

First Baptist Regina Weekly News

For the Week of June 28th, 2020

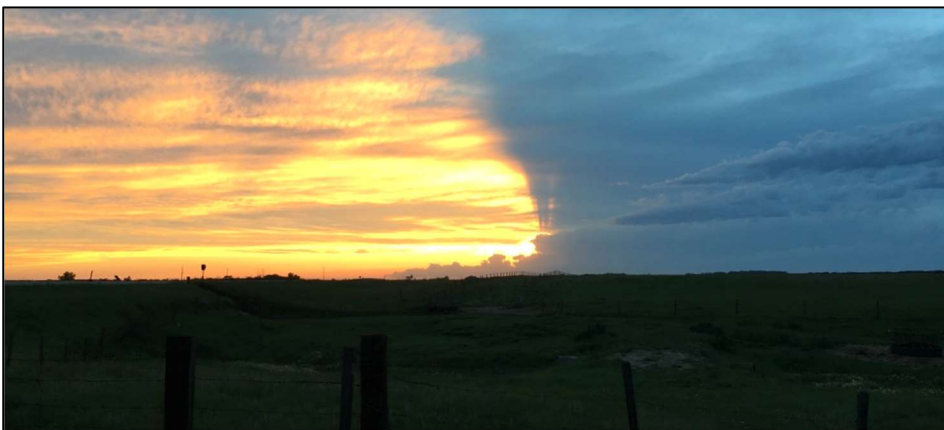
The Psalmist writes: “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork” (Psalm 19:1).

I very much enjoy the outdoors as it is a place I find myself to be close to God. When we used to live on the east coast we would go to different locations along the coast line as a family and enjoy hours just being beside the ocean. It was time spent with family and with God. The rhythmic tide would remind me of God’s consistency – regardless of what else may be happening in our lives.



I have grown to love and appreciate, as well, the vastness of the prairie sky. A band from a few years back, *Whiteheart*, performed a song titled “Montana Sky.” The lyrics, in part, state:

Gazing
From a lonely mountaintop,
Face to face with a sky that never stops -
Here,
Where an empty soul can turn
To look for the reasons,
The riddles of why.



If you’re a fan of nature to any degree, I hope that this week you will be able to find in the vastness and consistency of creation, the virtues and constancy of our God.

Pastor Richard

Who Are the People in Your Neighbourhood? Three Proposals for Summer

- Prayer walks. Many of us are walking more often. Make a point of walking through your neighbourhood praying as you go: for the people, the businesses, the parks. Prayer is listening as well. What is God saying to you about what you see?



- Photograph what you see. Take your camera with you sometimes. Look for a picture of the smaller details around you, something you had not noticed before: a detail on a building, artwork, a plant, or whatever catches your eye. Read on the next page how Dean G did this during the height of Regina's shut down.
- Neighbour interviews. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to at least three neighbours to speak with this summer. It could be that you know everyone, but try to find someone new. See what happens. Explain that your church is encouraging neighbourhood/ Covid-19 interviews. Ask if they have a few minutes to answer a few questions. Choose from these: 1. How long have they lived in the neighbourhood? 2. What do they like about it? 3. What is one concern they have with it? 4. How have the restrictions affected them? 5. Has anything good come of the changes? 6. What has been difficult? 7. Is there anything you can pray for in their life?

These exercises can help us to be more attentive to what is right in front of us. There is so much beauty, character, and individuality around us, all signs of God's ongoing creative presence in the world. These exercises also deepen our awareness that God has us living where we do for a reason.

Covid-19 has given us a unique opportunity to speak with our neighbours. First of all, with restrictions still in place, people are going to be around more than usual. Secondly, with the virus and the restrictions, we all have something in common now! Jesus said, "Love your neighbour". Jesus did expand "who is my neighbour" but that larger definition still includes your actual neighbour! If you find you have peace, joy, hope, and love through Jesus, know that many long to have a loving, hopeful person who will listen to them.

Trust the Spirit and who knows? Even if only a few of us are led to someone who opens up, that will be very meaningful.

Please share your pictures and stories with us. Call or email the church or Esther G, our newsletter editor, and let us know how it is going.

Phone: (306) 359-1450

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Pastor Joel

Dealing With the Shutdown—Creatively

Over the past three months, Dean G's friends on Facebook have been treated to a great series of pictures. With so many stuck indoors, Dean had a brilliant idea. He took photos of his neighbourhood while out on his regular walks. Each photo was a detail or a smaller object in roughly a 5 x 5 frame but there were a few wide shots. He posted them on Facebook and then asked people to guess where the object was found. If you are on Facebook, make a friend request with Dean, then go online and take a look.



“Lebanon Live” Fundraiser Results

Thank you to all who gave so generously to our annual Lebanon Partnership fundraiser over the past month. Our goal was to match our Missions budget of \$8,500, and the total raised as of June 30th is \$9,103! (It is never too late to give, so if you still wish to help, see a previous newsletter or the Lebanon link on our FBC website: firstbaptistregina.ca) The economic and political situation in Lebanon is dire, and our partners are extremely grateful for our ongoing prayer and financial support.

What's 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 at firstbaptistregina.ca for the link.

Children

The children are having a short break from meeting at this time.

Youth

Summer will see us reduce our gatherings but we will still plan to get together in smaller groups, or over Zoom, semi-regularly. Zoom has allowed us to be in contact, and will hopefully become a tool that we can continue to use both in the short and long term to stay connected and build relationships.

Gospel of Mark Small Group

In May we had a new small group get underway with two different meeting times: The 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 7pm and the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 10am. We are reading through the Gospel of Mark at about a chapter a week and meeting to discuss what we've read twice a month. This is not an in-depth study of Mark, but more a slow reading of Mark with informal discussion. We meet online via Zoom in light of the ongoing COVID situation. Our conversation, along with highlights from Mark's Gospel, includes visiting to get to know each other better and we also take some time to pray together. We invite you to join us! Contact Pastor Richard (richard.fbcregina@sasktel.net) and he will get you connected.

Spiritual Disciplines Series: Meditation

As we continue our journey through the disciplines which will help us in our reasoning of who God is and what this means for us, this week we turn to meditation or what is sometimes called contemplation. This is a practice which can help move our reasoning from our head to our heart. The Psalmist prays that not only the words of his mouth but also the meditations of his heart may be pleasing to God (Psalm 19:14).

On what things do you meditate? What grabs your attention beyond an intellectual level to the place of desire or longing? Can we approach God with more than an inquisitive mind and respond with more than stark obedience?

The practice of meditation or contemplation seeks to lead us to a deeper or more personal level of understanding; this discipline leads us to the desiring of God, the longing for his presence within the core of our being. A book written with this very thing in mind is *The Pursuit of God* by A. W. Tozer. In this classic book Tozer defines faith this way: "Faith is the gaze of a soul upon a saving God."

In meditation, what we are seeking to do is *behold the Lord*. In John 1:29, John the Baptist, upon seeing Jesus coming, said to his disciples, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." This word behold, in the Greek "ἰδε", means to perceive, discern, experience, or attend to. To behold the Lord is so much more than simply cognitively or intellectually recognizing that he is physically present; it is to attend to the reality of what this means – to experience this truth in the depths of our being.

Some practical ways to practice meditation:

- Pick a passage or verse to meditate on (perhaps Psalm 139); read the passage but then bring it back to memory throughout the day. What is this passage telling you about God, his presence, in your life today.

- Notice creation around you; see the trees on your street, notice the rain, see the flowers, watch the sunrise or sunset. *Behold* the wonder and beauty of nature and seek to perceive, experience its' wonder and ask what this means for you.
- Pay attention to others around you; simply put: notice people, listen to your conversations (what is being said, what could it mean?).

Meditation or contemplation is the continued pursuit of God once we have beheld him. A. W. Tozer, in *The Pursuit of God*, beautifully stated: "To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love." If you would like to take this further, one resource and practice I would recommend would be *The Ignatian Adventure* by Kevin O'Brien.



A pastor tells the story of a parishioner who volunteered to paint the church. He was given a considerable supply of good-quality paint and he decided to dilute it a little so that he could paint his barn as well.

Before dawn the day after he finished, it rained. He woke up to see the paint streaming off his barn. Horrified, he ran to the church. The paint job was ruined there too. He fell to his knees, looked up, and cried, "What shall I do?" A voice answered, "Repaint, and thin no more."

I have bad reflexes. I was once run over by a car being pushed by two guys. (Woody Allen)

Website

The COVID-19 crisis has impacted our church events and schedules in every way. The church website (firstbaptistregina.ca) is a valuable source of information that can be used to keep you connected and up to date with how our church leadership and pastors are responding.

We are currently holding Sunday worship and Learning for Life (L4L) via Zoom meeting. The links to these meetings can be found on the home/sermon page of our website. As well, there are bi-weekly small group meetings, and daily prayers that are utilizing Zoom.

You will also find links to our Facebook page and YouTube channel, where we are presenting video reflections and devotions by a number of our members and pastors.

“Boast in the Cross”

Pastor John Nelson’s sermon from June 28, 2020

Galatians 6:11-18

One of the highest crosses in the world is on top of the Chicago Temple. Some years ago a traffic jam occurred on the streets and sidewalks around the building. Thousands of busy people stopped and looked upward. There was a reason for the unusual interest. A man was doing repair work on the cross, high above the street. The cross itself was there every day. No one looked at it. But everyone became interested when there was a man on the cross. (Charles Crowe, Christian Clippings, March 1978, 23)

The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 6: 14 “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Who was this man called Paul?

Studying any of the epistles, you are awestruck with the impressive character of the Apostle Paul!

- Dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus, the greatest antagonist of the church becomes the Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary the church has ever known.
- His writings impacted the Word of God and the Christian church.

Paul’s life journey – God inspired

- He wrote 13 remarkable epistles (letters) that not only became part of the New Testament, but some believe his writings completed it.
- He left an imprint on Christian theology.
- He is considered to be the second most important person in the New Testament and possibly better known than Jesus because of his writings.
- His letters were responsible for spreading the Christian Faith.
- His letters are important because they are part of God’s inspired Word...God-breathed. Paul gave expression to his belief in scripture in 2 Timothy 3: “all scripture is God-breathed”, a term meaning “created by God.”

Why was Galatians written and to whom?

- Possibly written to a specific group of people, or the letter was written to the churches in southern Galatia (founded by Paul on his first missionary journey) and written for Christians everywhere.
- Written to refute the Judaizers (who taught that Gentile believers must obey the Jewish Law in order to be saved), and to call Christians to the pure gospel...faith and freedom.

What was the setting for the writing of Galatians?

- Controversy in the early church revolved around the relationship of new believers, particularly Gentiles, to the Jewish laws.

Freedom in Christ

When one reads the book of Galatians, it does not take long for one to realize that Paul's letter is all about freedom. Many theologians have declared this letter to be...a Charter of Freedom.

Paul is boldly stating that there is a reality before the Galatians and all people, and that reality is a Freedom found in Christ. This offers freedom from the law, from the power of sin, and it is a freedom to serve our living Lord and Savior.

However, with freedom, especially a chart of freedom, comes accountability and responsibility. We must be very careful not to abuse, misuse, or misinterpret it. Many times freedom can be seen as being gifted with a license to commit sin, vandalism, etc.. This is not being in touch with reality!

We see that the majority of the first converts and early church leaders were Jewish Christians. This group believed and proclaimed Jesus was their Messiah. The Jewish Christians struggled with what one could only describe as a feeling of being pulled in two different directions, or feeling as if they were living a "dual identity":

1. Their Jewishness which compelled them to follow the strict Jewish law;
2. Their newfound life in Christ, a conflicting belief that they should celebrate a new found freedom.

Paul was highly respected by the Galatians and they knew that he had been chosen by God to be His instrument in preaching and spreading the Good News. In no uncertain terms, Paul preached that the Good News was for ALL people, both Gentiles and Jews

alike. Paul refuted the Judaizers beliefs, emphasizing that a person's salvation was only attained by God's grace through faith in Christ alone and nothing less...nothing more. More succinctly, Paul was saying that if you had faith in Christ, then it meant you had true freedom.

In Galatians 6: 11, Paul writes, "see what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!" What did he use the word LARGE? There is the suspicion by many writers that Paul had poor eyesight, thus explaining why he says, "see what LARGE letters I use...". Furthermore, by taking pen in hand, Paul is stating that I, the Apostle Paul, am writing this letter to you. Up to this point many writers believe that Paul had likely dictated his letters to a scribe.

With pen in hand, his action emphasizes his message, enhances his writing and validates his message.

In this verse, Paul is writing his warm final personal greetings and expresses glory in the cross of Christ. He is proclaiming to the Galatians it is THE CROSS that makes us free.

In verse 12 we read that the Gentile converts were being pressured to have circumcision. Why? The Judaizers were a group of people who had great influence in the area. They were teaching the Gentile believers that they must obey the Jewish law in order to be saved.

In truth, the Judaizers were coercing the Gentiles into believing that circumcision was an absolute "must" to complete their conversions.

The Apostle Paul immediately confronts this abuse, seeing through the real motives of the Judiazers. The Judaizers wanted to have power over the Gentiles and saw them, as William Barclay expressed, as "trophies" to win over...to enslave.

***Historical Fact:**

Rome for many years had adopted a mind-set that had them tolerating Judaism, yet they ruthlessly persecuted the followers of Jesus. A dilemma evolved here for the Gentiles. If you became a Jew, Gentiles avoided being discriminated against...mistreated. However, if the Gentiles succumbed to this coercion to protect themselves, it meant misrepresenting the terms of salvation, giving credence to the circumcision pre-requisite, that was merely a glorified ritual to obtain salvation.

In verse 13 the Judaizers continue to apply pressure by saying that circumcision was also proof of holiness. Ironically, the Judaizers at the same time were conveniently ignoring the other Jewish laws.

Judiazers were false teachers or prophets coercing the Gentiles to submit to a “law” that they had chosen to apply pressure on the Gentiles, not as a means by which to create spiritual growth, but conveying that circumcision was rite of passage or pre-requisite, to becoming part of the church.

Seriously? Circumcision was necessary to be saved?

Paul saw through the Judaizers motives as a manipulation of the terms of salvation. What they were doing was glorifying in a ritual, a concept as a condition of God’s acceptance.

We see this in today’s society, where people will choose a specific principle, law, ritual, restriction, and make it a measure of faith. For example, drunkenness is strongly denounced while gluttony is ignored.

The Apostle Paul states boldly as to what we must do. We must look to the Bible as our rule of thumb...our rule of faith. Turning to the Bible offers us guidance and direction. We must not listen to false prophets and teachers. The Bible is our rule of both faith and practice and no one has the right to pick and choose the Biblical principles we believe in.

Renowned theologian, John Stott, said, “Outward forms are valueless if inward reality is lacking.”

Reality Lesson:

When you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, your new life is found IN CHRIST ALONE. That is reality! A wonderful motto that reflects this reality is, “Jesus plus nothing equals everything.”

Paul makes it very clear that God’s people is LARGER than the Jewish nation. There was no hesitation or question in Paul’s proclamation that it did not matter whether you were Jew or Gentile, for in the sight of God there was NO difference. What was of utmost importance was believing in, trusting in, having faith in a God who unconditionally loves all those who embrace His promises.

Your life and mine are bombarded on a daily basis by what I refer to as a “buffet culture”. What do I mean by this? We are confronted by tantalizing delights, not so subtle enticements, invitations, and temptations that create distractions and detours, cause the breaking of promises, and see us adopting questionable morals and values...all of which create barriers for our Christ-like life journey. Our world right now is filled with propaganda, the twisting of truths, a lack of facts, and in some cases, the rewriting of history.

How should we live our lives? Where should we look to? The Apostle Paul believed wholeheartedly in looking to the cross for direction and meaning for our lives. In Galatians 6: 14, Paul says, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Boast??? If one was to look to the original language, the word “boast” meant, “to rejoice in, to celebrate.” In Paul’s writing, one sees that he was not a supporter of what we might refer to today as performance-oriented Christianity. One writer calls it performance-based Christianity. One should note that Paul was not only a notable instrument of God, he was also an astonishing man of God who never bragged about personal talent or achievement. Even more important, he definitely rejected any ritual or pre-requisite as a means by which to gain salvation...acquire freedom in Christ. Once again, it was believing in Christ alone that brought you salvation.

If I were to ask each of you what your primary delight in life was, I am sure that we would hear a variety of interesting and unique responses. Would you be able to determine what the Apostle Paul’s primary delight was? Paul’s primary delight was in glorifying THE CROSS, a symbol that to the Romans was seen as ugly, crude, and an obscene object. They would not even utter the word, merely referring to it as “an unlucky tree.”

Paul was God’s instrument, spreading the GOOD NEWS and preaching boldly of the wondrous cross of his Lord Jesus Christ. He had no reservation in, and did not concern himself with the risks in, promoting THE CROSS. This was Paul’s primary delight, the glorious Cross of Christ, which he preached boldly as he spread the Good News.

How does one live a Christ-like life? Once again, we look to the Apostle Paul for guidance. Paul believed there were only two paths that one could travel:

1. Choose the path of glorification of one’s self;
2. Choose glorifying in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which path have you chosen?

If you have chosen the path of the cross, then when thinking of Jesus upon the cross, we should have a sense of being called to the path of remembrance, for without his cross there is no pardon and without his cross there is no salvation.

Choosing the right path will change everything in our life. Paul proclaimed that we are called to live a life where the world is crucified to us. We must bury the manipulated values and morals along with the broken promises of our world that create detours, create distractions...preventing us from walking worthy in the sight of God.

As we grow in Christ, we must not be concerned about how the world sees us, but understand as Paul stated in Galatians 2: 20, "I am crucified with Christ."

We must walk in the light of God's love and remember the freedom that Christ purchased for us on THE CROSS. When we do this, our lives are changed, transformed and we become a new creation. This does change everything and we then comprehend the wondrous reality that "Jesus plus nothing equals everything."

In this verse and previous ones, Paul has confronted the controversy and declares in no uncertain terms in verse 15, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation."

Remember, the purpose of writing Galatians was to refute the Judaizers, those who taught that Gentile believers must obey the Jewish law in order to be saved, and to call Christians to faith and freedom in Christ. Paul takes the Judaizers head on and boldly denounces this boasting, this glorification by saying that circumcision and uncircumcision do not matter. Instead, Paul emphatically proclaims that what is of most importance is the act of faith. This act of faith changes everything and brings alive a new life beyond our wildest imaginations.

The theologian, Ryker, expresses it this way: "When we embrace the new life offered, we no longer think as the world thinks; our priorities are transformed, our behavior changes, and we no longer take comfort in what the world has to offer."

We should always ask ourselves the question, what is the standard or foundation upon which we should live our lives? Paul tells us that we find the standard by which to live our lives in the wondrous, glorious cross of Christ. The Christ-life path you and I should choose is not bathed in the glorification of ourselves, but glorifying in the cross of Christ. Discovering this new freedom in Christ means that we are walking in the Light and walking worthy in the sight of God.

Our Christian journey "begins with the cross and everything ends with the cross." Do you view jewelry in the form of a cross as mere decoration? How we should see and experience it is as a declaration that we have found new life in Christ. "We cannot wear (bear) His image, without bearing His cross." One writer captures the true essence of the power of the cross, saying, "Jesus makes us Kosher."

As I was preparing for today's service, I recalled a duet that my mum and dad sang when I was a child, "For Me to live is Christ". The message of the song emphasized that it is the work of Christ, his suffering upon the cross on our behalf that has transformed us,

changed our lives, and given us freedom to live in Christ. Paul preached that the glorious and wondrous cross reflected this FREEDOM to live for Christ.

The Sanctuary choir has sung a particular Easter anthem called, “I Too Shall Live” The message of this anthem affirms Paul’s message: “I Too Shall Live! I too shall live. In the glory of the cross I too shall live.” The anthem’s message also conveys that living in Christ means that we understand there is only one thing that we can do, and that is to turn to Him in trust, in humility, in faith and receive Him as Lord of our life. Then we too can “boast” (rejoice, celebrate), knowing that there is no principle, law, or ritual that can improve our standing before the sight of God.

The act of faith, the cross, salvation changes everything and reveals to us a God who holds His arms wide open, accepting us as children of His kingdom, whom He loves unconditionally, and in whom He takes great delight. “To God be the glory, great things He hath done.”

The Apostle Paul was a “marked” man. “My marks and scars I carry with me to be my witness to Him who will now be my rewarder.” There are a numerous explanations for this comment, but I believe that we gain a clear understanding of what he meant from the words of the renowned theologian, William Barclay: “Most likely what Paul means is that the scars of the things he had suffered for Christ are the brands which show him to be Christ’s slave. In the end it is not his apostolic authority that he uses as a basis of appeal; it is the wounds he sustained for Christ’s sake.”

The Galatian people held immense respect for Paul’s suffering.

They knew that his marks, his scars were endured for the cross of Christ, for what he often referred to as “my pure Gospel”. People understood that Paul was a servant of God. Thus he was a “marked” man and was an instrument used of God to proclaim the Good News.

In verse 17 Paul makes this bold statement, “let no one make trouble for me”. He is emphatically proclaiming that no one should dare question his authority. Do not forget, Paul believed that he preached a divine message...God-breathed. Who would dare confront or question the Apostle Paul, knowing that he was an instrument used of God, preaching a divine message that was the Good News?

In conclusion, we understand that Paul’s Galatian letter proclaims the Freedom of the Christian and it is declared to be a CHARTER OF FREEDOM for Christians. Paul spelled this out in a large portion of the letter, especially when dealing with the controversy between the relationship with the Judaizers and the Galatians. Paul spoke boldly to correct the abuse of the Jewish laws, affirming that we do not need to convert to Judaism in order

to be Christians, for both Jew and Gentile were acceptable in the sight of God and we are FREE to live for Christ.

Yes, the God-breathed book of Galatians was written during a tumultuous time, yet Paul brings his letter to a wonderful, peaceful conclusion and benediction, just as he had begun his letter. One of Paul's last words is GRACE. "May the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen!"

Paul has therefore reminded the Galatians of the wondrous grace and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has boasted in the glory of the cross, conveying that without the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no pardon. Glorifying in the wondrous glory and love of the cross is everything and makes everything possible.

"Jesus + nothing = everything."

Remember the cross of Christ! "May I never boast EXCEPT in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6: 14)

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

(Canticle of the Cross" by Joseph Martin)

"The power of the cross is a pillar of truth to guide us."

The cross of Christ is a shield to overshadow us.

The cross of Christ is a tower of strength to protect us.

The cross of Christ goes before and behind us.

The cross of Christ is on our left and on our right.

The cross of Christ is within and about us.

How wonderful the cross of Christ!

It brings life, not death; light, not darkness.

It is the wood on which the Lord, like a great Warrior,
was wounded and died for the sin of the world.

A tree had destroyed us; a tree now brings us life.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL TO US!

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.

**Husband and I went
grocery shopping
with masks, got
home, took off
masks, brought
home wrong
husband! Stay alert
people!**

On a certain Canadian warship, the wheelhouse and the bridge were a deck apart. A voice pipe connected them. A freshman sailor was at the helm and a young sublieutenant on the bridge. Misunderstandings occurred frequently and once the sublieutenant called down demanding: "Who is the idiot at the end of this pipe?"

A mild voice returned from the wheelhouse: "Which end, sir?"

And then there's the pilot who has a surefire method of getting his passengers' attention. As his plane sits on the runway waiting to take off, the captain announces, "We'll go in a minute. Just getting up my nerve."