

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

#### October 2019

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

##### Becoming A Fruitful Congregation: First Fruits

About a year ago, a small team of First Church leaders attended the "Transform" Conference offered by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Mary Jesse, Heather Mazurak, Bob Wilson and I attended on behalf of the congregation, and Jo Szostak was at the conference too in her role of Congregational Development Coordinator for the Synod. So, we had five First Church people listening, learning, thinking, and praying about what God may be calling us to do next in our ministry here in Regina.

"Transform" was a good chance to hear speakers, participate in workshops, and be inspired by creative ministries and missions in different parts of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Of course, five people cannot decide the future plans of a congregation, and we had no intentions of doing so. Our goal was instead to gather some ideas and possibilities, and we agreed that we should go home and seek to engage the whole congregation in a process of discernment and planning for the next steps in our ministry together.

There are lots of good things already happening at First Church. We gather for joyful worship, care for one another in community, nurture one another in faith through educational opportunities, and reach out in mission and service in a variety of ways including our current commitment to refugee sponsorship. So, the plan is not to replace these ministries or to add so many new projects that we all burn out from overwork. But our goal is to be intentional about what we are doing, how we are setting priorities and plans, and to involve everyone in discerning our next steps. We hope that our ministries can be transformed so that they are even more fruitful!

The Transform Team proposed to Session that we use Robert Schnase's book "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations" as a framework for our

reflection and planning for ministry. We will take our time, considering each one of the five practices over a number of months. The practices are: Radical hospitality; Passionate worship; Intentional faith development; Risk-taking mission and service; and Extravagant generosity. You may notice that these are all things that are already a part of our ministry at First Church, but Schnase's exploration of each one invites us to do what we do in bigger, deeper, and more faithful ways so that our ministries will be more and more fruitful.

This Fall Season we are beginning with the practice of Radical Hospitality. This kind of hospitality refers not only to how we welcome and embrace newcomers and visitors who show up at our church on Sunday mornings, but also how we go out beyond our church to show hospitality to our neighbours in the community.

We began with a Thanksgiving Prayer Walk around the neighbourhood on October 12th.



A dozen church members showed up to walk and pray for the people in our neighbourhood, and others joined in prayer from home. We

thought about the emergency services personnel, musicians and artists, teachers and school staff and volunteers, business owners and workers, political leaders and public servants, ecumenical and interfaith partners, and those who live and work in our community. We acknowledged the gifts and contributions that they make, and we prayed for their well-being. We began to wonder about how we might reach out to them or partner with them in what God wants to do in our neighbourhood.

We will continue to learn about “Radical Hospitality” and reflect on the people in our neighbourhood in our worship service on Sunday, October 27th at 10:30 am. I hope you’ll be there to share in the reflection and prayer with us.

Then, on Saturday, November 9th at 10:00 am, please join us for the workshop on Radical Hospitality in the gymnasium. This will be more than a learning opportunity, but most importantly a chance to pray and plan together for First Church’s next steps in ministry. We need your presence to help us listen together for the Holy Spirit’s prompting and guiding us towards new and radical ministries of hospitality that will produce fruit for the Kingdom of God. Let us know that you plan to attend by adding your name to the sign-up sheet in the narthex.

The Rev. Amanda Currie

### **SESSION**

As the fall gets into full swing, all committees are putting plans in place. Some notable events coming up are:

- ◆ Fellowship is planning a Bunwich Lunch for Nov. 3 and an Advent party for Dec. 1
- ◆ The Transform Team is presenting a workshop on Radical Hospitality on Nov. 9 from 10 - 12 in the morning. All are welcome! This is part of a larger future planning initiative.
- ◆ Mission and Outreach has a special service project planned for this Advent season
- ◆ A Blue Christmas service on Tuesday, Dec. 17 at 7:00 p.m.
- ◆ An anniversary lunch to celebrate 95 years as a congregation in January 2020

Many more events are planned for 2020 but we’ll let you know about them after Christmas.

Also approved at our meeting - We’re pleased to welcome Cade Eastwood as a Music Scholar beginning in November.

Jo Szostak  
Clerk of Session

### **FROM THE MODERATOR: Loving These Women in Ministry!**

In the last issue of The Presbyterian Connection, I shared one of my favourite ecumenical quotes, from Cardinal Mercier of Malines, an ecumenical pioneer. Speaking of reconciliation between the churches, he suggested that, “In order to unite with one another, we must love one another. In order to love one another, we must know one another. In order to know one another, we must go and meet one another.”

Over the last few months, I have had the opportunity as the 2019 Moderator to go and meet a variety of people. Those of you who have been following me on Facebook will know that my Autumn season has been filled with visits to speak, listen, connect, and learn about so many of our siblings in the Body of Christ. And with each meeting there have been opportunities to learn about our partners, to grow in love for them, and to take steps towards greater unity in Christ.

When I returned from the Moderator’s international visit to the Reformed Churches in Hungary and Romania in September, many people asked me what the highlight of the trip had been. That was a difficult question to answer. The people were welcoming and hospitable. The bishops, ministers, and lay leaders were dedicated and inspiring. The history of the countries and political issues were complex and difficult to fully understand. The challenges of deep poverty, cultural and linguistic divisions, economic migration, and the Churches’ mission with the Roma People each added layers of complexity and much upon which to reflect.

As I thought about it, I realized that the highlight for me was the experience of meeting, and

getting to know and to love, the women in ministry that I encountered in Hungary and Romania. Yes, we also met some excellent male church leaders including several bishops who greeted us warmly, and the ecumenical officers of both denominations who guided us, translated for us, and provided for our practical needs in many and various ways.

But it was the women in ministry who touched my heart.

First there was Dóra Kanizsai-Nagy who coordinates the Kalunba Refugee Ministry in Budapest. I was amazed by the dedication and determination of Dóra and her small team to support and equip the vulnerable people who are trying to make a new life in Hungary after fleeing from persecution in their home countries. Given the political climate, general fear of refugees and immigrants, and lack of financial and moral support, I was touched by Dóra's personal sacrifice to stay faithful to this important work.



*Dóra, left, and Kalunba Staff*

Next, we visited Samuel House in the Village of Mische, Romania, and met Csilla Bertalan. Csilla directs a Christian social ministry that supports children from poor families in a rural area. Thirty-six children from pre-school to high school are assisted, with 16 currently living in the house all week, and the rest living in the village. They are supervised by full-time caregivers, before returning to their families on weekends. The children are selected based on need, poverty, and those at risk of being put into "state care" orphanages. The non-residential students come to the house during the afternoon and are fed a healthy lunch and dinner before going to their homes in the village.



*Csilla with Joan and Joyce from St. Giles Church in St. Catherine's*

It was clear that Csilla loves the children of Samuel House like her own children, and she works hard every day to support both the children and their parents so that the children can receive a good education and escape poverty.

In the City of Oradea, Romania, we met the Rev. Judit Vinczéné Pálfi who is the Director of Missions for the Reformed Church of Romania. We visited some of the mission programs that she oversees, and she was excited to share with us about how she is bringing together all the diaconal ministries under one umbrella and working on connecting the ministers with each other for support, encouragement, and training. In addition to her denominational role, Judit also serves as the pastor of a local congregation, where we were privileged to worship and hear her preach.

Back in Budapest, Hungary, we visited with several more women engaged in various ministries. Dia Erdélyi made a particular impression on me, especially when she introduced herself as an "ecumaniac." She was serving in the ecumenical office of the Reformed Church of Hungary, but it quickly became apparent that it was not just a job for her, but a calling. Dia grew up in an interchurch family with a mother in the Reformed Church and a father in the Greek Catholic Church, and her ecumenical family experience prompted her to work for the

unity of the Christian Church. In addition to working in the ecumenical office, she also serves as an elder at a very diverse and inclusive congregation in Budapest, and as an Executive Committee member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.



*Dia, Rev. Amanda and Szabina*

During our visit to Dia's congregation, we also had the pleasure of meeting Szabina Sztojka, the Student Associate Minister at the St. Columba Scottish Mission, the English-speaking congregation in Budapest. When Szabina finishes her studies, she will be the first woman with a Roma ancestry to be ordained in the Reformed Church of Hungary. It was so interesting to hear about her experiences, aware of the fact that this young woman was breaking through the stained-glass ceilings of both gender and culture, and to anticipate all that God would do through her as her ministry continued.

I felt privileged to be a Canadian Presbyterian Woman Moderator to visit, encourage, and learn from these inspiring women. As I got to know them, I truly began to love them and to desire unity in Christ across differences in geography, language, culture, and experience.

Back home in Canada, meetings with women in ministry continued to be a part of my itinerary. Of course, I had gatherings with congregations, presbyteries, and students at Knox College and the Toronto School of Theology that included a diversity of genders. And I was also an ecumenical guest at the Plenary Assembly of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, which as you can imagine, was mostly men – Catholic Bishops.

But the women continued to encourage and inspire me. In Manitoba, I met Ruth Magnuson, the Executive Director of the Winnipeg Inner City Missions, a program that is supported through Presbyterians Sharing. Ruth introduced me to the staff and volunteers and toured me around the various programs of WICM. And I was once again amazed by another woman putting her heart and soul into the work of ministry and the lives of the people with whom she ministers.



*NIMC Executive and PCC Staff*

I was also able to visit the Rev. Margaret Mullin and the people of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church, the Indigenous Presbyterian congregation of Winnipeg. And finally, I was welcomed to join in meetings of the Executive of the National Indigenous Ministries Council that was meeting with PCC staff Jen deCombe (Canadian Ministries) and Allyson Carr (Justice Ministries). As these Indigenous and non-Indigenous women discussed together the sensitive and important issues around our church's response to the Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, I was honoured to be part of the conversation to listen and learn from these wise women leaders in our own denomination.

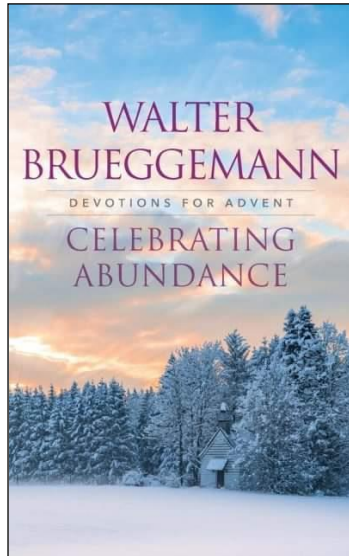
I am looking forward to many more meetings as I continue my travels as Moderator this year, and I will continue to pray that in meeting one another, we will come to know one another, and then grow to love one another as well. And I pray that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will make us One in Christ, so that the world will believe.

Rev. Amanda Currie

## **ADVENT BOOK STUDY**

In Advent 2019, Presbyterians across the country are invited to join a denomination-wide book study on Walter Bruggemann's Celebrating Abundance. Using thoughtfully prepared small group and individual weekly study guides, Presbyterians will journey through Advent reflecting on themes of God's abundance as revealed through the small details of faith stories—a cry in the wilderness, a teenage mother, a worn-down stable and a promise of a new day.

You are invited to join in the study group at First Church or to participate as an individual if you prefer. The study group will meet at the church on Monday evenings at 7:00 pm in Advent (Mondays Dec. 2, 9, 16, & 23).



Please let Amanda know that you wish to participate by October 31st so that we can order enough copies of the book. The church will pay for the books, but if you wish to make a donation to cover the cost, it is \$15 each (if we order less than 20) or \$13 each (if we order 20 copies or more).

## **CHRISTIANS TOGETHER IN CANADA TODAY**

The Canadian Council of Churches celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019. To mark the event, we're hosting "Christians Together in Canada Today" -- a cross-Canada live-streamed event featuring dialogue with prominent church leaders interacting with participants across the county. Celebrate #75YearsTogether with the Canadian Council of Churches.

Be sure to save the date for this cross-Canada event from 10:30am to 1:30pm, Saturday Oct. 26 at Living Spirit Centre, 3018 Doan Drive, Regina. Hosted by the Regina Council of Churches and the Living Spirit Centre. Contact Rev. Amanda Currie at [revfpc@sasktel.ca](mailto:revfpc@sasktel.ca) for local details.

## **WELCOME BACK POTLUCK**

Thanks to the Fellowship Committee for hosting a great "Welcome Back Potluck" on Sunday, September 29th. It was wonderful to connect with First Church friends and family, to share food and fellowship together. The event also included a moment of giving thanks for Joyce Rivers' many years of service to the congregation by singing in the choir. Some of the choir members sang Joyce's favourite song, "Soon and Very Soon" and we all enjoyed the delicious cake! Thanks to Ginny Nisbet for the lovely decoration on the cake, including the musical notation for "Soon and Very Soon."



## FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Mark your calendars! The Fellowship Committee is planning a Bunwich Lunch on November 3, 2019 immediately after church. Plan to stay after church and join us for lunch and a visit with your friends. There will be a freewill offering to cover expenses. Hope to see all of you there.

Sheila Wilson

## FUNDSCRIP

This Sunday will be the last order Sunday for October. November order Sundays will be Nov. 3 and Nov. 17, with the final order Sunday before Christmas on Dec. 1. So, plan now for your Christmas gifts! October specials include Giant Tiger 5% and Shell 3%. A reminder that McDonald's gift cards are now available (as well as other fast food cards like A&W, KFC, Subway, Wendy's...) Stop by the table in the gym following worship to place an order or purchase gas and grocery cards. Thanks for your support.

## CAMP CHRISTOPHER

Hello to everyone at First Presbyterian, Regina Many thanks for your recent donation to our t-shirt campaign. I am happy to report that every camper did go home with a new t-shirt, many with the names of their new friends written on them.

Thank you again for your generosity.

Sheila Coulter,  
Camp Christopher Treasurer

## 120th ANNIVERSARY AT KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Weyburn

(Knox Hall, 136 - 2nd Street) On Saturday, November 2nd, 2019 at 5:30 pm, Knox Presbyterian Church will celebrate 120 years of faithful Christian service, dedication and commitment in the Weyburn community. We invite you to join us as we honour the memories of yesterday, the joys of today and the hopes of tomorrow.

Cocktails at 5:30, Supper at 6:30, Commemoration of Rev. John Ferrier, entertainment. Tickets are \$25. For information call (306) 842-6405 or (306) 842-4203.



## PRAYER IN UNCERTAINTY

God of those who falter:  
give us grace in our uncertainty;  
give us courage  
to persist in choosing you  
over and above all else;  
to keep on risking vulnerable love;  
to keep on keeping the faith. Amen  
~ Julie Greenan

## OCTOBER EVENTS

<b>20</b>	<b>10:30 AM</b>	<b>Worship &amp; Sunday School</b>
22	9:00 am	Adult Walk
22	10:30 am	Adult Bible study
22	Noon	Freedom 55'ers
23	7:00 pm	Board of Managers
23	7:00 pm	Youth
24	9:00 am	Adult Walk
24	7:00 pm	Choir
24	8:15 pm	Contemporary Group
<b>27</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Worship &amp; Sunday School</b>
29	9:00 am	Adult Walk
29	10:30 am	Adult Bible study
29	Noon	Freedom 55'ers
30	7:00 pm	Youth
30	7:00 pm	Book Club
31	9:00 am	Adult Walk
31	7:00 pm	Choir
31	8:15 pm	Chancel Singers

## NOVEMBER EVENTS

1	2:30 pm	Prayer Shawl Group @ Wintergreene Estates
2	10:00 am	Worship Committee
<b>3</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Worship &amp; Sunday School (Communion)</b> Preacher: The Rev. Bob Wilson
3	11:45 am	Bunwich Lunch
5	9:00 am	Adult Walk
5	10:30 am	Bible Study
5	Noon	Freedom 55'ers
6	7:00 pm	Youth
7	9:00 am	Adult Walk
7	7:00 pm	Choir
7	8:15 pm	Chancel Singers
9	10:00 am	Radical Hospitality Workshop