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## The Race That Is Set Before Us

Scott McAndless

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

I have been running all summer, and I intend to keep doing a lot of running through the fall. That is because I have signed up to run in the *Toronto Waterfront Marathon* this coming October 18.

I will be running the half marathon (21 km) and I would like to be able to run it in bit less than two hours. I have set this goal for a few reasons. I want to do it to support a healthy lifestyle for myself, I want to challenge myself and I want to experience being part of such an event.

So I have been thinking about training for running a great deal.

I keep returning to that verse from Hebrews, which teaches us that the Christian life is like preparing to run a race. And so I'd like to highlight a few thoughts from that verse that I believe have a lot to say to our congregation as we move into the fall of 2026.

First, the writer notes that we run "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses." He is referring to the great heroes of the faith that he has been speaking about in the previous chapter, saying that we live out our Christian lives in the shadow of those who have gone before.

As we enter into the fall of this year, our congregation is aware of another great cloud of witness – of all of those faithful souls who went before us in the long history of two congregations. We are living in the shadow of their

legacy and are trying to do our best to use the spiritual and material assets that they have left to us. This is absolutely something that helps us to move forward with

commitment.

Another thing that runners need to do as they prepare to race is to think carefully about anything that encumbers

them. Poor equipment – especially anything that weighs you down – will negatively impact your performance. And so the Letter to the Hebrews encourages us to "lay aside every weight and the sin that clings."

If we are going to continue to run well as a congregation into this coming year, there are also some things that we will need to lay aside. As the church enters into a time of great change, we may need to let go of many of our "we've always done it that way" attitudes. Some people may need to let go of control in order to allow new people to step forward and take on leadership for the future.

But the number one piece of runners advice this passage offers us is this: "let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

Perseverance is the only thing that gets a runner to the end of a long-distance race. And perseverance is the only thing that will help our congregation to become what it needs to be. This verse offers us the key to such perseverance. We can find the strength within ourselves to keep going by keeping our eyes fixed on our goal.



And what is our goal? Is it money or power? Is it to be measured in numbers. No, the goal of the Christian life is found in the person of Jesus. It is only as we seek to live into the image of Christ, to take his example and his priorities, that we will discover our new purpose.

We will have many opportunities to train ourselves for the race that lies before us this fall. You'll read about many of these things in the newsletter that lies before you now. We will have the chance to renew our sense of purpose, vision and identity. So, whether you plan to run in a marathon or not, I hope you are ready for the race that lies before us.



When we went into our amalgamation over 20 months ago, one of the tasks we set for ourselves was to come up with a long-term plan for our property in Preston. While we do want to build and maintain a Presbyterian presence in the town, we have always recognized that we do not need to maintain the existing physical plant as it is to do so.

Knowing that repurposing church properties can be a very complex and difficult process, this past spring some representatives of session entered into serious discussions with some people in the Stewardship department in the national church offices.

The people we spoke to were quite impressed with the story of our amalgamation. They felt as if we were in a very strong position to make some really good long-term plans.

Their recommendation for the best way to approach this was to enroll in what is called the New Beginnings program. This program would not only provide us with expert evaluation of the needs of the community and our assets and with experienced coaching, but it would also open up the possibility of grants that would allow us to do things like feasibility studies on uses for our properties.

As the session discussed this recommendation, we felt as if this would be very helpful, not only to create that long-term plan for our real estate, but also to build a very firm foundation for our ministry in general in the years to come.

Session agreed to apply to the program and also to apply for a grant that would cover 90% of the cost. We have recently learned that we have been accepted into the program and have received the grant. So now we are just waiting to be contacted for scheduling and to get started.

We are very excited about this possibility, and are just learning what the next steps will be. But it seems clear that participating in New Beginnings is a very important part of us preparing to run this race that lies before us.



**132 Argyle St. N.  
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## Membership Classes

By Scott McAndless

Things seem to have been very busy over the last few years and one thing we have not managed to do is hold membership classes. We are aware that a number of people have come to our church (apart from through the amalgamation process) and we have not provided them with an opportunity to learn some of the basic things about being part of our congregation. And so, we are feeling as if it is time to do something about that.

This is an open invitation to anyone who is interesting in a basic introduction to the Christian faith and the Presbyterian practice of it. We are imagining a class that might take place on a Saturday morning or afternoon, but we can be flexible on the day and time based on who may be interested.

At the end of the class, you will be given the opportunity to make a profession of faith and claim the rights and responsibilities of being a member of the congregation. That final step is totally up to you.

If you are interested in such a learning opportunity, please speak to the Minister or to Joni Smith and we will try to find a day and time that works for everyone.

## Presbytery Visitation

By Scott McAndless

When the Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington approved our amalgamation, it made a commitment to arrange a Presbytery visitation in order to check in on how we are adapting to our new amalgamated life. They agreed that such a visit should take place by the end of 2026. For that reason, the Presbytery has now designated a team including Rev. Dr. Frank Szatmari, Ann Wilson and John Hake to visit our congregation this fall.

The team will be contacting soon to arrange the best day and time for everyone involved. Everyone will be invited to participate.

So maybe start to think about what we can share about our life together with the larger church. How can the Presbytery assist us? What triumphs, challenges and stories can we share to encourage and challenge others? We will give you further details about the visitation as soon as we have them.

## Election of Elders

By Scott McAndless

When Knox Preston and St. Andrew's Hespeler came together to form a new congregation, we merged the two sessions. The amalgamated session has appreciated being able to work together and get to know one another ever since. But we also agreed at that time that we should hold an election of elders near the end of 2026.

Session is planning to hold that election, but would like to complete both the membership classes and the Presbytery visitation first. So we do expect to put out the details and the procedure for that election to all of you soon.

In the meantime we would encourage everyone to prayerfully consider who you would choose for this vital roll in the life of the church.

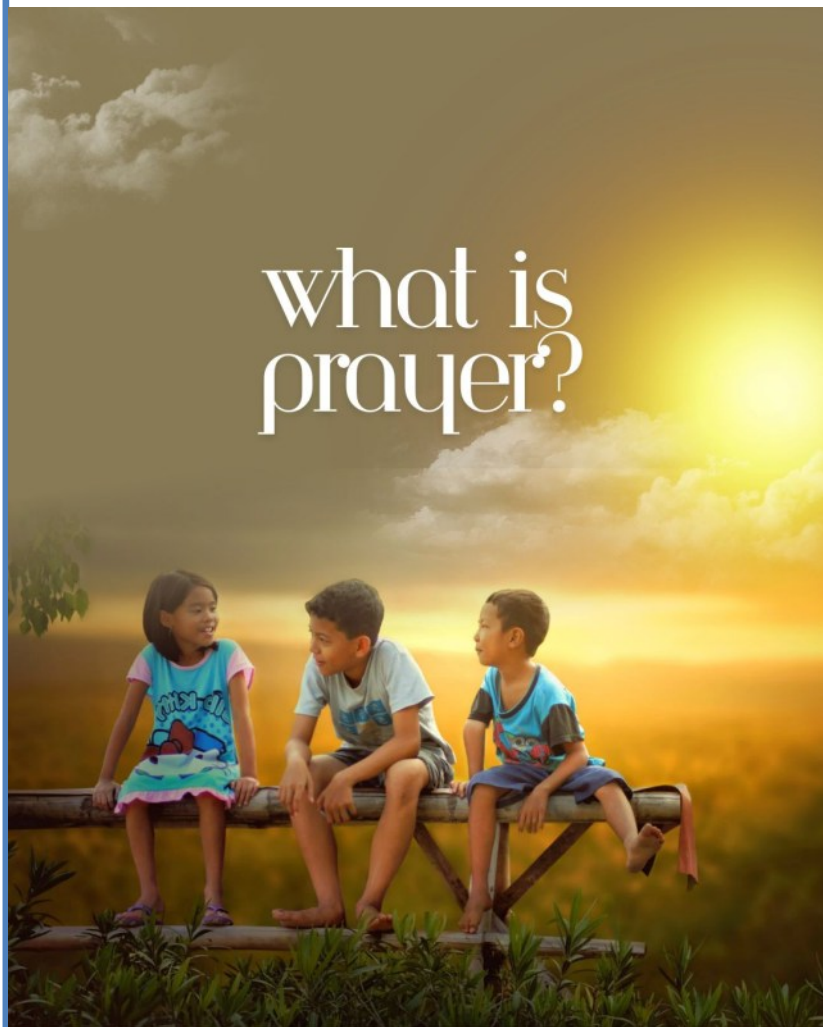
There are many things that make good Elders. Among other things, they should be:

- of good character and examples in their "speech, conduct, love, faith and purity."
- able to see the "big picture" of life in the church.
- good at discerning the character of other people
- understands systems and how they work.
- trustworthy and able to hold confidences.

## News from Sunday School

By Joni Smith

Throughout the year we will be taking time to learn about prayer, what it is, why it is important. And we will work on learning the Lord's Prayer together with the congregation.



Prayer for children is the practice of helping kids communicate with God, teaching them that prayer is a conversation rather than a formal ritual. Even very young children can grasp the concept of talking to God, much like they talk to friends or family. This helps them build a personal relationship with God, understand His presence in their lives, and develop habits of gratitude, trust, and reflection.

Teaching children to pray introduces them to a lifelong spiritual practice. Prayer helps children cope with challenges, express emotions, and seek guidance or protection. It also encourages mindfulness, empathy, and moral development. Biblical examples, such as David's Psalms or Hannah's prayers, show children that prayer can be used to ask for help, give thanks, and praise God.

Regular prayer can also provide comfort and reduce anxiety, as children learn to share their worries with God.

## An Outreach Message

By Joni Smith

As we head into cooler weather and more uncertain times we are seeing more people needing to reach out for some help from our Food Bank off-site location, St. Andrew's Pantry and Hope Clothing.

What is needed most? (we asked the people who come to Food Bank and Hope Clothing)

- Warm clothing, waterproof mittens, warm socks, good gently used boots
- Healthy school snacks: apple sauce and fruit cups, cheese strings
- Soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toilet paper
- Canned food that has flip top openings for those who live off-grid and disposable cutlery
- And while not a necessity, coffee is a much appreciated treat!

Please consider adding an extra item to your shopping cart the next time you are shopping.

We have a bin just outside the office door to collect items.



# Run Scott, Run!

This year Rev. Scott has challenged himself to run the half marathon (21 km) at the Toronto Waterfront Marathon on **Sunday, October 18, 2026**



Scott will be accepting pledges for his run. A pledge sheet will be at the back of the sanctuary soon. All pledges will be donated to St. Andrew's General Fund.





*St. Andrew's Hespeler*

# *Dream Auction*

*Live & Silent Auctions*

*Saturday, November 7, 2026*

*Viewing, Silent Auction & Desserts start at 7:00 pm*

*Live Auction starts at 7:30 pm*

St. Andrew's Hespeler Presbyterian Church  
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Everyone is welcome!

| Date         | Place        | Time          | Event                                                    |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun. Sept 27 | 73 Queen St. | Approx. 11 am | Fire drill!                                              |
| Wed Sept 30  | Canada       | All Day       | National Day for Truth and Reconciliation                |
| Sun. Oct 4   | 73 Queen St. | 10 am         | World Communion Sunday                                   |
| Sun. Oct 11  | 73 Queen St. | 10 am         | Harvest Thanksgiving                                     |
| Sun. Oct 18  | Toronto      | 8 am          | Toronto Waterfront Marathon (Steve Marsh Guest Preacher) |
| Sat. Nov 7   | 73 Queen St. | 7 pm          | Dream Auction                                            |
| Sun. Nov 8   | 73 Queen St. | 10 am         | Remembrance Sunday with guests from the Hespeler Legion  |
| Sun. Nov 29  | 73 Queen St  | 10 am         | First Sunday of Advent                                   |
| Sun. Dec 6   | 73 Queen St. | 10 am         | Communion Sunday                                         |
| Sun Dec 13   | 73 Queen St. | 10 am         | Family Christmas Sunday                                  |
| Mon Dec 21   | 73 Queen St. | 7:30 pm       | Longest Night Service                                    |
| Thurs Dec 24 | 73 Queen St. | 7:30 pm       | Christmas Eve Service                                    |

## National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

September 30<sup>th</sup> is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also called Orange Shirt Day. It is a national day of memory for the generations of Indigenous children taken to residential schools: for people who are Survivors, intergenerational Survivors, their families and communities, and for the children who never made it home from the schools.

Orange Shirt Day was begun by Phyllis Webstad, a Survivor who at age six had entered the St. Joseph Mission Residential School in B.C wearing a beloved orange shirt, only to have it taken away and replaced with the institution's uniform. The loss of the orange shirt became symbolic of all that was taken from children at the schools – language, culture, family and community relationships, spiritual practices, safety, security, identity and sometimes even their lives.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran 12 residential schools. In the church's apology we make five fundamental commitments, including listening to and learning from Indigenous people and telling the truth about the past. One way congregations support these commitments is by publicly marking September 30.

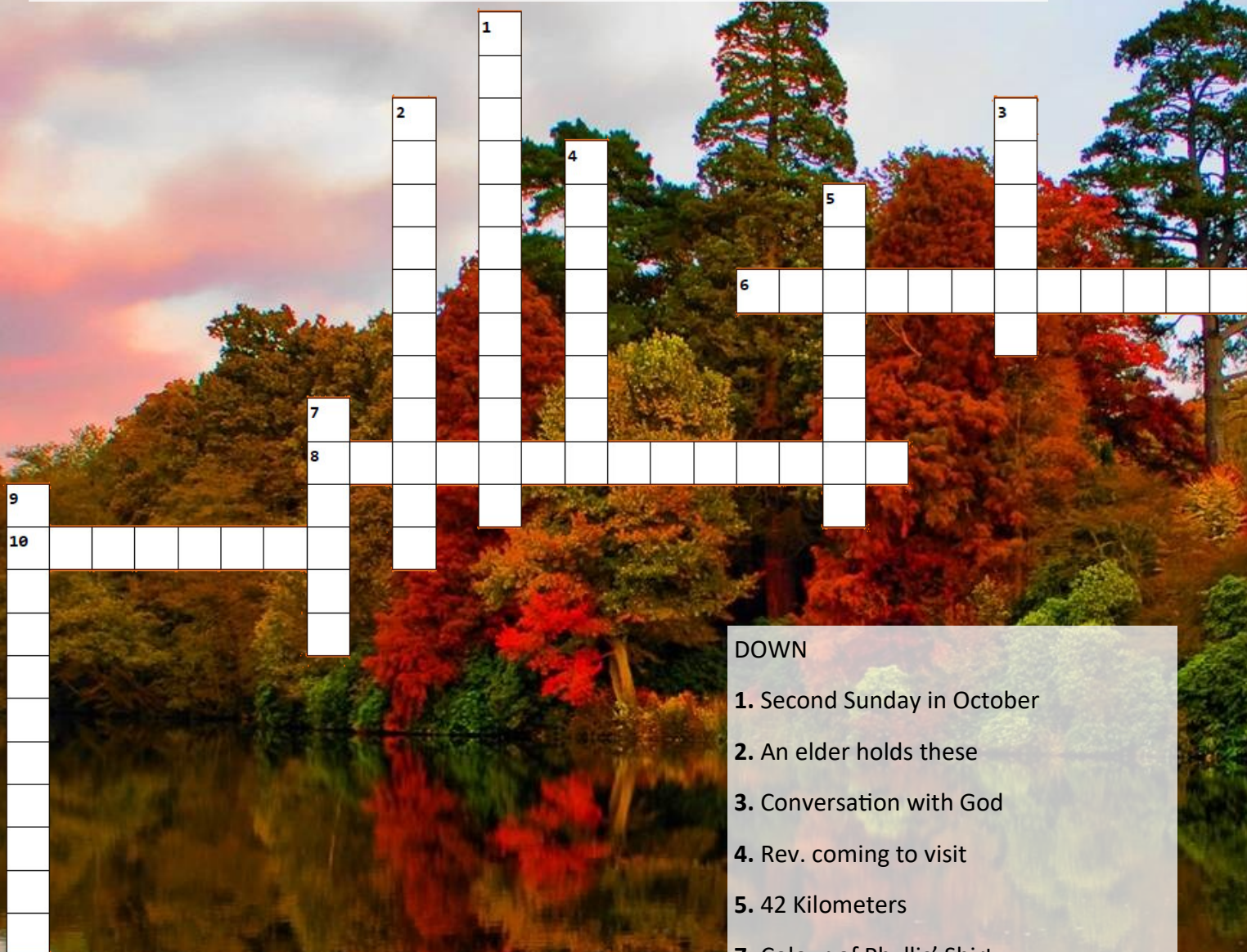
Consider wearing orange clothing on that day as a symbol of your solidarity with survivors and take this opportunity to learn more about this difficult history.



Olive trees are ancient symbols of peace and a basic source of livelihood and nutrition across the Mediterranean Basin. Palestinian farmers have seen their trees—some thousands of years old—uprooted from their own land, burned and destroyed, depriving them of their income and traditional way of life. The PCC donations for the Olive Tree Campaign provide funds to support farmers suffering from Israeli policies that put their land and property under the threat of confiscation. Sponsored olive trees get planted in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip areas where olive trees have been uprooted and destroyed by the Israelis, or where fields are threatened to be confiscated by the Israeli military occupation, or where parts of the Israeli apartheid wall and settlements are constructed on part of the land.

## The Back Page

Well, you have now read through this entire newsletter. Now let's see how much of it you remember. Can you fill out this whole crossword puzzle without looking back?



### DOWN

1. Second Sunday in October
2. An elder holds these
3. Conversation with God
4. Rev. coming to visit
5. 42 Kilometers
7. Colour of Phyllis' Shirt
9. A study to discover potential uses

### ACROSS

6. What gets you to the end of the race
8. Creating peace and understanding between peoples
10. How we choose elders

We will publish the answer key in the bulletin in two weeks!