



Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

A church where you experience and practice the love of God through Jesus Christ

294 Burrows Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH OUR SUPPORTERS—  
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

○ February | ○ 2009

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard,  
no mind has conceived what God has  
prepared for those who love him” - but  
God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.  
1 Cor 2:9-10



Dietrich and Edith  
Desmarais

# bethlehem

From the heart of

## I like the North End.

One day, I went outside of the church building and stood on the doorsteps. Sometimes when I want a break from inside churchy stuff, I hang out at the “hangout” place, namely, the doorsteps.

So I’m standing there, looking around, and a man on a bike stops in front of me and asks for prayer. I knew the guy since he occasionally came on Sunday and lives in the general area. But more specifically, I knew him for what happened to him a few months before, for you see, his teenage child was tragically murdered and left for dead outside the city. This event was front page news in Winnipeg, and brought to light (again) the stronghold of crime in this town. Numerous headlines hit close to Bethlehem, many times too close for comfort. I hope I never get used to it though.

So I’m standing there, about to pray for a man whose story the whole city knows about. He tells me what to pray for, and I begin to pray. I’m glad to do it, but it’s hard to pray for someone whose plight is so tragic that it makes me feel unqualified to pray for him. I pray for him, we talk a bit, and then he rides off.

Before I could go back inside, a teenager with a black hoodie walked up to the door and just stood there beside me, still and despondent. He was standing there looking at the street, as I was doing earlier.

I don’t small-talk, but I tried to small-talk with him even though I couldn’t understand what he was saying since he spoke quietly. Tears began to roll down his face, and he told me how he had just fought with his girlfriend and hit her.

I’m no counselor, but we talked, I gave some practical advice, prayed with him, and tried everything I could to help him deal with his anger and pain, etc.

Like the man before him, he said goodbye and went on his way.

Months before, a crying man rang the doorbell asking me if I was the pastor. He wanted prayer because his wife just died. Robotically, I said I wasn’t, and that the pastor wasn’t here at the moment but he could make an appointment. He then asked me if I was a pastor, to which I replied “sorry, no.” He proceeded to leave the building, I imagine to continue his walk in search for a pastor.

Naively, I concluded he was looking for a professional to help him out. But I was kidding myself, since I knew in my heart that he wasn’t just looking for a pastor but for someone – anyone – to pray for him, and a pastor was just someone who would naturally come to mind for anybody.

I lost an opportunity then, and I hope to never confine myself ever again when the opportunity arises. I prayed for him with Dietrich after I realized this, but it was too late to pray alongside him in his precious time of need.



Is church inside or outside today?

Which takes us back to the doorsteps. Did the teenager have it right when he equated church with counsel, even if it wasn’t on a Sunday, even if he had hit his girlfriend, even if his face was filled with tears, just as long as there was someone to listen?

I read somewhere that church is for non-members.

If this is true, then we have to be prepared to “be church” to them, outside these four walls. Outside, there is no microphone, no worship team, no sermon, and definitely no pastor to help you out.

Just you and a stranger.

When you mix the gospel, with a community filled with hurting people, and a doorstep to sit on, what do you get? A vision of a world in chaos? Or a hope of transformed lives?

This is Bethlehem.

“Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless;

maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.” Psalm 82:3 □

Ernest Chan, Administrator

# Safety in heart listening

By Dietrich Desmarais

**Out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks. Luke 6:45b**

We often don't know what is in our heart until we begin speaking. One of the difficulties in life is to find someone to listen to us so our hearts can open up and say what we are feeling. One of our primary roles in loving and caring for people at Bethlehem is to listen from our heart so that people can finally feel safe to say what they are thinking without fear of reprisal or embarrassment.

Recently one of our long term members came quietly and sat down beside me during the Sunday service. We have known him for the last 13 years and are friends. He informed me that he is now going back to school to get his grade 12 and that he is the oldest one in his class (mid 50's).

He was sharing his heart with me and his motive is to be a positive example to his chil-

dren and grandchildren. He said that the people in his class would quietly come to him and say he was an inspiration. I was so proud of him and felt honored to hear his heart.

He is an inspiration to me as well. He is an example in showing me that it is never too late to do the right thing. Please pray for him as he perseveres. Some of his greatest needs is to have enough money to buy lunches for school. It is our greatest privilege to honor him and encourage him to do well.

This is a big part of what Bethlehem is all about. These simple stories in our community are repeated over and over again through the sacrificial love that is demonstrated in each of our team members. Thank you for helping us with your prayers and support that allows us to extend the love of God in practical ways to this community.

Blessings to all, Dietrich and Edith ☐



*Youth on Lake Winnipeg during a staff retreat, which was themed 'Supernatural.'*



*Christmas Banquet which included games, skating, presents, and of course, fine dining.*

## Clothes bridge gap

By Jo-Ann Swenson, "Muffin Lady"



The last Thursday morning that the "muffin gang" went out on the streets before Christmas, the Lord orchestrated an amazing encounter right at the door of the church.

That Thursday, I was late, and just as I pulled up to the church, a young mother pulling her twin girls on a toboggan appeared from around the corner. One of the twins was screaming with cold, as her little hands were mittenless. I noticed the

mother's hands were also mittenless, so I asked, "Don't you have any mittens?" She replied, "I am on my way to buy some." Excitedly, I said, "No, come with me, we have LOTS of mittens, scarves and toques in the church." I invited them in, and we tugged her toboggan into the church.

The dear little children stopped crying, as we (Dee and I) warmed their little hands, put mittens on them, scarves around their necks, and toques on their heads. We gave the mother mittens for herself, a scarf and a toque. We also gave her a handful of muffins as well as some buns that were in the church. I said, "Jesus loves you very much, since He had me arrive at the church at the exact time you were coming by. A few minutes earlier or later and I would have missed you."

The young mother looked content and warm as we sent her and her dear little 2 year old twin girls on their way. We invited her to come back and fellowship with us on a Sunday, and she said she would.

I thank the Lord for orchestrating this encounter. Please continue to pray for us "the muffin gang" that we will be alert to what the Lord is showing us in the community and how we can share His Love in any way He wants.

I also want to thank the church group in Alberta who sent us a donation for the Muffin ministry. We are so thankful for the prayers of support and the economical support.

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40 ☐

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# bethlehem.ca

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