



Our vision at BAF is to be a house of prayer for ALL NATIONS  
Isaiah 56:7



Dietrich and Edith Desmarais

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

# Bethlehem

From the heart of

## A House

There is a large yellow sign that spans the side of our church with this scripture. Our vision is to be a beacon of hope through prayer and good deeds among Aboriginal people.

ALL NATIONS live in the inner city and attend B.A.F. The community experiences the church like a light-house in the storms of their life. We have also been known as an "oasis", a place of refuge, safety, and refreshment.

This weekend there has been a series of shootings right near the church. Violence strikes like lightning in the dark seas of hopelessness that swells up in people's hearts and lives. We make every effort to pray with people as they come and go through the various outreaches we have. Col 4:2 says "devote yourselves to prayer" and we desire to see God touch the hearts of people's brokenness through a prayer that fits like an apple of God in a setting of silver (Proverbs 25:11)

Your promptings and commitments to pray has kept us going more than you realize; we



## of Prayer

**Walking with the Lions**  
Dietrich and Edith recently travelled to Africa to attend their daughter's wedding, and to speak at a multi church conference

(Photo - left)

appreciate it! "Being in one place as a pastor for fourteen years is a form of success. Being in the inner city for fourteen years and remaining devoted adds to that feeling of success." I felt the Lord gave me His personal word of encouragement in these thoughts.

We deeply feel gratitude to you who've prayed for us and financially supported us on that journey: Thank you! Please keep praying and giving as we press on.

Blessings to you all,  
Love Dietrich and Edith

# Pentecost Sunday Bethlehem Becomes a Church

By Mary Mitchell

It is widely understood that on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) the church was born. How appropriate then, that on Pentecost Sunday, 2009, Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship held its first ever "Covenanting Service" and received into membership the first twenty-three members of our Bethlehem congregation!

With this brief ceremony, we have passed a significant milestone in our history. Until now, we have been gathering as a congregation of believers and seekers, to worship the Lord in whole-hearted commitment to Him, but with various degrees of commitment to one another, here at

Bethlehem. Now, this year, on May 31, twenty-three people joined hands and solemnly covenanted to become a united people, repeating together:

"As members of Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship, we covenant to live out the faith in Christ that we acknowledged at our baptism, by:

Being faithful to assemble together regularly, to worship God and learn more of His word;

Being faithful to serve the Lord by using the various spiritual gifts He has given us, for the advance of God's kingdom, according to the prayer He taught us



Being faithful to share generously, each according to the wealth given us by God, that His Name may be glorified. "

This was not a step taken lightly. Since last fall, we have been considering what it means to be a church. Pastor Dietrich started us off with a little sentence that we've been taking

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# A Love Winnipeg Story

## God's Love Softens Hearts

By Jo-Ann Swensen

With the coming of spring, "LOVE WINNIPEG" springs to life. What is "Love Winnipeg"? It's an annual event birthed by dozens of Winnipeg churches working together to show the Love of God to our city. This year, on June 6th, friends and members of Bethlehem rolled up their sleeves and spent the day serving our neighborhood in a spring cleanup. With technical and practical assistance from the Church of the Rock, our own youth leader, Jeremy, headed up a crew offering a variety of services to householders in the vicinity of Bethlehem: cleaning up winter garbage, removing graffiti, painting, doing minor repairs, planting flowers - - in short, serving any neighbours who were ready to welcome our folks into their yards, and doing whatever work needed to be done, including praying for those who asked for prayer.

In our small way, we wanted our neighbours to see that Jesus loves them, and His love is practical, when His people are following His lead.

Following the work time, the team re-assembled at Bethlehem to report, and to enjoy a supper lovingly prepared by two members who gave up their day to cook for the crew. The food was good, and the reports exciting:

A lady from the neighborhood watched with delight as we cut her grass, removed garbage, and planted spring blooms. When we asked if we could pray for her, she said "Yes, please do, I am going through tests to see if I have cancer." We prayed, and a beautiful smile lit up her face. A week later, when I paid a return visit to her, a big smile said it all. She told us, "I DON'T have CANCER!". We praised Jesus with her.

As we worked in one yard, all wearing our red shirts with the slogan "Love Winnipeg" written in bold letters across the front, a passerby stopped and asked very curiously, "What are you doing? I see all these red shirts".

One of the team explained how we were out expressing God's Love for people by doing yard work and planting flowers at no cost to the people. The passerby was amazed that God's people would do this.

A member of our crew had begun the day feeling pretty discouraged that over the past few weeks his service for the Lord hadn't seemed to be making any impact. But that evening, on returning to the church

for supper, he was bubbling with excitement. While working on someone's yard, the householder told him: "I've seen you walking by my yard lots of times and wondered where you were going. Now I see you freely helping me make my yard beautiful, and I have learned you are going to Bethlehem when you pass by my house. I've never really been interested in God, or church, but now my thoughts about church are changing. I think I may come to your church some day, and see for myself." Our crew member reported he had tears in his eyes as he said this.



## Youth Employment Program

### Blessing & Opportunity

By Beth Wilton

Darla and Cheyenne, coming no further than the staircase, peeked shyly around the corner to see what was going on. They had to be coaxed to come down the stairs and hand in their permission forms for Work Force. Sawyer and Ned came charging down the staircase, grabbed onto the pipes at eye level and swung themselves into the room landing with a thud, to present their permission forms.

Thus began another summer of Work Force, Bethlehem's employment ministry for 12 to 15 year olds in the neighbourhood. The teens work at businesses and for residents in the area and are paid minimum wage by the program. They gain confidence, build their self-esteem, begin to believe they can have a job one day and hear about Jesus in the process. Staff work hard at building relationships with these teens, being there for them, loving them and just generally walking their journey with them.

Often our "employers" are amazed at how well the youth do. Kids cut grass, stock shelves, organize videos, wash walls, play with pet store animals and a whole variety of entry-level jobs. Not only are there benefits to the teens, but the community also finds that the youth in the area, who often get such a bad rap, are capable of being an asset to their community. It is a win win situation. Youth for Christ and Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship work in partnership to run this program.

# The Saga of The Muffin Gang

By the "Muffin Lady", Jo-Ann Swenson

We have been out on the streets around Bethlehem for almost three years now, every Thursday morning, rain or shine, 30 below, or 30 above! I am so grateful to the Lord for giving us the courage and HIS LOVE to continue this outreach week after week.

A small group of about five women who have come faithfully during these years, praying as we go for PEACE for the neighbourhood, for HOPE for the hearts of the people, for God's LOVE to move into the hearts of each man, woman and child in the area. Lately we have experienced some amazing interventions from the Lord. Let me tell you about them:

## **Crack House Shut down by a Muffin Gang !**

One elderly lady lived next door to a crack house. We visited her weekly, praying that the Lord would shut down the crack house and restore peace to the neighborhood. One day we came, and the elderly lady said "They're gone!!!!" How we rejoiced with her!

## **The Lord's Timing is Perfect!**

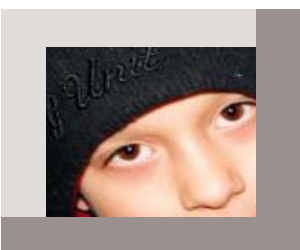
A week ago, as we visited this elderly lady, we found that she had FALLEN inside her house, and couldn't get up. Her door was locked and we couldn't get in, but the Lord had SENT us there that very morning shortly after she had fallen. After much hard work on her part, she managed to get the window open a crack so we could get the name of her son and his phone number. We called the son, and he was able to come, enter the house and send her by ambulance to hospital.

We were so thankful that we had been obedient to the Lord to go out that morning. If she had lain on the floor longer than a few hours, she might not have survived. Clearly, God in His Love saw this dear lady as she fell and sent the muffin gang to her house at just the right time.

*"God sees the little sparrows fall, it meets His tender view.*

*If God so loves the little birds, I know He loves me too".*

## **A Little Child Shall Lead Them**



Seven children from another part of the city wanted to come out into the streets with us and give out muffins. On their own, they decided to gather food and prepare hampers for some of the families in the neighborhood. In their own part of town, they went door to door. On May 30, they came to Bethlehem with 14 hampers of food they had gathered.

Joyfully they visited 4 families, giving what they had gathered.

It is a worldly saying "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach", but I believe that the way to a man's, woman's or child's heart can be by giving a muffin with God's Love. It is such a joy to meet the people. At other times during the week. When they see us coming, they respond by saying "it's the muffin ladies".

# A New Kind of Family

By Roger Stoesz

## Family of Singles

This ministry began in January 2008. Since then, we've been meeting on an average of once a month with a regular attendance of 15 people, ranging in age from their 20's to their 50's.

We've been careful to make it known that our purpose is not to be a "pick-up place" or a "dating service". Nevertheless, since the group began, three new couples (two of whom are now engaged) have come together!

At every meeting we remind folks of our purpose: to be a family. That's where we get our name - - The Family of Singles. Our goal at each formal gathering (though gatherings are not usually very formal) is to get to know each other, to learn together, and to have fun.

We have had a consistent group of people come, mostly from Bethlehem, but also with a small number of others. I've noticed that as we get to know each other, people are willing to ask questions that help them to shed their shells, and connect with others.

Discussions are focused around topics relevant to singles. We can tell when we have hit a relevant topic because there will be lots of sharing - so much so that we may have to cut the discussion short.

After the discussion, we play games. This is also an important part of the evening as it provides needed stress relief. Sometimes games can go on till one in the morning. We are challenged to find games that don't intimidate the folks who have not had opportunity for higher education. It's important that the whole group feel comfortable with each other, and enjoy working together. We want these meetings to be a springboard for other events that members of the group will organize themselves.

Debbie has taken initiative in this area, and has held several parties at her home. Some have simply been after church drop-ins. Louise too has extended hospitality, hosting a Christmas dinner and helping with activity planning.

# The Children of our Neighbourhood

By Mary Mitchell



Our neighborhood in the "North End" of Winnipeg is brimming over with children. Babies and toddlers accompany their mothers to our food bank, and it's amazing to see how even tiny children assist in lugging home the boxes and bags of food that help augment their family's diet. School aged children play on the streets after school hours. Many of them are responsible for looking after their younger siblings while parents are busy with other things. Adolescents tread a hazardous road in the north end. Money isn't easily earned, and street prostitution or inducements to join street gangs offer easy, but deadly, opportunities to make good money, or to find a sense of "belonging".

Recently we have all been hearing of the damage done to many Aboriginal youth through the residential school system. Certainly, parents who were never properly "parented" as young children lack the skills to parent their own kids today. Many try very hard to do it well, but it's an uphill battle. And then there seems to be an epidemic of FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome) that prevents its victims from thriving on a level playing field.

Yet there are wonderful kids in our neighbourhood. Bright, eager, capable of great things. And we, at Bethlehem, are struggling to find ways to minister to them with the love of Christ and the excellence they deserve. Debby has open house on Mondays after school where kids come to chat, play games, make (and of course, eat) cookies. Jo-Ann has a team of kids from another part of the city that pray for, and occasionally come to minister in the north end. Others among our congregation who love kids find ways to befriend individual children. One of these ways is to let a child who would like to attend a church service come and sit with them, under their supervision.

And what are our "formal" children's ministries?

This past year, Bethlehem decided that we had to stop relying on good friends from other churches to come and put on Sunday School programs for us.

Their help was valuable, and a blessing to us and to the neighbourhood children. But we wrestled with the concept that kids (all kids, but perhaps especially those in this neighbourhood) needed the consistency of the same teacher, week by week, and perhaps even a teacher whom they would see around their neighbourhood through the week. Not only that, but also from the point of view of our concept of "church" it became increasingly evident that God was calling our own people from this neighbourhood to serve the



## Who's Who

By Beth Wilton

Not everyone who is considered "staff" at Bethlehem is actually paid, or if they are, it may not necessarily be by Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship! Following is a fairly complete list of people who help BAF tick, run and twirl!

**Beryl Raven** heads up our weekly food bank. She is a volunteer, but is considered staff. She has been a long time attendee at BAF and her expertise regarding the area and people is very much valued.

**Louise Ablack** has joined us the last couple years and gives leadership to our weekly prayer ministry - "Banquet of Prayer". People from the neighbourhood, Winnipeg and even outlying areas attend for prayer. She raises her support/salary from people who believe in her and what she is doing.

**Deirdre Peters** is the church secretary and is the first voice you'll hear when you phone. She has her fingers in a million necessary pies! She partially raises her support and is also funded by a CBM grant.

**Mary Mitchell** is in charge of staff care, Sunday school and has recently become our new Board Chair. She volunteers her time.

**Doug Sinclair** (*Photo*) is our church caretaker, security, board member and a long time attendee at BAF. His position is funded by a CBM grant.

**Jeremy Zehr** works with the youth in the area as well as running a conflict management group for junior highs, in partnership with a local jr. high school. He raises his support/salary through Youth For Christ, and is considered staff with BAF as well as YFC!

**Teresa Zehr** (Mrs. Jeremy) heads up BAF's youth church and youth group and spends a lot of time with youth in the area. She also raises her support/salary through Youth for Christ who partners with BAF.

**Roger and Dana Stoez** head up a dynamite young adults ministry as well as mentor/counsel people from the church. They do this on a volunteer basis.

**Jo-Ann Swenson**, along with a few other women, started reaching out to people in the neighbourhood by giving those they met on the streets a muffin and prayer, and soon the "Muffin Ministry" was born. She is also involved in the Thursday night Banquet of Prayer. She raises her support/salary to do this.

**Peter Boothroyd** for many years has been leading our worship at Sunday services. He does this on a volunteer basis.

**Debby Smit** owns a very large house in the area and hosts many BAF events, meetings, children and youth and is a great community contact, as she is well known. She also has had a number of church people live with

# The Children of our Neighbourhood

Who's  
Who



(Continued from page 4)

her, from time to time. She is the Short-term Missions Coordinator, and raises her support/salary.

**Kim Bochinski** is a professional counsellor who works with some of the people in the area and offers us her wisdom when needed. She is a volunteer.

**Rosemarie Mauer** is our new grant writer who spends hours finding us money to run our ministries as well as the upkeep/repair of our historical church building. She is paid staff.

**Beth Wilton** (Photo) oversees the youth ministry, particularly the summer employment program called Work Force for youth in the area. She is staff at Youth for Christ and BAF and also raises her support/salary.

**Dietrich Desmarais** is our pastor - shepherd, teacher, prayer warrior, healer of hearts and brains and is the driving force behind BAF. It was his dream and God's enabling that got BAF off the ground. He raises his support/salary as well as being funded by a CBM grant.

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people of this neighbourhood. And so began a long road for us to build, and learn to run our own Christian Education program for "our" children.

We began in the fall, and have made our share of mistakes. By God's grace, we now have two couples who team teach on alternate Sundays. They are inexperienced as teachers, but terrific at working with kids, and the program is gradually coming together. We struggle with irregular attendance, occasional bouts of so much excitement the kids can't settle down to learn, little siblings that need to be looked after and so must be brought along. But our teachers are "hanging in".

To support their efforts, one of our church members has organized a prayer team who meet regularly by phone to pray for our "Children's Church". I know they would welcome your support in joining your prayers to theirs. Please pray for the kids of our neighbourhood, and for those who devote their time, energy and courage to teach them.

## Pentecost Sunday

(Continued from page 1)

to heart ever since: "This building is not the church; the people are the church." Sunday by Sunday, line upon line and precept upon precept, we have been adding to that

idea what the scriptures teach us

about being united as the people of God, His church. For some, in this age of individualism, the commitment has not come easily, but finally, by God's grace, we "get it." And now that the initial step has been taken, others are beginning to discuss when they too, might join with the original twenty-three.

This first Covenanting service at Bethlehem completes a year of transformation that began last spring, when Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship transitioned from governance by an external board to governance by one internal to our own congregation. We are a newborn, baby "church", and we need the prayers of you, who read this report, that we may grow in grace and wisdom, and mature in our calling to be one people - - a light to lighten the gentiles in the north end of Winnipeg. To God be the glory!



Mary Mitchell

## Bethlehem Becomes a Church



[bethlehem.ca](http://bethlehem.ca)

Please make all support cheques payable to: Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship, 294 Burrows Ave. Winnipeg, MB R2W 1Z6. If they are designated funds, please indicate on a separate piece of paper and not on the cheque. To donate online please go to our website.