

# Midweek Messages - 2020

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December 30th - **Incentive as We Approach the New Year**

***Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth has disappeared. (Rev. 21:1)***

My family started off the new year of 2020 at a Toronto Raptors 905 game in Mississauga. Coral and her basketball team were invited to play for 5 minutes on the court during half time. Prior to going on the court, the girls were given a chance to have their picture taken with one of the Raptors championship rings. As they were about to go on the court, they got to high-five some of the players as they were coming off it. Then it was their time to take center court and not only be cheered on by family members but close to 5,000 fans in attendance. It was an incredible experience for these girls and once it was over, they had their picture taken with the Raptors mascot at half court. What a way to start off 2020.

These girls were also looking forward to so many other exciting things in 2020 such as:

- Four more months of games as a team ending with the Ontario Basketball Championship weekend in April,
- Year-end class trips that are full of lasting memories,
- Purchasing dresses for their Grade 8 graduation ceremonies,
- Celebrating their achievements at graduations,
- Conversations about becoming high school students in the fall and playing on their school basketball teams.

The team got to play some games in January and February during the time when our world was just beginning to hear about a virus. I remember being at a basketball practice the night when we heard the first case of COVID-19 was now in Canada.

[Read more](#)

December 23rd - **Look Up**

On Monday, Premier Doug Ford announced that we would be heading into lockdown for 28 days beginning on Boxing Day. We were warned about this possibility last

weekend, but it was still hard to hear. The first lockdown was difficult in so many ways, but we endured and enjoyed the loosening of restrictions over the summer and fall. We hoped we would never have to endure another lockdown but here we are again. At least we have experience on our side this time and know what to expect. It does not make the current reality any easier though:

- ***Wondering if certain stores or businesses will survive this second lockdown?***

- ***Wondering if the lockdown will be more like two or three months as opposed to 28 days?***

- ***Wondering whether this new strain that has been occurring in parts of Britain is already here?***

- ***Wondering if our hospitals will be overwhelmed or not?***

- ***Wondering how we and others will cope through this financially, emotionally, and spiritually?***

This pandemic has been a reminder to us that life here on Earth is not always Heaven but Hell at times. I was reminded of this earlier today eating breakfast as I was watching a portion of the Dolly Parton Christmas movie *The Coat of Many Colours*.

[Read more](#)

December 16th - **Career vs. Calling**

***Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed.***

***(Luke 1: 46-48)***

On Sunday night I overheard two parents talking as I was watching Coral at basketball practice. The one parent asked the other when he would get off work for the Christmas break. The parent responded he had to work until December 23<sup>rd</sup> and then did not have to return until January 4, 2021. It sounded like a pretty good time off to me, but the other parent said, *that is awful that you have to work up until December 23<sup>rd</sup>*.

When she said this, I began wondering what she would think if she heard my answer to her question:

I will be working on December 24<sup>th</sup>

I am on call for emergencies on December 25<sup>th</sup>

I will be working on December 26th filming our online service

I will be working on December 27<sup>th</sup>

I will be working the week between Christmas and New Years

I will be working January 2, 3, & 4<sup>th</sup>

After hearing this, if she asked what I did for a living, she would discover that there is a difference between having a career and having a calling. The other parent has a career, while I have a calling. I do not begrudge at all the time commitment or sacrifices that come with a calling and neither did Mary. [Read more](#)

December 9th - **Two Shadows**

***How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 36:7)***

I saw a unique experience one night recently as I was walking our dog Daisy. The moon was exceptionally bright that night as I walked with my back to it. I noticed it was casting not just one, but two of my shadows. I cannot recall another time when the light from either the moon or the sun cast two shadows. Maybe it has happened to me before and I did not notice it. I definitely noticed my two shadows that night. The first moment I spotted them there was a smaller shadow just ahead of me followed by a much larger shadow directly ahead of it.

When I saw this, it reminded me of our life following Jesus. There Jesus is walking ahead of us and we are following Him in His shadow. After staring at this image for a few moments I turned the corner with Daisy and the two shadows changed in their appearance. The much larger shadow was still directly ahead of me, but the smaller shadow was now beside me no longer walking within the longer shadow. This change in location of the smaller shadow got me thinking how sometimes we choose not to follow Jesus and walk outside the shadow of His presence instead. By the time I turned the final corner and headed home, gone were the two shadows which were now replaced with just one.

As I said, if the moon and sun had ever cast two of my shadows before I never realized it. This moon-filled night reminded me of the two choices we can make in life: 1) To walk in the presence of the shadow of Jesus and follow Him, or 2) to walk outside of the presence of His shadow. [Read more](#)  
December 2nd - **A Season of No**

***She wrapped Him snugly in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger because there was no lodging available for them (Luke 2:7).***

My mother called me on Monday afternoon to tell me her furnace was not working, and she had no heat. I got to her house at 4:00 p.m. and tried to get the furnace working but to no avail. I called a local heating company before 4:30 p.m. to see if they could get there that afternoon or evening. I called their office and then called their emergency messaging service. Both times I got no answer. I left my phone number hoping they would call back after supper, but I received no phone call.

It was not until the next morning when I finally received a phone call that they would send a technician over. Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m. the service technician gave us the news that the furnace was beyond repair and as a result a new one would need to be installed. There she was with one more day of no heat until they could install the new furnace on Wednesday.

These past three days have been a time of NO for my mom when it comes to heat. Her situation served as a reminder to me how this second wave of COVID-19 has brought upon us a whole lot of NO! [Read more](#)

## November 25th - **What Life Has Taken From Us**

The regions of Toronto and Peel entered into a second lockdown as of Monday, November 23rd for 28 days. The Tuesday morning newspaper shared the stories of two business owners impacted by the lockdown. The first was the owner of a pub and restaurant. He shared how he invested over \$10,000 to properly protect his staff and patrons from COVID-19. The owner also spoke highly of his landlord who has been patient in regard to the rent. This business owner is so frustrated by the fact that his business has done everything the Province of Ontario has asked with respect to following COVID-19 guidelines and yet has been shut down by this recent decision. He is going to keep trying to stay in business, but this second lock down is making it difficult.

The other story featured in the newspaper on Tuesday was of the owner of a clothing store in a mall. She too is worried about her business surviving this second lockdown. Her sales are down on average by 80 percent. The Christmas shopping season is her busiest and most profitable time at her store. Being closed for 28 days leading up to Christmas was heartbreaking for this store owner. She admitted crying for two days after the province announced this shutdown last Friday afternoon. This owner is not sure if her business can survive a second lockdown.

These two stories are a reminder to us of how this pandemic has taken so much away from us. [Read more](#)

## November 18th - **Good News in the Midst of Bad News**

***Jesus traveled through the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And He healed every kind of disease and illness. (Matthew 4:23)***

As we progress deeper into this second wave of COVID-19 it seems like the news is getting worse:

- Hearing reports on the high number of cases each day,
- Listening to the number of deaths,
- Stating that the health care system is at a tipping point,
- Modeling data projecting infection rates could rise to 6,000 daily by mid-December if restrictions are not put into place,
- Receiving updates that some areas of our province are moving into the red category and experiencing further restrictions,
- Medical experts wanting the province to go back into a complete lockdown like we saw in March and April,
- Restaurants and other businesses saying they will not survive another shut down,
- Situations worsening in other provinces and the United States and Europe,
- More outbreaks in our Long-Term Care facilities putting the most vulnerable at risk,
- The Government of Canada having to put more money into COVID-19 recovery plans increasing our level of debts.

With a pandemic like this comes a steady stream of reports that are filled with bad news. The more bad news we are exposed to, the more depressed and discouraged we can become. In the midst of it we have to find some *good news* to lift our spirits. I found my good news this morning. [Read more](#)

November 11th - **The One Who Has the Answer to Our Questions**

**Jesus told him, *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)***

We lost a true icon this weekend with the passing of Alex Trebek. For over 3 decades Alex was a daily presence in many homes as people tuned in to watch JEOPARDY. Tributes have come in from so many people since news of his passing. Monday morning, I had the opportunity to read tributes from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Toronto Mayor John Tory and actor Ryan Reynolds. The one tribute I found the most interesting was from Jeopardy champion Ken Jennings who many of us who have watched the show have come to know. Ken Jennings said: *Alex was not just the best ever at what he did. He was also a lovely and deeply decent man and I am grateful for every minute I got to spend with him.*

When I learned of his death I thought back to a day in August 2018 when we actually visited the set of Jeopardy at Sony studio. They were not filming Jeopardy that day which allowed us to tour the set. Right next-door, Wheel of Fortune with Pat and Vanna was being filmed. I had my picture taken behind the Jeopardy desk with a cardboard cut out of Alex. Many of his awards were displayed there as well. [Read more](#)

November 4th - **Covered in White**

***Yet There are some in the church in Sardis, who have not soiled their clothes with evil and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. (Revelation 3:4)***

For much of the month of October my backyard has been covered in leaves. I am not one of these ministers who procrastinates when it comes to raking leaves. I rake several times a week when the weather permits, bagging up each pile. After I finish, my backyard returns to being covered by green grass, weeds and a few bare patches. Within a day, my backyard will be covered once again by leaves.

This has been my reality every October since we moved into our home in August 2009. On November 1 this year I looked out and saw that my backyard was covered in snow. It was a shock to see and I know many people hate to see the first snow, but it reminded me of some benefits too:

- Since the snow covered my leaves that had fallen in the high winds the day earlier, I did not have to worry about raking on Monday,
- When I took Daisy out at 6:15 a.m. to do her business in the backyard, the snow on the ground made it far easier to see in the dark,

- Daisy got so excited by the snow that she ran around in circles on her leash and played some more by putting her nose in the snow,
  - The snow allowed me to see what animals had been roaming through the backyard that night as their tracks were quite visible.
- As hard as it was to see snow so early, the sight of my backyard being covered in white provided me with some blessings too.

As I thought about these blessings it got me thinking about how Christ desires to see us covered in white. [Read more](#)  
October 28th - **Count First on Him**

**Turning to Philip, He asked, *Where can we buy bread to feed all these people? He was testing Philip for He already knew what He was going to do. (John 6: 5-6)***

When he became Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford never imagined what he would be counting in 2020. After he was elected, he probably imagined he would spend time each day counting:

- The increase or decrease in the unemployment rate,
- The increase or decrease in the provincial deficit,
- The ways he could reduce costs and create more efficiency in government services,
- Or the ways he could reduce the wait times for surgeries or overcrowding in emergency rooms.

This year, COVID-19 has caused the premier to focus his attention on counting the number of cases each day. He shared at a news conference this week that each morning he spends time counting:

- The new cases by region,
- The number of people in intensive care,
- The number of people needing ventilators,
- The number of deaths,
- And the number of outbreaks in long-term care facilities.

It must be hard some days for the premier to focus his time and energy counting these numbers. [Read more](#)

October 21st -**What Our World Needs From Us Right Now**

**So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world you are My disciples (John 13: 34-35).**

I was in the grocery store last week and when it came time to check out, I was in the line of a cashier I had not seen in the past several months. As I unloaded my groceries onto the conveyer, I said to her ***I have not seen you in such a long time.*** She told me that she had been off work during Covid-19 and this was her first day back.

She then proceeded to tell me the reason why she took time off was not because she was afraid of catching COVID-19, but rather she did not want to deal with the angry customers all the time. She explained how, on the day she had enough, it seemed like every customer that came through her cash register was angry. It was not just her register, as all the cashiers were experiencing the same anger from customers. One customer was so upset that they actually threw their money at her. That was the tipping point that resulted in her taking several months off work.

After hearing her story, I welcomed her back and told her I was sorry she had to go through that and finished by saying, *At least you have had one kind customer to start off your first day back.* She smiled and thanked me for taking the time to listen and care. [Read more](#)

October 14th - **Our Calendars are *Out-of-Whack***

**Remember to observe the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. You have six days from each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath Day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God (*Exodus 20: 8-10*).**

When it comes to professional sports right now, their calendars are *out-of-whack*. Take for instance Thanksgiving Monday. Normally on this day the Canadian Football League would have its usual Thanksgiving rivalries: the Toronto Argonauts playing in Hamilton against the Tiger Cats and the Calgary Stampeders playing against Edmonton. There was no CFL football being played this past Monday due to COVID-19.

Normally a new NHL season starts in early October, but this year is different. The Tampa Bay Lightning just won the Stanley Cup a few weeks ago and a new season is not expected to start until January 2021. The same is true for the NBA. A new NBA season starts in October as well, but its season ended this past weekend with LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers winning the title. Tennis has been experiencing the same. The French Open, which is usually played in June, happened over the past two weeks instead. Golf has done the same with some of its events. The Masters, usually played in April, will be played this year in November. Although some professional sports calendars are still normal like the National Football League, many other sports calendars are *out-of-whack*.

Our calendars are usually filled with things like work, school, medical appointments, activities for kids, meetings, church, Bible studies, get-togethers, and social outings. This pandemic has certainly caused many of our calendars to become *out-of-whack*. Many things that filled up our calendars have either been cancelled due to COVID-19 or postponed to a later time. Some people have enjoyed their calendars being freed up and less busy, while others have struggled with this change. [Read more](#)

October 7th - **God Blesses**

**May the Lord bless and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you His favour and give you His peace (*Numbers 6:24-26*).**

The first page of the *Toronto Sun* told the story of a father and grandfather from Alabama who left a bucket of baseballs that he used to pitch to his son and grandson. His son and grandson are both adults now, so he no longer needs this bucket of balls. He decided to take this bucket of balls to a nearby batting cage to leave for anybody there who could use them. Before leaving the bucket of balls behind, this man left the following note attached to the bucket:

FREE

*HOPE SOMEONE CAN USE THESE BASEBALLS IN THE BATTING CAGES. I FOUND THEM CLEANING OUT MY GARAGE. I PITCHED THEM TO MY SON AND GRANDSON FOR COUNTLESS ROUNDS. MY SON IS NOW 46 AND MY GRANDSON IS NOW 23. I AM 72 AND WHAT I WILL NOT GIVE TO PITCH A COUPLE OF BUCKETS TO THEM. THEY HAVE BOTH MOVED AWAY. IF YOU ARE A FATHER, CHERISH THESE TIMES. YOU WILL NOT BELIEVE HOW QUICKLY THEY WILL BE GONE. GOD BLESS*

*P.S. GIVE THEM A HUG AND TELL THEM YOU LOVE THEM EVERY CHANCE YOU GET! [Read more](#)*

September 30th - **Seek and Find**

***Keep on asking and you will receive what you ask for.  
Keep on seeking and you will find.  
Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.  
(Matthew 7:7)***

On Sunday nights Coral has a two-hour basketball practice at the University of Guelph. Due to COVID-19 only players and coaches can be inside the gym. In other years I would be inside the gym sitting in the bleachers with a coffee in hand watching Coral practice. Without being let inside this year I usually go to a nearby McDonalds and do some work while having a coffee.

Last week I was done my work fairly quickly and I still had another hour to wait for Coral to finish her practice. I decided to return to the university and go for a walk around the campus. As I was walking, I was praying asking God to help Coral learn and develop her skills that night. I also started sharing with God how much I missed seeing Coral play and practice and how I wished I could see her work out with this new team.

Shortly after praying that part of the prayer, I found myself nearing the Athletic Centre where the team was practicing. I felt a nudge from God to just keep walking so I did. I

turned the corner around the Athletic Centre and found a set of stairs I did not know existed. I climbed the set of stairs and at the top was a set of windows looking down over the gym in which Coral was practicing. For the next 45 minutes I was able to watch Coral practice, just like old times. [Read more](#)

### September 23rd - **Overcoming Fatigue**

***But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)***

We have been hearing a lot in the news recently about people gathering in large numbers whether it be at outdoor BBQs and parties or at indoor events. Many of the people attending these events are not wearing masks or maintaining proper social distancing and as a result the number of cases of COVID-19 is on the rise in Ontario. The reason being given for why people are choosing to participate in these gatherings is they are *fatigued* and *tired* from the restrictions put upon them by the province.

When we think in terms of fatigue, our focus tends to go first toward the physical. While we may not have been as active as we normally were due to COVID-19, the fatigue it is causing so many people to experience is *emotional*. This pandemic has been hard on us emotionally because of:

- Being isolated from others in the beginning,
- Staying in a social circles of just 10,
- Missing out on gathering with family and friends at school, work, church, coffee shops, and in other ways.

People want this pandemic to be over. They want their lives to feel the same again. [Read more](#)

### September 16th - **Look and Consider**

***Look at the birds, they do not plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your Heavenly Father feeds them. And are not you far more valuable to Him than they are?***

***-Matthew 6: 26***

The number of cases of COVID-19 are on the rise in Ontario. A few weeks ago, we had days where the number of cases were under 100. As of September 15, 2020, the number of cases has risen to 315. The Premier of Ontario is worried about the rising numbers. The hospitals are not being overrun with the rise in new cases. The majority of these cases are in people 39 years of age and younger. A lot of these cases among this age group are a result of them attending large gatherings and not social distancing. If this rise in case numbers continues, the Premier of Ontario is worried it will be the start of the second wave of the virus that has occurred in other countries.

The first wave of this pandemic brought enough concerns for all of us. The possibility of a second wave occurring keeps these concerns lingering.

It has been hard living with these on-going worries. Jesus knew worries would be a part of our lives. While He did not address the worries associated with a pandemic, His advice during His teaching in the Sermon on The Mount are very helpful as we continue through this season of worries in our lives. [Read more](#)

September 9th - **The Need to Learn**

**Moses called all the people of Israel together and said, *listen carefully, Israel, hear the decrees and regulations I am giving you today so you may learn from them and obey them!* (Deuteronomy 5:1)**

My daughter Coral starts high school this week. She is attending BCI just like both of her parents did. Even though it was 42 years ago (yes, that number is correct) I still remember my first day of high school. My first class was typing, and I asked my home room teacher where to find it. Nerves and butterflies must have been interfering with my listening abilities because instead of going up one flight of stairs to the typing room I went all the way across the school and ended up in and art class with Doug Hughes (I did not see any typewriters there). Thankfully, Doug took pity on this Grade 9 student, who would one day be his minister, and gave me the right directions to eventually find my first class.

So much has changed in the 42 years since I started Grade 9 at BCI: [Read more](#)

September 2nd - **Trust the One Who Does Know**

***For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not disaster, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29: 11)***

September 2, 1988. Thirty-two years ago, to the day that you might be reading this message. Thirty-two years ago, the lights were on at our church. The reason why I know this is because Nadine and I were there to say our vows and to enter our life of marriage with each other. There were some things I did know as I stood at the front of the church waiting for Nadine to come down the aisle:

- I knew we were running late,
- I knew I was in love,
- I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Nadine,
- I knew I was blessed and fortunate she wanted to marry a guy like me,
- I knew the next day we would be leaving for a short honeymoon.

But there was so much more that I did not know at that time: [Read more](#)

## August 26th - **Because Nothing is too Hard**

I see their faces everyday as I turn to the editorial section of my newspaper. The faces I see are of the two MICHAELS - MICHAEL SPAVOR AND MICHAEL KOVRIG. These two Canadians have been held captive in China since December 10, 2018. As of August 25, 2020, they have spent 625 days in captivity. The conditions these two Michaels have endured have not been easy:

- In the beginning they were given very little food to eat.
- It was only when COVID-19 started, that they were fed larger portions.
- They are forced to sleep with the lights on instead of in the dark.
- They have gone long periods of time not being able to talk with family or with representatives from the Canadian Consulate.

Their situation reminds me of something I heard a former POW (prisoner of war) during the Vietnam War say about his experience: *Being a POW is the loneliest experience you can ever have.* [Read more](#)

## August 20th - **Spending Time Pulling Weeds**

***The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear the word of God, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced (Mark 4:18-19).***

I have spent a lot of time on my knees since May. I wish I could tell you that all this time on my knees has been spent praying. Unfortunately, most of the time spent has been pulling weeds out of the grass in my backyard.

After 10 years of neglect, weeds had taken over my backyard. Every year I tackled dandelions in my yard but left all the other weeds alone. Besides dandelions, I began to see lots of weeds that sprouted purple flowers on them, and lots of other weeds that would display yellow buds and white ones at times. Since late May I have been outside at least an hour a day, usually six days a week weather permitting pulling weeds with my trusty little tool in hand. Some seeds would have long deep roots. Others just had short roots. Some weeds seemed to spread across quite a large area.

When you have a 300-foot-deep lot it takes quite a while to pull weeds out of your grass. [Read more](#)

## August 13th - **Do Not Leave Home Without It**

***Your Word Is A Lamp to Guide My Feet and A Light for My Path (Psalm 119: 105)***

Remember never to leave home without it! When we were children, and experiencing old Canadian-style winters, our parents would remind us never to leave home without

wearing our hats and mitts. Then once we learned how to drive, we needed to remember not to leave home without a purse or wallet or sunglasses when getting into the car. Then with smartphones and cellphones we had to remember not to leave the house without them. I often remember to take the cell phone when I leave but I do not always think to turn it on so Nadine can call me. Several times the waitress at my local coffee shop would come to say, *your wife called; will you turn on your phone!* Once we got our dog Daisy, we had to start to remember to have a certain bag in our hands before we left the house to take her for a walk. Now with COVID-19 we have one more thing to remember never to leave home without: a FACE MASK.

It is certainly a new thing for all of us to have to remember to grab our face mask as we leave the house. I forgot to do so two weeks ago when I stopped to get gas in the car. Instead of paying at the pumps I went inside and immediately realized I had forgotten my mask at home. I apologized to the clerk and pulled my shirt up to cover my mouth while I paid. Taking a mask with us whenever we go out is certainly a new reality for us. [Read more](#)

### August 5th - **A Retro Moment**

On Sunday afternoon and evening Coral spent time going through our closets in search of some of our outfits and items from the 1990s. Apparently, *RETRO* has come back into style recently amongst teenagers. Coral has the right parents when it comes to *RETRO* since both Nadine and I are in our fifties. Yes, our closet still has outfits from the 1990s and late 1980s.

At first Coral focused her attention solely on Nadine. It was interesting seeing Coral put on some of her dress jackets from the 1990s. After she put on one of her red jackets Coral looked in the mirror and said, *I look like Hillary Clinton in this jacket.* If Coral was wearing dress pants at the time, she would have looked like Hillary.

After we got back from visiting the Rev. Mother Sunday night, Coral went back upstairs in search of more *RETRO* clothes. I was downstairs watching the Leafs lose to Columbus, but I could hear a bit of laughing and giggling going on as Coral was looking through our clothes. Later that night I heard Coral yell, *Wow Dad, I did not know you had this sweater.* I looked and there was Coral wearing a University of Michigan sweater that I had not worn in years. It looked good on her. Next thing I heard her telling me was, *It is mine now Dad, thanks.* My loss was her gain but if it saves me buying her a new sweater for school in the fall then it is my gain as well.

[Read more](#)

### July 29th - **Grieving Change**

***As soon as Jesus heard the news, He left in a boat to a remote area to be alone (Matthew 14: 13).***

In a normal year much of my grief right now would have to do with the Toronto Maple Leafs having gone another year without winning the Stanley Cup. This has been no normal year for any of us as a result of COVID-19. Throughout the past four months I have found myself grieving at times as a result of the many changes brought on by the pandemic:

1. As I mentioned in an earlier mid-week message, I have grieved at times for the losses my daughter has experienced with a cancelled basketball season, no class year-end trip and a delayed Grade 8 graduation.
2. I am grieving the fact that we cannot get away this summer for a vacation that we look forward to each year.
3. I grieve when I hear that certain stores are closing as a result of COVID-19 and begin to think of all their employees without work.
4. I grieved recently for a family I did a funeral for feeling guilty that they could not have more people to celebrate the life of their mom.
5. I grieved after our recent session meeting knowing that when we do reopen some of you may not be able to return until a later date.

This pandemic has brought about so many changes and as a result caused us to experience losses in our lives. It is natural for us to grieve whenever we experience loss in our lives. It is important for us to acknowledge our grief in these moments. Jesus did when He experienced losses in His life. [Read more](#)

July 22nd - **Having a Home**

***Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of Heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at Gods right hand (Colossians 3: 1).***

As I write this message, the Toronto Blue Jays are still looking for a place in which to play their home games for this shortened season starting on Friday. It was this past weekend when the federal government made the decision not to allow the Toronto Blue Jays to play their regular season games at the Rogers Centre. According to their general manager Ross Atkins, the Jays have five plans in the works as to where they will play their home games.

It must be hard for the players as they packed their bags and left Toronto to play two exhibition games in Boston before starting their regular season in Tampa Bay. For this 60-game season these players will be:

- living out of their suitcases each day,
- not able to look forward to heading home after a road trip like they could in other seasons,
- not able to have the advantage of playing in their home ballpark where they are familiar with the bounces that come off the turf, sight lines and lighting,
- unable to have their families to return home to after each home game. [Read more](#)

## July 16th - **Hearing and Listening as a Child Does**

Our family was listening to Premier Doug Ford make an announcement at his press conference on Monday that parts of Ontario will now be allowed to reopen under Phase 3. After explaining how Phase 3 works and what can reopen in this stage, the Premier then took questions from the media.

A reporter from Toronto acknowledged that he was confused as to whether the City of Toronto would have to wait four more weeks before they could move into Phase 3. Both the Premier and the Minister of Health had explained a few minutes earlier that the Chief Medical Officer of Health likes to see a 4-week period of testing and numbers before making a decision about which areas of the Province are safe to reopen. The communities allowed to reopen this Friday have gone through the 4-week period and areas like Toronto that were delayed by a week before entering Phase 2 would likely not be allowed to move into Phase 3 until the following week.

[Read more](#)

## July 8th - **Wanting Consistency Again**

***But the Lord's plans stand firm forever;  
His intentions can never be shaken (Psalm 33:11).***

Three of the major sports leagues are preparing to restart their seasons after shutting down due to COVID-19. The NHL, the NBA and Major League Baseball are all preparing to return soon. The athletes will be returning under different circumstances than what they are used to. For instance, when NHL players return and enter into the *bubble* of one of the two hub cities, they will have to adapt to these new realities:

- Daily testing for the virus,
- Being prohibited from giving handshakes, high fives or fist bumps,
- Not reusing towels,
- After games they cannot use the spa or sauna to soak sore muscles,
- When they return to the hotel, they must use their elbow or knuckle to push the elevator button,
- Once the doors to the elevator close there is no talking allowed. [Read more](#)

## July 1st - **Reach Out and Up**

Friends of our family texted us last week asking if we were comfortable getting together during COVID-19. I was surprised at first by the text in that we typically get together with them just once a year. To receive this text when we did, made me think this was more than just a social visit. The minister in me began wondering if God was behind this visit.

We arranged to meet on Sunday afternoon in our pool area. Our friends teenage daughter is the same age as Coral so they swam as we visited. During the course of the conversation I began to realize the purpose of the visit was they needed to reach out to us. Their teenage daughter was having a very hard week as a result of not

having a proper Grade 8 graduation and recounting other losses from COVID-19. It was a week of tears and sadness at times for this young lady. Her mother realized she needed to help her daughter reach out to somebody at this time and her first thought was Coral. [Read more](#)

June 25th - **We Will Make it Back**

***And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues His people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle, and He will give you to us (1 Samuel 17:47).***

June 25th marks the 70th anniversary of the Korean War sometimes called *the Forgotten War*. The Korean War began on June 25, 1950 when 75,000 North Korean troops marched across the 38th parallel into South Korea. The country had been divided at the end of WWII. The Soviets occupied the North and the Americans took over the South.

During the cold war era, this act by North Korean troops was seen as Soviet aggression and the spread of communism. The United Nations recommended military intervention and 21 UN member nations including Canada stepped up. Under the leadership of general Douglas MacArthur, UN forces battled the North Koreans back over the 38th parallel. Then China entered the war and their troops were able to push the UN forces back south. The war went back and forth like this until peace talks began and an armistice was signed in 1953. [Read more](#)

June 17th - **Building Confidence**

*But you, O Lord, are a shield around me; You are my glory, the One who holds my head high. I cried out to the Lord and He answered me from His glory, the One who holds my head high. I cried out to the Lord, and He answered me from His holy mountain. I lay down and slept, yet I woke up in safety, for the Lord was watching over me. (Psalm 3: 3-5)*

The theme of Psalm 3 is confidently trusting in God. David is reflecting upon a time when he was fleeing for his life because of his son Absalom rebelling and desiring to become king. As many as 10,000 soldiers may have surrounded David according to Verse 6. David was experiencing this difficult crisis in his life and yet still chose to confidently trust God. As you read the verses, I have provided for you above, the confidence David has in God is definitely on display. [Read more](#)

June 10th - **Seeing the Difference: A Wall Coming Down**

I WAS REMINDED A FEW DAYS AGO THAT June 13, 2020 will mark the 30th anniversary of work officially beginning on the destruction of the Berlin Wall. Even though the process had begun 7 months earlier on November 9, 1989, it was not until June 13, 1990 that the destruction of the wall was officially begun. The Berlin Wall was built in 1961 to prevent East Germans from fleeing to freedom in West Berlin. The wall became a symbol or iconic image of the Cold War era. Hundreds of people were killed or wounded trying to go over, under or around the wall to escape communism.

I spent four months in West Germany in 1985 as a foreign exchange student. Some of the students I was studying with contemplated traveling to West Berlin so they could see the Berlin Wall firsthand. I still recall my teacher warning these students: *Do not drive into East Germany. The police will be checking and watching you closely. If you do go you are better to fly into West Berlin. Do not cross any of the border crossings into East Berlin. It is not safe.* [Read more](#)

June 3rd - **So Much I Wish For Right Now**

I have been finding myself saying over and over again this past week the words -I Wish- as I endure another week of COVID-19 and watch the video of the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the demonstrations that have followed. Some of the things I have been saying and thinking are:

*I wish we were not having to go through this pandemic.*

*I wish things could just return to normal.*

*I wish my daughter could have finished her Grade 8 school year and all of the meaningful experiences that come with that.*

*I wish she could be hanging out with her friends.*

*I wish that her basketball season had not been cancelled.*

*I wish a vaccine could be found sooner than later.*

*I wish we could get back safely to worship.* [Read more](#)

May 27th - **Trying Things That Do Not Work**

People are trying a lot of different things right now during COVID-19 thinking it will work but discovering afterward it did not.

Inmates at a Los Angeles County jail thought that if they drank from the same water bottle and breathed from the same facial mask, they could become infected with COVID-19 and if so, be released from prison. Thirty of these prisoners did come down with COVID-19 but none of them were released from prison. Their plan did not work.

A former US Congressman tried to convince people that the COVID-19 virus was just a hoax and accused the Democrats of using the virus to try and gain power. His claim that all this was a hoax did not work out as his own son who is a U.S. Senator in Washington DC came down with the virus. [Read more](#)

May 20th - **A Humbling Time**

These past eight weeks during our COVID-19 isolation have been humbling for me at times. If anyone asked me at the start of this if I was good at math and answering questions on the Bible I would have responded of course I am. A person like myself who earned a professional accounting degree as well as having a Master of Divinity should be good at answering questions in these areas.

During COVID-19 students like my daughter Coral have had to do their learning online. Several times when she was struggling with a math question, she came to me and sought my help. How hard could it be for me to answer a Grade 8 math question?

I have come to discover it is very hard at times. I will look at some questions and realize I have no clue where to begin. [Read more](#)

### May 12th - **Wanting to Know When**

The question that most people are asking right now is WHEN?

When will the restrictions be lifted?

When will my kids be able to get back to school?

When will sports like hockey, basketball and baseball resume?

When can I gather with friends and relatives?

When will restaurants open so I can enjoy a meal out again?

When will I be able to get my hair cut?

When can I get back to work?

When will there be a cure or vaccine?

When will we be able to get back to church?

WHEN? is a common question being asked by so many right now, and we want certain specifics included when it comes to the answer. [Read more](#)

### May 5th - **Peaks and Valleys**

It is in late April and early May when ambitious mountain climbers try their best to ascend Mount Everest. Every year around this time I pay attention to the news to see how many people successfully reach the summit, how many fail and how many perish. I have always been interested to read testimonies about their struggles to conquer the highest mountain in the world.

However, Mount Everest is quiet at this moment. No permits were granted to climbers this year. With no activity taking place on the peak of Everest the only activity will be in the valley below. [Read more](#)

### April 28th - **Gardening Tips for the Current Season**

With all of us practicing distancing and self isolation at home during these past six weeks I have noticed on some of my walks with Daisy how some of my neighbours are trying to keep busy. In late March and early April, I would often see my neighbours out picking up sticks and branches from their lawns that had come down during the winter. Once that was done, I would see many neighbours get out their rakes and pick up those piles of leaves that had gathered since the fall. Once the leaves were done, I saw them begin to rake the grass in their front lawns. I have to admit that many of my neighbourhood lawns are looking really good at the moment (my lawn is not one of them). [Read more](#)

### April 19th - **Having to get Creative**

National Hockey League players have had to become very creative with respect to keeping up their training during this COVID-19 pandemic. With rinks closed at this time, hockey players cannot keep in shape by skating or playing scrimmage games

with other players. With this form of workout taken away from them NHL players have been coming up with some creative ways to stay in shape. [Read more](#)

#### April 10th - **With All These Deaths**

As of 6:20 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7, 2020, a total of 381 people in Canada had died as a result of COVID-19. As of Wednesday, April 8, 2020, I found out I knew one of these 381 people. Her first name was Linda and she was a parishioner at the Presbyterian Church in Petrolia where I ministered from 2001-2007.

It is hard to be upbeat and positive with all the death we are bombarded with each day during this pandemic. Normally we do not want to focus on death in order to lift our spirits during times like this. There is one death we do want to focus on this week and in the days and weeks to come which is JESUS DEATH ON THE CROSS. [Read more](#)

#### April 3rd - **Turn Those Worries Into Prayers**

One of the realities for us as we continue through this COVID-19 pandemic is that we will find ourselves having more moments of feeling anxiety than we may have ever had before. There are so many things with our current reality that will trigger these anxious feelings within us. [Read more](#)

#### March 26th - **When This is Over**

It is astonishing to think how much our life has changed over these past ten or more days:

- Schools are closed
- Restaurants can only do take-outs
- Shortages of items at the grocery stores
- Cancellations of sports
- The need to do social distancing
- The closing of our borders to non-essential travel
- People returning from trips isolating themselves at home
- The temporary closing of our churches and so many other changes. [Read more](#)

#### March 19th - **We Shall Overcome**

There is a hymn book called *Praise Ways* that I had a copy of at home but had misplaced. I knew it would turn up eventually and yesterday, as Nadine did a thorough cleaning of our room, she pulled out our magazine bin. Sure enough, in the bin was the missing *Praise Ways*. When I opened the book to the first page, I came to the song **We Shall Overcome**. I began reading the words to the song and I thought to myself how fitting for these days and times. [Read more](#)