

# NORTHERN LIGHT

*The Official Newsletter of*

## **The Cariboo Presbyterian Church**

PO Box 156, Lac La Hache B.C. V0K 1T0

Visit our website: <http://www.cariboopresbyterianchurch.bc.ca>

**Editor: Jon Wyminga**

**Lent-Easter Edition 2019**

### **Annual Report for 2018**

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## **MISSIONARY REPORTS**

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### **From Our Southern Missionary: Bruce Wilcox**

2018 was another eventful and busy year in this mission, and once again I must say what a blessing it is to be part of God's family here! Our churches, which are scattered over a very large geographical area, continue to display the light and love of Christ in reaching out to those around them, and are the only organized Christian witness in the villages and rural areas in which God has planted us. Since you'll be reading reports from various ministry points and house churches in this newsletter, please forgive any overlap as I briefly touch on some of the ministries and highlights from the southern part of the Cariboo Presbyterian Church in 2018.

In May we were glad to have a visit from the Moderator of the 143<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Peter Bush, and his wife Debbie are from Winnipeg. We were mutually blessed as these folks experienced house church worship and fellowship with us, with Peter then sharing some very interesting and encouraging testimony about how God has worked through the indigenous people of Taiwan.

Last summer we also had visits and worship time at Sheridan Lake House Church with Mission Committee folks representing First Presbyterian Church in Penatanguishene, Ontario, and then from Haney Presbyterian Church on our BC lower mainland. Many thanks to these churches, as well as all the rest of our faithful supporters of this mission from across the country for your prayers and support!

In July our McLeese Lake House Church hosts arranged a concert in the local community hall with a great gospel band from Manitoba called "Prairie Joe", who had previously ministered at the Williams Lake Stampede as part of the cowboy church ministry of John and Cynthia Noble. It was a great evening, in lieu of our normal house church

worship that week, and the McLeese Lake Hall was packed!

In August we were also blessed by a visit and fascinating presentation from the Chapin family in all of our churches. Dave, Jessie and their kids were part of our house church family here and have since been ministering with an aviation missionary organization overseas for a number of years now, and it was exciting to hear what the Lord has been doing through them!

Also in August our Lac la Hache Church was once again asked by the community to do church outside at the big annual Garlic Festival on the lake, which is always a great opportunity for evangelism.



In September the McLeese Lake House Church kindly hosted our annual "Rendezvous" once again for anyone across the entire Cariboo Presbyterian Church that could make it. It was a really blessed time, and the weather was also good enough for outside activities, including a ball game.

In October over fifty people who connect with or support the weekly Alcoholics Anonymous

program in the Lac la Hache Church jammed the basement for food, fellowship, sharing and the recognition of various anniversaries of sobriety . . . one for over twenty years, praise God!

Christmas had a lot going on as usual, with different ministries going on in different places including food hampers, gifts, knitted goods, and free turkey dinners for those in need, and even evangelism through Christmas caroling outside from some of our folks. Also, the annual Christmas play/pageant and dinner for the inter-lakes area at the local Community Hall was a real blessing again, of which the Sheridan Lake House Church plays a huge part.

Thank you to everyone in all of our fellowships here who help this mission to function with your love, offerings, various gifts and willingness to serve the Lord in so many ways. These include our gracious house church hosts, those who bring food to our services as well as for our regular coffeehouse musical community out-reaches, those who plow snow for us, clean and maintain our building, serve on our administrative team, lead and facilitate regular mid-week Bible studies, fill in for me in sharing a message from the Scriptures in the churches when I'm not here, and all the different musicians in our groups who bless us with their gifts in church as well as through outreach and musical evangelism in our communities.

And thank you everyone for your heart to reach out to others with Christ's love! As a result the Lord continued to draw some new folks to all of our churches here in 2018, and especially our Forest Grove Church at the Legion, which has been experiencing a major increase in numbers even as I write this - Praise God!

Also a huge thank you to all of you from across the country who make this possible by partnering with us through your prayers and financial support! As well, a very big thank you to Presbyterian World Service and Development for the generous help which you made available to us in



*Home lost to fire: the family helped by PWS&D*

enabling us to give substantial and desperately needed financial assistance last year to a number of families here who suffered major losses due to wild-fires. God Bless you all!

**From Our Northern Missionaries: Jon Wyminga**  
*(Jon and his wife Shannon Bell serve together as our missionaries in the northern part of the Cariboo.)*

As I recall the events in the northern end of our ministry during 2018 the themes of death and new life come to mind. We began 2018 with two heart wrenching funerals early in January, one for a young man who sadly took his own life shortly after Christmas, and the next day for a dearly loved First Nations elder who was a very special part of our Nazko House Church. Of course 2018 began with the summer wildfires of 2017 still painfully fresh in our minds. Then in the spring there was extensive flooding due to the winter's high volume of snow and the lack of living trees to absorb the spring melt. A number of basements and summer homes were flooded and others were threatened. Sadly those most affected by the previous summer's forest fires, or who were trying to rebuild from them, were further threatened or partly cut off by the flooding. Later in the year the ominous scepter of forest fire reared its ugly head once again. Other communities in BC were in much greater danger this time but some people in our area faced yet another evacuation (the third within a year), we all faced another smoky summer and, of course, the trauma of the previous summer was re-awakened for many. Later in the year there were more funerals. We lost another First Nations elder and long-time participant in our Nazko House Church, and then still another elder from the community. Finally we learned of the shocking death of a woman who was hit by a rock that fell from the mountainside as she and her husband were driving south to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Together they had once hosted a house church in Milburn Lake when Shannon and I first came to the Cariboo. Later in the same month we participated in a memorial to remember a young man who died a few years ago and is still missed very much.

Of course if that is all that marked our ministry in 2018 it would be a very dreary year indeed. Fortunately there were also signs new hope and life. We enjoyed the third Annual *Nazko Arts and Music Festival* in early March. While we were facing the flooding we were privileged to host the Moderator of the 143<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC). As the



chairperson (Moderator) of the denomination's Annual Meeting (General Assembly) Peter Bush and his wife Debbie travelled extensively through the rest of the year as representatives of the PCC. They graciously accepted an invitation from us, visited several house churches and, when they were in the north Cariboo, they were able to see the damage caused by the forest fires and floods. It was a great blessing to have their encouraging presence with us. While here Peter wrote daily reports on Facebook about his experiences. They can still be found on his Facebook page. If you are interested in reading them



but don't have access to Facebook please contact me at 250-249-9669 or [cariboopc@xplornet.ca](mailto:cariboopc@xplornet.ca) and I will be sure to send you a copy.

Other signs of new life in 2018 were

Shannon's extensive community networking to develop emergency planning in the event of future disasters and the privilege of being able to distribute significant amounts of relief funding for those most affected by the natural disasters. Shannon and I were also able to attend a very helpful workshop on pastoral care for disaster victims at the Salvation Army in Quesnel. An encouraging pastor's retreat, an intensive week of counselling and some enriching study leave courses were also beacons of new hope. In the fall we participated in the local Thanksgiving Pow Wow in Quesnel and, before that, Orange Shirt Day, which commemorates the experience of Phyllis Webstad of Williams Lake, whose beloved orange shirt was taken from her when she attended residential school as a child. These two events mark the resilience and fun loving nature of many of our First Nations friends and neighbours in the face of so much historic oppression.

These themes of death and new life of course point to the very reason we are here: the death and new life of the Lord Jesus, the one who became the very "image of the invisible God" in human form, who faced suffering and even death just as we all do, but who achieved the final victory over death when he was raised to new life. How amazing that he offers us this same new life in him when he says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) It is this new life that we seek to point to as we walk with the people in our communities even "through the valley of the shadow of death." (Ps.23:4)

We are grateful to the many contributors who support this ministry including those of you who contribute through weekly offerings, those individuals and churches throughout Canada and beyond who contribute regularly through the year and of course the Canadian Ministries office and Presbyterian World Service and Development of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. All of you continue to help us to point to the new life in Christ and we are deeply grateful.

## ELDERS AND MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORTS

Clerk of Session Report: Ginny Alexander

*(The session is responsible to oversee our entire ministry of house churches and is made up of elders elected by the people of the ministry. Ginny is the clerk, or secretary, of the session.)*

The session of the Cariboo Presbyterian Church had one face-to-face meeting and five

teleconference call meetings during 2018.

The session is seeking someone to help take over much of the administrative work still, of necessity, being done by our pastors. If administration is your forte, then please contact a session member for more information.

The session continues to be on the lookout for

new elders to serve the church. If you feel led or called to serve the church in this capacity, please contact someone in leadership for more information.

Changes were made to the newsletter mailing schedule in 2017, and the session decided to stay with those changes, that is, that there will be two newsletters per year (February-Easter and pre-Christmas) and a thank report you letter sent out in July to supporters of the Cariboo Presbyterian Church.

Our church was pleased to host the Moderator of the 143<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Peter Bush and his wife Debbie, from May 5-10, 2018. The Bushes were able to spend time visiting house church ministries at Williams Lake, Nazko, McLeese Lake and Sheridan Lake before heading home.

The 2018 Rendezvous was held at McLeese Lake on September 22. It was a good time with approximately 50 people present.

#### Management Team Report: Diane Vanruyskensvelde

The management team assist Jon and Shannon with the myriad of tasks involved in the function of the Cariboo Presbyterian Church. We help to prepare the annual budget and provide the ballots so the congregation can vote on the budget.

Late last year we completed Stipend (salary) and Benefits reviews with our Pastors and Lay Missionaries. This gives everyone an opportunity to voice any concerns and highlights any increasing costs they may be facing.

In December and in the spring, we send out newsletters to all the folks who support us here in the Cariboo.

This past fall we brought our congregation into the realm of digital photos and the consent necessary to use pictures in our newsletters and online.

We are also involved in keeping Criminal Record Checks current and up to date for our Pastors.

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## **HOUSE CHURCH AND MISSION REPORTS**

*The following reports are from each of our house churches and ministry points, beginning with Punchaw in the northwest and ending with Sheridan Lake, nearly 400 kilometers and more than a 5 hour drive to the southeast.*

### Punchaw House Church: Mickey Wheat

Greetings in the name of the Lord. 2018 has come and gone and a new year has just begun. May the Lord bless you within the coming year with stronger faith and your walk with God. May the Living Word be opened to see God working in our lives and the lives of others. At the beginning of the year it seems that I'm reminded of the importance of reading and meditating on and in the Living Word that my faith will be steady and strong each day as I read it. May I know and see the character of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, which comes with much prayer. Having a much deeper understanding of prayer and seeing how God answers us makes me more aware that God is with me. I know He says that He is here with me and I see how He is a very personal God in the way He is working. The Holy Spirit helps us realize just how much He is teaching us. There are times of patience and endurance as we become more dependent on the Lord. I realize the need for prayer to see things happening in our lives and the lives of others. Through the series of Bible studies that Jon brings to us, our spiritual eyes are



opened to see how God works with imperfect people and still accomplishes His work and will.

Everyone in the Punchaw House Church enjoyed New Year's dinner, a wonderful time of fellowship and a very good movie. (Note: The movie was *The Case for Christ* which is based on Lee Strobel's book of the same name. It tells the story of his journey from skepticism to faith. If others are interested in seeing it just ask Jon and Shannon.) We are thankful for the mercies and grace that God gives

us each day. I enjoy hearing how God is at work in your lives. Blessings be upon you in the name of the Lord from the Punchaw Church.

### **On Holy Ground: Jon Wyminga**

Jesus once said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” (Matthew 18:20) It can be hard to believe those words when we live in a world that defines successful gatherings by large numbers. It is tempting to feel disappointed when only one or two people show up for worship. Yet there are times when I can look back on these visits and clearly see that the Spirit of Jesus was there. The planned sermon was set aside. Somehow the defenses were broken down. Someone felt the trust to share more openly than if even one other person showed up. There was an openness to speak at a deeper level. Suddenly the door was wide open to talk very personally about Jesus. Often my richest encounters with Christ came in times like this when my initial reaction might have been discouragement. For a few years now our ministry in the remote Dakelh village of Kluskus has been like this – a long journey, a few brief greetings and visits and, at times, a conversation that just gets right to the core of it all. Amazing! Of course there have been many other visits like that in many other places. Someone might share very deeply about a loved one lost many years ago but the grief still lingers. Someone else shares how they continue to struggle with the trauma related to the forest fire more than a year ago. Someone else might even ask about how to get right with God. I often walk away from these conversations with a humbling sense that “I have been walking on holy ground.” Why? Because two or three were gathered, Jesus was there among us and we had put aside our obsession with the big things to recognize the biggest thing: the Spirit of Jesus was there and we were on holy ground.

### **Nazko House Church: Shannon Bell**

Our little house church in Nazko remains faithful though small in numbers. We meet each week in our living room for worship, prayer, teaching and fellowship. Some weeks we celebrate the Lord’s Supper with bannock and grape juice and then enjoy more bannock with coffee afterwards. We have started a new tradition when Geraldine’s grandson Jarius comes with her to church. Jarius is 11, a bright and comedic kid who keeps us laughing. He was introduced to the card game UNO at Bible Class and so now whenever Jarius comes to church, we always

finish our evenings with coffee, snacks and a few rounds of UNO. It reminds me of our experience in church in Thailand many years ago when they stopped the service in the middle, cleared out the chairs and spent 15-20 minutes playing games together before putting the chairs back in place for the preaching. Games in church? Why not?! Laughter and fun should always be a part of our life together as God’s family.



We decided about three times in the past months to move our Sunday evenings to the clinic on the reserve and invited everyone in for a movie night. We showed the movies *Soul Surfer*, *the Shack* and for Christmas we showed *The Star*. For the first two movies we had only a couple of people come besides our regular group, and we are still working on getting a good system for showing the movies with proper sound. *The Star* attracted several more kids (doubling our normal house church number) and we had a lot of fun and popcorn.

Our group continues to sing and drum at most of the funerals in the community as well as at *National Indigenous People’s Day* in June. We recognize that the ministry of this small group goes well beyond the few that gather for worship on Sunday nights. Each one is a witness to their families and neighbours and we are called upon whenever there are needs in the community. We believe that God is able to do much more than we can ask or imagine as we seek to be faithful followers together in Nazko.

### **Nazko Kids Bible Class: Shannon Bell**

We are in the 25<sup>th</sup> year that Jon and I have been leading the Bible Class after school with the kids in Nazko. Our second generation kids are in high school now. Wow, do I feel old! We have seen such a shift in the character of the kids over those years. It used to be a real struggle just to keep a semblance of order to try to tell a story or give craft instructions. Now it is a joy to gather with our kids on Tuesdays in our classroom at the Nazko Valley Community Centre. Our younger group (kindergarten to grade 3) is very small this year, but it allows for us to have quality time in a more relaxed way to build relationships with them. The older group of kids (grades 4-7) has been coming for several years and

they know the routines and what to expect. Some of them have a very high energy level, but they all have respectful attitudes and love to have fun. Bruce Wilcox made a comment a couple of weeks ago that made me realize the importance of the work that we do with these kids. For the elders and adults in the community there are still barriers in receiving the message of the love of Christ. Some have been taught that only Roman Catholicism is authentic Christianity. Some are dealing with the pain of the legacy of residential schools. For some both is true. Even though we may not see our kids growing up to follow Jesus whole-heartedly, we are breaking down those barriers so that the seeds of the gospel will hopefully be planted deeply in the love and acceptance and fun they have experienced with us through their elementary school years. That



encouraged me. I look and see that the kids who are now adults in our community do not have those same hesitations about us and the message we bear. They welcome us to pray for them. They engage with us in friendship and respect. I'd love to report here that many of them are walking on the Jesus path, or

even moving into leadership in the church, but God is at work, softening hearts and planting seeds that with the work of the Holy Spirit, will one day grow a harvest. In the meantime, we will keep on loving 'our kids' and helping them know more about the Creator and his Son who love them even more than we do.

### **My Ministry is a Disaster: Shannon Bell**

My ministry is a disaster! I know that this sounds a bit odd, but for the last year and a half, this has literally been true of a lot of my ministry time. On July 7, 2017 over 160 wildfires broke out across BC, most of them in the Cariboo and Kamloops Fire regions. Within a week I was drawn into a whole new form of ministry as I was drafted into the BC Wildfire Service working the remainder of the summer as a Community Liaison for Nazko and area. Being completely different from my previous ministry contexts, I faced a baptism by fire, so to

speak, to learn about it. Normally Jon and I share a single position between us but that summer he took it on full-time in order to free me to concentrate on disaster response. I shared in last year's reports about my experiences in 2017 but that was only the beginning. In the spring of 2018 our community faced evacuation again due to flooding. The Nazko and Blackwater rivers rose through April and May and homes and businesses were threatened. Some homes were flooded, fencing and land was washed away and people were ordered from the community. You



can imagine the emotional impact of this just seven and a half months after returning home from a long and difficult evacuation from fire. In the spring Jon and I were away on study leave when we were evacuated and we headed home and through the roadblocks (with a permit) in order to help direct firefighters in sandbagging. Just a few short months later in August, wildfires again threatened Nazko and we were all under evacuation alert, with the north end of our community under order. Once again I was engaged by BC Wildfire to act as the Community Liaison. By the fall, when the fires were out, our community was exhausted and traumatized by three disasters in a year.

In the meantime, after the 2017 fires, I developed a small team of people to work on emergency management and preparation for the community as well as to address some of the difficult issues that came out of the 2017 fire experience. We put together a grant application to the Red Cross for training and equipment for firefighting and First Aid so that our own people would be ready for the next disaster or emergency. We also plan to put together a database of all properties and a handbook for every home. Unfortunately none of that was in place for the spring floods or summer wildfires. Our grant has been approved although only 20% of it so we are back to the drawing board to look for funding.

We have also been meeting with local politicians to try to address some of the policy issues

that were identified through the last year to see if we can make things work more effectively with the community in disaster situations. There is much to do in little time as we know that we will face more flooding this year and that the possibility of more wildfire will be our annual reality.

How can this be called ministry? It isn't preaching. It isn't running programs or leading Bible Studies. It is about walking with people through crises and times of utmost stress, fear and anxiety. If the gospel does not speak to these kinds of situations, I don't know what does. People are in need of practical help, direction and someone they can count on for truth. They need a source of peace and hope. Jesus is present in the midst of disasters through his people who are his hands and feet and arms of love.

There is a lot of work ahead of us and I invite your prayers as I seek to lead our team and community in healing from the past year and a half to walk with greater confidence and preparation in the future. Please pray for us to have a reprieve in the coming year to enable us to implement our projects before we have to face another emergency situation. Thank you to all who contributed to Presbyterian World Service and Development in 2017 for the BC Wildfires as it was a source of great help and hope to families in our community and throughout the Cariboo who had lost homes and livelihoods.

*"If you make the Most High your dwelling – even the Lord, who is my refuge – then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways . . ." (Psalm 91:9-11,NIV)*

### **Wildfire Recovery Visitor: Shannon Bell**

During the summer of 2017 while our community was evacuated for 40+ days, people dealt with a great deal of anxiety, depression and trauma. They were separated from one another, the land and their homes and there was no emotional or mental health support available. After returning home, that help was still unavailable for people to process their experiences. Many people, both those who lost homes or livelihoods as well as those who did not, have suffered the effects of trauma. This was exacerbated by two more evacuations within the year. All through this time, the people were suffering without support.

In the spring of 2018, seeing no help on the horizon, the Cariboo Presbyterian Church decided to respond. Through grants from the Healing and Reconciliation Fund we had been able to send our

elder Doreen Patrick for training in Biblical Counselling. She is almost finished the last of her courses. We submitted an application to the Red Cross to hire Doreen for 20 hours a week as a Wildfire Recovery Visitor in the Nazko area. It took several months to get through the paperwork, but in a step of faith the session put her to work in September 2018 even without hearing the results of the grant application. The grant did come through to allow Doreen to bring hope and healing to the local people for a year.



In her position, Doreen spends two days a week in the community visiting in homes and giving people the opportunity to talk about their experiences and offering support and resources. She will also be offering workshops on trauma in Nazko and other villages. We are glad to be able to use her skills to bring much needed psycho-social support to people who have felt forgotten in their suffering.

### **Circle of Hope (Quesnel): Shannon Bell**

In March of 2018, elder Doreen Patrick and I launched a new approach to ministry in Quesnel. We have tried a number of different things including a couple of attempts at a house church, but it has never taken off. We know that there are a lot of First Nations people in Quesnel who have faith but are not necessarily part of a church body. There are also a lot of First Nations people seeking healing. We engaged with The Healing Rooms International ministry to start the Circle of Hope. The Healing Rooms have a wonderful storefront space on the main street that is only used for a few hours each week. We are using their gathering room on Wednesday nights to hold a healing circle. We have been trying to invite as many people as we can think of to join in our circle. It has been slow, but the Circle has become an important place of safety and support for a few people, both First Nations and non-Indigenous. Doreen or I begin our time with a brief devotional from Scripture and then Doreen leads us in a traditional healing circle. We pass our talking stick around and share whatever we want to with the group each week. Some people just listen. Others share joys or struggles and we

listen to one another without interruption. We then pass the stick around a second time to pray for the things that have come up or have been requested for prayer. We have a guitar, hand drum and song books available for any time someone wants to worship through song. At times the small numbers can be discouraging, but we are discussing how to reach out further and welcome more into our Circle of Hope.



**McLeese Lake House Church: Clarence Colp**

What a pleasure to report that our house church is still blessing so much! We have seen the odd new face in our presence during the year. The light of Christ continues to shine in our small house church and as far as we know, we are the only Christian influence in our area.

During the year we have had our Annual Rendezvous at the McLeese Lake Hall. It was well attended. We also had a "Prairie Joe" concert which went over great. At Christmas time we went out to the neighbourhood and did some Christmas caroling. This was much appreciated by the people in the homes we visited. It also blessed us as we travelled about meeting families.

We are so fortunate to have Bruce Wilcox who travels one and a half hours to come and minister to us. His ministry from the Word is always so powerful and so appropriate for the needs of us all.

**Williams Lake House Church: Elizabeth James**

*(While our other ministry points are led by our full time missionaries this house church is ably led by our Lay Missionary, Ginny Alexander, along with the help of Dave Webber, whose name many of you will recognize. We are deeply grateful for their faithful service in Williams Lake.)*

On every other Sunday in 2018 our house church continued on with studying the Bible. We discuss what the Bible passages under discussion

mean and how they can be used in our own lives today.

On the first and third Sundays of the month we hold our church at the Retirement Concepts Retirement Home. Our services there provide fellowship and a place to worship God. We have met old friends and made new friends there.

As you know, last summer was another very smoky one as once again fires devastated large portions of our province. Smoke covered Williams Lake most of the summer. As a result, Peter and I spent most of our time inside the house, as did a great number of other people. Fall came and along with it the rains fell and the smoke gradually dissipated. Bless the Lord.

We all pray that this summer will be different and that no one else will have to suffer the loss of property and possessions. May God bless you all and keep you safe.

**Lac la Hache Community Church: Sharon Hutchinson**

It's been another good year for the Cariboo Presbyterian Church in Lac la Hache. In 1 Cor. 12:12-21 Paul tells us that we the church are all part of the body of Christ. Just as in the human body all parts are different and do necessary functions. Let's take delight in the differences and appreciate what God has called each one to do!

Praise God for our shepherd pastor Bruce Wilcox, who leads with tender hearted mercy. Thanks Bruce, for your faithfulness to God. We're blessed in praise time when Karen White or Lynda Lipsett lead on piano with Bruce on guitar. More people are joining in requesting favorite worship songs. Bruce gives us exciting insight into Scripture in his messages encouraging us in our walk with God.

Mid-week Onno Vandenhoek leads us in Bible Study along with the support of one of our elders Don Lipsett, and we have a blessed time digging in, asking questions, and sharing observations.

We continue to have our coffeehouses every couple months. It is a fun musical outreach to the community and an opportunity to bless someone or some local need with the donations. Last summer we did church at the annual Lac la Hache Garlic Festival again too. Don and Lynda Lipsett took part in the Transform 2018 Conference in Ontario and gave a report. Our church also greatly contributed to the local volunteer fire department for Christmas hampers for folks in need. What a blessing to be able to help!

Sunday attendance is growing a little at a time, and at Christmas the community sure knew where to worship. Our church was full! And at our December Christmas dinner downtown we welcomed several extra guests, Praise God.

Unfortunately we had to say good-bye to a couple of our people. Judy Sutton's mom Ila went to be with the Lord, and another good friend Jim Jorgenson has also crossed over to those greener pastures. We'll miss them but know we'll meet again. What a hope we have in Jesus! And so we are Christ's body in Lac la Hache. Thank you Lord.



### **Reflections On Seniors' Ministry: Bruce Wilcox**

*(Along with the many other things he does, Bruce is actively engaged in ministry among senior citizens. He leads a weekly worship gathering at Carefree Manor and has regular ministry at Mill Site Lodge and Fischer Place, all in 100 Mile House. Under the able leadership of Ginny Alexander we also engage in senior's ministry at the Senior's Village in Williams Lake.)*

Our mission here in the Cariboo Presbyterian Church has resulted in opportunities from the Lord to do a lot of ministry for seniors in several care facilities here in the South Cariboo, through regular church services, visitation, as well as musical and other special events. In an aging population God keeps showing us how important, vital and valid seniors' ministry really is, and that no one is ever too old for God to powerfully work in and through their lives. We are all aging, meaning that loving our neighbour as ourselves is to love people who age.

Most of today's seniors grew up in a time where "rugged individualism" and self-sufficiency were highly prized, especially in our western culture. I remember my favorite shows when I was young were the many Westerns that were on every week, and of course anything with John Wayne. But even though it may be difficult to "learn new tricks", with God all things are possible, and He keeps showing us seniors through the ministry of the gospel of Jesus

Christ and the Holy Spirit that individualism is no match for a community of mutual care, support and compassion.

Because aging almost always includes various degrees of physical infirmity, pain and suffering, resulting in emotional and spiritual trials as well, I used to think that issues to do with aging and dying were rather morbid and not worth thinking about too deeply. The suffering and dying can sometimes seem so heavy and depressing. But God has been helping me to think about all of this in a much more positive way, mainly by reminding me that real love and empathy for one another as we grow older actually comes from Him in us. In other words, it is meant to be so much more than just a human "misery loves company" kind of thing, but rather a pulling alongside which springs out of knowing Him more through prayer, His word, His Spirit, and an ever growing comprehension of His love for all of us in Jesus regardless of our physical or mental abilities!

Because even though some folks may not have the same capacity to know as much intellectually *about* God, they still have the same capacity (or perhaps more!) to love God, and to experience His love for them. We know this and we see this because God looks on the heart. Speaking for myself, I find it much too easy to clutter my heart up with a lot of unnecessary or unhelpful things, instead of stopping more often to "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" (Psalm 46:10)

Seniors ministry also tends to force me to face the processes of my own personal mortality in a more immanent and direct way, and to recognize even more of God's positive purposes through all of it. If I may wax theological for a moment, how would we be able to ultimately let go of that which is temporary in order to focus and hold on to that which is eternal, if there was no such thing as growing older or dying in this life? Or how could the desires and hopes we now have, including the final goal and ultimate purpose of our life, really be recognized or given any proper definition and meaning apart from the context of the limitations of our present mortality? Any suffering would also lose its meaning, and the sense that life and even every breath we take is a gift from God would be greatly diminished. Neither would we really need patience. Writer Gilbert Meilaender said something about this: "*It is patience that makes place in life for its accompanying virtue, gratitude. For without patience, we can receive nothing as a gift, nothing that comes apart from our own effort and achievement.*" This reminds us that it is by the sheer

grace of God that apart from this body we will one day be “home with the Lord” - but we must wait for it with patience.



Jesus said, “*which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?*” (Matthew 6:27) The older I get the more I have come to believe that death in the context of this statement is not so much a “curse” but a promise which is actually also a gift! We have “no continuing city” here, and knowing that the length of our lives is totally in the hands of a perfect, loving and sovereign God is an absolutely good thing! His timing is perfect, which reminds us that we must also give the processes of aging and dying and especially grieving the time needed, which can be different for different people, which is why we pray for not only empathy and love, but wisdom from God in comforting others.

Thank you and God bless the seniors ministries and care givers among us here in the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, and everywhere, including especially some among us also involved in palliative care, who do the holy work of comforting and helping the dying and the grieving with the time they need to say good-bye in the best possible way.

#### **Forest Grove Community Church: Mart Blazina**

For 2018 my wife Liz and I were among the “new kids on the block” at the Forest Grove Community Church. We have found our little church to be even more than we anticipated and are truly blessed to find a family of believers who desire to serve and honour the Lord Jesus in our community. We meet each Sunday evening at 6:30 for worship, Bible teaching, prayer and fellowship under the gifted leadership of Bruce Wilcox. Bruce brings timely and relevant messages of what God has for us, for this time.

January 2018 started us in the book of Colossians and saw us through until the first Sunday in June, with a couple of different topics in May. We

came to understand that the Word of God is very real and applicable for day to day Christian living. Our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus is “*Christ in you, the hope of glory . . .* (and we are) *rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith.*” We went on to study various themes that each week challenged us to take opportunity to personally apply God’s Word . . . to know Him . . .to know His will . . . to allow Him to work on our character . . . and not just merely to know “about” Him. We covered topics such as God’s sovereignty and love, His power, forgiveness, spiritual warfare, the trials we face, His holiness, His Word, the foundation of prayer, how He is able as well as many other topics.

From these, we were able to take home some special words of encouragement . . .

- \* He is able to do more than we can ever imagine.
- \* He knows us perfectly, even better than we know ourselves.
- \* Our emotional state does not change who God is - - His love and His promises never change.
- \* He is sovereign in the midst of our suffering . . . . He is the God of hope!
- \* Our God - - He restores - - He leads - - He is, indeed, ever faithful!

In addition to our regular Sunday meetings we had special guests in July, when the Chapin family came to share their passion and ministry with an aviation missionary organization. In September, some of us attended the House Church Rendezvous at McLeese Lake, where great food and fellowship were enjoyed by all . . . except for a few aches and pains for the ‘old guys’ playing ball.

In our church that meets in Forest Grove, 2018 was a year of blessing, with relevant teaching, close fellowship and heart felt prayer. And together, we look forward to what God will do in our midst, in 2019.

*“And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not fail you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.”*  
(Deuteronomy 31:8)

#### **Sheridan Lake House Church: Alice Duits**

We have had a wonderful year learning more about God and our relationship with Him. We have had great times of worship and deep times of prayer, lifting up our joys, sorrows and hardships together before His throne. We have seen incredible answers to prayer. Our faith has been strengthened. I believe we have grown closer with one another and the love we share is truly a precious gift. Each week, we are

so happy to see one another. We really care for one another, and that is shown practically and often by praying and supporting one another during the week. Again, Pete and Nicki Bonter have opened their home each week, serving the body of Christ with such wonderful hospitality.

The messages given by Bruce have been very good - lots of food for thought for me – and have allowed growth in my own personal walk. We have enjoyed such good discussions after the message and as iron sharpens iron, we have sharpened each other.

During the summer months, we enjoy seeing more folks coming up from the coast. It always feels like a happy reunion, and those times are special times for our house church. My in-laws, Barry and Joanne Duits, have been coming to visit us each summer. They just love coming weekly to our gatherings. They say that the love they feel is so special and they go home sadly, knowing they will really miss their Wednesday evening fellowship. God has used them to encourage us and they faithfully pray for us by name. What a blessing.

We had some other special guests come. One week, the Moderator, Peter and Debbie Bush came from Winnipeg. That was wonderful! The community of saints is a precious thing. We also had the most wonderful visit from the Chapins. It was a time of hearing about God's amazing provisions, protection and miracles. We pray for the Chapins and the Nobles each week. We also had a group of men and woman who came from Haney Presbyterian Church. They felt God laid it on their heart to come up and help a family who had been impacted by the wild fire. They came up to serve my family! It was three days of "God Moments." The men helped my husband Berney with several projects outside and the woman canned and froze vegetables and fruits for my family. We all worked so hard. We also fellowshiped while we worked, we sang together each day and prayed for each other. They came with us to house church and it was a night to remember. During the time of worship I thought the roof would be lifted up from the beautiful sound of believers singing together and the love and unity binding us together in perfect love . . . God's love!

In closing, all I can say . . . "To God Be The Glory !"

#### **“You Will Be My Witnesses”: Jon Wyminga**

Before Jesus ascended to the Father he said to his followers, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses

in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) When Jesus said “Jerusalem” he was referring to the immediate city where his followers were. When he said “Judea and Samaria” he was referring to the local region and the next region over. When he said “to the ends of the earth” he was referring to . . . well, I think you know! In the Cariboo House Church Ministry we have had the privilege of reaching out to our immediate region in many ways. Christmas pageants, relief for forest fire victims and participating in community festivals are among those mentioned in this newsletter. A lot of our local ministry has focused on music and the arts. When the Bible says we have been created in the image of God I believe a special part is that we ourselves have the ability to create. We have been blessed with the company of many creative and artistic people. Ginny Alexander and others are always involved with the *Festival of the Performing Arts* in 100 Mile House. Our fellowship in Lac la Hache has a musical coffee house ministry on the first Friday of every other month. Several local musicians come to share their talents. It's called the *Galilean Coffeeshouse* because, for us, Jesus the Galilean is right at the centre of it all. In Nazko we have partnered with the Nazko Valley Community Centre to host the annual *Nazko Arts and Music Festival*. This year's event will be the fourth annual and take place on March 2. It will begin at 11:00 am with displays of a variety of local artwork: paintings, stained glass windows, woodwork, jewelry and much more. At 2:00 pm we are looking forward to many musical and other performances. I have been amazed at the great variety of talent in our small community. It is especially exciting for me when someone nervously takes to the stage for the first time and amazes us with their talent. Our hope is that in all of these things the Holy Spirit will use us to reflect the love of Jesus.

Through the missionaries in some of our house churches we are also privileged to be Christ's witnesses even beyond our local regions. For a number of years now we have been able to support John and Cynthia Noble and their family as they lead the *Cariboo Christian Outreach*. They have an extensive ministry throughout the Cariboo-Chilcotin including summer Vacation Bible Schools for children on distant reserves, flying to remote ranches and other communities, extensive travelling and ministry at several rodeos each year. We are blessed to have them as a part of our McLeese Lake House Church.



We are also honoured to support another family who has indeed gone “to the ends of the earth” – or so it seems to us. Dave and Jessie Chapin and their children are a part of a challenging aviation ministry in Central Asia. With the missionary organization they are a part of they have been developing a ministry of flying into remote communities with medical supplies and other much needed support and transportation. Their many challenges include extensive negotiations with local government officials, upgrading and maintaining local airstrips and maintaining a small fleet of airplanes. They are also a special part of our McLeese Lake House Church family, even though they are not with us in Canada most of the time. I’m sure there are many other ways that people among us seek to be Christ’s ambassadors in various ways, sometimes over coffee and a private conversation, sometime in activities I have overlooked in my forgetfulness.

Of course we’re always open to other ways of reaching out with the love of Christ. If you or some others in your local ministry have a special idea, an idea that might just be planted there by the Holy Spirit, and if you need some support and help then tell your local house church leader and we will seek God’s leading together.

**Our World Vision Kids: Jackie Wilcox**

A big thank you to everyone who contributed to the ongoing support of our four Cariboo Presbyterian Church World Vision kids. They are Yandri, a nine year old boy in the Dominican Republic; Ferdus, a 17 year old boy in Bangladesh; Leonardo, a one year old boy in Ecuador; and Rong Xiu, a 15 year old girl in China.

Leonardo and his family in Ecuador are new, replacing another boy (Aguilar) and his family also in Ecuador, who were deemed self-sufficient by World Vision last August.

Our bankbook summary is as follows:  
 January, 2018 beginning balance . . . . . \$ 1,951.48  
 December 31, 2018 account balance . . . . . \$1,545.48  
 We contribute \$156.00 per month for a total of \$1,872.00 for the year.

Please keep these kids and their families and villages in your prayers. Thank you again for your steady support!

**A Recipe for Mission: Shannon Bell**

My grandma taught me how to cook and bake when I was young. I remember following her around the kitchen trying to write down all the instructions for the things she would show me. However, I quickly learned that she didn’t follow written recipes. She was so good in the kitchen that she would add and mix ingredients without measuring them or following the rules. There were certain ingredients that she was particular about – shortening had to be Crisco; flour had to be Robin Hood. She used the best, but after that, it was all creativity.

In doing mission, we need to have the right ingredients, but after that, we listen to the Holy Spirit rather than follow a recipe or set of rules. That is what makes mission such an adventure! Experience and context come together to determine what is the best mix for the ingredients to make a successful creation. Here are the ingredients:

- People needing the gospel and the body of Christ.
- Missionaries hearing the call of God to go out.
- The leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit.
- The gospel message interpreted into the specific culture and context.
- The tools for carrying out the mission such as vehicles, literature, supplies etc.
- People to pray for the mission.
- People to give financially to support the mission.

We have been blessed over the years to have all of these ingredients for the Cariboo. Thank you especially to all of you who give of your time and energy to pray faithfully and send notes of encouragement. Thank you especially to all of you who send the funds we need to make this mission happen. In 2018 we had a negligible deficit in spite of the reality that we have seen many of our faithful supporters move on to heaven. Thank you all for being a part of the recipe!