

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

May 2020

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

As I write this message, I'm sitting on my living room couch. As most of you know, I've been working mainly from home since the middle of March, going into the church office only when absolutely necessary. Although this has been a very different time with our church building mostly empty and no physical gatherings for worship, fellowship, or service, it has not been a quiet time for me or for the church.

More than anything, we are reminded in the midst of this pandemic that the church is not the building, but the People of God. The church is God's People living every day as disciples, reading God's Word, worshipping God in Spirit and truth, and loving and serving one another and the world. I am happy to say the congregation of First Presbyterian Church (which normally meets at Albert Street & 14th Avenue in Regina) continues to meet online, by telephone, by mail, and by our spiritual unity and commitment to the ministry and mission that we share.

I am glad that I grew up in the church of the 1980s so that the lively song "I am the church! You are the church!" is rooted deeply in my mind and heart. The words continue: "We are the church together! All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we're the church together!"

Although it continues to be a struggle for us not to gather physically, to share food and smiles and hugs as a church family, we have been blessed with many online and telephone connections during this pandemic. It has been wonderful to see folks joining us for worship on Facebook who we typically see at church only occasionally. With our services going out to the world each week, we've had other Presbyterians across the province and from other parts of Canada joining us in prayer. Our reach has indeed grown, and this is one good reason to rejoice despite our other challenges.

As our province begins the slow but steady re-opening of businesses and services in our community, people are beginning to ask: "When will the church open again?" Unfortunately, we don't yet know the answer to this question. We will certainly need to wait until restrictions on group gatherings have been lifted.

As well, there will be other factors to consider so that our future in-person gatherings are carried out responsibly and safely for everyone. We'll need to look at our hygiene and sanitation practices, make allowances for maintaining physical distancing, ensure that any sharing of food, including Holy Communion, is done appropriately, and learn to greet and share peace with one another in safe ways. We'll keep in mind the diversity of our congregation and the specific needs of those who are most vulnerable to the virus.

This week I will be joining other religious leaders in Saskatchewan (and hopefully the Government too) in conversations about how our religious institutions can re-open safely. I trust these discussions will be helpful as we make plans to begin meeting together again.

In the meantime, our ministry and mission continue. Indeed, since the 2020 General Assembly which would have met in the first week of June has been cancelled, my ministry as Moderator will extend for another year while I continue to serve as your minister at First Church. Although I won't be travelling as Moderator for a while, I am nonetheless engaging with Presbyterians on-line across the country and providing pastoral leadership at the national level.

You may be interested to read some of the interim reports and study documents that were posted this week to The Presbyterian Church in Canada's website. These are the reports which would have been considered by the General Assembly in June. Although they won't be

formally approved, or have recommendations passed by an Assembly, they do give a sense of what the national church has been up to over the last year. Our ministry will continue, and the Assembly will meet again (God willing) in June of 2021.

Perhaps of particular interest to First Church folk, these reports include one by the Rev. Jean Morris, Convener of the Committee to Advise with the Moderator, which offers a summary of my first year as Moderator. We'll see what the second year will bring!

Check out the reports and study documents at: <https://presbyterian.ca/2020/05/06/interim-reports/>.

Rev. Amanda Currie

WORSHIP DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Thank you to all the people of First Church for your patience and flexibility in adjusting to new ways of worshipping during this pandemic. It is hard to believe that the last time we gathered together in the church building was on Sunday, March 15th! Unfortunately, I think it will be a while yet before we can gather in that way again.

Still, we continue to worship and serve God together as a church family. Thank you to our Music Team and guest musicians for leading us each Sunday. Every week I'm hearing from church members who are blessed and encouraged by your musical offerings. I hope everyone else is singing along from home and glorifying God with a joyful sound!

Thank you to Nicholas Jesson for facilitating our livestreamed services on the technical side. Sometimes we are recording live from the sanctuary of the church and other times we are leading from our homes using Zoom. Both methods work well and meet the various needs of our leaders.

Please do continue to participate with us in Sunday worship, and let us know how we can continue to tweak what we are doing to ensure our worship together is faithful, meaningful, and glorifying to God. If you haven't yet connected

with us for worship, you can do so in several ways:

1. Join us live on Facebook at 10:30 am on Sunday mornings by watching the "FirstPresbyterian Regina" page: <https://www.facebook.com/firstpresregina1925>
Sometimes I do ask a question during the children's message, so feel free to add your ideas and responses in the comment section of the post. It is also a great encouragement to us all to know that we are worshipping with our friends and families from a distance.
2. If you have difficulty accessing Facebook or if you miss the live service, you can always watch the video later (after 11:30 am when I post it) on my sermon website: www.curriejesson.ca You'll also find the full text of the sermons on that site and you can access past sermons as well.
3. Finally, for those who don't have internet access at home, I hope and pray that you are still joining us spiritually in our worship week-by-week as a Christian community. We are mailing out the sermon, order of service, and words to the hymns each week to those who need these. (Call the office if you are not already on our list and would like to be.) I was so encouraged to hear from a couple of our members who receive the mailing each week and who take time to read the Scripture texts and the sermon to each other. Thank you for taking the time to listen for God's Word each week.

FIRST CHURCH FELLOWSHIP BY ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

Everyone is invited to join with First Church friends for fellowship and connection using Zoom video conferences every week:

Note: All Zoom links are sent out by email only, and not published here where they are publicly accessible. If you don't receive the Zoom links you need, email, text, or phone Rev. Amanda Currie.

Freedom 55'ers: Tuesdays at 12 pm – The 55'ers group continues to meet, eat their lunches

together, and enjoy presentations and entertainment.

First Church Choir: Every other Thursday at 7 pm (normal choir time) all choir members and musicians are invited to re-connect on Zoom for a visit. Next one: Thurs. May 21st.

Tea & A Chat: Thursdays at 8 pm – An informal time of visiting and connecting for everyone. Rev. Amanda will include a short devotional reflection and prayer.

First Church Coffee Hour: Sundays at 2 pm – We miss sharing coffee and conversation in the gymnasium on Sundays! Join us on Zoom instead after you have watched the livestream worship service or the video posted at www.curriejesson.ca.

Rev. Amanda Currie

MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Easter In Memoriam Donation to North Central Regina Schools: A big thank you goes to First Presbyterian for your generous contribution to our Easter In-Memoriam project to assist kids in Regina's North-Central neighbourhood. In addition to their primary role of education, Kitchener and Albert Community Schools are an important source of friendship, community, safe space and extra nutrition for many kids. When schools closed in March due to the pandemic, most of these extra supports were reduced or stopped. We contacted Kitchener School (where we also send our knitted mitts and scarves every winter) and learned that the schools were hoping to provide "wellness packages" for 150 vulnerable families during the closure. The packages include staple foods for families in need, and fun educational activities for kids.

On April 24 we delivered a \$1,520 cheque to the school to help with their Wellness Package program. Community worker Fanny K, who visits the families regularly, was quite overwhelmed with the size of our gift. She said the schools are very low on funds for this unexpected situation. Our donation will allow the schools to continue their visits and deliveries to vulnerable families until the end of June. She said "You have no idea how much this thoughtfulness means to us. Some families don't have enough food each week, and we really worry about how they will

manage over the long term. Some of the kids are quite sad as the school was a bright part of their week. These funds will allow us to help with food insecurity in the neighbourhood and also with supplies for the children to keep learning and stay physically active."

Mary Jesse
Mission & Outreach Convener

PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

The Pastoral Care Committee has assembled a daily prayer calendar for the month of May. Let's keep gathering together spiritually as we unite our hearts in prayer for one another and for the world. Be in touch with the church office if you need a copy.

The Pastoral Care Committee also invites you to share your prayer requests for your own needs or your concerns for others. These will be included in prayer on Sundays as well as future monthly prayer calendars. Please ask permission before sharing another person's name, and send your prayer requests to Carole Cann at 306-352-5036 or carolegcann@gmail.com.

Emily Ireton
Pastoral Care Convener

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Kids Create Change: Presbyterian World Service and Development has a challenge for you. They want your short stories, drawings or videos in response to three posts about farming, education and clean water. They have links to each one on their website. Here is the link: <https://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/2020/03/26/kids-create-change/>

You will find links to the stories and activity suggestions. You can then submit your creations either on-line or by mail. Deadline is July 31. You may receive a prize and your work may be shown on the website. You can also share your creations with the First Presbyterian Church family as well. Looking forward to your submissions!

Bette Kelly
Christian Education Convener

Do you love to draw?
Are you great with a camera?
Do you and your friends like to make up stories?

Do the Kids Create Change challenge!

READ about people impacted by PWS&D's work,
CREATE something cool in response and
SEND it to us for a chance to be featured in PWS&D resources. There's a prize for every entry!

View details and submit your creation online at WeRespond.ca/kids-create-change or by mailing it to the office.

Any questions? Contact Emma Clarke at eclarke@presbyterian.ca.

Deadline: July 31, 2020

Presbyterian World Service & Development
50 Wynford Dr.
Toronto, ON M3C 1J7
1-800-619-7301 ext. 291
WeRespond.ca

“DID YOU EVER WONDER?”

(Formerly “Wondering Wednesdays” but now it will be on Tuesday evenings!)

You are invited to join with others who, like you, sometimes wonder about big questions. We are using a video resource called “Did you ever wonder...” from the Canadian Roman Catholic – Anglican Dialogue which has provided some “small answers to big questions.”

Tuesday evenings at 7 pm starting on May 5th, please join us by Zoom video conference. Come when you are able, and feel free to invite your friends. Question for Tuesday, May 12th: “Why believe?”

Rev. Amanda Currie

OFFERING

There are several ways you can continue your offerings to First Church:

- 1) The simplest way is to use Interac E-transfer. If you use online banking, log in to your online account and look for the link to Interac

E-transfer. We have set up a dedicated email address for e-transfers. Please send it to firstpresreginaoffering@gmail.com. Then it can be deposited directly into the church's account. You will receive a confirmation of the deposit. An electronic receipt will be sent to Shirley and Tina in the office. Shirley will record it in the donations program under your envelope number and Tina will record the deposit in the accounting system. Be sure to indicate in the comments section how you would like your offering distributed.

- 2) You can mail a cheque to the church: First Presbyterian Church, 2170 Albert Street, Regina, SK, S4P 2T9
- 3) Sign up for PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance). You specify the amount and it is automatically transferred from your account about the 20th of each month. Shirley administers the program for our church. To start on the plan, you must complete an authorization form indicating the amount and distribution of the monthly payment and provide a signed, voided cheque. Contact Shirley in the office if you're interested. (firstpresregina@sasktel.net or 306-522-9571)
- 4) It is possible to send a donation through PayPal by clicking on the Donation button in the top right corner of our website (firstpresregina.ca). However, PayPal charges a flat rate per transaction of 2.9% plus 30 cents, so part of your donation would be deducted by PayPal.

ADULT WALK

Thank you to all who participated in the Adult Walk this winter. It is now finished until the fall. We encourage those who walk to continue to do so now that it is safe to walk outside. Fresh air and exercise are good medicine for those of us who are so missing social gatherings.

Bob Wilson

FUNDSCRIP

You can continue raising money for First Church during this crisis. Place an order and have it mailed to your home. Specials for May include Shell (3%) and Earls (8%).

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. Specials for April include Walmart (3%) and Ultimate Dining (7%) - you can use this for takeout! (Note the conditions below to have free shipping.)
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!

REV. AMANADA'S CHILDREN'S MESSAGE ON EASTER SUNDAY

My Easter stole has butterflies on it. Even though there's no mention of butterflies in the Bible, I think it makes sense because butterflies remind us of new life and freedom and joy. I like to wear this one at Easter, and sometimes for funerals too, to remind me that even after someone has died, Jesus promises them a new and everlasting life in heaven with God.

As a butterfly soared overhead, one caterpillar said to the other, "You'll never get me up in one of those things!" Yet, for every caterpillar, the time comes when the urge to eat and grow subsides and it instinctively begins to form a chrysalis (or a cocoon) around itself. The chrysalis hardens, and you'd think for all the world that the caterpillar is dead.

But one spring morning, the life inside the cocoon begins to writhe, the top cracks open, and a beautifully formed butterfly emerges. For hours it will stand stretching and drying its wings, moving them slowly up and down, up and down. And then, before you know it, the butterfly glides aloft, effortlessly riding the currents of the air, alighting on flower after gorgeous flower, as if to show off its vivid colours to the bright blossoms.

Somehow, the miracle of the butterfly never loses its fascination for us. Not only because butterflies are so beautiful, but also because the butterfly is like a living parable of the promise of resurrection.

On Easter morning, the Gospels tell us that the disciples saw Jesus' graveclothes lying on the cold slab still wrapped round and round the body. Only the body was gone, much like an empty cocoon deserted by a butterfly who has left to soar free. "He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said," an angel told the women who came to see the tomb.

Soon after, Jesus appeared to those women, and then to some of the other disciples too. They could see for themselves that he was risen from the dead. It was him! But he was also different somehow – changed, transformed – he was ready for a new and everlasting life.

The Good News of Easter is that because Jesus was raised, we will be raised also. We don't need to be afraid of death anymore, because we trust that God is more powerful than death itself, and God has good things planned for us. The cocoon and the butterfly remind us that God brings new life and beauty and joy even out of death.

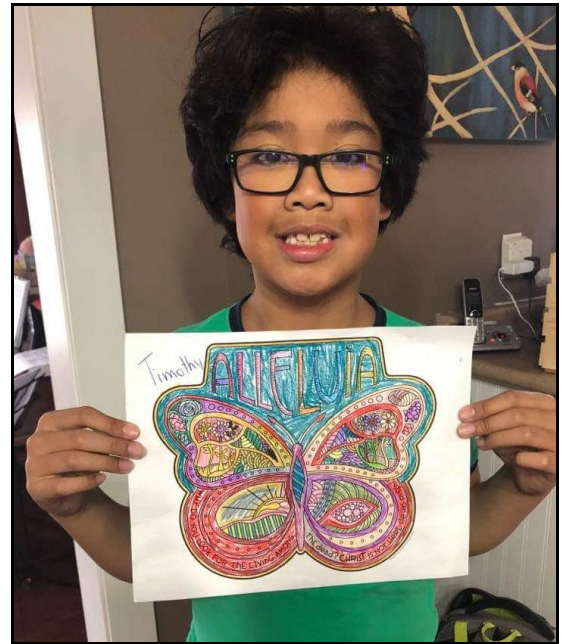
I think that's a good thing for us to remember, especially this Easter. When we're stuck at home, cocooned in our apartments and houses, maybe feeling a bit worried and anxious about the future... we can trust that God is with us, and God has plans for us.

I actually don't know how long a caterpillar usually stays inside the cocoon before it transforms into a butterfly and pushes its way out into the world. And I don't know how long we'll

need to stay inside either, but I trust that we will be able to come out one day. And when we do, I think it's going to be quite wonderful!

Note: Thanks to everyone who coloured and shared your beautiful butterflies this Easter!

Rev. Amanda Currie



RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Each day brings new information about the spread of COVID-19 around the globe. The partners and communities that Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWS&D) serves are preparing to feel the serious impact of the coronavirus.

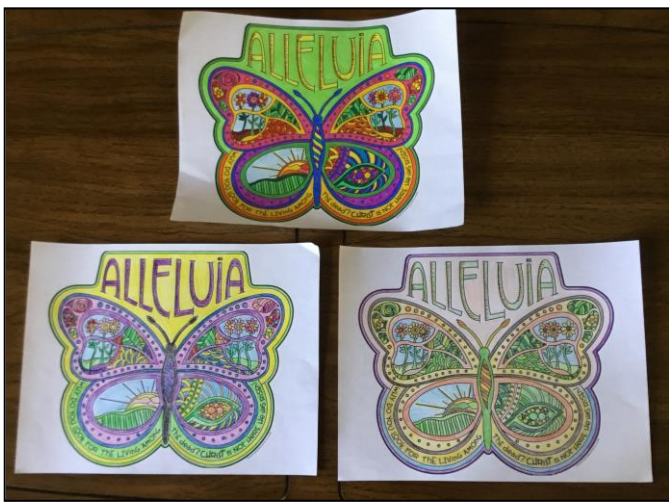
We take comfort in the words of the psalmist, "Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you." (Psalm 30:22)

Midwives in Afghanistan lead COVID-19 awareness trainings with community members.

PWS&D program staff are in close contact with our partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean to offer support and guidance as partners continue to work with families and communities. Coronavirus cases can now be found in all of the countries where PWS&D works.

Program adjustments are taking place to ensure the safety of partner staff and community members. While some community meetings and training sessions have been cancelled or postponed, precautions are being taken while trying to carry out whatever work can be done.

In Malawi, partners are buying personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves and gowns, and cleaning and disinfecting



supplies. A gift of \$50 provides a kit of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers, including masks, gloves, gowns, etc.

In Haiti, a nutrition program that treats malnourished children has had to pause their mobile clinics, but community health workers are still going door-to-door providing therapeutic nutritional support to malnourished children.

In Nicaragua, families who are part of a PWS&D-supported nutrition and child development project are receiving cleaning items, including hand soap and towels, disinfectant wipes, bleach, cleaning supplies and toilet paper. Additionally, PWS&D has contributed \$25,000 to the ACT Alliance COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund. This fund is supporting proposals for urgent action and life-saving initiatives and, where appropriate, interventions for preparedness.

We continue to do all we can to help bring hope and lessen the impact of this pandemic and are grateful for your faithful support. If you would like to support PWS&D's COVID-19 response, you can give through First Church. Designate your special donation as "PWS&D: COVID Response."

CAMP CHRISTOPHER

Dear friends,

I write this letter to inform you that due to the Covid-19 pandemic Camp Christopher will not be operating the children and youth programs this summer. This was not an easy decision to make, but feel it is a necessary one with the health and safety protocols currently being enforced in the province. We still hope to celebrate the Camp's 75th Anniversary in some form and, for now, the Women's Camp in September is still being held.

Even though the program will not be running this summer, the Camp site will still be busy! We will be using this time to complete some much-needed updates to the Camp. We hope to complete the following:

- shingle the roof,
- remove the chapel,
- remove the old kayak shed
- redo our water system.

- Update and mark our hiking trails
- Give the camp a good cleaning
- Painting

We know this is a difficult time for our supporters, but we hope you will continue to support this ministry with your time, talents or treasure.

My friend wrote the following and I think it is an appropriate way to end this letter.
Many of you are coping with this social distancing/isolating/quarantine in such creative and positive ways that is very much like my life's work and special places that I know as...CAMP! If you didn't go to children's summer camp, it is typically just a bunch of rustic buildings, often some shade of brown, but that isn't where the magic lies.

The magic that you are seeing now is what Camp spirit (our magic) is all about.

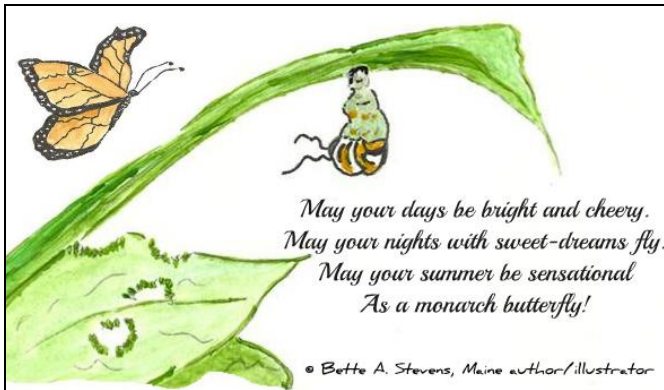
- *Creating moments of magic and wonderment for children and youth (painted rocks, holiday lights, hearts and butterflies in windows)*
- *Checking in on each other*
- *Walking places*
- *Saying hi to people as you pass*
- *Offering free items when you have too many*
- *Asking, "I have to go out, is there anyone who needs anything?"*
- *Stating, "Let me know if you need anything, no judgement, if you've lost your job."*
- *Creating masks, caps and gowns for health care workers*
- *Taking a bag on walks to pick up garbage on your daily walks*
- *Wearing comfy clothing all day (maybe not showering all the time, wearing a hat, did I wash my face today?) – don't worry your smile is the most important thing*

I am glad there are so many of you to shine your magic into our communities to make the burden of the situation much more bearable. Thank you.

If you require more information or want to help with camp please contact with us at info@campchristopher.ca.

Go and create the magic,

Heather Kolojay
Camp Convenor



MAY EVENTS

Please note:

All 'meetings' will be held via Zoom
unless otherwise noted (live stream).

May 10	10:30 am	Worship (<i>live stream</i>)
May 10	2:00 pm	Coffee Hour
May 12	12:00 pm	Freedom 55'ers
May 12	7:00 pm	Did you ever wonder?
May 13	7:00 pm	Board of Managers
May 14	8:00 pm	Tea & A Chat
May 17	10:30 am	Worship (<i>live stream</i>)
May 17	2:00 pm	Coffee Hour
May 19	12:00 pm	Freedom 55'ers
May 19	7:00 pm	Did you ever wonder?
May 20	7:00 pm	Joint Session/Board Meeting
May 21	7:00 pm	First Church Choir
May 21	8:00 pm	Tea & A Chat
May 24	10:30 am	Worship (<i>live stream</i>)
May 24	2:00 pm	Coffee Hour
May 26	12:00 pm	Freedom 55'ers
May 26	7:00 pm	Did you ever wonder?
May 27	7:00 pm	Book Club
May 28	8:00 pm	Tea & A Chat
May 31	10:30 am	Worship (<i>live stream</i>)
		<i>Pentecost Sunday. Remember to wear RED and celebrate the fire of the Holy Spirit!</i>
May 31	2:00 pm	Coffee Hour