

One more thing. When ever I read a letter from Paul (or a student of Paul) what strikes me is the urgency to offer one - more - thing. Sentences that go on and on and on. The elaborate layering of adjectives. Imagery and metaphor and promise and praise in endless, breathless succession. And now I find myself in the position to say one. More. Thing. And I understand Paul a little better.

We have worked through quite a bit - and in a relatively short time - since I first occupied this pulpit. You have taught me about your history; you have given me access to your worst and best moments; you have trusted me and tested me, and I have been changed - for the better - by the experience.

We have cried and disagreed and celebrated and been changed. In your 140 year history as a congregation, this has been something you (and your ancestors in the faith) have done a lot...and with seventeen different people. The anxiety of working towards the discovery of your next minister of Word and Sacrament should be diminished by the knowledge that you have done this before, and done it well.

St John's is not just a point on the map of downtown Medicine Hat. St John's is a collection of individuals bound together by wisdom and energy, devotion and faithfulness, curiosity and conviction. You are more than the sum or your parts - and you have everything you need to find and encourage and welcome the next occupant of this office.

You have welcomed me - and challenged me - and comforted me - and changed me...and I can do no better on this day than to take a selection of Paul's letter to the Ephesians as my 'one more thing.'

Paul was writing to what I think might have been his favourite group of people. He has few harsh words for the folks in Ephesus - nor does he promise to return to 'straighten them out' as he does with others (the Corinthians, for example). He praises their devotion - he thanks God for them, and he blesses them in the work that he knows is really theirs, as he labours on somewhere else.

He reminds them of God's abundant grace - the thing that makes it possible for them to pursue the path of Christ - and he leaves them with several pages of good advice...about resisting temptation - about how to honour one another - about claiming the strength and power of God in every circumstance. And because This experience has been a blessing to me; because you made me consider and appreciate my vocation; because you have shown me -over and over again - the face of Christ...because I will miss you - I can do no better than quote Paul directly:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak. And I shall pray for you.

Peace be to the whole community - and love with faith - from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.