

WELCOME

Bridges of Love Ministry Society **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

August 1, 2025 - July 31, 2026



**Bridges of Love Ministry Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
2025/2026**

**August 26, 2025, 10:30 am – 11:15 am
Bridges of Love's Office – Virtual
101 – 5208 53 Ave. Red Deer
587.272.0955**

Meeting Called	Board of Directors	Type of meeting	Annual General Meeting
Chairman	Marg Pollon	Note taker	Sandy Widmer

Board Members	Denise Hill, Tom Pollon, Marg Pollon, Sandy Widmer
Regrets	
Guests	

Agenda

- ☐ **Call to Order** – Marg Pollon
- ☐ **Welcome & Opening Prayer** – Denise Hill
- ☐ **Confirmation of Quorum** – Marg Pollon
- ☐ **Adoption of Agenda** – Marg Pollon
- ☐ **Adoption of Previous AGM Minutes (August 22, 2025)** – Marg Pollon
- ☐ **Chair's Report** – Marg Pollon
- ☐ **Executive Director's Report** – Marg Pollon
- ☐ **Treasurer's / Financial Report** – Marg Pollon
- ☐ **Board of Directors, Acknowledgement of Board Service** – Marg Pollon
- ☐ **Transition to the New Board - Pending**
- ☐ **New Business - All**
- ☐ **Questions & Discussion - All**
- ☐ **Closing Reflection & Prayer** – Sandy Widmer
- ☐ **Adjournment** – Marg Pollon

**Bridges of Love Ministry Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

**July 31, 2024, to August 1, 2025
August 22, 2025**



Meeting called by: Board of Directors **Type of meeting:** Annual General Meeting
Chairman: Marg Pollon **Note taker:** Sandy Widmer
Time: 4:03pm

Attendees: Marg Pollon, Tom Pollon, Denise Hill, Sandy Widmer
Guests: Dr. Wayne & Oi-Wah Whitbourne

Agenda

Opening Prayer & Devotional **Tom Pollon**

"God is With Me": Trusting God in the wilderness. "Lord, help me to wait well"

Acceptance of 2023/2024 Minutes

Discussion:

Motion: To accept minutes as recorded: Marg Pollon Seconded: Tom Pollon Carried.

Chair Report

Discussion: No Chair Report

TBA

Action items:	Person responsible:	Deadline:
---------------	---------------------	-----------

Executive Director's Report **Marg Pollon**

Discussion:

Discussion:

Motion: Accept Executive Director's Report as read: Marg Pollon Seconded: Tom Pollon Carried.

Action Items.	Person responsible:	Deadline:
---------------	---------------------	-----------

IT Report		Tom Pollon	
<u>Discussion: N/A</u>			
<u>Motion</u>			
<u>Action Items:</u>		<u>Person responsible:</u>	<u>Deadline:</u>
Treasurer's Report		Marg Pollon (Acting Treasure)	
<u>Discussion:</u>			
<u>Motion:</u> Accept Treasurer's Report as read: Marg Pollon Seconded: Sandy Widmer Carried			
Denise commented on how responsible Marg has with the finances that have come in. Marg replied that they need to trust God to bring in the money.			
Casting the Vision		Marg Pollon (Read)	
<u>Discussion:</u> Marg isn't completely happy with our Vision Statement so will work on revising.			
Denise said that if Marg felt jaded, we never noticed. Marg's been growing, while she's been in difficult places. She doesn't give up!			
Election of Directors			
<u>Discussion:</u> Asked if there were any others who would like to come on the Board. No takers! We would like to see some younger individuals who can see the vision join our Board.			
<u>Action items:</u> We'll keep the same positions: Sandy Widmer- Secretary, Denise Hill - Prayer Coordinator, Tom Pollon - IT & Marg Pollon - Chair			
Discussion & Questions			
<u>Discussion:</u> No substantial funding has come through but there is still a little funding left from Marg's salary for another month.			
If we have to give up our office space it was discussed that we might look for space in a church like we had in Calgary in St. John Lutheran Church for 15 years.			
Tom gave Marg a beautiful bouquet of flowers, as a Thank You			
Closing Prayer		Sandy Widmer	
Thanking God for His past and future guidance and asking Him to help in trusting Him.			
Adjournment: 4:42pm		Motions: Marg Pollon Seconded: Sandy Widmer Carried	

BRIDGES OF LOVE MINISTRY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026

CHAIR'S REPORT



Faithful Through the Journey

As we gather for another Annual General Meeting, I am reminded that the story of Bridges of Love Ministry is about much more than programs and activities. It is a story of faith, perseverance, relationships, and a continued willingness to serve.

The past year has brought its share of challenges. Like many small organizations, we have faced financial pressures, limited resources, and the need to carefully consider how Bridges of Love can continue its ministry in a sustainable way.

Not everything unfolded as we had hoped. Some initiatives did not move forward, some anticipated partnerships have yet to develop, and progress has sometimes been slower than we would have liked.

Yet, through those challenges, **Bridges of Love has continued.** That is something worth recognizing and celebrating.

Throughout the year, the combined responsibilities of **Executive Director and Chair** have continued to require significant time, dedication, and perseverance. The Board recognizes and appreciates the commitment required to carry both roles while keeping the ministry moving forward.

We are also grateful to our Board Members, **Denise Hill, Sandy Widmer and Tom Pollon**, for their continued commitment and willingness to serve another year. Their encouragement, prayers, and support have been especially valuable during a challenging season.

We extend our appreciation as well to our donors, volunteers, churches, community organizations, and friends of Bridges of Love. Whether through financial support, practical assistance, prayer, encouragement, or simply believing in the work, each contribution has helped sustain the ministry.

Looking Back

One of the encouraging aspects of this past year has been the continued effort to build relationships within our community.

Meetings with civic leaders, emergency management personnel, potential funding partners, churches, and community organizations have helped increase awareness of Bridges of Love and opened doors for possible future cooperation.

Not every conversation has resulted in an immediate partnership or tangible outcome. However, relationships take time to develop, and we believe these connections are an important part of strengthening the ministry.

The CROSSWALK experience was a particularly encouraging example. A community agency brought forward a need, Bridges of Love helped make a connection, and a local church responded with practical assistance. It was a small example of the kind of bridge we hope to build more often.

Our emergency preparedness initiatives have also continued to provide opportunities to share information, encourage individuals and churches to prepare, and strengthen our connections within the emergency management community.

These accomplishments may not always appear large when viewed individually. Together, however, they represent a ministry that has continued to serve, learn, adapt, and build relationships despite significant challenges.

With Gratitude

As we complete another fiscal year, I believe we have much for which to be thankful.

We are thankful that the ministry has continued to operate. We are thankful for the people who have remained committed to the vision. We are thankful for the relationships that have been established and for the opportunities that continue to emerge.

Most importantly, we are thankful for God's faithfulness.

There have been times when the path ahead has not been clear, but we have continued to experience reminders that the work matters and that we are not walking this journey alone.

As Chair, I am grateful to have the privilege of serving alongside those who continue to believe in the vision of Bridges of Love Ministry.

The detailed report that follows provides a fuller account of the year's activities and accomplishments. Our **Looking Ahead: From Awareness to Action** report will then consider the opportunities and challenges before us.

For now, it is enough to acknowledge that the journey has not always been easy—but **we have continued to walk it together.**

And for that, we are truly grateful.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marg Pollon, Chair
Bridges of Love Ministry
August 26, 2026

Executive Director's Report

AUGUST 25,
2026

2 Chronicles says, "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."



Bridges
of Love

Support those whose heart is completely His!

When newspaper headlines and news broadcasts threaten to discourage us, we need reminders that God is still at work through people who faithfully serve Him and make a difference in the lives of others.

The promise found in 2 Chronicles 16:9 remains just as true today. Our concern and compassion for others should compel us to move forward with a fresh view of God, a clear view of ourselves, and a renewed view of those He has called us to serve.

That has been our hope and prayer as we continue to trust God for the ongoing service and sustainability of **Bridges of Love Ministry**.

Although we encountered several hurdles during the past year, we are grateful to have maintained our office and training space and continued our activities as circumstances allowed. Building positive and trusting relationships remains one of our highest priorities as we seek the support needed to sustain and develop our programs.

This past year also brought us back to our beginnings, with no additional staff available to assist with day-to-day responsibilities. Even so, we kept our records current, met our financial obligations, and ensured that the ministry continued to operate. For this, we are truly thankful.

We are grateful for the continued support of our Board Members, **Denise Hill, Sandy Widmer and Tom Pollon**, who graciously agreed to serve for another year. Their encouragement, prayers, and commitment have helped sustain Bridges of Love through another challenging year.

We are equally thankful for the faithful generosity of our donors, including two very special monthly supporters, both named **Heather**. Their consistent financial support has provided much-needed stability and encouragement during a particularly challenging season when grant funding has not been available.

As we close another fiscal year, we do so with thankful hearts. There have been challenges and disappointments, but God's faithfulness has never failed us. He has continued to provide for our needs, strengthen us for each new day, and surround us with people who believe in the vision and ministry of Bridges of Love.

The story of Bridges of Love is written **one relationship at a time**. Each event, meeting, workshop, and conversation has become another chapter in God's unfolding plan.

The pages that follow are more than a record of activities. They are a testimony of His faithfulness throughout our **23rd year of ministry**.

BRIDGES OF LOVE'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2026
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
Faithful in Service ~ Hopeful for the Future

- **Wildfire season a concern (Summer, 2025)**

As Alberta's wildfire season continued, we highlighted our **Alberta Recovers** program in the event that our online giving platform needed to be activated to assist individuals and families affected by wildfire.

During this period, we also received an additional supply of N95 masks provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada and distributed through the Canadian Red Cross. With an ample supply available, we offered masks free of charge to our newsletter recipients and shared boxes with several seniors' facilities. The response was very positive, and the facilities were grateful to receive them for their residents.

- **"Getting to Know You" Event – August 22, 2025**

To celebrate Bridges of Love's 22nd Anniversary, we hosted an informal **"Getting to Know You"** gathering designed to bring friends, neighbours, colleagues, churches, and community members together.

Guests had an opportunity to tour our office and training facility and learn more about our programs and services. We were encouraged by the attendance and grateful to everyone who travelled to support the event.

Following the fellowship, the Board of Directors held our Annual General Meeting. We are grateful to everyone who participated and helped us fulfill our annual charity requirements.

- **"Bearing Together" Bears Knitting Club**



We continue to hear encouraging stories about our **Bear-to-Care** initiative. We were especially touched by the story shared by Board Member, Sandy Widmer after giving three bears to a relative and her two children who were experiencing a difficult time.

Each bear is intended to carry a message of comfort, hope, and God's love. Recipients are encouraged to **"share it forward"** by passing the bear to someone else who may need encouragement. Every bear is accompanied by two VIP Member Cards. The recipient keeps one as a reminder of the love received and passes the bear and second card to someone of their choosing.

The remaining "Care-to-Bears" are currently waiting for their new homes, so the project is on the back burner for now.

- **Provincial Recognition**

Bridges of Love was pleased to have several submissions featured in the **Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) BePrepared Resilience Builders Bulletin**, distributed electronically to emergency management organizations across Alberta.

Our Emergency Preparedness Week activities were highlighted, along with a five-minute overview of our **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** program.

We were honoured to be invited to contribute and appreciated the opportunity to promote community preparedness and resilience throughout Alberta.

- **Presentation to Red Deer Probus Seniors' Club – September 11, 2025**

Following an earlier presentation at the Golden Circle Senior Centre, Bridges of Love was invited to speak to the **Red Deer Probus Seniors' Club**.

Approximately 50 seniors attended the 45-minute presentation, which introduced Bridges of Love's programs and shared practical steps individuals can take to prepare for emergencies.



We appreciated the opportunity to connect with community members, answer questions, and encourage greater awareness of personal preparedness.

- **Christmas Community Outreach**



Once again, Bridges of Love was blessed to receive donated candy, toothpaste, and personal care items from **Samaritan's Purse** following its Operation Christmas Child Shoebox campaign.

Despite winter travel challenges, we made the trek to Calgary collecting six large boxes of supplies to share with Red Deer local agencies and individuals in need.

A Christmas Open House was held on December 19, providing an opportunity for churches, community partners, and individuals to connect and receive items to bless others. Although attendance and financial support were lower than anticipated, we were grateful that the donated supplies could be redirected to organizations serving vulnerable individuals in our community. By the end of the Christmas season, hundreds of dollars' worth of donated items had been distributed to the **Women's Shelter, the Mustard Seed, and Safe Harbour**. Each organization expressed appreciation for the practical assistance and encouragement.

While the event did not unfold as originally planned, we are thankful that these generous gifts were ultimately used to bring help and hope to those who needed them.



- **Strengthening Community Partnerships**

Relationship-building remained a key priority throughout the year. Meetings were held with **Member of Parliament Burton Bailey**, **Red Deer Mayor Cindy Jefferies**, the City's Emergency Management Coordinator **Aswathi Vijayan**, and a representative of the **Central Alberta Community Foundation, Jael McCauley**. Our meeting with Mr. Bailey and his assistant, Steven Ellingson, provided an opportunity to introduce Bridges of Love, discuss our ministry, and share our financial challenges. They offered suggestions for strengthening fundraising efforts and committed to sharing information about government grant opportunities.

The meeting with Mayor Jefferies and members of her administration increased awareness of Bridges of Love within the City of Red Deer. Discussions included our mission, financial challenges, and community concerns such as homelessness in the downtown core which does affect traffic to our office which is adjacent to their shelter. The meeting established a positive connection with City leadership sharing an apple pie for their Council Meeting and hopefully, opened the door to future collaboration.



We also met with the City's new Emergency Management Coordinator, Aswathi Vijayan, to introduce Bridges of Love and begin building a working relationship. She expressed interest in learning more about our emergency preparedness initiatives and the potential for future cooperation.

Representatives of the Central Alberta Community Foundation also visited our facility. We discussed our ministry, grant applications, and the Foundation's funding priorities.

Although these meetings did not produce immediate results, they strengthened Bridges of Love's visibility and credibility within the community and established relationships that may lead to future partnerships.

- **Alberta NGO Council**



As Treasurer of the **Alberta NGO Council**, I continued to support the Council's administrative operations, including membership renewals and membership records.

The Council also continued efforts to strengthen its relationship with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, including the goal of securing a formal seat at the provincial emergency management table.

An encouraging step forward came this year when Alberta NGO Council members were invited to participate in AEMA's provincial emergency preparedness webinars. I believe this was a first! Our Chair, **Tammy Suitor of Samaritan's Purse**, was also invited to present the Council's mandate and explain how organizations can become members.

These opportunities reflect growing recognition of the Council's role and increasing collaboration with Alberta's emergency management community.

- **Monthly Newsletter and Supporter Engagement**

Our monthly **Newsletter** continues to be an important communication tool for Bridges of Love. It provides updates on our ministry, shares opportunities for involvement, and keeps supporters connected to our ongoing work.

The Newsletter is distributed to more than **400 recipients** and continues to achieve encouraging engagement. Our open rate has averaged approximately **43–45%**, with individual issues achieving strong results. For example, the March Newsletter achieved a 97% delivery rate and a 45% open rate.

Some recipients have been receiving our Newsletter since the first edition was published in 2004. The Newsletter has become particularly important since the completion of our previous grant funding. It provides an opportunity to communicate our needs, celebrate God's provision, and invite supporters to continue partnering with us.

We also maintain a printed edition for supporters who do not have access to email. Our Newsletters are archived as part of the ministry's history, documenting more than two decades of Bridges of Love and God's faithfulness.

- **Hope on the horizon!**

Developing a sustainability plan continues to be one of our highest priorities as I recognize the realities of the aging process.

When a possible fit is identified, we prayerfully seek out that individual. One such opportunity arose through an introduction to **Pastor David Bayduza**. He and his wife spent time getting to know us and learning about the ministry. Although we had hoped this connection might become the answer to our prayers, it was not the right fit at this time.

Even so, we remain confident that God is preparing the right person to help carry the mission of Bridges of Love into the future.

We continue to pray that, in His perfect timing, He will bring someone with a sincere heart, a shared vision, and a passion for continuing the work He has entrusted to us.

Our hope remains firmly on the horizon.

- **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)**

Planning continued for a pilot **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Summit** designed to equip churches and community members with practical emergency preparedness skills. The proposed Summit was intended to launch during Emergency Preparedness Week and strengthen partnerships among churches, community organizations, and emergency management agencies.

As part of the planning process, discussions were held with AEMA regarding participation as a keynote presenter. Although AEMA was unable to participate because of existing commitments, we were hopeful that we could plan their participation for a future date.

Invitations were sent to Red Deer churches encouraging them to participate for a pilot Red Deer event with registration set at a reduced rate. Unfortunately, the response was insufficient to proceed, so the Summit was postponed.

Although the event did not move forward this year, the planning process reinforced an important lesson: **relationships and partnerships need to be established before launching new initiatives.**

We remain committed to the vision of equipping churches and communities to work together in emergency preparedness and will continue to pursue opportunities to bring this initiative to fruition.

- **Renewed Call to Canadian Churches**

In April, Bridges of Love launched a church engagement initiative to inform and engage the local church by mailing information packages to ten Red Deer churches. The packages introduced our ministry, outlined our core programs, and invited churches to explore opportunities for partnership in strengthening community resilience through faith-based emergency preparedness.

Although immediate partnerships did not result, the initiative established important first points of contact with local church leadership.

The information package highlighted Bridges of Love's four key initiatives:

- ✓ **Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative (FEPI):** Equipping churches to prepare for and respond effectively during emergencies.
- ✓ **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT):** Training volunteers with essential disaster response skills to support their families, neighbours, and first responders.

- ✓ **Alberta Recovers:** An online platform connecting donors with individuals and families affected by disasters.
- ✓ **Crosswalk:** Connecting people experiencing hardship with local churches able to provide practical assistance and support (Not yet implemented).

This initiative reflects our continued commitment to strengthening the Church's role as a trusted source of hope, practical care, and resilience within the community.

- **Emergency Preparedness Week – May 7, 2026**



Week across Alberta.

With no indication that the city would be hosting an Emergency Preparedness Week event, Bridges of Love organized its own “**Getting to Know You**” gathering. Rather than broadly advertising the event, invitations were directed primarily to Red Deer churches.

The purpose was to introduce local church leaders to Bridges of Love, share information about our programs, and explore opportunities for future partnership.

The AEMA **BePrepared Team** video was highlighted as part of the event. We appreciated the team's work in developing resources for Emergency Preparedness

Churches were also invited to attend our Emergency Preparedness Week gathering, with follow-up telephone calls made to encourage participation. While responses were generally positive, scheduling conflicts limited attendance. **First Christian Reformed Church** was the only congregation represented, sending three board members to learn more about Bridges of Love.

While attendance was lower than anticipated, the event provided another opportunity to increase awareness of Bridges of Love and establish relationships that may lead to future collaboration and increased support.

- **Bridges of Love Ministry Brochure**

A new **Bridges of Love Ministry brochure** was developed this year to provide a concise overview of our history, mission, programs, and opportunities for partnership.

The brochure has become a useful resource for meetings with churches, community leaders, potential supporters, and organizations interested in learning more about our work.

It supports our continued efforts to build relationships of trust and create opportunities for collaboration within our community and beyond.

- **CROSSWALK in Action**



Although **CROSSWALK** has not yet been fully implemented, this year provided an encouraging example of its potential.

Bridges of Love received a request from the **Alberta Brain Injury Network** seeking emergency financial assistance for a client at risk of losing their housing.

Although CROSSWALK is still awaiting broader church participation, we reached out to our network of Red Deer churches to determine whether assistance might be available.

First Christian Reformed Church responded immediately. A deacon met with the agency and the client, and the church generously provided the financial support needed to prevent the individual from losing their home.

Jeana Freerksen, Services Coordinator with the Alberta Brain Injury Network, expressed appreciation for the connection that was made.

This experience demonstrated the vision behind CROSSWALK: **building bridges between community agencies and churches that are ready to respond with compassion and practical care.** It is an encouraging example of what can happen when relationships, community needs, and willing partners come together.

SUMMARY

This reporting period has been characterized by perseverance, relationship-building, community engagement, and continued efforts to develop a sustainable future for Bridges of Love Ministry.

Not every initiative progressed as hoped. Some opportunities remain in the developmental stage, and several proposed partnerships have yet to become active. Nevertheless, important relationships have been established, awareness of our ministry has increased, and opportunities for future collaboration continue to emerge.

Building a sustainable ministry requires patience, perseverance, and a long-term perspective. Throughout the year, Bridges of Love has remained focused on strengthening relationships, expanding awareness of our mission, and positioning the organization for future service.

The CROSSWALK experience provided a small but meaningful example of what can happen when a community need is connected with a willing church. The CERT initiative demonstrated the importance of building partnerships before launching a program. Our meetings with civic leaders, emergency management personnel, funders, and churches have helped establish connections that may become increasingly important in the years ahead.

As we look forward, we remain committed to our mission of equipping churches and communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from times of crisis. We continue to move forward with diligence and faith, trusting God for His guidance and provision.

Most importantly, we remain grateful. God has been faithful throughout another year of Bridges of Love Ministry, and our hope remains firmly on the horizon.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Marg Pollon
Executive Director
Bridges of Love Ministry
August 26, 2026**



Acknowledgement of Board Service

Before we move forward with the appointment and ratification of the Board for the coming year, I would like to take a few moments to recognize those who have faithfully served Bridges of Love through the years.

Denise Hill, Sandy Widmer & Past Board Members

Denise and Sandy, I want to thank you both sincerely for your willingness to serve on the Board of Bridges of Love and for the time, energy, encouragement, and prayer you have given to this ministry.

Board service is not always easy, and it becomes particularly challenging during seasons of uncertainty. You have walked with us through both encouraging and difficult times, and your presence has been an important part of the Bridges of Love story.

Although you have decided not to continue for another term, I want you to know that your years of service are appreciated and will always be part of our history. We respect your decision and are grateful for the time you were willing to invest in this ministry.

Thank you for standing with Bridges of Love and for the part each of you has played in helping us reach this point. We also thank the many Board Members who have given faithfully throughout the past 23 years. Thank you all for your service.

Tom Pollon

I would also like to recognize my husband, Tom, who has served on the Board of Bridges of Love for an extraordinary **23 years**. Tom has been there from the very beginning, often working quietly behind the scenes and doing whatever needed to be done. From technology and computers to moving supplies, fixing things around the office, solving problems, and providing practical support, Tom has consistently been willing to help. But his greatest contribution has been his faithfulness. For 23 years, Tom has stood beside this ministry—and beside me—as we have tried to follow where we believed God was leading. He has seen the successes, the disappointments, the financial struggles, the unexpected blessings, and all the ordinary work in between.

His willingness to continue serving is deeply appreciated, and I am especially thankful that he remains willing to be part of the Board as Bridges of Love enters this new season.

To all of you—thank you!

Your service has helped write the story of Bridges of Love.

People may see the programs, newsletters, presentations, events, and activities, but behind every one of those things are people who have been willing to give their time, their energy, their prayers, and their hearts.

Denise, Sandy, Tom and the many Board Members who have served, you have each contributed to that story in your own way, and for that we are truly grateful.

May God bless you for what you have given and continue to guide each of you in the years ahead.



BRIDGES OF LOVE MINISTRY'S FINANCIALS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

July 31, 2025 – August 1, 2026

Please see QuickBooks Financial Reports included.

What a financial year we have experienced! With our CSF grant ending in March 2025, this past year has been one of trusting God to provide, one day at a time. As Philippians 2:13 reminds us, God provides both the desire and the ability and resources to accomplish His work. We are very thankful that, despite significant funding challenges, Bridges of Love has continued to operate from our Red Deer office.

- **Individual Donors**

Through our newsletters, we have placed greater emphasis on the important role of individual donors in sustaining the ministry during these uncertain times. We have shared both our needs and opportunities to support our programs.

We are especially thankful for two faithful monthly donors whose consistent support provides a dependable foundation. We are also grateful for those who have responded at just the right time to meet specific needs. Because of the generosity of our donors, we have been able to keep our office operating throughout the year without incurring debt. We sincerely thank everyone who has supported Bridges of Love financially.

- **Grant Funding**

- **Alberta CIP Operator Grant**

Our fiscal year began with the disappointing news that our application for the Alberta CIP Operator Grant was unsuccessful. The feedback indicated that our goal of providing four training sessions annually would not produce enough graduates to make a significant difference during a disaster.

While 80 CERT graduates may seem small in a city the size of Red Deer, we believe that even one trained person could make a life-saving difference during an emergency. We felt the grant was a strong fit for our project and intend to consider applying again when we have additional support to strengthen our application.

- **Central Alberta Community Foundation Micro Grant**

We also submitted two grant applications to the Central Alberta Community Foundation. Unfortunately, neither application was successful. We requested feedback to better understand the decision and to strengthen future applications.

The feedback on one application indicated that, while the importance of emergency preparedness and the feasibility of our project were recognized, the application needed to demonstrate more clearly:

- ✓ measurable, localized impact;
- ✓ identified community needs and partnerships;
- ✓ sustainability beyond the initial funding period; and
- ✓ stronger risk and long-term planning.

This feedback is helpful as we continue to improve our grant applications and demonstrate the measurable impact of community-based emergency preparedness.

➤ Red Deer FCSS Grant

Following a suggestion from Jael McCauley of the Central Alberta Community Foundation, we applied for a three-year Red Deer FCSS grant. The application was extensive and took several weeks to complete.

On May 7, we received the unexpected news that our application had been deemed ineligible and would not proceed to Stage 2. The reason given was:

"This project is considered to be a service that is ordinarily provided by another government or government agency (Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services), which is ineligible for funding under provincial FCSS Regulations."

This decision was particularly concerning because Bridges of Love is addressing a recognized community need through education, training, and volunteer preparedness—not attempting to replace the work of government emergency response agencies. The decision also raised serious questions about the future ability of community organizations to obtain government funding for emergency preparedness initiatives.

We, therefore, submitted a formal letter to the FCSS Board Chair requesting clarification, with copies provided to Public Safety Canada, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), and the Be Prepared Team. We specifically asked for clarification regarding the apparent conclusion that community-based organizations should not be providing preparedness education and support.

Following further correspondence, Jason Kinck, FCSS Program Specialist, explained that:

"Following a review of your application, the Finance Committee determined that the proposed program falls within the mandate of another ministry. This is consistent with decisions regarding other community-based initiatives that address important local needs but align more directly with the responsibilities of the Ministries of Justice, Health, or Education."

This response created further confusion. Bridges of Love had previously received a substantial grant from the Minister of Community and Social Services for this work, and our project had not materially changed since that funding was awarded. We therefore requested further clarification.

The subsequent response stated:

"We recognize the importance of addressing service gaps and unmet community needs. While these factors are considered during the review process, eligibility decisions are based on established criteria, including alignment with ministry mandates and program requirements."

While the decision itself was disappointing, the rationale provided raises an important question: If community organizations are encouraged to identify and address gaps in emergency preparedness, but are then told that this work falls under the responsibility of government and is therefore ineligible for community funding, where does that leave the community?

This concern is especially significant in light of the realities experienced during major emergencies, when government emergency services can be stretched beyond capacity and local residents, volunteers, churches, community organizations, and other grassroots groups often play an important role in supporting their neighbours.

We sought perspectives from several community leaders and emergency management professionals following the FCSS decision. The responses helped provide additional context and, in some cases, confirmed our concerns.

Scott Cameron, Co-Founder of Emergency Management Logistics and formerly Manager of Social Planning for the City of Red Deer, shared his perspective based on his experience with FCSS and municipal government. He noted that emergency response agencies generally prefer clearly defined command-and-control structures and suggested that concerns about volunteer-based organizations that can self-activate, such as CERTs, may have influenced the decision. Scott also shared a personal observation from his experience during the 2013

Calgary flood, noting that the first several days of response were heavily community-led and that community support continues to be important after formal emergency services leave.

His perspective was valuable because it helped us understand that the FCSS decision may reflect broader concerns about how volunteer emergency preparedness and response organizations fit within established government structures.

Other community contacts also responded. The Emergency Management Coordinator expressed concern about the outcome and recommended that we await responses from FCSS, Public Safety Canada, AEMA, and the Be Prepared Team before determining our next steps. The Office of the Mayor of Red Deer acknowledged the decision and recognized the disappointment it represented for Bridges of Love.

Although this funding decision was discouraging, it has caused us to look more closely at the role of community organizations in emergency preparedness and at the apparent gap between the need for community preparedness and the willingness of government funding programs to support it.

We remain committed to pursuing appropriate funding, partnerships, and opportunities to strengthen emergency preparedness in Red Deer. We also believe it is important to document this experience so that our members, supporters, and community partners understand the challenges we are facing and why securing sustainable funding for this work has become increasingly difficult.

• **Rent-Free Grace**

With funds still tight and our ability to meet all our obligations becoming increasingly challenging, we had to humbly acknowledge our financial situation. I met with our landlord, Brad Rothbotham, owner of the Roll'n Industries facility where our office is located, to explain our circumstances and our strong desire to remain at our present location.

Brad graciously listened to our situation and offered Bridges of Love **three months of rent-free time—November, December, and January—to allow us additional time to pursue sustainable funding**. This generous offer was a tremendous encouragement and a very tangible answer to prayer.

During this period, we actively explored a number of possible sources of financial support, including:

- ✓ Sharing our financial needs through our monthly newsletters, reaching more than 400 contacts.
- ✓ Contacting Fire & Flood and the Knights of Columbus.
- ✓ Reaching out to our Board members, friends, and family.
- ✓ Applying for a \$5,000 grant through the Central Alberta Community Foundation and requesting a meeting with the Foundation.
- ✓ Contacting the City of Red Deer Finance Department regarding available funding opportunities. We were advised that there were no funding opportunities available for 2025, and that any potential 2026 funding would depend on a year-end surplus, which would not be known until May or June.
- ✓ Sharing our funding letter with the Canadian Red Cross, who offered to circulate it among other contacts.
- ✓ Requesting a meeting with the Mayor of Red Deer. After following up when we had not been contacted, a meeting was scheduled for January 22, with an apology for the delay.
- ✓ Meeting with our MP, Burton Bailey, and his assistant on January 12. They were very helpful and assisted with drafting our funding letter. We were encouraged to expect further contact, and after not hearing back, a follow-up message was left on January 19.

While these efforts did not immediately resolve our funding challenges, they demonstrated the many avenues we pursued to keep the doors of Bridges of Love open and to find a sustainable path forward.

- **Connecting with Newsletter Recipients**

Accessing larger funding sources can take months of effort, so over the past several months we have placed greater emphasis on our monthly newsletter as part of our immediate fundraising efforts.

Our nearly 400 newsletter recipients include many people who have followed and supported Bridges of Love over our 23 years of ministry—family and friends, colleagues, CERT graduates and instructors, community leaders, pastors, Christian educators, and Board members.

We wanted our supporters to understand that Bridges of Love has reached a crossroads and that their financial support could help keep our doors open. We used the newsletter to clearly communicate our mission and vision, particularly for those who may not have fully understood the scope of what we bring to churches and the wider community.

We made several direct appeals for financial support. **While we are grateful for the continued interest and encouragement of those who receive our newsletters, we have not received donations as a direct result of these appeals to date.** This has reinforced the challenge we face in converting awareness and goodwill into the financial support needed to sustain the ministry.

- **Managing Expenses**

Throughout the year, we have worked diligently to keep expenses to a minimum while ensuring that our monthly obligations were met. We have made every effort to avoid carrying debt and have kept our MBNA credit card at or near a zero balance.

Our largest operating expense increase has been with WIX, as the costs for both our website and email marketing program have increased substantially. We were especially grateful for a donation from my brother Garth's company, which covered these costs and allowed us to continue maintaining our website and communicating with our nearly 400 newsletter recipients.

We also hosted several community events throughout the year as part of our efforts to build relationships and increase awareness of Bridges of Love. These events resulted in some modest expenses, but were considered worthwhile investments in community engagement.

Despite the financial challenges we have faced, we have continued to keep our essential expenses—rent, insurance, telephone, internet, and other regular bills—paid and up to date.

When our Shaw telephone contract came up for renewal and the monthly cost was expected to increase substantially, we chose to enter into another one-year contract to keep the monthly expense close to what we had paid the previous year.

Overall, we have continued to exercise careful stewardship of the resources entrusted to Bridges of Love, making every effort to maintain operations while keeping expenses as low as possible.

Financial Report Summary

This past financial year has been one of both significant challenge and remarkable provision.

With our CSF grant ending in March 2025, we entered the year knowing that replacing this funding would be essential to maintaining the ministry and our Red Deer office. We pursued numerous grant opportunities, contacted government and community organizations, reached out to individuals and businesses, and increased our communication with our nearly 400 newsletter recipients. While several grant applications were unsuccessful and our direct appeals did not result in the donations we had hoped for, we continued to look for every possible avenue of support.

At the same time, we have worked carefully to manage the resources entrusted to Bridges of Love. Expenses have been kept to a minimum, essential bills have remained current, and we have made every

periods when funds were insufficient to meet all monthly obligations, Tom and I personally covered shortfalls, including rent and other essential expenses. These rent payments are recorded as loans to the ministry rather than donations, with the hope that the amounts can be repaid when the organization's financial position allows. You will note this amount under the 'non-receipted' entries on the spreadsheet. In addition to these loans, we continue to contribute personally each month as a donation to the ministry. We are grateful for the ability to help sustain Bridges of Love during this challenging season while continuing to seek more sustainable sources of funding.

There have been several tangible reminders of God's provision throughout this difficult season. We are especially grateful to our faithful monthly donors, to those who have responded to specific needs, to Garth's company for helping cover our website and newsletter expenses, and to Brad Rothbotham, who generously provided three months of rent-free use of our office when we needed additional time to secure funding. These acts of generosity have made a meaningful difference in allowing Bridges of Love to continue operating.

The unsuccessful grant applications have also provided valuable lessons. We have gained a clearer understanding of the importance of demonstrating measurable community impact, partnerships, sustainability, and long-term outcomes in future applications. The FCSS decision, in particular, has raised important questions about how community-based emergency preparedness initiatives are viewed and funded, and we continue to seek clarity and appropriate partnerships.

Through all of this, Bridges of Love has remained committed to its mission. We are grateful that, despite the financial pressures of this past year, we have been able to keep our office open, our bills paid, and our ministry active in the community. We are especially grateful to our faithful monthly donors and to those who responded to specific needs throughout the year. Every gift, large or small, made a meaningful difference during this challenging season.

As we look ahead, sustainable funding remains our greatest financial need. We recognize that continuing this work will require ongoing support from individuals, churches, businesses, foundations, and other community partners. We remain committed to being responsible stewards of every dollar entrusted to us and to continuing to seek wise and sustainable solutions.

Most importantly, we continue to trust God for His provision and direction. Philippians 2:13 reminds us that it is God who works in us "to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." We are thankful for every person who has walked alongside Bridges of Love during this challenging season, and we look forward with faith to what God will provide and accomplish in the year ahead.

Respectfully Submitted:
Marg Pollon (Acting Treasurer)
Bridges of Love Ministry
August 26, 2026

11:40 AM

2026-08-11

Accrual Basis

Bridges of Love Ministry Society

Profit & Loss

August 2025 through July 2026

	Aug '25 - Jul 26
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
1700 · Amazon Rebate	2.30
4100 · DONATIONS	
4110 · Donations - Receiptable	9,144.21
4120 · Donations - Non Receiptable	2,735.00
Total 4100 · DONATIONS	11,879.21
Total Income	11,881.51
Gross Profit	11,881.51
Expense	
5100 · ADMINISTRATION	
5120 · Bank Charges	44.00
5130 · Credit Card Charges	6.44
5150 · Insurance	605.72
Total 5100 · ADMINISTRATION	656.16
5400 · FACILITIES	
5410 · Office Rent	7,170.73
Total 5400 · FACILITIES	7,170.73
5500 · MINISTRY COSTS	
5510 · Activity\Event Supplies	268.68
5540 · Communications	
5541 · Cell Phone Charges	1,230.65
5542 · InternetAccess\WebPage	1,732.48
5545 · Telephone Services	540.61
Total 5540 · Communications	3,503.74
5550 · Educational Resources	9.22
5560 · Food & Refreshment Expense	185.64
5575 · Memberships	177.65
5580 · Office Supplies	19.01
5590 · Postage & Shipping	63.11
Total 5500 · MINISTRY COSTS	4,227.05
Total Expense	12,053.94
Net Ordinary Income	-172.43
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
4155 · Bank Interest	-0.03
Total Other Income	-0.03
Net Other Income	-0.03
Net Income	-172.46

Bridges of Love Ministry Society

Balance Sheet

As of 1 August 2025

	1 Aug 25
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Chequing/Savings	
1100 · BANK ACCOUNTS	
1110 · Scotia Bank Operating	197.12
1130 · Servus Credit Union - Community	-9.98
1140 · Servus Credit Union - Savings	0.55
Total 1100 · BANK ACCOUNTS	187.69
Total Chequing/Savings	187.69
Total Current Assets	187.69
TOTAL ASSETS	187.69
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
2200 · GST Recoverable	-132.21
Total Other Current Liabilities	-132.21
Total Current Liabilities	-132.21
Total Liabilities	-132.21
Equity	
3900 · Retained Earnings	319.90
Total Equity	319.90
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	187.69



Looking Ahead: From Awareness to Action

Over the past year, we have continued to advance our objectives and draw attention to the challenges facing our communities, particularly the increasing risks associated with wildfires, floods, and tornadoes. The need for meaningful preparation, prevention, and resilience has never been clearer.

We have shared information, raised concerns, explored possibilities, and worked to make progress despite limited resources and, at times, limited support. Our purpose has never been simply to identify problems. It has been to help find practical ways forward—before circumstances leave us with fewer choices.

The recent wildfire situation in British Columbia is a powerful reminder of why this work matters. Many of the risks we have discussed are no longer theoretical. They are affecting communities, families, infrastructure, forests, and local economies.

This brings us to an important question:

If the circumstances we have been preparing for are becoming reality, how do we move from recognizing the need to taking action?

We believe there is an opportunity to build on the work already undertaken. However, meaningful progress will require more than the efforts of a small organization working on its own.

As we look ahead, we hope to develop stronger relationships with governments, agencies, organizations, communities, funders, and others who share an interest in building resilience and reducing risk.

What We Need to Move Forward

Our request is straightforward:

- Recognition of the work already undertaken and the importance of the issues being addressed.
- Encouragement that our efforts are worthwhile and contribute to a larger solution.
- Partnerships with organizations and agencies that can help develop and implement practical initiatives.
- Funding and resources appropriate to the work required to move beyond planning and discussion.
- A clear path forward, including an understanding of where our organization fits within existing programs and how we can work collaboratively.

We are not asking others to accept every idea without question. We welcome constructive discussion, evidence, collaboration, and accountability. What we are asking for is the opportunity to demonstrate what can be accomplished when local knowledge, committed people, good ideas, and appropriate resources are brought together.

The past year has reinforced an important lesson: identifying a problem is only the beginning. The real challenge is creating the partnerships, resources, and commitment required to address it.

We are ready to continue. We are ready to listen, learn, adapt, and work collaboratively.

We are still here. We still believe this work matters. We are still willing to do our part.

But we cannot do it alone.

We invite our members, community partners, government representatives, agencies, funders, and others who share these concerns to sit down with us and help determine what the next step should be—and then, together, take that step.

Perhaps the greatest encouragement we could receive this year would not simply be words telling us that we are on the right track.

It would be the opportunity to prove it.

Recognizing the Barriers

There are also barriers that we believe should be sincerely acknowledged.

As a faith-based ministry, we recognize that our Christian identity may sometimes create uncertainty about whether we are viewed as an appropriate partner by certain organizations, agencies, or funders. We respect that different organizations have different mandates and policies, and we are not asking anyone to compromise those principles.

At the same time, we hope our faith identity will not prevent others from recognizing the value of the work itself. Our motivation comes from our Christian faith, but our desire to serve, protect, prepare, and strengthen communities is not limited to those who share our beliefs. We believe there is considerable common ground in caring for people, supporting communities, protecting what matters, and preparing for challenges that affect us all.

We also recognize that my age may raise questions about succession and the long-term future of this work. I turn 76 this week, and rather than viewing that as a reason to step back, I see it as a reason to be intentional about what comes next.

Experience is valuable, but experience alone is not enough. If this work is to continue, it needs younger people, new ideas, new leadership, and strong partnerships. Part of my responsibility now is not simply to continue doing the work myself, but to help create something that others can carry forward.

We hope that neither our faith identity nor my age will become reasons to dismiss what we are trying to accomplish before the work itself has been properly considered.

We would rather be judged by the quality of our work, the sincerity of our intentions, the evidence we provide, and the results we are able to achieve.

That is the opportunity we are asking for.