

Bethel News

BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

December 2011

Pastor's Piece:

Christmas means many things to many people. One obvious emphasis is that Christmas is a time for presents. There is shopping to do to choose the right gift for the right person. For some this is a duty or obligation – everyone buys presents, so I had better do it too. For others this is an opportunity to express thankfulness for a meaningful relationship that exists between the giver and the one receiving the gift. Such a gift is chosen and given from the heart.

The gift of Jesus as our Saviour is an expression of the Father's heart for his people. "For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son." We might become so familiar with the Christmas story, as we may get familiar with gifts from the same people every Christmas, that we lose some of the wonder and awe and amazing love that is wrapped around this gift. In the busyness of the Christmas season, pause to renew the awe at the gift of God's love.

In receiving this gift from God, we are also invited to look at our thankful response. Our Father has blessed us with many gifts: wealth, time, abilities. How are we using these gifts as an expression of thanks to him for the gift of salvation? Are we spending more time, money, energy on ourselves and our own happiness? Are we sharing what we have with others? Are we ignoring some of these gifts that God has given us? We can easily say that we are very busy people. What are we busy with? Whom are we serving?

Advent & Attawapiskat by Mike Hogeterp, Christian Reformed
Centre for Public Dialogue, Ottawa

“...the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations....these words are trustworthy and true.” see Revelation 22:1-6

Attawapiskat is the latest in a long line of Indigenous communities in Canada in the news because of shocking living and social conditions. The media coverage of this situation presents it as a crisis. But this crisis, in Attawapiskat and elsewhere, has lasted for generations. When the media glare fades the work of deep reconciliation and mutual responsibility continues. In the expectant season of Advent, of Jesus’ coming and coming again, the work continues in hope and love!

Attawapiskat is a Cree community of roughly 2000 people on the Western shores of James Bay in Northern Ontario. The only year-round access to the community is by air. Housing and infrastructure problems are chronic in Attawapiskat to the extent that some families are living in what can only be described as third world conditions. In October, community leaders responded to deteriorating housing conditions by declaring a state of emergency an emergency that got little public notice until the MP for the area released a video showing the disturbing realities of housing conditions in Attawapiskat. That video provoked a media glare that is slowly fading now. It also prompted an emergency response from the Red Cross, the Government of Canada and many people of good will.

There is a danger that appropriate emergency responses to Attawapiskat will make us content to check it off as ‘done’ in the Christmas charity column. That’s like forgetting that the Christmas carol jingles in our malls ought to be celebrating Christ’s incarnation.

The great Canadian poet Bruce Cockburn once said redemption rips through the surface of time in the cry of a tiny babe. This is no fluffy sentiment! That tiny babe, born in ramshackle accommodations, came to make all things new to bring salvation, reconciliation, justice and the healing of the nations. The repetition of tragedies like Attawapiskat remind us that Christ’s kingdom is already and not yet, and that the ministry of reconciliation and the healing of the nations is urgent.

So yes, let’s generously support the Red Cross, TrueNorthAid and others who are responding to the Attawapiskat crisis. But Advent hope doesn’t end there. For many years now, Indigenous people have told churches that there is a need for a reconciled relationship between our peoples. Residential schools and assimilation policies denied the dignity of Indigenous cultures and separated generations of children from their families and communities this is the background to a shocking cycle of social problems, like those in Attawapiskat. Yes, residential schools are in the past but their affects persist today recognizing this, and working for healing, reconciliation and a new relationship with Indigenous people is the stuff of real advent hope and love.

continued . . .

PRAY:

-for Attawapiskat and other Indigenous communities that struggle with chronic social problems.

-for the January 24 meeting of the Prime Minister and First Nations leaders that tangible steps to justice and a new relationship will happen at this historic meeting.

-about the history of the relations between Indigenous people and settlers; and about the importance of a new relationship between us.

Announcements:

CONNECT WITH OTHER MINISTRY LEADERS - Have you ever wondered how other churches do a particular ministry? Well, there's a website where you can find out. You can ask questions, share experiences, get resources, read blogs, and more. It's called The Network and it covers dozens of ministry areas and roles. Check it out at crcna.org/Network

WORLD MISSIONS - Interested in nursing, public health, or youth ministry? Volunteer with Christian Reformed World Missions this summer on a team of North American and Filipino young adults leading workshops on HIV and AIDS prevention in schools, churches, and other settings throughout the Philippines. Up to six North American young adults are needed. For more information, visit www.crwmm.org/summer

VOLUNTEER WITH THE CRC! - Some of the current opportunities include an Accountant and an Information Technology & Website Volunteer both in Nigeria with CRWRC, as well two opportunities with World Missions in the Dominican Republic where they are looking for a Christian Reformed School Volunteer as well as a Theological Educator to assist in some short term training, administration and mentoring. For further information on these opportunities or to see what else is available, please visit www.crcna.org/servicelink or contact us at volunteer@crcna.org.

Married Couples: Valentine's Day will be here before you know it! **Decide today to give your spouse an unforgettable gift this Valentine's Day.** Why not take your spouse away for a special weekend of communication, reflection and time away from your hectic schedule? Rekindle the joy, intimacy & romance in your relationship. The next Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend is **February 17-19, 2012 in St. Catharines, ON.** Early registration is highly recommended. For info or to register on-line, visit www.reformedme.org or call David and Danielle at **(905) 985-8305**. There is no sharing in a group on the weekend. See also www.wwme.org.

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTMAS SALE - Looking for Christmas gift ideas? Order by Dec. 21 and save on great gift ideas including God Loves Me Storybook sets for children, "Seeking God's Face" by Philip F. Reinders, "Honest to God" by James C. Schaap, and "150" by Kevin Adams. Plus get FREE shipping on orders of \$25 or more! Visit FaithAliveResources.org/Gift or call 800-333-8300 to order.

Dear Bethel Christian Reformed Church,
Thank you so much for your very generous donation of food items.
Your kindness is greatly appreciated by many local families.
Thank you, Operation Harvest Sharing

To Bethel Christian Reformed Church,
Thank you for your very generous donation, it is very much appreciated. It has been a very busy year for us at Loaves & Fishes and the number of meals are growing. We now serve between 70 – 90 each evening.

Yours sincerely, Irene Selkerk, Administrator, Loaves and Fishes

Members of Bethel CRC:

Thank you for your support....

We have had a lot happen since our last prayer letter. Mark and Haley got married. John (16) is now in Thailand until next May. He is living with another Wycliffe family and doing his grade 12 there. (Wow). Sarah is continuing to do a good job as a nurse. Some patients even wrote a letter to the hospital saying how much they appreciated her going above and beyond the call of duty. Living at home, she is making great progress at paying off her student loans. Luke (23) moved out and is sharing a house with two other guys. On Sept. 14, Luke came close to death. He was driving along a road and an 18 wheeler (large truck) pulled out of a side street across his driving path. Luke tried to stop and avoid a crash. His car could easily have gone under the truck trailer sheering off the top of Luke's car, but by God's grace his car hit a low spot near the front of the trailer. The entire front of his car was demolished and the air bags went off. Luke had no serious injuries.

I (Rick) had a good trip to Ontario in August and was able to visit three of our supporting churches which have not heard from us in quite a while. Our department continues to release new updates to our computer software so that Translators have new features available to them which will make their work go better.

I was in North Carolina the last week of September for our software developers' conference. While there I was able to visit the Vernacular Media Services department and was very excited to have them explain how the Read and Grow images are being used to produce audio books to encourage people to learn to read and to read the Bible when it is translated into their language.

Thank you for your part in this ministry by enabling us to serve in Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Rick & Lori MacLean

We wish everyone God’s richest blessings of hope, peace, joy and love in this Christmas season. We give thanks for the blessing of being part of a supportive and caring family of believers. Thank you for your cards and words of encouragement. Rejoice in the Lord always!
 Pastor Jack and Jane

There have been some comments and questions about “The Stool,” the video that was shown during the sermon last Sunday. I chose to include the video as an illustration of the idea of taking a risk to follow God’s will (consider Ruth, Boaz, Mary, Joseph, Jesus). The message of the video, as stated by its makers (see www.onetimeblind.com) is: “Since the fall of man, we’ve been in a power struggle with God over control. We surrender to God’s will, but when His reality interferes with our daily lives, we jump right back in the driver’s seat. This short video will spark discussion over how committed we are to following God’s direction in our lives.” I appreciate the comments that were made and hope that this helps to answer some of the questions and clarifies the message of the video clip.
 Pastor Jack

Offering Schedule for December

	AM	PM
December 18	Our Missionaries	Diaconate
24		Diaconate
25	CRWRC	
31		Diaconate
January 1	Diaconate	
8	Focus on the Family	Home Missions
15	CRC Youth Unlimited	Home Missions

Heritage Community Christian School -Gift Cards

Just a reminder that we sell **grocery gift cards**. Wonderful stocking stuffers for your children or grandchildren! They come in \$25, \$50, \$100 and \$250 for the Superstore, Valumart and No Frills; \$25 and \$50 for Food Basics and Metro; \$25 for Giant Tiger. And don’t forget the \$10 and \$25 cards for Tim Hortons! Contact Renee at the church office or Jo at 613-342-9526. The Christian school gets 5% of every dollar you spend, at no cost to you!!

1. An excellent atmosphere of fellowship and congeniality existed at the recent congregational meeting.
2. A budget for \$273,869 was approved for 2012.
3. Total active members for 2012 is 213.
4. Greg Houldcroft of Cross Town Impact gave a very passionate speech about his work amongst the youth in our local high schools as well as elementary schools and coveted our support.
5. While allowing the youth to play in the gym after the service, Council wishes to ascertain, for reasons of liability, if there is any untoward activity or behaviour.
6. Council supports a Defund Abortion Petition which will be made available to all members.
7. Council encourages all members to be committed to a daily plan of devotions, Bible reading and prayer.
8. Over the past several months several letters and comments have been received from community persons who were inspired by our services broadcast on the cable channel. We thank God for that!

Who We Are

We are called ***Christian*** because we confess, belong to, and follow Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

We are called ***Reformed*** because our history is rooted in the 16th century Protestant Reformation. We continue to affirm the Reformation teachings of salvation by faith in Christ alone, and the Bible as the only rule of faith and conduct.

We are called ***Church*** because we are part of the universal family of God, through which our relationships to God, to each other, and the world are nurtured.