



# First Presbyterian Church Communion - June 2024

My dearest friends,

It seems like yesterday that I (finally!) made up my mind to attend Knox College to become a minister in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. That was in the summer of 2000. It is hard to believe! I had a brief stint preaching that summer at St. James Presbyterian Church, followed by one year as student minister at St. Andrew's in Dresden, my home congregation. Then in August of 2002, I was hired by First Church to serve as student minister while Rev. Evelyn Carpenter was getting ready to retire. That was followed by my call to this incredible congregation in December 2004, and my ordination and induction in February 2004. I have served my entire ministry here, and I could not be more grateful for it. And for you.

So much has happened in the 22 years I have served in this church, both to all of us personally, and in the world. Not to mention all that we have experienced in this church along the way. I am so thankful for the way you have embraced my ministry, and the direction we have taken together. I joked once that people go into ministry wanting to change the world, and yet they get fired for making changes to the bulletin! Thankfully, you have not been that kind of church. You have helped create a welcoming, inclusive, relaxed, and spiritual environment that speaks to a wide variety of people. This church is everything I dreamed and hoped for when I entered the ministry. I feel sadness having to say goodbye to all of you, but I am equally thankful for what you will continue to do in the next chapter of your congregational life.



I don't know who God will be calling to be your next minister, but I know you. I pray you continue to be the open-minded and welcoming people that you are. Our world right now is bent on defining territories and erecting walls to keep people out. Our Lord calls us to a banquet where all are welcome, and no borders exist. A seat at this banquet has but one requirement – that we leave our ego behind. This is what Jesus calls “dying to self;” a state of being in which status and privilege have no place or purpose. This may sound foolishly idealistic to some, but inclusion means that people feel love and safety, no matter who they are regardless of gender, skin colour, nationality, sexual orientation, income or faith. Far from being idealistic, I believe this mindset is at the heart of the Gospel.

By now you know that the Presbytery of Essex-Kent has appointed Rev. Tim Reddish as your Interim Moderator (IM) who will oversee the life and ministry at FPC while you search for a new minister. Rev. Reddish will work with the session to create a search team which will be tasked with writing a congregational profile (a detailed description of our ministry and congregational life) to submit to the Presbyterian Church in Canada's head office. That profile will be made available to the denomination at large, and will be read by prospective ministers considering whether to send their profile to the IM to be reviewed by the search team.

In a nutshell the process is as follows: the IM and members of the search team will review all profiles received, and interview any candidates who look promising. Only when the IM and search team are satisfied that they have identified the person who will become the minister at FPC, they will give their recommendation to the session for approval. Throughout the process the IM gives regular reports of progress to Presbytery and receives their support.

Once approval is given by the session, the candidate will be invited to preach on a Sunday announced to the congregation. Immediately following the service, a congregational meeting will be called to vote on whether to extend a “call” to the minister. Only full members of the congregation are allowed to vote on whether or not



to call the prospective minister, but adherents are able to sign a separate list to “attest” to the call. Following a successful vote, the prospective minister will have seven days to inform the session whether he/she wishes to become your new minister.

As you can well imagine, this will not happen overnight, so I am reminding you to give your all to this congregation during the vacancy, both of your time and financial support. On average, churches in the PCC take about a year to find a new minister – some sooner, some later.

Should you be approached by the session to be part of the search team, I urge you to prayerfully consider accepting the invitation. Both members and adherents are able to serve on the search team. Please note that being a member of the search team is not a ticket to making sure the next minister fits your particular tastes. Being part of the search team is a role that requires teamwork, and an overall view of the ministry, style and life of the whole congregation. As well, it requires people who have visibly demonstrated that they have been part of the congregational life and ministry of the church over the last few years, and who are thus familiar with the hopes and dreams of this congregation as a whole.

I am very thankful that Rev. Paul Shaw has volunteered to lead our worship services during the vacancy, and he has the grateful support of both the session, and Rev. Reddish. Having one person in the pulpit during the vacancy will provide continuity as well as focus, as Rev. Paul intends to remind the congregation of the ultimate goal in finding a new minister for this church. As well, as noted in the last Session Highlights, Rev. Reddish wishes to preach once every two months in order to get to know the congregation, and to provide an opportunity to ask him questions as necessary.

You will also be in good pastoral hands, as Sue Easun will be working to make sure anyone who needs pastoral care will receive it. I am grateful for Sue’s desire that care continue throughout the vacancy. As well, Rev. Paul is willing to do hospital calls and funerals. Remember too that everyone has a part to play in pastoral care while you



search for a new minister. Please help Sue, Paul, and Rev. Tim by being the hands and feet of Jesus to the people you know and love.

This is a time to take to heart the chorus of “I am the church! You are the church!” which says: The church is not a building; the church is not a steeple; the church is not a resting place; ***the church is the people.*** I invite you all to step into serving at FPC as you search for your new minister, so that all ministry and congregational life will remain vibrant throughout the vacancy and beyond.

**Bible Studies:** The Men’s Bible Study (Tuesdays – coffee at 9:30 a.m., with the study following 10:00 – 11:00 am.) and the Zoom Bible Study (Wednesdays at 7 p.m.) will run to the end of June. They will be on break during July and August, and will start up again in September. Rev. Paul Shaw will lead the study groups in the fall.

**Sunday School:** Our Sunday School will be taking a summer break in July and August. The Nursery will be available if parents desire it. Sunday School children will be given quiet church bags/activity sets which they can use during the service. Sunday School will resume on September 8!



## Saturday Outreach Breakfast

@ First Presbyterian  
Church

**Saturday Breakfast:** I think the Saturday Breakfast is among the most important ministries we do at FPC. I spoke to one of our guests last Saturday who thanked the church for providing our free breakfast every week. She told me how many people that who come to us on Saturday mornings would find it difficult to make ends meet without this one meal they can count on during the week. The need in our city is great, and there are no simple answers to reversing it. And certainly, no

manner of self-righteous disregard for those in need is of any help whatsoever.

I am immensely grateful that volunteerism at our Saturday Breakfast is as strong as it has ever been. It is so gratifying to see how willingly and happily our volunteers give of their time and energy to this ministry of mercy. I love their spirit that does not judge our guests, or dismiss them altogether. Quite the opposite – they make it their

goal to honour our guests with the best breakfast they can provide, and to serve it in a welcoming and caring environment. And to add to our spirit of hospitality, we are reintroducing the different menus that we served prior to the Covid pandemic. I thank the different cooking teams who are getting ready to switch gears and prepare a different breakfast than the one we've been serving for the last 4 years!

I thank Rebecca Ladd and Bruce Davidson who are doing the lion share of organizing our volunteers and making sure everything is ordered and in place to serve the upwards of 90 guests we get each Saturday. If you've never served at our breakfast, I really, truly, wholeheartedly encourage you to do so. I know you will find it to be incredibly satisfying, for you will serve the people in need in our city, and you will get to know the members of this congregation as you work together. Call the office, and Linda Weeks, our Admin Assistant, will make sure you get connected to this ministry right away.



**Backyard Mission:** We are running the Backyard Mission on **Friday and Saturday, August 9-10** with a concluding service at FPC on August 11 with Rev. Nate Van Denend as our guest speaker. The theme for this year's Backyard Mission is "The First(s) Shall Be Last" – a play on words using both participating churches' names as a reminder that we are called to serve our neighbour. We are still reviewing possible sites for this year's project, and a decision should be made in the next week

or so. Once that is done, a sign-up sheet will be available in the sanctuary. I thank Oscar Njumba and Barb Sargent who will be looking after this year's project, as I will have retired by the time it takes place.

In case you are new to FPC, the Backyard Mission is a joint project of First Presbyterian Church and First Christian Reformed Church. Over two days, a group of volunteers transforms the outside of a house for an individual in need in our city. In the past we have scraped and painted houses, built wheelchair ramps and fences, done general carpentry repairs, replaced eaves troughs, landscaped, and done general cleanup around a house. This is done free of charge as an outreach of love and compassion to the homeowner. It is a great project, both deeply satisfying and a lot of fun.

## Current Message Series:

**The Way Forward:** Well, my friends...my ministry comes to an end at FPC. But Praise God, your ministry will continue past my retirement. Although we've been together a long time, God has been present here long before. As you prepare for a new chapter in your congregational life, let's take one final opportunity to be reminded of the mindset and spirit you should hold to as you determine the "way forward" for First Presbyterian Church. And spoiler alert...it can be summarized by Jesus' command to love God and neighbour.

**May 26** "Focus on what is important." Gen 25:19-34; Matt 22:35-40

**June 2** "Don't worship the wrong things." Gen 32:1-24; Matt 22:35-40

### Communion Sunday

**June 9** "God is a planner!" Gen 37:1-28; Matt 22:35-40

**June 16** "Pray about it." 1Sam 1:1-28; Matt 22:35-40

**June 23** "Trust that God is at work." Matt 11:1-19; Matt 22:35-40

**June 30** "Put God FIRST - always." Matt 4:1-17; Matt 22:35-40

### Rev. Mike's final Sunday



**Your financial support:** I am sure you've noticed that we do not take up an offering during the worship service, as we follow an honour system in receiving your church tithe. If you are using offering envelopes, you can leave your weekly or monthly offering in the collection plates located at the entrances to the sanctuary.

I encourage you to continue with your prayerful and steady financial support of this church. This is especially true while you search for a new minister, which on average takes about nine to twelve in the PCC. There can be a tendency to back off on offerings during a vacancy, but you can well imagine that it ends up hurting the church. ***And this too: our denomination requires that a congregation show that it can afford a minister before it's allowed to extend a call. Fiscal health is part of the mix in your ability to bring a new minister to FPC.*** We have also run in a deficit this year, and I encourage everyone to work together to bring the church's finances back into the black, so that your new minister can start without financial constraints on his or her ministry.

One of the easiest ways to contribute financially to the church is to join our **Pre-Authorized Remittance** plan, in which your offering will be automatically withdrawn from your bank account every month. Please leave a message at the office if you would like to find out more about PAR, and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

As well, we have set up an auto deposit to FPC's bank account using the email [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org). You can e-transfer funds using that email. In the memo line please include your envelope number and where you want your funds designated (general operations, building fund, etc.).

Finally, if none of these methods work for you, you can mail a cheque made out to "First Presbyterian Church" to Barb Capeling, our church treasurer, who will deposit your cheque. Please do not send cash by mail! Barb's address is: Mrs. Barb Capeling, 30 O'Brien Drive, Chatham, ON., N7M 2E7

If you are new to FPC and need to be assigned envelopes or an envelope number, please call Linda in the office, and she will arrange for you to receive them, and be added to our offering list.

**Join the Choir!** Do you like to sing and praise God through music? Well, then...talk to **Adam Shaw**, our music director, and join the choir! I know he and the members of the choir would love you to join them. Practices are on Thursday evening. And while I am at it, I thank Adam for his continuing desire to serve this congregation through his musical talents. We are blessed to have him leading the music at FPC!



**Serve at First Church:** These are ministries at FPC that would gladly welcome new volunteers. Covid has had its effect on volunteerism, and I am concerned that people have stepped back from serving in person. Unfortunately, that means that the people serving on these teams are working far harder than they should be. It is not fair to assume they will continue to carry the load indefinitely. I am asking you to prayerfully consider serving in any of the teams listed below. All these teams need you! You can contact me, or Linda in the office, or speak directly to the people leading each team.

**Property and Finance Committee** – Ed McLachlin

**Pastoral Care team** – Sue Easun

**Audiovisual team** – Barb Capeling

**Livestreaming team** – Mike Fry/Ed McLachlin

**Choir and Praise Team** – Adam Shaw

**Saturday Breakfast** – Rebecca Ladd/Bruce Davidson

**Greeters on Sunday** – Mike Bennett

**Breakfast grocery coordinators and shoppers** – Office.

**Decorating team** – Judy McCarthy



**Welcome to our Newcomers!** We are so thankful for every person who joins our family at First Church. We are getting new people checking out FPC as they seek for a church to call home. Although we don't have an official greeting time at the start of the service, I encourage everyone to welcome the visitors who come to church on Sunday. Attending a church for the first time is not the easiest thing to do, so a friendly and welcoming atmosphere at church makes that first visit a pleasure!

Although my time at FPC is growing short, I would love to meet with you if you are new to FPC. Hopefully we can arrange a time to meet for coffee in June, if you would care to do so. I'd love to hear your story, and let you know all about FPC, and the work of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Please contact the office if you have questions regarding **membership or would like to transfer your membership** to FPC. Linda Weeks, our Administrative Assistant, will be glad to request your transfer for you. As well, Linda can arrange a phone call or meeting with me. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about life and ministry at FPC.

Well, my friends...this is my last newsletter, and coming up next week is the last time I will share in Holy Communion with this church family. This is a bittersweet time for both Jodi and me, as we look forward to a new chapter in our lives, but knowing that it comes at the cost of stepping away from this church, and all the dear friendships we have made over the years.

If you have not made it out to church in a while, I invite you to join us for **Holy Communion on Sunday, June 2 at 10:30 a.m.** This is an important sacrament in which we remember Jesus' ultimate sacrifice, and his call on our lives to love as he has loved us. The sharing of bread and cup are a visible reminder of what Jesus did, said and taught throughout his entire ministry. I would love to see you join with your church family in this manner.





As well, I invite you all to join us **on my last Sunday, June 30 at 10:30 a.m.** I am sure it will be an emotional service for Jodi and me, and perhaps for you as well. All the same, I'd love for you to share in that notable milestone in this congregation's life.

And by the way, if you have not bought a ticket to my retirement dinner on Saturday, June 29, please do so quickly! The final date for purchasing tickets is June 16, with no exceptions! Tickets are \$20 each.

So, for the last time, in newsletter form anyway...

May God bless you and keep you,

*Mike*

**FPC Website:** Please check out our church website at [www.firstchatham.org](http://www.firstchatham.org) You can view videos of our worship services by clicking on the "Current Message Series" link. You can also find about the groups, Bible studies and ministries in our church. Please feel free to share this website with family, friends, and neighbours. It is a great resource for anyone thinking about joining our church family.



**Email List:** By now you should be receiving an email church bulletin every week which has news and the link to our Sunday worship services. Please call Linda Weeks in the office at 519-352-2313 to us know if you are not receiving emails from the office or from me, and wish to do so. We need your permission to use your email, and once we do, we can add you to our distribution file.

*Be these*  
MATTHEW 5:13-16

