



Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

Christmas 2019 Newsletter



Merry Christmas!

Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship wishes you a wonderful Christmas as you celebrate the arrival of our Saviour who changed everything!

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*
Isaiah 9:2

Women's Prayer & Scripture Group

In the fall we started up the Women's Bible study again after a hiatus of over a year. We are meeting weekly and are encouraged by God's Word and are praying for each other and our community.

We've been reading scriptures about the "storms" people experienced and how the Lord uses those hard times to strengthen us and help us become more like Him. We know the Lord is with us in all circumstances.

Karin Reaehr

Forever in Our Hearts

As many of you know, a long-time member at our church, Jo-Ann Swenson went to be with her Saviour on July 7th. She had shared in previous newsletters that she was battling cancer.

Jo-Ann was a very special woman. Her joy in the Lord was contagious. Many times after she explained a scripture to us we would hear her exclaim, "Isn't that amazing!" She was a prayer warrior to all who knew her because her first response was to pray about whatever the issue was. Often in Board meetings she would stop us and say, "Let's pray about that." She had her ear tuned to the Lord. She easily heard from Him and I used to joke that during times of prayer at our Board meetings, she would have an answer from the Lord while I was still at "Dear Lord!" Her smile and laughter were wonderful as well.

She had a passion and heart for the north end of Winnipeg. At first when she began the Muffin ministry (an outreach of giving muffins to people she met on the street and offering to pray for them) she was a little nervous of the area. But she received such a positive response that she quickly grew to love the people and the community. Adults and children grew to look forward to her weekly visits as she was so encouraging. She had a pastor's heart for the people who came to church as well. They would seek her out to talk to her specifically and to be prayed for. She believed in our people and believed that our church could make a difference in the community.

She also loved the children and they loved her. She would go out of her way to make sure they knew they were special and valued. When the children arrived at church, they would ask where Jo-Ann was if they couldn't see her. Hugs were given and received freely with Jo-Ann.

She was also our part time paid staff who did all the grunt work – reading the insurance policy to ensure all was correct, problem solving about the building, figuring out financial questions and issues, phoning many people about various things, finding our weekly speakers and Sunday school teachers. She was a very good administrator.

All in all, Jo-Ann was the glue that kept us together. Various duties and responsibilities have had to be reassigned. It is encouraging to see that some people have stepped into more leadership while others are helping out more on Sundays. Our sense of community is growing stronger. We are doing okay and are moving ahead. But of course we miss her and always will.

The Sunday after she passed away, the congregation had a sharing time. People shared fond memories of Jo-Ann and ways that she had helped them, encouraged them and prayed for them. It was a time of sadness but also celebration of a life well lived with people whom she loved.

Beth Wilton for the BAF Board



BAF and Finances

Being an inner city congregation means that often "pickings are slim" for our people. We however have been blessed by the CBWC as well as sister churches and individuals who support us financially. If you are in a position to help us out as well, that would be greatly appreciated and very helpful. You can safely donate on CanadaHelps.org. You can go to our website Bethlehem.ca/giving for a direct link.

Summer Work Force 2019

It really is important to pause, remember and give thanks for what God has done! This is particularly true when I look back to all that transpired this past summer at the Summer Work Force (SWF) program.

Here are some highlights from my perspective:

One notable story involves a local family of four boys who live just down the street and have been participating in Work Force ministries for the past year. During the year the boys typically came in like tornadoes, raising their usual ruckus, consuming whatever was being served only to leave after receiving their usual three warnings – but something changed! Even from the beginning of the summer, you could see something transpiring in the boys' lives, and leaders who knew them from before were blown away by what they saw. Slowly they went from being a goofy disruptive clique, tossing food back and forth just watching the action from the sidelines, to engaging in the activities, staying for the God talks, coming to optional Bible studies, and really connecting with other youth and leaders! The icing on the cake was the youngest of the four taking the bold step to make Jesus his friend and now pursuing to be baptized this November!

Another story from this past summer involves our 16 year old summer intern! Having been an active participant in Work Force programs since he was 12, he dedicated his life to Christ in the past year! During this time leaders have disciplined him through the various ministries of Work Force and through personal one on one connections in particular. It was amazing and gratifying to see him not only contribute to the leadership team but passionately and effectively minister to the youth just a few years behind him! His baptism at our Birds Hill excursion with the youth was definitely another summer highlight that left a mark on all who watched!

By the end of the summer we rejoiced as a team seeing firsthand the various transformations that emerged from a, safe, fun and loving Jesus focused environment!

Summer Facts:

Youth registered and actively participated in SWF: 58

Business Placement Partners: 32

Salvation Decisions we knew of: 2

Baptisms: 1

Total number of youth one-on-one outings with six leaders: 176!

Ian Croatto, Work Force Staff

***Summer Work Force is a ministry run by Youth for Christ in partnership with BAF*



Prayer Needed!

Please pray for our community. As you are probably aware, we are in the midst of a lot of the recent violence.

- Pray against the spirits of violence and murder in our community and city
- Pray the various churches and their people would be the light of Jesus in our community
- Pray Jesus would comfort and carry those who have lost loved ones