FPC repair plan requires scaffolding this summer – 5-year fund raising plan needed

The Board of Managers of First Presbyterian has been awarded a $100,000 grant, the largest figure possible for Alberta’s designated historical sites.

The Alberta government website says the heritage value of FPC “lies in its Gothic Revival style architecture and its association with Reverend D.G. McQueen, an important clergyman in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Alberta.”

Under the leadership of Jacqueline Meffen, the Board has applied for several grants, but none are expected to top the $100,000. Repairing the leak in the tower roof is a priority but the 83 windows, mostly stained glass need attention. Large ones will each take months.

This large grant requires that it be matched by FPC funds. That means the Board of Managers will be in fund-raising mode. Charitable organizations, can lessen their financial commitment to the program by using in-kind contributions in lieu of cash up to a maximum of 25% of the total project cost. This is a time when volunteer hours put into the repairs will count like cash.

The Food Bank at First is part of our tradition

The vestibule is a hive of activity on Food Bank’s outtake day. “Hampers” line the walls and our volunteer greeter Nii Tawiah Koney stands ready. (Full story on p 5)
A Tribute to Rev. Harry Currie – 10 years in the making

On Sunday May 26th Dr. Kenneth Munro, on behalf of the church elders, spoke during the church service in appreciation of Rev. Currie’s contributions to First Church. A special luncheon followed the service. He highlighted three aspects of Rev. Currie’s ministry which have nourished our religious life as a congregation.

The first contribution he makes is his desire for continuous learning and study. We are very fortunate we have a leader who is excited about “life-long learning” of our Christian theology, doctrines and beliefs. Rev. Currie takes his study leaves seriously and also enrolls in courses from time to time. We as a congregation benefit because he brings his latest research to us in his weekly sermons. After taking a course or reading a book, he is very animated and loves to sit down and explain the various perspectives he has discovered with anyone who will listen.

Rev. Currie’s passion for study and the dissemination of his research is not confined to our pulpit on Sunday mornings alone. Often after choir practice on Wednesday evenings, several members of the choir and Harry go to the 1950 Pub on Jasper Avenue to wind down between 9:30-11:00 p.m. Gathered around a long table in the centre of this cavernous pub, choir members and Harry, who sits sipping his diet coke, often discuss rather mundane topics. However, the conversation invariably turns to deep theological issues as the evening wears on. Various choir members bring their knowledge to the table and often the discussion becomes rather animated.

At the same time, regular patrons of the pub are watching Don Cherry doing his analysis of the plays and players in the hockey game on the screens scattered about the walls of the premises. Never quietly spoken, Harry’s enthusiasm about things religious appears to be a competitive attempt to overshadow Don Cherry on the TV screens, whose voice is equally booming and determined to persuade while analyzing hockey plays. Observing this scene, first time visitors to Edmonton, I think, must get a somewhat distorted picture of “Edmonton’s exciting night life”.

Besides an informed and current review of our Christian theology and doctrine, the second contribution Rev. Currie has brought to our congregation is his musical ability. Rev. Currie was born with musical ability. His grandfather sang as a soloist in a United Church choir and his father was a musician. At gatherings with his aunts and uncles, everyone would sing in four-part harmony and play various musical instruments. Harry plays the piano and guitar. As a youngster, he took piano lessons for one year and then stopped. As a teenager, he played the guitar and picked up the piano once again, later in life, by chording.

Harry helps the choir greatly since he can sing tenor or bass. Depending on his voice and mood, he will move to the tenor side of the pulpit to sing tenor or to the bass side to sing with them. As we know, sometimes Rev. Currie sings the “Introit” alone, supported by his guitar before beginning the Service of Worship and sometimes a solo at an appropriate part of the Service. Harry loves singing solos; even when he sings as a member of the bass section, some have the impression he is singing a solo with the choir as his backup! Seriously, however, choir members know that the sound and ability of the choir is enhanced by Harry’s voice and musical abilities.

The third contribution Rev. Currie brings to our congregation is his great preaching and wonderful sermons. We have all learned these past 10 years that Harry likes family, film and food and often begins his sermons with one of these topics. Unfortunately, he generally starts sermons talking about food at about 11:40 a.m., and thereby reminds us about our empty stomachs and lunchtime. Nevertheless, he quickly moves into his theological analysis and we soon forget the need for sustenance of the body as he more than fills our requirements with “food for the mind and spirit.”

Because he feels preaching is one of the most critical aspects of his life as a Minister, Rev. Currie spends a great deal of time on his sermons. He believes God operates in our everyday life: we can see, feel and hear Him if we are open to Him. Thus, everyday stories and everyday events are important because God is there in each of them.

Continued at the top of the next page (p3)
Munro’s Tribute continued

Rev. Currie sees God as unconditional love and grace and our goal is to be like that. Similar to St. Paul’s letters to various Christian congregations in his day, Rev. Currie’s sermons are well planned and executed and geared to our needs each Sunday. His funeral orations are equally specific but always focusing on the universal themes of the love and grace of God.

On behalf of the Session and congregation, Harry, I wish to thank you for sharing 10 of your 30 years of ministry with us at First Presbyterian Church. May you and your wife Fiona enjoy many more fruitful years with us in Edmonton.

Dinner music started with “We’re just wild about Harry…”

Two days of special events, May 25th and May 26th, marked the 10th anniversary of Rev. Harry Currie’s induction as Minister of Word and Sacrament at First Presbyterian Church, as well as 30 years of ordination.

The turkey dinner on the Saturday was a fund-raising event for something dear to Rev. Currie’s heart – the youth ministry led by Rev. Mark Chiang, who coordinates Sunday school programs and helps the youth plan projects.

The choir organized the event and provided the musical entertainment. Choir Directors Marnie Giesbrecht, (pictured below with hot mitts) and Joachim Segger arranged the catering.

Rev. Currie’s daughter s. Kirsten and Alison, watch their father’s musical performance.
The baking brought by members and friends of the Ladies Aid was quickly converted to $375 on Apr. 28. Those who were late to the sale table found only a few cupcakes and squares.

Commemorative coffee spoons, cake plates with a sketch of the church, and other memorabilia, like vintage (1989) FPC Cookbooks were also sold. The executive expressed their thanks to those who contributed baking and those who made purchases. The money will assist in the Ladies Aid work this year.

Bake sale is first fund raiser in 2013 for the Ladies Aid

On April 6, poor weather at Camp Kannawin resulted in the Women’s Missionary Society Synodical staying in Edmonton. The Synodical event was moved into the Social Room at FPC.

Katherine Allen gave an informative talk on her trip to Palestine. She and other Presbyterians had a Syrian guide during the trip. Ms. Allen worked for 40 years with WMS and recently retired as circulation manager for Glad Tidings.

Another WMS event called Burst Forth was held on the May long weekend.

Notice: The WMS requests that donors to WMS clearly mark contribution envelopes with the initial “WMS” to prevent confusion with regular church offerings.

Weather changed the Synodical meeting plans
The Food Bank depot at First Church is nearly as old as the Edmonton Food Bank itself — and it was Canada’s first

In 2012, the Food Bank Depot at First Church handled 580 hampers, providing 978 adults and children with fresh and non-perishable items. Judith Strachan says it is a great outreach program for the church. It is a long standing one.

The Edmonton food bank was the first in Canada. It officially began on January 16, 1981. First Church became involved in 1983, when the minister and the church secretary were the main workers.

Judith Strachan knows all about this. As well as being a long-time volunteer, she sets volunteers’ schedules and arranges on-the-job training. Training lasts until a volunteer is comfortable with the tasks.

Most food bank clients are on Social Assistance and so they live on extremely low fixed incomes. They are also students, single parents, seniors, refugees and low income families.

Judith says that some clients have mental illness, perhaps managed schizophrenia, that makes them occasionally agitated.

Judith says the Food Bank work needs caring and feeling persons who are comfortable with all sorts of people.

“A person needs to be able to set boundaries,” she says, “have equanimity and a sense of humour.”

Monday is intake day: At FPC, this requires 1 person for 2 hours (9 a.m. to 11 a.m.) but a second person is required to be in the vicinity for personal safety. Intake is in the Arthur Newcombe Room. Persons registered with the food bank place orders, by phone or by coming to the church. The volunteer fills order sheets by hand and later faxes them to the Food Bank. The Food Bank fills the orders and delivers them by truck the next day around noon.

Current intake volunteers include, from FPC, Megan Collins, Margaret Oseen and Judith.

Tuesday is outtake day: Two people take one hour, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. One volunteer ticks clients’ names as their orders are picked up. The other volunteer ensures all runs smoothly in the pick-up area, where clients must transfer items from boxes into their own bags.

Current outtake volunteers are comprised of both First Presbyterian members and ATCO employees, who come through a program called Employees Participating in Communities (EPIC). ATCO volunteers are Laurie Hart, Sherry Martinez, and Susan Yui. Judith calls them “our ATCO Angels”.

Our FPC Outtake volunteers are: Allen Hazen, Shirley Jay, Dalton Philip, Carlos Raposo, Deb Shelswell, Nii Tawiah Koney and Tom White. Rev. Harry Currie and FPC employees Joe O’Sullivan and Nellie White also provide support. Jim Larsen is missed. He was a dedicated volunteer for a number of years before his death in 2012.

The Edmonton Food Bank — a few surprises

The first surprise is the eligibility criteria. All food bank clients must register at the Main Food Bank (121 St. & 116 Ave.) and only those with a city address may register. The Food Bank determines who is eligible to be put on the registry. Initially, clients must use depots in their areas of the city.

Because the homeless have no addresses they do not qualify to be Food Bank clients. If they come during intake or outtake, FPC volunteers suggest places for a meal like Mustard Seed & Boyle Street Community Services when a homeless person comes to the door.

Surprisingly, FPC is only one of 200 agencies, churches and food depots that do this work.

As 2012 ended, 40% of clients were children under the age of 18.

The Edmonton Food Bank was serving some 15,000 people per month through hamper programs. In addition, it provided over 350,000 meals and snacks through affiliated agencies. Some of those very likely serve the homeless.

Since 1983 – for 30 years – the Edmonton Food Bank has relied on First Presbyterian Church to provide a depot on its behalf. At the beginning Rev. Lloyd Fourney and Susan Schellevis handled and delivered up to six hampers a week. That could have meant 200-288 in a year, a mighty effort.

Judith Strachan, pictured below, is looking for more volunteers for all Food Bank tasks. Phone the church office to inquire (780) 422-2937.

There are small tasks as well as the major ones.

Volunteer! Help provide outreach to our downtown community!
Community Spirit Grant shows the Board of Managers that FPC has the right spirit

FPC Board of Managers found they had easily met the requirements of a $11,086.94 grant from Alberta Culture – without trying.

Jim Flatman, Treasurer, said, “The total expended … was over $12,000 and all were worthwhile benefits to our community. They were given without thought (of a grant)…”.

Jim added that FPC had even more items that would have qualified.

When the Community Spirit Grant arrived last spring, however, there was a deadline to spend it and there were stipulations.

The Board of Managers and particularly Diane Walker, grants coordinator, had worked to earn it, so it was very welcome.

All money needed to be spent by May 1st, 2013. Moreover, it must be spent on serving the community, yet could not be spent on promoting our faith as Presbyterians or Christians.

**Dinner to be June 22**

The major event the Board had in mind was, a community dinner. The dinner is for church neighbours who would most benefit from a free meal.

The concern was that this would be held after the deadline. That prediction was right. The date set is June 22, 2013 (after deadline).

**The list of items used in accounting for the grant were:**

- FPC Christmas hampers (for those less privileged)
- Food Bank delivery expenses (delivering food donations)
- No Room in The Inn (money collected for battered women in need of housing)
- Support for youngsters attending Summer Camp at Camp Kannawin
- Smoothing and levelling sidewalk (beside building)
- Hospitality for a visiting children’s choir
- Financial support for refugee family housing and
- Furniture and fixtures for our library (available for public use).

Other items that qualified were also FPC doing “all the usual things.”

Grant applications are handled by Board member Diane Walker while Board Chair Jacquie Meffen is the primary liaison between church and government. The Community Spirit Grant is said to be discontinued.

June 9 Tea for Retiring Elders— Bud Liversidge

Dr. Ken Munro said these words about Bud on behalf of Session at the June 9 Tea for Retiring Elders. The farewell to other elders will appear in the next issue.

**Bud Liversidge** worked for Air Canada until his retirement several years ago. Because of his singing ability, Bud served as soloist and leader of the bass section of the choir for many years. He also was a very conscientious Session member. In 1964 he was appointed chair of the Radio and Publicity Committee to promote the Life and Mission Project (LAMP) of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. In 1970 this committee began the quarterly publication of a newsletter entitled *First with the News*. Later the History and Archives Committee of Session took over the production of the paper. Bud has served most recently as Chair of this committee and continues to sit on the committee despite his retirement from Session. His main contribution has probably been organizing the Archives of the Church.

Bud is an artist and has painted in oils the McDougall mansion, has taken numerous photos, and has mounted several photographic displays for key celebratory events of the congregation. We thank you, Bud, for your help and service, especially to the musical life of the congregation and for the maintenance of the Archives and History of the congregation.
Church School holds a Palm Sunday Party!

The Sunday School children have a special top secret plan for their teachers at the wind-up celebration June 23. [We learned nothing – its top secret]. The wind-up coincides with the Congregational Picnic.

The guidance of Rev. Mark Chiang, who directed the Sunday School program this year, has made a difference, according to teachers’ comments. Mixed age groups are a challenge, but Mark’s lessons have a range of activities to accommodate the age range, we were told.

One teacher said, “It is so easy to teach when Mark has things so well organized in advance; I don’t think I’d be able to teach otherwise.”

This year the theme for weekly lessons has been “fruits of the spirit”. In line with this, the school rooms are adorned with giant fruit hanging from a huge vine. Each piece of fruit bears a message from one of the lessons on the theme,

Church Picnic — June 23

The congregation’s annual picnic will be held Sunday June 23. All are welcome.

Please bring some food to share for the pot luck lunch.

Everyone will gather, immediately after the church service at RJW (Dick) Mather Memorial Park, which is at the corner of 105th Street and 99 Avenue, just south of our church.

Watch the Church Bulletin for further details.

Fund Raiser for the Building Repairs

August 11 at First Church.

You are invited to donate good used items and Canadiana now!

To discuss donations contact David Meffen at (780)438-7344 or Dalton Philip at 780)466-2965

During the summer, children will still be welcome in the Sunday School rooms upstairs during worship.

A modified “Sunday School light” program will be offered. We may rely on youth to help supervise and
Edith Mary Giesbrecht (nee Whitlock)

“Mary” was born in Yeovil, Somerset, England, to Edith (nee Pinnock) and John Allan Whitlock. The family immigrated to Canada in March 1922, along with two Whitlock brothers, Arthur and Wilfred, to take up a homestead near Lloydminster, Saskatchewan.

In 1926, baby brother George was born and two weeks later pneumonia took George and Mary’s mother. In 1927 their father married the widow Vera Field and brought her and her three children, Robert, Ruth and Edna, from Ontario to the homestead. Mary loved her stepmother immediately and learned how to cook and sew from her. The blended family moved to Rosetown, Saskatchewan where Vera gave birth to Donald in 1931. They relocated to Grande Prairie in 1937. Mary attended Grande Prairie Business College.

In 1942, at the invitation of her friend Sylvia O’Brien, Mary headed to Edmonton where she got a job as a stenographer at Bechtel Price Callahan. In January 1944 Mary met William (Bill) Giesbrecht and they were married on June 27 of the same year. They joined First Presbyterian Church on December 6, 1946 and were active members through the years, with Mary involved in the Sunday School and then singing soprano in the choir (both her parents came from musical families). Bill was ordained as an elder and both Bill and Mary served on various committees.

Mary and Bill loved music of all kinds, enjoyed dancing, and were active in bridge, golf and camping. Mary rode a bike in summer and in winter she liked to skate and cross-country ski. She was an avid reader and a faithful borrower at the library but she found time to sew clothes for everyone in the family. Mary took up yoga in 1966 and continued doing her daily routine every morning well into her 80s.

Mary and Bill took their first overseas trip in 1967 and travelled with friends to Spain, Hawaii, Jamaica and Europe over the next 15 years, in addition to making camping trips with their extended family in Canada. Bill retired in 1977 and they had almost five years together before he predeceased her in 1982. Her family said Mary was inherently optimistic and they describe her independence as fierce. She continued to travel with friends by car and cruise ship, continued to golf, and, with the help of her family, lived on her own until she was 93. She was said to always be up for a party or to attend a concert.

Mary and Bill were proud of their four daughters Wendy Diane, Judith Mary, Marnie Lynn, and Debbie Kim. They were delighted as son-in-laws and grandchildren joined the family. Wendy married John Hill (Josh. Melanie and Mika; Nathan and Ileah); Marnie married Joachim Segger (Mark and Heather; Chris); Judi predeceased her parents in 1974 but her son Jason Cockroft provided Mary with great-grandchildren (Tracy, Jordan and Zach, Logan, Morgan).

For at least 65 of her 95 plus years, Mary’s life kept the regular rhythm of weekly worship in First Presbyterian, participating in hymns, psalms, prayers, responses and anthems, often from the choir loft. These rituals remained important to her and she remembered them long after she lost her memory of most things. She loved the music and worship and she loved the building in which she spent many hours in meetings, at rummage and bake sales, in choir practice, in the Sunday school, at church dinners and countless other events. A celebration of Mary’s life was held at First Presbyterian Church on May 18, 2013.
Isabel McRae celebrates her 105th birthday in May with two cakes and a crowd of well-wishers

Isabel McRae, born in Edmonton in 1908, celebrated her 105th birthday with two cakes at FPC on May 6th. Isobel, pictured here with her nephew Don Reynolds, gives a broad grin for the camera. Don cut and served cake for the crowd.

He and Session Member Jean Warrack ensure that Isobel is driven to church each Sunday.

A couple of years back another Session Member, Barb Acton, was driving to church when a daughter, called out, “Mom, that’s Isobel McRae on the sidewalk.” Isobel and her walker were on their way to church too. A taxi had failed to arrive when expected and so Isobel decided she’d just walk. She was tiring, so Barb, and daughters picked up Isobel on that occasion.

They also conferred with others who regularly attend FPC and decided that rides must be arranged.

Pauline Grant — June 9 Tea for Retiring Elders

Pauline Grant was born in the Netherlands as Pieterke Kits. She immigrated to Red Deer as a young girl at which time her given name was changed to Pauline by her sponsoring relatives. She was educated at Emmaus Bible College, Oak Park, Illinois. Pauline worked for five years as Regional Representative of Pioneer Girls of Canada in British Columbia. She married Raymond Grant in Vancouver in 1973 and moved to Edmonton in 1974. Pauline worked part-time as administrator and psychological test librarian at the U. of A. Psychology Department (1975-93). She became a Presbyterian Chaplain in 1990 and worked half-time in that position at the U. of A. until 1997. She served as Chair of the Chaplains’ 1996-97 academic year.

In 1996, Pauline served as liaison to the Sunday School for the Christian Education Committee of FPC Session. Then, in the fall of 1999, Pauline undertook leadership on “Wednesdays at Noon” Bible Study. She and Raymond Grant led Bible Studies through 2002.

For Pauline Grant’s work on Session and Presbytery, we thank her.

Dr. Ken Munro said these words about Pauline on behalf of Session at the June 9th Tea for Retiring Elders.

The farewell to other elders will appear in the next issue.

Summer Student to work in Our Presbytery

In early February, the congregation at First Church was asked to raise $300 before the end of the month to bring a ministerial student to our western presbytery. The Presbytery has 17 congregations and each were asked to contribute the same amount with a goal of raising $3,000.

FPC raised a generous $845 for this goal. This summer experience will benefit the student and bring new ideas and energy from a new generation of ministerial students.
NOTICES AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT FIRST CHURCH

Mary Giesbrecht’s Family: Marnie, Joachim and Debbie wish to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone who expressed condolences, attended the service of remembrance and celebration for the life of their mother (mother-in-law) and in so many ways loved and supported them in their loss. Also greatly appreciated are donations to the music fund and building fund in her memory, which totalled about $2000.00 – a wonderful tribute for which we are extremely grateful. We are thankful for God’s grace in mom’s life through all her years.

VOLUNTEER FROM HOME! WANTED
Link verifiers for FPC website. To check FPC website, weekly if possible, to see that links are all working and inform the webmaster if they are not. Contact the webmaster through the website.
www.firstpresbyterian.ca

VOLUNTEER FROM HOME! WANTED
WANTED proof-reader for FPC website. To check FPC website, weekly if possible, to see that links are all working and inform the webmaster if they are not. Contact the webmaster through the website.
www.firstpresbyterian.ca

WANTED: FLOWER DONATIONS
Flowers for the sanctuary are always welcome. You may wish to celebrate a special occasion or honour a loved one. Contact Dorothy Stoutjesdyk at 780-487-7575 or dscott@shaw.ca for details and to make arrangements.

VOLUNTEER for HOSPITALITY after church service. There is a signup sheet in the Arthur Newcombe Room for the food (which should not be elaborate – cookies are fine). Tea and coffee will be served after the church service, whether food has been donated or not.

A happy 80th birthday to Bud Liversidge a past editor of First With The News.

Change your address, email or phone number? Please advise Jean Warrack, who is now responsible for the congregational list, (email her at jeanwarrack@gmail.com)

NOTICE
Bible study and the weekly noon hour prayer have ended for a time.
Rev. Currie can answer your questions about church events revharry@telus.net

Congregational Picnic!
The Annual Congregational Picnic at First Presbyterian Church will occur Sunday June 23

We hold the picnic immediately following the Service of Worship.

Come to RJW (Dick) Mather Memorial Park located at the corner of 105th Street and 99 Avenue. This is a lovely park just south of our church where the McKay Avenue School is located.

Everyone is welcome. There will be activities for the children. Please bring some food so that we can all partake in a pot luck lunch.

Watch the Church Bulletin for further details.