

## First Baptist Regina Weekly News

*For the Week of November 7th, 2021*

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it, the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” *Hebrews 11:1-3*

This week, I turn from people I knew, to an author whose stories were a shield of love and faith.

I have no idea what possessed me to attempt to read Fyodor Dostoevsky, the Russian author from the late 1800s. I suppose my parents, being avid readers, had all sorts of novels on their shelves.

Dostoevsky remained committed to his Eastern Orthodox Christian faith throughout his life. Someone suggested he was trying to convert all of Russia through his works. His moral failings were not hidden, but in his writing, he unveiled the transformative power of God’s grace and love, which he had experienced in no small part through his remarkable wife.



*Fyodor Dostoevsky*

I read “The House of the Dead” first. The gloomy title probably piqued my curiosity. It is a nearly autobiographical account of the years he had spent in a prison camp in Siberia, told as a work of fiction.

When he was younger, Dostoevsky had been part of an academic and literary group who read and wrote about progressive political ideas, until the Tzarist government ordered all of them arrested. After a year in prison, their trials concluded and they were all sentenced to execution by firing squad. When the final morning came, they were taken, blindfolded, tied to a post, and waited for guns to fire. In the final instant, an order arrived from the Tzar commuting their death sentences to exile in the prison work camps in the Siberian gulag.

Knowing about Dostoevsky’s experience and then reading his book, “The Idiot,” I came immediately to a gripping passage where the main character, Myshkin, reflected aloud on what the final moments before an execution might be like. In those pages, there was so much compassion, faith, terror and pain, all mixed together. The characters listening to Myshkin were deeply affected by his words, and moved to look at people and the world in a new way. They found the open, sincere, and vulnerable way he spoke to be compelling. However, to others, his insights come across as naive, idealistic, and simple. They scoff and roll their eyes at his innocence. Throughout the story, people react to Myshkin in this

conflicted way, recognizing that he is capable of brilliant insights, but dismissing him as being out of touch with “the real world.”

Dostoevsky repeatedly crafted his later novels around the call to know God’s love, to trust and love God, and to love all people and all creation. Dostoevsky’s books often have a central character who inspires an intense and divided response. The people around this character are at once enthralled by the light of goodness and wisdom they see in him, but dismiss as childish, the call to trust in that goodness.

In this way, Dostoevsky helped me process my own feelings about the faith of my childhood. I had very little knowledge of philosophy or history, so I didn’t know why I felt the very tensions he described in his stories. He helped me recognize that I felt a pull to see believing in God as childish, or at least, to see the belief that God might actually be listening, speaking, or acting in this world, as a childish notion.

After all, if God was at work in the world, why would God permit the horrors that played out on the news every evening? What of the surreal and otherwise inconceivable violence, too often perpetrated by Christians, that we learned about in history class? How could God be powerful and good in the light of all that evil?

The church often focused on ‘science’ as the driver of unbelief, but very little of the world I grew up in, seemed to require God, in order to work. People could work, study, spend money, engage in politics, help others, or play, without needing faith of any kind.

It felt like the only grown-up way of looking at the world was to admit that there was no spiritual realm, or, if there was, it was unknowable and unreachable.

In fact, I saw that some Christians seemed to accept this, and behave as if the only thing that really mattered is the church making the world a better place.

Others taught and modelled that the touchy feely stuff of prayer and spirituality, if it mattered at all, only mattered because of the psychological or physiological benefits that any spiritual practices provide, no matter what their origin. Meditation, fasting, community service – these were good for us, but not because God was listening or involved.

Was there actually a God speaking to us, seeking to transform us and direct us, and specifically through Jesus Christ? A God who comes to live within us as the Holy Spirit? A God who loves me, in particular? A God who calls me to love him and to love others? Or is that a childish, superstitious notion?

Dostoevsky examined this conflict in his stories. He helped me identify what I was feeling. He helped me see that I had a choice. No one had conclusive arguments either way, for belief or for unbelief. Believing in a God who was personally involved in our lives, or even more to the point, believing in Jesus Christ, was not silly. Jesus was beautiful, good, and

the source of light. There was wisdom and understanding in Christianity. It made sense to repent and be baptized. I had to choose.

Dostoevsky encouraged me to consider that while some might mock faith, others longed for it, and for hope and love, but they struggled to believe. Dostoevsky's greatest skill (in my opinion) was his ability to capture the long, arduous, inward struggle that people endure as they grapple with the call to submit to God.

Dostoevsky's book are not short! But they are well worth it if you enjoy reading. Let me know if you've read any of his works, and what you thought of them. Or let me know if there is an author, musician, or artist who has shaped your faith.

Thanks be to God who has blessed us in so many ways, so that we might be able to persevere in our faith, even through the hardest times. May we be found to be faithful and to encourage faith in others.

With love,



Pastor Joel

## November Congregational Meeting

When: Sunday, November 21st, following the morning worship service

Where: In the sanctuary and on Zoom

This is a very important meeting, so please make a point of attending, whether in person or over Zoom.



*Sunday, October 31, 2021*

The proposed budget for 2022 and other related materials are

available on the church website. Printed copies are available at the church.

For those who attend in person, masks will be mandatory during the meeting. No eating will be allowed in person, due to Covid-19. The meeting will be approximately an hour long. If this creates a problem for you, please participate in the meeting through Zoom from your home. You will be able to join the meeting by clicking on the "Join Worship Service" link in the *First This Week* email or on the [church website](#).

## Christmas Worship Concert

Date: December 19, 2021

Time: 7:00 pm

Place: First Baptist Church

Please mark your calendar and make plans to be in attendance. If you would like to participate, either as part of the choir or as a soloist, please [email Melissa](#) by November 17th.

## Birth Announcement

David Wolfgang Pelzer ("Little D," for short) was welcomed by parents Daniel and Alicia on November 2, 2021, and weighed in at 8lb, 8oz. Congratulations to proud grandmother, Laurie McPherson.



## Appreciation Expressed for Knitted Items

A big thank you to the faithful knitters who made mitts and toques for children who need them. Winnie K delivered over 200 items last week, to seven schools here in Regina. We received another thank you note this past week: "Arcola Community School would like to thank the ladies that knitted all the lovely toques, scarves, and mittens for our students. We truly appreciate that you thought of us and all the time and skill you put into this – this donation will be well received as winter arrives! Blessings to you All!"



Because of a shortage of jobs in town, a boy appeared for work on a farm. The foreman decided to give him a try and told him to milk a cow, equipping him with a stool and a bucket.

An hour later, the boy returned, dirty and sweaty, the bucket in one hand and the broken stool in the other.

"Extracting the milk was easy," he explained. "The worst part was getting the cow to sit on the stool!"

A pastor was preaching an impassioned sermon on the evils of television "It steals away precious time that could be better spent on other things," he said, advising the congregation to do what he and his family had done. "We put our TV away in the closet."

"That's right," his wife mumbled, "and it gets awfully crowded in there."

## What's happening at First?

### Morning Prayer

Join us each morning, Monday to Thursday at 7:15 am to begin your day with scripture and prayer, via Zoom. Visit our [website](#) for the link.

### Children's Ministry

There are now in-person classes for children up to Grade 6 – “Godly Play” for the younger children and “Oasis” for the older ones.

At present, our children are participating in an exciting “Heroes of the Faith” art project on Hebrews, that can be done in church or from home. For more information or for art supplies, please contact [Pastor Kayely](#).

### Adult Ministries

**Learning for Life (L4L):** On September 12, Dr. Kelvin Friebel began leading a new series: “Lament Psalms: Asking God the Hard Questions.” This series is about learning to approach God in prayer during difficulty. This class is in person, but also available through Zoom. For more information, please go to [our website](#).

**Voice:** A small group for women who like to read and enjoy lively conversation. The group meets every second Wednesday from 7 to 9 pm, using Zoom. For more information, send an email to [Bonnie Austring-Winter](#) or [Lauren Snook](#), or visit [our website](#).

**Reading through the Old Testament:** In this online reading group, participants are reading through the Old Testament chronologically. The group meets Wednesday mornings at 10:30 am, via Zoom. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact [Pastor Richard](#) or call the church at (306) 359-1450.

**Gospel of John small group study:** Pastor Richard is leading this small group. There are two groups meeting, via Zoom. The first group meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7 pm, and the second, on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 10 am. For more information, please contact [Pastor Richard](#), or call the church at (306) 359-1450.

### Dial-the-Sermon – (306) 992-1912



Know of someone with no computer and/or internet access and cannot come to church in person? Please let them know that there is an easy way to listen to a recent Sunday's sermon. Simply dial (306) 992-1912 (toll-free within the Regina area) on a landline phone or cell phone. This number takes you straight to the sermon recording.

## Tithes and Offerings

While many of you are coming to worship services in person now, there are also quite a number joining the service on Zoom or Facebook. Whether you are attending in person or online, there are several methods that you can use to give your tithes and donations to the church:

1. Mail your gifts to the church or call and leave a message at (306) 359-1450 to arrange for an in-person pick-up. Please place your cheque in your regular offering envelope (or any envelope marked "Offering"), and seal that inside another envelope addressed to: First Baptist Church, 2241 Victoria Ave, Regina, SK S4P 0S4.
2. Establish a **Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) Plan**. This will automatically transfer funds from your account into the FBC Regina account on a regular basis. Please email the church or contact the Treasurer if you would like to set up PAR, or change your commitment.
3. Make an online donation:
  - Use **Interac e-Transfer** to donate from your phone or computer to FBCRegina@gmail.com *(no fee or cost to the church)*
  - Use a credit card with a PayPal account via the **PayPal Giving Fund** *(no fee or cost to the church... 100% of your donation reaches us and contributes to our mission)*
  - Use a credit card or PayPal via **CanadaHelps** *(a fee of 4% is deducted from the donation)*
  - Use a credit or debit card via **FBC ChurchTrac** *(the church is charged a fee of approximately 3% for each donation)*

**PLEASE** refer to our website at [firstbaptistregina.ca](http://firstbaptistregina.ca) for more specific information on these contribution methods. You may also contact the treasurer at (306) 775-1497 or email the church at [main\\_fbcregina@sasktel.net](mailto:main_fbcregina@sasktel.net) for further details.



*"When you get to be my age, things don't work like they used to."*

Over breakfast one morning, a woman said to her husband, "I bet you don't know what day this is."

"Of course I do," he indignantly answered, going out the door on his way to the office.

At 10 am, the doorbell rang, and when the woman opened the door, she was handed a box containing a dozen long-stemmed red roses. At 1 pm, a foil-wrapped, two-pound box of her favourite chocolates arrived. Later, a boutique delivered a designer dress.

The woman couldn't wait for her husband to come home. "First the flowers, then the candy, and then the dress!" she exclaimed. "I've never spent a more wonderful Groundhog Day in my whole life!"