



# Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

December 2014 Newsletter



## GIFTS...

For this Christmas issue of the BAF newsletter, we asked people to write about a gift they felt they had received from their involvement with Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship. The different perspectives that staff and leaders bring to the table are interesting and some are surprising.

For me, I would say the gift I received from BAF this year was watching the Lord work in our little church, reinforcing the fact that He is with us, no matter what.

The year started out with the Lord giving me this scripture for BAF, *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.* Isaiah 43:19. In BAF, there is always much to deal with. So many unexpected things cropping up that we don't know how to handle. Things so big, they seem impossible to do, to fix, to learn. There are never enough people to do the work. Sometimes it feels like a desert and wasteland.

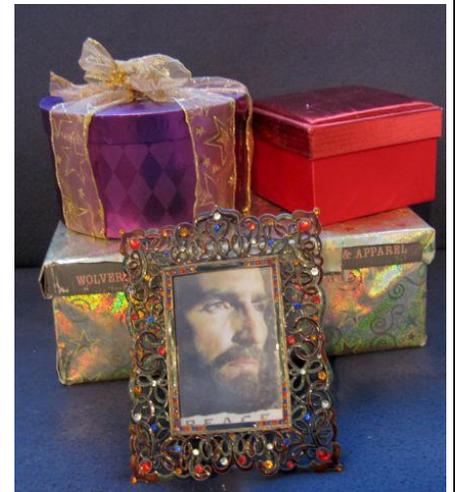
But then two people were baptized. New people started attending, many from the neighbourhood. A baby was dedicated. A visiting pastor came with a Word just for us. A visiting worship leader led us in worship and the presence of the Lord was so evident. A cheque arrived in the mail for a thousand dollars. People were asked to serve communion and felt so blessed to be asked. There was a public confession that brought a lot of healing to the church. Community happens each Sunday over coffee and cupcakes; people learn each other's names. The children continue to arrive eagerly for the afternoon activities and are blessed. Some Sundays the offering total is over four hundred dollars!

People have volunteered so that we can offer a food and clothing bank, run youth programs, have a men's group and women's support group, give away muffins and pray for those encountered in the neighbourhood. The church building continues to stand with the help of a volunteer handyman.

Deserts and wastelands are barren, dry and dead. Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship is teeming with life and God's presence. One just needs to take the time to perceive it.

May you have a Christmas filled with Jesus' presence.

*On behalf of the Board, Beth Wilton*



## The Gift of Laughter

*submitted by Shaunna Goode, Work Force Youth Employment Co-ordinator*

Looking back on the past year, I would have to say that one gift I've received from being connected to BAF is the gift of laughter. Whether in Summer Work Force, Infinity or Youth Group, laughter seems to be a common thread that knits us together as a community.

I think that the fact that I can laugh with the youth, the volunteers or the summer staff is one of the things that makes this job such a blessing. Sometimes the issues that we have to deal with amongst the youth can be so discouraging. However, the fact that we know how to take advantage of those moments in which we can celebrate life together ensures that we are not crippled by despair.

I'm truly thankful for the gift of laughter with which the Lord has blessed us. It's a constant reminder of His goodness and of the reason for which we have to be joyful.



## Meet our new Staff Member



It's been 3 months since I joined the staff at BAF. I am glad to be here once again. God's clear call inspires confidence and joy that He is at work and has a plan. I oversee the prayer ministry at BAF and the worship.

Last decade I co-led teen moms at BAF. I was also privileged to be part of the Thursday night healing prayer team where we experienced powerful encounters with the Lord. Many came for prayer from far and wide, and left deeply encouraged. I continued with prayer ministry at the Den in Winnipeg for seven years, sensing that I would be led back to the First Nation community at some point.

The Lord did lead, and here I am working mostly with Jo-Ann, and also Beth and brothers and sisters in the community. We have intercessory prayer, a women's Bible Study/ support group. We enjoy the muffin outreach that Jo-Ann began, and have some wonderful encounters talking and praying with people. Food bank is also an outreach opportunity. We listen and pray as they are willing, and several are coming to our Sunday services. Prayer is foundational to everything we do. I co-ordinate our volunteer Sunday worship leaders who have big hearts for God and our community, and I also lead.

We are encouraged that the Lord is building His body here, in this community, and I am thankful and honoured to be part of that.

Karin Regehr, BAF staff

**Bethlehem is looking for churches or Christian organizations who would be interested in sharing our building with us.**

Please spread the word if you know of any possibilities.

For more information, please contact Jo-Ann at (204) 798-2897.

**Staff and Volunteers Who Serve Cheerfully**

What has been a gift for me? That would be our staff and volunteers here at BAF. Our handy man doesn't go to BAF yet he volunteers his time once or twice a week. He believes in serving the Lord and doing so cheerfully as he fixes things around the church. His name is Pierre and we love him at BAF. Then there is our cleaner; her name is Debra and she is a new believer. She has taken on the task of going places that hasn't seen a mop or broom for quite a while and just gives her all until the task is done. Again, all the while doing it cheerfully.

We sometimes don't realize who God has placed in our paths and when we do it is a joyous surprise. I have been working at BAF for just about three years now and I am constantly amazed at who God brings into our lives here at BAF and what he does with them as well as with me. God is good all the time; all the time God is good. Thank you, God for all of this and more.

Lois Mawby, Office Manager

**Make a Donation**

If you are interested in making a donation to Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship, you can donate safely online through our website, or see other options on our Giving page.

[www.bethlehem.ca](http://www.bethlehem.ca)

**YOUR PRAYERS: AN AMAZING GIFT!**

We want to tell you how thankful we are for the amazing gift of your prayers over this past year. We have now come to the end of a delightful year where the Lord once again has been our Chief Shepherd. He has gifted us with the ability to continue to do various outreaches to the community around Bethlehem (Food bank, Youth church, Job Studio, Muffin Ministry, Youth group, summer youth employment program, Sunday Services, Children's ministry, men and women's support groups and an intercessory prayer group). We have received a wonderful gift this year at BAF. The Lord has sent Karin Regehr, a wonderful prayer warrior to walk and work with us in the journey at Bethlehem. She has been a gift to me as we minister together.

God has been faithful: But we have now come to a transitional stage.

1. Our general fund has dwindled down to a bare minimum, though we are blessed with donations coming in from churches and individuals all across Canada from Duncan, B.C all the way to Newfoundland.
2. After much prayer, the Board feels the Lord wants us to stay in the church. But in order for this to happen, certain things need to fall into place. A) We need to repair the church. CBWC has come alongside and is helping us explore possible options on how to repair the building. An architect and contractor have been assessing the building for repairs and cost of repairs. B) We need to cover the day to day costs of maintaining the building. Some churches have expressed an interest in partnering with us by sharing the building. We are also exploring this.
3. We as a congregation will continue to pray and seek God's wisdom and timing as to how He wants to continue His outreach.



We ask you friends to stand with us in prayer during this transition time. Isaiah 26: 3 says, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you". Thus we pray together out of a position of PEACE, because our eyes are fixed on the Lord.

Jo-Ann Swenson, Board Member

**Work Force Job Studio\*** by Jocelyn Chan, Work Force Job Studio Co-ordinator



This season we were asked to answer the question "What is a gift we have received or experienced recently?" I could give a multitude of answers, including:

- Hannah, a practicum student from CMU who has joined our team for 1 year and brings in fresh ideas and a willingness to serve.
- Youth who open about wanting to seek God
- Previous youth who are getting jobs or staying in school (or going back to school!)
- Special relationships between leaders and youth being built with our current group

But if I must focus on one gift, I would thank God for the gift of His presence and protection this semester. Many of our youth come from broken families and struggle with many things, including mental illnesses and getting kicked out of school. Our team tries to walk alongside these youth as much as possible. Several times this fall we encountered very difficult situations such as suicide attempts, physical abuse and alcoholism to name a few. Often we are unable to handle these situations ourselves or sometimes can't even understand them. Thankfully God is much bigger than us

and has reminded us that He cares, and that He goes ahead of us. His Spirit has given us the wisdom we need to persevere through these crises, all the while offering His hand of protection over the leaders and the youth, both spiritually and emotionally.

These are blessings from the Lord that I am so thankful to experience and don't ever want to forget!

\*Infinity, Girls Club and the Work Force Job Studio are a partnership between Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship and Youth for Christ.