



Rev. Geoff Ross

Geoff's Journal

April 2017

Minister's Message: "XX"

As hard as it is for me to believe, this month marks the 20th anniversary of my ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. Twenty years! With weddings, funerals, and additional services around Christmas and Easter, that's over 1,000 services; and about that many sermons! (Insert your own comment here - be kind, though.)

Growing up I always enjoyed going to visit my mother's parents in Brantford, Ontario. I was born there just prior to my parent's going off to Nigeria as missionaries for the Presbyterian Church in Canada, so I always thought of it as home. What I loved about my grandparent's house was how big and comfortable it was - especially the addition that my father designed that provided room for my Grandfather's study and the 'den,' with its fireplace. Named after my Grandfather I gravitated to his desk, to his chair, to his books and photographs - even more so after he died when I was 14.

The one thing that captured my imagination more than anything else, though, was the oak chest with the metal brackets and lock on it that sat behind my Grandfather's chair and desk; it looked like a treasure chest - only bigger. It wasn't until I was older - now into university, doing a course in Canadian history (specifically, Canada's role in WWII) - that I found out what that chest held: my Grandfather's sermons. There, in neat manila 5 by 9 envelopes, labeled in pencil with the date, were his sermons from his ministry at Central Presbyterian Church in Brantford - a ministry that spanned over 40 years. There were too many envelopes to count!

I was doing research on my Grandfather who served as a military chaplain during WWII and was overseas from November 1939 to May 1945. While the sermons in the chest didn't date back to the war, his war diaries were also kept in the chest. I remember running my hands over the rows of envelopes, picking 1 or 2 from the tightly packed rows and, reading the date, opening up the envelope and finding 2-3 neatly folded sheets of paper lined with words, handwritten in pencil; almost too illegible to read. Regardless, I also remember being so amazed at the body of work - all those envelopes, all those sermons - and thinking that this was who he was; these were his words, thoughts; his faith, hopes; his messages to generations of faithful people at Central. I am still amazed at that thought of that chest.

When I first found those sermons I wasn't thinking about becoming a minister but I was in awe of the life my Grandfather lived; I had always thought that if I were able to do half of what he accomplished in life, I would be satisfied. Marking 20 years of my ministry is sobering; I know what I have done and not done, I am aware of my abilities and failings, and I have been humbled by the task. By no means do I feel that I have accomplished 'half as much' as my Grandfather but God willing, I am looking forward to beginning the next 'half,' and to serving God by serving His Church here at St. Andrew's, Brampton.