



LIFE NEWS

Good to be HOME

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by Nigel Unrau
Lead Pastor

It is so good to be home!

I can't say that I have ever felt more like Paul than I have in the last few months. Not the tremendous personal responsibility he bore as an Apostle to spread the gospel to the reaches of the Roman Empire. Not the urgency he experienced to plant churches wherever the gospel took root on his missionary journeys. But the heartfelt longing he had to be with those who he had loved in the Lord and shepherded in the faith? Yes, that's the feeling to which I can relate.

You can see Paul's affection for the church plastered all over his letters. We were in Thessalonians just before the start of my Sabbatical, and his words couldn't reflect my heart better. In **1 Thessalonians 2:8**, Paul writes, *"Having such a strong affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."* When Paul writes to the Corinthian church, he shares the personal and physical cost he has paid for being an apostle. However, he ranks his spiritual concern for his brothers and sisters above his physical suffering. *"Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches."*

Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?" (2 Cor 11:28-29)

I certainly wouldn't put anything I've experienced on par with those of the Apostle Paul, but my heart's desire and love for the church resonates with his. Over the last few months, the Lord has continued to cultivate in my heart a love for my Parkside family and affirm His calling. It has been a weird kind of experience this summer to have visited a church and come across churches online whose pastors are retiring. Some of them are older and, having served faithfully for years, are now moving on to other family priorities. Some are younger and are simply moving on to other opportunities. My Facebook and Google feeds are providing me with a steady supply of statistics and research on why pastors are leaving the ministry. So many have become worn out by internal church politics, secular politics dividing the church, the struggle to recover from COVID, unrealistic expectations, discord that stems from unforgiveness and pettiness, etc., etc. My heart goes out to all the pastors who are experiencing such tumultuous church settings and are reaching their breaking point. At the same time, my heart is filled with gratitude to God for giving us our

Parkside family: who you are and your determination to walk with Christ.

Are we perfect? Certainly not. But from my vantage point, we are a pretty special community of believers who are hoping and growing in Christ. Do we need to keep going and excelling in the perseverance of our faith? Do we need to press on toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus? Do we need to look for ways to express our love for God toward each other, being quick to forgive and encourage each other? Do we need to stand with each other in order to reject the temptations and idols of our world and sanctify Christ in our hearts completely? Yes! This is all part of the journey of faith that leads us closer to Christ, and I am so glad to travel together with you.

I'm so grateful for the leadership of the Elders over the last few months and their teaching on Sunday mornings. I am so thankful to be a part of a church family that holds the worship and Word of God in such high esteem. Your commitment to one another and devotion to God has more to do with the teaching of truth than the teacher. I can't tell you how much of a relief that is! I can't tell you how much joy, hope, and optimism that brings me. I can't tell you how good it is to be home.

Because of Jesus,

Pastor Nigel



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