

Executive Director's Report

October 16,

2018

Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.

Joel A. Barker

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

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6

In a life dedicated to serving Christ, Paul had faced excruciating poverty, abundant wealth, and everything in between. Whatever the circumstances, Paul had learned to be content, finding real joy as he focused all of his attention and energy on knowing Christ and obeying him.

The past year has been one of learning patience and finding joy through waiting on the Lord for His timing. Bridges of Love has been without an office since we had to vacate St. John Lutheran Church July 4, 2017 moving our office furnishings and resources into our son’s garage. It was a very large undertaking, packing 14 years of office equipment, resources, and furnishings. The computers and financials came into our one bedroom condominium where I operated for almost a year from our small laundry room. It was not an ideal situation but we kept the ministry operating, while praying for God to provide another facility, in His time.

As we recall from past Board meeting discussions, a strategy had been in the works for some time, to broaden our ministry and CERT training to Southern Alberta, accompanied with a move to a more affordable location, for both home and office.

With our condo up for sale anticipating a fairly quick move, we made the decision to wait on filling board member positions that were vacant until we knew where we would be located. Our past Board Chair, Lois Reid, left her position at our last AGM on October 19, 2017 due to family commitments. We thank Lois for her dedication to our board over the years she was involved. Hubby Tom and I carried on our day to day activities and responsibilities with regular board meetings and all records kept up-to-date.



June 2017 brought a grant from Rocky View County for a CERT Summit in their county. We were indeed looking forward to facilitating CERT training in Rocky View due to prior involvement and participation in their various emergency preparedness events. Their Fire Chief, Randy Smith was our Fire Safety and Search & Rescue trainer over the years. We knew the key to success was having support from leaders in the community to affirm CERT as a valuable resource. We were, therefore, optimistic the Rocky View County CERT Summit was going to be the best Summit yet, since prior relationships had already been fostered. We were looking forward to sharing the success of Rocky View’s Summit with other municipalities down the road.

Past trainers were invited to participate in our first rural setting which was planned for Bragg Creek where a lovely Community Centre was offered at an affordable rate. The largest room providing seating for 300 was reserved for the Friday Evening Key-note Speaker and smaller rooms were confirmed for the two Saturday training sessions. Anthony Fury, a Toronto Journalist and author of “Pulse Attack” accepted our invitation for the Friday evening. With the threat of an “Electromagnetic Pulse” from a nuclear attack from North

Korea, this relevant topic was appropriate with Anthony just completing a book entitled “Pulse Attack”. Resources and literature were assembled for 25 attendees. All trainer positions for Rocky View’s Summit were confirmed so marketing to the nine districts was the next order of business.

Countless hours were spent delivering posters and literature to every district, hand delivering invitations talking with many residents along the way, placing ads in two local papers, and hundreds of Event Brite invites shared across the county. Despite our best efforts, five days before the event, we did not have sufficient registrants to proceed. After letting the trainers know the Summit had been cancelled, we received responses of regret but each assured us they would be available when another Summit was scheduled. That was good news and encouragement to hear they were on board for future events.



We made the decision to proceed with the Friday evening session since Anthony's flight and hotel were confirmed and he was looking forward to attending. Unfortunately, I received a call five days before the evening from Bragg Creek's Recreation and Community Social Manager expressing fear that our topic might scare the residents. We made the decision at that time to move the event to Calgary with fifteen individuals attending the discussion. Anthony's talk was most informative. The pies that had been made for the Summit trainers as per our tradition were thawed to feed those who attended the Friday evening session. It was a great evening so it was indeed unfortunate that more people did not hear his message. We presented Anthony with a "White Hat" to show Calgary hospitality and a little memory of his time with us.

I will not go into a lot of details of what transpired, while planning the Rocky View Summit, but I was told on numerous occasions that a few of the Rocky View Councillors were against the grant going to a Faith Based Organization and were quite vocal of this fact in their meetings; gathering support from others. Corwin McCullaugh, Bragg Creek's Recreation and Community Social

Manager, shared that when the grant was issued they did not have policies in place regarding support for Faith-based Organizations. It was indeed a stressful and confusing time with many challenges after the grant was allocated but it did teach a valuable lesson. Strong support and championing from the Municipality is indeed necessary, in order for the training, to be successful.

Randy Smith, Fire Chief of Rocky View County continued his support of the Summit going forward. He encouraged me through the 'nay-sayers' to keep focused on the task at hand. I am sure he was disappointed that the event did not go ahead as anticipated and 25 volunteers did not receive the CERT training in their locality.

An invitation was received to attend the Canada Volunteer Awards in Ottawa on December 6-7. Since it was Canada's 150th Anniversary, the Government invited past recipients of the CVA to attend. Besides the ceremony, we participated in a day long discussion on how to improve aspects of volunteerism, across Canada. A great day was enjoyed by all!



Winter was on its way and our son Mark was anxious to have his garage back for the winter season. In November we made the decision after some investigation for costs and accessibility; to move our office to a MI Box, in SE Calgary. A 16 ft. container was dropped at our son's residence and the family rallied to help load. Our office was secure indoors, in their lovely warm facility, until we were ready to move to a new location.

Our first Newsletter of the New Year was accompanied with our Church Contact and Resource Assessment Form that went out to our church data base. We updated our files with Tom Pollon, IT Guy, inputting all changes to our Access Data Base. Most churches needed a call to remind them of the request, but most shared any changes that they had, so our files were once again up-to-date for any future events.

A conversation with SGT. Eyvi Smith (INSET, R.C.M.P.), our Terrorism presenter, regarding a Youth CERT Summit came with a suggestion we contact the Boy Scouts. The older group (Rangers) might be interested in taking the training. Unfortunately, the manager of this region said they were not interested at that time.

Anticipating a move to Southern Alberta specifically Claresholm, we were given an opportunity to share with the Claresholm Ministerial. The Chair of the Claresholm Pentecostal Church, Tim deWaal made introductions to speak at their March meeting. We appreciated an opportunity to share about Bridges of Love and our desire to relocate to their town.

We were once again invited to participate in CEMA's Disaster Alley taking place May 6. Since our resources were still in storage, we had to decline for this year. I attended the event, however, and visited a few booths

meeting Rob de Pruis, Director, Consumer & Industry Relations, Insurance Bureau of Canada. It was great to have the opportunity to meet Rob as over the years IBC have kindly shared three donations which supported several Calgary CERT Summits.

We were also invited again to participate in Southcenter's Mall Emergency Fair during Emergency Preparedness Week but we had to regretfully decline. We look forward to participating again now that our resources are out of storage.



We received an email on Monday, May 7 announcing we were the recipient of the Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award under the category, "Resilient Communities". This comes from Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management. The Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award is a prestigious recognition for exceptional service and achievement across Canada to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters. As a partnership

between provincial, territorial and federal governments, the award recognizes recipients who have achieved excellence in their respective fields. Three letters of support from Dr. Wayne Whitbourne (Action International Ministries), Wayne Cao (former Calgary Fort. MLA), and Cameron Nikitiuk (CERT Graduate) accompanied the application. We appreciate their kind notes of affirmation.



The awards ceremony was held on May 24 in Ottawa so it was with great pleasure I accepted this honour on behalf of Bridges of Love Ministry and the many who have contributed to our work over the years. It is truly a team effort from donors, prayer warriors, CERT Trainers, Key-note Speakers, Churches, Board Members, and the list goes on. The ceremony took place at the War Museum in Ottawa. Since many contributed to our success and accomplishments over the past 14 years, a letter of appreciation was sent to our contact list of churches, friends, donors, and colleagues. We received kind notes in return congratulating and affirming our work.

For the past year, we had been praying for God to prepare a place for Bridges of Love. We were initially looking for a home where we could reside as well as have room for the ministry. Six months ago, we came across a former Law Office, located in Claresholm, AB that appeared perfect for the ministry. It had a generous basement that could be finished as our residence. After looking into this possibility with the mortgage company, however, we could not purchase this Commercial property personally unless we rezoned and then no changes could be made to build a suite downstairs. Bridges of Love would have to purchase the property to bring it to a reality.



We were told properties did not move too quickly in Claresholm, so we felt confident God would save the property, until we had our funds in place. Fund raising efforts immediately went into action through "Operation Stone Soup". An activity to raise awareness of our ministry in this region came from an invitation from the Claresholm Ministerial to share at their monthly meeting where the vision for Bridges of Love and The Shepherd's Staff was shared.

After two years trying to sell our one bedroom condominium in Calgary, it finally sold June 10. The buyer wanted possession on July 4 so that gave three weeks to pack and find another residence. Since we felt certain the facility in Claresholm was clearly what God had called us to, Claresholm, was our destination of choice. A duplex in our price range with finished basement was empty and ready for occupancy. Having room for the ministry was a bonus but at this time we were still hopeful that we would raise sufficient funds to purchase the other property once we settled in Claresholm. We planned to step up our fund-raising efforts to add to the donations for Operation Stone Soup, which had already come in.



Upon arriving in Claresholm, much to our disappointment, we heard that the SOLD sign was going up the property, the day we arrived. Though this news was not what we planned for or anticipated; God ways are not our ways. We were very thankful to have a finished basement in our duplex which would serve as our temporary office space.

Our home and office was unloaded in two separate moves. July 4th we had our home furnishings delivered and then two weeks later the office arrived via a U-Haul truck with son and girlfriend at the helm. After many weeks of unpacking, sorting, and getting settled, Bridges of Love was in place and we were once again ready to serve.

SUMMARY

The past year has indeed been one of ups and downs, but through it all, God has been faithful. He provided a lovely duplex and office space that is very comfortable with ample room for the ministry to operate until He provides otherwise. We are close enough to Calgary to keep in contact and support our CERT grads and FEPI churches as we broaden our ministry to Southern Alberta.

Tom and I feel at peace that even though our plans did not turn out the way we had hoped, God has us here for a reason, and His purposes will be achieved. We look forward to all that He has prepared and we are ready to serve Him with joy where we are planted. We thank and appreciate the many prayers and support from family and friends that have gone before us, over the past year. The God who began a good work in us continues it throughout our lifetime and will finish it when we meet him face-to-face.

Respectively Submitted:

Marg Pollon, Executive Director
October 16, 2018