

FIRST THINGS FIRST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA
September 2020

We begin this edition of *First Things First* by sharing a letter to our congregation from the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, the Rev. Stephen Kendall:

The Presbyterian Church
in Canada



L'Église presbytérienne
au Canada

MODERATOR OF THE 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Amanda Currie, B.A.Sc., M.Div.

August 25, 2020

First Presbyterian Church
2170 Albert St
Regina SK S4P 2T9

Dear Friends,

I write to you once again on behalf of the 2019 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and convey to you sincere greetings in Christ. At the time of the 2019 General Assembly, we could never have imagined what the world would be like now. The cancellation of the 2020 General Assembly was never anticipated, and Amanda's kind willingness to continue as Moderator was gratefully received by the church.

Your congregation, even in these extraordinary circumstances, has exhibited a commitment to be supportive of Amanda and through her, the whole church, as she continues in office. Thank you so very much for this support. Amanda speaks often and with great affection of her congregation, and the church is grateful to be able to share her many gifts (and her precious time) with you. Thank you for your important contribution to the life of the church. This comes wishing you God's blessing in your ministry.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Kendall
Principal Clerk
skendall@presbyterian.ca

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief, is a subordinate standard of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and a wonderful little document about many aspects of our faith and life together as a church. In section 7.3, *Living Faith* says this about worship:

*The church lives to praise God.
We have no higher calling
than to offer the worship that belongs to God
day by day, Sunday by Sunday.*

*Through the preaching of the Word
and the celebration of the Sacraments
in praise, prayer, teaching and fellowship,
God sustains the life of the church.
We worship God as Lord
offering ourselves in the service of Christ,
rejoicing that we have been brought from
darkness to light.*

*Worship draws us into the work of Christ.
Even now he intercedes for the world
to which he came and for which he died.
In union with him, the church prays
for the healing and the salvation of the world.*

*Blessing and honour and glory and power
be to our God for ever and ever!*

Since our congregation last gathered in person for worship on Sunday, March 15, 2020, we have continued to live to praise God Sunday by Sunday. We've gathered online. We've gathered in our homes. We've taken time as individuals to read sermons and reflect on the Scriptures. We have learned to worship differently for a time because the COVID-19 Pandemic made it necessary. Still, we are missing our gatherings, our public worship and witness, and the Sacraments that sustain and encourage us in our lives of discipleship.

The pandemic is not over, and there continue to be risks in gathering together. However, we recognize that until there is a vaccine the risks will remain, and we do not want to wait such a long time (maybe another year?!) before we resume our in-person worship. Although our meetings will feel somewhat different (with masks, physical distancing, and no coffee hour)

we trust that our worship will glorify God, encourage our spirits, and equip us for daily service as Christ's followers.

Please, friends, do not feel any pressure to come to worship in person if you are not yet comfortable to do so. If you have underlying health conditions, or if you need to keep your bubble smaller for other reasons, do not feel bad about staying home. Keep on worshipping with us online or by reflecting on the materials we send you each week. But for those who feel ready to join us in person, I will look forward to seeing your faces (at least your eyes!) and sharing in worship with you again soon.

As I have noted in recent bulletins and emails, please do reach out to me if you need some pastoral support. Call, text, or email me to set up a meeting by phone, Zoom, or in person with appropriate physical distancing.

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

Welcome back to a new church year! We've been through a lot in the last six months, and this year will be different, but we are confident that we are taking the right steps to support the life of the congregation in safe and careful ways. The Session has decided to re-open the church for worship in person on Sunday, Sept. 20 at 10:30 am. A committee has developed a comprehensive plan to ensure that the re-opening occurs in as safe a way as possible. There is detailed information in this newsletter about what to expect and how it will work. Please take time to read through this information. We will still be streaming the worship service live online, so those who choose not to come in person may still worship with the congregation.

We have been working on completing all of the refugee application forms required to sponsor the Adnan and Saleem families. They left Pakistan in fear for their lives and are currently in Malaysia. We just have to get all the forms signed and then we will send them off and begin the process. We haven't had any word on the Matthiang family in South Sudan. The paperwork is in process but may have been stalled by the

pandemic. Our prayers are with both families as they live in hope of being able to come to Canada soon, but have to endure the risks of life as refugees during the COVID crisis.

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

WELCOME BACK TO CHURCH:
Sunday, September 20th at 10:30 am

Here are a few things you need to know about in-person worship at First Church beginning on September 20th.

1. We are opening carefully, having studied and implemented the guidelines for places of worship that are set by the provincial health authority. This includes additional cleaning and sanitizing, physical distancing, use of masks, screening, and adapting activities to reduce risks. We recognize that it will feel different from our normal worship, but it will be good to see one another and to worship together in-person in our sanctuary.
2. Please stay home if you are sick, if you have been travelling outside the country in the last 14 days, or if you have been in contact with someone who may have COVID-19.
3. If you are medically vulnerable, please consider delaying your return to church until there is a vaccine. Please continue to watch online. We care about your health and safety, so do not feel pressure to return until it is safe and comfortable for you.
4. Register to attend by phoning Shirley in the church office (306-522-9571) or emailing (firstpresregina@sasktel.net) by Friday morning each week. This will help us to plan for Sunday morning, but you will still be welcomed at worship even if you did not register in advance.
5. Bulletins that include the order of worship and announcements will be sent out by email on Fridays. Print a copy and bring it with you if you would like to. Everything will also be projected on the wall at the front of the church, so a bulletin is not essential.
6. Arrive 15 minutes earlier than you normally would in order to facilitate the seating process.
7. Please wear a non-medical mask. Everyone will be wearing masks while inside the

building. Amanda will take her mask off to lead in prayer and to preach from the pulpit, but we will all wear masks for singing. (We will have disposal masks available at the registration desk for anyone who does not have one.)

8. Enter using the Albert Street door only, where you will be welcomed, registered, and asked the health and travel questions. There may be a line-up to enter, so maintain physical distance while you wait for your turn.
9. If you want to bring your offering envelope to worship, you can leave it in the plate at the registration table. The offerings will be presented during worship as we sing the doxology. Of course, you can continue to use PAR, e-transfers, or mail in your offering if you prefer.
10. After checking in, you'll use the hand sanitizer provided, and then proceed up the stairs (or the lift) to the narthex. An usher will guide you to a seat. We will be using every third pew and sitting in household groups with at least 2 metres distancing between households. Once you are seated, please stay in your pew for the duration of the service.
11. Children are welcome. There will be a children's message (delivered from a distance) so that children will stay with their families. Sunday School will be resuming soon, but most likely in an online format.
12. Washrooms will be available for urgent need only.
13. Sharing food continues to be a very high-risk activity, so we will not have a coffee hour after the service.
14. Following worship, please follow the direction of the ushers to exit by the 14th Avenue door while keeping physical distancing. Please use the available hand sanitizer again before you leave the church. Only those needing to use the lift will be exiting by the Albert Street door.

BOARD OF MANAGERS

Preliminary work has been done to get the foundation repair project under way. It is anticipated that construction work will begin mid-September and last approximately five weeks. We will be able to use the sanctuary throughout

the construction period but the lawn and parking area to the south of the church will be fenced off during the project.

Thank you to everyone for your ongoing generosity throughout this difficult time. We appreciate the offerings that continue to come by e-transfer or mail. We are in a slight deficit situation but have been able to continue covering most of our regular operating expenses. We look forward to resuming rentals of the hall during the fall, and our gym will be a polling location in the upcoming provincial election.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

We will be doing Sunday school via Zoom this fall. Let us know what a preferred time might be for you! Would you prefer a Sunday after church or a weekday after school or is there another time you might prefer? Watch for emails with more information.

Bette Kelly,
Christian Education Convenor

MISSION & OUTREACH

Greetings everyone! It feels wonderful to connect with each other again through this newsletter.

M&O is excited to join Rev. Amanda in a special *Walk with the Moderator* event in support of Presbyterian World Service and Development on October 3. This event will replace our usual winter PWSD appeal, so we invite you to participate in any way you can. Details about this wonderful opportunity to walk, to pray, to learn and to give, are found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Another excellent piece of news is that the Regina Indian Industrial School Cemetery now has a permanent fence which surrounds all the burial locations. Thanks to Doug Stewart's historical research, we know the style of the original fence and that it was built by students at the school. The new fence built and painted by many volunteers this summer is historically

accurate, and is an important tribute to the children of that school. First Presbyterian and the Synod of Saskatchewan both made significant donations to this project.

Mary Jesse,
Mission & Outreach Convenor



Nick Jesson & Rev. Amanda Currie priming fence



Volunteers applying the primer coat of paint to the new fence on August 22



New fence with final coat of paint -- August 29.

THANK YOU, MARY!

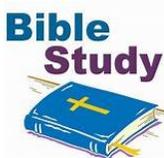
The Session of First Church would like to commend Mary Jesse for her leadership and diligence in coordinating a major work bee to put the first layer of paint on the RIIS Cemetery fence. This was a major project that was successfully accomplished for an important cause. Thank you, Mary, for your servant leadership with the RIIS Commemorative Association.

SCHOLARSHIP

First Church has three scholarship funds for post-secondary studies and makes awards to students each year. Application deadline is September 30. The criteria and award amounts vary. Applications are available on the church website at www.firstpresregina.ca (click "Who We Serve" and then "Scholarships"), and on the table in the narthex. For further information contact Jim Doolittle. Please submit all applications to the church office at 2170 Albert Street, Regina, SK, S4P 2T9 or by e-mail to firstpresregina@sasktel.net. Applicants must have completed their first year of post secondary education

Jim Doolittle
Scholarship Committee

MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY



Rev. Amanda Currie is looking for your input on the timing for a mid-week Bible study this Fall. Would you be interested in participating?

It would likely be held during the daytime by Zoom. Would noon on a weekday work for you? Is there a day or time that would be better for your schedule?

HALF AN HOUR OF HYMNS

Thanks to Gabe Omolida, Cade Eastwood, and all the choir members who participated in "Half an Hour of Hymns" on live on Facebook every Sunday afternoon this summer. One friend, watching from England, said they reminded her of the television program "Songs of Praise." These little programs were enjoyed by members of First Church, shared widely, and

viewed by Presbyterians and others across the country and around the world!

The final "Half an Hour of Hymns" (at least for now) will be this Sunday, September 13th at 1:30 pm on the FirstPresbyterian Regina Facebook Page. The theme will be the healing of our world, and we will sing and pray for our health care workers, for those developing vaccines for COVID-19, and for all who need healing in these days.

Rev. Amanda Currie



WALK & PRAY WITH THE MODERATOR

I led this summer pilgrimage of prayer for The Presbyterian Church in Canada from June 1 – August 31. There were at least 134 people engaged in the program in various ways, and about a dozen people from First Church participated.

We walked and prayed each day for all the congregations and other ministries of the PCC and for our ecumenical partners in the Canadian Council of Churches (10-11 ministries per day). We shared photos, reflections, and prayers in the "Walk & Pray with the Moderator" Facebook group, and I hosted four gatherings on Zoom throughout the summer that included between 20-60 participants. By the end of the summer, I walked 1044 km while praying for the church (930 ministries and 134 individual participants).

The Facebook group will continue as long as I am moderator, and the prayers will be focused using the Presbyterian daily prayers and the WCC's Ecumenical Prayer Cycle (weekly prayers for countries of the world). I will keep

walking, but likely not quite as much as this summer.

It was a privilege and a joy to share the journey with Presbyterians across the country and with the enthusiastic participants from First Church. Thank you so much for walking and praying with me!

Rev. Amanda Currie



WORSHIP & VBS with the SYNOD OF SASKATCHEWAN

The COVID-19 Pandemic has led to a lot of changes in our daily lives, work, and school, and church is no exception! In mid-March we began worshipping together online instead of in-person, as well as mailing out sermons and bulletins to those without internet access. Another change occurred when we teamed up with other Presbyterian churches across the Synod of Saskatchewan to worship together and share an online Vacation Bible School program this summer.

It was a privilege for me to support the Synod's Summer Ministry by mentoring the students from the Vancouver School of Theology who worked with us this summer, Jacqueline Cleland and Samuel Andri. I particularly enjoyed working with them to organize live online worship, reading their sermons, providing feedback, and engaging in dialogue about preaching, worship, and ministry in general.

I also got to assist with the online VBS program by attending as an additional adult helper for 3 weeks of the program's running. Three families (5 children) from First Church participated in the program, though we had hoped there would be more. Online VBS was certainly challenging, and required lots of learning and adjusting. I would say that there was lots of good that came from the VBS program in terms of learning, engagement, and relationship building. I know that our kids were disappointed when it came to an end!

Many thanks to Jo Szostak for the many, many hours she spent working with the summer students to support them in their leadership of worship and the children's program. It was a learning experience for us all! And thanks to other First Church folk for your participation in the synod services through music, reading, watching, and participating online each Sunday morning.

Rev. Amanda Currie



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



On October 3rd, people across Canada will be participating in the "Ride for Refuge" in support of various helping agencies. Many Presbyterians will be riding or walking in support of our

development agency, Presbyterian World Service & Development. Rev. Amanda Currie plans to walk 20 km in Regina on Saturday, October 3rd between 8 am and 1 pm and you are invited to walk (or ride) with her.

We'll be doing a 4 km loop which begins at First Presbyterian Church every hour, and you can participate in as many loops as you wish. Every hour, on the hour, we'll gather in the gymnasium to learn a little about the good work of PWS&D (with livestreaming to Facebook and special guests from the PWS&D Committee and Staff) and to pray for this vital ministry. Yes, we will be following physical distancing guidelines, wearing masks when we are in the building together, and using lots of hand sanitizer. Bottles of water and safe snacks will be provided, but if you want coffee or other food items, please bring what you need. You're also welcome to walk with our team virtually and to watch the livestreamed PWS&D Moments on the hour between 8 am and 1 pm CST.

Please register for the "Ride for Refuge" at rideforrefuge.org. When you're asked about a location, choose "Ride Anywhere," and then be sure to join the team "Walk with the Moderator" with Amanda Currie as team captain. Then encourage your friends, family, colleagues, and other supportive folk to sponsor your walk, and consider making a donation yourself. Note: If you fundraise at least \$150 (adult) or \$75 (youth) by September 15th, you will receive a free T-shirt from "Ride for Refuge."

If you would like to sponsor Rev. Amanda Currie or another team member, you can make a secure donation by following this link: <https://secure.e2rm.com/registrator/FundraisingPage.aspx?registrationID=4764590&langPref=en-CA> You may also want to use cash, a cheque, or send an e-transfer to one of the team members. Be sure to provide your full name and mailing address so that you will receive a charitable tax receipt.



Rev. Amanda Currie

FUNDSCRIP

We do have some gift cards for groceries and gas on hand. You can purchase these from Shirley in the church office. You can also place an order directly with FundScrip and have it mailed to your home (currently there is no postage charge for this service.)

To place an order, follow these steps. Specials for September include Walmart 3% and Ultimate Dining Card 7% (East Side Marios, Montanas).

1. Go to the FundScrip website: fundscrip.com
2. Create your own account. Be sure to enter the Invitation code for First Church - 86MLRU That way, First Church will get credit for your purchases.
3. Shop for the cards you wish to purchase. Specials for April include Walmart (3%) and Ultimate Dining (7%) - you can use this for takeout! (Note the conditions below to have free shipping.)
4. When you go to Checkout it will show that First Presbyterian Church is the beneficiary. Be Sure to edit the Shipping (or your cards will be shipped to First Church!) Click on Edit and choose Direct Shipping. Then enter your home address. Select letter mail from the options.
5. Choose a payment method. The easiest and best is EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) where it will be transferred directly from your bank, like paying with debit! Click on the link to set up your EFT. It's easy to do - just log in to your own bank account. (You may have to click on Shop then back to Checkout for it to be an available choice).
6. Click on Checkout and you will have a chance to review your order, then click on Place Order. It will show you how much the church will receive for your order.

Thanks for your support!

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

- Sept. 12 10:00 am Re-opening Committee
(church set-up)
- Sept. 13 10:30 am Worship (online)**
1:30 pm Half an Hour of Hymns
(online)
2:00 pm Coffee Hour by Zoom
- Sept. 16 7:00 pm Board of Managers by
Zoom
- Sept. 17 7:00 pm Volunteer Orientation
(for re-opening)
- Sept. 19 10:00 am Presbytery by Zoom
- Sept. 20 10:30 am Worship**
(in person & online)
2:00 pm Coffee Hour by Zoom
- Sept. 23 7:00 pm Book Club by Zoom
- Sept. 27 10:30 am Worship**
(in person & online)
Presbyterians Sharing Sunday
2:00 pm Coffee Hour by Zoom
- Oct. 3 8 am - 1 pm Ride for Refuge
- For PWS&D
- Oct. 4 10:30 am Worship**
(in person & online)
World Communion Sunday

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.