

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

October 2018

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

##### **“Meet your elder” Sunday**

A few weeks ago, on Sunday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, we provided a special opportunity to “meet your elder” during the fellowship time after worship. Many of you stayed a little longer that Sunday and visited with your elder over coffee and Timbits. We are glad you did! In case you missed that Sunday and you're still wondering who is your elder, the lists of elders and their districts are posted in the gymnasium on the wall by the kitchen, so you can check these out.

##### **Who are the elders at First Church?**

Elders are faithful members of the congregation who are elected to serve on the Session and are ordained for a ministry of leadership in the church. Although elders are ordained for life, here at First Church we use term service, that is, elders usually serve on Session for a term of 6 years after which they can step down or be re-elected for another term. The group of elders actively serving on Session changes somewhat over time, as a few new or returning elders are elected each year.

The current elders serving on the Session of First Church are: Jo Szostak (Clerk of Session), Andrew Donovan, Jim Doolittle, Tom Ireton, Bette Kelly, Margaret MacDonald, Tammy MacDonald, Graeme Mitchell, Doug Stewart, and Sheila Wilson.

##### **What's an elder, anyway?**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada believes that having elders is faithful to the way the apostles of the New Testament organized the early churches. The word “Presbyterian” comes from the Greek word *presbuteros* meaning “elder.” We are ruled by elders.

The early references in the New Testament describe elders as assisting church ministers: “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting,

committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust” (Acts 14:23). See also Acts 11:30 and 15:22. However, the early church was a church that was in transition; later references (as in Titus 1:4-9 and 1 Peter 5:7) imply that elders were the ministers.

From a scriptural point of view, in the early Christian church the elders were the church leaders who met, thought and reasoned together with the apostles. Together they led and guided the church. At the Reformation, the office of the elder was given a key role, becoming the basis for the Presbyterian form of government.

Elders (also called “ruling elders”) play a key role in the life of the congregation today. Through membership on Session they work closely with the minister (also called the “teaching elder”) in: supervision and oversight of the congregation, membership and pastoral care, worship including participation in the sacraments, Christian education, stewardship and mission, and in relating to presbytery, synod and General Assembly.

Most decisions about the life and work of the congregation are made by Session. With the minister, who acts as the moderator of Session, elders work as leaders—leading the congregation in its fellowship and in its mission. Elders seek the will of God for the congregation, so they can lead it in the direction they believe Jesus would have it go. They seek to model themselves after Jesus as they listen to people and serve the church.

This might seem like a daunting task. However, the church believes that God has given each elder gifts, that the congregation has recognized these gifts, and that each elder has “discerned a call.” By working together and sharing their gifts as a Session and with the minister, elders are able to carry out their many tasks and responsibilities.

## Why do you have an elder?

In addition to leadership and governance responsibilities that the elders on Session carry out together as a group, elders also have a pastoral care role. Members and adherents of the congregation are each assigned an elder, and your elder is available to you if you have questions about the church's ministry, as well as for prayer, encouragement, and Christian friendship.

As your minister, I am available to you for pastoral support. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have theological questions, doubts or anxieties, or need a listening ear and some prayer as you navigate the challenges of life, family, work, and discipleship. But your elder will also be there for you, and I encourage you to get to know him/her and to ask for support when you need it.

Rev. Amanda Currie

## SESSION

September was a very busy month in our church, with lots of things going on. As we settle into the year, many dates are being set for the usual activities of our church, as well as a number of new initiatives. It looks like it will be an exciting year for First!

The Rory Allen Concert on Sept. 29 was a great success, and the Session is grateful to Brett Pollard for proposing the idea and carrying through on the implementation. Members of Brett's committee included John Murray, Amanda Currie, Bob Wilson, Margaret MacDonald, Emily Ireton, Brenda Tamaki and Eva Roesner. Thanks for all your efforts!

There are two important events coming up:

Mark your calendars for a **Global Potluck Supper on Sunday, Oct. 28** at 5:30 p.m. Please bring a dish your grandparents would have eaten that is representative of your cultural heritage. Also, if you have a traditional cultural dress we would encourage you to wear it that night. This event will launch our refugee sponsorship project. Nyabani and Elijah Ngor will share with us the story of Nyabani's family members who are living in a refugee camp near Khartoum. We

will also share information on ways you can contribute to this project. The event is sponsored by the Stewardship Committee.

Rev. Amanda has been working to put together a team of four people from First Church to attend the **Transform Conference Nov. 8-11** in Orillia, Ontario. We are hopeful that the team will gain new ideas and inspiration to help our congregation move forward.

Jo Szostak  
Clerk of Session

## HAPPY THANKSGIVING from the Presbytery of Assiniboia!



In this season of Thanksgiving, the Presbytery of Assiniboia holds in prayer all of our ministers and congregations, grateful for your sharing in the ministry in this region of Saskatchewan. Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Presbytery met on September 15, 2018 at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Grenfell. How appropriate that we could gather in the home congregation of our new Moderator, elder Fran Neuls, and be led in prayer and worship by the minister at Trinity Church, the Rev. Isaac Lee.

In addition to having a new Moderator of Presbytery, we also had a "committee shuffle" this summer so all our committee convenors are new, and members are learning the work of the new committees where they have been assigned, whether Congregational Life, Mission, or Ministry.

One of the things that Presbyteries do is to study and report on church documents and policies that come to us from the General Assembly.

Here at the local level, we provide input and direction for the decisions of the whole Presbyterian Church in Canada. At our next meeting in November, we'll discuss a recent document from the Church Doctrine Committee titled, "On the Question of Unity and Diversity." If you're interested in reading it too, check it out at <https://presbyterian.ca/gao/ga2018/2018referrals/> under the items for Study and Report. If you do read it, please don't be discouraged by the ending which does not feel very hopeful about the unity of the PCC. Keep in your prayers a committee of PCC past-Moderators who are working together this year to formulate and propose a strategy for keeping our denomination together in unity with the diversity of perspectives and theology that exists within our church.

Working together as congregations and missions is foundational to what it means to be Presbyterian, and here in Saskatchewan we will be trying out a broader network of relationships as we meet together with both Presbyteries (Assiniboia and Northern Saskatchewan) and the Synod of Saskatchewan for a special retreat November 19-21, 2018. This gathering will take place at Shekinah Retreat Centre located about 50 minutes north of Saskatoon on the North Saskatchewan River. It will be our first experiment combining the Synod meeting with both Presbytery meetings. An integrated agenda has been developed. Please pray for us as we meet and imagine a future of sharing ministry and mission together in new ways.

For the time being, it is a Presbytery responsibility to provide oversight and care for the congregations and ministers within the bounds of Assiniboia. This Fall, numerous teams from Presbytery will be conducting visitations to congregations to encourage and support you in your ministries. I hope you'll welcome these visitors and share freely about your joys and struggles.

At our September meeting, we heard the report on a summer visitation to Bekevar Church in Kipling. Although the small congregation has already received approval to sell their physical building, the congregation will continue in worship, fellowship, mission, and service in a

rented space after the building sells. Presbytery agreed to hold a worship service of thanksgiving and transition when the Bekevar church building sells, so watch for notices about that, and plan to join us in thanksgiving and prayer for this congregation.

The Presbytery is pleased to be able to support theological students who are preparing for ordained ministry. Unfortunately, Samuel Yeonjoo Jung confirmed his intention to withdraw from the recertification process as he may not be continuing towards ministry in our denomination. However, Jinsil Park was recertified as a candidate for ministry and began his 2-semester program at the Presbyterian College in Montreal this September. The program includes a placement in a congregation, classes in Reformed worship, Reformed theology, Presbyterian history, and other courses TBD. Please keep Jinsil in your prayers as he experiences this year of intensive learning and preparation.

Our Synod Youth Coordinator, Martha Fergusson, reported a very busy summer of ministry with children and youth throughout the province. Together with our Summer Student Minister, Guy Laberge, Martha coordinated Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs in 11 locations, working together with ministers and volunteers of the local congregations. Martha also organized a group of youth and young adults from Saskatchewan who attended the Canada Youth 2018 conference at Brock University in early July. She shared pictures and reflections on these summer ministries.

Jo Szostak reported on her work as Congregational Development Coordinator. Although the summer was a quieter time, several meetings with congregations are planned for this Fall. St. Andrew's Swift Current is beginning a significant new program for congregational development called "ReVision." This is a new pilot project through Canadian Ministries. If your congregation would like assistance, please contact Jo at 306-789-5071 or [jszostak@acesscomm.ca](mailto:jszostak@acesscomm.ca).

Jo also reported about the ongoing new church development work happening in White City. We

held a VBS program at the Community Centre in August, and had 17 children from the area participate. We are also working together with an ecumenical group to organize a Thanksgiving Service in White City on October 7<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm. If this is successful, we hope to offer Christmas and Easter community services as well. Work is underway to begin surveying a random selection of White City residents to determine what the needs are for ministry.

We do invite you to stay connected with Presbytery and all our congregations by reading little newsletters like this one. But you can also connect online. Our website is <http://pccweb.ca/assiniboia-presbytery/> and we have a Facebook group called "Saskatchewan Presbyterians" (for all of the province) which you are welcome to join.

### **WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

The autumn season has arrived, and we hope that everyone had an enjoyable summer and is ready for all the new activities the Rev. Amanda and the Worship Committee have ready.

Thanks to Rev. Amanda for the two services in September – the Backpack and Teachers' Sundays. These two worship services have so adequately emphasized the importance of a new school year for both our students and teachers.

At the Worship Committee meeting on September 25<sup>th</sup>, Bill Sgrazzutti reported that all the organ refurbishing is complete, and that Hart Godden has offered to explain and demonstrate the organ improvements to the congregation at a date to be determined.

Those of you who have taken the time to read Rev. Amanda's message on the first page of the new pictorial directory will have seen her Celtic Blessing. This blessing inspired Rodolfo Omolida, our Contemporary Arts Coordinator, to compose a special piece of music to accompany it. His composition will be performed at a Sunday service soon.

Thanksgiving Sunday this year is also World-Wide Communion Sunday. We look forward to seeing you at this special service.

There will also be a special service on the Sunday before Remembrance Day. We will certainly miss Mac MacDonald's input at this time, which he so adequately helped organize in past years. This will also be a time to remember "Mac" and his service to our armed forces.

Volunteers are still needed to serve as ushers for our worship services. A list of ushers' duties is being prepared. If you can assist with ushering for even one Sunday, please speak to Marianne Woods or e-mail her at [marianne@osac.ca](mailto:marianne@osac.ca). Your help will be most appreciated. Thanks to those who have offered to read Scriptures during worship services this fall season. If you would like to volunteer as a lector during the months of January through June, please let Marianne know.

Joyce McKersie  
Worship Committee

### **MISSION & OUTREACH**

**Do you have winter coats, boots, scarves and hats you don't use any more?** Carmichael Outreach is in constant need of these items now that cold weather has arrived. Adult socks are also in demand. Donations can be dropped off at their housing/clothing location in the former Sears Outlet; use the 6th Ave door. We will also place a large donation box in the narthex (in the balcony landing) and will deliver your donations periodically.

It's time once again to begin our annual ***Freedom From Freezing*** knitting program. Knitters -- your child and youth-sized mitts and scarves will be donated to Kitchener School. Non-knitters -- your donations of yarn are most welcome. Bins for yarn and completed projects will be set out in the Narthex shortly. Freedom From Freezing will continue until the end of January.

Mary Jesse.  
Convenor

## FUNDSCRIP

October marks our 7th anniversary of fundraising with FundScrip! During that time, we have raised almost \$13,000 for First Church - and most of that money was raised just by buying gas and groceries with gift cards! Thanks to all of our faithful supporters! If you haven't tried it before, stop by the FundScrip table in the gym following worship. When you buy a card, a percentage comes back to the church. It costs you nothing extra and you can use the card like money.

We're having a celebration in October. We'll have a draw for a gift card at the end of the month. You can enter the draw by putting your name in the draw box on the FundScrip table. Everyone is eligible - no purchase is required. Enter every week and you might be the big winner!

Order Sundays in October are October 7 and 21. Promotions for October include Giant Tiger 5%, Shell 3%, Old Navy 10%, Gap 10% and Sobeys 3%. Cards ordered will be available for pickup the following Sunday. Pick up an order form and see the wide variety of retailers available. You can also purchase gas and grocery cards at the table. Thanks for your support!

## OCTOBER EVENTS

- 7 10:30 AM Worship Service**  
Join us today for coffee or tea after worship. We will meet in the gym and enjoy a variety of breads and jam. We recognize the different "breads" being used around the world as we celebrate Worldwide Communion today.
- 8 Thanksgiving Monday - Office closed**  
Note: Rev. Amanda is on study leave in Montreal this week. She will be back Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>.
- 9 9:00 AM Adult Walk**
- 9 10:30 AM Bible Study**
- 9 Noon Freedom 55ers**
- 11 7:00 PM Choir**
- 14 10:30 AM Worship Service**  
(Jennifer Holtslander preaching)
- 16 9:00 AM Adult Walk**
- 16 10:30 AM Bible Study**
- 16 Noon Freedom 55ers**
- 17 9:45 AM Riverbend Walk**
- 17 7:00 PM Board of Managers**
- 18 - No Choir tonight**
- 21 10:30 AM Worship Service**  
(Jennifer Holtslander preaching)  
Rev. Amanda will be on a visitation to St. Andrew's in Moosomin.
- 23 9:00 AM Adult Walk**
- 23 10:30 AM Bible Study**
- 23 Noon Freedom 55ers**
- 24 9:45 AM Riverbend Walk**
- 25 7:00 PM Choir**
- 26 2:30 PM Prayer Shawls @ Wintergreene**
- 27 10:00 AM Worship Committee**
- 28 10:30 AM Worship Service**
- 28 5:30 PM Global Potluck Supper**
- 30 9:00 AM Adult Walk**
- 30 10:30 AM Bible Study**
- 30 Noon Freedom 55ers**
- 30 7:00 PM Book Club**
- 31 9:45 AM Riverbend Walk**