



# Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

Summer 2023



## **A Start to Healing**

A while ago at BAF we were looking for a way to connect with our community in the North End. We decided we wanted to reach out to the families who had lost loved ones. Grief and loss, and a lot of it, is something that most of us are very familiar with here in the north side of our city.

Often these losses are tragic and traumatic for families and community members. Within our Indigenous community, we are unfortunately connected together by loss and tragedy. Even though it is painful, it brings us together. If we don't know the person personally, we know others who know them. At one point I said that I didn't personally know any murdered or missing women or children but I can't say that anymore because I now know one of them.

Giving soup and bannock to grieving families is practised within a lot of First Nations Communities, so we decided to serve our north end community in this way as well. We wanted them to know and experience that there is a church near them that actually cares about what is happening to them. Psalm 23:4 says "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me."

As a church within our community we are not just about doing church but being the living church. We need to continue to walk together and be present for each other as our Lord is through his church. We as a north end community are in need



of this kind of healing and reconciliation. We need to find a place for all of us to connect to allow healing. For BAF it is our soup and bannock ministry that is a starting point towards healing.

*Pastor Lyle Blackbird*

## **Anger**

Growing up in the reservation as a child and then moving into the city as a teenager was a big change in my life. On the reserve it was a country life. We lived in a small house with four families and only a few bedrooms. There was lots of wild life around. My dad, grandpa and uncles would hunt and fish for our food. There was a store but it was a long ways away, so our food was there when you needed it. A body of water surrounded us so we would get water for drinking, washing clothes and whatever else. As four families living together, we learned to live with each other although of course there were times we did not get along. There was a lot of anger in our lives because alcohol was involved with our parents and other relatives. When they drank it would turn into fighting each other. That's how we all dealt with our emotions - through anger. We didn't know any other way.

In my teenage years we moved into the city into low rental housing and it was there that I met Jesus. I started to learn how to live without anger and God was teaching me about love – love like I'd never experienced before. The closer I got to God the more I felt loved by Him. God showed me how to love others and that He can change people. By showing my family God's love, they began to go to AA and church. Their anger was replaced by more positive attitudes; they weren't as negative and they communicated more. Some became believers. My mom used to yell at us all the time and then at the grandchildren. We told her to speak more softly to the grandkids and eventually she did! With my children I passed on the love that God showed me and how to live expressing anger properly. This scripture really speaks to me, "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only son, that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

So I finally let go of my anger because I realized I was loved by God and from that I learned to love and care for others. I have been able to show this love to my north end community and I have begun to see God building a more positive north end community bonding us together.

*Rena Wilde*

## **Bible Studies and a Husband**

For the last few months during our church service people have been sharing stories about themselves to help us get to know each other better. Reconciliation requires healing as individuals and as a church so sharing stories of how others have dealt with issues and problems in their lives helps us towards our own healing and draws us together as a church. We've shared lots of laughter and found out surprising things about each other!

Marie shared her story and as it was delightful to see God at work in her life we thought we'd share it with others.



*I used to drink a lot. Finally I felt like I didn't want to drink anymore. I told my worker I wanted to stop and she said she would help me get into a treatment centre. She got me into one at Pine Falls right away. I enjoyed it because I made friends that stayed friends afterwards.*

*After I went home I was going to AA. My brother told me about a Bible Study he was involved with and*

*asked me if I wanted to be involved in it too. I thought he meant going to someone's house but it turned out it was a booklet of lessons that I did on my own. It was a correspondence course and it was mailed or hand delivered to a fellow who marked it. I loved doing the Bible Studies and sometimes I stayed up all night doing*

*them. My brother was living with me at the time and I used to wake him up in the night to ask him to check if my answers were right. He told me nobody could get all the answers right!*

*One day we were walking across the Arlington Bridge and I told him I wanted to change my life. He told me that this was God speaking to me; that he wanted me to accept him into my life. I told him I was scared, that I would have to quit everything and I didn't know if I could. My brother said that he would get somebody to talk to me. That somebody turned out to be the fellow who marked the correspondence course. His name was Kurt.*

*I told Kurt that I wanted to change but that I was scared I would have to quit everything. Kurt told me that I wouldn't have to quit anything. He said the Lord would help me and would take the desires away. I told him okay and accepted the Lord. Instead of going to AA anymore, I started going to Bible Studies and church with Kurt. Slowly the Lord did take the desires away. I didn't want to go to the bars anymore, or drink or smoke. It's been over 30 years that I've been sober. Bingo was a hard one to give up. I realize now that I was addicted to it too. I went everyday spending all my money on it, including food money for the kids. Over time I got to know Kurt better and as they say, the rest is history! We got married at a Salvation Army Church and have been together for 26 years!*

*Marie Martens  
(as told to Beth Wilton)*



### **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)