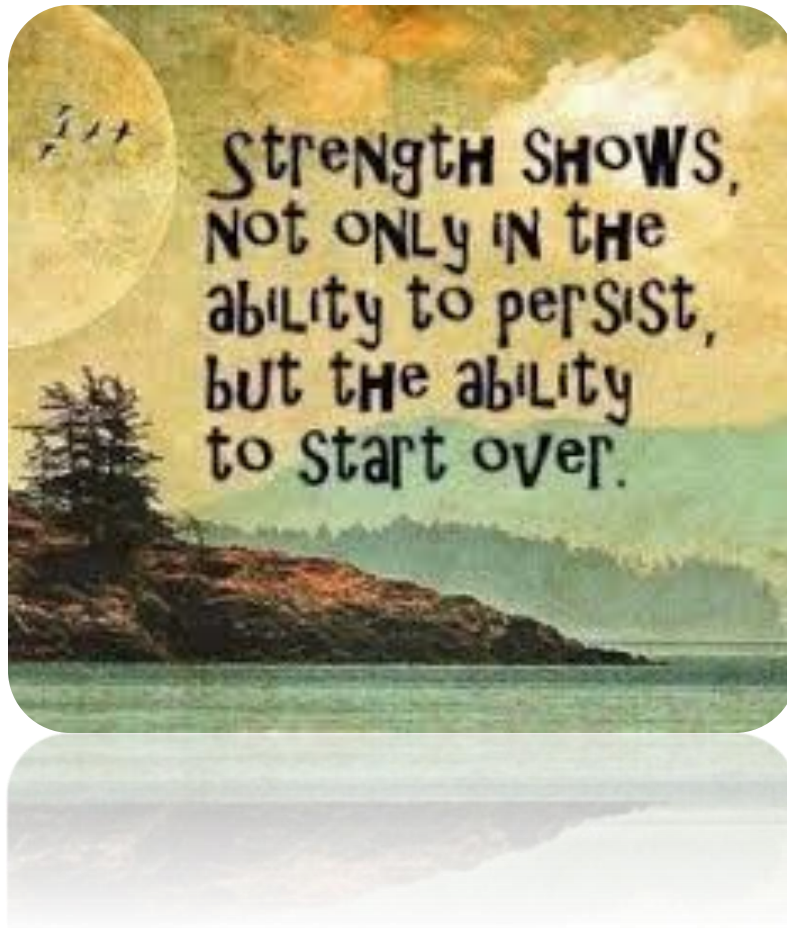


Bridges of Love Ministry Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

August 1, 2018 - July 31, 2019



**"THERE ARE FAR, FAR BETTER THINGS AHEAD
THAN ANY WE LEAVE BEHIND"**

C.S. Lewis

Executive Director's Report

September 24, 2019

2019

The great thing about faith in God is that it keeps a man undisturbed in the midst of disturbance.

Wisdom from Oswald Chambers

**BRIDGES OF LOVE'S
ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING**

“Ministering in everyday opportunities that surround us does not mean we select our own surroundings—it means being God’s very special choice to be available for use in any of the seemingly random surroundings which He has engineered for us. The very character we exhibit in our present surroundings is an indication of what we will be like in other surroundings.”

Oswald Chambers ~

- **Expanding Bridges of Love**

Our move to Claresholm July 4, 2018 was one accompanied with great excitement and expectations for expanding and strengthening our ministry. We conducted due diligence before moving Bridges of Love to Southern Alberta making a presentation to the Claresholm Ministerial and making introductions to the Willow Creek Emergency Manager, Travis Coleman. He shared they had nothing like CERT in their locality so he felt they would support our training. Due to a facility for sale that appeared perfect for our application; we felt it was a green light to relocate to Claresholm, after selling our Calgary condo.

Fund-raising efforts had begun early in the New Year with hopes to purchase a former Law Office that was perfect for Bridges of Love’s head-quarters. The price was affordable with extra office space that could be rented to small charities to generate additional income. *“Operation Stone Soup”* was put into action with a few small donations coming in. Since we could not purchase the facility personally as a Commercial Property, and Bridges of Love did not have the capital to secure a mortgage, we began to fund raise in Calgary initially, with those who already had relationships with us. We planned to go full steam ahead with our fund-raising efforts, once we were settled in Claresholm. The plan seemed viable and our Real Estate Agent said properties moved very slowly in smaller towns, so there was no concern that it would sell before we were ready to purchase...

God’s plans do not always match our plans, however, as the day we arrived in Claresholm, the **SOLD** sign went up on the property which was indeed a surprise and disappointment! With a finished basement in our duplex, Bridges of Love’s office was set-up temporarily, in hopes that we would secure outside office space, as we raised resources and built the ministry. Even though it was not what we had planned, we felt fortunate to have a place to hang our hat, which was both comfortable and affordable.



- **“Inspired” Darrel Janz – September 5, 2018**



Early in September we received a call from Daryl Janz, CTV who requested an interview for his program “Inspired.” He and a camera man came out to Claresholm to do the interview which was aired the following week. The exposure was appreciated raising awareness for the work of Bridges of Love. An unexpected call came from a friend who now lives in Mexico who heard the program. We had lost touch over the years, so this was an added bonus, which came from the interview.

- **MD Willow Creek Council Meeting – October 10, 2018**

Mid October, 2018 Cynthia Vizzutti, Chief Administrative Officer for MD Willow Creek invited Bridges of Love to give a 20 minute presentation to the Council Members of the Municipality of Willow Creek. It was an open door to share our mission and desire to duplicate our template that had been successfully tested in Calgary. Several days were spent putting together a talk that not only shared information on Community Emergency Response Team training but also “WHY” this is valuable for the rural community. It was difficult to tell if they had clear understanding or had by-in for what was presented so I requested a follow-up meeting with Cynthia to gain insight into their acceptance for CERT. Unfortunately, there was no reply to the invitation. The Emergency Manager was also invited to sit in on the presentation, so I felt he would have already shared that he was in favour of this going ahead; as he shared with me on that initial meeting that took place, before we moved to Claresholm.

- **Lawrence Gleason, Reporter Claresholm Local Press interview – October 10, 2018**

As we were leaving the Municipal building after the presentation, Lawrence Gleason, a reporter for the Claresholm Local Press approached us. He was also sitting in on the meeting and requested a copy of my presentation as he wanted to do a follow-up story in the local paper. We appreciated his offer and a few weeks later, the article was printed, providing additional exposure for Bridges of Love's activities to Claresholm and surrounding area.



- **Edmonton Contact**

October 15, Bob Davies from Edmonton came for a visit as he was interested in taking the CERT training and perhaps introducing the training in his locality. Bob has been a volunteer with Edmonton's Search and Rescue for over 20 years. We appreciated the opportunity to meet and hear his enthusiasm for CERT and broadening the training to Edmonton. We have kept in touch over the past year keeping him informed of our progress.

- **South Centre Mall's Fall Emergency Faith**



Keeping with our desire to keep Calgary engaged with our projects, we participated in the Emergency Fair on October 21 and again on May 11 at South Centre Mall. Cameron Nikitiuk and Tom Pollon (CERT Grads) helped out in the booth. It was a great time sharing with many visitors to our booth. Our Emergency Wheel of Fortune proved to be a hit, sharing candy and toys that were kindly donated from Samaritan's Purse.

- **Public Safety's Ninth Annual Roundtable Discussion**

October was indeed a busy month, attending Public Safety's Ninth Annual Roundtable Discussion on Disaster Risk Reduction. The event moves across Canada so being closer in location to Calgary, I decided to attend. The "Circles of Influence" discussion time was centred on what was our priorities for disaster risk reduction and then on the obstacles that were interfering with success. Trust was one of the biggest issues that was mentioned. They introduced their blog GCcollab, an on-line collaboration tool that will facilitate DRR discussion year-round.

- **Canada's Volunteer Award Ceremony**

An invitation arrived in late November to attend Canada's Volunteer Award ceremony taking place in Ottawa, on December 5. Invitations were shared with past recipients of the Award, to attend the ceremony as well as to participate in discussions on, "Cultivating social responsibility through volunteering and enterprise." It was indeed an honour to be included in this special event for a second year, and it was great to reconnect with Tina Walters, the event Secretariat.



Plans were already in place to attend **AEMA Stakeholder's Summit**, taking place in Edmonton during the same time-frame, so a decision had to be made for which event to attend. The flight and hotel room were already booked as well as the registration fee paid. After speaking with the AEMA, however, they confirmed the Registration Fee could be returned and the hotel room could also be cancelled for a full refund. Unfortunately, our personal Air Miles were lost and the taxes paid for this ticket, but I feel the right choice was made to attend the event in Ottawa. Building relationships has been a priority, so this was an excellent time to network and meet other leaders in the Charitable Sector. All expenses were covered, which was an added bonus!

The next section of my report is going to be fairly detailed in order for complete documentation of the events that transpired that caused us to relocate from Claresholm. We want our donors and interested parties to completely understand the events that lead to this difficult decision. Please bear with me as I share greater details for this time frame.

- **Making Introductions**

We tried to move slowly introducing our vision to Claresholm, since we were new to the area, we wanted to build trusting relationships with leaders and community. As mentioned, we had an opportunity to present to the Councilors of Willow Creek. Then just before Christmas, I requested a meeting with Allison McKee, Community Outreach Coordinator with FCSS. She seemed interested in the CERT training and especially the Psychology of Trauma module. She taught AHS's Psychology First Aid Course so expressed interest to teach our module. I dropped off the binder for her to check out and also left a Memory Stick containing the eight module course PowerPoints. She had the materials for many weeks and after trying to schedule a follow-up meeting, I finally picked up the binders without further conversation. I was invited to attend the January Interagency luncheon, which was a great opportunity to meet many in the various charity sectors. I continued to attend their monthly meetings.

February 9, 2019 a meeting was scheduled with Marian Carlson (CAO, Claresholm). I was told their Fire Chief, would be in attendance but instead, their new Emergency Manager, Jason Hemmaway was included in the conversation. A FEPI 'Love Bee...ing Toque' was shared with Marian and we spent a good hour discussing our projects. She was interested in the training but was concerned about volunteers spontaneously when responding to an incident. She felt we should have a Letter of Agreement with the town so they know what CERTs are doing. Due to her interest, I left with optimism that we would be able to work out an agreement. Jason mentioned there was new Alberta Legislation for volunteers that might affect our work, so a call was made to Randy Tiller, AEMA District Officer for clarification.

Since Randy Tiller, was Emergency Manager District Officer for South Central Alberta he referred me to two District Officers for Southern Alberta AEMA. Unfortunately, they were busy and were not able to respond to my request. Randy Tiller was again contacted and he suggested I check out their website. Unfortunately, I could not find anything to help with this inquiry so continued to quote the "Good Samaritan Law" as coverage and liability for CERT action in the community.

Our CERT information and a Summary of our activities was dropped off to both the town of Nanton as well as Fort MacLeod. Neil Smith (CAO, Nanton) responded with an email saying to let them know if we were requesting to be a future delegation to Council or have a specific request of administration at this time. I responded with a positive request to meet but never heard back from him or anyone from Fort MacLeod. Cynthia Vizzutti (CAO, Willow Creek 26) and Travis Coleman (Willow Creek Emergency Manager) were also given an update on our activities and a Summary shared. Pincher Creek Emergency Manager, Brett Wuth also reviewed our material and returned with this comment... *"Unfortunately the proposed CERT approach does not fit with the priorities we have for the emergency management program."*

- **Counter Terrorism Workshop**

Tom and I were very pleased to accept an invitation by Sgt. Eyvi Smith to attend the R.C.M.P. Inset Counter Terrorism Workshop. This three day event was held in March at S.A.I.T. and was a very interesting time with many speakers and presenters.

- **Grant Applications**

Two grant applications were submitted to the Lethbridge and Southern Alberta Community Foundation and the Claresholm FCSS. We were planning our first Summit for Willow Creek 26 for April 4, 5, & 8 pending word from the Claresholm Grant. The Senior Centre and the Lethbridge College were tentatively booked for our first Summit with 2 additional events planned if the grants came through. Quotes were also received for CERT shirts, caps, and bags from both Fort Macleod, and Claresholm embroidery shops.

March 4, we received a note saying we did not receive the Claresholm FCSS Grant. The total budget was based on receiving \$3000, from Claresholm FCSS, and since they had assured me that they try to help as many agencies as they can each year, I was confused why they turned us down. Contacting the Director, Barb Bell who shared that she heard the reason was because we were duplicating services. Since this comment had been said before by the church community, I wanted to know what we were duplicating. Barb mentioned Reception Centre Training offered by the AEMA was a course presented to their staff. I also spoke with Lauren Billey, the FCSS Board Chair

part of the grant decision makers. She also said that we were duplicating services but could not give an answer to what we were duplicating. Her response was that the decision had been made and we could try again next year. Perhaps people hear the word 'training' and it is all packaged under one umbrella.

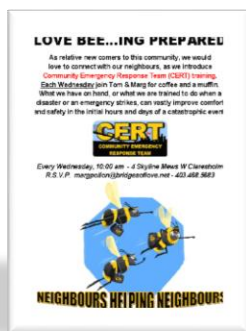
This news was indeed disappointing, as if the community leaders where we reside, do not support CERT, it would be very difficult to garner support, from the community. I also contacted, Travis Coleman, the Emergency Manager for Willow Creek whom I spoke with before moving to Claresholm. At that time he had assured me that there was nothing like CERT in this municipality and felt they would support the training, if we moved to Claresholm. He unfortunately, did not return my call or a follow-up email. I had a call shortly following this, however, from Cynthia Vizzutti, Willow Creek, CAO who was very defensive and upset that I contacted Travis. At one point, I asked her why she was so feisty! She said she wasn't feisty but frustrated. I told her, I was the one who should be frustrated as could not get an answer to what we are duplicating, and just wanted an answer. Her reply finally was... "You are not duplicating services...but don't quote me on that!!" She said it was our responsibility to convince the community that our program was valuable – not theirs!

Barb Bell also recommended I apply for a grant for Granum FCSS. She said that she made the decision on that grant so it sounded like we had a good chance for success. We had no response back for this grant at the time we made the decision to move, so I suggested they cancel our submission.

Tom and I attended the Community Foundation's Fund Raising Dinner on March 18. I was seated beside one of their Board Members. She inquired what our Charity did and what we had applied funding for. After hearing we did Emergency Training, she said... "Wow, everyone is getting involved in this type of training." I said really, please tell me who else is doing training? She said training was going on at the FCSS office in Fort MacLeod that night. After hearing this, Tom and I dropped in on the Fort Macleod FCSS a few days later to inquire what training they were doing. They shared that AEMA was doing Reception Centre training in all their offices in Southern Alberta. I asked if their volunteers had any training and she indicated, they were not included, as it was just for their staff.

The greater disappointment came on April 23 from the Community Foundation. Again, we received a very short note saying our application for funding was not selected with no reason given. I contacted the Executive Director to gain clarity on why we did not qualify. She shared we were duplicating services and also felt we should have had more funders, involved, even though \$14,000 of the funds came from the Summit Registrations. Our total Budget was \$50 (3 Summits in various locations) and we asked for \$30,000 from the Foundation. I was surprised at their decision as the criteria for this rural grant seemed like a perfect fit with our activities and focus.

- **Meet and Greet**



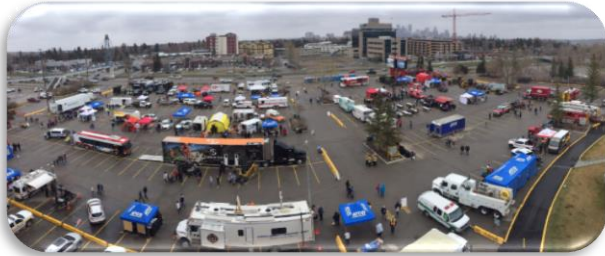
After Cynthia's comment that it was our job to convince the town that CERT was a good thing for the community, we made some posters to distribute throughout the town, inviting Claresholm neighbours for coffee and a muffin. We thought we would open our home each Wednesday morning to connect with as many residents as possible. We thought this would be an opportunity to get to know others in the community and introduce them to CERT and the work of Bridges of Love. Tom prepared a short PowerPoint presentation to give an overview. After three Wednesdays waiting for the doorbell to ring, we did not have one person pay us a visit. I personally invited Sean Kelly (Fire Chief), and Cynthia Vizzutti (CAO), and the Claresholm Ministerial with no response from any.

- **AEMA Meeting**

An unexpected call from a trusted Calgary colleague was received in April saying he received a call from Gary Dzioba, AEMA District Officer. Gary said Bridges of Love was making waves in Southern Alberta. The colleague said he knew we were not trouble makers so thought we should know and follow-up to see why the AEMA were talking negatively about Bridges of Love. I had been trying to get an appointment with Gary for many weeks to discuss the new Alberta legislation that I was told might affect our training. He kept moving the date so out of frustration, I shared that I had heard his comment. His returned note requested knowing who had shared this

information with me. Permission was given prior to this time, that if needed, I could say who gave me the information. A meeting was scheduled for May 29 in Claresholm with Gary and Randy Tiller, District Officer Central Alberta, to get this straightened out but was later cancelled due to our anticipated move from his jurisdiction.

- **Disaster Alley**



May 4, Bridges of Love took part in the Calgary Emergency Management Agencies Disaster Alley at McMahon Stadium. Cameron Nikitiuk and Tom Pollon assisted in our booth. It was a very cold and wet day but the turn-out was surprisingly good considering the nasty weather. We shared with many visitors to our booth including lots of children who were happy to spin the CERT Wheel of Fortune and receive a candy or ball. Despite the weather, it was a great day!

- **Letter from Minister Ralph Goodale, Public Safety Canada**

After sending Minister Goodale, the 13 Page Summary of our activities on February 6, 2019 we received a return letter on May 14 and one on July 25. We have corresponded over the years since he has been in office and he awarded the Exemplary Service Award to Bridges of Love last year so he was aware of our activities. He once again thanked us for our involvement having a positive impact before, during, and after an emergency. He mentioned that in January, 2019, he met with their Provincial and Territorial counterparts in Alberta, where they approved the Emergency Management Strategy for Canada. This strategy builds on previous efforts and seeks to guide Federal, Provincial, Territorial governments, working with their respective EM partners, in carrying out priorities aimed at strengthening Canada's ability to address disaster risks and to respond to emergency situations.

He went on to say the Federal Government supports a whole-of-society approach to EM that takes into consideration all levels of government and civil society, including local volunteers. He commented that working jointly with their partners on the EM Strategy Action Plan, they will closely look at how best to work with community groups, such as Bridges of Love Ministry Society. That was indeed an encouragement!

He appreciated the challenges we face and encouraged us to continue to work with our local management related non-governmental organizations, and Provincial, and Territorial representatives and authorities to ensure more integrated and cohesive emergency response initiatives, in coordination with Municipal and Provincial authorities, which are the main EM partners of the Federal Government of Canada.

- **Letter from Pastor Joseph Steeves (On Behalf of the Willow Creek Ministerial)**

May 15, a call was received from Pastor Steeves (Grace Baptist Church, Claresholm) saying he wanted to drop by with a letter from the Ministerial. The letter conveyed their group decision to not support Bridges of Love's initiatives. Their decision was made after a meeting with the town CAO and Emergency Manager. They were told since CERT trained individuals were not recognized by local or provincial authorities, the end result could create liability issues and confusion so for these reasons, they would not support FEPI or CERT.

This letter (please see attachment) was concrete evidence that our initiatives were not supported by the town or church community; which initiated my husband Tom and my decision to put our duplex up for sale. We felt our hands were tied and we would not have an opportunity to continue the ministry in Southern Alberta.

Never expecting a quick sale, we were pleasantly surprised to have an offer within a week. Moving day was set for July 12, just a year and a week after we moved to Claresholm with such enthusiasm for what we hoped to share and accomplish. A move to High River purchasing a condo moved forward on schedule but not without its share of upsets. Tom had a heart attack on June 30 and triple by-pass surgery on July 6. Due to the move and Tom's heart condition, my time was occupied, but our monthly Newsletter continued on schedule. We are very thankful to be in this new location and are praying the Lord will open the doors to continue building Bridges of Love.

SUMMARY

As I reflect and document the activities from the past fiscal year, we know God had His hand in all that transpired. Even though the outcome was not what was anticipated, we know He had a purpose in it all. God indeed provided clarity for what is needed in order to move forward and these issues need to be addressed and resolved; before the community will accept our endeavors.

The Federal Government has affirmed on many occasions the work Bridges of Love is doing for community preparedness and resilience, so we know there is justification to pursue a plan to garner support from all sectors.

“I would encourage you to continue to coordinate your work with your local community partners, and PT representatives and authorities, like the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. This will ensure that Municipal, Provincial, and Territorial jurisdictions are respected, and that emergency response is well coordinated.”

The Honourable Ralph Goodale, P.C., M.P. (July 25, 2019)

Respectively Submitted:

Marg Pollon, Executive Director
Bridges of Love Ministry
September 24, 2019