

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

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Do you see the light at the end of the tunnel? I think I am beginning to see it! Although we still have further to go towards a full recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic, I am beginning to see signs of hope. Infection rates in Regina and Saskatchewan are starting to go down. More and more people are getting vaccinated (about 66% of Saskatchewan people 40 years and up at the time of writing this). Visits to care homes will soon be a possibility again. Restrictions on gathering sizes will be reduced in the coming weeks. All this is prompting me to look forward to the day when we can welcome everyone back to in-person worship, fellowship, and service in the church building.

When the Session met this week, we decided to continue our current practice of worshipping online through the month of May, and we will evaluate the situation once again in the first week of June. However, I am quite confident that changes will be coming and new opportunities for gathering will come, particularly as people get their second doses of the vaccine this summer. I am looking forward to seeing you all in person once again!

The other light at the end of the tunnel that I am seeing is the end of my extended term as Moderator of the General Assembly. The 2021 General Assembly will take place on June 6-9 in an online format, and after preaching at the opening worship and then installing the next moderator during the first sederunt (first session of the assembly) I will become the Past - Moderator.

Commissioners to the Assembly from the Presbytery of Assiniboia will be Jo Szostak (elder commissioner) and me (minister commissioner). Gabe Omolida will be participating in the Assembly as a Young Adult Representative for our presbytery. The reports were published online this week, so we are busily reading and considering the recommendations on many different topics of

interest and importance to the church and its life, ministry, and mission. You are also welcome to read any of the reports that may be of interest to you. You can find them at <https://presbyterian.ca/gao/ga2021/>

Although there are many interesting reports to consider, I would particularly commend to you the final report of the Rainbow Communion. This special committee was appointed by the 2017 General Assembly to lead a listening process to hear the stories of harm done to LGBTQI people within The Presbyterian Church in Canada, as well as the stories of grace experienced in the church. It is a long report that shares many stories that were heard, as well as recommended actions for the church as a whole and various bodies of the church to confess the harm done, provide support and care for those wounded, to turn in a new direction, and become a more welcoming and loving community of faith.

If you do read the Rainbow Communion's report, be prepared for some difficult and heart-wrenching experiences to be shared. In the coming months I will be interested in your reflections on the report, as well as your thoughts about how First Church may be called to respond to the recommendations for congregations.

I also ask that you pray for the 2021 General Assembly as we meet to consider all the important and urgent business of the church. Please pray for the Commissioners and the Young Adult Representatives, for the Moderator and Clerks, the Staff of the PCC, and all those involved in facilitating a very different kind of Assembly in an online format. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us, granting us wise discernment and love for one another, for the church, and for the world.

You are invited to join the General Assembly's opening worship service on Sunday, June 6th at 12:00 pm (2:00 pm EDT). Details about how to participate online will be forthcoming. Please

note that Session has decided there will be no morning worship service at 10:30 am on that day, and invites all members and adherents of First Church to join the General Assembly's worship service.

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

At its May 5 meeting Session decided to extend the suspension of in-person worship and facility-use until June 3. Hopefully by then there will be further direction from the provincial government in terms of restrictions.

Gabe Omolida will be offering a benefit concert online to raise money for our refugee sponsorship so watch for more information!

On June 6, the opening worship service for General Assembly will be held online, beginning at 12 noon SK time. Amanda will be preaching, as the outgoing Moderator, and some members of First Church will be participating. Session has decided there will be no service at 10:30 am that Sunday morning, but the congregation will be encouraged to participate in the Assembly worship service at 12:00 pm (local time). Please mark this on your calendar.

The Music Team will be busy this summer! Gabe Omolida will be the lead musician for June, July and August. Cade Eastwood will finish his term as Music Scholar at the end of June and we thank him for his contributions! Cade will continue to be a guest musician and we look forward to that! Will Ireton will serve as a Music Scholar during June, July and August. There will be lots of great things happening between now and the fall!

Annual Congregational Meeting First Church held its annual congregational meeting by Zoom on May 2. There were 36 people in attendance. It was a productive meeting with a celebration of the past year and approval of the budget for this year. In spite of the pandemic, the congregation was busy in 2020. The major accomplishment was to complete the repairs to the foundation of the sanctuary. Thanks to everyone who contributed their time and effort to the life and mission of the congregation!



Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship Committee sends our greetings and hope that all have been blessed with hope and joy over this Easter season. We have received many positive comments regarding the virtual services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Keep watching future services. Also, we also send our gratitude and thanks to Nick Jesson for his generous contribution to this project. The half-hour hymn sings have been a time for many to participate. Although we cannot hear your voices singing out in your homes, carry on and sing joyously!

We look forward to May 9th when we celebrate Mother's Day. In the past, we have presented the ladies of the congregation with a carnation. Since that is not possible, perhaps we can send a virtual carnation to each and every mother and those of you working with children, as you do your very best, guiding your family and children in your charge during this trying time. May you receive God's Blessing.



May 23rd is Pentecost Sunday, when the Liturgical colour for that day is red. The following Sunday, May 30th, we return to white for Trinity Sunday. Starting in June, the colour returns to

Green for the remainder of the Church year in late November.

At a recent on-line Worship Committee meeting, Rev. Amanda Currie reported on plans for the opening of General Assembly, for which she is preparing the service. Look for more information on that (in this Newsletter) as we will be able to tune into that service as part of our own worship for that day. She also reported on future plans to continue virtual services for those unable to attend in person, once we are able to be in the sanctuary again.

Bill Sgrazzutti reported that work is nearly completed on the Casavant Organ which will be ready for use in upcoming services. We look forward to hearing the lovely tones of our organ once again. Bill also reported on his plans for special music throughout the Spring season. Thanks to all participants.

Since we will not likely meet again before summer, the Worship Committee wishes each and every one the joys that Spring and Summer bring. Spring is that special time of year when all is new and refreshed again. Perhaps we will all be together in person in the sanctuary by September.

Joyce McKersie
Worship Committee member

LOVE MY NEIGHBOUR



On Friday, April 16th I became eligible, based on my age, to receive a vaccination to protect against COVID-19. Like many Gen-X Canadians, I had been cheering for several months as I watched the older generations of my friends and congregation members getting immunized. I “loved” every social media post about someone getting vaccinated, and I shared all the latest news about clinics and eligibility in my province. I

was overjoyed when my sister (a front-line health worker) got the jab, and relieved when my parents, and then finally my husband, “Stuck it to COVID” just a week before my turn came up.

On the day of my eligibility, I sat impatiently through several church meetings on Zoom, and then hopped in my car and went straight to the drive-through clinic not far from my home in Regina. It was a bit of a wait. I drove into a lane as directed, and then sat there for about an hour and a half. It felt just like the line-up of cars waiting to get onto a ferry. I rolled down the windows, enjoyed the sunshine and the breeze, and worked on a sermon until my lane began to move. Then followed about an hour of inching along towards the big garage doors of the clinic.

The nurse who vaccinated me was very friendly and professional – asking me lots of questions, explaining the possible side effects, and making sure I knew where I should wait my 15 minutes afterwards in my car, and put on my hazard lights if I didn't feel well and needed help. The jab itself felt just like my annual flu shot, but it meant so much more.



The next day I was exhausted, a bit headachy, and my arm was pretty sore. I knew to expect a few minor side effects, but I was surprised by the flood of emotions that I experienced. A deep sense of relief, like I'd been holding my breath for a year and finally I could breathe freely. An amazing feeling of gratitude, having received a long-awaited and much-desired gift. And I wouldn't say that the third emotion was guilt, but it was a real awareness of privilege.

I thought about younger people who were still waiting, people without vehicles who could not go to the drive-through clinic and would wait longer to access a vaccine, and essential workers whose turn still hadn't come up. I also thought about people around the world - those in

countries without the financial resources to buy vaccines, those in places where outbreaks are totally out of control and medical services are severely limited.

I felt like one of those ten people with leprosy who was healed by Jesus – the one who turned back, praising God with a loud voice, the one who lay down at Jesus’ feet and thanked him profusely. I’ve often wondered about that story, about what that thankful person did after Jesus sent him on his way. I can picture him telling the story of his healing again and again with excitement and joy. I can imagine him encountering other sick people and pointing them towards Jesus for help and hope.

But the more important question is what I will do in response to the free gift of my COVID-19 vaccination. Certainly, I will continue to give thanks to God for the amazing gift that I have received. I will continue to encourage others to get vaccinated as soon as their turn comes up – protecting their own health, protecting vulnerable people around them, and protecting our society as a whole from all the devastating effects of the ongoing pandemic.

In deep gratitude for the gift of being vaccinated, my husband and I have each given \$250 to the [Love My Neighbour project](#) to help UNICEF provide COVID-19 vaccines to the world’s most vulnerable people. “Love My Neighbour” is a national movement for global vaccine equity, inspired by Millennium Kids and Canadian faith communities, to raise funds to help increase equitable access and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. Each gift of \$25 provides funding to fully vaccinate a person who would not otherwise have access to this life-saving immunization. This includes vaccines, per-person cost for transport, cold chain protection, health worker training, and disposal of needles and waste.

If you also feel thankful and privileged to have access to vaccinations and the hope of a COVID-free community, I invite you also to turn back like the healed man did. Give thanks and praise to God, tell the story, encourage others,

and consider gifting a vaccine to someone else who needs it too.

Rev. Amanda Currie

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPEMENT

India is currently in the midst of a dramatic surge in COVID-19 cases, threatening its healthcare system and leaving already vulnerable families in crisis. For more than a week, over 300,000 cases have been diagnosed daily. So far over 220,000 people have died in India, and the crisis is only worsening. Immediate needs are access to health care, medical supplies, and medicines, particularly oxygen. There is an urgent need to educate people on risk prevention and to address vaccine hesitancy. Vaccine supply is insufficient and inaccessible to many, leaving herd immunity out of reach.

Donate Now: [Donate online](#) to help save lives in India. Or make a donation through First Church by marking it as “PWS&D: India COVID Crisis”.

PWS&D is preparing to respond with its partners and ACT Alliance members in India to support people who are sick or quarantined at home with provisions to buy medicines and for other emergency needs. Additionally, they will work with communities to share messages on infection prevention and control, as well as information on vaccines.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2021 Reports Now Available

The 2021 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada will be held online **June 6–9, 2021**. The Assembly considers matters affecting the ministry and mission of our denomination. Commissioners, who are responsible for the business of Assembly, will discern and make decisions.

Reports to the 2021 General Assembly are now available on **PC-Biz**—the online platform for all information relating to the General Assembly.

Learn More: presbyterian.ca/ga2021

SUBMIT YOUR ARTWORK **for the 2022 PCC Wall Calendar**

For the 2022 edition of the PCC Wall Calendar, we're inviting Presbyterians to send in high-resolution photo submissions that showcase the variety of artistic talents within our denomination and congregations.

We're looking for submissions that demonstrate how different forms of creative expression have been used to glorify God, including (but not limited to):

- Drawings/paintings
- Sculpture works
- Stained-glass works
- Seasonal arts and crafts (i.e., for Advent and Lent)
- Sunday School artwork
- Quilting/knitting/sewing works (i.e., handmade pulpit fall)
- Culinary/baking art
- Gardening
- Photography
- Performance art
- Poetry

The submission deadline is **August 20, 2021**.

Submit Now: presbyterian.ca/2021/04/23/2022-wall-calendar

NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S **GATHERING 2022**

Celebrate God. Sing together—everyone! The Women's Missionary Society National Presbyterian Women's Gathering will take place **May 21–22, 2022**, at the Sheraton Parkway Hotel in Richmond Hill, Ontario.

Learn More:
presbyterian.ca/2021/04/08/national-womens-gathering-2022

INDIGENOUS CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP **Annual community "Walk of Faith,** **Hope and Love" Fundraiser**



In past years participants have enlisted donors to "sponsor" their walk and we have then walked together on Pentecost Sunday, gathering at ICF, 3131 Dewdney Avenue. However, as with last year, this Spring we need to plan an alternative to the group walk in North Central Regina.

Instead, on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, we encourage our friends and supporters to conduct their own "Walk of Faith, Hope and Love" in support of ICF. Each person or family is invited to walk in support of Indigenous Christian Fellowship in their home neighbourhood or another safe place of their choosing, and to make either a personal donation to ICF or collect sponsors to raise funds for ICF.

Donations will support two projects identified and selected by ICF Council:

- upgrades to our sound system, especially to support outdoor activities, and
- funding for Christian Indigenous leadership training.

Cheques can be sent by mail to: Indigenous Christian Fellowship, 3131 Dewdney Avenue, Regina, SK S4T 0Y5.

Arrangements for e-transfers can be made by contacting Bert Adema at BertA@icfregina.ca

Thank you in advance for your support and participation. If you require further information or pledge forms, please contact one of the organizers: Larry Fry (larry.fry@hotmail.com); Dawn Rossignol (dawnrossignol@outlook.com); Bert Adema (BertA@icfregina.ca)

ICF will provide charitable donation receipts for gifts of \$20 or more. Participants can drop their sponsor/pledge forms and funds received at ICF following May 23rd. Generally, ICF is open from 10am to 4pm, Tuesday-Saturday. Outside of ministry hours please place envelopes in the mail slot at the front entrance.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord's Supper, The Mass, Holy Eucharist

An opportunity to explore in an ecumenical group the meaning and purpose of Holy Communion. Each week a couple of articles will be emailed to participants in advance of the session. These will provide the focus for the Zoom discussions. Wednesdays May 5, 12, 19, & 26, and June 2 at 10-11:30am or 7-8:30pm (max. 12 persons per group)

Facilitators: Rev. Marie-Louise Ternier and Rev. Matteo Carboni

For more information or to register, email angluth.watrous@gmail.com or m-carboni@hotmail.com

SIGNS OF LIFE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH: May 2021 Webinar Series

Each Thursday in May, starting May 6, from 3 to 4pm (Saskatchewan time) on Zoom.

- May 13: Fabulously Flourishing in the Local Church with Canon Dr. Neil Mancor (Congregational Development Coordinator, Anglican Diocese of Montréal)
- May 20: Blessed to be a Blessing ... The Stewardship of Opportunity with Rev. Dr. Tim Beadle (co-founder of the Rural Church Pastors Network & Missional Engagement Team Lead, Foothills Alliance Church, Calgary)
- May 27: To The Regions Beyond: Spiritual Care in Under-served Areas with Rev. Dr. Robin Haensel (Director of Church Development, Canadian Midwest District, Christian & Missionary Alliance Church)

Free registration:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAqf-ytqzosGdVoDhE6gNcveFr2JjU4-WCd>

For further information, contact Archdeacon Cheryl Toth at stewardship@sasktel.net

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE, GENDER, POVERTY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

These interactive conversations will be led by the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (FILL) of the Canadian Council of Churches, an ecumenical agency with 26 member

denominations representing 85% of Christianity in Canada.

Four Saturday afternoons, at 4:00pm EDT/2:00pm in Saskatchewan: April 17, May 15, June 12 and June 26.

<https://www.interculturalleadership.ca/programs/conversation-circles>

VIRTUAL FESTIVAL OF HOMILETICS May 17 to 21



This year, in light of COVID-19, the Festival of Homiletics is again moving online. The world needs good preaching as we continue to grapple with a global pandemic. We are making access to the week of sessions and speakers on the website absolutely free!

<https://www.festivalofhomiletics.com/register/>

SEEKING JUSTICE TOGETHER:



Seeking Justice Together is a virtual conference hosted by Citizens for Public Justice from May 17 to 20 exploring how we are called to seek justice together through intersectional, interpersonal, and interconnected approaches. Keynotes and workshops will invite participants to consider how Christians, in particular, are called to seek justice alongside others. Participants will be invited to explore the role of theology, church history, and contemporary expressions of faith in our understanding and practice of justice. All participants are welcome, regardless of faith background.

<https://cpi.ca/seeking-justice-together/>

WALKING TOGETHER

The gift of inter-church marriages

A webinar by the Anglican Centre in Rome (May 20 from 6-8pm Rome time / 10am-12pm Saskatchewan time)

This online seminar aims at highlighting the journey and experience of married couples coming from the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. It would help us explore the many blessings of Anglican/Catholic marriages. It would inform us of the way they have addressed the differences brought about by their respective spiritual journeys and how they have been challenged as a couple and as a family.

For registration or further information, please send email to administrator@anglicancentre.it by Monday 17 May 2021- we will be delighted to help.

MULTI-FAITH SASKATCHEWAN

Annual General Meeting



Join the MF-Sask board members and others interested in promoting interreligious

relations in Saskatchewan. Sunday, May 30TH 3pm, by Zoom. Contact Nick Jesson at njesson@archregina.sk.ca for Zoom details.

CROSS-CANADA SERVICE of Prayer for Christian Unity

Led by the Canadian Council of Churches, this service on Saturday, June 5 at 3pm EDT/1pm in Saskatchewan, will draw from the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity theme "*Abide in My Love*" (cf. Jn 15:5-9). Further details will be coming soon.

HEEDING THE SPIRIT:

New Horizons in Receptive Ecumenism

June 21 A webinar by the Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University (UK)

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ccs-study-series-heeding-the-spirit-new-horizons-in-receptive-ecumenism-tickets-132543580417>

MAY EVENTS

May 11	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers
May 12	7:00 pm	Book Club
May 13	2:00 pm	Bible Study (note adjusted time)
May 16	10:30 am	Worship
	12:15 pm	Sunday School
	1:00 pm	Coffee Hour
May 18	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers
May 20	7:00 pm	Board of Managers
May 23	10:30 am	Worship (Pentecost)
	12:15 pm	Sunday School
	1:00 pm	Coffee Hour
May 25	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers
May 27	1:00 pm	Bible Study
	8:00 pm	Choir Chat
May 30	10:30 am	Worship
	12:15 pm	Sunday School
	1:00 pm	Coffee Hour
June 1	9:30 am	Pastoral Care Committee
June 2	7:00 pm	Session
June 6	12:00 pm	General Assembly Opening Worship

Note: There will not be a First Church service at 10:30 am, June 6. Everyone is invited to worship together with Presbyterians across Canada at 12:00 pm (2:00 pm EDT) There will also be no Sunday School or Coffee Hour that day.