

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

October 2020

#### **MINISTER'S MESSAGE**

Happy Thanksgiving First Church!

In a time when there continue to be pandemic-related restrictions and challenges, we may be less inclined to feel thankful. Some of us are still quite isolated. Some are struggling with financial issues and worrying about the future. Some are disappointed because another holiday is coming and celebratory gatherings with extended families and friends are still not allowed. Still, I hope you'll take some time this weekend to practise gratitude.

If you need a little bit of inspiration, check out the "Half an Hour of Hymns" for Thanksgiving that we livestreamed to the FirstPresbyterian Regina Facebook page on Thursday evening, October 8<sup>th</sup>. You can find it on Facebook or watch it from my sermon website at [www.currielesson.ca](http://www.currielesson.ca) If you don't have a computer, tablet, or phone on which to watch, ask someone in your small circle of family/friends to play it for you. What a great way to share it with a grandchild or friend who might also enjoy it!

Over the last week, the White Butte Christian Community (an ecumenical group of churches reaching out to the White Butte area) has been celebrating "12 Days of Thanksgiving and Praise" with a series of daily videos shared on Facebook. (See the details about this program in Jo Szostak's piece below, and consider watching.) In the video for Day 7 Russell Mitchell-Walker, the minister at Eastside United Church, shared a simple practice for growing our sense of gratitude and thanksgiving.

Taken from Diana Butler Bass' book, *Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks*, the practice is described as a daily examen that we can engage in each evening:

1. Become aware of God's presence.
2. Review the day with gratitude.
3. Pay attention to your emotions.

4. Choose one feature from the day, and pray from it.
5. Look towards tomorrow.

*"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*  
*(Philippians 4:4-7)*

As you give thanks this weekend, may God bless and sustain you and grant you peace. I am grateful that you are a part of the church family of First Church, and I am looking forward to the ways the upcoming opportunities for us to connect, to worship together (online & in-person), to serve together, and to share our faith with others.

Rev. Amanda Currie

#### **SESSION**

There are three online events to which we would like to draw your attention. Mark your calendars and plan to participate!

#### **12 Days of Thanksgiving and Praise**

Our presbytery is part of an ecumenical group ministering in the White City/Emerald Park area. We are currently presenting an online event "12 Days of Thanksgiving and Praise." The event began with a kickoff event on Oct.1. Then each day a member of the community shares what they are thankful for. Visit the White Butte Christian Community Facebook page to view daily posts. ([facebook.com/WhiteButteCC](https://facebook.com/WhiteButteCC))

Join us on Monday, Oct. 12 at 2:00 pm for a livestreamed Thanksgiving worship service.

## **Synod of Saskatchewan**

Our Synod will be holding their annual meeting online Oct. 16 and 17.

You are invited to join the Synod for worship on Friday, October 16 at 7:00 pm.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86361616440>

You are also invited to attend our Saturday morning conference. Presenters are Matthew Brough, Cyclical PCC Coordinator, and Jen deCombe, Associate Secretary of Canadian Ministries. They will be providing information and practical ideas for growing the church and revitalizing congregations.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84051902544?pwd=alhNREdISTBIUDVTIJDWDRpOUNWZz09>

Meeting ID: 840 5190 2544

Passcode: 098991

## **Camp Christopher**

Children's camps were cancelled this summer but that provided an opportunity to get lots of projects completed at the camp. Check out the camp Facebook page to see pictures of the many projects this summer.

(facebook.com/CampChristopher)

Mark your calendar for Nov. 22, as there will be a special worship service to celebrate Camp Christopher's 75th anniversary. More information will follow.

Jo Szostak  
Clerk of Session

## **MISSION & OUTREACH**

Many thanks to all who walked, rode and donated to our special PWS&D "Walk/Ride with the Moderator" event last Saturday, October 3. Amanda planned a beautiful fall 4km route for the group, which we walked or biked five times that morning, totalling 20 kms. Between each walk we returned to the church for a brief rest while Amanda hosted Facebook Live interviews with PWS&D staff and committee members.

The interview comment that resonated with me most was PWS&D Director Guy Smagghe's request that we remember a family of 7 living in Afghanistan as we walked; a family which struggles to afford basic food, and is suffering more because of Covid-19 pressures. A \$100

donation to PWS&D provides food security for that family for a month; and when Canadian matching grants are added, our contributions have an even larger impact.

Our 11-member Walk/Ride with the Moderator Team raised over \$4000 for PWSD programs. Ours was one of several Canadian teams which raised \$28,000 for PWSD programs around the world.

Mary Jesse,  
Mission & Outreach Convenor

## **PLANNED GIVING**

Applications Welcome for Planned Giving Projects

Our First Church Planned Giving Program is inviting applications for activities supported by our Planned Giving Funds. A project or initiative needs to support one aspect of our mission to be:

- joyful in our worship
- tender in our lives together; and
- daring in our outreach

The deadline for Planned Giving project applications is December 31, 2020. (You will find an application form at the bottom of this newsletter.) Applications will be considered by the congregation at the Annual General Meeting in spring 2021.

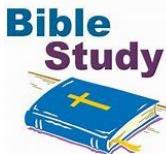
To comply with COVID safety precautions, we have attached an application form to this newsletter if you are receiving it by email. If you receive the newsletter via regular mail and need a planned giving application form, please contact Shirley in the office at 306.522.9571 and she will mail you one. Once you have completed your application, please submit it to Shirley in the office, in one of the following ways: by

- email to [firstpresregina@sasktel.net](mailto:firstpresregina@sasktel.net)
- regular mail to First Presbyterian Church, 2170 Albert Street, Regina, SK, S4P 2T9, or
- dropping your application off at the registration table if you are attending church in person on Sundays.

We welcome your proposals to further the mission of First Church!

Lisa Ann Wood  
on behalf of the Stewardship Committee

### MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a small group used to gather on Tuesday mornings for weekly Bible study in the Kennedy Room. Some folks used to come for the study and then stay to attend the Freedom 55ers group, which also hasn't been able to gather in-person since the middle of March. Although many of our church programs quickly moved online, we didn't do that with the Bible study because my schedule was already very full of Zoom meetings and it wasn't manageable at the time.

However, Bible study is important. It is helpful for faith formation and going deeper when we read the texts together, learn about their background and context, and consider thoughtfully what God may be saying to us today through these ancient words. It's an opportunity we don't typically have in worship, where you mostly hear what the minister has to say about the Scriptures, but rarely add your own thoughts and reflections.

Since we typically study one of the texts that will be featured in worship on the following Sunday, a mid-week Bible study is helpful to me as the preacher as well. Although I always read commentaries and reflections from a variety of Christian authors, getting together with church folk in our own community to talk about the texts for the week can often be a big help as I prepare for leading worship on Sunday.

Mid-week Bible study has resumed, and you are invited to join us. It doesn't matter if you are not available to attend every week, as every study session can stand alone. Join us via Zoom whenever you are able, learning from others and sharing your thoughts and questions as you are comfortable to do so. Bring a Bible (whatever translation you like) or look up the text on your computer in the

background of the Zoom gathering. We would love to have you join us. Here are the upcoming Bible study dates:

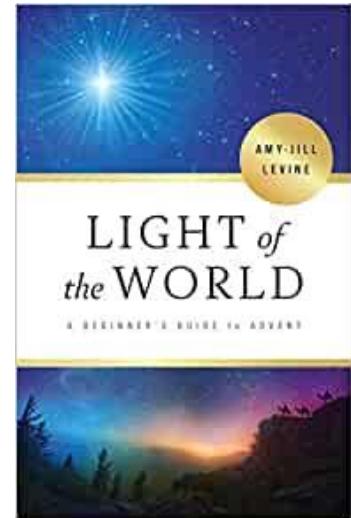
- Wed. Oct. 14th – 12:15 - 1 pm
- Thur. Oct. 22nd – 12:15 – 1 pm
- Wed. Oct. 28th – 12:15 – 1 pm
- Wed. Nov. 4th – 12:15 – 1 pm
- Thur. Nov. 12th – 12:15 – 1 pm
- Thur. Nov. 19th – 12:15 – 1 pm
- Fri. Nov. 27th – 12:15 – 1 pm

Rev. Amanda Currie

### ADVENT BOOK STUDY 2020

In Advent 2020, Presbyterians across the country are invited to join a denomination-wide book study on Amy-Jill Levine's *Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent*.

Guided by Levine's knowledge of the New Testament, strong storytelling skills and deep love of the gospels, Presbyterians will journey through Advent reflecting on the birth of Jesus as it is told in the first two chapters of the gospels of Matthew and Luke.



Here at First Church, join us on Tuesday evenings at 7:30 pm December 1, 8, 15, & 22. We'll meet on Zoom and use the study guide provided by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Let me know by November 1st if you would like to participate so that I can order enough copies of the book. (You're welcome to read along during Advent, even if you are not able to attend the Tuesday evening sessions. There is also a PCC Facebook discussion group which you can join.)

***Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent*** traces the Christmas narrative through the stories of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, the journey to Bethlehem and the visit from the Magi. Lingering in the often-overlooked details of these biblical characters and the

situations in which they find themselves, Levine explores the historical context, the literary and aesthetic implications, and the significance of the nativity story for readers then and now.

Contemporary readers will learn how these texts would have been read by those in the time they were written, and also how Matthew's and Luke's accounts of the nativity continue to be good news for us today.

***Don't let the title fool you; this book is not just for beginners!*** The book provides a rich and challenging learning experience for people from different stages in their Christian journey. As Levine draws us deep into the Nativity stories of Matthew and Luke, you'll find yourself pondering allusions to Jewish texts and Roman history that you hadn't noticed before, making connections to other stories in the gospels, and exploring themes that are as relevant today as they were when Jesus was born: birth and death, youth and aging, taxation and immigration, revelation and hope.

**RIDE FOR REFUGE: WALK, PRAY & GIVE  
with the Moderator to support PWS&D**



Thanks to the Mission & Outreach Committee for working with me to organize a "Ride for Refuge" event in support of Presbyterian World Service and Development on Oct. 3rd. I called it "Walk, Pray, and Give with the Moderator" as a kind of follow-up to the walking and praying we were doing all summer.

Ten people participated in the "Walk with the Moderator" team, walking and/or riding either from the church or in their own neighbourhood. Numerous First Church members, friends and family of the walkers, and other Presbyterians across the country supported the walk with a donation, totalling \$4140 as of Oct. 8th

(donations can still be made online up until Oct. 31st). Thank you so much for your support and generosity!

You may be interested to know that there were nine teams with 69 participants walking/riding for PWS&D across the country. The initial goal set by PWS&D leadership was \$10,000, but they soon realized we were going to surpass that goal and so raised it to \$20,000. As of Oct. 8th, together we have raised \$28,344.

Throughout the walk day here in Regina, we livestreamed PWS&D Mission Moments from the gymnasium. Each one had a speaker sharing about an aspect of the ministry of PWS&D. Donna Wilkinson and Mary Jesse shared live from the gym. Guy Smagghe (PWS&D Director), Rob Robertson (PWS&D Past Convenor), John Popiel (PWS&D Program Coordinator), and Andrea Perrett (PWS&D Current Convenor) shared via Zoom. All the videos can be viewed on the FirstPresbyterian Regina Facebook page. The videos are a great way to learn about the scope of the mission we support through PWS&D including emergency relief, food programs, development projects, refugee sponsorship, and much more.

Rev. Amanda Currie



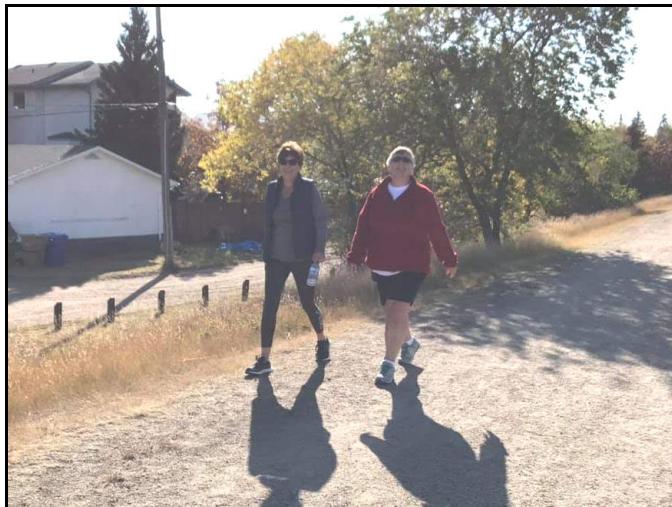
Alfred Ferozdin, Mary Jesse, Donna Wilkinson, Heather Mazurak, Rev. Amanda Currie and Andrew Donovan



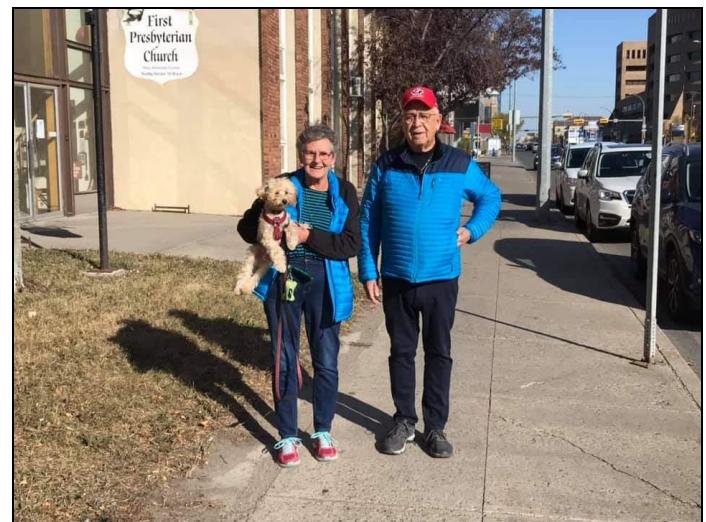
Nick Jesson



Rev. Amanda Currie



Mary Jesse and Donna Wilkinson



Sheila and Bob Wilson



Andrew Donovan and Alfred Ferozdin

## **HYMN SING**

Thanks to all the musicians and singers who contributed to our weekly livestreamed “Half an Hour of Hymns.” Many of the singers indicated that they enjoyed being a part of this summer ministry, and the videos were viewed many, many times by congregations and others on Facebook. Hopefully some of you were singing along!

Although we have finished the weekly Sunday afternoon hymn sings for the moment, the Music Team plans to continue occasionally, about once a month or so. The latest video was posted on Thursday evening, October 8<sup>th</sup>, and the hymns and songs are on the theme of Thanksgiving. We hope you’ll watch, enjoy, and share with your family and friends this Thanksgiving Weekend.

Rev. Amanda Currie



## **A REFLECTION FROM THE MODERATOR, THE REV. AMANDA CURRIE**

### *Thanksgiving faith formation activities for families*

As we move towards Thanksgiving weekend in this ongoing pandemic, I admit that I’m not feeling as thankful as I usually do at this time of year. The world is struggling with a global health crisis, political strife, fires burning out of control, racism and violence. Some recent tragic deaths in the Canadian Presbyterian community have impacted many of us as well.

Aware that I was not feeling very grateful as I began to prepare for Thanksgiving, I remembered a really hard Thanksgiving weekend some years ago. It was the year that my cat died, and I was trying to write a

Thanksgiving sermon in the midst of my grief.

The text was Luke 17:11–19—the one in which Jesus heals ten people from leprosy, and only one of them returns to thank Jesus. Sometimes this story is told as if it’s just a lesson in being polite. If someone does something nice for you, Miss Manners would say you should write them a thank-you card. But it seems to me that saying thank you to God is more than just a matter of manners. I think that saying thank you actually changes us. Being thankful actually makes us well.

“Boost your health with a dose of gratitude” was the title of a web launch by a medical group. The essay cited thousands of years of philosophic and religious teaching urging gratitude and then cited new evidence that grateful people, for whom gratitude is a permanent trait, have a health edge.

Commenting on this website, preacher John Buchanan writes, It may be that grateful people take better care of themselves, but there is evidence that gratitude alone is a stress reducer, that grateful people are more hopeful, and that there are links between gratitude and the immune system. So your mother was right when she made you call your grandmother and thank her for the birthday card.

C.S. Lewis, observing the connection between gratitude and personal well-being wrote: “I noticed how the humblest and at the same time most balanced minds praised most; while the cranks, misfits, and malcontents praised least. Praise almost seems to be inner health made audible.”

Do you remember what happened in the gospel story? Jesus was approached by ten sick people who wanted his help. They had leprosy, and they wanted to be healed. Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests, and as they went, they found themselves healed.

Now, they were ALL healed. Did you notice that? Not just the Jewish ones. Not just the righteous ones. Not just the ones who would remember to say thank you. Not just the ones who had faith. But only one of the former lepers turned back to praise God and thank Jesus. All we really know

about him is that he recognized a gift when he saw it and experienced it, that he returned to say, “thank you,” and that Jesus said to him, “Your faith has made you well.”

Remember, ALL of the former lepers were made CLEAN. They would all show themselves to the priests and be restored to the community. But only the one who came back to praise God and thank Jesus was made WELL. Another possible translation of the Greek phrase in this story could be: “Your faith has saved you.”

I don’t think that Jesus was just talking about the fact that the man’s skin was clear again. He was talking about wellness, about salvation, about the kind of wholeness of life that comes from an attitude of praise and gratitude to God for every sign of God’s grace and mercy.

In a pastoral reflection, Kimberly Bracken Long explains our gospel story in this way:

Jesus is teaching about the nature of faith. In short, to “have faith” is to live it, and to live it is to give thanks. It is living a life of gratitude that constitutes living a life of faith—THIS is the grateful sort of faith that has made this man from Samaria truly and deeply well.

As I struggled through that difficult week after my cat died, my role as preacher forced me to practice gratitude in spite of the circumstances and how I felt. I intentionally gave thanks for my cat’s life, for the peace, comfort, and fun he brought to my life, and for the people who listened and cared for me as I was grieving. By the end of the week, my pain and grief had not disappeared, but my heart was beginning to heal. And it became clear to me that thanksgiving is not just an activity for those whose lives are going well in every respect. Instead, no matter what our circumstances, we are blessed when we praise God and give thanks.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Philippian Christians from his jail cell in Rome, encouraged them to “Rejoice in the Lord always.”

He said, “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all

understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Christian writer, Anne Lamott, explains that her two favourite prayers are quite simple. In the morning she prays, “Help me, help me, help me.” And in the evening she prays, “Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

No matter what our circumstances are today or tomorrow, may we join in these prayers, and by God’s grace may we be made truly and deeply well.

Rev. Amanda Currie

## OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct. 11	10:30 am	<b>Worship</b> (in person & online)
	12:15 pm	<b>Sunday School by Zoom</b>
	2:00 pm	Coffee Hour by Zoom
Oct. 12	2:00 pm	Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service (on the White Butte Christian Community Facebook page)
Oct. 14	12:15 pm	Bible Study by Zoom
Oct. 14	7:00 pm	Mission & Outreach Cmte
Oct. 15	8:00 pm	Choir Chat by Zoom
Oct. 16	7:00 pm	Worship with the Synod of Saskatchewan (Zoom)
Oct. 17	8:45 am	Synod Conference by Zoom
Oct. 18	10:30 am	<b>Worship</b> (in person & online)
	12:15 pm	<b>Sunday School by Zoom</b>
	2:00 pm	Coffee Hour by Zoom
Oct. 22	12:15 pm	Bible Study by Zoom
Oct. 25	10:30 am	<b>Worship</b> (in person & online)
	12:15 pm	<b>Sunday School by Zoom</b>
	2:00 pm	Coffee Hour by Zoom
Oct. 27	7:00 pm	Board of Managers by Zoom
Oct. 28	12:15 pm	Bible Study by Zoom
	7:00 pm	Book Club by Zoom
Oct. 29	8:00 pm	Choir Chat by Zoom

**Nov. 1 10:30 am Worship  
(in person & online)  
12:15 pm Sunday School by Zoom**

Nov. 1 2:00 pm Coffee Hour by Zoom  
Nov. 4 12:15 pm Bible Study by Zoom  
Nov. 4 7:00 pm Session by Zoom

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: All Zoom links are sent out by email. If you do not receive the Zoom links you need, email, text, or phone Rev. Amanda.

## 10 Thanksgiving Faith Formation Activities for Families



**Nature Walk:** It's a beautiful time of year to be outdoors. Go for a walk as a family – invite your neighbours too! As you walk, discuss what you are most thankful for in God's natural creation. Bring souvenirs back from the walk (leaves, sticks, acorns, stones) and put them in a special place in your home. Each time you

walk by, remind the kids to give thanks to God for the natural world.

**A Count your Blessings Collage:** Find a blank wall in your home to attach a poster board. Place a small table of art supplies underneath it. In the days leading up to Thanksgiving, invite all members of your family and guests who visit the house to write, draw, or glue a magazine picture of what they are thankful for to the poster board. Use the collage at Thanksgiving dinner to give thanks to God for all you have.

**Thank You Bank:** Look through the Presbyterian Church in Canada Gifts of Change catalogue (<https://presbyterian.ca/gifts-of-change/>). Choose a "gift" related to something you are thankful for (clean water, food, education, security). Make "piggy banks" out of cans, jars, or boxes by decorating them with images related to the gift you've chosen. Deposit coins in the bank every day for the whole month of October and then submit your donation.

**Make a Thanksgiving Tree:** Gather or buy long sticks and put them in a large vase. Make paper cut outs of leaves in the fall colours of orange, red, yellow and brown. Invite family members and guests to write something on the leaves that they are thankful for. Attach the leaves to the branches using twine or colourful pipe cleaner.

<https://www.hgtv.com/design/make-and-celebrate/handmade/new-thanksgivingtradition-create-a-thankful-tree>

### Countdown to Thanksgiving Bible Verses:

Write or print off Bible verses about giving thanks. Put them in a jar. Have each child take a Bible verse from the jar and read it. Find a way of integrating the verse into a family routine you are already doing, such as driving or walking to school, eating breakfast, or reading before bed. Here are 28 printable Bible verses with questions you can use to start these discussions:

[https://www.faithgateway.com/thanksgiving-bible-verses-free-printable/-W6Swd\\_5Kii4](https://www.faithgateway.com/thanksgiving-bible-verses-free-printable/-W6Swd_5Kii4)



**Praise Pumpkins:** Start a family tradition of using pumpkins as reminders to praise God. Go to the pumpkin patch and have each member of the family choose their own unique pumpkin. Talk to kids about the qualities of pumpkins and draw links to what it means to be a Christian.

(<https://happyhomefairy.com/being-a-christian-is-like-being-a-pumpkin-free-printable/>). When you get home, paint the pumpkins white and then, after they are dry, write praises to God on them.



**Candle Lighting:** Fall is a time when the weather is cooling down and the days are getting shorter. Make it a ritual to light a candle in the evening. Remind your children that Jesus is a light for us in the darkness, and he promises to provide for our every need. Teach them to say a short prayer using words from Ephesians, “Christ, flood our hearts with light” (1:18), as you light the candle together.

**Prayers of Thanks:** Thanksgiving is the perfect time of year to teach children how to pray. Children are good at identifying things that they enjoy and appreciate about their lives. Ask them about those things and write them down or, better yet, have the child draw them. Using the list or drawing as a prayer prompt, start the praying simply with “God, we thank you for....” As you or your child names each thing, have your child draw circles using colourful markers around each of the prayer requests. At the end, you will have a colourful list of thankfulness that you can put on the fridge or up in the child’s room.

**Photo Scavenger Hunt:** Make a list of all the things that you are grateful for in your neighbourhood (favourite hangouts, gardens, parks, neighbours, restaurants, trees, etc.). Divide into two groups, ensuring that each group has a device they can use to take pictures. Send both groups out to collect pictures of as many things on the list as they can in a certain amount of time (your time limit will depend on the length of your list!). The group with photos of the most items wins. If both teams have pictures of all the items, then determine the winner by the quality of the photos. If you want to take this game one step further, have the photos developed and make a collage in your home of all the things you are grateful for in your neighbourhood.

**Share Thanksgiving Blessings:** As a family, choose a couple of people you’d like to bless this Thanksgiving. Perhaps there is an older person in your congregation without family in the area who could use a visit. Or maybe one of your neighbours is struggling with an illness and pick some flowers to bring them. Thanksgiving offers excellent opportunities to teach your kids how to put Jesus’ command to “love your neighbours” into action.

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*

## **Growing our Vision: Seeds of Abundant Joy**

### **Application Process**

- This process is designed to align with the annual congregational planning process.
- Applications are to be received in the Church office by December 31st.
- The Stewardship Committee reviews applications, considers money available, and develops recommendations.
- The Stewardship Committee presents all applications, with recommendations, to the joint Board/Session meeting in January/February.
- All applications are forwarded from the joint Board/Session meeting, with recommendations, to the congregational Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- Applications are considered for approval by the congregation at the AGM.
- Other applications arising during the remainder of the calendar year may be considered as funds are available. For amounts up to \$2000, the Session may approve projects. For amounts over \$2000, congregational approval is required.

**Growing our Vision: Seeds of Abundant Joy  
Application Form for Funds**

Name/Group \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: (Person Responsible) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your Project: (Attach supporting documents if necessary)

How does this further the Mission of the Church:

Joyful in Worship\_\_\_\_\_ Tender In Life: \_\_\_\_\_ Daring in Outreach\_\_\_\_\_

Amount requested: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Forms due December 31st of each year to the office of First Presbyterian Church,  
2170 Albert Street, Regina SK S4P 2T9. Completed forms can also be emailed to  
[firstplannedgiving@sasktel.net](mailto:firstplannedgiving@sasktel.net)