

Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

April 2016 Newsletter



Season of New Growth

"See! the winter is past ; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land". (Song of Songs 2: v. 11 & 12)

Just as we have entered a new season in the natural, Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship has entered a new season in the spiritual realm. It is now just past NINE months that we made our move from 294 Burrows, to our new location renting from Living Word church at 467 Manitoba Ave. Though there have been many challenges with finding ways to accommodate two church bodies in a small space, it has been a time of stretching and growing for us. We no longer have limitless space in which to spread out! Instead of pouting or getting discouraged when things get discouraging, we collaborate with the leaders of Living Word and work out a feasible solution for both groups.

So, how is our congregation doing? About 20-25 people continue to come regularly and there are definite signs of growth in the people.

- 1) A mother and her daughter from our congregation have stepped up and are now working together with the other mother/daughter team in the Children's Ministry.
- 2) The neighbourhood children are taking hold of the lessons they are being taught and are remembering the stories of the Bible. They are also bonding beautifully with the children's ministry leaders.
- 3) The North American Baptist Women's Union gave BAF a generous grant for our children's ministry, and we have been able to set up storage cupboards and shelves as well as purchase Bible lessons, snacks and craft materials for them. We are very grateful to the NABWU for this.
- 4) The women's ministry group has become a wonderful "watering hole" for the women, and the Lord has been giving some of them creative ideas as to how to reach out to the community in new ways.
- 5) The pastor of Living Word, Paul Winter has been teaching BAF some simple innovative ways to study the Bible, bringing a sense of excitement and joy as we read the Word.
- 6) Two of our young boys (age 8 and 12) chose to be baptized on Dec. 20, 2015! It was wonderful to see Drake and Logan step up and declare their faith in Jesus publically.
- 7) The Lord has been reminding us that HE is building HIS church, so we are "keeping in step with His Spirit" (Galatians 5:25) and listening to Him so we will grow at the rate and in the way He is showing us. He continues to provide financially and with prayer support. This is exciting!! Continue to pray with us!



By Jo-Ann Swenson , for the BAF Board



Debby



Joyce

Hello We have two new people who have joined our team at BAF. One is Debby Yetman who has been involved with us in various ways the last couple of years. She is our office manager and she keeps us well organized.

The second is Joyce Friesen who is our new bookkeeper. She comes with a wealth of experience and lives in the area. We are so thankful for both of these woman who are serving us so well.

BAF is looking for a part time pastor

Although we are a small congregation, God is at work in our midst. Our vision is to see our North End community transformed by the love of Jesus. We are searching for a part time pastor who will be part of our leadership team, has a heart for the inner city and a deep love for Jesus.

Responsibilities:

- 10 – 20 hours per week.
- Preaching regularly
- Depending on hours other responsibilities could be raising up and equipping leaders from our congregation, shepherding the flock, discipleship, networking

Qualifications:

- A call to minister to the inner city
- A team player with a servant heart
- Gift of preaching from God's word
- Demonstrates a genuine life of prayer, obedience and a dependency on God

For more information please contact either Jo-Ann Swenson jswenson77@shaw.ca or Beth Wilton at bethwilton@gmail.com.

Work Force Job Studio

The Work Force Job Studio is an employment program run in partnership with BAF and Work Force/ Youth for Christ. It is for community teens 16 – 20 who want to find a job but basically don't know how.

This year we have changed the format of the Job Studio. Instead of running shorter sessions with two groups of youth per year, we are running one 7-month session; essentially doubling our time with the youth! This change was made so we could go more in depth in the teaching topics and give the youth more time to practice their new skills.

We have now been with this group of youth for 6 months and are entering into the final month of studio. We just finished our interview skills practice, and had 3 rounds of mock interviews. The progress was incredible to witness. At our first interview, only 4 youth showed up (out of 10). At the final interview, all but 1 youth showed up. We saw remarkable improvement! There was one boy who constantly wore a baggy t-shirt with a hole in it; at our last interview we all cheered and clapped when he took his jacket off to reveal a dress shirt. Some of the girls worried they didn't have proper dress clothes, so we took them to the Up Shoppe (a second hand clothing store nearby) and bought them dress shirts and pants; one of the girls proudly wore her new shirt and pants, commenting that it "felt weird" to be so dressed up.

Besides their appearance, it was amazing to see the youths' confidence grow as they practiced handshakes, eye contact, speaking clearly and answering interview questions. They became vulnerable in sharing how nervous and scared they were, but showed great courage in being there and trying their best. Our final guest interviewer said he was so impressed; he would have hired all of them!

I want to end with a final story; about one of the biggest transformations I've seen so far, a 17 year old girl who has been faithfully attending the Job Studio. She is quiet and doesn't participate much. When we started to practice interviews, she was resistant and lacked confidence to even look me in the eye. One day I taught her the trick of looking at the bridge of the interviewer's nose, if eye contact was too scary. She used this in her mock interview, and came back with a huge smile. "I used the nose trick and was able to look at him most of the time! I wasn't even nervous!" The rest of that day, I noticed every time I talked to her, she was able to look me in the eye. From that day on, I saw a huge change in this youth. She is starting to see herself as God sees her; competent and extremely capable of getting and keeping a job. This is just one of the many ways we have seen hope and growth at the Job Studio this year!

By Jocelyn Chan, Job Studio Coordinator



Cooking and Jesus

One thing that the staff at Work Force** always talks about is the idea of meeting the youth where they are. This is not something that can be accomplished without listening. Recently, I've had the chance to engage with some of our community youth in a new way, and this was all because I took the time to listen.

For example, I am now running a girls' supper club with 5 girls, ages 12 to 15 who have been coming out to our Sunday and/or Thursday night programming. At this club, we make a healthy meal together and then sit down and eat it as we engage in a Bible study. The idea for this club came about by piecing together several comments that these girls have been making over the past few months. For instance, they had been saying things like 'I love cooking' or 'I wish I knew how to cook' or 'Helping today was so much fun (this was in reference to helping me bake some cookies for snack).' I also "heard" them saying things like 'I don't have many friends' or 'I'm uncomfortable in large groups' or 'I'm interested in learning more about who Jesus is.' These last few comments were not said verbally. That's why I put the word heard in quotations above. Instead these things were said through the girls' actions and I "heard" them by observing them at our programs. When I took the time to reflect on all this, I realized that I could use their expressed interest in cooking to help address the needs they weren't verbalizing.

And this is how our weekly supper club was born.

We've only had a few meetings of our club to date but there are a few things that I've noticed so far. With respect to the cooking part, the girls are eager to learn. I've tried hard to create an environment where mistakes are simply considered part of the learning process. This has helped to take pressure off the girls and as such if things don't turn out perfectly we are still able to enjoy the time we've spent together.

Where the Bible study is concerned, I've learned that some girls are still not comfortable sharing their deeper level thoughts as yet. This means that I need to work more intentionally on building community amongst the group. However, I have to admit that one of the girls in the group has surprised me. She is normally so shy and such a people pleaser, what I've seen as the weeks have progressed is that she is being both open and honest about what she thinks. She is also more aware of Jesus than I realized and it's so encouraging to see her grapple with the topics we address from week to week.

As we continue to meet, I'm truly excited to see what God has in store for these girls and how this supper club will impact their lives.

by Shaunna Goode, Work Force Youth Employment Coordinator

** Work Force is a program of Youth for Christ. It works in partnership with BAF to run various youth programs.

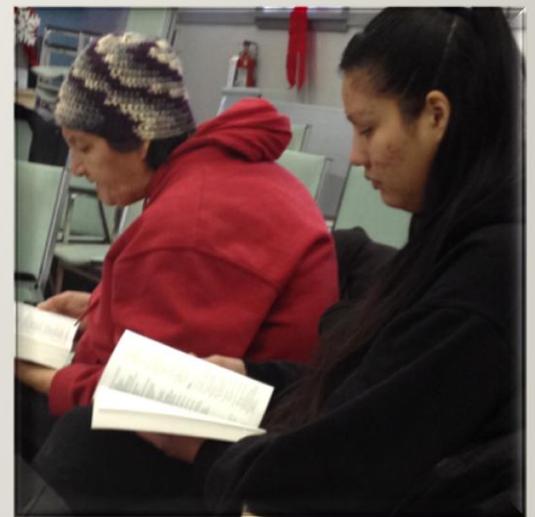
BAF Women's Group

Every Thursday at noon, Jo -Ann and I and a group of women from our church and community gather to be encouraged and strengthened in the scriptures, in listening to each other and sharing in each other's lives. We enjoy coffee and left-over muffins too.

We desperately need the Lord in the midst of personal and family struggles and are learning to pray for one another. We are so thankful that God answers prayer!

We thank God for a safe place to grow and learn, to being together. It truly is a "watering hole" of encouragement each week.

By Karin Regehr, BAF staff



Pastor Paul (Living Word) and intern Clint

Make a Donation

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www.bethlehem.ca

