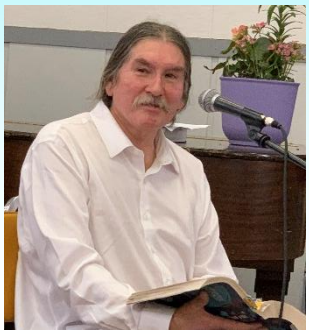
Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

Summer 2026 Newsletter

Connection Within Our Community

Connection within our church community is vital. We come from different cultures, socio-economic backgrounds and different life experiences, heart aches and joys. And yet, in Christ we find ways to connect.

This year we had a few significant losses with some of our attendees passing on. One of them in particular stands out for me. Athena, a young mother was fighting an addiction and lost. She overdosed. We have a lot of overdoses and deaths within our North End Community.



It has become an epidemic if one could call it that. Athena was so looking forward to getting her children back from CFS. She didn't make the deadline for this either. A few times she helped me hand out communion. Once I heard her say to herself, "His blood shed for me." This moved me very deeply and still speaks to me. Another one was Louisa, or Louise as that is what we knew her by. She would often come late but she always asked for prayer at the end of the service.

It is for people like these that I minister the way I do within our services. Our community walks, journeys and so connects together despite its challenges. For some, church might be the only positive thing going on in their lives. I would not want to take that positive away in the midst of so many negatives that some face.

That's why in a real sense we are a mission church. A mission church meets people within the community where they are, how they are and whoever they are. We connect with them as the Church because they are the Church as well. We try to offer more positives within the negatives that they face every day. Thank the Lord for connection within community.

Pastor Lyle Blackbird

It Helps to Keep Me Sober

Marlene, 35 years old, came out of a treatment centre recently. She was there for one and a half years. She knew that one of the things she wanted when she left the centre was connection with a church. She says, "God is the one who brought me this far and He is the one who keeps me going. I know I couldn't do it without Him. I can only stay sober if I stay close to Him and He is in my life." So, she started to come to BAF where her family attends, as well as another church near her home. At BAF she feels connected to God and she feels accepted by the people there.

She also realized she needed to be connected to an AA group and found one nearby that focuses on Christ. She says the group reminds her that other people are going through the same things as her. She can relate to them and they can relate to her. It is encouraging for her to hear their stories.

She also realizes that she needs connection with her family. Her brother passed away a couple of years ago and now that she is sober, she can be there for his children – her nephew and niece. Another niece who is 20, told her recently that she was proud of her. Marlene has been able to provide a safe place for her when needed. She is also working on being there for her own children who are in care. One has already come home and the other one will be home in a couple of weeks. She can also now help her mom with the grandchildren and various other things, and that feels really good too. She appreciates their support, encouragement and the fact that she can be herself. Nobody is watching to see "if I make it. They are just there for me."

To sum it up, Marlene says she is so glad to have connection with the church, other people and her family because it helps to keep her sober.

Interview by Beth Wilton

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Connection and Neighbours

Connection with people can often be difficult. Sometimes I don't like Jesus' definition of the neighbour with whom I should connect. I have a drug house near my home. I have had bodies spread eagle on the road. I have seen people crouched down completely out of it. I've seen people in the fentanyl fold, and I've seen people reeling around until they fall down. It is very disturbing and disheartening. One evening I was watching a man reeling until he finally fell on the boulevard across the street from my house. A woman who was just coming from the drug house as well but was stable, saw him and went over to him. She called out to him but he didn't move. Then she shook him and he got up. They spoke a little bit and stumbling around, he started off in the opposite direction from her. But I heard her call out to him and invite him to come walk with her for a bit, and he turned around and did. And I heard the Lord say to me, she was more compassionate than you. And He brought to mind the parable of the Good Samaritan.

I don't see the people who are struggling with these issues as enemies; I was just angry he was there. I was upset I had to put up with this. I wanted him and all these situations gone. So as the Lord was concerned about my attitude, I decided I'd better change it. I decided if I came across people in similar situations I'd ask them if they needed help and see what I could do for them. I've only had the opportunity once so far to do that and I must admit it felt a little better offering help than being angry! I had wanted nothing to do with people who were all drugged up like this. I was definitely fitting the description of the priest and the Levite in the Good Samaritan parable. And as Jesus considers these people his neighbour, that means I must as well.

Beth Wilton

What Does Connection Mean to You?

Here are some of the answers given to this question by individuals in our fellowship:

- Connection is important because it helps us encourage one another and helps us to get to know one another on a deeper level.
- I believe that the BAF community is a life line for some of the members of our body. Some of our folks seem to have minimal connections besides those in our community. We have experienced the good Lord's blessings upon members of the body, which also pulls us closer together. It's a great group in which to fellowship.
- Connection helps me come out of my comfort zone because people talk to me. I keep to myself so I like it when others talk to me.
- Connection with God and others is vital to me. It helps me to know I am loved and worthwhile and keeps me growing as a person.
- Connection means spending time together in worship and in life. It means meeting each other with prayers and caring. It means belonging. It means work. It means something good in our lives.
- Connection with friends gives me a purpose in life. It helps us to be kinder to each other and we end up loving each other.

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