

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Minister: **John Zondag**

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Organist: **Margaret McNutt-Reichelt**

Clerk of Session: **Raymond Reichelt**

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS SHEET

THE 1ST SUNDAY IN LENT 6 March 2022

Welcome! We extend a warm welcome to our guests, and invite you to sign the guest book at the back of the sanctuary. Unfortunately, however, we are not yet able to resume our after-service fellowship time in the Church Hall.

Online Services - An abbreviated version of today's service will be recorded, and uploaded to YouTube. The link to the recorded service will be e-mailed out to those who have requested it. It can also be accessed from our congregational website, which is at www.firstpcportage.com. Due to the easing of pandemic restrictions, next Sunday (the 13th) is the last Sunday we will be making a recorded service available — unless new restrictions are imposed sometime in the future.

Scripture Readings - The readings for today's service are

- Deuteronomy 26.1-11 - A thanksgiving offering
- Psalm 51.1-12, 16-17 - "Have mercy on me, God"
- Romans 10.5-13 - Believing and professing
- Luke 4.1-13 - The temptation of Jesus

The readings for next Sunday will be

- Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18 - Abram believes God's promise
- Psalm 27 - "The LORD is my light and my salvation"
- Philippians 3.17 - 4.1 - Following Paul's example
- Luke 13.31-35 - Jesus' lament for Jerusalem

The Greeter this month is **Val Pogue**.

The Reader for today is **Lalaine Buan**.

This Week in First Church:

- Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. - Bible study, by Zoom
- Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. - F&M Committee meeting, by Zoom

Coming Up:

- Sunday, 13 March - Daylight Saving Time begins
- Sunday, 20 March - Deadline for submissions for the March Newsletter

Annual Meeting - Our Annual Meeting was held last Sunday, 27 February. The various reports in the Annual Report were adopted, as was the proposed budget for this year.

Keith Kelly and Lisa Sneesby were re-appointed to the Endowment Committee for a further 3-year term, and Brian Yeo was re-appointed a Congregational Trustee for a further 2-year term. Debbi Miles has allowed her 2-year term as a Trustee to expire, and we thank her for serving in that capacity for the past couple of years.

Following the routine portion of the meeting, a discussion was had on whether the Session should permit same-sex weddings to be held in our church (they are now permitted by the General Assembly of our church, but each Session has the right to set the policy for its own congregation). There wasn't much discussion, but when an "advisory vote" was taken, the results were four "yes" votes and thirteen "no" votes. The Session will take this into consideration when it finalizes its policy for weddings.

A few copies of the Annual Report are available on the table behind the back pew for those who didn't receive one.

Session News - Here are some highlights from the January and February Session meetings:

- A request from Debbi Miles for a one-year leave of absence from the Session was approved. The families in Debbi's elder's district have thus been transferred to Margaret McNutt-Reichelt and Margaret Dunn's district.
- In view of the easing of pandemic restrictions in our province, it was decided that we will soon stop recording abbreviated services and uploading them to YouTube. The final recorded service will be uploaded next Sunday, the 13th. Printed scripts will still be made available to those who would like them, however.
- The Session was unsure as to whether, or how, we should change our own pandemic protocols, in view of the government's easing of restrictions. No changes have been made to date, but, depending on what exactly the government decides, changes may be made after the 15th of March.
- In our third discussion with our New Beginnings coach, Ian Fraser, it was decided to hold off on making a decision on when to resume the New Beginnings process until the May Session meeting.
- Raymond Reichelt offered to provide pulpit supply on Sunday, 27 March, when John Zondag needs to go to Neepawa for that congregation's Annual Meeting. John is Neepawa's interim moderator, and it's his responsibility to chair their Annual Meeting.
- In view of John's mother's upcoming 100th birthday (17 April), the Session has agreed that he may take two weeks' vacation at that time, so that he can go to southern Ontario for the occasion. Unfortunately, though, that day also happens to be Easter Sunday this year, so John will be away on Easter Sunday and the Sunday following. Raymond Reichelt has offered to provide pulpit supply on Good Friday, Charlie Clifford on Easter Sunday, and Keith Kelly on the 2nd Sunday of Easter (24 April). John plans to be back on the 25th.

Ukraine - PWS&D is now accepting donations toward the effort to provide assistance to refugees fleeing the Russian invasion in Ukraine. The most urgent needs are for food, water, and shelter. PWS&D provides assistance through its partners, the ACT Alliance (ACT stands for “Action by Churches Together”) and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Donations can be made through our congregation; just mark your cheque or envelope “PWS&D - Ukraine”. If you would like your donation to reach PWS&D faster, you can make your donation online, using your credit card. Go to www.WeRespond.ca, click on “Ukraine Crisis Appeal”, and then click on the “Donate Now” button.

The Christian Year - Today is the first Sunday in **Lent**, which is the fourth of the six seasons of the Christian Year. Lent is a season of preparation for Easter, and in that respect, it’s similar to Advent, the season of preparation for Christmas. Lent is a time for us to give increased attention to our struggle against our sinful impulses and the sinful pressures of the world around us, and to work for renewal in our relationships with God and our fellow human beings. Historically, Lent was a time when the disciplines of fasting, charitable giving, and prayer were emphasized (see Matthew 6.1-18). In some denominations, the practice of fasting has evolved into the practice of “giving something up for Lent”.

The season of Lent originated in the early centuries of the church as a period in which new converts (called “catechumens”, mostly adults) were given their final instruction in the Christian faith, in preparation for their baptism at Easter. By the Middle Ages, Lent had evolved into a solemn season of penitence and fasting, in imitation of Jesus’ 40 days of fasting and being tempted in the wilderness (Luke 4.1-13 and parallels). The length of Lent was therefore set at **40 days** (not including *Sundays*, however, since Sunday, the weekly celebration of Jesus’ resurrection, could not be a day of fasting). So Lent always begins on a Wednesday, 6½ weeks before Easter: **Ash Wednesday**. Since the date of Easter changes from year to year, the date of Ash Wednesday also changes.

The final week of Lent is called **Holy Week**, and during that week we commemorate the events of Jesus’ “Passion” — his suffering and death in Jerusalem.

The symbolic color for Lent is **purple**, signifying preparation and penitence. The color for Holy Week is **red**, symbolizing Jesus’ blood, shed on the cross as a sacrifice for human sin.

Today - Copies of the March-April issue of the devotional guide *Today* are now available, and have been set out on the table behind the back pew. Feel free to pick one up and take it home for your daily devotional reading.

Newsmagazine - A copy of the latest issue of *Vocations*, the quarterly newsmagazine from Knox College in Toronto, has been set out on the table behind the back pew. Anyone who would like to have a look at it is welcome to. Knox College is one of our church’s three theological colleges; the other two are in Montréal and Vancouver.

Protocols - In order to protect each other from transmission of the COVID-19 virus, please follow these protocols in our Sunday services, until further notice:

- Wear a mask. Those taking part in leading the service may remove their masks when they are speaking, so that they may be more easily understood.
- Maintain physical distance (2 meters) from others (except members of your own household).
- Use hand sanitizer when entering the sanctuary.
- An offering plate has been set out at the back of the sanctuary.
- Remain seated throughout the service, including for the hymns.
- Bring your own cushion and/or Bible each week, if desired.

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Protocols (*continued*)

- Prefer that washrooms not be used.
- There will be no coffee/fellowship hour.
- Refrain from shaking hands, etc.
- The names of attenders will be recorded each Sunday, so that we have a record of who attended on which Sunday, in case contact tracing should need to be done later.

Attendance Limit - The current public health orders limit attendance at our services to 50% of capacity, when proof of vaccination is not required — which, in our case, works out to 88 people!

Mission Moment

The Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, Ukraine, has been struggling to recruit and retain pastors to serve in poor, rural churches. To encourage seminary students to return after studying abroad, the church started the Nest Program, which offers pastors a safe place to live. **Bishop Zán-Fábián was overjoyed when The Presbyterian Church in Canada offered financial support to renovate a vacant parish house for the Rev. Sándor and his wife Noémi**, who have agreed to serve in the small village of Tiszaújhely. With financial assistance from *Presbyterians Sharing*, Sándor and Noémi have furnished their house with basic appliances and furniture and can now concentrate on their ministry in Tiszaújhely and give thanks to God.

Prayer Calendars - Copies of the Prayer Calendar for March are ready to be picked up at the back of the sanctuary. Don't forget your copy!