



Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

December 2020 Newsletter



The Board Report

Like all of you, this has been a challenging time for us at BAF. With the closing of the church doors in the spring and now again because of COVID- 19, we of course have had to rethink how we do things. We did enjoy meeting during the summer and fall months, however, with our new pastor in place. We were able to keep six feet apart and still fit everybody in – one of the perks of being a small church!

Because we do not have the technological expertise (we still use songbooks!) to post our services online, we decided our number one priority needed to be the care of our people. Four or five people phoned the others aiming for once a week to see how everybody was doing. We did this in the spring and are doing it again now. We have developed our Facebook page to include a scripture for the week, a worship song and a link to the church that we rent from that offers a great sermon weekly.

But despite COVID-19 there have been some amazing things happening at BAF. In our last newsletter we told the story of how we hired a pastor during a lengthy process of discernment. In this newsletter we tell the story of how our offering has grown amazingly along with the ownership of our people.

Our Board make up has shifted dramatically with the Board now comprised of 3 indigenous people and one white person. An exciting change! Then out of the blue, one of our worship leaders (we've had guest worship leaders for years) felt God was calling him to be our main worship leader and is committed to coming weekly to teach us about worship. Joe Davis is from one of our sister churches and we are very thankful for his heart and that he heeded God's call. We also have one person who is beginning to teach us simple songs in Cree as well as other indigenous languages.

Of course like everyone else, we hope to be open for the Christmas season. We've even tentatively planned a combined Christmas day service with a bit of a celebration keeping all health protocols. But time will tell. There is a gentleman who for years has bought the church food to give out to our people (thanks Ron!) which we did regularly when we were open. As that is not possible now, we are planning on dividing all the food up between our people, adding some homemade knitted goods that some wonderful churches provide, as well as some home baking. Closer to Christmas, we will then drop this gift off at the homes of our people and have a quick chat from 6 feet away. Not ideal, but a good way to connect and bless them as well.

As we enter this Christmas season which will be very different from past ones, we know that Jesus remains the same; Jesus, the Light of our Christmas, the Joy of our hearts and the Hope of our world. Have a blessed Christmas.

The Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship Board



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

Contact Us: Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship
467 Manitoba Avenue Winnipeg, MB R2W 1Z6

Phone: (204) 586-5707 Fax: (204) 589-0154
E-mail: bethaf@shaw.ca

A True Story

I want to tell you a story – a true story that occurred at our church.

In June, at our AGM, the church agreed to hire Lyle Blackbird as our pastor. There were about 12 people present out of about 16. He was to be part time at 10 hours a week. On behalf of the Board, I then asked the congregation how we were going to pay him.

As many of you are aware, Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship is located in the north end or what some would call the inner city of Winnipeg. Folks here don't have a lot of spare money. Any extra money often goes towards food for the family; in fact food security is one of the biggest needs for our congregation. Therefore, over the years, there has not been a lot of money left in the offering basket on a Sunday; certainly not enough to pay a pastor. I got discouraged one day when the offering was \$1.50.

So the Board began to pray about this. We felt the Lord nudging us to invite the congregation to start to "step up to the plate" so to speak. But how could we ask people to put money in the offering basket when there were so many other important and relevant needs in their lives?

But we heeded the nudging from the Lord. At that AGM meeting, I spoke about us taking it seriously that if we wanted a pastor, we had to pay him and each of us needed to pray about what we could do. I had no idea how people received this.

And then the miracle happened. For the next two Sundays, our offering was just over \$500 each Sunday. Then for the next couple Sundays, it was in the \$400 range. We now on average have an offering of around \$250 weekly. So amazing for people who have so little. God is at work.

For four years now, we have been receiving a monthly installment from the CBWC from the sale of our previous building – the big red brick one. As well we have some sister churches that have generously included us in their budget and also a few individuals. This is how we have managed to pay our bills, 3 part time staff and rent. On our own, we could not have done this, even with the wonderful increased giving from our congregation.

As of mid-February 2021, the money from the CBWC will be used up. We have no idea what the Lord has in mind, but thought we would like to make our need known. Presently on our own, our average offering is \$1028/month. Our expenditures are \$2382 a month. If you are in a position to help us out, we would be very grateful. You can give safely online at CanadaHelps on our website www.bethlehem.ca. Or you can send a cheque to 467 Manitoba Ave, Winnipeg, MB, R2W 2G4. All donations are tax-receiptable. We know it is highly unusual for a church to request financial help in this way. We are looking at other avenues as well, but being small and serving the people we serve has its challenges.

We know the Lord is moving in our midst at BAF. In many ways since June it feels like we have started a new chapter in our church. It will be exciting to see where the Lord leads us.

On behalf of the BAF Board, Beth Wilton

