

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

June 2024

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Summer in Regina is about to begin, and I'm looking forward to the season ahead. My usual practice has been to take most of my holidays during the summer months, but I'm doing something a little bit different this year. I'll be away on holidays for the last two weeks of June (June 17- July 1) and then again for a week in August (August 5-12), but otherwise I'll be working through the summer with a plan to take a little more time off in early October.

Summertime is usually a bit quieter around First Church without committee meetings, programs, and special events. Attendance at worship tends to be lower as well, as many of you take time for your own holidays and travel to other places too.

However, I'm looking forward to Cari and Gavin's wedding at First Church on Friday, July 5th (Note: everyone is invited to the ceremony at 3 pm and potluck supper to follow!), helping out with Camp Christopher staff training July 8-12, and the Compassion Camp VBS at First Church July 22-25. In addition to that, I look forward to worshipping with those who gather on Sundays through the summer, spending time preparing for Fall programs and special events, and hopefully connecting with many of you individually or as families.

The first summer I was with you back in 2017, I circulated a sign-up sheet for pastoral visits so that I could get to know many of you in an informal context outside of Sunday gatherings. This summer, I want to invite you to reach out to me again. Invite me to your home, meet me at the church, or connect with me in a coffee shop or for a walk outdoors. Don't think that you need to be going through a spiritual crisis to ask for a visit this summer. I am not too busy to spend time with you.

Whether you are travelling this summer or staying in the city, I pray you'll have a wonderful time with the blessings of recreation, renewal,

and as much rest as you need. Please be in touch if you'd like to get together this summer. You can reach me by email at revfpc@sasktel.net or by phone/text at 306-580-8095 or speak to me on a Sunday. (Keep in mind that I will be away until July 2nd.)

As you look forward to summer, here is a prayer/poem by Hilary Allen called "The Lake." It's taken from the prayer book *Bare Feet and Buttercups* by Ruth Burgess of the Iona Community in Scotland.

The Lake

The lake was still, tranquil in the morning light.
I, too, was still, watching and listening.
What would God say to me today?

A dragonfly danced and darted,
then rested beside me,
amber-iridescent in the sun.
Being not doing.

God said I could be like that,
being not doing,
receiving his love.

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

As summer approaches quickly, and our church year winds down, I hope that you are able to spend some time relaxing and enjoying with family and friends.

Please note that for Sundays in July and August, we won't be serving coffee and tea, but we will make a cold drink available so that people will have an opportunity to visit after worship. There will be a sign-up sheet outside the kitchen. Please sign up if you are able to help with a Sunday or two.

Thanks to those who placed orders for FundScrip this month. Read the update in this newsletter for summer and the fall.

The Stewardship Committee has lots of plans for next year. Read about them in this newsletter!

Plans are going ahead for our 100th anniversary celebrations in January 2025. Keep that weekend open, as you won't want to miss it! There will be a birthday party in the gym on Saturday, January 11. Rev. Brad Childs will be our guest preacher on Sunday. Immediately following worship, we will all gather in the chancel and take a 100th anniversary picture. Then there will be a catered dinner after worship on Sunday (with Charlotte's catering providing the meal.) So be sure to mark your calendars and save the weekend!

We're also looking for pictures from times past in First Church. We want to share memories by the decade. So, if you have any pictures of events at First over the years, please arrange to pass them on to any of the committee members - Heather, Sheila, Bette, Margaret, Jo, Amanda.

Following the discussion at the annual meeting in April, we are putting together a task force to consider the future of First Church, our Mission and our needs, and directions to go in terms of our building. The Session has named this the "Directions Task Force". We have a few volunteers, but if you are interested in participating, please let me know. This is an exciting working group that will be considering future directions for our church.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Compassion Camp will be a Vacation Bible School program taking place at First Church this summer. Children ages 5-11 are encouraged to

participate Monday, July 22 - Thursday, July 25 from 9 am to 12 pm. Youth ages 12 and up are invited to volunteer as helpers. This program is supported by the Synod Youth Coordinator and Summer Student Minister, along with leadership from First Church. Please invite your grandchildren, friends, and anyone else that may be interested in joining us. Registration forms are available in the narthex.

MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

First Church generosity provided over \$2700 to Camp Christopher to assist with costs of bringing drinking water to the camp for the summer. Many thanks!

On Saturday July 20, First Church will again host the Saturday Lunch Program at First Baptist Church. We already have a full slate of volunteers to prepare and serve the meal; details will be shared with those folks closer to the date.

Most of our guests live with food insecurity, so having enough money for other basic needs is a challenge. Each week the program provides a table of toiletry items that are greatly appreciated by our guests. If you would like to donate, please choose from the list below and leave it in the blue bin in our narthex. Our volunteers will take the items to First Baptist on our hosting dates. We host again on October 5.

- toilet paper
- toothbrushes
- toothpaste
- alcohol-free mouthwash
- Tums/Roloids
- bar soap
- shampoo
- deodorant
- feminine hygiene products
- 1/4 cup portions powdered laundry detergent in Ziploc bags
- reusable shopping bags
- No clothing please, except for new socks, mitts, toques, scarves and men's gloves

Mary Jesse
Mission & Outreach Convener

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

The Stewardship Committee has been busy and there are two events planned for the fall:

- On Sunday, Sept. 22 at 4:00 pm we will be holding a Canadian Trivia Night. This will highlight our new immigrant families and raise money for our Refugee Sponsorship Fund. It will be lots of fun, so be sure to mark your calendars! Supper will be provided. More information will be provided in September.

- On Sunday, Nov. 24 at 3:00 pm we will be holding a Christmas concert in the sanctuary. If you have a musical talent to share - vocal or instrumental - please talk to Chloe as she will be coordinating the content. We have a lot of musical talent in this congregation, so mark Nov 24 on your calendar and be sure to attend! An offering will be taken with proceeds to the Joyful Worship Fund to support our Music Scholars program.

PICNIC IN THE PARK!

We had a wonderful time of eating, sharing, visiting, and playing the park together on June 9th after worship. Special thanks to Bette Kelly, Calvin Miller, and Tammy MacDonald for planning the event, reserving the great spot near Candy Cane Park, and shopping and BBQing the hot dogs. It was the perfect day weather-wise, and we all had a lovely time!



CAMP CHRISTOPHER

The summer starts in a few short weeks. We are so thankful for your support. First Church raised \$2,751 towards our clean drinking water appeal!

Two of the four camps have full registrations, which is great news!

I would ask that you pray for the campers, Karlee Michael, our Camp Director and all the staff this summer!

There are still of areas at camp in which you could volunteer if you would like to help. If you know a lifeguard who would be interested in working at camp, please get in touch with Donna at donnaw@sasktel.net.

Donna Wilkinson
Camp Christopher



FUNDSCRIP

Thanks to all who placed an order for FundScrip this month. We received over \$4000 in orders and we also ordered some to have on hand for sale. So our total order was high enough that we got free shipping and **we earned \$180 for the church!** That's wonderful!

We won't be placing orders in July and August, but **we will take orders Sunday, Sept 8** (to avoid the long weekend) and the first Sunday in October and November.

Beginning in September, there will be a FundScrip table at coffee time in the gym. If you would like to purchase a grocery or gas card, we will have them available for purchase. Remember that it costs you nothing extra to participate. For \$50 you get a gift card worth \$50, but FundScrip gives a percentage back to the church. It's a win-win!

During the summer, you can still purchase grocery and gas gift cards by visiting Shirley in the church office (Monday – Thursday mornings during the summer.)

Another easy way to participate is to **set up your own account, order cards and have them mailed to your home address.**

Currently the cost of lettermail is covered, so you get it delivered free!

1. Go to the FundScrip website: fundscrip.com
2. Create your own account. Be sure to enter the Invitation code for First Church - 86MLRU

That way, First Church will get credit for your purchases.

3. Shop for the cards you wish to purchase. You need to order between \$200 and \$400 and no more than 4 cards, but you can place multiple orders!

4. When you go to Checkout it will show that First Presbyterian Church is the beneficiary. **Be Sure** to edit the Shipping (or your cards will be shipped to First Church!)

Click on Edit and choose Direct Shipping. Then enter your home address. Select Lettermail from the options.

5. Choose a payment method. The easiest and best is EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) where it will be transferred directly from your bank, like paying with debit! Click on the link to set up your EFT. It's easy to do - just log in to your own bank account. (You may have to click on Shop then back to Checkout for it to be an available choice).

6. Click on Checkout and you will have a chance to review your order, then click on Place Order. It will show you how much the church will receive for your order.

Thanks for your support!



PRESBYTERIAN CONNECTION
NEWSPAPER

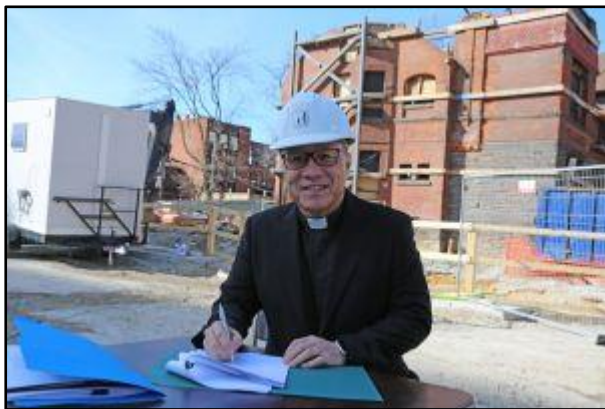


The Presbyterian Church in Canada publishes a quarterly newspaper called the Presbyterian Connection. The latest edition newspaper was sent out to all congregations and subscribers in early June, and you can pick up a copy in the narthex at First Church on Sunday. It is another edition packed with amazing articles and photos from Presbyterian congregations, individuals and groups across the country.

You are also invited to sign up to receive the Presbyterian Connection directly by email or mailed to your home at no cost. Here's the link where you can sign up to receive this informative newspaper in either format:
<https://form.jotform.com/63184686465973>.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Anglican and United Churches Sign Lease on Nation Office Space, 300 Bloor St. West in Toronto is under construction, with a move-in date planned for 2026.



It's official! The United, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches have signed leases to share national office space at the redeveloped site of Bloor Street United Church at 300 Bloor St. West in Toronto. The agreement reflects the churches' ongoing commitment to nurturing ecumenical relationships and cooperation, reducing costs, and lessening their carbon footprint.

"We've marked a formal agreement between the Presbyterian Church, the United Church, and the Anglican Church of Canada as we prepare to move in together in shared office space in a couple of years," says the Reverend Victor Kim "I'm very excited about the possibilities of what this partnership will produce in the years to come. A happy day for all of us!"



The Venerable Alan Perry, General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada; the Reverend Victor Kim, Principal Clerk at The Presbyterian Church in Canada; and the Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary of The United Church of Canada, met at the construction site to see the project's progress and offer prayers of blessing for the safety and well-being of the construction workers.

"This opportunity to be together in this space came out of a relationship and conversation. We are excited about the possibility of the relationship and working together, with a commitment to ministry," said the Rev. Dr. Blair, General Secretary of The United Church of Canada. "We collaborate to be witnesses in the healing of God's world. So, I am excited and grateful for the possibilities."

Located in downtown Toronto's Annex-University of Toronto neighbourhood, the development includes a refurbished Bloor Street United Church and office, community, commercial, and worship spaces. The floor plans reflect a more efficient and flexible use of physical space for the new offices and were drafted with input from all three denominations. The three denominations' archives will also move to the new national office building and be shared, along with meeting and video spaces.

“The possibility of better ecumenical collaboration in this space will also allow us to make more effective use of our financial and human resources,” said Archdeacon Perry. “Being so close to good public transit allows for easy access to visitors to our offices and means we will have less impact on the environment.”

Besides being a practical solution for resource optimization, the shared space is also a tangible expression of the denominations’ commitment to collaboration, greater impact in the public space, and increasing the ability to innovate and share ideas between denominations.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT HAPPENED AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2024

I was happy to serve as a commissioner to the 2024 General Assembly from June 2-6th in Waterloo, Ontario. As you may know, the General Assembly is the annual meeting of the highest court (governing body) of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Each year, local presbyteries commission one out of every six ministers on their roll, along with an equal number of elders to participate in the discernment and decision making of our denomination as a whole.

Compared to the high stress General Assembly of 2019 when I was serving as the Moderator and we were making decisions about controversial and important topics related to human sexuality, the 2024 General Assembly was relaxed, positive, and hopeful. A highlight for me was the chance to sit together with other Former Moderators for the opening worship on Sunday evening. Specifically, I enjoyed connecting with the Rev. Dr. Jean Morris (Moderator in 2005) and Rev. Linda Bell (the first woman to be Moderator in 1992). Six out of the eight women who have served as Moderator of the General Assembly were present that evening as we heard a thoughtful reflection from the outgoing Moderator, the Rev. Mary Fontaine, and then elected and installed the current Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls.

There were many interesting items on the agenda of the meeting, and Pat (my former professor of Hebrew Bible at Knox College) did an excellent job of leading us through the

Assembly. But I think that most commissioners would agree with my assessment that the most important thing that happened during the Assembly was the adoption and presentation of *The Apology of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for its Complicity in Colonization and the Residential School System*. I was one of the members appointed to the committee that prepared the apology, so I was deeply involved in the process, moved the recommendations from the committee, and participated in the presentation of the apology after it was approved.

Here’s how the events of Wednesday afternoon at General Assembly were described by PCC Communications staff:

Following the adoption of the apology of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for its complicity in colonization and in operating residential schools on Tuesday, June 4, the Special Committee Regarding an Apology for Residential Schools and Colonization brought a quiet stillness and introspection to the gathering with a sacred smudging ceremony in which the committee members participated. The deeply moving ceremony was followed by singing and prayers, led by Stewart Laughing Bear Folster, a member of the National Indigenous Ministries Council (NIMC) and the past Moderator and convener of the NIMC, the Rev. Mary Fontaine. Members of the special committee took turns reading the preamble to the Apology, after which the Moderator of the 2024 General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. Pat Dutcher-Walls, read the Apology in full. The committee then invited the Assembly to participate in a smudging ceremony.

Most of you will be aware that the PCC made a Confession to God and to Aboriginal People for our participation in Residential Schools back in 1994. However, it was noted that we have learned a great deal about the impact of what our church did over the last 30 years. We are much more aware of the devastating effects of colonization and the intergenerational and ongoing trauma caused by the schools. We also noticed that our 1994 Confession didn’t actually use the words “I’m sorry,” nor was the Confession shared adequately with many of

the Survivors and their families that needed to hear it.

The renewed Apology is detailed and honest about the Church's mistakes and the harm caused. It is intended to be shared with Indigenous people in our communities, but should be shared very carefully with great caution so that it does not cause further harm by naming these difficult things. The committee that wrote the apology is continuing to work over the next year to provide guidance for how to share the apology in a good way, and to encourage Presbyterians to read it, learn about our history, and engage more deeply in the work of healing and reconciliation.

The Church is deeply grateful to the Indigenous members of the committee who shared their wisdom and experience to help us express what needed to be said. It was a privilege to walk with them and to share in the honest and vulnerable work of apologizing for our wrongdoing.

Rev. Amanda Currie

The full text of the Preamble and Apology are included on pages 8 and 9 of this newsletter.

Summer Calendar

June 15	9:00 am	Presbytery Meeting at First Church
	11:00 am	Regina Pride Parade (meet at First Church to walk together)
July 14	10:30 am	4th Sunday after Pentecost Welcome & Inclusion Sunday (Sanctuary & Online) Rev. John Borthwick preaching
July 21	10:30 am	5th Sunday after Pentecost (Sanctuary & Online) Alicia Monson preaching
July 28	10:30 am	6th Sunday after Pentecost (Sanctuary & Online) Pastor Charles Kooger preaching
July 3-7		UPLIFT Youth Conference Pray for the 12 participants from Regina
July 5	3:00 pm	Cari & Gavin's Wedding We are all invited for the ceremony and potluck supper to follow.
Worship continues on Sundays at 10:30 am through the summer with Rev. Amanda Currie preaching. Student minister, Sumi Jung, will preach on August 11 th .		
July 20	10 – 1	Saturday Lunch Program at First Baptist
July 22-25	9 – 12	Compassion Camp (VBS program)
Aug. 27	7:00 pm	Stewardship Committee
Sept. 11	7:00 pm	Session Meeting

THE APOLOGY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA FOR ITS COMPLICITY IN COLONIZATION AND THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

Introduction

We, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, humbly offer this apology to the generations of Indigenous people and communities harmed by the residential schools and day schools we operated.

We originally made a Confession in 1994 for our role in operating residential schools and colonization but we have realized the inadequacy of that Confession. We apologize for our slowness and the apathy of our response. We are deeply sorry.

We acknowledge the families whose children were taken to schools without telling their families where the children were being taken and who never returned, who remain lost today. We acknowledge with grief the many unmarked graves that have been found and will be found, including at schools that we ran. We remember the children who never made it home.

We apologize for the impact of the genocide of colonization, forced assimilation and racism to which we actively contributed.

Many Survivors and intergenerational Survivors have shared very personal and traumatic experiences in the context of Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings and within the congregations, committees and governing bodies of the church. We acknowledge the strength and courage of Survivors for sharing your experiences in the schools and the heavy burdens you, your families and communities still bear. We acknowledge the pain and difficulty of sharing and reliving the truth of your lived experience.

We acknowledge that the church's apology itself, as well as the presence of church representatives making the apology, may be triggering, evoking trauma for some by surfacing memories of devastating experiences in residential schools.

Apology

We acknowledge that Indigenous children suffered at residential schools. The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran Ahousaht Residential School in British Columbia, Alberni Residential School in British Columbia, Birtle Residential School in Manitoba, Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School in Shoal Lake, Ontario, Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, Crowstand Residential School in Saskatchewan, File Hills Residential School in Saskatchewan, Muscowpetung (later known as "Lakesend") Residential School in Saskatchewan, Portage la Prairie Residential School in Manitoba, Regina Industrial School in Saskatchewan, Round Lake Residential School in Saskatchewan and Stoney Plain Residential School in Alberta.

We apologize for taking children from their homes, parents, grandparents and communities. We apologize for traumatizing parents and communities and taking away their rights to protect their children.

We honour and respect the languages of the land and apologize for punishing Indigenous students for speaking their traditional languages.

We apologize for attempting to eliminate Indigenous identity and Cultural and Spiritual traditions.

We apologize for the abuse Indigenous children suffered, including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and Spiritual abuses.

We apologize for the weaponization of food that happened in the schools and for non-consensual experiments with food, nutrition and medical procedures that were conducted on children.

We apologize for the lost lives, for children who died while at residential schools – from disease, neglect, suicide, attempts to run away and from violence by teachers, staff and volunteers.

We apologize that the schools created an isolated and unsafe environment where violence was condoned and students learned violence. We regret, and are deeply sorry, that we provided conditions where students could abuse other students.

We acknowledge and apologize for the resulting loss of bloodlines, of ancestors and of people who would not grow to become Elders, the huge loss of culture and future for nations this meant.

We apologize that when children died their parents were not always informed, they were not always returned to their communities and their burial sites were sometimes unmarked or the markers were not maintained and the record of names was not kept.

We apologize for the church's attitude of white superiority, for its assimilating policies and practices, for the racism of treating Indigenous people as less than human and for the ongoing intergenerational effects of our complicity with colonization and the schools that continue to negatively impact families and communities.

We acknowledge that this systemic racism continues to impact Indigenous people, including through: insecure housing; poverty; forced dependence on social assistance; experiencing lateral and domestic violence, in particular toward Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ people as named in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We acknowledge this has led to hopelessness, mental health crises and the tragedy of suicide, barriers to completing education and to accessing health care. We acknowledge this has led to the breakdown of family bonds that results in children taken into foster care, gang involvement, exploitation, addictions and incarceration.

We are sorry for how long it has taken for The Presbyterian Church in Canada to begin to understand the depth of harm we have caused, and we still have much to learn.

For our complicity in colonization and the residential school system, we are deeply, deeply sorry.

We therefore offer five fundamental commitments:

We will continue to listen and learn from Indigenous people, leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, welcoming and engaging voices from both within and beyond The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

We will continue the work of reconciliation, responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and the work of reparation that we have begun.

We will respect traditional Indigenous spiritual practices.

We will listen to and tell the truth about the past.

We will work to support Indigenous-led healing and wellness initiatives and be in solidarity with Indigenous people and communities.