

November 4, 2018
All Saints Sunday – “A Rich Heritage”
2 Timothy 1:1-14
Faye Reynolds

(slide 1)

Today has been set aside to learn more about your denomination – The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, but in Christian tradition today is known as All Saints Sunday, following November 1 which is All Saints Day. It is the day that the Christian church honours its heritage – all who have led the way to form this “Great Cloud of Witnesses” – the foundation that continues to support our faith today. Baptists are not great on remembering saints, but we do have a heritage that has formed us and continues to form - and inform our practices. We have loved ones that have set us on the path to faith and we remember those who have gone before. Would you take a moment and say out loud a few names of those who, by example have encouraged your faith today? We will say them all at the same time so there will be a great murmur of voices as we remember together. (Prayer)

This church has a heritage which comes out of our roots called The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada and the greater family of Canadian Baptists across the entire country. In a culture that highly values independence, we have lost touch with our Baptist cousins and metaphorically rarely think to visit the old homestead where it all began. This morning, I want to help reconnect you to our greater CBWC family and extend the invitation to join our next “family reunion”, The Gathering, which will be in High River next May. First, we have a video of our Executive Minister, Rob Ogilvie who will introduce you to the three priorities that are presently shaping the work of the CBWC.

(slide 2 – Video)

(slide 3) Let’s highlight these three priorities as we reflect on our Scripture passage from 2nd Timothy this morning. Read Scripture: 2 Timothy 1: 1 – 13

(slide 4) In our text today, Paul is writing to the young Timothy (timótheos - whose name means ‘honoring God’) Timothy was born of a Jewish mother and grandmother, and a Greek father and Paul commends Timothy’s upbringing to him as faithful and godly. But he also refers to Timothy as his “dear son”. This reminds us that we each have our biological families – some of which were hugely influential in our coming to faith and others perhaps not so much, but we also have our adopted family – those who have taken us under their wings and cared for us – you may have called out their names a few minutes ago. When I went to seminary there was a dear saint named Nell Young who prayed for me every day and wrote the occasional letter of encouragement. What a treasure that was to me!

Timothy traveled with Paul and Silas on their missionary journeys from around 52 – 64 AD until he was left in charge of the church of Ephesus, so Paul knew Timothy very well. There is a bit of

speculation about the personality of Timothy as a shy and perhaps somewhat nervous character. We read in at the end of Paul's first letter to Timothy that he should take a little wine to help settle his stomach. (Slide 5) And then in I Cor 16:10 we read: *When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am.*

Paul also tells Timothy not to let anyone criticism him for being young but to lead with strength and confidence, exhorting him that *God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.* From this we sense that perhaps Timothy was not a natural "take-charge" kind of leader and yet Paul put great confidence in his ability to lead the Ephesus church and encourages him in every way. Paul was truly a mentor to Timothy. This summary is found in Wikipedia: (Slide 6)

His relationship with Paul was close and Paul entrusted him with missions of great importance. Timothy's name appears as the co-author on [2 Corinthians](#), [Philippians](#), [Colossians](#), [1 Thessalonians](#), [2 Thessalonians](#), and [Philemon](#). Paul wrote to the Philippians about Timothy, "I have no one like him" ([Philippians 2:19–23](#)). When Paul was in prison and awaiting martyrdom, he summoned his faithful friend Timothy for a last farewell.^[9]

One of the priorities of the CBWC is cultivating the next generation of leaders. Faith Today magazine had an interesting article entitled: (Slide 7) "Renegotiating Faith in Young Adulthood" which summarizes a 150-page report of the same name done in Canada in partnership with Angus Reed, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Intervarsity Xn Fellowship, Power to Change and Youth for Christ. The study was spawned from the increasing anxiety over young adults leaving the church once they reach college age. The dropout rate is concerningly high! The study reveals many challenges facing youth as they enter a new non-parental community whether college, university or the workforce. But I was most drawn to the factors that buck the trend. I quote this from the article:

Outlined in the report are several issues facing young adults including delayed adulthood, social media influences and the popular all-religions-are-the-same world view. But the report's good news is that spiritual outcomes are significantly improved if (1) postsecondary students find a faith group within the first month of starting their postsecondary studies. (2) a mentor keeps in touch with them through the summer after high school and well into October of the next year, or (3) that mentor or someone else personally introduces them to a faith group in their new home and assists in negotiating a role in that group. . . Research shows youth who aren't mentored into Christian community during their first few months away at school are likely to find other community instead – and stick primarily with that for years . . .

(slide 8) Besides mentorship, the article also identifies Christian Camps as crucial for developing young leaders and giving them responsibility in a protected situation before they are fully ready to be leaders. The third key factor for youth maintaining their faith is attending a gap-year program such as YWAM, Capernwray or a year of Bible College. I was excited about this article because it affirmed that the CBWC is basically on the right track. We have hired Peter Anderson to come alongside the youth leaders of our denomination to help them be more intentional in leading and mentoring their youth. This church is fortunate to have Kyle Merkle as a full-time youth pastor, but Kyle needs us all to be intentionally engaged in mentoring the youth of our church. Is there anyone you feel called to walk with as they transition to college, or know of someone moving here from another city? Is there a way that

we as a church in a college town can be more intentional in connecting to first year students? That is something we could to be in prayer about.

Secondly Peter Anderson is to work with our camps and their leadership development programs to continue to define and grow their capacity for training up the next generation of leaders through our camping ministries. Thirdly Peter is to design a gap – year for our youth that flows out of their leadership training at the camps and incorporates a mission component with CBM, our mission network. When I was a young adult, our denomination had BLTS – The Baptist Leadership Training School – that helped myself and others here in our congregation transition into “post-parent” faith. We want to use available infrastructure such as the Gull Lake Camp for this one-year experience, but it will require an influx of funding from our supporting churches to launch this venture. So as Paul mentored Timothy and worked with him for 12 years to bring him into his eventual leadership of the church in Ephesus, we too much be more intentional in how we mentor young leaders and give them responsibility and opportunity to lead. Perhaps Timothy was not a natural leader with his timid spirit and nervous stomach, but Paul saw potential, walked along side and entrusted him with great responsibility.

(Slide 9) I have read of a church that was in steep decline and the leadership struggled to keep the doors open. Prayerfully they made a conscious decision to start identifying the potential leaders among the younger folk still in their congregation and began what they called “Three-deep” mentoring. Every person presently in leadership had to take a person under their wing to mentor and in turn encourage that person to also mentor someone younger than themselves. That included the pastor, elders, music leaders, teachers, etc – no one could be in ministry unless they were deliberately mentoring another into their role. That church is now over 2000 and has begun satellite churches with the same philosophy. The CBWC desires to cultivate the next generation and assisting us to do the same.

(Slide 10) The second priority of the CBWC is to invest highly into relationships. As we read the letters of Paul and particularly this letter to Timothy, we can’t help but be struck by the depth of relationship and love that is present. *“I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so I may be filled with joy!”* There is no mistaking the great affection Paul holds for Timothy and the invitation there to continue to fan his gifts and join Paul in proclaiming the gospel. It is not explicitly in this text, but there was great interconnection between the churches that Paul established. Timothy spent time in Corinth, in Miletus and Macedonia. We know that the diaspora churches took offerings to support the work in Jerusalem where the Christians suffered persecution and poverty. If the CBWC is only a resourcing agency for our churches, it will not have a long future.

((slide 11) One of the questions I hate to hear as I travel through our churches is, “Well, what does the denomination do for us?” That is not the language of relationship, it is the language of transaction. In this self-serve culture and age of Amazon, you do not need services or resources – everything is a click away for things like Sunday school curriculum, the latest church growth trends or outreach ideas. The services our CBWC office does offer are primarily relational. We have regional ministers that encourage our pastors and help navigate church conflicts or struggles. We hold the credentials of pastors and help with the ordination preparation of candidates – our own Anna Braun is in this process right now and we will have the honour and delight of ordaining her in this church. We ensure that pastors have good retirement plans and benefits and have opportunities for professional development. We have educational programs for pastors and lay leaders – Kyle and Troy are students of the Master of Divinity program at our Carey Center. Right after today’s service Stephen and I, Bruce and Marianne head to the Banff Pastor’s Conference. Yes, we offer services but that is not the answer to “What does the CBWC do

for us?” When you are part of a family, do you ever ask what Uncle Mervin and Aunt Terry ever did for us? Of course not - because their place is shared family identity whether you particularly appreciate them or not!

(slide 12) The CBWC is investing in a relational identity. There is a reason why this is a Baptist church and not a Presbyterian Church. There is a reason why it is not a North American Baptist or Southern Baptist. We have historic roots and values that form our identity within the greater Christian community that distinguish us. The CBWC is not a hierarchical structure but a volunteer association of churches with shared values of living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ equally in Word (Evangelism) and Deed (Social Justice or social responsibility and care). We are egalitarian in that **all** are called to serve out of their giftedness and calling, regardless of race or gender. We value joint overseas mission empowerment with sister churches across Canada. It would be great if we could better know the people who attend our sister churches in Pincher Creek, Claresholm, Medicine Hat, Nanton, Cranbrook and High River. We don't gather like we used to, although the pastors connect a few times a year. This is why I encourage you to come up to High River, May 23 – 25 to attend our Assembly – The Gathering. It is like a family reunion and a great opportunity to meet others of our CBWC family. This is also another important value of our camping ministry because our youth get to know one another from other churches; volunteers can meet at work days or serve on the board. I encourage you to not take this family for granted but try to get to know the broader connections that make up our unique identity in the Kingdom.

(slide 13) The third priority of the CBWC is Engaging in Mission, but in truth this is the over-riding value of why we exist, just as this defined the relationship of Paul and Timothy – the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In verse one, Paul gives his reason for being – “by the will of God for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus” – The promise of life and we remember that Jesus described it as “abundant life”. I believe that it is becoming crucial for the church today to remember what the gospel really is – what is the Good News and if we truly believe it is good news, is there a way to share that news more easily and freely. Next fall, the CBWC is going to offer resources to encourage our pastors to do a preaching series called “Why the Gospel is still Good News” for we all need to be challenged with that question. Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ Good News for my next-door neighbor? Is it still good news for our First nations community or a horrible reminder of our failure? Is it good news for the homeless and disadvantaged? These are questions we hope our churches will take on next fall and we will launch the information at The Gathering in High River.

(Slide 14) How does Paul define the Good News to Timothy? **(click) 1)** Timothy received a gift from God – the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. This gift infuses Timothy with strength, with love for others and with self-discipline. This is Good News for us all, for we are not limited by our own strength, our own self-discipline, our own feelings of like or dislike toward others. We do not need to rely on our own wisdom or experience, our own ability to love selflessly. When we open our lives to the spirit's leading, we become more than we are. This is fantastic news, better than any energy drink or stimulant on the market. **(click) 2)** Grace is the second amazingly good news! This is a word that we throw around so easily, but we fail to embrace its true significance, we fail to live out of its freedom and we fail to offer it to one another. Paul reminds Timothy that this grace has existed since the beginning of time – it is the very heart of God as revealed in Jesus. We do not have to earn approval, prove ourselves worthy of love, make our own way in this world. Do you know how many people long to be set free from earning another's approval????? Everything is marketed toward us in advertising and media that if we do this, wear this, use this makeup, drive this car, make this money – then we will be acceptable and approved of!!! Oh, how our world does not understand grace and what a gift we have to

share. You are enough! (Click 3) Thirdly Paul reminds Timothy of the Good News that Death has been destroyed! This is hard to grasp since we know that we will physically die, and we do not look forward to it. Many will die too young, too painfully, too tragically so death has not been eradicated from our earthly existence. Paul reminds Timothy that there is pain and suffering that accompanies the Good News – which sounds very counter-intuitive! What is the good news here? Perhaps it is that Jesus has destroyed the fear of death. In Christ, we need not fear the unknown and death is the ultimate unknown. Who knows what happens beyond the grave? No one – but we are not to fear. Yes, in this life, there is sadness and loss – we deeply grieve our departed loved ones, and perhaps even more, those who are physically suffering now, but even in this there is light and hope. I believe that the Good news is a banishment of fear through the gift of light. For light erases darkness – erases the unknown and that light is the resurrection of Jesus – the best news of all.

(Slide 15) This passage of Scripture is rich as a model of how we live and work together as brothers and sisters in Christ. We encourage one another by reminding each other of the Spirit that is at work within us; we urge on one another to live into the Good News and live for the Good News of our gracious acceptance of God that we are “enough” and we extend that grace and live graciously toward one another. We embrace each other, not for what they can do for us, but because together we have an identity in Christ and together we have a calling to fulfill. The CBWC is not an institution – this church is not an institution. Institutions exist to keep on existing and become very self-protective. Prayerfully, that is not what we are, but rather we are a grace-filled community that embraces life as good and abundant and fearlessly looks outward to invite others into this good news. And I pray that we will embrace these three priorities as part of the CBWC family as we cultivate the next generation of leaders through the richness of relationship into the Mission to which God has called us.