

BRIDGES OF LOVE MINISTRY SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT - 2009/2010

Prepared by Marg Pollon - September 25, 2010

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight."
Proverbs 3:6*

It is with great gratitude I report that the past year held some of the most amazing experiences and progress since the beginning of this ministry. Even though we did not wish for a pandemic, with the emergence of the H1N1, it opened opportunities to raise awareness of the importance of the Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative. (FEPI)

For those who attended last years AGM you will recall our theme "The Phoenix"...let us arise from the ashes. After five years of operation, we felt Bridges of Love was at a place to arise, perhaps not from the ashes but from its infancy with a more defined focus, mission and vision for the future. Even though the H1N1 did not become as severe as predicted, we were given a little glimpse into the reality of emergencies happening...even in our locality. The exposure we received was indeed an 'arising' of sorts as you will hear, later on, in the report.

Before I go into further detail, however, please allow me to thank those who have played an important role in this ministry over the past year. Once again, we appreciate St. John Lutheran Church for their continued support in allowing Bridges of Love office space. It is hard to believe we are going into our seventh year. Dorothy, Pastor Arnie and I are still the three amigos and even though life has been busy the past year we still enjoy our occasional round table discussions over coffee. Since I continue to work as a solo, I especially appreciate these times of fellowship.

Also, thank you to our faithful Board of Directors. We continue to appreciate Herb Arnold, Don Ford, Tom Pollon and our newest member Pastor Wilson Nelson's participation and support. Wayne Elford stepped down from the board this spring but he continues his involvement on the Faith Emergency Preparedness Advisory Council. It has been a year of working through some board issues such as Membership, Board Governance and Fund Development. We are making progress forming a sub-committee to work on these functions which are essential to our Society's operation. We have especially appreciated all the work Don put into 'drafting' policies for our review. Thank you Don.

We have also appreciated those who have donated financially. With the past year being another lean economic year, many ministries have struggled to keep afloat. It has not been an easy year financially for Bridges of Love as well but we continue to press on trusting God to provide. Thank you so very much to those individuals, businesses, churches and members who have carried this ministry through. I know for some your giving was a sacrifice so your donations have been greatly appreciated.

Now on with our review of 2009/2010 activities.

As you may recall from the closing of 2009's fiscal year we were in the process of completing the **Quadrant Pandemic Information Sessions**. We had two sessions yet to complete which took place in September. The last one was held in South Calgary Community Church (our SW Quadrant Lead) with Huntley Street making a video of our discussion which became part of a program on Pandemic Preparedness and the Church Community. Huntley Street did a few interviews with those who attended which was aired in November with Tom Sampson's (Deputy Chief) and my interview. We appreciated the support of David Fletcher, City of Calgary and Tanya Platt, Alberta Health Services as well as the participation of Dr. Wayne Elford and others from the Advisory Council. We were also fortunate to be part of a program on Pandemic Preparedness with Listen-Up TV's, Lorna Dueck which also aired last November.

Other media coverage included:

- ✓ ChristianWeek – On-line Newsletter (National)
- ✓ CTS, Natalie Faith – TV Video (Provincial/National)
- ✓ Listen-Up – TV Video (National)
- ✓ Huntley Street – TV Video (National)
- ✓ Total Women Interview, 11:40 Radio Station (Regional)
- ✓ Calgary Herald – Newspaper Article (Regional)
- ✓ Connections – Magazine Article (Provincial)
- ✓ Globe and Mail – Newspaper Article (National)
- ✓ Christianity.ca – Printed Globe and Mail Article (National)
- ✓ Faith Today – Magazine Article (National)

While the Pandemic Sessions were winding down, in order to keep the momentum going “**Operation Crosswalk**” was introduced. This grass-roots opportunity was birthed to provide a vehicle and open door for the local church to connect with their neighbours as well as to provide alternate contacts other than from the city emergency numbers. In a wide spread disaster, our local emergency agencies will be overwhelmed so this endeavour would provide additional contacts within easy reach.

During the summer we began raising funds for 250,000 door knockers on which is listed the city emergency contact information as well as the email addresses for the four Quadrant Lead Churches and phone number and email address for the Faith Emergency Coordination Centre (Bridges of Love). In order to cover the expenses of these door knockers containing a little magnet on the back, \$15,500 was needed. Also, before proceeding, we felt it necessary to have a minimum of 100 churches committed to the initiative. By the October 31 dead-line, unfortunately, we did not have the money required or the 100 churches on board so it was temporarily put on hold. The funds raised (\$4800) was returned to the various churches that supported this project. Mobilization Crosswalk is an integral part of FEPI as it brings the initiative to the community level and it also helps with sustainability of the project since major emergencies do not normally occur very frequently. Once trust is established in a community, an individual/family with a need will not be afraid to ask for help. Our hope is to have stronger support of the Calgary Church community to resurrect “Mobilization Crosswalk” in the future.

The “**Cross the Street**” Conference was held in Calgary this past year so Bridges of Love was fortunate to be offered a booth. Only those organizations that were part of the conference were invited so it was a gift of kindness from David Macfarlane with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. The focus was on ‘out-reach’ to the community so it was a very good fit with Bridges of Love with information being shared with many.

While the pandemic was in full swing, Alberta Health Services (AHS) was looking for sites for the vaccination clinics so they asked if the churches were interested in being assessed as possible sites. I attended a meeting and invited a couple of our Quadrant Lead Churches who were very open to participate in their program. Unfortunately, AHS decided to use their own sites but it was a foot in the door to show we were interested and willing to help in any way we could.

Our ‘Poster Boy’ for the H1N1; one of our board members Tom Pollon contacted the flu in the later part of November. After 5 days in the hospital, he returned home to recuperate which took more than a month. Much of my time and attention, therefore, was on Tom’s recuperation. This first hand experience was valuable, even though not pleasant for Tom, as provided clear evidence that there was much fear associated with the virus both in the hospitals and for the general public. We saw confusion with the Public Sector’s approach to the vaccination clinics and the media reporting so we all have learned valuable lessons from this out-break and the deficiencies which were apparent.

The Pandemic Sessions which Bridges of Love offered helped with education and raising the level of awareness of how the church could be involved if the virus became more virulent and wide-spread. Chris McKiernan, Emergency Disaster Manager for Alberta Health Services was invited to share the lessons learned at our January Advisory Council meeting.

The pandemic began to wind down by February so the wheels were once again in motion to find another way to promote the initiative and raise awareness for emergency preparedness. When I first started Bridges of Love, God gave me an idea called “**Carpe Vita**” – **Seize the Life**. There did not seem to be an opportunity to introduce this initiative over the years but when Haiti was the focus after their earthquake, this seemed like an open door to help with their work and raise awareness once again of the importance of Emergency Preparedness in our own city.

Since Samaritan’s Purse was one of our FEPI Advisory Council members, a Benefit Auction – “Carpe Vita” (a gift of the heart) was organized to raise funds for Haiti. All proceeds from the auction went directly to SP and the proceeds from the ticket sales (\$10.00 each) to Bridges of Love. As well, to help raise awareness of the Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative during Emergency Preparedness Week, which is the week we held, Carpe Vita, (May 8) we invited the public to attend an information display held at Samaritan’s Purse facility. Briden Solutions, an on-line preparedness internet site, set up a wonderful display of their emergency resources alongside Public Safety Canada pamphlets and Bridges of Love FEPI brochures. It was great to make introductions with Briden Solutions and hopefully we will have further collaboration down the road.

The Benefit Auction was a lot of fun with Bear Cat Murray taking on the auctioneer duties, the Corpus Christi Male Choir entertaining with their vocal talent, a message for the progress in Haiti by Samaritan’s Purse and everyone enjoying homemade apple pies made by the ladies at Brentview Baptist Church and cupcakes donated by Craves. We raised \$3870 for Samaritan Purse’s work in Haiti which was used to purchase shelter accommodations for the rainy season. Bridges of Love didn’t quite cover our expenses but the strong relationships fostered while planning this event were very worthwhile.

Thank you notes were written and many hand delivered to the many companies and individuals who donated ‘gifts of the heart’ for this event. Fred Weiss, the ED of Billy Graham and SP was especially appreciative of the money raised and wrote a very kind letter of affirmation for funds raised through Carpe Vita. The Calgary Herald did a 2/3 page article on the event high-lighting the initiative and gifts-of-kind were donated by City Light News and Briden Solutions. All in all it was a great time and I feel, even though it was a lot of work, Carpe Vita was an event worthy to be repeated in the future.

After this very busy time, my hubby and I decided it was time to take a breather, and accept a lovely gift from our three children, for our special Anniversary of 40 years. Off to Hawaii we travelled for a two week retreat from our busy lives to recharge our batteries. We enjoyed every minute of this wonderful paradise.

The **Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative Advisory Council** is still gathering. My duties include administration, chairing the meetings, as well as recording the minutes. We meet every 3 to 4 months, usually in Red Deer, with 21 members from all sectors of Government Emergency Management/Health Agencies and representatives from the Christian/NGO Communities. Our major accomplishment this past year has been the development of a Project Charter which was documented by Chris. McKiernan (Alberta Health Services), Jan Donais (Public Safety Canada) and myself. This charter is posted on our web site and is a helpful document when seeking funds and offers credibility to the initiative. We also made a name change at our last meeting as felt the Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative Advisory Council more closely described the focus of this group. We are expanding to other cities in Alberta with Red Deer Emergency representatives joining for the first time this month and the Alberta Health and Wellness Manager of Emergency Preparedness also plans to attend.

The Calgary Emergency Management Agency has also been part of this group for the past year so we have been looking to them for next steps. Tom Sampson, Deputy Chief has delegated Ken Hoffer, the new Coordinator for Disaster Social Services as my contact. We have had three meetings over the summer and he has been very helpful and affirming of the project moving forward. Ken has offered to attend our next Advisory Council meeting to share the new Disaster Social Service’s plan where FEPI will be included. This is a major milestone so we have broken ground to integrate the local church into the existing secular emergency preparedness structure.

Ken introduced me to the coordinator for emergency lodging during the summer and we are now gathering more churches to act as Reception Centres. I have been invited to attend their assessments

this fall. We are also looking at a Table Top Exercise with members of the Advisory Council as well as those Calgary Churches who wish to attend.

We are making good progress but there is still work ahead. We have 45 churches who have signed on to be part of the initiative which is a good start but we will be continuing our quest to have the city adequately covered with congregation members trained and ready with a very effective response.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us that there is "a season for every activity under heaven" and the past year the time seemed right to put more emphases on our **By-laws, Fund Development, and Governance** policies. As mentioned we have appreciated all the work Don has done to revise our current By-laws. It is a work in progress, however, as we continue to learn and gather insight for the best practices and policies for this ministry. I have recently been accepted into the Leadership Plus program at CentrePoint Advancing Non-Profit Management Agency so we are putting these 'draft' documents on hold until I complete the Governance section of the course. It is a six month mentorship program so it will be most valuable to align with the Government regulations. I have received one grant from the Kahanoff to cover half the cost (\$1500) so praying that another foundation will cover the remainder. I feel very fortunate to be chosen to be in this program as there are only eight in the class and the other participants are all Executive Directors of various organizations so I am sure we will learn from each other.

As mentioned earlier, funding has been a concern this past year. Our donations were slightly higher than the previous year but as you will see from the treasures figures our expenses have been slightly higher than what has come in. We were able to pay our monthly bills (rent, telephone, internet, cell phone) which we were very thankful but my salary has not been covered since April 30. Even though finances continue to be a challenge I feel optimistic that God is providing some help with this course to better address the Fund Development issues and how best to gather the support we need to move forward.

We have jumped many hurdles over the years and continue to walk day by day trusting in God's promise of Proverbs 3:6..."Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight."

Thank you for being part of the journey with your prayers, financial and board support and encouragement as together we build Bridges of Love to our community.