

Midweek Messages - 2024

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December 26th - Something is Stirring

A tradition some people might have on Christmas Eve is to read the poem *The Night Before Christmas*. The poem starts off with these words:

**Twas the night before Christmas
When all through the house
Not a creature was stirring
Not even a mouse.**

How I wish I could say this about my house this Christmas Eve. There is a creature stirring in our house. I am not referring to my dog Daisy who just stirred awake from her sleepy slumber when the mail was delivered. I think she is happy that the postal strike is over because now she has someone to bark at again.

For the past week or so the stirring in my house has been coming from the crawl space between our first and second floors. At first, days would go by without hearing this sound. Now the sound of this creature scurrying has become more frequent. The past few days this creature has been spending time in the crawl space between my main level and upper bathroom. For the most part I just hear it moving around but there have been a few moments during the past week when it has been busy scratching at the floorboards. I decided to call a pest removal company on Friday to come and do an inspection to see how best to remove this critter. Unfortunately, this company has not returned my call, so I still have this critter. I would have loved to have had this critter removed from my house before Christmas Eve, but I may have to put up with more "stirring" from this creature during the holidays.

The poem, *The Night Before Christmas* may say there should be no stirring going on, but as believers we know there should be lots of emotions swirling in our hearts at this time of year. [Read more](#)

December 19th - Receiving Requests

In my household I do most of the cooking. I am not a fancy cook by any means. My meals tend to be very plain and old style. My wife and daughter will sometimes put in requests to their cook. My wife's requests usually come at breakfast asking for

poached eggs, or for oatmeal cooked on the stove. Lately, my daughter has been requesting me to make her a breakfast sandwich.

Fulfilling this request starts off with me frying up some bacon. Then in a separate fry pan I make an omelette that has a piece of Black Forest ham inside with melted cheese. After I complete my work at the stove, I assemble the sandwich. Usually, I will place the omelette and bacon on a croissant and then spread some cream cheese on the inside of the bread. The heat from the omelette and bacon ever so slightly melts the cream cheese.

After a garnish of salt and pepper, the breakfast sandwich is ready to serve along with a side of fruit. My daughter sits down, places a dab of ketchup on the plate and digs in. The cook in me naturally asks her how it tastes. Lately her reply to me has been, "Dad, you just keep getting better and better at it!" When she asked me to make her this breakfast sandwich last week, I found myself smiling and thinking how enjoyable it is for this "plain-style" cook to start having people request their favorites from me.

This experience from last week got me thinking how much it must please God whenever He fulfills our requests. Jesus encouraged us to bring our requests before God. [Read more](#)

December 12th - Experiencing Joy With My Coffee

Usually, it is my daughter who gets an Advent calendar at this time of year. She still enjoys getting one of those calendars that you can open each day and find a chocolate inside. Last week it was my turn to experience joy from opening an Advent calendar each day. While I was shopping at a store that sells pods I can brew in my Keurig machine, I noticed they had on display Coffee Advent Calendars. I looked closely at the cover of the box and saw how they were advertising it as the "24 days of coffee." Each day during Advent one could experience a different single serving of flavored coffee. Some of the flavours of coffee in the box included peppermint candy cane, gingerbread, maple syrup, cinnamon bun, chocolate brownie, and many more.

I thought it was a brilliant idea when I saw it, but the cheap side of me hesitated. There was another woman in the store at the time who was carrying a young baby. I commented to her that it was great to see she was introducing her child to the joys of coffee at such a young age. She smiled and said, "I just love my coffee and enjoy it so much." I could relate. A few minutes later she spotted this same Advent calendar. She was debating about buying it just like I was. When she decided to grab one of these "24 days of coffee" Advent calendars, I was convinced to do the same. I am looking forward to trying some new flavors of coffee in the days leading up to Christmas.

My experiences of joy surrounding my love for coffee did not finish there last week. During one of my many visits to Tim Hortons last week a new employee I have come to know was disappointed my daughter was not with me. After handing me my coffee she said, "I want you to tell your daughter that I said hi." I shared this with my

daughter afterward and it brought her such joy knowing she was thought of. The very next day this same employee was on when I went in for my morning coffee. I shared with her how my daughter loved hearing that and that she was planning to come in with me one day soon to chat with her. The biggest smile came across this employee's face and then said, "You don't know how much joy that brings me." My love for coffee seemed to be a common factor when it came to experiencing joy last week.

This week at church we will be lighting the third candle in Advent which represents joy. Sometimes we get joy confused with happiness, not realizing they are two very different things. [Read more](#)

December 5th - Charity and Competition

Last week I was in attendance at two basketball games. The first game was a charity event at my daughter's high school having the senior boys' and girls' teams play against some of the teachers. Funds were raised by having teachers pay a certain amount of money to have their students come down to the gym for the event instead of being in class. For parents like me, I had to pay \$5.00 in order to get in. I know many of you will be surprised I opened up my wallet to do so, but it was for a good cause.

The gym was filled with students and teachers to take in this charity game. The first four minutes saw the senior boys' team play against some of the male teachers. There were a few dunks at the basket and some shots that went in, but what I noticed the most were the smiles and laughter shared by the students and teachers on the court.

Then my daughter's team took the court to play against some of the women teachers. The tip off was actually between a mother who teaches at the school and her daughter who plays on the team. The two of them were grinning ear to ear standing at center court. The smiles and laughter between the players and teachers were just as noticeable during this portion of the game as it was when the men were on the court. On the car ride home after the game I shared with my daughter how this event was such a great way not only to raise money for a charity but also to create good memories doing so.

The second basketball game I attended was between two university teams. Naturally, with this being a regular season game for both teams, I expected it to be very competitive. There were so many different emotions on display in this competitive game as opposed to the charity event. I saw some players get frustrated with themselves after missing shots. Other players got very angry with the refs at some of their calls, and naturally one team celebrated at the end while the other walked off the court dejected after a hard-fought loss.

Seeing this contrast in emotions and behaviors on display in a charity game as opposed to a competitive one got me thinking how we see this also happen when it comes to other aspects in life. [Read more](#)

November 28th - Our Favorite Things

This fall my daughter has been doing a co-op placement through her high school at two of the museums here in Brantford. Much of the work she has been doing for them has involved scanning documents to be archived and updating a book so that it could be republished. Last week she got to do something different on a day when the museum was hosting students on a class field trip.

After arriving, the students were broken up into smaller groups and spent time participating in various activities organized for them. My daughter was assigned to show these students some of the toys that were played with in pioneer times. She was given no script ahead of time of what to say, so she decided to start off by asking each group of students what some of their favorite toys were.

That question was a brilliant discussion starter. Several girls mentioned their favorite toy was their Barbie dolls while many of the boys shared some of the video games they enjoy playing. My daughter used this discussion starter as a bridge to tell how those things were not available back in pioneer times and began showing them some of the toys that were played with back then. My daughter thoroughly enjoyed the experience of interacting with the students there that day and some of them shared with her afterward they liked her activity the best during their visit. I am glad she got that experience, and the museum has booked her for many more school trips that will be held there during the month of December.

When I prayed on Monday morning for an idea for this week's message it was my daughter's experience at the museum that God placed on my heart. I realized the reason why this story was timely for this week is because we are entering another season of Advent and Christmas when we focus on some of our favourite things.

[Read more](#)

November 21st - Leaves Everywhere

Even though it was the Grey Cup last Sunday, it seemed to me most people were focused on their leaves. When I left my house to drive to church, I spotted one person already out raking their leaves despite the grass still being wet. When I came home around noon, I began to see an increase in this activity going on in my neighbourhood. The neighbour across from me was raking up leaves along his fence line. An hour later I saw a few cars pull into the driveway of a retired couple that lives nearby. Several family members jumped out of their vehicles and raked up all the leaves in front of the house.

By mid-afternoon it was my turn to rake up some remaining leaves on my property. I took my dog Daisy for a walk right afterward and spotted one of my neighbours raking his leaves for the first time all fall. Beside him was a family of four all helping rake the leaves in their front yard. When I turned the corner, I spotted a dad who actually convinced his two teenage children to help him bag up leaves. I wondered if he had bribed or threatened his teenage children in order to get them to help.

As I walked by many of the homes on my usual route with Daisy, I could see by the bags placed at the side of the road that lots of people had already finished their raking for the day. One person's house however caught my attention because of how many leaf bags were sitting curbside. I stopped in front of this house and counted at least 72 bags in total. I had never seen that many leaf bags from just one house waiting for collection. Sunday turned out to be the day when many in my neighbourhood were focusing on their leaves.

I should have spent Sunday night focusing on the Grey Cup but instead I found my mind thinking about the experiences these leaves had from the time they first appeared on the trees until now. [Read more](#)

November 14th - Fixing a No-Heat Problem

Last week's temperatures were so warm we did not need to have our furnace on. Temperatures must have dropped overnight on Thursday because when I woke up on Friday morning and came downstairs it was really chilly inside. I went to put the thermostat on and discovered it kept clicking on and off before the furnace could stay on any length of time.

I wondered initially if the thermostat needed new batteries. After replacing the batteries, I turned the thermostat back on and discovered it was still clicking on and off before the furnace could run for any length of time. I called a heating company to arrange for them to come and see if the problem was with the thermostat or with a part on the furnace. Unfortunately, they could not come on that Friday, so we arranged for an appointment on Monday morning.

By Friday afternoon, the furnace would not come on at all so we had no heat. On Friday night the house was getting pretty cold, so we turned on our electric fireplace and covered ourselves with blankets in order to stay somewhat warm. By Saturday morning it was so cold inside our house that we had to double and triple layer our clothes in order to stay warm. The coldness inside must have played with my emotions because cheap and frugal me opened my wallet and bought a small portable heater to try and warm up the house a little. Sunday was not much better when it came to the temperature in our house. When we arrived home after church the thermostat read 16 degrees, but it sure felt a lot colder. All I could think about while snuggling under a blanket to stay warm on Sunday was how much I was looking forward to Monday morning and having our furnace fixed.

Finally, Monday morning came, and the service technician arrived. [Read more](#)

November 7th - Never Tire of This

I shared in my mid-week message a few weeks ago how the tire on my one car split while I was in Caledonia, and I needed to remain patient as I waited for a tow truck to arrive. I knew the tires on my car were not in great condition and that the day was coming soon when I would have to open my wallet and splurge for new ones. I waited until last week to make the purchase so that I could put on a new set of snow tires.

When I arrived to have the new set installed, there was a delivery truck at one of the bays unloading an order of tires. I watched as each tire rolled off the truck and bounced on the ground like a basketball toward the owner. As each tire came toward him the owner gave it a slight tap so that it would continue on in the direction of his two employees standing behind him who would then grab them and pile them up one on top of the other. I was quite impressed with the system they had devised for unloading tires.

What I was not aware of until afterward was that the owner was keeping a count in his head not only of the number of tires being unloaded but what size each was. As soon as the last tire came off the truck, the owner was aware immediately that three tires were missing from the order and which size they were. He called the driver over and pointed out on the packing slip which tires were missing on the delivery truck. I asked the owner afterward if it was common for him to experience this with his shipments. He said to me, "Unfortunately in my business it is. That is why I need to count!" A short time later I counted four new snow tires on my car and how much came out of my bank as a result.

That same day I discovered how reliable and trustworthy my new tires were. [Read more](#)

October 31st - Trying Not to Stumble Again

Last Thursday afternoon my daughter played her final high school basketball game at her home gym. COVID took away from her playing in her Grade 9 year but she has played on the school team each year since. For four seasons I have walked into the school gym to cheer her on, but I have never made an entrance quite the way I did this past Thursday.

It should come as no surprise to anyone who reads my messages that I always stop and grab a Tim Horton's coffee before going to a game. When I entered the gym carrying my coffee, I immediately turned my head to the left in order to see the score and how much time was still left in the junior game that was playing. Because I turned my head in that direction upon entering, I did not see that there was a long bench a few steps in front of me.

The next thing I knew, I hit the bench with my shin causing me to stumble over it while carrying my coffee. Somehow, I kept my balance after stumbling over the bench but I was not very graceful in doing so. I was glad that my coffee did not go for a tumble in all of my stumbling. After first assessing there was no damage done to my coffee in my stumble, I then became aware of the throbbing pain I was experiencing where I hit my shin.

When I sat down on the bleachers I was apprehensive at first to pull up the jean leg to assess the damage. A few spots of blood on my jeans finally prompted me to do so and I discovered two nice gashes on my shin. I made quite an entrance stumbling into my daughter's final basketball home game on Thursday and have the scars to prove it.

My embarrassing stumble from last week reminded me of the time when Jesus stumbled carrying something for us. [Read more](#)

October 24th - On-Going Learning

83 - 89 - 24

The three numbers above could represent a combination to unlock something, or somebody's choices on a lottery ticket. What these three numbers represent however are the years when I, along with my wife, and my daughter graduated from the same high school. This past Saturday my daughter graduated from high school. During the ceremony I found myself reflecting on some of the changes I was seeing since I graduated in 1983.

I was amazed at the size of the graduating class with 195 students in attendance to receive their diploma. Without looking at my yearbook I am sure my graduating class did not have that many students. I also noticed how some of the awards I received at my graduation are no longer offered but have been replaced with so many new ones throughout the years.

What I think stood out to me the most during the ceremony were the challenges this generation of students had to deal with that neither Nadine nor I did in our high school years. These graduates had to start their first two years of high school in the midst of the pandemic. These students did not only arrive for their first day of Grade 9 worried about what they were wearing, or about finding their classrooms but also having to wear a mask for the day. Continued into grade 10. I wondered how I would have coped if I had to experience the same thing in my high school years.

After considering these and other differences in our graduations, I realized that the one thing that had not changed in all those years is the message to the graduates. [Read more](#)

October 17th - Noticing the Deductions

My daughter has been working part-time for about six months now. She was naturally excited and proud when she received her first pay cheque. Something she did not pay close attention to in those first few months of employment were the deductions coming off her pay. Because she is only part-time, the employer only deducts amounts for C.P.P and EI off her pay, but nothing for income tax. Depending on the number of hours she has worked during a two week pay period she is beginning to notice that at least \$25.00 is being deducted from each cheque. For her that amount represents an hour or more of work being deducted. She feels that amount of money would look better sitting in her bank account than in the government's coffers.

It is hard for me to remember if I felt the same way about deductions coming off my pay when I first started working at her age, but I probably did. When my daughter started ranting recently about the amount being deducted, I tried to comfort her by saying, "**Well the C.P.P. that is coming off your pay will help pay for dad's retirement one day!**" This came as no comfort to her at all. I wish I could tell her that these will be the only deductions she will encounter coming off her pay cheques in life.

I can just imagine the shock she will have when she starts working full-time in a career and seeing additional deductions come off her pay for income tax, a registered pension plan if offered, and maybe union dues depending on her profession. Who knows by that time if the government will have come up with a few more deductions to come off our cheques. In about another month I will begin to see notices come through from my national office sharing the increases in deductions that will start coming off my pay in 2025. I may begin to go on a rant of sorts myself when I see them. If I start ranting, I would not be surprised if Jesus stopped me in the midst of it to remind me about the time He was questioned in regards to paying taxes. [Read more](#)

October 10th - My Week of Patience

The need to remain patient seemed to be front and center for me last week. It began on Tuesday while I was in Caledonia to watch my daughter play a high school basketball game. When we came out after the game, the front tire on our car was flat. The flat tire was not from a nail or screw but a result of it splitting.

Nadine and my daughter got a ride back to Brantford with one of her teammates while I called CAA for assistance. Once I got through, I was told it would be a 35 minute wait. After 35 minutes I received another call from CAA to say it would be a further half hour before assistance would arrive. The tow truck finally arrived and confirmed the tire was too damaged to drive on and because my vehicle came with no spare tire it would need to be towed. The driver then proceeded to tell me that he could not do it because his company did not cover tows to the Brantford area. CAA had to be called back to send a different tow truck to take my car to Brantford. I then had to wait an additional hour or more for the second tow truck to arrive. By the time I arrived back in

Brantford and was dropped off at the garage by the tow truck operator it was three hours after I made that first call. When I shared this story with a few people they asked how I was able to remain so patient those three hours.

Staying patient that long was nothing compared to what came next. When I arrived home, I discovered that my TV provider was not working. I learned that the provider had been hacked and it would take time for it to get back up and going. A day passed and it was not back up. On Thursday I contacted the provider, and they told me to take my box in for an update. I did that and was told they hoped to have it up soon and to just remain patient. I stayed patient on Thursday and remained so on Friday. Come Saturday it was still not up and working and I was told once again to remain patient and that they were hoping to have it going by the end of the weekend. It is now Monday morning as I write this, and I am still waiting patiently for my TV provider to get things fixed.

It was far easier to remain patient for three hours waiting for a tow truck than it has been for nearly six days for my TV provider to fix the issues on their end. [Read more](#)

October 3rd - What We Focus On Taking Care Of

We purchased a new vehicle a few months ago. Technically it was not new, but it was new for us. When we purchased this vehicle, it was nicely clean after the detailing the dealer had done on it. When we brought the car home, my daughter said to me, "Dad, I hope you keep this car cleaner than the one we just traded in!"

Her words have stuck with me these past five months. I am very conscious to make sure I do not leave any receipts or garbage anywhere in the car. If my coffee happens to spill a drop or two on the gear shift, I make sure I quickly run into the house and get a damp cloth to wipe it clean. I do not think I have put this much effort into keeping a car clean since I bought my first one when I was 18 years old. A week would not go by without me washing it. Even in the dead of winter, I would be in the driveway washing all the salt off the car.

Our new car is not the only thing I have been putting extra effort into taking care of lately. We recently had our bathtub removed and replaced with a walk-in shower complete with sliding glass doors. The installer recommended that after each use we squeegee down the glass doors to cut down on water stains. Because it is new I make sure I do this each time after showering. I also find myself paying more attention to removing any hair that may be building up around the drain. I did not do this on a regular basis with our old tub and shower, but I am showing this level of care when it comes to our new one.

I imagine we all have this tendency when it comes to something new in our lives, but over time we may get away from showing this same level of care. I wonder if we have this same tendency when it comes to our faith? [Read more](#)

September 26th - What Counting Reminded Me About

My neighbour shared with me during the summer that he was planning to retire come the end of September. Each time I saw him I would ask if he was counting down the days until his retirement. It quickly became evident to me that he preferred to count down based on the number of weeks left as opposed to how many days.

This Monday marked the beginning of his last week of work before retiring. I imagine he has now switched to counting the number of days he still has left. As I have journeyed with my neighbour counting the number of weeks still to go, I have become aware of other measures some people are using to count down to their retirement. A person shared with me at church on Sunday that somebody they know recently commented they have three more construction seasons before they can retire. When I went to the coffee shop on Monday morning the employee getting my large double-double commented how her father has just four more years before he can retire. I would think most people with this many years until retirement would use this measure to count.

Since I turned 60 over the summer, I do find myself joining those who are counting down how long before they can retire. I think it is the pastor in me that uses a slightly different system than the others to count. I have found myself at times counting in terms of the number of sermons I still have to write and preach before I can retire. Another system I have been using is not only counting the number of years I still have left but also the weeks as well. I think these methods of counting I am using have to do with focusing on preparing for a church service every week. In case any if you are wondering, my current count is 4 years and 48 weeks or approximately 250 sermons.

All of this discussion about people retiring reminded me how we all have our own systems or preferences when it comes to counting certain things. I remember as a kid enjoying counting down the number of sleeps left before waking up on Christmas morning to open gifts. On Sunday while I was watching the F1 race on television the commentator shared in kilos how much body weight the racers lose during a race. I prefer to be given that information in pounds so of course I had to do the calculation to convert it. For some reason people who are not Toronto Maple Leaf fans seem to keep counting how long it has been since we have won our last Stanley Cup.

As I was thinking about all of this I was reminded of the time when Peter wanted confirmation from Jesus on the method of counting that should be used when it comes to forgiving people. [Read more](#)

September 19th - Focusing on My Cup

Just before I sat down to write this message, I decided to make myself a coffee with my Keurig machine. Even though I stop into Tim Hortons for my morning coffee I still make myself a few coffees through the course of the day with my Keurig. I have to be careful whenever I do this because my mind sometimes becomes distracted while

doing so. On more than one occasion I have pressed the button to start the brewing process and forgotten to place a cup underneath. One can imagine the expression on my face when I come to retrieve my coffee but discover instead that the drip tray is overflowing, and the counter is covered with it too. Many might be wondering if I would just get out a straw and start sipping away when this happens, but I prefer my coffee in a cup with two creams and sugars.

On this occasion I did remember to place the cup underneath. While I was waiting for the cup to brew, I began thinking about an incident that happened to me at Tim Hortons last week. There was a new employee on that day, so I gave her my usual order. Instead of a large double-double appearing on the screen, it came up as a small-sized cup. I cannot remember if I have ever ordered a small-sized coffee at Tims. When I brought this to her attention, she attempted to correct it, but the screen showed I wanted not just a small sized cup but a medium one too. She tried to correct this mistake also but this time the screen showed I wanted a small, a medium, and an extra-large-sized cup. The only one missing was the large size I ordered. To put her at ease I said to her, "If I come back home with all four sized cups of coffee, my wife will really think I have a coffee addiction!"

When I sat down at my computer after thinking about these two incidents, naturally my mind was still on cups. It did not take me long to remember the reference that David made to a cup in Psalm 23. [Read more](#)

September 12th - Help for Those Tears

On Friday morning I received an urgent message from Nadine while she was at the church cutting up onions in preparation for making chili sauce for our bazaar later this fall. Her urgent request was for me to search Google to find suggestions on how to cut onions without crying. As a pastor I have been asked advice for how to stop tears resulting from loss and grief but never due to cutting onions. After a couple minutes on the computer, I messaged back to her these recommendations:

- Put the onions in the fridge or freezer before cutting.
- Cut them on a wet or damp paper towel
- Cut them while they are submersed in a bowl of water
- Wear goggles while cutting them

A short while later I heard back from Nadine that putting the onions in the freezer seemed to do the trick.

Cutting onions can be a source of tears for us. Usually, we associate tears with moments when we are hurt, disappointed, or experience loss in our lives. On Sunday night I was reminded of a moment in time when I found myself crying. I was looking through a memory book my mother did up for me on Sunday night and came across my father's obituary notice. As I read it, I was reminded this week will be the 25th anniversary of this loss. September 12, 1999, happened to be a Sunday. When I came home from church that day there was a message on my phone from my mother to come up to the hospital because my dad had passed away earlier that morning.

I can still remember the tears I shed saying goodbye to my dad there. I don't cry often, and I remember both Nadine and my mother crying when they saw my tears. Part of my tears was realizing my dad passed away alone without any of his family there. I was confused as I left the hospital and was asking God why He did not arrange for me to be with my father before his passing.

That afternoon God arranged for a person to call and provide me with the answer I was seeking. [Read more](#)

September 4th - A Date in Time

I am actually writing this message on my wedding anniversary. Nadine and I were married 36 years ago on September 2, 1988. I can remember the weather being really good that day because I spent the afternoon golfing before arriving at the church for the 7:00 p.m. ceremony. As I reflect upon that day, I am reminded how things were so different back then. Renting an apartment was definitely cheaper. The first place we lived in was a two-bedroom apartment including utilities for just under \$300.00 per month. I was glad rent was so cheap back then because interest rates were quite high and there was no way we could afford a mortgage on my yearly salary of just \$21,000.00.

The car I drove back then was a Ford Granada. I cannot remember the last time I have seen such a car on the road. I had just finished university a year earlier with a degree in business specializing in accounting. Despite this amount of education, I still had at least two more years of night courses to take in order to become a Certified Management Accountant.

When Nadine and I stood at the front of the church on September 2, 1988 and exchanged our vows, she thought she would be married to an accountant the rest of her life and so too did I. It was 8 years into our marriage when God revealed His plan to me to become a minister. In 2001 I completed my studies and was ordained as a minister in the Presbyterian Church in Canada in June of that year. On my 13th wedding anniversary on September 2, 2001, I actually found myself leading worship for the first time at my new pastoral charge in Petrolia. Only God could make this kind of arrangement happen and He alone could have me be the pastor right now at the very church I was married in 36 years ago this day.

Being reminded of this date in time each year on my wedding anniversary allows me to see how God's hand has guided my life through the years. I am always amazed and humbled to see the plans God has had for my life. It is on this date I am often reminded of these words David expressed. [Read more](#)

August 29th - Mistaken

On Sunday evening we decided to play tennis, and when I started walking toward the courts, I could hear a man's voice singing. Usually at the tennis court I will hear

grunts, screams, and a few profanities coming from people, but this was the first time I heard singing. When I got closer to the court, I discovered the voice was coming from a music player that some people were listening to while they played. Just as I discovered this, I was met by a woman walking her dog along the path in the opposite direction to me. She too had heard the male voice singing and she thought I was the one with the wonderful singing voice.

I have never been mistaken before for having a good singing voice. This is the reason why I am never asked to sing in a choir or asked to do a solo at church. In fact, I turn my microphone down during hymns, so nobody has to hear me sing. Instead of bringing up these examples, I pointed to Nadine (who was behind me laughing) and told her my wife can confirm I do not have a good singing voice. I then shared with her where the music was coming from before we each continued down the path. Sunday night was definitely a first for me in being mistaken for having a good singing voice.

Sometimes I have been mistaken for having certain traits that I do not, and other times people have mistaken me for being somebody I am not. I imagine each one of us have had similar experiences. After Sunday night's incident I was reminded of a time when people were mistaken in these ways about Jesus. [Read more](#)

August 21st - Not the Way Some Expected the Week to Start

My Monday morning started off the way I expected. After getting up and making my way downstairs, my first task was to get the garbage out to the curbside for pick-up. Then I hooked up our dog Daisy on her leash and got her out. Once I was back inside, I made myself a cup of coffee and sat down at the computer to read my newspaper online. Once I finished that, it was soon time to make breakfast for Nadine and myself. My Monday morning was going the way I expected it to.

It was over breakfast that I learned from Nadine that some people in our neighbourhood were not starting their week off the way they expected. She began seeing on our neighbourhood Facebook page that many people in our area were reporting thefts overnight. One neighbour reported that her son's work vehicle had tools and other items taken from it. Still others were sharing that their vehicles had been broken into. Thankfully we did not experience anything stolen or broken into during the wee hours of Sunday night into Monday morning, but we have had this happen to us a few times during our 15 years at this address. Even though we did not experience any of this, my heart still broke for my neighbours knowing how disappointing, discouraging, and frustrating it can be to discover this is the way the week was starting.

After hearing about this I found my thoughts on Monday morning turning at times towards other ways a day or week may not begin as expected. [Read more](#)

August 15th - Disappointed in Me

I have shared with you on previous occasions besides being known as the "large, double-double" guy at Tim Hortons I have also become recognized at Sobeys by one cashier for being the "discount" guy. It is an easy reputation to come by when one is a frugal, cheap, Presbyterian pastor such as me. On Friday I stopped into Sobeys to pick up a few items for supper, and when I got to this cashier, she was shocked that I had no discounted items included in my basket. She actually said to me, "**I am disappointed in you!**" To be honest, I was just as disappointed in myself. It was not from a lack of trying, but sadly I disappointed this cashier, as well as myself with my shopping efforts on Friday.

As I walked to my car thinking about this incident, I was reminded of the time when the disciple Peter disappointed Jesus as well as himself. It happened on the night when Jesus was betrayed and arrested. Earlier that night He warned Peter: "**I tell you the truth, Peter- this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me. (Mark 14:30)**"

When Peter heard this, he told Jesus he would never disappoint Him in this way.

[Read more](#)

August 8th - Stepping Back in Time

I stepped back in time so to speak twice last week. The first time was on Wednesday night while Coral and I were watching television. All of a sudden, she spotted an ice cream truck out front of our house with kids from the neighbourhood already at it. We looked at each other and decided we needed to join in. By the time we got our shoes on and went out the door the ice cream truck was already halfway down our road. Thankfully another group of kids had waved the truck down to buy some ice cream. Coral and I ran down the street to try and get to the truck before it drove off again. I don't remember huffing and puffing as much when I ran after an ice cream truck as a kid. It was truly a step back in time for me to buy ice cream from a truck coming down my street. I just wish the prices were a step back in time because I do not remember an ice cream costing \$5.00 in the early 70's.

On Thursday afternoon I stepped back in time again by returning to Brock University where I was a student from 1983-1987. The reason for my visit was so Coral could tour the university to see if it would be one of the schools she might consider applying to. Because I am part of Brock's alumni, I received a complimentary gift at the beginning of the tour. I wish the gift had been a full scholarship for my daughter, but the thought was nice. Brock University has changed so much since I was a student there, but it was interesting to step back in time during the tour. I was able to point out to Coral where some of my classes were, where I stayed in residence, and some of my favourite places to hang out. A lot of memories came back to me as I stepped back in time touring Brock University on Thursday.

It was an interesting week for me experiencing these instances of stepping back in time. It can be quite nostalgic for us when we step back in time and take a trip down

memory lane. There may be some moments from our past that we would prefer not to step back into. One step back in time the Bible warns us not to take is to return to our old ways from before we started following Christ. [Read more](#)

August 1st - Watch Your Shoes

Besides helping me with many of my ministry tasks, my wife Nadine also does house cleaning for several clients. This past Friday afternoon she was cleaning at the home of a client she has had for several years. This client's daughter happened to be visiting when Nadine arrived but was soon leaving to travel back to her home in Buffalo after having spent the past few days here.

While Nadine was still there, the daughter packed up all her things and left to drive back to her home in Buffalo. When Nadine finished, she went to the door to put on her shoes but did not see them. She began searching around the house and could not find them anywhere. Even the client joined in the search for the missing shoes, but he could not spot them either. Nadine ended up driving home in just her socks. It was around 6:00 p.m. when Nadine received a phone call from her client to inform her that the shoes had been found in Buffalo. Apparently, the daughter has shoes that are similar to Nadine's and mistook them for being hers.

I believe God knew this was going to happen to Nadine. The reason why I say that is Nadine went shopping at Walmart earlier that week for a new pair of shoes before they were replaced with winter boots. Nadine does not shop for shoes very often. I think God prepared her for what He knew would happen on Friday by at least ensuring Nadine had a new pair of shoes to wear while her old pair spends some time in Buffalo.

This incident got me thinking about shoes and in particular references made to them in the Bible. [Read more](#)

July 25th - Held Up

On Sunday afternoon I went to the nursing home to visit a person who I am a caregiver for. As I was walking toward this person's room, the hallway was crowded at spots with various residents making their way to their rooms and activity areas. At one point, I found myself behind a man walking with his walker at the same time another resident was on the other side of the hall in a wheelchair. I stopped and just waited patiently for the two residents to pass by each other so I could keep going. The man with the walker must have sensed somebody was behind him because he turned and looked at me and said, "**I am sorry. I am holding you up!**" I told him he did not need to apologize as he was not holding me up at all. Shortly after I said this, he moved over a bit so that I could slip through and head down the hallway to where I was going.

As I was driving home from the nursing home Sunday afternoon I began thinking about this man's words and how often we do find ourselves "**held up**" so to speak by someone or something. It is not uncommon for me to be **held up** in busy traffic, or in a long line at the bank or store. I often find myself at times being **held up** waiting on the phone while a customer representative is looking something up. Based on previous experiences I have just come to expect to be **held up** by delays when flying or traveling. At times I am **held up** being able to send out various reports for meetings because I am still waiting on somebody to send me their write-up. We all have had our share of stories and experiences of being held up by someone or something. Hopefully we maintain our patience when being held up, but sometimes in these moments we may find ourselves becoming frustrated and lose control of our temper.

After reflecting upon various examples when I have been held up and the emotions we can experience in these moments, I found my thoughts switch to the times when I have had people share with me that they feel God is holding them up on something.

[Read more](#)

July 19th - A Recent Recognition

I received an unexpected recognition last week that brought a smile to my face. The recognition was not a result of me reaching the 60-club in age on Tuesday, nor was it for my preaching. Usually, any recognition for my preaching comes if people are still awake by the time I reach the end of the sermon. It should come as no surprise to anyone that the recognition I received last week occurred when I stopped into Tim Hortons.

A new employee was being trained last week, and while she was making my coffee one of the regular employees came over to her and said, "**Make sure you make his coffee properly! He is my favourite customer!**" I appreciated this employee's words and recognition. When I shared this story with a person at church on Sunday, they asked whether it is because I tip her that I have become her favourite customer. When I reminded this person that I am a cheap, frugal, Presbyterian pastor they realized quickly the compliment did not come as a result of me tipping.

I think her acknowledgement is more a result of me showing simple kindness on a regular basis. Every time I see this employee I always try to make the effort to ask her how she is doing and inquire about her family. I have discovered her son plays baseball, so I often ask how his team is doing. When I learned last year that her husband was in an accident, I kept checking in with her on how he was doing. Naturally, I ask her, too, about how she is holding up managing work with a busy home life. These conversations only last a few short moments while she makes my coffee before serving the next customer in line. I also make sure I smile and thank her each time I interact with her. If I had to tip for my coffee at Tim Hortons, there is no way I would be any employee's favorite customer. But showing kindness and compassion on a consistent basis, I believe, has led her to acknowledge me as her favourite customer.

Her words last week meant a lot to me, and they got me thinking quite a bit too. [Read more](#)

July 11th - He Does Not Forget About Us

On Sunday afternoon I decided to stop into Tim Hortons and sit at one of the booths so that I could plan out my week ahead with a coffee in hand. It was just after 4:00 p.m. so the early shift had already finished for the day, leaving only three staff on. It was not busy when I came in but shortly after things began to pick up. A line started forming inside while, at the same time, the drive-thru got busy. The three staff were devoting all of their attention to the drive-thru and forgetting about the customers waiting inside. One of the customers standing in line shouted to the employees at the drive-thru, **"Don't forget about us here!"** I could tell from the tone of his voice that he was not angry but just wanted to bring to the employees' attention that there were customers waiting at the counter too. The staff apologized and shortly thereafter one of them came over to serve customers waiting at the counter.

Hearing the customer's words on Sunday afternoon reminded me of a conversation I had with somebody many years ago who was worried God would forget about him. I had coffee with this man while he was going through a time of uncertainty in his life. There were so many factors in his life that were beyond his control and even though he was a person of faith, he was visibly worried going through this uncertain period of his life. We talked about the importance of trusting God in moments like he was experiencing. I remember him saying, **"I know but I just hope God does not forget about me in all of this!"** I assured him that God would not forget about him, but I felt I needed to give him some proof of this at that moment to hold onto. I felt led to remind him about how God remembered Noah when he was on the ark after the flood began. [Read more](#)

July 4th - Getting Past the Halfway Point

Just a few days ago we came to the halfway point of 2024. Our chiropractor commented last week how amazed he was at how quickly these past six months have gone. Perhaps many of us feel the same way. Halfway points like we are in right now in 2024 are often a good time to stop and do some reflecting. Jesus used the halfway point in His three year ministry to have the disciples begin reflecting upon their understanding of who He was. Jesus started off by asking them, **"Who do people say I am?"** They replied how some thought He was John the Baptist, others felt He was Elijah, and still others considered Him to be one of the other prophets. Then Jesus asked, **But who do you say I am?"**

This question was meant to teach how it is not enough for us just to know what others say about Jesus, but that we must come to recognize for ourselves that He is the Messiah. Through this lesson Jesus was teaching how we cannot remain at a halfway point when it comes to our commitment, adoration, and faith in Him. He wants us to move past the halfway point by being fully committed to following Him.

Now that we are at the halfway point of 2024, I thought it would be a good time to follow in Jesus' example and use it as a time for reflection. I hope that we have already passed the halfway point by turning our curiosity about Jesus into adoration and true love for Him. A deeper question for us to consider is whether we have passed the halfway mark when it comes to walking in faith, keeping our focus on Him always, and no longer having doubts? Perhaps a story that took place halfway across the Sea of Galilee will help answer these questions for us.

After Jesus miraculously fed the crowd of 5,000 with just five loaves of bread and two fish, He sent the disciples off in the boat to sail that night across the Sea of Galilee while He went off to pray in solitude. A strong wind began to develop causing the disciples to fight against heavy waves in their journey across. By 3:00 a.m. they were only about halfway across the Sea of Galilee, still far from shore. Jesus could see from where He was praying that they were in trouble. Miraculously Jesus walked out on the water in the middle of the night and in the midst of that severe storm to where the disciples were. [Read more](#)

June 27th - Looking at the Labels

I heard a story recently about how rude a customer was to an employee who was still being trained at a store. When the customer expressed what she needed, this new employee tried to be of assistance but quickly realized they had not been trained yet on that matter. The customer was clearly irritated and told the employee she was incompetent. The employee called her manager for assistance but when he arrived, he did not know how to properly handle the customer's need either. At that moment the customer turned to the manager and employee in training and said, "I will come back when there is not incompetent staff and managers on!" After saying this, the customer abruptly turned around and left.

When I heard this story, it made me wonder if this customer is aware of the labels she is placing on others with her words. When we think of labels, we usually consider the labels that are already on items we are looking at buying. For instance, at the grocery store I will often look at the label on say a loaf of bread, or on a milk carton to see the expiry date before putting it in my cart. Sometimes when I purchase a new item at the grocery store, I will look at the label first to see if it has instructions on how best to prepare it for serving. When it comes to clothing, I look at the labels in order to find the proper size for me. With medications I look at the labels to see how often it should be taken, or what might be possible side effects to look for. Of course, when I see a warning label on some products, I will pay even closer attention to see what it says.

With all these things I have described others have affixed the labels to these products. In the situation I described at the store, the customer was placing a label on the employee in training along with the manager on duty. Sadly, some words that are spoken to us can be like labels placed on us that can be detrimental to our self worth. As much as we would like to quickly remove that label placed on us through somebody else's words, it is not always easy to do. I had a hockey coach long ago

that often placed labels on me whenever he felt I was not playing well. It took me many years to remove the harmful labels he placed on me.

It is important for us to look at examples from everyday life like what happened at that store recently to ask ourselves whether we might be doing the same thing and affixing labels to people by the words we express. The Bible speaks a lot about the great care and consideration we must use when it comes to the words that we speak. [Read more](#)

June 20th - Do Not Stop the Story

When I stopped into Tim Hortons for my morning coffee on Friday, I did not encounter anyone being arrested as I shared last week. While I was waiting for my coffee I looked over at the one group of tables where the regulars tend to gather to discuss stories and events. Sure enough, a story was being shared by one of the men at the table. I could not hear what the story was about, or how long it had been dragging on, but finally the one regular said,

"You have to stop telling the story. I have heard enough. I need a break from it. Why not tell the rest of the story when the other guys are here again on Monday!"

With that, the man telling the story stopped and another word was not spoken amongst them while I was still there.

When I walked into Tim Hortons on Monday morning, I remembered this incident from a few days earlier, so I looked over at the table where these men usually gather to see if they were resuming the story that had been paused on Friday. Unfortunately, I could not tell because not a word was spoken amongst them while I waited for my coffee.

Upon leaving with my coffee in hand I began thinking how there are some stories we wish would just continue and keep going in our lives. Perhaps we have come to enjoy watching a certain television show or reading a book series and do not want these stories that have entertained us to come to an end. Sometimes we experience a break in these stories we love and are forced to wait in anticipation for the television series to return with new episodes or for the author to publish the next book in the series. I talked with a young lady at church on Sunday about how she cannot wait for an author she loves reading to put out their next book. My own daughter has been waiting two years for a television series she loves to come out with the second season. Her wait finally ended on Sunday night when she was able to resume watching the storyline of season two.

While there are some stories we want to continue in our lives, there are others we are happy to see come to an end or get a break from like the man expressed at Tim Hortons last Friday. [Read More](#)

June 13th - Caught Off-Guard by Something Unexpected

I have shared in some of my previous messages how it is part of my morning routine to stop into Tim Hortons and get a large double-double coffee. Being a regular, I have come to have these expectations whenever I stop in:

- That at least 2-3 of the employees will make an effort to say hello, wave or smile at me each time,
- That most employees already know what my order is even before I say it,
- That sometimes my coffee has already been made and is waiting for me before I reach the counter,
- That I will see the same group of men each morning gathered to discuss sports, the weather, the news, and ways to solve the world's problems.

I have come to expect these and a few other things whenever I stop into Tim Hortons each morning.

Two weeks ago, I experienced something totally unexpected while getting my morning coffee. It happened while I was standing next in line behind a man who was ordering a coffee and breakfast sandwich at the counter. Two undercover officers suddenly made their way around me in line and arrested this man while he was paying for his order. I stood there in shock as I watched the man being placed in handcuffs.

Being next in line while he was being escorted out by the police, I said to the employee, "I did not expect to see that when I came in this morning." When I went to the spot to pick up my coffee, I looked over at some of the regulars sitting at their tables and could see they too were in shock at what had just transpired. I came home and shared what had happened with my daughter. She said, "Dad, it is no surprise to me that something that unexpected would happen when you were around." She knows me well.

This incident was a reminder to me how sometimes the unexpected has a way of creeping into our familiar routines. [Read more](#)

June 6th - The Strong Pull of Emotions

I shared in my mid-week message last time how I officiated at a graveside service recently. In that message I spoke about how the one grandson commented that his grandfather was the person he needed the most at every stage of life. This grandson has young children of his own who were at the cemetery that Saturday. It was the first time these young children had to deal with grief and loss.

When they got home from the cemetery this father could see that his children were struggling with their feelings. When it came time for bed, these youngsters were having a hard time falling asleep as a result of still dealing with their emotions from earlier in the day. When he realized this, the father looked for inspiration from his own grandfather in order to try and help his own kids with their emotions. Even though they were already dressed for bed, he told the kids to get ready because they were going

to go to the bowling alley just like Great-Grandpa enjoyed doing. So, off this father and his grieving children went to relive and create memories of their own bowling just like their great-grandpa would do. By the time they got home from bowling the youngsters were no longer feeling sad and fell asleep very quickly.

This story was shared with me a week after I did the service for the family. Hearing this story was a reminder to me of the impact emotions can have on us no matter what age or stage of life we are at. It was not only these great-grandchildren affected by loss and grief that day but also the deceased's grandchildren, children and nieces and nephews too. Both young and old were being pulled by their emotions that day which is understandable.

Hearing this story also reminded me how we can find inspiration from the examples of others in order to properly handle these emotions in a positive way. [Read more](#)

May 30th - Who We Need at Every Stage of Life

On Saturday morning I conducted a graveside service while there was a heavy down pour of rain, mixed in with a few cracks of thunder. A family member commented how the deceased was going out with a bang after one crack of thunder was heard. The deceased may have gone out with a bang of thunder during the service, but he certainly made quite an impression on his family while he lived out his life. This became evident to me when the man's grandson wrote me before the service and said, "Grandpa was the person I needed the most at every stage of my life." I used this grandson's observation in my reflection at the graveside and then proceeded to share with the family some of the ways he was the person they needed at various stages in life. I reminded them:

- how he always had his great-grandchildren's favourite snacks available when they needed one when visiting,
- how he would be the one playing their favourite games with them on the floor when they were young,
- how he would put on funny glasses and make them smile whenever they needed a laugh,
- how he would teach his grandsons how to start dressing like a man when they became teenagers,
- how he would offer them advice on dating, and marriage when they needed it,
- how he would offer them advice on how best to cope through stress at work, or deal with difficult co-workers whenever in need of it,
- how he would listen to their stories when they needed somebody to listen,
- and how he would provide them with someone who was patient, thoughtful, and caring in their lives whenever then needed it most.

These were just a few of the memories I shared with the family at the graveside to remind them how blessed they were to have this person they needed most in their lives during every stage.

In the days following this service I have found myself at times thinking about this grandson's observation about how his grandfather was the person he needed the most at every stage of his life. I imagine each one of us might have somebody who has been that person for us. [Read more](#)

May 23rd - A Blessing Came From Something Small

When I cut the lawn for the first time this year, I accidentally ran over a cord of string left out from last fall that was hidden in some long grass. Naturally, there was a loud noise when I hit it, but everything seemed to be working fine with my lawnmower as I finished cutting the rest of my grass.

A week later, the blade suddenly came off from underneath shortly after I started cutting the grass for the second time. I searched all around the area to find the bolt and nut that held the blade in place but had no luck in finding them. I began to wonder if it had come off when I hit the cord of string a week earlier. I searched the section of the lawn where that had happened but found no signs of the missing pieces. I began looking online to see which stores might carry a replacement blade for my model of lawnmower but could not find a match. I decided to go to Canadian Tire where I bought the lawnmower two years earlier to search its parts section. I enlisted the help of an employee in my search, but we had no luck. He suggested I try finding a suitable nut and bolt at a hardware store. I went to Home Hardware and a few other places, but these stores had nothing that matched the size I needed.

I then asked my neighbour who is a millwright if he might be able to find a suitable nut and bolt to affix the blade back onto the lawnmower. He looked through some he had at home, but none were suitable. He even went to Princess Auto to try, and they too had nothing in stock that would work.

When all of these options failed, I decided to call the manufacturer of the lawnmower to see if I could purchase the proper parts from them. The customer service representative was able to identify the part I needed but they had none in stock. I was informed it would be 6-8 weeks before they would have this nut and bolt in stock again. That would put me into mid-July before I could use this lawnmower again. When I called, I did not expect what happened next. [Read more](#)

May 16th - A Mistake Often Made When Moving On

Things have been happening very quickly in Leafs Nation over these past ten days. After the Leafs were eliminated in Game 7 in the first round of the playoffs, once again by the Boston Bruins, players began to clean out their lockers and do interviews with the Toronto media two days later. Then on Thursday afternoon we learned the Leafs had fired their coach, Sheldon Keefe. On Friday morning the chairman, president, and general manager of the Leafs gathered for a press conference to share their plan to examine carefully everything about the team with the goal of making whatever

changes are needed to bring a Stanley Cup to Toronto. A lot of things transpired in such a short time frame after the Leafs lost in Game 7 to the Bruins.

This past Monday morning I was surprised to learn how quickly the Leafs were moving on in the search for a new coach. While listening to a radio broadcast I heard the Leafs had already interviewed one coaching candidate on Saturday and another was flying in that morning to be interviewed. The Leafs are obviously moving forward fairly quickly in their search to hire the next coach of the team.

I began to wonder after hearing this, has Leaf management taken the time they said they would to learn any valuable lessons before moving on in this search? Sadly, moving ahead without properly reflecting on important lessons that can be learned from past experiences is a mistake so many people make. This pattern is especially frustrating to God because Scripture makes it very clear how He desires for us to take time to reflect upon experiences so we can learn from them before moving on to the next task. [Read more](#)

May 8th - The Mystery

On Sunday morning I was reminded about one of the greatest mysteries in life. This may surprise you, but I am not referring to the mystery as to why my beloved Toronto Maple Leafs lost in the first round once again on the previous night. Sunday morning's mystery actually had to do with why so many socks come back without a match after being put in the wash.

At one point in my life, I thought women knew the answer to this mystery and it was just us men who did not. Perhaps this mindset came from having watched an episode of a television show where a room full of husbands all had mismatched socks on and their wives were smiling at one another like they knew the secret. In the past I always blamed my wife for why there were so many socks in my drawer with no matches because she did the laundry. The other reason why I was of this mindset is up until the past year or so my wife did most of the laundry so naturally, she must know the answer to this mystery. I am getting a new perspective about this mystery now that I have been doing more of the laundry lately.

When we were getting ready for church on Sunday morning, Nadine opened her sock drawer to discover most of them were missing. She brought this to my attention, so I pointed to the end of the bed where there were several of her clean socks laying there with no matches. She tried putting on a pair of mismatched socks that we men have become accustomed to wearing but because they were of two different lengths she did not find them to be comfortable. She did not share with me at that moment the answer to the mystery, so I realized right then and there it still remains a secret where socks go missing after being washed.

On Monday morning after I put on a pair of mismatched socks, it was time for me to pray and ask God for inspiration for this week's message. He reminded me of Sunday morning's mystery which led me to begin looking up references to "mystery" and "secrets" in the Bible. I did not find the mystery to missing socks in my research, but I

was reminded through one of Paul's writings that God does not want it to be a secret for us to understand what He expects us to know and do. I found this in a section of Paul's first letter to Timothy where he helps him to understand faith in a way so that it will not be a mystery of how to please God. [Read more](#)

May 2nd - Waiting for Change

Last week I found myself waiting for change to be given back to me on two separate occasions. The first time was at the grocery store. I could tell right away the cashier was distracted in thought as she scanned my purchase. I held out my money to pay but there was no reaction on her part to take it from me. Twenty seconds passed before she came out of her daze and took the money. She admitted having drifted off and apologized for it. I was owed 5 cents back in change, but the cashier closed her drawer and seemed to be distracted in thought once again. I stood there waiting for my change, but I could quickly tell she was not aware I was still standing there. I did something this cheap, frugal Presbyterian pastor would rarely do and walked away without being given change.

Two days later I was at the Dollar Store and once again paid with cash for my purchase. This time I was owed \$5.00 back in change but the cashier closed her cash drawer and just handed me back the receipt. This cheap, frugal Presbyterian pastor was not going to let this same thing happen to him twice in the same week. In a polite way I brought it to the cashier's attention how she forgot to give me back my change. She apologized right away and acknowledged she had never made that mistake with any customer before. I was not mad or angry, but I did appreciate being able to walk out with the change I was expecting to get back.

I imagine many of us have had similar experiences of not getting back the change we were expecting after a purchase. These two experiences got me distracted in thought wondering if we have not been giving back proper change to Jesus after He purchased our forgiveness through His death on the cross. [Read more](#)

April 25th - Which of the Three Season are We in?

The Stanley Cup playoffs began this past Saturday. It is so different watching playoff hockey as opposed to games during the regular season. Wins and losses have more significance at this time of year. Players are under more pressure to perform well during these games. Goals are often harder to come by. Having home ice advantage in the playoffs is often more important than during the regular season in helping a team to win. Hits seem to happen more often at this time of year and fans reactions to them are more enthusiastic. Playoff hockey is very different and especially stressful to watch if you happen to be a Toronto Maple Leaf's fan like me.

As I watched the first game of the Toronto-Boston series I was intrigued by a comment made by one of the commentators. He shared how Wayne Gretzky once said that there were three different seasons in hockey. Wayne identified the first as

being the regular season, the second as being the first three rounds of the playoffs, and the third being the actual Stanley Cup finals. Prior to hearing this I always perceived the three seasons in hockey to be the pre-season, followed by the regular season, and then the playoffs. Based on his experiences, Wayne Gretzky obviously felt the Stanley Cup finals were a completely different season from the other two.

Even though I heard this comment once made by Wayne Gretzky over the weekend I still found myself thinking about it by the time Monday arrived. I realized these thoughts had less to do with the Leaf's playing again that night but rather were a result of having helped a person earlier that day enter a new season in her life moving into a nursing home. [Read more](#)

April 18th - So Many Accidents

There have been so many accidents in the West Brant area these past few days. On Friday morning I left the house shortly before 8:00 a.m. to pick up my mother and take her for groceries. When I turned onto Mount Pleasant Street, traffic was backed up. I sensed right away there had to be an accident up ahead. Thankfully I was able to make a detour down a side street to get to my mom's house.

After I picked my mom up, we came upon another car accident right near the grocery store. While we were shopping for groceries, I overheard a customer saying there was still another accident that was tying up traffic in the West Brant area. Sure enough, by the time we came out of the grocery store even the side streets in West Brant were congested with drivers trying to find ways to avoid the accident areas. It was a chaotic and hectic Friday morning to be driving in West Brant to say the least.

Every Monday morning, I usually try to be at the grocery store right when it opens in order to take advantage of some of their discounted items. As I started the car, I thought to myself, hopefully the drive to the grocery store will not be as chaotic as it was on Friday. I spoke too soon. When I drove by my favourite Tim Hortons on the way to the grocery store there were two cars involved in an accident in the parking lot. Police were already on scene and were blocking off the parking lot going into my coffee place.

I realized right then I was not going to be getting my morning coffee at that location. I was surprised to see even more police cars there when I drove past it on my way home from groceries. About an hour after I got home, I received a message from my wife Nadine that she had heard about the accident on Facebook. News was quickly spreading that it was another morning of accidents in the West Brant area. [Read more](#)

April 11th - It Was Written on Money

I received a very strange phone call on Saturday afternoon. When I answered the phone, the person said, "I am calling you because your phone number is written on a five dollar bill I was just given." I don't think I have ever had a phone conversation

start off this way. Apparently, he was given this \$5.00 bill that had my phone number on it a few minutes earlier at a Tim Hortons in Cambridge. When he saw the number he said, "I was just curious to call to find out who would answer."

I don't know if he was counting on a pastor from Brantford answering but that is what he discovered. I thanked him for calling and shared with him I had no idea how my phone number ended up on that \$5.00 bill. After hanging up, this man actually sent me a text a few minutes later with a picture of the \$5.00 bill that prompted his call. I thought to myself afterwards how fitting it was that this \$5.00 bill with my phone number written on it would turn up at a Tim Hortons where this pastor loves to get his morning coffee from.

Whoever wrote my number on that \$5.00 bill must not have had anything else at the time to write it down on when they wanted to get in touch with me. This incident got me thinking about what we may see written on money. My first thought was how we see the words "In God We Trust" written on U.S. coins and bills. Being a pastor, this naturally led me to begin thinking about two stories in the Bible when Jesus noticed messages people were writing with their money. [Read more](#)

April 4th - March Madness Predictions

This year's March Madness college basketball tournament is now down to its Final Four in both the men's and women's brackets. Before the tournament started, many avid fans filled out their bracket sheets making predictions who they thought would win each game and eventually make it to the championship. My daughter and I were two such fans who did this before the tournament started.

The criteria I used when making my predictions included looking at a team's ranking, their win-loss record during the season, and my impressions if I watched some of their games on television during the season. My daughter used some of the same criteria that I did but there were times when she chose the team I did not in order to make our competition more interesting.

Sixty games have been played on both the men's and women's sides in order to get to the Final Four. After 60 games, my predictions on the men's side have only been accurate 68% of the time. I am doing a lot better at predicting winners in the women's tournament as my predictions have been right 82% of the time. In case you are wondering I am just slightly ahead of my daughter when it comes to our predictions who will win.

March is a time when college basketball fans will make their predictions on the March Madness tournament. Baseball started its regular season last week and many sports commentators were making their predictions about the Toronto Blue Jays chances of making the playoffs again and who might win the World Series this year. With the regular season in hockey drawing closer to an end many fans will soon be making

their predictions as to who will win each playoff round and eventually win the Stanley Cup.

This is a time of year when we even see predictions being made about what kind of summer we should expect when it comes to temperatures and weather. When it comes to the predictions we make, the reality is they might turn out to be right or not at all. We make our predictions based on the best information we have at the time but there are so many circumstances beyond our foresight and control that can affect them from coming true.

Somebody who is perfect when it comes to predictions is God. We are reminded of this truth in the stories we just celebrated last week on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. [Read more](#)

March 28th - Remembering History

I was very busy this past weekend celebrating both my mother's and daughter's birthdays. One of the things my daughter wanted to do for her birthday was to go to the Royal Ontario Museum (the ROM) with a friend. My daughter loves history and the friend she took appreciates it just as much. The timing for going was perfect for this "cheap" pastor because admission to the ROM was free last weekend.

When we got there the lineup to get in was longer than the eye could see. We probably walked half a mile or more just to get from the front of the line to the back. We were told it would take 90 minutes to get in but thankfully the line moved fairly quickly, and we were inside within 15 minutes. Despite the crowd the sections my daughter and her friend wanted to see first were not that busy. They spent the first two hours looking through the Greek and Roman exhibits. They just loved reading about each display and appreciated when they recognized something they learned in their history class together last year. By the time we finished all three floors of the exhibits at the ROM we had spent the better part of 5 hours there. My feet and back were sore by the time we left but I am glad we did it because it was a very special way for my daughter to be able to celebrate her 18th birthday with a dear friend.

Spending time remembering history this past weekend came at an interesting time for me as a pastor. I say this because Easter is a time when we look back in history to 33 AD to the events surrounding Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. While these events happened long ago, what makes this story so different from the many moments in history we examined at the ROM on Saturday is that Jesus is still alive and with us.

During our visit to the ROM we read the accounts of what many people from history accomplished. Every one of these people we read about are no longer alive. Because Jesus has risen and is still with us, when we remember the events surrounding His death and resurrection each Easter, we are not just commemorating history but realizing we are part of His-Story. [Read more](#)

March 21st - Focusing on the Nails

During this past week some people have been focusing on my fingernails. It began with my wife noticing a bit of discolouration in the nails on my pinky and ring finger. Two days later I was having coffee with a fellow minister, and he noticed the same thing. Both my wife and this minister are aware of some added stresses I am going through currently and they were worried that the discolouration was an indication of poor circulation. It was a fair observation on both of their parts.

I had to be honest with them that the discolouration of the two nails was not health or stress related, but rather due to my age. I confessed that the discolouration was a result of dying my hair. I have shared in these messages lately that I am turning the same age as Tim Hortons this year. Greying comes naturally to me. Looking like I am still in my mid- to late- 40's or early 50's takes some effort and colouring on my part. Both my wife and this minister were relieved that the discoloured nails were not from poor circulation due to stress.

These incidents got me thinking how we sometimes focus on nails. I noticed at church last Sunday one woman who had green nail polish on as part of her celebration of St. Patrick's Day. Whenever I go to the mall and walk by one of the nail salons I am always amazed how busy they are with clients. I also notice at times how long some women's fingernails are and marvel how it does not seem to affect them with texting or other tasks necessary with our digits. I have also seen how angry and upset some women become when they break one of their long fingernails.

With spring fast approaching I know some people who are very anxious to get some dirt under their fingernails and spend time again in their gardens. Spring will also see some people focus again on their toenails, preparing to wear sandals again. We focus a lot on our nails, but it is also that time of year again when we begin to focus on the nails on the cross. [Read more](#)

March 14th - Making an Effort Toward Perfect

While I was out Saturday morning doing some errands, I received a text from my wife saying: **If you are stopping for your coffee this morning I would sure like it if you brought me a tea!**

She knows me too well. Of course, I was going to stop into Tims and grab a coffee before coming home. When I got to the counter my coffee was already made and waiting for me. I told the employee how I would be in serious trouble if I did not come home with a tea for my wife. It was not busy, so he said to me, "I am going to make her the perfect cup of tea!"

I watched closely as he set out to make the perfect cup of tea. Naturally he started off with the tea bag and filling the cup with hot water. He did not fill it to the top but instead came over and added the milk and sugar next and carefully swirled it around

the cup. Then he went back over and topped up the cup with more hot water. When he put the lid on, he began carefully writing a message on it.

Usually I will see the initials "dd" on my lid indicating it is a double-double. Sometimes they will put a smiley face on the lid when they know I am getting a tea for Nadine. This time he wrote out the words "smile" for Nadine to see. When he handed me this perfect cup of tea, I thanked him for doing so and asked whether he had any ideas on how to make me the "perfect husband" too. I don't think the answer to that one can be found on a Tim Hortons' menu. When I brought it home and shared the story with Nadine, she truly appreciated this employee's efforts at making her the perfect cup of tea.

Reflecting upon this event from Saturday got me thinking about our own efforts at trying to become more perfect. Scripture reveals how Jesus is the best example for us of the perfect life lived according to the Father's plan. [Read more](#)

March 7th - Sticker Shock

On Monday morning I pulled into the grocery store in search of the marked down items I typically find after a weekend. I have a reputation to keep up as you know. As I walked across the parking lot, I happened to notice a man staring at his grocery bill standing beside his car. It was obvious by looking at his facial expressions that he was surprised by the amount. When I saw him shake his head in disbelief, I realized that he was suffering from "sticker shock." It is very common to see people like this man experiencing sticker shock at the grocery store.

My search for discounts at the grocery store has helped me a bit with this matter, but some days I too come out having experienced sticker shock. It is not just at the grocery store nowadays that I experience sticker shock. I am constantly in shock when I hear how much a house is being listed or sold for. I am also in shock when I hear how much people are willing to pay for concert tickets to see performers like Taylor Swift. My daughter has also been in shock at how much some girls have been willing to pay for dresses for the upcoming prom at her school. "Sticker shock" is a reality we experience in these days and times of inflation and rising prices.

Seeing this man in "sticker shock" on Monday morning got me thinking how believers can experience this feeling during the seasons of Lent and Easter. It is at this time of year when we remember the journey Jesus took toward the cross. He was fully aware that it was the Father's plan for Him to suffer and die for our sins and He spoke about this several times with the disciples. The exact moment when our sins were placed on Jesus was when He cried out: **My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?"** (Mark 15:34)

When Jesus gave up His spirit and died on the cross for our sins, the sticker that was placed on it declared "**FORGIVEN!**" [Read more](#)

February 29th - Let Us Hear Something Good

The inspiration for this message came about on Monday morning while I was driving to Tim Hortons to keep up my reputation for being known as "the double-double" guy. I like to listen to the radio while I drive and normally, I have it on a sports talk radio station. Lately I have also been tuning into a certain FM station that plays lots of 70's and 80's music that I grew up listening to. I had it on the FM station Monday morning hoping I might hear the daily contest they have whereby a listener has to answer 10 questions in 60 seconds in order to win \$100.00.

My timing was not right on Monday morning to catch the contest but thankfully I was tuned in for something even more special. The radio host asked his audience to start calling in and share on the airwave something good that was happening in their lives. When I heard the host make this request, I thought it was an incredible idea because we all need to hear stories of good things happening.

The unfortunate reality in these days and times is we tend to be bombarded with stories about something bad happening rather than something good. We see this reality in the news stories involving human suffering brought about by:

- acts of nature such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, etc.,
- acts of conflict and war,
- acts of violence directed towards individuals,
- acts of discrimination and racism,
- and acts of injustice and greed.

It is hard to find in some broadcasts many, if any, good news stories. This can also be the case in our conversations with friends, neighbours, and colleagues. Whenever we get the chance to catch up with them and ask how they are doing we sometimes discover that they have been going through challenges and difficulties at work, home, or with their physical and emotional well-being. We listen in these moments with compassion and love and realize how much they need to hear something good. Maybe that is the situation we find ourselves in right now too due to a difficult situation.

As I contemplated this on Monday morning, I was reminded how John the Baptist was in need of hearing something good in the midst of a difficult moment for him. [Read more](#)

February 22nd - Known For

When I go into Tim Hortons for my morning coffee, I have become known for always ordering a large double-double. It has come in handy for me being known in this way. Sometimes the person on the counter will see my car pull into a parking spot and will already have my coffee ready for me when I enter. Other times the employees will see me waiting in line and make my coffee at the same time they are filling orders for people in front of me, so it is ready for me when I do get to the register to pay. I am not blessed in these ways every time I go in, but it is nice to experience these perks as "the large double-double guy" there.

It is not only at Tim Hortons that I have become known for my purchase choices. Some days, before I stop into Tims, I will go over to Sobeys in order to see if any items have been marked down overnight. Sometimes I will find pre-made salads, or seasoned vegetables, or even marinated chicken breasts reduced anywhere in price from \$2.00 - \$10.00. After making my rounds through Sobeys looking for these deals, I seem to have lately come upon the same cashier to ring in my items. I do not know whether she recognizes me because there is a big smile on my face knowing less money will be coming out of my wallet, but she is starting to refer to me as her "discount guy". Whenever I approach she now smiles at me and says, "How much am I discounting for you today?" I don't mind her referring to me as "the discount guy," especially when I look at the receipt afterward and see how much I have saved. My church family has known for quite a while about my frugal nature. They have chosen to refer to me as "the cheap pastor" rather than as "the discount guy." Both descriptions are pretty accurate, though.

On Tuesday morning after stopping into both places, I began thinking about how I have come to be known in these ways at each establishment. I understand it has taken consistency and repetition on my part at both of these establishments in order to become known for these things. All of this reflecting on how we become known for certain things got me thinking about a hymn we sang at church this past Sunday.

[Read more](#)

February 15th - Searched for and Found

Whenever my wife or daughter cannot find something missing around the house, they always come to me for help. One gift I inherited from my father is a knack for finding missing items. Over the weekend some socks that my daughter ordered on Amazon went missing. The last place any of us remembered seeing them was on the counter beside our fridge after we opened the package when it arrived. My wife looked for them on the weekend but to no avail. On Monday morning my daughter mentioned to me how much she wished we could find those socks she ordered. That was her way of saying, "Dad, you have a new missing case to solve." The search was on.

I began by searching around the counter near the fridge where we last saw them. I next did a quick search of my daughter's room looking under her bed and in her closet to see if they ended up there somehow. When that did not prove successful, I looked in the other bedrooms in our house in case we accidentally put them in one of them. Determined to keep my reputation intact I then searched our laundry room to see if they ended up in a laundry basket. When that did not turn up anything I returned to my daughter's bedroom. I checked behind her pillows and under her bed sheets in case they had gotten covered over. Finding nothing there I turned around and spotted the socks sitting on a wicker shelf covered by a picture that had fallen off the wall a few days earlier. This whole process took about 10-15 minutes start to finish. I came downstairs after finding the socks and presented them to my daughter. Another missing case solved by you-know-who.

After finishing my search, I sat down to begin writing this week's message. Before my search I had another idea in mind for the message, but I found myself thinking about some of the things that helped me be successful in finding the missing sock. I recognized how much thinking and reflecting goes into searching for something. I also realized it takes determination, persistence, and patience. For me it also involves prayer. [Read more](#)

February 8th - Adjusting to Changes

On Monday I had to start adjusting to a few changes with respect to my morning routines. The changes were a result of Monday marking the start to the second semester for high school students. This semester my daughter has a spare first period and an on-line course for her second one. As a result of this schedule, she does not have to be at school until third period which starts after lunch. Her new schedule has resulted in these changes to my morning routine:

- no longer having the challenge of trying to start waking my teenage daughter up at 7:15 a.m.,
- no longer having to pack a school lunch for her since she can eat it now at home before going in,
- no longer having to think about what to make her for breakfast since she can make her own now that she is not having to rush,
- no longer having to rush to be out the door by 8:35 and navigate the heavy traffic trying to get her to school on time.

All of these changes to my morning routine would appear to be favorable upon first glance. It does provide me with more time before 9:00 a.m., but now I have to adjust my schedule slightly after this. What I mean is that during first semester I would typically arrive back home shortly after 9:00 a.m. with my coffee in hand ready to start working with the house just to myself and my dog.

At times in life, we have to adapt to various changes. These changes may be brought on by:

- losing a job or starting a new one,
- retiring and adjusting to this new reality in our life,
- experiencing a health matter that affects our well-being and requires alterations to our schedule or lifestyle,
- losing a family member or friend in our lives,
- moving from our home into a new community or into a retirement or long-term care facility,
- having our grown children head off to university or marry and begin this new phase in their lives. [Read more](#)

February 1st - Lucky at Times, But Not at Others

I was reminded of the Rod Stewart song *Some Guys Have all the Luck!* while watching the NFL football game on Sunday afternoon between the Baltimore Ravens and the Kansas City Chiefs. These lines from the song began going through my mind:

*Some guys have all the luck,
Some guys have all the pain,
Some guys get all the breaks,
Some guys do nothing but complain.*

The reason why I started thinking about this song is it became evident to me while watching that this was one of those games or days when Kansas City was experiencing all the luck and breaks. Several times I watched incredible catches made by Kansas City receivers that had more to do with luck being on their side than skill. There were other moments in the game when broken plays should have resulted in a loss of yards for Kansas City, but a lucky break turned it into a gain instead. We see this happen at times in sports where a team or individual athlete seems to have all the luck going for them. We can also see the opposite happen when it seems like they have no luck or breaks going their way.

It is not just in sports where we can experience this inconsistency on a given day. For instance, in everyday life, we may find:

- some days every traffic light works in our favour and other days we hit every red one.
- some days everybody we interact with is friendly and nice and on other days nobody seems to be in a happy mood.
- some days everything we say or do seems to go in our favor and other days nothing seems to be going right for us.

How true it is, as the lyrics to Rod Stewart's song remind us, that some days we experience all the luck and on other ones, none at all. A tendency we can have on those days when nothing seems to be going in our favor is to develop a negative perspective toward that day, or toward life in general, or even toward God. [Read more](#)

January 25th - Reminded of My Age

Two weeks ago, I shared in my mid-week message how Tim Hortons is celebrating their 60th anniversary in 2024 and that I was born in their first year of operation. Many of you are very good at math as I received a lot of comments after that message how I will be turning 60 this year. Since then, I have been getting constant reminders about my age. It started with my doctor prescribing some new medication for me that typically does not become a problem in people until they hit my age in life. Then I saw a rerun of a sitcom I watch that reminded me of my age. In this rerun a man was talking about adopting a baby in his 40's and how he would be in his 60's when the child graduated high school. It reminded me how I was 42 when I became a dad, and I too will be 61 when my daughter goes off to university. These are just a few of the reminders I have been getting of late about my age.

All of these reminders brought to mind the saying that "age is just a number." My mother is a perfect example of this. She is 93 and shared with me on Sunday how she has already bought gifts for next Christmas. She commented after sharing this how some people would think it was crazy for somebody her age to buy Christmas gifts this early. It did not sound crazy to me. It demonstrated showing positivity and optimism. How my mother lives her life at the age of 93 is a constant reminder to me that age is just a number.

I took a few moments before sitting down to type this message to Google search the saying "Age is just a number." I was interested to read some of the quotes that people have shared about this. I particularly liked what Mark Twain had to say: **Age is an issue of mind over matter; If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.** I don't mind the fact that I am turning 60 this year with a teenage daughter heading off to university in a year's time. I have often commented it is what keeps me young. [Read more](#)

January 18th - Just in Time

I finally made the decision to purchase snow tires for my Toyota Prius. I have had my own car since the age of 18 and in all the years I cannot remember having snow tires. Usually, I have had all-season or all-weather tires on my cars. If I am being honest, probably the reason why I have not invested in snow tires before now has had to do with my cheap nature.

What finally motivated me to open my wallet and purchase snow tires is my daughter has her licence now and this will be her first year driving by herself in winter conditions. I wanted some peace of mind and assurance knowing if she was ever out driving and the snow started coming down, she would have the safety of doing so with proper tires under these conditions.

The snow tires were installed this past Thursday and "just in time" considering the weather we experienced this past weekend. Sure enough, my daughter was driving home on Friday night when the snow started coming down heavily. Thankfully the tires helped her to get home safely on the treacherous roads.

On Saturday we had to travel to Unionville for two basketball games. We encountered heavy snow coming back and I was glad we had the snow tires on. Then on Sunday there were a lot of snow-covered portions on the road heading to church and back due to drifting. Once again, the snow tires gave us confidence being on the road. The purchase of snow tires was truly "just in time" for all the driving we had to do in bad weather these past few days.

On Monday I began thinking about doing things "just in time." [Read more](#)

January 11th - An On-Again, Off-Again Journey

As 2023 was coming to an end, I saw signs at my local Tim Hortons that this Canadian icon and establishment would be celebrating its 60-year anniversary in 2024. When I stopped in for my morning coffee on Monday, I noticed that their new coffee cups have "60" on them to recognize this milestone. The year 1964 must have been a good year because not only did Tim Horton's come into existence but I was born in July of that year as well. Maybe this explains why at some point in my life I would become an avid coffee drinker.

After I got home, I began thinking about my earliest memories of Tim Hortons. My earliest recollection goes back to a cold Saturday morning when I was in Grade 7. We had hockey practices every Saturday morning at 7:00 a.m. in St. George. My mom would alternate with another parent on the team driving us kids to Saturday morning practices. I remember on the way to practice one morning, this other parent stopped at Tim Hortons along the way to get himself a coffee, and us two kids hot chocolates. I think the reason why I remember this is when the parent drove away, he spilled some coffee on himself and said a word I was too young to use myself.

I did not go to Tim Hortons too often in my early years except for a treat. I do remember my mother often getting my brother's birthday cakes there when they used to sell them back then. What my mother did not know is how much my brother hated their cakes. Maybe that explains why they were discontinued.

During university it was rare for me to frequent a Tim Hortons, but I did appreciate when I started working as an accountant whenever a visiting salesperson would enter our work establishment with coffee and donuts for my boss and me from there.

It was when I started ministry back in 2001 in Petrolia that I first started visiting Tim Hortons more frequently. Tim Hortons was the main gathering place in Petrolia so I would go in each morning to have coffee and conversation with some of the regulars. I referred to it as my coffee shop ministry and was blessed to get to know many people in Petrolia who were not just from my church. [Read more](#)

January 4th - What Is New?

Whenever I see my mom, she usually starts off a conversation with me by asking what's new. It does not matter whether I saw her the day before or if 4 or 5 days have passed since we last saw one another, she still starts off with asking the same question. Usually I respond by saying, "Not much", or "Busy as always!"

I was reminded about this conversation starter my mother had with me on New Year's Day. I think the reason why I began thinking about this is because New Year's Day is when we take time to consider what has become new. There are so many new things we need to consider with each new year. So often the start of a new year may see us paying some additional taxes which can affect our discretionary income. We will begin to see new television shows soon as well as new movies that will be coming to theaters in 2024. For anyone who still writes cheques like I do, then we will have to

remember to put the new year at the top. If we still have a calendar in our house this will be the time when we put up a new one. Of course, many people will be starting off this year with new resolutions they have made for their lives. This is the time of year when we consider what should be new in our lives.

Have we considered this when it comes to our spiritual lives? One of the realities once we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour is we become reborn. This truth is brought out in **John 1:12-13: But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn - not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.** This new birth after we welcome Jesus Christ into our lives begins a process of changing us from the inside out in a way that rearranges our attitudes, desires, and motives to become more Christ-like. [Read more](#)