

**Executive
Director's
Report**

August 25, 2016

July 31, 2015 to August 1, 2016

God's training is for now, not later. His purpose is for this very minute, not for sometime in the future. We have nothing to do with what will follow our obedience, and we are wrong to concern ourselves with it. What people call preparation, God sees as the goal itself.

Oswald Chambers

**BRIDGES OF LOVE
MINISTRY SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING**

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”
James 1:4

God wants to make us mature and complete, not to keep us from all pain. Our struggles are opportunities for growth. Our prayer over the past year continues to be that we follow Him through all the ups and downs of ministry life. He has indeed been faithful allowing Bridges of Love to experience another year of growth and accomplishment.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank our **Board of Directors** for their continued involvement. We appreciate **Lois Reid** taking another year as Chair; **Peter McManus**, Treasurer; **Tom Pollon**, IT; and **Beth Henry**, Secretary. Due to health concerns, however, Beth stepped off the Board submitting her letter of resignation; effective April 30, 2016. We appreciate Beth’s commitment over the past two years and even though she will not be part of the Board of Directors, she asked to continue her involvement with CERT as a trainer, which we are most grateful.

We appreciate Lois’s support and were so pleased to see her graduate from our CERT training at our last Summit. City Light News provided free advertising for our Summits as well Peter donated his CLN booth for MissionFest Alberta so we could attend. Tom’s IT focus continues to keep our two web sites up to date and we appreciate the videos he produced for various events. Thank you Bridges of Love Board of Directors for all you have done over the past year.



The new fiscal year started with a flurry of activities beginning on September 26th with our **6th CERT Summit** taking place at Samaritan’s Purse. Ambrose University was already booked for this day so we had an opportunity to try a different location with Samaritan’s Purse lovely facility proving to be a great venue. We were back to Ambrose for **Summit 7**, Nov. 27/28 with our Key-note speaker Sean Baylis, Royal Bank Securities presenting Financial Preparedness. The Friday evening sessions are open to past CERT grads as well as those who wish to hear the special speaker only. The topics vary for each Summit and we try to focus on what is relevant at the time. **Summit 8 and 9** were held at the Staybridge Suites Hotel in N.E. Calgary. We found the Hotel very accommodating and the food was delicious. They were very kind to allow us to bring in muffins and fruit for our light breakfast to keep costs down. Our special speaker for Summit 9 was Ian Fox, Field Director with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency with his timely and appropriate topic “Alberta Hazards” with a tornado focus.

Each Summit went extremely well. The presenters have been first class so we have been very fortunate to have such out-standing trainers. We are developing a data base of potential presenters for the various modules which will make future Summits easier to plan.

Each graduate now receives a laminated **photo ID card** in addition to their Certificate, CERT cap and CERT kit. An ACCESS data base has been developed with each graduates contact information and photo included. Having this information close at hand, when disaster strikes, will greatly speed up our response time when volunteers are deployed.



Bridges of Love was invited to participate in two events with Rocky View County. Randy Smith, Chief of the Rocky View fire department and one of our trainers; invited us to their **Emergency Services Expo** in Irricana Saturday November 21, 2015.

May 28, Rocky View County’s **Fire Management & Emergency Preparedness Workshop** in the Cochrane area provided another opportunity to share our passion.

I was fortunate to attend a number of conferences over the past year. Public Safety's **Annual National Roundtable on Disaster Risk Reduction**, November 2-3 was held in Calgary. I appreciated the information and the connections made. The main thrust was on building resilience in communities through stronger relationships and training. The Keynote Speaker, Margareta Wahistrom, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, spoke on the New Sendai Framework for Risk Reduction. She came over and spoke to me personally affirming the work of Bridges of Love and the importance of engaging the Faith Community in emergency preparedness.

AEMA Stakeholders Summit followed on November 30 – December 1. This year it was Calgary's turn to host the event so I appreciated the opportunity to attend. This was the first year that a cost was associated with attendance but since accommodation was unnecessary, it was affordable. I was glad to hear from many excellent speakers and was pleased to be recognized by Tom Sampson (CEMA) and Ron Robinson (Medicine Hat) who publically acknowledged CERT as valuable training during their presentations. That was indeed an encouragement!

We continue to meet with our CERT graduates with 12 attending our Nov. 13 meeting. We have 16 **CERT members** who have t-shirts and about half have paid \$25.00 which goes into a separate CERT Membership community account with the Bank of Montreal. These funds are allocated for any activities that CERT grads which to engage.

Another CERT members meeting was held June 14 at the Canadian Red Cross's request. They wished to present to our members an opportunity to serve through their Personal Disaster Assistance program as a Red Cross volunteer. We had a good turn-out with interest in their program. I felt this opportunity was a "win-win" as their Director of Disaster Management, Melanie Soler indicated they may have funding to assist our training. PDAP training would provide opportunities to our grads to learn additional skills. Keeping volunteers interested and engaged tends to be an on-going challenge. Assisting the Red Cross would see CERT volunteers involved in smaller day to day emergency events.

CERT strength results from strong teams. A graphic artist was invited to depict "Bee CERT Trained!" Michelle Morean kindly donated her time and expertise for this project which is a great visual to help raise awareness.



Our CERT Organization module includes an introduction to ICS 100. To have a strong knowledge base to teach this module, I completed **ICS - 300** last December. This three day course offered by the High River Fire Department was excellent.

CERT graduates experienced their **first deployment** on Jan. 15-16, 2016 due to an invitation from Chestermere's Emergency Social Services. Chestermere received funding from the Province to assist with the flood recovery efforts. They asked for our help to assist residents complete their DRP forms. Due to a loss of precious memories, material possessions, and the emotion associated with a devastating experience, seven CERT members trained in the Psychology of Trauma, volunteered their time to be a listening and compassionate ear to these residents.

We appreciated the opportunity to attend and have a booth at **Mission Fest Alberta (Edmonton)** February 19 – 21, 2016. This was the first year it was held in a church instead of the Shaw Centre. It proved to be a viable facility and we felt traffic was a little better than in previous years. There were many who visited our booth who asked when CERT was coming to Edmonton...

Another training event that I was fortunate to attend was the R.C.M.P. **Counter Terrorism Information Officer (CTIO)** held on March 16 – 18. It was indeed an interesting session and opened our eyes to the very real threat of an attack and the many agencies that are involved in countering terrorists activities. We appreciate the R.C.M.P. INSET our Summit Terrorism module presenters.

April 30th, 2016 brought another major disaster to our Province. The **Ft. McMurray fire** proved to be another reminder that we are vulnerable to a number of threats in Alberta. Bridges of Love did not take an active role as CEMA and the Red Cross did not require our help. We did activate our RECOVERS site, however, in case donations were needed. Our CERT volunteers were invited to assist Samaritan's Purse's activities in Fort McMurray. Brent Davis, Director of Disaster Management with SP shared that CERT volunteers would be given top priority if they wished to assist. It is encouraging to hear CERT trained individuals are great ones to recruit.

Over the past year, our Board has been in conversation, regarding the sharing of our CERT material. This was due to one of our out-of-town graduates request to take our material and start CERT training on their Reserve. After much discussion, a motion was put forth at our last Board meeting in May, stating Bridges of Love Ministry will duplicate CERT in other regions outside Calgary. Now that we have a proven template; our desire is to expand to other regions outside Calgary. In order to maintain consistency in the program, however, the Board felt it essential to have Bridges of Love involved in any start-up training to be sure the same high standard is duplicated. A decision was also made to delete the DVD CERT Student Training Manual from the literature shared with our graduates. The Teachers and Student Manuals can be purchased, however, when collaborating with Bridges of Love.

How to promote CERT in the community has been an on-going challenge and topic of discussion. A suggestion was made at our CERT membership meeting as well as from the board that we start **mini-presentations** in Libraries, Community Associations, and for Church Groups. CERT Grads can act as promoters for our CERT Summits. After each Summit grads will be asked to introduce CERT to a number of people and sign them up for the next Summit. Lois Reid has kindly volunteered to be a presenter of mini emergency preparedness sessions as requests come in. Our CERT graduates are our best ambassadors. They have a keen interest in being prepared and now have the knowledge and training to share this opportunity with others.

SUMMARY

Strengthening communities through CERT training and maintaining our Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative (FEPI) data-base continues to be our quest to build a strong foundation on which to grow. To date, we have over 50 CERT graduates and over 50 churches who have shared vital information for our access data base.

The incidence of natural disasters worldwide has steadily increased according to a report from the New England Journal of Medicine. The report goes on to say...natural disasters, particularly floods and storms, will become more frequent and severe due to climate change. Humanitarian relief will always be required, and there is a demonstrable need, to place greater emphasis on prevention and mitigation.

NOW is the time. Bridges of Love Ministry promotes community resilience through coordination, resources and training.

Submitted by: Marg Pollon, Founding Executive Director; August 25, 2016