

FIRST THINGS FIRST

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

November 2018

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The focus text that is in my mind as I prepare for worship this Sunday, November 18th at First Church, comes from Hebrews 10:23-25: *"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

November often feels like a time when a little more encouragement is needed. Winter is beginning to set in. The days are gloomier and getting shorter as we move towards the Winter Solstice. Added to this is our experience of the recent deaths of three of our members in October, and the awareness that we have quite a few members who are experiencing medical challenges at this time and are unable to be with us on Sundays when we gather for worship, service, and fellowship.

Nonetheless, when we gather together around God's Word and Sacraments, sharing in prayer, praise, and care for one another, we are encouraged by the Spirit of God and the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ. Just imagine how difficult it would be to navigate the circumstances of life if each of us had to do it alone! We are deeply blessed by our belonging to one another and to God in our community of faith.

Although I was sad to miss another Sunday at First Church on Sunday, November 11th, it was a blessing and encouragement to be able to be part of the First Church team that attended the "Transform" Conference organized by The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Canadian Ministries department. Mary Jesse, Heather Mazurak, Bob Wilson, and Jo Szostak participated with me in this new opportunity to be inspired, encouraged, and strengthened for ministry in our congregation.

We gathered together with representatives from Specialized Ministries, Indigenous Ministries, and Congregational Ministries from across the country at the YMCA Camp near Orillia, Ontario. The hospitality and food were excellent. The site included several walking trails that we enjoyed despite intermittent rain and snow.

The keynote speaker, the Rev. Grace Ji-Sun Kim, spoke about her new book, "Healing Our Broken Humanity: Practices for Revitalizing the Church and Renewing the World." (co-authored with Graham Hill).

We enjoyed times of worship that included some upbeat, but very sing-able worship songs, and interactive reflections on scripture, poetry, and a video called "Visio Divina."

We attended workshops on Community Connection, Experimental Ministry, Discipleship, and Stewardship. We heard Case Studies about new and vibrant ministries taking place in congregations and specialized ministries. We also met a couple of times each day with a Mentoring Group to reflect on what we were experiencing and learning, and how it might be applied in our own ministry contexts. Our First Church team was part of a mentoring group that included folk from Willowdale Presbyterian Church in Toronto and Knox Presbyterian Church in Weyburn. Our mentor was the Rev. David Moody who led a church re-plant in Stoney Creek, Ontario called "The Family Church of Heritage Green."

The First Church team will meet again soon to make plans for how we are to share our learning and facilitate a process of discernment for First Church that includes the whole congregation.

First Church already has an excellent Mission Statement:

*Christ calls us to be faithful disciples
who strive to be
joyful in our worship,
tender in our life together,
and daring in our outreach.*

Our goal will not be to change our mission but to consider together how we are going to live out this mission over the next few years. What new projects or priorities is God calling us to focus on in the years ahead? We want to invite everyone to participate in making decisions and setting goals for the future so that the Minister, Session, Board, and Committees can all be working in the same direction, and that we can be intentional about the ministry and mission choices we make month by month.

During our final mentoring group session at the conference, David invited our three teams to pray for each other as we put our plans into action in our local contexts. The First Church team asked the others to pray “that the congregation of First Church will enter fully into this process and that it will be life-giving.”

Please watch for future invitations to participate in this process in the months ahead, and join with us in seeking God’s direction together. May this work be a blessing and encouragement to us all in these days.

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

There will be a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, Nov. 25 immediately following worship, to confirm congregational approval of the refugee sponsorship plan. Circumstances have changed since the initial approval was given and we need to include a current motion in the final application process.

The plan was outlined at the Global Potluck Supper on Oct. 28.

Here are the highlights of the plan:

- We are working to bring members of Nyabani and Elijah’s family to Canada from South Sudan where they are currently living in a refugee camp. There will be five people for sure – Nyabani’s parents, sister, brother and niece. If he can be located, the sister’s husband would also come. We don’t know how long it will take but PWS&D tells us it usually takes 16-20 months. It could be as short as 10 months but that’s not too likely. So, it gives us about a year to get ready...

- It may cost as much as \$60,000 but some of the needs can be met with donations of goods which would reduce the amount of required funding. For example, Dorothy Henley’s family donated all her furniture (currently being stored in the church basement) thus giving us a good start.
- We are accepting financial donations and we will set up a fund so as to be ready when the family arrives. You may make a donation by including it in your offering envelope and writing “Refugee sponsorship” on the Special Offering line.
- We would also like you to indicate other areas where you might be able to help. There are lots of tasks to be carried out and lots of things we need to provide, including furniture and kitchen equipment. Also, please let Jo know if you would be willing to serve on a coordination committee, or willing to help with tasks like transportation, assisting with applications for health cards and SIN numbers, or if you have items you would like to donate. More specific information will be provided as plans are developed.

Election of Elders

The Session is working toward having 12 elders on Session for 6-year terms, with 2 elders elected annually. This year we have two elders completing terms - Andrew Donovan and Tom Ireton. They are eligible for re-election. We will be electing two elders to 6-year terms, one elder for a 4-year term and one elder for a 2-year term. A nominating committee was established to prepare a slate of nominees for election at the annual meeting. All members of the congregation are invited to nominate members of the congregation to fulfill this role.

The Session is responsible for supervision and oversight of all activities of the congregation. Elders attend Session meetings on the first Wednesday of each month from September to June. Each elder also serves on one of the committees of Session. As well, each elder is assigned a group of approximately ten people/couples with whom to maintain contact.

According to the Book of Forms...

"Election to the eldership is the call of God, through the congregation, for service in Christ's Church. Since the eldership is a spiritual office concerned with the rule and pastoral oversight of the congregation only suitable men and women should be considered. They should be committed Christians, in regular attendance at public worship, persons of sound judgment and upright character, and either knowledgeable or prepared to learn of the government of the church."

If you would like to nominate someone, please contact either Jo Szostak or Bette Kelly.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

ADVENT PARTY Mark your calendars!

The Fellowship Committee is planning our Annual Advent Party on December 2nd, immediately after church. We will have some Advent activities, Christmas Bingo - of course - and a lot of fun. We are planning on having chili and mac 'n cheese. Plan on joining all the other fun-loving people at First Church for this event. Hope to see all of you there.



Sheila Wilson,
Fellowship Committee Convener

WALK TO BETHLEHEM: **An Advent Pilgrimage**



Two years ago, I decided to embark on an Advent Pilgrimage and I haven't stopped walking since! I came across this little

program that invites participants to walk every day during the Season of Advent and to meditate, along the way, on biblical texts about the Advent journey to the manger. Mary and Joseph walked from Nazareth to Bethlehem, a journey of about 111 km. You can choose whatever distance you would like to walk

each day, but one possible goal is to walk the full distance of 111 km in the 28 days of Advent – about 4 km each day. You can walk indoors in the gymnasium at First Church or outdoors on the sidewalks and pathways. One circle around the main section of Wascana Lake, for example, just happens to be 4 km!

You can count your steps and distance with various watches or pedometer devices. There are many free apps available for iPhones or Android phones that you can also download. Or, don't worry about the exact distance too much, and just walk every day. It's your choice.

The biblical texts each day are meant to us meditate as we walk our Advent journey to the manger by reminding us of the Advent promises that are ours in Jesus – Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Some of the passages refer to walking and our journey of faith.

You can pick up a copy of the "Walk to Bethlehem" booklet in the narthex at the church. It includes instructions, Bible passages for each day, and a log sheet to keep track of your distance or steps. May this Advent walk be a blessing to you as you journey towards Christmas and to the gift of Emmanuel, God with us.

One final note: If you would like some company for one of your walks, whether it's around the gym at the church or outside, I'll be very happy to join you. I'm always up for a pastoral visit while walking at any time of year!

Rev. Amanda Currie

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

You are invited to an Advent Bible Study in the Morris Room on Tuesday evenings, December 4th and 11th at 7:30 pm. We will be doing a two-part study from *The Thoughtful Christian*, titled "Accounts of Jesus' Birth."

Here is an excerpt from the study, written by Steven M. Sheeley, professor of religion at Shorter College in Rome, Georgia:

The nativity scene feels right. It captures the meaning and importance of Christmas for many people around the world. But as a careful reader of the New Testament, I am struck by the reality that the nativity scene

does not appear in any of the Gospels. In fact, only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke even narrate the stories of Jesus' birth and infancy. John the Baptizer appears in the wilderness around the Jordan to prophesy and baptize an adult Jesus to begin Mark's Gospel story. And the Gospel of John starts before creation ("In the beginning..."), with the story itself beginning in Galilee.

Joining together (or "harmonizing") the story of Jesus found in the four canonical Gospels seems a logical step, and the Christian church has been doing so since early in its history. But the Gospels (and their readers) lose something in that process. The four Gospels paint varied portraits of Jesus the Messiah, and their variations add depth to the Jesus we encounter in the pages of the New Testament. That variety suggests that we ought to pay some attention to the individual Gospels, since the evangelists were aware that theirs was not the only story of Jesus being told or written.

Please join us in reflecting on the similarities and differences between the accounts of Jesus' birth in order to enter into a deeper understanding of the mystery of God with us, Emmanuel.

Rev. Amanda Currie

FUNDSCRIP

Order Sundays in November are Nov. 4 and Nov. 18. Now is the time to start thinking about Christmas and ordering gift cards. Our last order Sunday before Christmas will be Dec. 2, then we will take a break until January. Specials in November include HomeSense 8%, Ultimate Dining 6%, Winners 8%, Canadian Tire 5%. Cards ordered will be ready for pick-up the following Sunday. Stop by the table in the gym following worship to purchase gas and grocery cards or order cards from a wide variety of retailers.



SCENES OF WONDER

at Norman Kennedy Presbyterian Church

For the last few years, one of Norman Kennedy's Christmas events has been 'Scenes of Wonder'. This is a display of Nativity Scenes, beautifully arranged, creating a reminder of what and WHO we celebrate at Christmas.

Every year, as the committee begins planning, they seek out more and more 'Nativity Scenes' of all sizes and construction. Would the congregational members of First Church like to participate and include their personal sets in our display this year?

Everyone is always welcome to come to view our display. It will be shown to the public from December 1st through to December 3rd. We would have the nativity sets packed up by the 4th and ready to go back to your home on the 5th.

Leanne Irving is the convener of the Scenes of Wonder committee and she would be so happy to hear of some new scenes to be added to this year's display. If any are being offered, she can be contacted directly, or a message can be left with me at the church. Leanne's contact info is 306-949-6713 or mrsdenri@sasktel.net.

Thanks for sharing this information and for any offers of Nativity sets.

Blessings,
Ronda



NOVEMBER EVENTS

- 17 11:30 AM Music Team/Sunday School
Christmas planning meeting
- 18 10:30 AM Worship Service**
- 18 12:15 PM Organ Demonstration
- 19-21 Synod meeting at Shekinah
- 20 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 20 Bible Study - canceled
- 20 Noon Freedom 55ers
- 21 9:45 AM Riverbend Walk
- 22 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 22 7:00 PM Choir
- 25 10:30 AM Worship Service**
- 25 11:30 AM Congregational Meeting
- 27 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 27 10:30 AM Bible Study
- 27 Noon Freedom 55ers
- 27 7:00 PM Board of Managers
- 28 9:45 AM Riverbend Walk
- 28 7:00 PM Book Club
- 29 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 29 7:00 PM Choir
- 30 2:30 PM Prayer Shawls @
Wintergreene



DECEMBER EVENTS

- 2 10:30 AM Worship for Advent**
(Advent 1 – Hope: The service will include Holy Communion)
- 2 11:45 AM Advent Party
- 4 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 4 7:30 PM Advent Bible Study (1 of 2)
(Reflecting on the accounts of Jesus' birth, we enter into a deeper understanding of the mystery of God with us, Emmanuel.)
- 5 9:45 AM Riverbend Walk
- 5 7:00 PM Session
- 6 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 6 7:00 PM Choir
- 9 10:30 AM Worship for Advent**
(Advent 2 – Peace)
- 11 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 11 7:30 PM Advent Bible Study (2 of 2)
- 12 9:45 AM Riverbend Walk
- 13 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 16 10:30 AM Worship for Advent**
(Advent 3 – Joy)
- 18 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 18 7:00 PM Blue Christmas Service**
(This special time of worship is open to everyone, especially those who are feeling a little "blue" at this time of year.)
- 19 9:45 AM Riverbend Walk
- 20 9:00 AM Adult Walk
- 20 7:30 PM Christmas Concert
(A Festival of Lessons and Carols; featuring the Chancel Singers and Friends. There will be a free will offering to support our refugee sponsorship.)
- 23 10:30 AM Worship for Advent**
(Advent 4 – Love: This service will include a dramatic presentation by the children of our Sunday School, titled "The Word Became Flesh.")
- 24 7:00 PM Christmas Eve Service**
(Candles, carols and the Good News of Great Joy for all people!)
- 30 10:30 AM Worship Service**