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NEWSLETTER

Bridges of Love

"GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD, FOR HE IS GOOD; HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER" 1 Chronicles 16:34



**Give thanks to the Lord,
for he is good; his love
endures forever.**

-1 Chronicles 16:34

This verse, a call to gratitude and praise, of God's enduring goodness and steadfast love, is part of a song of thanksgiving that King David delivered when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem. It highlights two key attributes of God: His goodness and his everlasting mercy.

People who live the most fulfilling lives are the ones who are always rejoicing at what they have." "Nothing is more honourable than a grateful heart."

Thanksgiving is a time when we reflect on the blessings we received over the past year and thank our heavenly Father for all He has done for us. It is easy to focus on the challenging times and events that may not have gone as we thought they should. This is a natural and human response for activities that have not satisfied our longings. As we look back, however, God's ways are not our ways, so acceptance is key to understanding.

For those who have followed Bridges of Love for the past 22 years, you have witnessed firsthand God's hand in all we do and strive to accomplish. When Dr Tim Foggin invited Bridges of Love to join in Influenza Pandemic planning for the church community, we certainly stepped out of our comfort zone with a new but exciting chapter.

Who could have guessed this fledgling ministry would embark on this innovative approach to emergency preparedness by mobilising churches to be ready to respond to this impending threat? Back in 2005, when Pandemic Preparedness first began, most rolled their eyes in disbelief, but we now know only God knew the future, so this preparedness was just on track for what was to come!

We will always be appreciative to Public Safety Canada, which came on board with our pandemic planning, providing support and credibility for the Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative (FEPI). It was truly the best of times with agencies, churches, NGOs, and the government (FEPI Advisory Council) all working towards a common goal. That is, a plan for churches to be ready to respond to the needs of the community, should an Influenza Pandemic become a reality. A pandemic was overdue, which naturally occurs every 10 to 40 years, so they knew the local church community could stand in the gap for such a catastrophic event.

In 2008, Bridges of Love facilitated a Faith Community Summit on Pandemic Preparedness and Response at Rocky Mountain College with sixteen professionals instructing Alberta Faith Leaders on how they and their congregations could make a difference. What an exciting and valuable learning time this was!

Over the years, we have facilitated many events, all focused on the church's role, not only for pandemic preparedness but for any disaster that might occur in Alberta. We have provided tools, contacts, resources, information, and training (CERT). We desired to open doors for the local church to make connections with their community, demonstrating the love of Christ through their participation. With affirmation from the Federal Government by presenting

Prime Minister Volunteer Award in 2014, and Public Safety's recognition in 2018 with their Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award, it has indeed been a fulfilling and rewarding time!

We will never forget the 2013 Alberta Flood, where Bridges of Love had the opportunity to put its FEPI program into action. Matching donations with flood victims and FEPI churches making deliveries was a time when ideas were put into practice. What an amazing time helping those impacted by the disaster with a touch of Christ's love. Hundreds of donations were shared with hundreds of flood casualties with absolutely no stockpiling (Alberta Recovers). We appreciate the Alberta Government for their recognition through the 3 Heroes of the Flood Awards.

Bridges of Love Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training began in 2014 with an introduction to the US emergency training. Citizens being ready to respond immediately to the needs of their community, bridging the critical gap from the time of the disaster to when the first responders arrive on the scene, only made sense. The Alberta Government saw merit in another innovative project, administering a Civil Society Fund grant for Bridges of Love to share our templates. We were indeed humbled yet honoured that they believed in our initiatives by supporting us financially.

We have run the race with faith that God was using this ministry for His Glory. We are indeed so very thankful to have learned and grown over the past 22 years. What a ride it has been as we navigated the complex politics of collaboration. We know, however, that the race is not over as there is still so much work to be done!