

First Presbyterian Church News

17 Royal Road South, Portage la Prairie, MB



John Zondag, Minister

March 2022

Raymond Reichelt, Clerk of Session
Margaret McNutt-Reichelt, Organist

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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

As I write this on the first day of spring, it is just over two years since the COVID-19 outbreak was officially designated a “pandemic”, and nearly two years since pandemic precautions forced us to suspend our in-person Sunday services for the first time (29 March 2020). This past week, our province’s status was upgraded to “Green” for the first time since the color-code system was introduced in the spring of 2020. The provincial government has lifted most, if not all, pandemic restrictions, and we are hoping that, at long last, we’re seeing the proverbial “light at the end of the tunnel”. In response, the Session has begun easing our own internal pandemic protocols, and today (20 March) was the first day that we had the option of not wearing a mask during the service, and of standing for the hymns. Like all of you, I’m sure; I sincerely hope that this is the “beginning of the end” of the pandemic, and that we will gradually be able to get back to normal, both in society as a whole, and within the life and work of our congregation.

The pandemic has certainly had a disruptive effect on our congregation. Although we have continued having services every Sunday, in one form or other, many of our other activities have been sidelined. Financial assistance from both the federal and provincial governments have kept us “above water” financially for the past two years, but a return to normal also means that we will once again be “on our own” financially. Worse than that is the effect the pandemic has had on the cohesiveness and sense of community within our congregation, as circumstances have kept us apart to varying degrees over the past two years. Although we have had in-person services since the Labor Day weekend, weekly worship attendance remains considerably lower than it was in 2019.



A major challenge for us will be to come together again in the coming months (if circumstances permit, of course).

The pandemic has also thrown a monkey wrench into our plans to participate in the New Beginnings process for congregational renewal. We have been stalled partway through the process for over a year, now, since the next steps require as many of us as possible to get together in person, both as a large group and in small discussion groups. How soon we will be able to get going again is still unclear.

Soon we will be celebrating again God’s decisive victory over the power of death in the resurrection of Jesus. Let us pray that God’s power of resurrection may be at work in our congregation also, to restore our strength and vitality in the coming months.

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

The 17th of April will be John Zondag's mother's 100th birthday. Unfortunately, however, that day also happens to be Easter Sunday this year! With the agreement of the Session, then, John will be taking two weeks' vacation (11-24 April), to travel to Cambridge, Ont., for the occasion. Although he will be here on Palm Sunday (10 April), he will be away for the rest of Holy Week, as well as for Easter Sunday and the Sunday following. Fortunately, our lay preachers have offered to provide pulpit supply for the three services that John will miss, as follows:

- Good Friday (15 April) - Raymond Reichelt
- Easter Sunday (17 April) - Charlie Clifford
- The 2nd Sunday of Easter (24 April) - Keith Kelly

There will be no service on Maundy Thursday again this year. John plans to be back on Monday, 25 April. Pastoral backup will be arranged for the two weeks that he will be away. If a pastoral need should arise, please contact either your elder or Raymond Reichelt to find out which ministers are available to assist you.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

a) Regularly-scheduled events:

- Bible study - Tuesday evenings at 7:00 - by Zoom
- Finance & Maintenance Committee - 2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30 p.m. - by Zoom
- Session meetings - 4th Thursday of the month, 7:00 p.m. - by Zoom

b) One-time events:

- Communion Sunday - 3 April
- Good Friday service - Friday, 15 April, 10:30 a.m.
- Easter Sunday - 17 April
- Christian Family Sunday - 8 May
- Communion Sunday - 5 June

REVISED PROTOCOLS

In view of the easing of pandemic restrictions, the Session has revised our own protocols for Sunday services and other gatherings at the church, as follows:

- Wearing a mask and hand sanitizing are now optional.
- For the time being, we will continue to maintain physical distance (2 meters) from others (except members of our own households). We will also continue to refrain from shaking hands, etc.
- An offering plate is set out at the back of the sanctuary. It may be brought forward for the dedication of the offering by the Greeter (or someone else) if he/she is comfortable doing so.
- We will return to standing for the hymns and other parts of the service for which we stood previously; but will not yet put the hymnbooks and Bibles back into the pews. Those who wish to remain seated for the entire service should feel free to do so.
- Those who wish to do so may bring their own cushion and/or Bible each week.
- There will be no coffee/fellowship hour following the service, yet.
- The names of attenders each Sunday will no longer be recorded, since contact tracing is no longer being done.

EASTER ENVELOPE

For those who receive a printed copy of the Newsletter, the annual **Easter Offering envelope** is enclosed with it. For those who receive their Newsletter by e-mail, the Easter envelope is being mailed out separately. **Many thanks** to those who contributed to the annual Christmas Offering in December, which totaled \$1,405. Thanks also to those who contributed to the “Virtual Fundraiser” during 2021; contributions totaled \$1,660.

COMMUNION



Our Lent Communion service will be held on Sunday, 3 April. The procedure that we followed in October and December (people going forward to receive the elements either individually or in family groups) worked well, so, unless the Session decides differently, we will follow the same procedure again this time.

SOUP KITCHEN NEWS

The Soup Kitchen has been open since the middle of July 2021 for both in-person and takeout meals, following Covid restrictions. As these restrictions are being modified and lifted the Soup Kitchen is moving back toward pre-pandemic routines. Once the take out containers have been used up, takeout will no longer be available, unless conditions change. An average of 25 meals per day (Mon-Fri) was served in the month of Feb. The Soup Kitchen received a number of substantial contributions in the past 2-3 months. Our long-time volunteer accountant, Henry Riendeau has indicated that he would like to retire, so the Soup Kitchen will be looking for someone to step into his position.

~ Margaret McNutt-Reichel

FINANCE & MAINTENANCE

Not much new to report from the Finance & Maintenance Committee since our annual meeting. I'm sure everyone is aware by now of the financial situation our church finds itself in. We have requested the first sum from the Endowment Committee to help see us through. Otherwise, the kitchen light has been repaired and the emergency light in the South entrance will be repaired shortly. Please continue to pray for our church and the churches that are working to help the refugees from Ukraine.

OUR SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to **Harold Graham and family** in the death of **Donna Graham** on the 31st of January.

SESSION NEWS

The Session continues to meet by Zoom on the 4th Thursday of the month. Here are some highlights of the November, January, and February Session meetings:

- Raymond Reichelt (clerk of the Session) was given the responsibility of handling requests to rent the Church Hall and the kitchen.
- The Weekly Prayer Focus for this year will be the division and polarization that has taken place in our society in recent years. In the weekly Prayers of the People, we will pray for greater mutual understanding and tolerance, for a willingness to listen to viewpoints different from one's own, and for greater civility in public discourse. If you have any specific prayer suggestions relating to this issue, please speak to John.
- 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 therefore been transferred to Margaret McNutt-Reichelt and Margaret Dunn's district for the time being.
- In view of the easing of pandemic restrictions in our province, it was decided that we would stop recording abbreviated services and uploading them to YouTube. The final recorded service was done on Sunday, 13 March. Printed scripts will still be made available to those who would like them, however.
- 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.

ANNUAL MEETING

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

We accepted an allocation of \$3,200 for *Presbyterians Sharing* for 2022 — the same amount as we accepted for last year. By doing so, we commit to contributing this amount this year. Last year, our actual givings to *Presbyterians Sharing* came to \$3,370, surpassing the allocation we had accepted.

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

PWS&D UKRAINE APPEAL

Presbyterian World Service and Development is appealing for donations toward the effort to provide assistance to refugees fleeing the Russian invasion of 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 donate online, using your credit card. Go to www.WeRespond.ca, click on “Ukraine Crisis Appeal”, click on the “Donate Now” button, and follow the prompts. You can check the website also for periodic updates.

FINANCES:

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2022

FINANCES:

INCOME RECEIVED:	11,817.14
EXPENSES PAID:	<u>16,814.85</u>
SURPLUS (DEFICIT):	<u>(4,997.71)</u>

Included in the above income is \$2,430.96 from the Canada Employment Wage Subsidy (CEWS)

PRESBYTERIANS SHARING – Total Allocation for 2022 is \$3,200.00

DONATIONS RECEIVED:	<u>270.00</u>
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FUNDRAISING:

INCOME:	0.00
EXPENSES:	<u>0.00</u>
SURPLUS:	<u>0.00</u>

The summary of the surplus from the following events:

Spring Dinner	0.00
Fall Supper	0.00
Meal In A Bowl	0.00

Unfortunately our fundraising events had been postponed due to COVID-19

Thank you for your donations to our Special Appeal offering. The total amount received to date is \$700.00

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ENDOWMENT
FINANCIAL STATEMENT – FEBRUARY 28, 2022**

REVENUE:	MONTH	Y-T-D
High Interest Saving Account – Stride CU	2.24	4.72
Investment Interest – Stride CU		
Share Dividend – Stride CU		
Investment Redeemed – Stride CU		
Memorial Gifts	330.00	330.00
Honour Gifts		
Offering Envelopes		
TOTAL REVENUE	332.24	334.72

EXPENSES:

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

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

Opening Balance: January 1, 2022	\$ 3,121.93
Total Revenue Year to Date	330.00
Total Expense Year to Date	
Closing Balance: February 28, 2022	\$ 3,451.93

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

Opening Balance: January 1, 2022	\$ 11,695.80
Total Revenue – Year to Date	4.72
Total Expenses – Year to Date	
Closing Balance: February 28, 2022	11,700.52 - Included below **

INVESTMENTS:

DATE	BANK	INVESTMENT AMOUNT	
PURCHASED			
April/19	SCU	High Interest Saving Account**	\$11,700.52 **
Oct 14/21	SCU	TD Due Oct 14/22 @1.100% 307879	33,450.22
May 25/18	SCU	TD Due May 25/22 @1.00% 370687	23,020.06
Oct 31/17		Westbourne Due Oct 31/23 @1.50% 400450	1,500.00
TOTAL INVESTMENTS			\$69,670.80

TD – Term Deposit

CONGRATULATIONS!

We extend congratulations to **Lalaine and Ruth Buan**, who became Canadian citizens on the 11th of January, in a ceremony that was held online.

We extend congratulations to **Rob and Cheryl McPherson**, on the birth of a new granddaughter, **Soraya**, on the 4th of March - the daughter of Cheryl's son Rob and his wife Megan. They live in St. Thomas, Ont.

On December 22nd, 2021, **Jordan Yeo and Wandy She** were married in Los Angeles, California. The wedding took place at the home of Kirk and Holly Pilling. The wedding was viewed by Zoom, which connected family members from Malaysia, China, United States and Canada.

Jordan's sister Holly, husband Kirk and their son Grant participated in wedding.

We extend congratulations to Jordan & Wandy from 1st Presbyterian Church, Portage

