

PASTOR'S NICKEL

DESPAIR OR HOPE



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It was almost 30 years ago that I first heard the comment: "A great revival is coming again for the church in North America!" I was a student in seminary and it was spoken by a pastor in a church that was in decline. I recalled from history class that the church in NA had two great revivals in the late 18th century which saw hundreds of Baptist churches spring up in Nova Scotia and across Canada. This month I learned that the current active participation rate of Christians in church communities in Niagara is about 9%. I will let that sink in for a moment. Nine percent. How do you feel about that? I can think of two possible responses: despair or hope.

I choose hope. In the Gospel of John, the Apostle John, writing when he was about 90 years old, recalls the words of Christ Jesus from 60 years earlier who said to that band of 12 young men, "You say in the spring 'Four more months until harvest' but I tell you the fields are ripe and ready for the harvest. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send workers into the field."

If the data is right, 91% of the people living in Niagara are not active members of a church. I will let that sink in for a moment. Ninety-one percent. Almost every person you meet does not experience what you do in the family of Covenant. The visit of a friendly visitor, the social time after worship, the networking in finding a job for a family member, the friendship developed in volunteering in ministry, the weekly joy of watching young children whoop and holler after church, the knowledge that when you face a crisis that you have people who will surround you and your family. And best of all, the love of Christ embracing you and the comfort that he will never leave you.

Pentecost has happened. The Spirit is with you. The harvest is here. Now go.

That's my nickel. Pastor Bob