

"On Mission Together"

Saskatchewan Conference of MB Churches

Director's Calendar

December

26-29 – Post Christmas Break

January 2024

7 – Northwest Community Church
(Meadow Lake)

14 – Blaine Lake Gospel Chapel

21 – Faith River Fellowship
(Saskatoon)

21 – Carmel Pentecostal Church
(Saskatoon)

28 – Gateway Community Church
(Canora)

February

4 – Riverhurst Community Church

11 – Woodrow Gospel Chapel

18 – Christian Fellowship Church
(Lucky Lake)

***Please pray for traveling
mercies.***

Christmas Lights



You're not alone if you have ever wondered why we put Christmas lights up every year. I asked that question last year and discovered some interesting behind the tradition. For instance, it became popular in North America in the mid-1800s when

Mark Carr opened the first

Christmas tree retail operation, cutting down trees and selling them at New York City's Washington Market.

During that time, there were no electric Christmas lights, but people lit their Christmas trees (sometimes literally) with candles. This fire hazard was such a reality that there were well-known rules around having them on your Christmas tree: only having them lit for 30 minutes and always having a bucket of water nearby for when your Christmas tree catches on fire. Christmas tree fires were so common that insurance companies stopped covering house fires resulting from candles on the Christmas tree. Thankfully, in 1882, Christmas lights were invented.

Every year, as we go full Clark Griswold lighting up our house and tree, our Christmas lights proclaim a fantastic truth about what Christmas means for our world: light shining into the darkness. Isaiah 9, one of the more famous Christmas passages in the Bible, starts with hope; Isaiah says in Isaiah 9:2. "The people who walked in darkness, have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them has a light shone."

This Christmas truth is something our culture longs for. Tim Keller once mentioned that our culture celebrates Christmas, unlike any other Christian tradition. People don't celebrate Easter or Good Friday like we celebrate Christmas. Why is this? Because we long for the hope and peace of Christmas. The message of Christmas connects to the deepest longings we experience as humans, yet our culture struggles to connect the dots between the message of Christmas and how we can experience the hope of Christmas.

This Christmas, I want to encourage you to help people see the good news of Christmas. You might be thinking, "Isn't the good news

of Christmas obvious?" Yes and no. People might understand that the good news is Jesus; they have heard enough Christmas songs or remember a Sunday school lesson from childhood to know that answer. But they don't see why he is good news, and this is because they don't understand the bad news of Christmas.

Paul Tripp puts it this way, *"Jesus's birth is both the worst and the best news ever, and understanding both will change your life forever."* For people to see the hope of Christmas, the good news of Christmas for our world and us, we have to connect it to the darkness of our world. Good news is only good when we understand we need good news. As we connect these dots, we help people understand how they can

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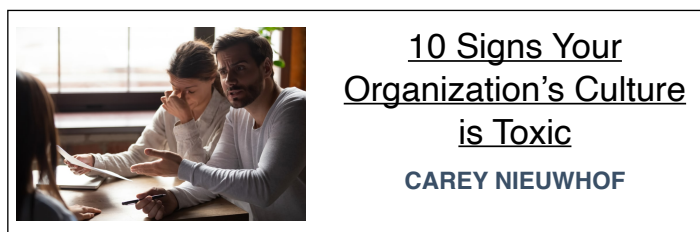
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experience the hope of Jesus, the joy of Jesus, and the peace of Jesus this Christmas.

SKMB, Merry Christmas! I am praying that as you celebrate the Saviour's birth this Christmas season, you are left in awe and wonder that *"in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."*

Tripp, Paul David. *Come, Let Us Adore Him: A Daily Advent Devotional* (p. 30). Crossway. Kindle Edition.



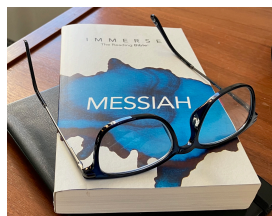
10 Signs Your Organization's Culture is Toxic

CAREY NIEUWHOF

IMMERSEd in the Bible

... and we found we could swim!

Rod Schellenberg, Lead Pastor, Hepburn MB Church



When a whole movie theatre erupts in laughter, it's somehow more fun than when you laugh out loud at that video on your phone—all alone, with your earbuds in, sitting in Starbucks.

Reading the Bible with others—the same parts at the same time—can shift our experience of Scripture from “phone+earbuds” to movie theatre. At least that was what we at Hepburn MB Church discovered when we took on the challenge of *IMMERSE: Messiah* earlier this year.

What is “IMMERSE”?

A pastoral colleague introduced me to IMMERSE: the Bible Reading Experience™ a couple of years ago. A collaborative venture between Tyndale Press (publishers of the New Living

Translation (NLT) and the Institute for Bible Reading, it's a repackaging of the NLT Bible into 6 paperback volumes, formatted in a way that makes for easy reading. For example, there are no chapters/verses, no headings and no footnotes. It feels more like that novel or biography you recently finished. Individual books are grouped together with similar writings, and each comes with a simple, helpful introduction. Each volume comes with a 8- (or 16-) week reading plan, forcing you to dive right in and get reading at length. The intent is that readers meet weekly with others, not for in-depth study, but for discussion similar to what you might experience in a book club. All 6 volumes are also available as a free audio Bible if you'd rather listen than pick up a book. There's also a free family devotional that tracks with the reading plan.

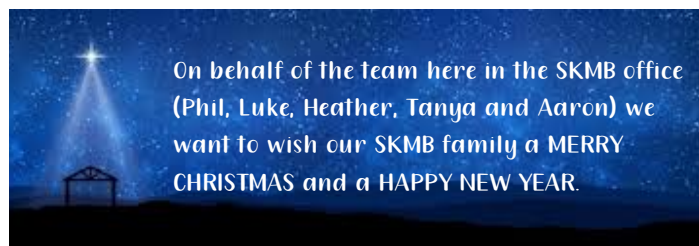
Hepburn MB's Experience

We decided to keep it easy and start with the New Testament (volume 6, called *Messiah*). I knew we had some people in our church who liked to read, but reading through the New Testament in 8 weeks is still a challenge. So when I threw out the idea, I figured maybe 15 or 20 would sign up. Boy, was I surprised! When we went to put in our order, we almost broke the system: 72 copies. How fun to think that almost a hundred of us, of all ages from Jr High to retired would be taking on this challenge together!

Over the next 8+ weeks, I often heard comments along these lines: “Reading quickly is sure different! Things are fitting together for me.” For others, their reading brought new questions: “Why did Paul say...?” People enjoyed meeting with others, learning through others' experience with Jesus through the words of the Bible. When we were all done, I asked people to share their joys and challenges.

Did *IMMERSE: Messiah* “revolutionize” our church community? I shy away from such pronouncements, but to think of so many people together diving deep into God's word—well, when the Holy Spirit is involved, that's *gotta* do something!

If you want to learn more for your church, check out: immersebible.com.



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