

First Presbyterian Church News

17 Royal Road South, Portage la Prairie, MB



John Zondag, Minister

December 2021

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Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m.

We acknowledge that we are in Treaty 1 territory, and that the land is the traditional lands of the Anishinabe and Dakota Nations, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

FROM THE MINISTER

I began my column in *last* December's issue with these words: "It's hard to believe that the COVID-19 pandemic that hit us in Canada in March is still with us eight months later, with no end yet in sight!" Now, a year later, it's hard to believe that the pandemic is still lingering, and continuing to cause disruption. Fortunately, at least, vaccines are now readily available here in Canada, and they appear to be having the desired effects: decreasing the severity of the illness that infected people experience, saving lives, and decreasing the pressure on the health care system.

Although we were permitted to return to in-person services toward the end of June, the Session opted instead to have us participate in joint online services with the two Presbyterian congregations in Brandon through July and August, and to wait until the Labor Day weekend before resuming our in-person services. Fortunately, we haven't had to suspend in-person services again since then, and hopefully, we won't have to from now on, either. As I write this, we are on track to have our Hanging-of-the-Greens service on the 5th of December (which last year we had to cancel), a Communion service on the 12th, and an in-person service on Christmas Eve (which we had to hold virtually last year). Due to high numbers of infections in our health region, though, we are allowed a maximum attendance of only 25 people, unless we require all attenders to be double-vaccinated — a measure that the Session so far has not decided to take. Our highest attendance so far this fall has been 22 (on Harvest Sunday), and our second-highest attendance was 19 on the 3rd of October (Communion Sunday). As far as worship is concerned, then, we are glad to be *halfway* back to normal, and we look forward to restrictions being eased again, perhaps after Christmas.

Other congregational activities remain restricted, however; and most meetings continue to be held by Zoom.

We have been extremely fortunate to receive financial support from the provincial and federal governments in the past year, which has kept us "in the black", and for which we are very grateful. However, as the pandemic situation has been easing somewhat, these support programs are being either scaled back or eliminated, so we will soon be "on our own" again financially, if we're not already.



Many thanks to all of you who have continued to support the congregation with your givings through these turbulent times, including your support of our "Virtual Fundraiser"!

During Advent and Christmas, we contemplate God's comings into the world, both past (in the birth of Jesus) and future (in Jesus' promised second coming). We are grateful for God's ongoing interest in us human beings and for his interventions in the world for our benefit. As we celebrate God's coming into the world in human form in the person of Jesus, in order to be "with us", we also look forward to Jesus' return from heaven to bring the world fully under God's control, and to do away with evil and sin in all its forms.

It looks as if many of us will once again be able to have family gatherings at Christmas this year, which we were unable to have last Christmas - something to look forward to, and to be grateful for. I wish you all a blessed Christmas season, then, and God's continued blessing in the New Year!

ONLINE SERVICES

John continues to record an abbreviated service most Sundays, and to upload them to YouTube, where they can be viewed at any time. Whenever possible, the services are uploaded before 10:30 on Sunday mornings, so that those viewing them at home can do so at the same time as the in-person service is being held. The link to each service is e-mailed each week to those who have requested it, along with a copy of the service script. The link can be accessed from the congregational website as well (www.firstpcportage.com). Each service is saved for two weeks, and then deleted. If you are not currently receiving the link by e-mail each week, and would like to, please let John know (jzondag@mymts.net).

COMMUNION

Our Advent Communion service will be held on Sunday, 12 December. The procedure that we followed in October (people going forward to receive the elements either individually or in family groups) went well, so we will follow the same procedure this time. Unfortunately, though, we are still not able to offer Home Communion for our homebound members.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

A number of our activities, events, and meetings remain suspended indefinitely, due to the pandemic. Some continue, however. Keep an eye on the weekly Announcements Sheet.

a) Regularly scheduled meetings:

- Bible study - Tuesday evenings, at 7:00, by Zoom, resuming in January
- Finance & Maintenance Committee - the 2nd Wednesday of the month, at 6:30 p.m., by Zoom. The December meeting will be held on Thursday the 9th, however.
- Session meetings - the 4th Thursday of the month, at 7:00 p.m. (except December), by Zoom

b) One-time events:

- Sunday, 5 Dec. 10:30 a.m. - HANGING-OF-THE-GREENS SERVICE
- Sunday, 12 Dec. 10:30 a.m. - COMMUNION SERVICE AND ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY
- Friday, 24 Dec. 7:00 p.m. - CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
- Saturday, 8 Jan. noon - Soup Kitchen Christmas dinner
- Sunday, 6 Feb. - PWS&D SUNDAY
- Sunday, 27 Feb., following the service - Annual Meeting
- Sunday, 6 Mar. - FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
- Sunday, 13 Mar. - Daylight Saving Time begins
- Sunday, 20 Mar. - Deadline for submissions for the March issue of the Newsletter
- Sunday, 3 Apr. - COMMUNION SUNDAY
- Friday, 15 Apr. - GOOD FRIDAY
- Sunday, 17 Apr. - EASTER SUNDAY

THANK YOU!

Many thanks to:

- **Allan McLean** for mowing the church lawn this past spring, summer, and fall!
- **Rob McPherson** for cleaning up the leaves on the church lawn this fall
- Everyone who donated items to the special appeal for the Birdtail First Nation, and to **Raymond and Margaret Reichelt** for transporting a number of those items to St. Andrew's Church in Brandon in October, from where they were forwarded to Birdtail.

SESSION NEWS

In the past three months, the Session has dealt primarily with routine administrative issues, so there's not much of interest to report this time, except possibly for the following:

- Requests for the use of the church building (e.g. the Church Hall and the kitchen) will be handled by Raymond, our clerk, from now on, rather than by John. We have a Rental Policy that any groups renting space in the building must abide by, as required by the national church's "Leading With Care" policy.
- Gwen Henwood's membership was recently transferred to Westwood Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, at her request. Gwen moved to Winnipeg in September of 2020. We miss her, and wish her well in her new congregation.
- Every year, the General Assembly sends out "Referrals" to Synods, Presbyteries, and Sessions, which give them an opportunity to comment on various initiatives that the national church is working on. At its November meeting, the Session spent some time discussing proposed changes in wording to the "edicts" (official notices) that are used prior to the ordination of a minister or elder, and the "preambles" to the questions that ministers and elders are asked in ordination and induction liturgies. The wording used in the existing edicts and preambles is very formal and old-fashioned, and the goal is to use wording that is less technical and more readily understandable.
- See also the separate item on "New Beginnings".

E-MAIL

If you have an e-mail address, and are not currently receiving your newsletter by e-mail, please give John Zondag (jzondag@mymts.net) your e-mail address, and he will add you to the congregational e-mail list. This would reduce the expense to the congregation of printing hard copies - plus, you would receive your newsletter in **color** rather than black-and-white! You will then also receive the weekly Announcements Sheet by e-mail.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING ENVELOPE

The annual **Christmas Offering** envelope is enclosed with this issue of Newsletter, for those who receive a hard copy. For those who receive their Newsletter by e-mail, the envelope will be mailed out separately. **Many thanks** to everyone who contributed to the annual Thanksgiving Offering in October, which totaled \$1,590.00! Thank you also to those who have contributed to our "Virtual Fundraiser" so far this year. Contributions totaled \$1,660.00 as of the end of October!

NEW BEGINNINGS

The Session invited our New Beginnings coach, the Rev. Ian Fraser, to join its November meeting by Zoom for a few minutes, to discuss when we might possibly be able to proceed to the next stage in the New Beginnings process, the "Introduction to Transformational Ministry weekend". It was agreed that we will not likely be able to hold that weekend in January after all, since the pandemic hasn't eased significantly. A decision on the date was therefore deferred to the January Session meeting. The earliest feasible time for the special weekend is now mid - to late February 2022. A year ago, we had thought we might be able to hold the weekend in January of 2021, but the pandemic has forced us to keep on postponing it!

ADVENT - CHRISTMAS - AFTER EPIPHANY

We are entering a period in the Christian Year in which the seasons are quite short. Between the time this issue of the newsletter and the next one have been sent out, we will have moved through the first three of the six seasons of the Christian Year: Advent, Christmas, and After Epiphany.

Advent is a season of preparation for Christmas. It always has four Sundays. We prepare not only by decorating and getting into the festive mood, but also by renewing our commitment to God, and turning away from sinful attitudes and actions. The symbolic color for Advent is **purple**, which symbolizes penitence (turning away from sin).

Christmas is a season celebrating the birth of Jesus, God's coming into the world in human form in him. It begins on the 25th of December, and lasts until the 5th of January — just twelve days in all, the shortest of the seasons of the Christian Year. The symbolic color is **white**, symbolizing joy and celebration.

Epiphany is a stand-alone festival that falls on the 6th of January. Originally a festival celebrating Jesus' birth, it eventually became one commemorating the visit of the Magi, or Wise Men. Since it is a joyous festival, the color is, again, **white**.

After Epiphany is a season of "ordinary time" between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent). It has no particular theme or emphasis. Since the date of Ash Wednesday changes from year to year (because the date of Easter changes), the season after Epiphany is a season of variable length. This year, Easter will be quite late (17 April), so the season after Epiphany will be longer than usual. Except for the first and last Sundays of this season, the seasonal color is **green**, the color for ordinary time. The first and last Sundays after Epiphany are special days — the first commemorates Jesus' baptism, and the last commemorates his transfiguration. The color for both of those Sundays is **white**.

WICM

Ruth Magnuson, the Executive Director of **Winnipeg Inner City Missions** (WICM) was our guest preacher on Sunday, 24 October. Through a few stories, she described ways in which WICM provides support and assistance to low-income people in Winnipeg's "north end". Information on WICM can be found on its website, www.wicm.ca. WICM is a Presbyterian Church mission.

"VACANCIES"

We are looking for people to fill "vacancies" on three of our Session committees:

- The **Finance and Maintenance Committee** - The term is for two years (until the summer of 2023). The committee meets every month, except July and August, on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, at 6:30 p.m. Contact Keith Kelly (857-5712) if you are interested, or have questions.
- The **Worship Committee** - The term is for a year at a time. The committee meets three or four times per year, as needed, mainly to plan the worship schedule and to organize our special services. Contact John Zondag if you are interested, or have questions.
- The **Soup Kitchen Committee** - The term is for a year at a time. The committee meets as needed, at least twice per year, to review the Soup Kitchen's finances, and to support and advise the coordinators. Contact John Zondag if you are interested, or have questions.

SOUP KITCHEN

Soup Kitchen Sunday was held on November 14, 2021. Volunteers were invited to attend. Thank you to the First Presbyterian Church for your support.

Henry Riendeau Treasurer spoke about the finances as well as our successful annual fundraiser. Gloria Nichols Assistant Coordinator talked about joining the Soup Kitchen team and what a pleasure it is to serve the community. Shelly Burton Coordinator spoke about the re-opening challenges after losing her close friend and mother figure Laure Dyck. Laure was a regular volunteer at the Soup Kitchen for many years and is truly missed. Many thanks to all of our volunteers. We couldn't do it without them.

Since re-opening the Soup Kitchen on July 19th we have served 2,591 healthy meals. There were 184 in July; 514 in August; 853 in September; and 1040 meals in October.

Due to an outpouring of donations we have been able to serve several extra special meals including bbq steak, meatloaf, chicken and ribs to name a few.

A Christmas dinner and celebration for the patrons will be held on January 8, 2022.

We are collecting items such as adult size socks, mittens, gloves, toques, personal care items and hard wrapped candy for the gift bags. These gift bags will be presented to the patrons at the celebration.

We truly appreciate all the support that the Soup Kitchen receives.

Yours truly,
Shelly and Gloria



This is some of the toques and mitts that Wilma Reimer knit for the soup kitchen.

FINANCE & MAINTENANCE

The Finance and Maintenance committee doesn't have much to report. John has placed some traps around the basement to comply with Pest Control measures from a recent inspection that was done. Furnace and boiler have been serviced for the winter.

Hopefully the New Year will see a gradual return to normal. Please continue to pray for our church and churches throughout the world. I hope you all have a Merry Christmas as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CALLS TO ACTION

THIS IS IT!! TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CALLS TO ACTION - 86, 89, 91-94

For those who have read each of these articles in the newsletters, dating back to 2017, you now will have read all 94 calls to action. The purpose of the TRC calls is to be read and acted upon. It helps us as individuals to understand the issues and grievances that Aboriginal people have faced throughout our history and continue to deal with. More information can be found on the website Beyond 94, an initiative of CBC.

86 - JOURNALISM PROGRAMS AND MEDIA SCHOOLS TO REQUIRE EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS ON THE HISTORY OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES - in progress - projects proposed

Some journalism schools offer courses on Indigenous history; though not all are mandatory and not all meet the criteria of this call. Wilfred Laurier University has had a mandatory Introduction to Indigenous Studies course since 2017.

89 - AMEND THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT ACT TO ENSURE POLICIES ARE INCLUSIVE TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLES - not started

91 - ENSURE THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' TERRITORIAL PROTOCOLS ARE RESPECTED BY OFFICIALS AND HOST COUNTRIES OF INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS - not started

There has been some acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples at some international sporting events; but it has been minimal and done with little consultation with local Indigenous communities.

92 - CORPORATE SECTOR IN CANADA TO ADOPT THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE - not started

A survey in 2017 revealed most corporations do not seek to engage Indigenous Peoples or culture, even though 1 in 4 was aware of this call to action.

93 - REVISE THE INFORMATION KIT FOR NEWCOMERS AND CITIZENSHIP TEST TO REFLECT A MORE INCLUSIVE HISTORY OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA - in progress - projects underway

The study guide has not been revised since 2011. However the federal government said in June 2018 that the changes to the information kit were close to completion.

94 - REPLACE THE OATH OF CITIZEN - complete

Bill C-8 was passed in 2021 which includes the phrasing "...including the constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Metis people."

As of Oct.4 2021

20 - not started

32 - in progress - projects proposed

29 - in progress - projects underway

13 - complete

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – 2021
JANUARY – OCTOBER 2021

FINANCES:

INCOME RECEIVED:	86,597.17
EXPENSES PAID:	<u>76,052.11</u>
SURPLUS (DEFICIT):	<u>10,545.06</u>

Included in the above income is 15,000.00 from the Manitoba Bridge Grant and 17,143.51 from the Canada Employment Wage Subsidy (CEWS)

PRESBYTERIANS SHARING – Total Allocation for 2021 is \$3,200.00

DONATIONS RECEIVED: 3,250.00

We have surpassed our annual allocation

FUNDRAISING:

INCOME:	3,701.60
EXPENSES:	<u>830.05</u>
SURPLUS:	<u>2,871.55</u>

The summary of the surplus from the following events:

Spring Dinner	2,908.50
Fall Supper	(36.95)

Unfortunately our Fall Supper had to be cancelled after we had incurred some expenses

Thank you for your generous donation to the Thanksgiving offering. The total amount received was \$1,590.00

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ENDOWMENT
FINANCIAL STATEMENT – October 31, 2021**

REVENUE:	MONTH	Y-T-D
High Interest Saving Account – Stride CU	2.40	15.69
Investment Interest – Stride CU	905.97	1,352.84
Share Dividend – Stride CU		13.86
Investment Redeemed – Stride CU		5,000.00
Memorial Gifts	5.00	10.00
Honour Gifts		
Offering Envelopes	85.00	155.00
TOTAL REVENUE	998.37	6,547.39

EXPENSES:

Bank Charges – Stride CU
Investment Purchase
Finance & Maintenance
Miscellaneous
TOTAL EXPENSES

BANK: STRIDE CREDIT UNION (SCU) (Chequing Account)

Opening Balance: January 1, 2021	\$ 2,820.58
Total Revenue – Year to Date	112.49
Total Expenses – Year to Date	
Closing Balance: October 31, 2021	\$ 3,044.42

BANK: STRIDE CREDIT UNION (High Interest Saving Account) – Included Below **

Opening Balance: January 1, 2021	\$ 5,706.81
Total Revenue – Year to Date	5,984.11
Total Expenses – Year to Date	
Closing Balance: October 31, 2021	\$11,690.92 - Included below **

INVESTMENTS:

DATE PURCHASED	BANK	INVESTMENT	AMOUNT
April/19	SCU	High Interest Saving Account **	\$11,690.92 **
Oct 14/15	SCU	TD Due Oct 14/22 @1.10% #307879	33,450.22
May 25/18	SCU	TD Due May 25/22 @1.00% #370687	23,020.06 ****
Oct 31/17	SCU	Westbourne Due Oct 31/23 @1.50% #400450	1,500.00
TOTAL INVESTMENTS			\$69,661.20

TD – Term Deposit

CONGRATULATIONS to Ruth & Miep:



Congratulations to Ruth Buan who received four awards at the Portage Collegiate Institute Grade 9 Undergrad Awards held on November 16. She received gold for science and woodworking. Ruth also received a citizenship award with a cash gift of \$50. She and another student tied for the highest average for grade 9 (98%) and each received a cash gift of \$100. Well done, Ruth!



Miep's 90th Birthday





Thank you to everyone for blessing Miep with your birthday wishes for her 90th birthday on October 19th!
She enjoyed going to the mail each day and receiving a nice surprise, an overwhelming total of 136 cards!!