taken, and the weight of the trauma that loss has wreaked in Indigenous communities, in which the church shared a large role, is still causing intense harm today.

In humility, the church calls for a time of prayer and lament to honour the lives of those children whose graves were just found and for all family, friends and communities who have lost loved ones through the Indian Residential School system—for whom this news opens fresh wounds. We also call for a time of reflection and recommitment to reconciliation. As we enter the month of June, which is National Indigenous History Month, we encourage all church members to reflect on the harmful history in which we have been involved and, from that reflection, seek renewed ways to work for healing and reconciliation with Indigenous people.

Prayer:

Creator God of love and justice, Comforter of those who mourn,

We have learned of more Indigenous children lost, more children who never were able to return to their families from schools they should never have been forced to attend in the first place. This news is devastating. We pray first for healing for the children's families and

communities, who are met again today with pain no one should ever have to bear.

We also acknowledge the actions of your church, our complicity in running residential schools and taking children like these, who were just found, from their families. We repent for the pain and ongoing harm we have caused, and ask for the will and wisdom to act to end that harm. We have asked for forgiveness and committed to work for healing and reconciliation. But we recognize that for many, that change came too late.

Comforting God, we pray for healing in the communities and families of all who experienced residential schools, comfort for all those grieving, and strength for all to pursue reconciliation. Amen.

Published May 29, 2021 in the PCC Newsletter

THE CUTTING EDGE OF MISSION



Each year at General Assembly, an award is given to recognize a person or group for their work on the cutting edge of mission.

2021 Cutting Edge of Mission Award Recipient:
The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

Julia Drydyk, Executive Director, is honoured to receive the Cutting Edge of Mission Award on behalf of the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking.

Human trafficking in Canada is occurring at shocking levels. It is a low-risk, high-reward manipulative crime that demands sophisticated, coordinated and integrated solutions.

Established in 2016, the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking was created to demand a national strategy for change by collaborating with various stakeholders—including all levels of government, private sector organizations and front-line service providers—in order to advance best practices and to best serve victims and survivors of this crime.

In 2019, the Centre launched the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline to provide an avenue for victims and survivors to receive the trauma-informed specialized support that they need and for community members to report incidents of suspected human trafficking. The Centre continues to work with Canadian law enforcement agencies to develop referral and reporting protocols that are part of the anti-trafficking response network used by Hotline Response Advocates when assisting victims and survivors.

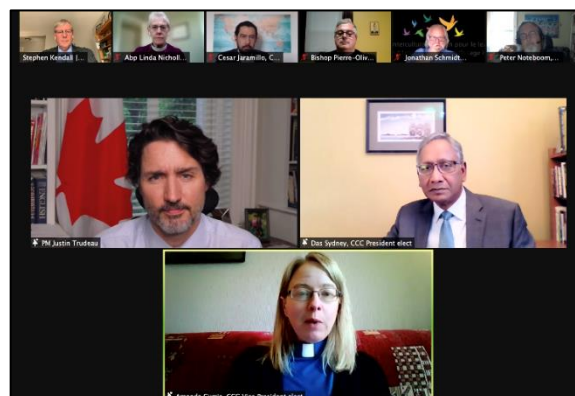
In 2018, Julia Drydyk began her career with the Centre as Manager, Research, and was appointed as the Director of the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline in 2019. In August 2020, Julia accepted the role of Executive Director.

Julia holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Women's Studies from York University and a Master of Public Policy from the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy.

Join Julia Drydyk, Executive Director, on **June 7 at 1:30 p.m. (Eastern)** during the online General Assembly as she accepts the award on behalf of the Centre and shares a special presentation on the Centre's work. YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNyII-mJLNk>

TALKING TO THE PRIME MINISTER



On Thursday, May 20th, I had the privilege of participating in a conversation between the Canadian Council of Churches and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The topic was "Preparing for a new normal? A vision for a just and caring Canada."

We had the opportunity to ask the Prime Minister a number of questions on topics including poverty, the climate crisis, nuclear weapons, global vaccine equity, just intercultural community, and justice for Indigenous peoples. I got to ask the question about the Government's plans to respond to the Calls for Justice in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The PM's response was articulate, and he seemed passionately committed to doing this work together with Indigenous leadership.

Rev. Amanda Currie

2021 CENSUS

You may have heard the 2021 Census is underway. It has been a challenging year for all Canadians, and the census might seem like another thing on our to-do list. However, we would like to encourage you to complete your census if you haven't already done so.

Census data helps governments at all levels plan for schools, transportation, community centres, and recreational activities. Data from the 2021 Census will be even more crucial, because it will help to evaluate the impact of the pandemic and to better plan for the future. You can quickly and easily complete your census questionnaire at www.census.gc.ca using the access code you received in the mail. If you need assistance, or would like to have a paper (or alternate format) questionnaire, please call the Census Help Line at 1-855-340-2021. Thank you for doing your part to help plan for a better future for all Canadians.

The Census Communications Team



Apple blossoms from the courtyard tree

JUNE EVENTS

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| June 6 | 12:00 pm | General Assembly <u>Opening Worship</u> |
| June 10 | 8:00 pm | Choir Chat |
| June 12 | 10:00 am | Worship Committee |
| June 13 | 10:30 am | Worship (online) |
| | 1:00 pm | Coffee Hour |
| | 7:00 pm | Benefit Concert: <i>Gabe Omolida on Piano</i> |
| June 15 | 7:30 pm | Young Adult Gathering |
| June 16 | 7:00 pm | Board of Managers |
| June 19 | 10:00 am | Presbytery of Assiniboia |
| June 20 | 10:30 am | Worship (online) |
| | 1:00 pm | Coffee Hour |
| June 24 | 8:00 pm | Choir Chat |
| June 27 | 10:30 am | Worship (online) |
| | 1:00 pm | Coffee Hour |
| | 2:30 pm | Half an Hour of Hymns |
| June 28 - July 5 | | Rev. Amanda on holidays |
| June 30 | 7:00 pm | Book Club |
| July 4 | 10:30 am | Worship (online) (No Coffee Hour today) |
| July 11 | 10:30 am | Worship (Probably in-person & online, if we reach Step 3 of SK Re-Opening and restrictions are lifted) |
| | 1:00 pm | Coffee Hour (Still on Zoom) |
| July 18 | 10:30 am | Worship (in-person & online) |
| | 1:00 pm | Coffee Hour |
| | 2:30 pm | Half an Hour of Hymns |
| July 25 | 10:30 am | Worship (in-person & online) |

In the month of August, worship will continue on Sundays at 10:30 am in-person and online. There will be a "Half an Hour of Hymns" on Sunday, August 8th at 2:30 pm online. Coffee Hours on Zoom will continue on Sundays at 1:00 pm, except when Rev. Amanda is on holidays from August 9 - 30.