

Executive Director's Report

October 19,

2017

A familiar scripture that came to mind as I gathered my thoughts for this year's Annual Report was Romans 8:28. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* This has indeed been a year of uncertainties but we continue to trust God for His plan to unfold...

**BRIDGES OF
LOVE ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING**

***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.”***

Romans 8:28

God works in “all things” – not just isolated incidents -- for our good. The past year has been one of waiting on Him and trying to discern His Will for Bridges of Love. It has not been an easy time as we waited on His timing. An answer came with provisions provided through a Rocky View County Grant but we could not have anticipated the challenges which were ahead.

Before I recap this past fiscal year’s activity, however, I would like to acknowledge and thank our Board for their continued involvement. We thank Lois Reid for continuing on as Board Chair even though she has had a busy year with a new job and caring for an aging Mother. Thank you Lois. Unfortunately, we lost Peter McManus mid-year due to other commitments that he became involved. Tom continues to help in all areas so his support is a blessing. We did not pursue other board members since our direction has been uncertain.

Our first meeting in August 2016 came with news that St. John Lutheran Church was considering the sale of their facility to a church (Calvary Grace Baptist Church) that had been renting space for the past few years. The writing had been on the wall for some time due to an aging and declining population. News came in the New Year that it had indeed been sold with Calvary taking possession the middle of February. After months of waiting to hear our fate, we received a letter saying we would need to vacate our office by the end of June. After 14 years renting from St. John, it was sad news. After so many years and much activity we had accumulated a great deal so the packing began immediately in anticipation of the move.

A strategy was in the works, however, for some time to broaden our ministry and CERT training to Southern Alberta so our focus was on beginning a new work in this part of the Province. During the summer (2016) Tom and I visited four cities to test the waters and garner support. We spoke with the Emergency Manager in Lethbridge who turned us over to the Mayor. Mayor Spearman very kindly wrote a letter of support for our training being welcomed to their city. We also spoke with Taber, MD of Taber, and Medicine Hat. The response was all positive so we planned a move to Southern Alberta as soon as our condo sold. We stepped out in faith when the Calgary selling market softened; by putting an offer to rent a home in Nobleford, AB (20 minutes from Lethbridge) until we were able to purchase when our condo sold. Unfortunately, the owners decided to sell the property before closing, the rent to own contract. Purchasing in a more affordable location, our hope was to secure a larger residence, where Bridges of Love could also be housed. In the meantime, the contents of our office has been stored in our son’s garage.

With the downturn in the economy in the New Year, it was getting more difficult to sell, so we had to put our move and training in Southern Alberta on hold. We prayed for God to open the doors that He wanted opened and then we tried to be patient as we waited for his timing. It was as if God told us to take a number and move to the back of the line, however, as months passed with little movement on our proposed plan.

I appreciated the opportunity to attend AEMA’s Stakeholders Summit in November 21-22 in Edmonton. The speakers are always excellent and I felt it was important to have a presence at these events.

March 8 a presentation was given at the Lethbridge Evangelical Ministerial Association's luncheon. It went very well with 35 pastors and ministry leaders attending. They seemed interested in FEPI and CERT so we were encouraged and affirmed the possibility that Lethbridge would be a good place to relocate.

Two additional events we participated in were Rocky View County's Wild Fire Exercise held on April 29 in Bragg Creek, and Disaster Alley, May 6 in Calgary. We were happy to be included in Rocky View County's event but unfortunately, the community response was not there so it was pretty quiet. We did have some positive news, however, when leaving their Emergency Social Services Manager said they might have some funding for us. We left with a smile on our faces!!



As in previous years, Disaster Alley was a great event with hundreds stopping by to play our "Emergency Wheel of Fortune". Our new wheel was a hit with young and old alike. It was a beautifully warm day so it brought out many visitors so Tom and I were kept very busy.

Southview Centre also extended an invitation to set up a booth for their Emergency Preparedness Fair. Since we were busy with Disaster Alley, we asked our CERT grads if anyone wished to help with this event. Cameron Nikitiuk stepped up and he had a great time representing Bridges of Love (CERT). He indicated it was a very positive experience.



We have been encouraged by the positive comments from attendees at the various events. One lady at the Rocky View County exercise gave me a hug saying "finally communities are getting involved and realize the necessity for being prepared and trained."

As mentioned earlier, Rocky View County did contact us regarding their Cultivating Communities Benefit Grant and we were encouraged to apply. The application dead-line was June 1 so an application was submitted before that date. On June 13, we received the good news that we were awarded a \$5000 grant from Rocky View County to conduct a CERT Summit and the funds arrived a week later. We were so excited to have support from the County as we knew this was the key to a positive response from the community.

We started preparations immediately, with a venue chosen in the Bragg Creek Community Centre. Since they gave such a great price for their facility we had extra funds available to invite an out-of-Province Key-note Speaker, Anthony Furey who is a Syndicated Journalist and Broadcaster from Toronto. He had just completed a book entitled, "Pulse Attack." Electromagnetic Pulse is a very relevant topic for this time. On June 21, Anthony was invited to be our Key-note Speaker for the Rocky View County CERT Summit and a week later he accepted our invitation. The presenters were all notified and invited to participate in the Rocky View County CERT Summit. Each one gave a positive response that they were pleased to participate. With the venue, key-note speaker, and presenters all set, posters were made for the CERT training which were distributed in July to Rocky View County offices. We were on our way to providing first class training to a district we felt were primed after participating in several of their events setting the stage for a very successful Summit.

Unfortunately, our joy turned to confusion, as my contact from the County asked to meet, saying she had 9 Council members breathing down her neck. I was told that they were upset that the funds had gone to a ministry so she needed more information about Bridges of Love. After an hour conversation, all seemed well as we parted company that day. Little did I know, this was just the tip of the ice-berg... and brings a close to our fiscal year end. Stay tuned!

SUMMARY

Over the past 14 years we have seen many changes and growth in our ministry. We can look back and see how God provided the people and resources for each phase. We are most appreciative for God's provisions and for each one who has served and given sacrificially to build Bridges of Love.

"God is never late; he's seldom early; he's always right on time", is the title for a book I am reading. The author affirms the importance of focusing on God and not on our problems. We seek only to do the will of God, saying...

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.

Marg Pollon, Founding Director – October 19, 2017