

# BRIDGES OF LOVE MINISTRY SOCIETY

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### Executive Director's Report - August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007

*"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."  
Zephaniah 3:17*

As I re-read my first Annual Report written three years ago, it said..."Would you like to take a walk as I follow Christ in His Great Adventure?" 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—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 few years have certainly been an adventure and the road God has taken this ministry is certainly one that I could never have anticipated. The path has not always been clear and smooth but it has been a time of growth both spiritually and learning to navigate through this ministry. The learning curve has often been one where I have been stretched beyond my comfort zone taking us into unfamiliar waters but the words in Zephaniah 3:17 have given great comfort and carried us through.

Let me share the high-lites from the past year.

#### **1. "Living it Out"... Love is ACTION**

After my return from Africa last July, I took some time to unfold what I had learned at the Vision Conference and all that I experienced from a culture that vastly changed my worldview. I knew that God had a reason for taking me on this trip so I wanted the memories and lessons learned to be captured. I spent a few months working on a 4 week-workshop called "Living it Out"...Love is ACTION. It encapsulates so much of what God has taught me since I started Bridges of Love; drawing from my great appetite for reading good books to the life experiences since being a follower of Christ. Topics covered in this document are 'Love', 'Compassion', the 'Biblical Worldview', the 'Mystery of Community', 'Is Church a Relevant Institution?', and ends with 'Christians in Times of Pandemic/Disaster.' Warmest thanks to Dr. Wayne Elford who gave guidance and assisted with the proof reading and to Dr. Bill and Sharon Bieber who shared ideas for this document. My prayer is that this study will teach and then drive to action, what God has called each of us to in His Great Commandment. That is to Love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbour as our self.

#### **2. Micah Challenge**

My duties as Mobilization Chair for the Micah Challenge were completed last August but my position was not immediately filled so Paul Robinson, the National Coordinator invited me to continue on with the monthly conference calls and I attended the National meeting at World Vision in Toronto last May. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has taken over the lead of this initiative. At this meeting we were asked for commitments of time and resources and I pledged ten per cent of Bridges of Love's activities to this Global initiative. The message of Micah 6:8 "What does the Lord require of you... *To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God,* is one that continues to resonate in my heart.

### 3. Charity Status

For those who attended our last Annual Meeting, you will recall that Bridges of Love had applied for Charity Status May, 2006. Herb kindly helped with this process and just before leaving for Africa we submitted our request to the CRA. A month before Christmas we received word that we did not fulfill all the requirements but were given the option to make an 'appeal'. After spending many hours and gathering a rebuttal to their queries, the application was resubmitted before their Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> dead-line. One of the objections that Pandemic Preparedness was not a Religious Activity was addressed and even though it was a disappointment not to be granted Charity Status quickly, I know that the time spent on the appeal, helped clarify our mandate and bring it into clearer focus. The CRA seemed satisfied with the appeal. Before granting the Charitable Status, however, they have requested the Society objectives be stated more concretely and they asked that one slight change to the Dissolution Clause in the By-laws be made to more closely align with the CRA requirements.

The new objectives adopted for Bridges of Love are:

- To educate and instruct religious leaders and their parishioners on emergency preparedness and the church's role in pandemic situations.
- To preach and advance the teachings of the Christian faith and the religious tenets, doctrines, observances and culture associated with that faith.

The new objectives and the change in the 'Dissolution Clause' were accepted at a Special General Meeting of the Board and have been approved by the Alberta Government Registry. The documents have now been sent to Ottawa (CRA) and we are optimistic that Bridges of Love will soon be a Charitable Society. I have been told the Religious Order Charity Status is the most difficult to receive approval so I know that God has helped with the process and given the wisdom to bring it to fruition.

Having to raise ones support has not been an easy task and it is a humbling activity to be sure. I see the value in having this as part of a ministry; however, as it teaches one to trust God one day at a time to provide what is needed to complete the task that He has given. God has indeed been faithful and the donations that have come in over the past year have been sufficient to accomplish all that was undertaken. Thank you to those who have given so faithfully as it has been a great blessing and encouragement.

### 4. Bridges of Love Song

Steven MacDonald from Burnaby, who is a Board member, has written a lovely song called 'Bridges of Love'. I wish he were here to play it for us but it is a very special song and when we have extra funds available we hope to have it recorded.

### 5. Pandemic Preparedness and a Church Response

My plate has been very full this past year and the main focus has been on 'Pandemic Preparedness; and mobilizing the church to stand in the gap for this impending threat. Many opportunities have opened to allow for this message to be shared in different venues. The most ambitious undertaking was a National **Faith Community Summit on Pandemic Preparedness and Response**. This event took place in Winnipeg – June 20/21 and was a collaboration between the Canadian Mennonite University and the International Centre for Infectious Diseases. I was fortunate to be part of the Planning Committee. This initiative was very well received by the Faith Communities, Government and Health Authorities across Canada and it fulfilled the two goals set out: (Please see attachment of a Press Release of this National Initiative)

- To ensure the faith community is effectively integrated into pandemic response structures before pandemic occurs; and,
- To create a meaningful dialogue between faith community members to create proactive, responsible and meaningful pandemic strategies

This was an excellent first step to engage the faith community in being prepared for influenza out-break but now there is much work ahead to keep the momentum moving forward. We are seeking continued opportunities across Canada to offer further education and practical hand-ones resources. A copy of the DVD of the Summit presentations was sent to all denominations across Canada and also to those who were speakers and participants. The feed-back has been very encouraging.

The Guide that Tim and I co-authored almost two years ago has been revisited and up-dated and it continues to be used. We have had letters of appreciation as it has served as a starting point for many churches and organizations. I have also written another shorter version called “**A Church Response**” **Pandemic Preparedness...Reconnecting the Church with the Community**. This material is included in the resource packs available to Calgary churches.

Recently, a letter was submitted to the **Mission Fests** across Canada to offer this topic for the upcoming sessions. The Mission Fests take place in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax. Two cities have responded with a positive reply but decisions are not made until the fall. If I am accepted as a presenter, it would be a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness from coast to coast. My acceptance will be contingent upon funds being available for travel.

Other venues where I have been able to share on this subject were: The Miracle Channel on “**Insight**” and Dale Lang did an interview last summer on his program “**On the Edge**”. As well, this past June after the conference, while I was still in Winnipeg, Willard Thiessen from the program “**It’s a New Day**” did an interview which will be aired this fall. Articles have also been written by the Calgary Herald and City Light News. At Mission Fest Vancouver I sat on a panel discussion with Dr. Tim Foggin and two other doctors from the Fraser Health Region. Thanks to Dr. John Lucas, I had a booth in both the Winnipeg and Edmonton Mission Fests

In March, I was invited to speak on Pandemic Preparedness at a community event in Bridgeland called “**Meet, Greet, Listen, and Learn**”. Representatives from the City Pandemic Planning, the Regional Health Pandemic Planning and Disaster Social Services were invited to participate in a panel discussion. Nine Churches of different denominations and the Bridgeland community were invited for this informative time. Resources from the City were shared with those who attended. The Health Region and DSS have been very generous in sharing materials with us.

The Global Day of Prayer partnered with Bridges of Love and Celebration 2007 (EFC) on the 90 Days of Blessings. It is called “**Waves of Blessings**” and this initiative will be an on-going process that will go beyond the 90 days. As part of this event, I was invited to speak at the Gathering Community Church in Bowness (thanks to Barbara Dodds) who gave an hour to share this topic with their congregation. It was a great evening so I hope to have similar opportunities to share & raise awareness with other congregations.

## **6. Bridge Maintenance and Repair**

Since Bridges of Love’s mandate is to enhance religion one topic that we feel would be valuable to offer to Pastors is “**Forgiveness and Reconciliation**” Dr. Charles Stanley, Pastor Dale Lang and Pastor Les Stahlke from Edmonton have been invited to give a seminar/workshop on a subject that is often neglected and misunderstood. This seminar is scheduled for October 19 and 20 and will be offered to Pastors and church leaders. Les has written books on Church Governance. Dale has a Pastor’s Biblical perspective as well as personal experiences to share after the tragic shooting of his son. Samaritan’s Purse has very kindly offered their facility—free of charge. I am still in conversation with Dr. Stanley’s office but Dale and Les have agreed to participate so we can proceed with these two excellent presenters.

## **7. Volunteer Work**

- Board Member of the **Calgary NE Electoral District Association**. It has been a great honour to be part of Art Hanger’s Board. We appreciate your kind support of this ministry Art and thank you so much for taking time from your busy schedule to attend this meeting.

- Board Member (Secretary) of the **Alberta Council of Global Cooperation** (ACGC). I have appreciated three years on the Executive and have grown in my understanding of International Partnerships and the operation of CIDA.
- The **Calgary Evangelical Ministerial Association** (CEMA) has invited me to continue on the Executive even though my term as Treasurer was up. I have taken on the new position of Member Care which affords an opportunity to connect with Calgary Pastors.

## 8. Board Members

It has been a great encouragement to have **Herb Arnold** as the Board Chair since Bridges of Love began. He has kindly agreed to stay on for another year so thank you so much Herb for your support and commitment to this ministry. Also, **Steven MacDonald** from Burnaby and **Louise Post** from Guelph have agreed to continue on for another year. Unfortunately, we are losing one member as **Pastor Todd Harris** has accepted a call to a Minneapolis Church so he has stepped down after his two year involvement. We will miss Todd's presence as we valued His Godly perspective and direction for this ministry. We are very pleased to welcome **Don Ford** on as Director and Financial advisor. He has given much time to input the financials into Quick books as well as shown great patience teaching me how to navigate through this program. He also gave valuable input for the Charity Financial Statement. Don has certainly been an answer to prayer as we have been asking God to provide someone with accounting expertise to join the board. Thank you Pastor Paras for making this introduction to Don. Lastly I thank **Tom**, my husband, who continues to stand along side, being there to pray, encourage and listen. He has certainly given sacrificially in support of Bridges of Love.

I also want to thank Carlene Galenkamp who spent many hours molding photos taken of special events into a beautiful collage. She has done a lovely job with her scrape booking talents so please drop my office to see her works of art.

I once again warmly thank St. John Lutheran Church for continuing to provide office space. It truly is my home away from home and they have been so very kind and generous to have Buddy and me!

As I look back on the past three years, I thank the Lord for the open doors and opportunities to serve Him. I have grown to trust Him one day at a time as I see Him working things through for His Glory. I know only through His Authority and Power can we accomplish the tasks for which He has called this ministry.

Jesus was a daring bridge builder. Against his own overwhelming odds, he imagined a bridge of unprecedented spiritual influence—one that could span a chasm roaring with skepticism, indifference, hostility, even persecution. He imagined a bridge able to connect his people—"my church," to a disbelieving, disinterested world.

Jesus said... ***"Follow me"***, he would say, and ***I will make you fishers of men.***  
 ... ***"You are the light of the world"***, he would teach, ***shine in the darkness.***  
 ... ***"You are the salt of the earth"***, he declared, ***make a tasteful difference.***

Nothing, he believed, would prevail against the power of the church. By exhibiting, through everyday humanity, his life and love to the world, Jesus expected the church to supernaturally attract all men to God: If I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. Pastor Robert Lewis

May we fulfill Jesus' Dream by building Bridges of Love, linking God's purposes for the church, with the real needs of the world demonstrating, ***Living Proof of a Loving God.***

Respectively Submitted:

Marg Pollon  
 Executive Director  
 August 11, 2007