

First Baptist Regina Weekly News

For the Week of September 6th, 2020

As I look out my window, we have been given yet another beautiful day with clear blue skies. Weather wise, this has to have been one of the nicest Regina summers ever. And it hasn't come at the expense of our farms and fields, as farmers are reporting a record crop.



Perhaps it is my imagination, but it seems that maybe with fewer cars on the road and planes in the sky, the air has also been fresher and the skies clearer.



I'm reminded of a message Ron P. shared with us on April 2nd. In the midst of the hardship, there is good news. It may not be much if you are finding these days difficult, but there are small

signs of God's grace. God continues to care for the creation which he called good. The reduction in pollution is something I'm grateful for. I'm trying to continue walking more and to make fewer trips.

You can look up Ron's video on our YouTube Channel. It is called "Reflection on Good News." There is a link to YouTube on the main page of our [website](#). While you are there, Pastor Richard is sharing a video, each week, about a spiritual discipline. Make sure to listen each week.

With love,

Pastor Joel

First Baptist Regina Re-Opening Plan

Beginning September 13th, First Baptist Regina will re-open its sanctuary for anyone who wishes to gather in person for worship. Details have been provided in a separate attachment. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with one of the board members or pastors or by emailing [the church](#) or leaving a message at (306) 359-1450.

Lebanon Update

Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM) has released a new video which provides an inspiring update on ministry in the aftermath of the Beirut explosion. It is narrated by Nabil Costa, head of the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD), and tells how the various organizations associated with the LSESD have been ministering to the many people injured, left homeless, or otherwise affected by the disaster.

[LSESD - Loving God, Loving our Neighbor](#)

Although the government's matching fund has ended, CBM is still receiving donations for emergency aid. Donations can be made online through the [CBM Website](#), by calling CBM at 905.821.3533, or by mailing a cheque to:

CBM
7185 Millcreek Dr
Mississauga ON L5N 5R4



Opportunities for Fall

New Series in Learning for Life: A Study of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans

Beginning this Sunday, September 13th, Annabel R. will facilitate a new online series in Learning for Life. The class will explore how Paul's epistle to the Romans focuses on his message to the followers in Rome, who are under the shadow of Caesar. Paul states that God's plan for the world has been revealed through Jesus, and his message demonstrates that God has been faithful to his covenant with Israel. For more information, please contact Annabel, or leave a message at the church at (306) 359-1450.

A Study of the Gospel of John

Pastor Richard will be leading a small group online that will look at the Gospel of John. This group will meet, via Zoom, on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 7 pm, and the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 10 am. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact [Pastor Richard](#).

Reading Through the Old Testament

Pastor Richard will also be facilitating an online Old Testament Reading Group, in which participants will read through the Old Testament chronologically. The group will be meeting weekly, via Zoom, at two different times: Sundays at 4 pm and Thursdays at 11 am. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact [Pastor Richard](#), and he will provide you with the reading schedule and Zoom link.

Renovaré

Pastor Richard's part time position with us allows him to continue to lead [Renovaré Canada](#). Here is a brief description, from Pastor Richard, of what this organization is all about:

What is Renovaré Canada? Renovaré Canada was founded and exists with the hope and intention to teach, model and inspire genuine Christian experience in Canada by way of the disciplines of the spiritual life. The seeds of renewal, which will bring change to our communities, culture, and country, reside in those of God's people who are being formed in the image of Christ (genuine Christian experience). The disciplines of the Christian life are a means of responding to the grace of God and partnering with the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about this much needed renewal in each of our lives, both individually and collectively. This is the heartbeat of Renovaré Canada.

Renovaré has an [Online Renewal Group](#) starting in September. This small group will focus on spiritual formation into Christlikeness. The core components will include daily devotional readings, supplemental readings on the spiritual life, online conversation via written posts, and live video chats. The group will meet on Monday evenings via Zoom. For more information, or for a schedule of meetings/readings, please contact [Pastor Richard](#), or leave a message at (306) 359-1450.

Also beginning in September, Pastor Richard is offering an online course through Renovaré, entitled [Wendell Berry: A Spirituality of Sustenance](#). Wendell Berry is a Christian author whose many writings include essays, fiction, and poetry. Class sessions will be on Thursday evenings. For more information, or for a course outline, please contact [Pastor Richard](#), or leave a message at (306) 359-1450.

What else is happening at First?

Morning Prayer

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

Children

Planning for fall programs is underway. Watch here for updates.

Youth

Pastor Chris to all Youth: “I am very excited for the youth group to be able to kick off our fall at [Mark and Cheryl J’s] farm next weekend. This is such a beautiful place to hang out and offers us a lot of options; horseback riding, hay wagon riding, space for wide games, etc. Please let me know if you have any questions and I hope that you can join us!”

The fall youth program kick-off will take place on September 12. For more information, please contact [Pastor Chris](#), or leave a message at (306) 359-1450.

Spiritual Disciplines Series: Celebration

Sometimes we can forget to celebrate – especially when life is difficult, times are hard, and God seems perhaps distant or silent. It may very well be that during these times in particular we need to remember to celebrate. Our God is a God who is faithful, just, loving and compassionate. This alone gives us something to celebrate. Within the context of the Old Testament, God’s people – who often found themselves in the wilderness – were called upon to celebrate regularly throughout the year in different festivals which celebrated the promises and provisions of God.

The Apostle Paul, in the New Testament, instructs us: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7). Rejoice, yes – have joy, in everything! There is a call in this passage which connects this celebratory lifestyle with a lack of concern or worry; in order to truly celebrate, to rejoice, we need to fix our eyes on something beyond the circumstances and cruelty of a broken and compromised world – we need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and lay hold of the promises of God. We need to celebrate God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Dallas Willard, in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, describes it this way: "We engage in celebration when we enjoy ourselves, our life, our world, *in conjunction with our faith* and confidence in God's greatness, beauty, and goodness." Or in the words of Richard Foster: "Celebration is not just an attitude but also something that we do. We laugh. We sing. We dance. We play. The psalmist described the joy-filled celebration of the people of God complete with timbrel and dance, with trumpet and lute and harp, with strings and pipe and loud clashing cymbals. In celebration we celebrate!" Perhaps more than a feeling or an attitude, especially during these troubling times, celebration for us will be an action, something we do.

So, I encourage you this week: Celebrate! Here are some ideas as to how you may do this:

- Make a joyful noise this week in song, lifting your voice to the Lord our God in celebration; this may be done alone or with another.
- If you like to dance, dance!
- Use your creativity or enjoy the creativity of others by engaging in art, theatre, music, fiction!
- Plan ways to celebrate key events on the church calendar such as Christmas and Easter.
- Celebrate with family and friends around birthdays, anniversaries, and special events like weddings or the birth of a child – make the most of these events.



My teachers told me I'd never amount to much because I procrastinate so much. I told them, "Just you wait!"

I went into a store to buy some books about turtles. "Hardbacks?" asked the shopkeeper. "Yes," I replied. "And they have little heads, too."

A man walks into a library and orders a hamburger. The librarian says, "This is a library." The man apologizes and whispers, "I'd like a hamburger, please."

Sentimentality and the Power of God

Pastor Joel's sermon from September 6, 2020

Deuteronomy 34

Prayer: Holy Spirit, we pray that you would bless the giving and the receiving of your Word. That you would accomplish your purpose in our lives, as we reflect on your Word to us. In your son's name we pray, Amen.

Thanks to the internet, there are just so many things you can find. There's almost nothing you can't search and then have access to from around the world, including obituaries. And, thanks to the internet, people are writing longer obituaries, they're recognizing that maybe they've got a bit of an audience, and so, there are some very unusual obituaries now being shared widely on the internet.

There was this one: "He was a generous man, giving away many of his possessions in the month before he died. He even left his car to twelve different friends. He was a ticket scalper and a broker, or, as he called it, a facilitator of supply and demand economics. If you are planning on attending the memorial service, let us know if you want to upgrade your seat for a small price.

Another read, "Claude, as he was called even by those who knew his name, lived such a boring life, that watching paint dry caused him anxiety. His accomplishments will be published at a later date, if any are discovered.

And then there was this very succinct notice, "Doug died."

These aren't what we expect from obituaries. If they're funny, it's because we expect obituaries and eulogies to focus on a person's positive traits and actions, and to omit anything that's negative, entirely.

In our scripture readings today were accounts that were like eulogies for Moses and for John the Baptist. Eulogies and obituaries expose the human struggle for life to matter. It's a struggle exacerbated these days by our secular age. Part of this struggle is determining what exactly a good life looks like.

Is a good life about having family and friends? Is it about virtue and character? Is it about having a strong faith? Is a good life made up of contributions to society and significant accomplishments? Is it all about good humour and personality? Being true to yourself – is that what matters? It can be all of those things.

We struggle for a good life against sin and death, which are our true enemies. They try to destroy our identity, our relationships, our accomplishments, and often they succeed. Our obituaries and eulogies reveal that, in our struggle for meaning, we sometimes turn to sentimentalities to cushion the blows that are dealt to us in life.

Sentimentality is a subtle dishonesty. We substitute honesty and facing the truth with warm feelings, sweet words of little depth, the fiction of ubiquitous happy endings, and we leave out unresolved unpleasanties. We ignore sins and we excuse or conceal bad behavior.

Moses longed to enter the promised land. He had given his whole life to leading his people out of Egypt to this place. All of his prayer, all of his work, all of his efforts. Sin destroyed that dream. Moses died on the top of a mountain, looking at the land that he would never be able to enter.

Sentimentality, at this moment, would have excused, minimized, glossed over Moses' sin. Moses himself tried to do this. Several times in Deuteronomy, he writes, "I entreated the Lord, saying, 'Lord, let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan.' But the Lord was angry with me on your account and he would not listen to me." But God, several times in Deuteronomy, responds: "You were the one responsible for this Moses."

Now consider this. It was a common practice to memorize these first five books of the Bible, including these passages. It was considered an essential habit to read these books of the Bible in the home and the synagogue in public and therefore daily, weekly, annually, Israel recited Moses' failures.

Well that's fun. Wouldn't that be fun if that was your life. If every year, you knew that the church was going to recite all of your sins and failures as a matter of course. An entire nation reciting Moses' failures. Evidently, God believed it was essential for a nation to rehearse and face its failures, its sin, and its evil. It was essential for an organization, an institution a nation to rehearse the sins of its leaders. There was no excusing it or covering over it.

Consider Israel's actions in the time of the exodus. Time and time again, God saved them. The people complained. They rebelled, "Let's go back to Egypt." God saved them. The people rebelled, they complained, "Let's go back to Egypt." Every single chapter, this is what happens.

Why didn't they minimize it when they wrote this book? Why didn't they explain it? Well, you have to understand the context of the time. Why didn't they justify it? This was the way everyone was behaving at the time. That is the sentimental approach.

What should our response be today? When people ask – or even demand – that, as Canadians, we re-read our history, when we re-examine the lives of our leaders. Contrast the ruthless honesty about Moses and Israel here, with the vague perceptions at least I have of the history of my country and the lives of my leaders. Perhaps we prefer a sentimental view of our leaders and our history because we suspect the truth might be unpleasant, if we went back and read not just a summary, but the actual documents from that time. And perhaps every nation, except the ancient Hebrew nation, has preferred a sentimental view of their history. One that lifts up the successes and the good things, and hides and conceals and downplays and justifies the atrocities.

But this isn't the final word, neither for the institution, the nation of Israel, nor for Moses. Failure and sin are not hidden in their faith, they're acknowledged. But God is faithful and loving. It was God who was alone with Moses in his final moments. It was God who prepared the grave and God himself who laid Moses in the ground. Can you imagine a higher honor given to any human being?

In the funerals in this church, I have seen something of this mix of honesty and the love of God. We have had several funerals where people who struggled in life, struggled to fit in, to belong, struggled to do the right thing, who failed and their failures were public and they were destructive, and yet the congregation appeared for their funeral. They were known, they were loved through the ups and downs of their lives, even though there was a great cost. And we were able to say at the funeral that we knew some of their flaws, and yet they were loved.

In Moses and John's final words, we see something else. But first of all, it was not them that was great, it was God. Who was it that parted the sea? Was it Moses or was it God? Who was it that defeated the Egyptian army? Who was it that brought bread down from heaven? Who was it that caused water to pour from a rock? These were the things that were great about Moses. And yet, they were truly God at work.

In John's words, when people came to him and said, "How can you stand this? You've been working hard your whole life. You've deprived yourself of all sorts of comforts, living in a desert, fasting, eating only honey and locusts. You've lived a life of purity. And now this other guy is taking away everyone from you. You are no longer getting all the attention."

And John puts it this way, "All I ever had, was given to me by God. And now, God is at work in this other way. Why should I be jealous or envious? God is still with me."

And something else. In Moses and John's final words, there is something else. The most powerful thing about their lives was that they knew God. It was what made sense of

everything else. And it makes sense that knowing God in the way that Moses and John knew God, would overshadow any accomplishments, any relationships they had.

Consider that if you were a friend, a lifelong close and personal friend to the Queen of England and to the royal family, that would probably end up being central in your eulogy and obituary. If the Queen called you every week and you holidayed together, I think it is safe to say that when people talk about you after your death, that that relationship is probably going to overshadow whatever hobbies you enjoyed, whatever your favorite foods were, or where you had worked.

If that's true of knowing and speaking with the Queen, then it makes sense that anyone who knows the creator of the universe, our creator, that that is going to overshadow everything else in their lives.

Everything that Moses had been through, and seen, and what is said about him: "Never has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses whom the Lord knew face to face." This is the final word on Moses' life.

Maybe we would want to say to Moses, "Aren't you angry that God didn't allow you into the land? How could you spend your last moments with the one person who denied you one of your dreams, the thing that's been driving you for decades? After everything you had done for God and for the people, how could you stand it that he brought up this one big failure.

And Moses replies something along these lines, "I knew the Lord. I spoke with him as a friend, face to face. God was with me in the end."

John the Baptist's final words are similar. People came to him, "Here you are at the end of your life, after everything you've done, after all of your hard work, now everyone is leaving you and going to this new person. You are being forgotten. Was it all for nothing?"

And John answers, "My greatest joy was getting to hear Jesus' voice." That was what everything was building up to. He uses the metaphor of a wedding. We're waiting for the moment when the groom appears. And when you see the groom, we've reached the purpose of the wedding. When he heard Jesus' voice, it was the fulfillment of all of his efforts and all of his life. It was joy to him.

And so I see this circle. If we know God, what we find is a real source of forgiveness, of healing, of comfort, of joy, and that allows us a freedom to be honest. To be honest about our disappointments. To be honest about our failures. To be honest about our sin. And out of that honesty, we are able to draw closer to God, and closer to one another. And,

drawing closer to God, we find peace, and joy, and forgiveness, and comfort, and healing, which allows us once again to be honest with one another and with God.

There is no need to, in a sentimental way, cover over, or make things seem better than they are. If we base our faith on sentimentalism, I am worried for us. I am worried that if we base our faith on everything working out, that we are going to be in for disappointment. That if we base our relationship with God on never sinning or never failing, on having no flaws, on being liked by everyone, that we are going to be in for disappointment. That if we base all of our faith on happy feelings, on looking good, our faith will end up vapid, impotent and we will be vulnerable.

Instead, we need something real, enduring, resilient. It is safe to say that with Covid, things are not going well, in general, in the world. It remains to be seen how long the perceived threat of the disease will last and what consequences there might be from all the restrictions that have been put in place – on our health, or on the debt, or on economic hardship that might be produced. So we need something real.

There is goodness – subjective and objective – that comes to us through Jesus. Subjectively, personally, privately, we know what it means to be able to turn in prayer to the Father through Jesus. We know what it's like to receive strength directly from God. We know the peace that can come from God when we share with God our fears and our longings. We know the comfort we receive from the love of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts. We know the relief of admitting sincerely and without excuse to God, the wrongs we've done and said. We know we will never be abandoned or forgotten.

Objectively, outwardly, corporately, we know we need more than just the feeling of God's presence. We need the real fact that, in history, Jesus Christ was born, that he lived, that he was crucified. That on the third day, he rose again from the dead. That he ascended into heaven and that one day he is returning. We need the outward, objective fact that our sins are forgiven. That we are being transformed and renewed, and that one day there will be the resurrection of our bodies.

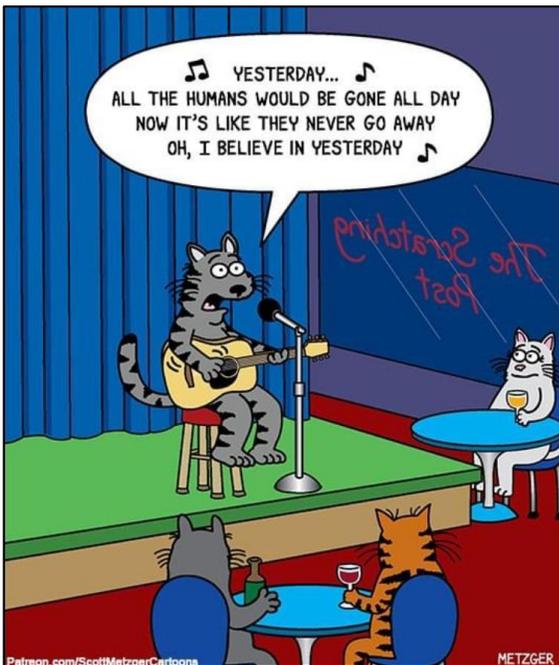
And we know how often, being a part of the church family, means that there is a place where we are loved as we are. We know there is a group that is always going to be there for us, if we let them. We know the joy, this morning, once again, of singing together. We have seen how the little that we contribute in a church becomes something so much greater when it's added to what everyone else is contributing.

We are a part of everyone's life and death. We are part of births and funerals. We are a mix of cultures and languages. We are young and old. We know the ineffable power of a baptism. The inexpressible life that comes to us when we partake as one, in the body and blood of Jesus.

I am saying all these very concrete things and tangible things that we have because our neighbors and our friends do not necessarily have these resources. And we do not know what is ahead in the coming months. We do not know what's going to happen with Covid this fall or this winter. We don't know what it's going to do to our economy. But we have all sorts of resources that we have experienced, concretely, in our lives. We don't need to offer people platitudes when we see that they're suffering. We have something real to offer them.

Does it mean it's all sunny ways as Christians? Is every day with Jesus better than the one before? No, no. Following Jesus is indeed a challenge, but none of us, and rarely is anyone called to face that challenge alone. We are meant to be part of a family of faith. And more than that, Jesus is there. That is what speaks the loudest from the eulogies of John and Moses. The Lord was at their side to the end. Amen.

Benediction: As you go, may you indeed be aware of Jesus at your side, leading you all the way. May the Holy Spirit indeed fill you and give you the things that you need for the challenges that come with each day. May the Holy Spirit indeed be with you and give you the words and the things to do to help the people around you recognize that God is present, that God is involved in their lives and moving all things towards a good end. And as you go, go with the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The peace of Christ be with you. Amen.



Q. Have you heard about corduroy pillows?

A. They're making headlines.

Q. How does a dog stop a video?

A. By hitting the paws button!

Q. What's the easiest way to get straight "A"s?

A. Use a ruler.

Q. What does the world's top dentist get?

A. A little plaque.

Q. What should you do if you're attacked by a group of clowns?

A. Go straight for the juggler.

Tithing during the pandemic

With the COVID-19 crisis limiting contact with others and restricting meetings of groups, please do not neglect the financial needs of our church.

We have several ways to provide your regular tithes and donations to the church:

1. Mail your gifts to the church or call and leave a message at (306) 359-1450 to arrange for an in-person pick-up. Please place your cheque in your regular offering envelope (or any envelope marked "Offering"), and seal that inside another envelope addressed to the church:

First Baptist Church
2241 Victoria Ave
Regina SK S4P 0S4

2. Establish a **Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) Plan**. This will automatically transfer funds from your account into the FBC Regina account on a regular basis. Please email the church or contact the Treasurer if you would like to set up PAR, or change your commitment.
3. Make an online donation:
 - Use **Interac e-Transfer** to donate from your phone or computer to FBCRegina@gmail.com (*no fee or cost to the church*)
 - Use a credit card with a PayPal account via the **PayPal Giving Fund** (*no fee or cost to the church... 100% of your donation reaches us and contributes to our mission*)
 - Use a credit card or PayPal via **CanadaHelps** (*a fee of 4% is deducted from the donation*)
 - Use a credit or debit card via **FBC ChurchTrac** (*the church is charged a fee of approximately 3% for each donation*)

PLEASE refer to our website at firstbaptistregina.ca for more specific information on these contribution methods. You may also contact the treasurer at (306) 775-1497 or email the church at main_fbcregina@sasktel.net for further details.