

**United Memorial Church  
Sunday, February 15, 2009  
William Hale**

**Has anyone been shopping at Shopper's Drug Mart lately, and if so, have you seen their bags that may be purchased to hold your purchases? I have and I present a bag for your viewing.**

**Muriel and I stopped by to pick up a few items when I spied the bag and I immediately wrote down on a piece of paper the words on the bag. I lost the paper and had to return to the store but that time I purchased the bag.**

**Note the words on the bag:**

- 1) Think**
- 2) Connect**
- 3) Embrace**
- 4) Protect**
- 5) Share**

**6) Grow**  
**And 7) Care**

**As I first wrote those words on my last piece of paper, Muriel said, “Did you find the making of your next sermon? The answer, of course, “yes”. I did, for as I thought of those words I thought of our faith journey.**

**To think is to be able to reason and remember, to have certain things in our thoughts, to have an opinion, a plan, an idea.**

**When we think of our faith, our thoughts are of God, of Jesus and of their teaching and the life plan that God has laid out for each of us. We have an opinion. We know what we stand for - justice for all humankind. We stand for compassion, for love and for caring.**

**The question then becomes, how do we connect that sense of justice, that compassion and love with all**

**humankind and all whom we come in contact with. When we connect with others we link together, we associate with others mentally, spiritually or emotionally. We develop a relationship. We have done that here at United Memorial. As a family of faith we connected with each other and we are on a faith journey to stay connected to God through Christ.**

**When we think and then connect we then embrace our faith. We embrace God. We embrace those around us. To embrace something or someone is to accept it or them willingly. We adopt ideas and things like religion, spirituality and relationships willingly. We embrace our God and we must never forget the story of our faith – the story that God the creator embraces each of us. He accepts us willingly. There are no written tests – no rejection – God’s arms are opened to us always ready to embrace.**

**As God embraces us, scripture also tells us that God will protect each one of us – his children. To**

**protect is to guard and to defend from attack or from insults or invasions. If God is willing to protect us and if we are to embrace humankind then we must too protect others – the poor, the ill, the ageing, the disabled, the disadvantaged and those who are emotionally or physically unable to make it through the day without the loving support of their church family, either individually or as a whole church family.**

**If we do connect, if we do embrace and if we do protect them, is it not only proper that we would go the next step and share. When we share, we take part in – we participate with someone or some group in their daily routines. God created. God shared his creation with each of us. If we seriously look at ourselves and then look at many areas of this creation we would see that we are truly blessed. If we are the truly blessed, God required that we share of ourselves; of our earthly wealth and that we share our hearts – hearts of love, caring and compassion.**

**When we connect, when we embrace, when we protect, when share, then our Shopper’s Drug store bag tells me we grow. When we allow new people in through our examples, when we open our arms to all, when we reach out to others and when we really show those who cannot be with us that we really care through visitation and God and Christ-centered Pastoral Care, then I do believe that we grow.**

**When we do not reach out but are satisfied just to belong to a group that does not connect, does not embrace, protect and share, we do not grow and, in my mind, we are just another social club.**

**God requires much more than that of each of us.**

**When we again look at our Shopper’s Drug bag, see all the six words together. But look below to the word “CARE”. All the things we talked about lead others and each of us to believe and to know that we truly care. We are a faith family that cares.**

**If we are to truly care, as Christ would have us care, then we must remain anchored to our faith. We must be anchored to deeds of love, deeds of compassion, deeds that really show a concern for justice for all. The questions are, “how strong is your anchor and will your anchor truly hold?”**

**AMEN**

**Sermon (delivered by Bill Hale) may vary from text printed here.**