

**FIRST THINGS FIRST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA
January 2023**

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

It wasn't long after I came to First Church that I initiated a congregational book club. I had never led a book club before or even participated in one, but I thought it would be a nice way to get to know some of the people of First Church in another setting. I also thought it might help me to make time in my schedule for reading – an activity that I know is good for my mind and heart.

More than four years after we started, the First Church Book Club is going strong. Whereas we first met together in people's homes to discuss whichever book we had read that month, we now typically meet by Zoom. We miss the benefit of sharing snacks and wine together, but we benefit from not having to drive at night and keeping safe from Covid and other viruses that may be circulating.

Every month we read one book. The books are most often fiction, but with diverse authors and styles. Our book suggestions come from the members of the group and we don't always love each other's choices, but we always have a good discussion. Although we rarely choose anything overtly religious, I find that our discussions of the stories, characters, and situations we encounter often lead to questions about God, faith, and the things that are most important to us.

The First Church Book Club has pushed me to read some books that I probably wouldn't have chosen myself, but that have enriched my life and thinking through the reading and the discussion. And in recent months, it has also prompted me to try out using audio books. One of our members is legally blind so traditional books don't work for her. But that doesn't stop her from participating. We need to be conscious when choosing a book that not all books are

available in an audio format, but many of them are. The Regina Public Library has a great system for online borrowing of digital books to read on a device as well as audio books that you can listen to on a computer, tablet, or phone.

My interest was piqued when Jessica mentioned that sometimes the audio books are read by the authors themselves, and that adds greatly to her experience of the books. Sometimes they are read by talented actors who do a variety of voices and accents, and other times a team of readers voice the various parts.

Since I am much more of an auditory learner than a visual learner, audio books actually work really well for me. I have enjoyed the audio experience of several books now, and appreciated the fact that while I'm listening I can multi-task by walking, knitting, cooking, or even cleaning the house!

It has been a blessing for me over the years to get to know the book club members more deeply, both those who have been gathering since we started and others who have joined us along the way. Interestingly, our group has been all women so far, but men are welcome too. I expect that our conversations would be enriched by greater gender diversity in the group!

Whether you want to read a traditional printed book, a digital book, or listen to an audio book, you might enjoy the opportunity to read and discuss together with some First Church friends each month. I have no doubt that you also will be blessed by the experience. We would welcome you to join us!

Rev. Amanda Currie

SESSION

- We are pleased that the Moderator of General Assembly, the Rev. Bob Faris, will be visiting First Church on Feb. 7/8. Watch for more information!
- Our Meet the Elder event will take place this Sunday, January 15, in conjunction with the Souper Sunday fellowship event. Come and enjoy a bowl of homemade soup, meet your elder and the rest of your district in the gym following worship.
- Refugee Sponsorship - We are thrilled that the Mathiang family has finally been able to join us in Regina! Please continue to contribute to this fund, as we have enough money to provide housing and support until the summer, but we need to raise about \$15,000 more to provide support to the end of the year.
- Mark your calendar for the Ash Wednesday service to be held Wednesday, Feb. 22 at 7:00 pm.
- Just a reminder that Amanda's day off is Monday. If you have an urgent pastoral care matter, it's not a problem to contact Amanda. For other business of the church, please refrain from calling or texting Amanda on Mondays. She has a heavy workload and we want to make sure she has some time to rejuvenate!

Jo Szostak
Clerk of Session

BOARD OF MANAGERS

- Please note that annual reports should be submitted by the end of January.
- Repairs to the Kennedy room, the Grade 1 classroom and the lower hallway will begin Feb. 7 and should be completed by March 15.

MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Christmas Giving In Memoriam Project: First Church, you've done it again! Several large bags of socks, toques and scarves and \$1740 was divided between our two local projects. White Pony Lodge is a street patrol group in North Central that disposes of dangerous items and offers help to people in need during their walks. Our cash donation will purchase 100 winter gloves in their Glove Drive, and they now have a healthy supply of warm socks, hats and scarves to distribute as they patrol.

The Ecumenical Saturday Lunch project provides warm winter items and toiletries along with a simple lunch meal to people each weekend. Your gifts helped provide the Dec 31 meal, while donations of socks, mitts and hats were shared at the Dec 31 lunch. With the remaining we will purchase gloves, socks and toiletries to be offered at upcoming Saturday lunches.

Thank you for your care for others and your generosity!

Can you help on Saturday, February 18? It is our turn to prepare and serve lunch at the Ecumenical Saturday Lunch program. We will make and serve 200 bag lunches for folks who could use a meal. We need 4 people to make sandwiches in our church kitchen from 9-11 am, and 8 people to fill lunch bags, serve guests, and set up and take down tables and chairs at First Baptist Church from 11:15 - 1:30 pm. If you can join Amanda and Mary for a few hours that day, please call or email Mary at 306-570-8662 or maryciesse@gmail.com.

Mary Jesse
Mission & Outreach Convener

SOUPER SUNDAY & MEET YOUR ELDER



Stay after worship today for "Souper Sunday." We expect to have about 10 different kinds of soup to choose from, and warmth and good company over lunch are guaranteed!

This lunch will also be an opportunity for you to meet or connect with your elder. Did you know that every member or adherent of First Church is assigned an elder? Your elder is available to you as a pastoral support and connection to the church. Your elder is someone who was elected by the congregation and ordained to serve on the Session of First Church, working with the minister and collectively overseeing everything that happens in and through our congregation.

You'll be invited to sit at your elder's table and to visit with your elder and with the other folks on their list. You can try to stump your elder with complicated questions about church polity or theology, or you can just enjoy a nice chat and get to know each other better!

COME TOGETHER

Dear friends,

As we start a brand new year, I hope you are all healthy and happy! May this year be filled with God's hope, joy, love and peace!

I am pleased to let you know that the next Come Together event will be on **January 18th, 2023, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm (EST)**, by Zoom. The topic will be on the people of Ukraine. Come and hear about how the people of Ukraine are enduring the war. With guests Thea Van Dixhoorn and Elena Risnyk, we will hear first-hand about the situation of the Ukrainian people. Thea Van Dixhoorn is a Canadian who has been working with the Reformed International Theological Education Seminary in Ukraine since 2008. She has made a number of visits to the Seminary and to support people in Ukraine by providing blankets, socks and warm clothes. Elena Risnyk is a Ukrainian now living in Canada as a refugee. She is a former student of the Seminary in Ukraine and worked with her husband as missionaries in the east of Ukraine. Her husband remains in ministry in Ukraine where he and his colleagues assist in the war effort.

If anyone wants to receive the Zoom link, they just need to email Sarah Kim and ask to be added to her list. SKim@presbyterian.ca.

As well, please save the date for future Come Together events, as follows:

- January 18, 2023, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm (EST) – on Ukraine
- March 8, 2023, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm (EST) – worship with the World Day of Prayer by the women of Taiwan
- April 12, 2023, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm (EST) – Easter worship with guest the Rev. Linda Patton-Cowie, writer of the worship resource
- June 14, 2023, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm (EST) – Information sharing on event 2024

Keep well! Happy new year!

Sarah Kim,
Executive Director,
Women's Missionary Society,
Presbyterian Church in Canada

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

The Reverend Charles Alexander Scott
(b. April 3, 1938, in
Orangeville ON)

passed away in Comox
BC on December 11,
2022. Beloved

husband of Sharon (60
years), inspirational
father to Andrew (m.
Brenda) Christine (m.
Andrew Kotaska) and

Daniel. Loving grandfather of Maya, Jesse,
Jack, Luke, Andrew, and Jaimie. Predeceased
by parents Charles and Janet and siblings
David, Jean, and Nan.

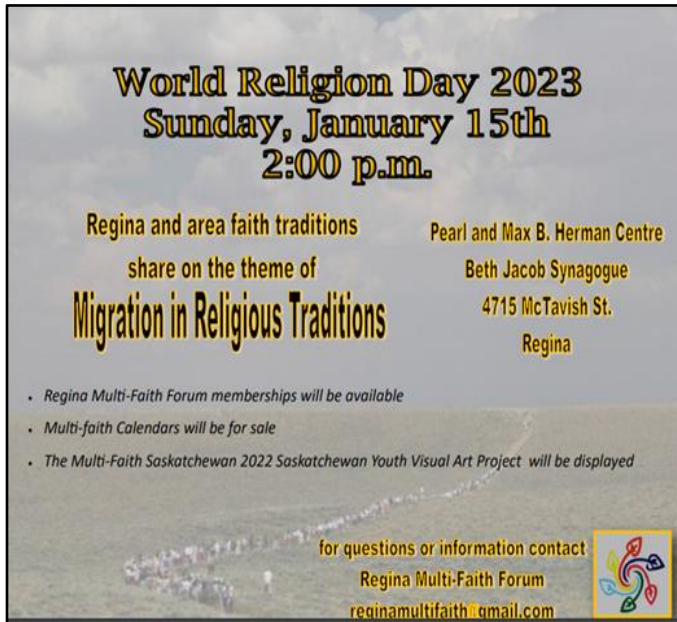


Charlie received an undergraduate degree from McMaster University, theological education from Knox College, University of Toronto and a Master of Theology from New College, Edinburgh. He served the Presbyterian Church at St. Andrew's, Victoria; Varsity Acres, Calgary; St. Michael's and All Angels, Blantyre, Malawi; First Presbyterian Church, Regina; and Gordon Presbyterian Church, Burnaby; settling in the Comox Valley for an active retirement.

Charlie's spiritual practice encompassed body, mind, heart, and soul. He had a gentle and compassionate spirit, infectious laugh, warm embrace, and patient countenance. Charlie's family are indebted to the staff at the Views whose compassion and care made his final year comfortable, respectful, and meaningful. There will be a memorial service held at Comox Valley Presbyterian Church in January 2023.

Note: In a recent letter of condolence from the Session of First Church to Sharon Scott, we wrote: "Charles' ministry at First Church in the 1980's was marked by a strong sense of mission, gentle pastoral care and faithful servanthood to Jesus Christ. His work with TEEM, Theological Education by Extension in Malawi, deeply shaped his ministry, both within our congregation and in the Presbytery of Assiniboia. Many in our congregation recall the Scott family with deep affection and have fond memories of your active and happy family."

The memorial service will be this Saturday,
January 14, 2023 at 1:00 pm PT (2:00 pm CST)
and you can watch the livestream at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwIKK3bmVgc>



A REFLECTION ON SINGING IN WORSHIP

I Go to Sing

I might be exhausted and the children might be cranky,
but I will be going to church on Sunday.
Don't know who is preaching, doesn't matter –
the sermon may be helpful or not, holds my attention or doesn't –
it's the singing.
I go to sing.

I get up,
get clean,
get dressed,
possibly get mad (at not-ready kids, at empty coffee pot, at traffic)
get going,
get there,
get seated,
get comfortable,
get focused
and when the music starts,
get saved.

It's the singing.
I go to sing.

It's the willingness to stand if you are able,
the common agreement on page number,
the voluntary sharing of songbooks with people on your row,
even ones you rode there with –

but most of all,
it's the collective in-breath before the first sound is made,
the collective drawing upon the grace of God,
the collective, if inadvertent, admission that we are all human,
all fragile,
all in need of the sustaining air, freely dispensed,
all in need of each other to get the key right and not sound discordant –

it's the hidden life-celebration
in the act of making a joyful noise,
all together.

We don't even have to sound that good.
Singing together still brings home the we-ness of worship,
the not-alone-ness of life in God,
the best of all we have to offer each other.
When we are singing, I think that I might actually be able to forgive you
for being so terribly human,
and you might be able to forgive me
for being so terribly not there yet,
and we might be able to find peace now,
not postpone it for some heavenly hereafter
but live and breathe it today,
drawing in the grace of God,
voicing out our need and hope and gratitude and longing.

When we are singing, I can feel the better world coming,
and if I get to be a part of it, you do too . . .

so sing with me,
and we'll make our way down that blessed road together,
collectively better
than we ever thought possible.

Lindy Thompson
FaceBook group: Unitarian Universalist
Hysterical Society

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:

The annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated by churches around the world in January or at another time of year. The 2023 theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, "Do good; seek justice" (Isaiah 1:17), was prepared by the Minnesota Council of Churches. The international theme and materials call Christians to recognize that the divisions between our churches and confessions cannot be separated from the divisions within the wider human family.

The Regina Council of Churches invites you to a city-wide service at New Hope Lutheran Church (370 McIntosh Street N) on Sunday, February 5th at 3:00 pm. The Rev. Dr. Ali Tote, Assistant to the Bishop, ELCIC Saskatchewan Synod, will be the homilist.

In partnership with the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, we are pleased to offer these special lectures, workshops, and an online Bible study as part of the Week.

Ecumenical Log Drivers: Forming Agents of Reconciliation for Church and World

The 2023 De Margerie Lectures on Christian Reconciliation and Unity Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers, OGS (Anglican Bishop of Quebec)



In the past century the ecumenical movement has made extraordinary efforts in healing the wounds of division in the church. However, despite efforts to educate and inspire successive

generations of Christian leaders about the quest for the church's visible unity, an ecumenical malaise has set in which ignorance, fear, mistrust, suspicion, stereotypes, caricatures, recrimination, anathematization—even persecution continue in the relations between divided churches. Drawing on decades of reflection on ecumenical reception and formation, Bishop Myers presents an approach to teaching the practical and theological aspects of ecumenism in a way that is both holistic and pragmatic and offers the potential to raise up a new generation of church leaders who are also agents of reconciliation and Christian unity.

- **Wed. Jan. 18, 7:00 pm at
Campion College, Regina**
- **Thurs. Jan. 19 at 7:00 pm at
St. Thomas More College, Saskatoon**

Both lectures will be presented in-person and livestreamed, and each lecture will be unique, so please plan to view or attend both if you can. If you can't attend, watch it online at

<https://www.youtube.com/@schmeisercentre>



Bishop Myers has been bishop of Quebec since 2017. Raised on a farm in Glengarry County, Ontario, he studied at the University of Toronto before a decade as a parliamentary correspondent in Ottawa and Quebec City. He completed his theological studies at McGill University, Montreal Diocesan Theological College, Bossey Ecumenical Institute, and the University of Geneva. He has recently completed a Doctor of Ministry at St. Paul University in Ottawa. He is a professed member

of the Order of the Good Shepherd, an international community of Anglicans who share a common rule of life. Before election as bishop, he served parishes in Quebec City and the Magdalen Islands, and as Coordinator for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations for the Anglican Church of Canada.

8 Days of online Biblical Reflection, January 18-25, 2023

An online Bible study led by a diverse selection of ministers, 12:15-1:00 pm daily (SK time) except Sunday, Jan. 22 which will be at 3 pm

Please be sure to register using this link -

<https://bit.ly/WPCU-2023-Bible-Study>

This Bible Study series will also be available on YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/@PrairieCentreforEcumenism>.

Presented on Zoom by the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism and the Regina Council of Churches.

- **Wed, Jan 18** - Rev. Brody Albers, Anglican, Christopher Lake
- **Thu, Jan 19** - Rev. Dr. Kathleen James-Cavan, United Church, Saskatoon
- **Fri, Jan 20** - Major Al Hoeft, Salvation Army, Regina
- **Sat, Jan 21** - Pastor Rachel Wallace, Mennonite, Eigenheim
- **Sun, Jan 22** (at 3pm) - Deacon Harry Lafond, Roman Catholic, Saskatoon
- **Mon, Jan 23** - Dave Feick, Micah Mission, Saskatoon
- **Tue, Jan 24** - Rev. Keitha Ogbogu, Free Methodist, Calgary
- **Wed, Jan 25** - Rev. Dr. Ali Tote, ELCIC, Saskatoon

The 2023 theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, "Do good; seek justice" (Isaiah 1:17), was prepared by the Minnesota Council of Churches. The themes for each day should be familiar to everyone who lives in Canada. The issues facing the churches in the United States affect us because of their proximity to our borders and as they relate to our present situation in Canada.

Although Canadians often speak of building a diverse, inclusive, and just society, we know that racism is deeply embedded in our society and

that we have seen great violence against people of colour and against ethnic and religious minorities. As we undertake these Bible Studies, let us bring the honest questions and reflections that come when the light of the gospel illuminates the truth of both our past and our present. As we seek greater unity, may it be in service to the love and justice God has revealed in Jesus.

Please tell your friends and neighbours. And don't forget to subscribe to the YouTube channel of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism at

<https://www.youtube.com/@PrairieCentreforEcumenism>.

January Calendar

Jan. 15	10:30 am	Worship (In Person & Online)
	11:45 am	Souper Sunday (lunch!) & Meet Your Elder
Jan. 17	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers (gym)
Jan. 18	1:00 pm	Bible Study (Zoom)
	7:00 pm	Board of Managers (Zoom)
Jan. 19	7:00 pm	Choir
Jan. 22	10:30 am	Worship (In Person & Online)
	11:45 am	Coffee Hour (in the gym)
Jan. 23	11:00 am	Fellowship Committee (Zoom)
Jan. 24	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers (gym)
Jan. 25	7:00 pm	Book Club (Zoom)
Jan. 26	1:00 pm	Bible Study (Zoom)
	7:00 pm	Choir
Jan. 28	11:30-3:30	Missional Leadership Course
Jan. 29	10:30 am	Worship (In Person & Online)
	11:45 am	Coffee Hour (gym)
Jan. 31	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers (gym)
Feb. 1	12:00 pm	Bible Study (Zoom)
	7:00 pm	Session Meeting (Zoom)
Feb. 2	7:00 pm	Choir
Feb. 5	10:30 am	Worship with Holy Communion (In Person & Online)
	11:45 am	Coffee Hour (gym)
Feb. 6	7:00 pm	Mission & Outreach (Zoom)
Feb. 7	12:00 pm	Freedom 55ers (gym)
Feb. 7/8	Visit from the PCC Moderator, Rev. Bob Faris - details coming soon!	