

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. My daughter heard the same message as I did when graduating: to take the lessons and experiences learned from their time at high school and apply them to their further learning whether it be in university, college, or whatever career they pursue.

183 - 146 - 15

These next three numbers played out a day later at my church service. We celebrated our church anniversary on Sunday by acknowledging we have had a Presbyterian presence in the village of Mount Pleasant for 183 years and have been in our present location for 146 of those years. The 15 is the

number of anniversaries I have been privileged to be the minister of the congregation. Anniversary services are a special time for us not only to recognize God's faithfulness but remember the people who have been part of our church family throughout so many time frames.

At first glance one would think that these two ceremonies shared nothing in common except me being at both. A graduation ceremony focuses on education, while a church service focuses on faith. The more I thought about it, the more I began to realize how these two ceremonies share in common the importance and need for further learning and growth. Naturally this message was what the teachers and educators hoped these graduates would take away from their years being in high school. As believers, learning and growing in our faith is something we must always be striving to do. Paul reminded us of this when he wrote:

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. (Philippians 1:6)

Paul wrote this as a reminder that God's work within us began when we first started believing, and from that point forward the Holy Spirit has been enabling us to learn and grow in ways to become more Christ-like each day. Paul also reminds us that this learning process does not end until we are called home or Christ returns. Jesus also reminded believers of the need to keep understanding the truths of Scripture in our on-going learning: **Make them holy by Your truth; teach them Your word, which is truth. (John 17:17)**. By continuing to learn God's truths we will come to understand how by applying His Word daily to how we live our lives it will not only have a purifying effect upon our hearts and minds, but also motivate us to keep our relationship with Christ a priority each and every day.

On Saturday graduates were given the encouragement to keep striving in their learning based on the lessons and skills they have developed in their years in high school. As believers, may we take this as our reminder to stay committed in our journey of learning and striving to become more Christ-like each day.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean