



Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

December 2021



Merry Christmas!

We'd like to share part of the Christmas story from the newly published Inter Varsity Press *First Nations Version Bible: an Indigenous Translation of the New Testament*. It is not a paraphrase but an actual translation from Greek into English. The *Baptist Standard* book review, (Baptiststandard.ca) states it is a *thought for thought —dynamic equivalence--rather than word-for-word, to produce a style and cadence more similar to the storytelling of the oral cultures, while remaining faithful to the original language of the New Testament*. They go on to say it is "a gift to Indigenous people", and we agree.

Humble Beginnings

Luke 2: 1-2 When the time drew close for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child, the government of the People of Iron (Romans) ordered that the people be numbered and put on government rolls. This happened during the time that Powerful Protector (Quirinius) was the governor of Bright Sun (Syria). 3 All the Tribal Members were required to travel to their own ancestral village to register.

4-5 He Give Sons (Joseph) and Bitter Tears (Mary) set out on a long journey from Seed Planter Village (Nazareth) in Circle of Nations (Galilee), to House of the Bread (Bethlehem) in the Land of Promise (Judea), the village of their ancestor, the great chief Much Loved One (David).

The journey took several long days and cold nights as they traveled over high hills and through the dry desert. When they arrived, tired and weary, they entered the crowded village.

6 The time for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child was upon her! 7 But no place could be found in the lodging house, so He Gives Sons (Joseph) found a sheep cave where it was warm and dry. There she gave birth to her son. They wrapped him in a soft, warm blanket and laid him on a baby board. Then they placed him on a bed of straw in a feeding trough.

8 That night in the fields nearby, shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. 9 Suddenly a great light from above was shining all around them. A spirit-messenger from Creator appeared to them. They shook with fear and trembled 10 as the messenger said to them, "Do not fear! I bring you the good story that will be told to all nations. 11 Today in the village of Much Loved One (David) an Honored Chief has been born who will set his people free. He is the Chosen One."

12 The spirit-messenger continued, "This is how you will know him – you will find the child wrapped in a blanket and lying in a feeding trough." 13 Suddenly, next to the messenger, a great number of spirit-warriors from the spirit-world above appeared giving thanks to Creator, saying, 14 "All honor to the One Above Us All, and let peace and good will follow all who walk upon the earth."

15 When the messengers returned to the spirit-world above, the shepherds said to each other, "Let us go and see this great thing Creator has told to us." 16 So they hurried to the village of Chief Much Love One (David) and found Bitter Tears (Mary), He Give Sons (Joseph), and the child, who, just as they were told, was lying in a feeding trough!

17 The shepherds began to tell everyone what they had seen and heard about this child, 18 and all who heard their story were amazed. 19 Bitter Tears (Mary) kept these things hidden in her heart and wondered what all this would mean. 20 The shepherds returned to their fields, giving thanks to the Great Spirit for the wonders they had seen and heard.



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An Exciting New Venture

For the past few months we have been dreaming about how we could more intentionally serve our community. After much discussion and then planning, we are ready to offer a pot of soup and bannock that we make to families who experience a tragedy. This is a traditional indigenous way to bring comfort to people. There are many traumatic events that happen in our neighbourhood and we feel this could meet a real need as well as show the love of Jesus. We have a number of organizations that have agreed to be our "ears to the ground" who will contact us when they hear of a need.

Once we hear of someone, a small group of us will meet in the church kitchen and work together to make the soup and bannock. This will be a great bonding time for us as well. But it will also be a challenge as we have no funds to purchase the food supplies. We really feel this is something the Lord wants us to do so are waiting with expectation to see how He will supply. Already somebody has donated some hamburger (for hamburger soup)! We will drop the meal off with a note inviting them to our church as well as pray with them if they are open to that. We will see how it goes!

Making It Through Difficult Times

We asked some of our church family how God had met them through difficult times recently. Here are some of their answers:

Florence: I was struggling with depression and then COVID hit and I lost my job. The isolation caused by COVID didn't help any and I found I was shutting people out. I grew up with my dad teaching me to trust that Jesus was all I needed so I read my Bible and prayed a lot. I hung onto the Lord. I kept busy too and that helped. Eventually I felt victory over the depression. Then I heard about the discovery of the children's graves at the residential schools and I felt so angry. I didn't know how to vent my feelings; It really hurts. Slowly God has been strengthening me to look at some of the trials and afflictions, the ugliness in my life and I have experienced His healing. This has enabled me to talk about the children's graves without anger. I can cry now without being angry and can let it go.

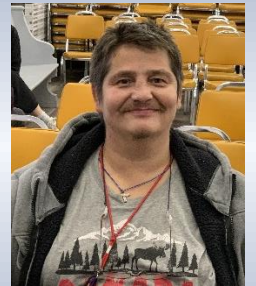


Kurt: I heard a sermon recently about David and Goliath where God showed me that every day He gives me challenges or giants to slay with His help. This has really hit home with me as I go about my business providing general service and repair. I have jobs daily that are a challenge. Recently a neighbour called saying she had water in her basement. When I arrived I realized that because of the position of the sewer I couldn't get my snake into the sewer hole. I was stumped until an idea came to me of using my sewer tape backwards - a different unusual way to solve the problem. I feel God inspired me to overcome this challenge or giant! I trust the Lord to help me solve the problems I face daily using the gift He has given me of craftsmanship. I am so thankful the Lord provides us with gifts to overcome the challenges in our lives.



Amanda: Most of my family, 6 of us got a mild form of COVID over about a six week span last spring. We obviously could not go out for anything. In the past, having enough food has been an issue at times. During this time of COVID though, the Lord supplied and we never lacked for anything- not food or money. We received hampers, meals and supplies from various people and organizations. The kids even received youth bags full of snacks and games. In fact we had so much stuff that we were able to help others who were struggling! The Lord is so good!

Danny: I'm trying to find a new place to live but it is very difficult for me to look on my own because of mobility issues. God has blessed me with people to help me. They are taking me to view places and looking out for me. I couldn't do this without them. I am thankful for these people God has brought into my life.



Rena: In the last year I've had a lot of health problems – kidney stones, a bum knee and glaucoma laser surgery. I read scripture, particularly Ps 91:9-10, *The LORD Most High is your fortress. Run to him for safety, and no terrible disasters will strike you or your home.* I chose to believe He was there for me and I stood on his promises. My church prayed for me and listened and supported me and I knew He was there for me through their care for me too.

Thank you...

We are excited about the place the Lord has brought us to as a church the last couple of years. We have a new pastor, worship leader and a dream we are trying to accomplish. Financially, many of our needs have been met through sister churches who support us as well as some individuals. We are very grateful for this much needed financial help. We also received the government grants being offered when churches had to close. Times though have been unusually hard for many of our people because of COVID. Giving is down as is the same for many churches. It is difficult to encourage people to give more when food security is such a big issue in their lives. If you are in a position to help us out financially, we would be so grateful. We know it is unusual for a church to request financial help in this way, but being a small inner city church means there are limited resources from our people. If you are interested, 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. Thanks so much for your consideration of this.

The BAF Board

WORTHY ONE, EMMANUEL, GOD WITH US, THE WORD, PRINCE OF PEACE,
LIGHT OF THE WORLD, THE SHEPHERD, THE RISEN ONE....JESUS!

**The BAF Board and church wish for you that the miracle of Christmas would be alive
in your heart this season and forevermore. Merry Christmas!**