

Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

December 2012 Newsletter



CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS TO FRIENDS OF BETHLEHEM

As this year of 2012 draws to a close, we at Bethlehem want to express our deep thankfulness to our Lord for how He has brought us through many challenges. Despite not having a pastor or worship leader this year, our Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus has bountifully supplied us with the needed support, keeping the "door" open to the community. Thus we want to express our thanks to all of you who have supported us this past year. Without your gracious donations and your gifts of pastors and worship leaders to assist at Bethlehem we would not be such a thriving community of believers. We have so appreciated the words of encouragement from each of you often confirming the word of Rev. 3:7 "I have opened a door no one can shut" that we received at the end of 2010.

The verses in Isaiah 43: 1 and 2 have a special meaning to us at Bethlehem. In verse 1 we read "Fear not, I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine."

Verse 2: "When you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they will not overwhelm you." (Almost 3 years ago in January 2010, we at BAF were hit with a "flood" as one of our sprinkler system pipes burst and water poured down the wall of the sanctuary and into the basement.) We were not "overwhelmed" (just as the Lord promises in verse 2). We moved into the basement and continued to worship Him in the Sunday services, continued to serve the people of the community with the food bank, continued with youth ministries, Bible studies, and with the daily outreaches of hospital and home visitation, as well as the muffin ministry. These outreaches continue to thrive.

Verse 2 continued: "When you walk through the fire you will not be burned or scorched, nor will the flames kindle upon you". In October 2012, an attempt was made to set fire to the church. Someone pushed a stuffed chair up under our gas meter and set the chair on fire. The fire blew up the gas meter and scorched up the wall of the outside of the building, but the Lord protected us from major damage and in just 2 days the gas meter was totally repaired, and the wall was cleaned from the burn scorches.

CBWC (Canadian Baptists of Western Canada) has been greatly instrumental in supporting us this past year, both with counsel and wisdom from them concerning our constitution and how to move forward with BAF. MANY Baptist churches across Canada, from BC to NFLD have sent financial gifts that have helped us support our daily work in the Kingdom. Thank you, wonderful churches and individuals across Canada! We bless you. Lately in one week over \$2000 came in from some of our sister churches to support BAF. Many individuals have donated very generously as well. May the Lord richly bless you as you have sowed into His Kingdom through BAF.



Our hearts are overflowing with thankfulness because the Lord has provided so bountifully with human resources and finances. For you all we pray, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He make His Face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. May He lift up His Countenance upon you and give you peace." (Numbers 6: 24-26).

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!! From the Board at BAF

Infinity Youth Church by Natalie Rempel. Work Force Staff

INFINITY has started up again this fall! Infinity is a youth church run by Work Force out of Bethlehem, focused on discipling youth from the community who are interested in Jesus. The name Infinity was chosen because it demonstrates the endless possibilities available for our lives when we choose to journey with Jesus. So much more is possible when we stop living by our own strength and open up our hearts and minds to what Jesus has available to us. This is what we as leaders desire for our youth to come to understand and apply to their own lives.



We have had about fifteen youth come out to Infinity this fall and it is exciting to see the different personalities and gifts that each one brings. Some youth are returning for their third or fourth years and other youth are coming for the very first time.



Some of the topics we have been discussing so far include prayer: what is prayer, can we actually talk to God, does God really answer our prayers? The youth have had some really great questions about these topics, such as: Can I pray too much? Can I yell at God? Why don't I always get what

I pray for? These questions open up discussion with the youth about what is going on in their lives. Many of the youth are open to discussing these topics, even if they don't believe in God. Youth church is all about exploring a relationship with God! Infinity is a great place to be yourself, ask the hard questions, and build relationships with friends and with the leaders. We are looking forward to the rest of the year and what God has in store for us at Infinity!



Prayer requested:

As you think of us at Christmas please pray for us. We are highlighting two of our groups for this newsletter:

1) Infinity Youth Church leader at BAF: Shaunna Goode: starting to give leadership to Infinity Youth church. She is in the process of raising funds for her work at BAF.

2) Community Visit: led by Clint Toews and Jeremy Zehr: a men's group starting on Tuesday Dec. 4, 7 pm. They will be discussing life issues and God with men in the community. Pray for the group.

BAF FOODBANK By Jo-Ann Swenson and Marcy , food bank co-ordinators

We have an amazing group of volunteers at BAF food bank. They are faithful to come each Tuesday to serve up to 60 people from the community. They work well as a team and it is such a blessing to Marcy and I as the co-ordinators. Here are some comments from their own mouths as to why they like volunteering at the food bank.



Myra: Likes to help and do good for people - she has a beautiful smile as she serves the people

Debbie: likes giving back to her community - a veritable "power-house" as she unloads the truck & sorts food, all with a cheerful attitude

Stan: likes to know the people and love them - he has been with the food bank the longest, and is very faithful in serving the people

Angie: likes meeting the people of the community - she loves to welcome the people

One of the men volunteers: loves working with the people, comes early to set up chairs, gets things ready for the food bank to start)

Norma: likes to help others - and she does it cheerfully

A lady: likes working with people in the community, is also one of the co-ordinators for the food bank

Gary: "I feel good about myself helping others. I like giving stuff away." He is very faithful and helpful.

Myself: I enjoy meeting the people of the community, praying with them when they need prayer, encouraging them. I get to know many by name, and like to hear how they are doing.

Roof Report from Bethlehem Board

We have just had the roof appraisal report from the contractors. The repairs will be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. This is a fair appraisal considering the size and slant of our roof. A large amount of the money will be spent on renting the special scaffolding that will be needed. We have begun praying as a congregation to ask for the Lord's leading as to how He is going to have the repairs done. He has answered so many of our prayer needs in unexpected ways. It will be very interesting to see what unfolds. We are asking you all to join us in these prayers. We feel the need for your prayer support right now. Please pray for us to hear clearly and not to run ahead of God and try to meet this need ourselves. If we try to take this need into our own hands it will crush us.



An Interview with One of the People of BAF:

By Beth Wilton

Angela Guiboché has been attending Bethlehem for about four years now. She is our security person which means during the service she checks on the cars to make sure they are safe, ensures people who enter the church come into the service and our resident coffee drinker! She is 43 and this is a little about her journey with the Lord.

Me: What did you have for family growing up? Where did you live?

Angie: I lived in Winnipeg and I had 5 brothers and 3 sisters and my mom. I didn't know my dad, but now I know him and we are on pretty friendly terms.

Me: What was your life like before you began a relationship with Jesus?

Angie: It was pretty terrible. I was into drugs – cocaine, drinking and working the streets for about 10 years.

Me: How did you feel about life during this time?

Angie: It felt awful. I was run down and I had no hope.

Me: Did you ever encounter God as a child or teenager?

Angie: I learned about God as a kid 'cause I went to Sunday school at this church for years.

Me: How did you begin a relationship with Jesus?

Angie: I lived in Edmonton for 15 years. When I was about 23 I went to this pancake breakfast in a park. Some lady came up to me and asked me if I wanted Jesus in my life. I said yes and we prayed right then.

Me: Why do you think you said yes?

Angie: I wanted my life to change but nothing really happened after that.

Me: So when did life begin to change for you?

Angie: Two things happened – I became a grandma. I knew I hadn't been a good mom, so I sure wanted to be a good grandma. I stopped drugs and drinking. I had quit the streets earlier.

Me: What was the second thing?

Angie: I got into God more. Four years ago I came back to Winnipeg and decided to go to church on Sundays. Bethlehem Aboriginal was the closest one to me and I knew somebody there. I saw how wonderful God is. I feel good singing – I love to sing. I try to live the way God wants me to now. God is a good friend and it feels like He loves me.

A Sunday Afternoon at Bethlehem by Jeremy Zehr

As I walk down the steps into the basement of BAF I see that some of my brothers and sisters have arrived. I can smell a nice aroma coming from the kitchen and soon discover that Susan is once again lovingly cooking up some warm, delicious soup with some of the leftover vegetables from the food bank earlier in this week. Jo-Ann gives me a big hug as she is getting the communion juice and bread prepared. Then I see Ed sitting comfortably on the couch along the wall of the basement and we do our usual fist pound and check in to see how each other is doing. Pretty soon the music starts and we begin to enter into worship on this Sunday Afternoon. Angie sings her heart out as the worship leader leads us in one of our favorites, "Amazing Grace". We are not always in sync with the song and some of us are out of tune, but there are no musical standards here, and Jesus is lovin' it because he knows the genuine hearts of those who unabashedly sing praises to God! By the end of the service, a handful of new faces have joined us including three young neighborhood children who seem to find their way to the Church when something is happening. They sit beside Susan while she gently loves them like a grandma would her grandchildren. After the kids get restless, they move to the playroom next door while the service continues. After the service we enjoy good food and fellowship and a few of the guys jump at the chance to do the dishes

This is our Sunday afternoon church service, but just a glimpse. We are small group of diverse people. We don't know what each Sunday gathering will bring. But we do know that the Spirit of the Lord is present as we gather together each week. As all things that God is creating, we are on a journey to follow our Lord and part of that experience is our weekly gathering on Sunday afternoons where we sing, laugh, cry, eat, and love.

