

ANNUAL REPORT – BRIDGES OF LOVE MINISTRY SOCIETY

August 22, 2005

'Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.'

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Tonight, I would like to invite you to join me on a walk. The Bible is a list of unforgettable walks. The first one was taken by Jesus himself, who used to walk in the garden in the cool of the day, but as a general rule, He asked people to walk with Him.

Peter was a great example of someone who took a walk with the Lord. His walk stood as an invitation to everyone who, like him, wants to step out in faith, who wants to experience something more of the power and presence of God. Unlike Peter, I have not walked on water but I have experienced what can happen when God calls an ordinary person to engage in an act of extraordinary trust, and that of following Him into the unknown.

God has a habit of asking people to do things that are often fearful to them. There is always resistance. There is always a decision. There is always a changed life. Those who say yes to God's call don't walk the walk perfectly—not by a long shot. But because they say yes to God, they learn and grow, even from their failures. They become part of His actions to redeem the world.

The past year of building 'Bridges of Love' has taught me so much on following the Lord on His Divine Adventure. It has not been an easy journey but through the ups and downs I know I am where God wants me. With knees shaking and voice quivering....I continue to say in obedience and love for Him...yes, Lord! I have been seeking His very best for my life and like Peter; I made a choice to get out of the boat and to completely surrender my life for God's Service and for His Glory.

Back in January 2004, I had a little insight into what God can do with a life that is completely His. I had a great passion for serving, had written a 23 page ministry plan called Bridges of Love, but I didn't know what to do with it. After waiting for a few weeks and praying for God's direction, on Tom's prompting I emailed it to Murray Moerman, Chair of Vision Canada, now known as the National Evangelism Partnerships. He phoned me from Vancouver a few days later and asked to meet the following week when he was in Calgary. A few weeks after our conversation, Murray asked me to join Vision Canada as their Compassion Track Coordinator. I will never forget the day this call came. I was so excited as I knew I was in for something special because God was in charge.

Being part of the National Evangelism Partnerships has been a great gift as I have met so many people through my involvement with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. My mandate with the NEP is to build partnerships and mobilize like-minded individuals across Canada to demonstrate the Love of Christ.

We attend Round Table Discussions each 6 months where we share in our roles as part of a group of 10 tracks. I am very pleased to have Wayne Whitbourne, the Director of Action Ministries as part of the Compassion Team as well as David Collins, the Director of Canadian Food for the Hungry.

Not long after Murray's phone call, he asked if I would like to attend a Micah Challenge meeting in Toronto. I had no idea what this was all about, but once again I was excited and like Cinderella, I went off to the 'ball'. And a 'Ball' it was!! Sitting around a board table at EFC's building in Markham were Bruce Clemenger and many others representing different areas of ministry? My knees were indeed shaking as we made introductions, but God gave me His Strength and Courage to make it through this initial meeting.

Upon returning home, I received an email from Michael Smitheram, who led the meeting and is the International Coordinator for the Micah Challenge. The letter was directed to those on the Facilitation Team for Canada, and here I was part this Team. For over a year now I have participated in monthly conference calls with our group of 8, who have been working on fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals and Mobilizing Christians across Canada against Poverty. A year later, my responsibilities have expanded; as Chair, responsible for Mobilization.

My involvement with the National Evangelism Partnerships with EFC, and the Micah Challenge has been a wonderful experience and even though I still feel very insecure with my new roles, I am learning to trust the Lord more each day. I remind myself daily, that this is His Ministry, and He will look after the details. I must let go to allow Him to His work in His way and in His Timing.

July 23rd, 2004 marked the Incorporation of Bridges of Love Ministry as a Society. Herb Arnold joined the Board and graciously accepted the position of Chair. Not only is he a valued friend but he is also an accomplished bridge builder. A friend of over 30 years, Louise Post, who lives in Guelph, ON. also joined the Team. She was very interested in building bridges with her own church. Louise has given me much support through her prayers & Friendship. Tom, my husband and greatest supporter, has acted as secretary, treasurer, and encourager. I could not have pursued this ministry if he had not given me permission to answer God's Call on my life. The road has not always been smooth, but he has encouraged me to never give up.

The **Vision Statement** for Bridges of Love says:

To influence the Christian life to be expanded beyond self-interest to the greater concerns of the community and world around them. To embrace the Great Commandment, to 'Love our Neighbour' and to display living proof of Christ's Love through passionate acts of service. To assist Pastors personally embracing the higher goal of influence, with churches redesigning their structures, with lay people rediscovering the real Christian life. To transform the church back to a 'guiding light' of influence and love within their communities.

As I reread my Vision Statement that was written almost 2 years ago, the focus for Bridges of Love has not changed. My involvement with NEP and the Micah Challenge has enlarged my territory but the vision and goals have remained unchanged.

Before, I introduce further events over the past year, I want to acknowledge and thank St. John Lutheran Church for inviting me to share their facility. I know that this is another gift from the Lord as only He could place a Ministry called "Bridges of Love" in Bridgeland. I am so very grateful for the kind generosity of this church and I am honoured to have my office there.

The Lord prepared me for building Bridges of Love, by giving me hands on experience at a position that I held at NeighbourLink Calgary. I spent a year learning to love the unlovely and I experienced the great rewards that come from serving in love. I learned that following Christ's call to mission leads to a kingdom mindset more than a church mindset which ultimately leads to strength within the body. This not only enriches lives, but establishes and strengthens relationships in the neighbourhoods which in turn build stronger communities. Strong communities build a more compassionate city of people who benefit from the rewards gained from fulfilling the Great Commandment. My aim, therefore with building Bridges of Love, has been to be a link and to facilitate action between concerned and compassionate believers and hurting and often needy people in their communities.

Almost a year ago, my first initiative to promote this concept, "**Country Love.**" was held in the beautiful Town and Country Hall in Airdrie. Jack Jackson and his band, Miriam Dreher – gold winning yodeler and Byn Thiessen, Country Poet participated in this outreach event.

Each denomination in Airdrie was invited to participate by inviting their communities to an evening of music, fellowship and fun. They were supplied with posters, bulletin inserts, and tickets. Each church was visited to gain involvement and support. Tom and I attended the churches in Airdrie over the summer to build relationships and trust. The ladies were asked to assist with apple pies for the intermission for our time of fellowship.

It was a wonderful evening and Jack not only gave us first class music but as a Pastor he gave a message of hope and love. It was a very special time. Whether it succeeded as an outreach event...I am not so sure, but it was a beginning and it taught me that those who don't know Christ love to see churches working together.

Public speaking has always been one of my great fears throughout my life. I was definitely more of a Martha than a Mary and enjoyed being in the background. God has broken my fear of this phobia however, as last October I was asked to give my testimony at Hyme Tyme. I can only give God the Glory for taking away this fear and I look forward to further opportunities to share my faith and journey.

A book that inspired Bridges of Love was written by Pastor Robert Lewis, from Little Rock, Ark. called, The Church of Irresistible Influence. I was fortunate to attend their conference a year ago May in Little Rock. I saw first hand the bridges that have been built because of churches uniting their efforts to build loving relationships in their communities. Not only have they partnered with other churches but they have impacted their government with Christ's Love.

An essential element that I learned from Robert's book was that Prayer had to be the catalyst for starting the process of building bridges. He gathered Pastors to pray for God's guidance on how they could collectively impact their communities. Bonhoeffer, in his book – The Cost of Discipleship reminded me that we have no business or right to be reaching into our communities until we are praying for our communities.

This had been a concern, as I built Bridges of Love, as I wasn't sure how to unite Pastors to pray. I didn't have to worry, however, as God had it all under control. It wasn't long until He placed me on the committee for the City Wide Prayer Rally and last week I had lunch with David Peddie, who started the City Wide Prayer Rally, and David Macfarlane who is leading Celebration 2006. We were discussing how important prayer is and how necessary it is for

events such as Celebration. We are now working on a strategy for building prayer into this initiative.

For those who know me well, you will relate with how we won't be in conversation very long before I am recommending a book that has touched my heart. I have quite a roster of books on my shelf that have impacted my life. One such book is '**Who Cares About Love**', by Dr's. Win and Charles Arn'. I started writing to Charles about 6 months ago and then invited him to Calgary to present his course '**Growing in Love.**' This past May we had 6 denominations take part in a day long seminar. He taught that love is a **choice** and love is **action**. Leaders who attended the seminar are now taking Chip's 13 week workshop back to the church to teach others in their congregations on how to become more intentional in building loving relationships. Dr. Arn has proven in his study, Church Growth Ratios, that loving churches are growing churches.

I feel that this course is God's very simple formula for building His Church. We need a passionate LOVE for the Lord, as it can't help spill unto those we meet. I would like to promote this course across Canada and Chip has offered to join on this venture. He has suggested that I conduct a similar survey to the one that he and his Father did in the US. After the survey is completed, he has offered to co-author a book on our results.

Presently, I am seeking funding to pursue this project with Chip. He has been very generous in helping me build Bridges of Love and I appreciate his kindnesses but I want to raise the necessary support before I step out. I am also in dialogue with the National Evangelism Partnerships to see if this would be a fit with their mandate. Murray feels it could be so I continue to seek guidance for the next step.

On the same day that I had the 'Growing in Love' seminar, **Cross the Bridge** was introduced. Cross the Bridge was my first Fund Raising Event and it was held at the Dream Centre. We were very blessed to have Charles Arn, T.V. Thomas, Geoff Tunnicliffe, and David Macfarlane share their stories on building loving relationships across Canada, the US and beyond.

It was a very special evening and as an extra blessing, Art Hanger, MP for Calgary NE, surprised me with a lovely tribute. I know that I have not accomplished all that he expressed in this tribute but God Willing, someday I will.

In appreciation of the caring efforts of Marg Pollon.

Your willingness to unselfishly give your time and your commitment to others has not gone unrecognized. Your devotion in persuading individual Christians, Churches and Ministries to work together to build strong, caring and loving relationships is not only admirable but honourable. The eagerness you have demonstrated will always remain in the hearts of our community and your dedication and commitment has set an example for others to follow.

Art Hanger, M.P. Calgary Northeast

He closed the letter with Galatians; Chapter 6, Verses 9-10.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. There, as we have opportunity let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

My prayer continues that I will never be satisfied with less than the Lord's best. I know that I have chosen the road less travelled and as Robert Schuler said, this road will be 'risky', 'long', 'bumpy' and 'lonely'. How true! The verse from Isaiah 40:31, however, keeps me encouraged:

...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint.

Soaring...isn't something that comes naturally nor is it easy. I have learned to follow Christ one day at a time, trusting Him for the impossible. As I continue to run the race I know that the person I am becoming in Jesus Christ is my greatest gift to others.

I thank God for allowing me to experience this Divine Adventure, and I look forward to sharing this journey with others, as we soar together to build **Bridges of Love**.

A Prayer for Our Journey Together

Holy Father, teach us to burn while hot with ambition and great dreams that are God-given and grace-induced. Make us ambitious for **Your** agenda and **Your** glory. Use us to bring hope and life and relief from suffering in ways beyond our wildest dreams. And yet, throughout this journey, do an even deeper work within our hearts. Sanctify us. Grant us pure motives. And help us, every step of the journey, to long to please You more than impress people.

O Holy Father, give us Holy Ambition!

Lord, we want to change our world and honour You, but we fear we will do it in our own strength, in our own flesh, and do it to meet our personal needs.

O Holy Father, give us Holy Ambition!

Even as we long to make an impact, we also long for comfort and peace. We're tempted to stay where it seems safe even though we know that our only real security comes only from You. We long for significance, but we fear stepping out to make a difference.

O Holy Father, give us Holy Ambition.

by Chip Ingram,
Author of Holy Ambition

Submitted with much Love,
Marg Pollon
Founder, Bridges of Love Ministry Society