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# Annual Report 2014-2015

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Prepared for and presented in **Annual General Meeting**, May 27, 2015

***“And now,  
little children,  
abide in Him,  
so that when  
He appears  
we may have  
confidence  
and not shrink  
from Him  
in shame  
at His coming.”***

***– 1 John 2:28, ESV***

**Preface to the 2014-15 Bethesda Church Annual Report**  
***LIVING UP TO OUR NAME: Disciples of Jesus, Christians, Bethesda***  
*Rev. Mark L. Wilcoxson, Senior Pastor*

It is my pleasure to write the *Preface* to our **2014-2015 Bethesda Church Annual Report**. Hard to believe, but this is our eighth annual report since my family and I arrived to join you here at Bethesda in August 2007. We are [still] very glad and thankful to be with you, and hopeful, too!

This last year, we've dedicated ourselves to the ministry of God's Word on Sunday mornings and this theme: "**LIVING UP TO OUR NAME.**" The basic point has been that following Jesus as His *disciples*, being known as '*Christians*,' and functioning as a *Bethesda* ('*a house of grace*' or '*a house of compassion*') should be our joyful aim and purpose.

Way back last fall, we began by looking at the passage in *the Book of Acts* where we learn it was at Antioch that the disciples were first called '**Christians**' ('*little christs*'). Look at it again:

<sup>21</sup>**And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.**

<sup>22</sup>The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

<sup>23</sup>**When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,** <sup>24</sup>for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

***“And a great many people were added to the Lord.***

<sup>25</sup>So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, <sup>26</sup>and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. ***And in Antioch the disciples were first called ‘Christians.’***” – *Acts 11:21-26, ESV*

Jesus's followers were known, *first*, as '**disciples**' and *second* as '**Christians.**' By God's grace and mercy, they'd become Jesus's '**disciples,**' and then, at some point later but no less profoundly and remarkably, they became known as '**Christ-ians.**' *The point is that our Biblical identification as ‘Christians’ assumes our following the Lord Jesus Christ as His disciples, first.*

We live in a day that's no longer the case. Being a 'Christian' means something considerably *less than* being a disciple of Jesus, as if being a disciple is reserved for the really serious and super-spiritual among us, but that is not a Biblical distinction. ***It's also not what Jesus calls us to.***

The situation is even worse than that. Being a '*Christian*' has come to mean, literally, whatever the individual, or the local church, or the denominational headquarters, or the world believes, or says, or teaches, or assumes that it means. We've turned what it means to be a 'Christian' upside down, as if it's a *lesser thing*, a *less specific designation*, something of a *less faithful* person or group, or a *less demanding stewardship* in the world. Again, ***this is not Biblical.***

*We at Bethesda Church, and beginning with me, are becoming increasingly determined **NOT** to accept or resemble such religious and worldly concepts of who and whose we are – whether as disciples of Jesus, as Christians, or especially as a distinct local congregation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ! Yes, we are, first, **disciples** of Jesus Christ – gladly and gratefully so, as long as we understand that being a disciple of Jesus means that we submit ourselves to Him ... **as Lord!***

*We are second **Christ-ians**, but not in the sense of priority but in the sense of identification, and together with every other true believer in the One True and Living God in all places and throughout all the ages of human history. If we are to be “*little christs*” (true **Christ-ians**), then together we gladly embrace the ongoing work of God’s Word and Spirit **to conform us into the image of His Son** (Rom. 8:29). While conforming us to Christ is the singular work of God’s Word and Spirit, we must cooperate in the process and recurrently submit ourselves to Him.*

*Thirdly, we are a distinct, local congregation of Jesus’s disciples, gathered together with other disciples of Jesus, partnering with our **Christian** brothers and sisters, committed to being a *Bethesda* in our day, place, and time. We are not an island unto ourselves. Yes, we are a ‘non-denominational’ church, but there is no concept of ‘**Christian independence**’ supported by *the Bible*. We are united with Christ by the Spirit of Christ, and we are likewise united to our brothers and sisters in other true churches – both here in Winnipeg and around the world.*

*In this *Annual Report*, you will find historical information about what we’ve done and who’s done it; what’s happened over the last year and a little bit of why; what we’ve given, what we’ve spent, and maybe even a little about what we can expect to spend. This is all good and necessary, and it reflects that we want to fulfill our responsibilities to God and each to other.*

*But beyond the good and normal expectations that church people have of church reports, *I hope that we can see and embrace **future-hope***. (Yes, I stole that concept from John Piper!) As *disciples of Jesus*, as **Christ-ians**, and as a local congregation that aspires to be a *Bethesda*, we must begin, end, and conduct ourselves at every point in between with a rock-solid faith and an unflinching hope in *the future-presence, future-provision, future-acts, and future-return of our once crucified, now risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ! This is what it means **to believe!****

*As we approach our ninth year together, my hope and my prayer is that we will look back only to give thanks and praise to the Lord who has brought us this far. But, even more passionately and more resolutely will we look boldly into the future that the Lord Jesus Himself is leading us to enter. *And, with unwavering faith, undimmed hope, and unhindered joy, **we will trust Him.****

***AMEN! COME, LORD JESUS!***

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## **Church Council Chairman's Report**

*Neil Craton, Church Council Chair*

I am thankful for our little community known as Bethesda Church. I continue to see evidence of God's work being done in our midst. Vibrant small groups, the AWANA program, missionaries all around the world, our English classes, and a continued emphasis on preaching the Gospel are encouraging facets of our ministry.

Since September, the emphasis from Pastor Mark in his preaching has been living up to our name. What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? What does it mean to be a "house of mercy" or "house of grace"? It has been good to reflect on these important questions in my own life. Examples from the Early Church at Antioch were quite convicting. These people were able to forgive Paul for persecuting them and harming their families. They were able to welcome him as a brother. This reminded me of the importance of grace, unmerited favor, in my life, and the life of our congregation as we seek to dispense grace to a thirsty world.

This year the Council has been considering our staffing needs. Since the departures of Shelly Wilcoxson and George Manalang from our staff, we have areas of ministry that have been underserved. The notion of "active waiting" has framed our deliberations, as we strive to follow the Lord's leading, as opposed to filling these holes as soon as possible with the first warm body to come along. We have acknowledged needs in the areas of children's ministry, youth ministry, discipleship, and have begun conversations with different people who may be able to serve in these capacities. These conversations are ongoing, and we hope to have some recommendations for your consideration at the annual meeting in May.

We are thankful for the service of Flo Fullerton in her role as administrative coordinator. She has worked well beyond her job description in many ways. We are thankful for the provision of a new custodian Kambiz Mesgarzadeh, and for the interim service of Nathan Vogt and Elijah Mogilevsky. Pastor Mark continues to serve us faithfully. His dedication to the Word of God provides a strong anchor for us in a changing culture. We are grateful for him and his family.

Bethesda continues to have a good working relationship with the Korean Church of Winnipeg. Joint worship services, now held once a year, are a unique opportunity to see the multi-cultural nature of Christ's Church. We have been able to provide KCW with a more prominent office space for their senior pastor, in an effort to truly function as co-laborers for Jesus. We have started to discuss how we might work even more closely with our brothers and sisters from Korea in the future. We are thankful that God has given us this opportunity. It is nice to see that the facility is being used so much of the week to further Christ's work.

Upgrades and maintenance of the facility continue to be a key focus of the Council. An *ad hoc* group comprised of several Council members and other key volunteers are monitoring most aspects of the church building. We are striving to be good stewards of this amazing facility that was provided by God's faithful givers from a previous generation. No major changes are being planned at this time, but we are considering many possibilities to make the campus even more effective in our outreach to the neighborhood and in service to our people.

One of the highlights of this church year was our Easter worship gathering. Seeing the church full and witnessing Pastor Mark baptize 6 people, ranging in age from 7-70-something, was really encouraging. Days like that make you glad you are part of a larger community that is seeking to build into God's family, one person at a time.

## **Elder Ministry Team Report**

*Jeremy Sneath, Elder Chairman*

Our elder team this year consisted of Neil Craton, James Fehr, Matt Fullerton, Mark Wilcoxson, and me. Paul Evans joined us informally for many of our meetings. I think we have all benefited from his wisdom and passion and look forward to him joining us on the elder team.

As a team, we meet together approximately once a month for prayer and discussion. In our discussions this year, we have identified three areas of ministry at Bethesda where we would like to grow and which could use additional staff or volunteer support. First, we need additional leadership in choosing children's ministry curriculum. Secondly, it would be great to have someone on staff who could preach occasionally in relief of Mark. Thirdly, in the future, we would like to provide some type of youth discipleship. We don't yet have a vision for what this will look like, but we are processing it and discussing it frequently.

For a few months, we have been in conversation with a potential, part-time addition to our ministry staff. He has a full-time job here in the city, which he plans to keep for the time being. More recently, he and his wife met with the full Church Council. Together, we and they are sensing that God may be bringing us together. He has significant preaching, teaching, and leading experience, and we are hoping that he may be able to help us in the future, primarily in the area of preaching support, and possibly assisting in curriculum selection.

Everyone on the elder team has been involved in small group *Bible* studies at Bethesda over the past year. Small groups are a great way both to build community and study God's word. Our small group this year followed a study guide based on the book *The Cross of Christ* by



John Stott. We worked through different *Bible* passages focusing on the importance of the cross and had some great discussions. It is at the cross where we see both our unworthiness and our worth. We are fallen and cannot live up to the standard required by God's holiness, but our worth in God's eyes is such that He paid the price to atone for us.

I want to thank my fellow elder team members for their faithfulness to God and to Bethesda. It has been a good year of growth and change, and I have appreciated every member of this elder team and the wonderful congregation of Bethesda Church.

## **Deacon Ministry Team Report**

*Philip Tan, Team Leader*

The Deacon Ministry Team visits, either in-person or by phone, those who are sick or shut-in among our Bethesda family. At Christmas, our team delivered poinsettias and oranges (recipient's choice). At other times, we have also provided different safety-related items to a few who needed them.

The team members are: Roger Green, Pat Hill, Eunice Hill, Doris Tibbs, Arlene Rempel, Louise Gillis, Hank Finlayson, James Fehr, and Gail Henry. In addition, there are several who are already doing visitations on their own initiative, so we are thankful to God for their caring.

We continue to learn how to better serve in practical ways, so we always appreciate and welcome your suggestions, prayers, and volunteering.

## **Senior Pastor's Report**

*Pastor Mark Wilcoxson, Senior Pastor*

Every year, it seems I'm writing in my report to you some variation of, "**We're turning a corner!**" *We have been, and I believe we still are.* Maybe the lesson is, when God's people are coming alive to what new thing Christ Jesus is doing among us, then we are always "*turning a corner,*" and the corner is **our turning** more and more *away from ourselves*, our own plans, and our own desires and more and more *in the direction of God*, as we follow Jesus more fully and faithfully.

Some years ago, I preached a message on **change** *as the constant of the authentic Christian life.* It's one of the very few messages I ever preached more than once. That's not to say I took an old manuscript, dusted it off, and preached it; I've never really done that. But for those who would

be disciples of Jesus, the concept of ongoing, transformative, life-long change is unavoidable, and I have had opportunity to share this particular message several times along my way.

*The Bible* says God's children are "**predestined to be conformed to the image of [God's] Son**" (Rom. 8:29) – an ongoing, unceasing, life-long, transforming process of change and discipleship. *This is revitalizing truth for individual disciples; it's revitalizing truth for congregations of Jesus's disciples. Think of it: **We are predestined to be conformed into the image of Jesus!***

After I preached that message, a dear friend<sup>1</sup> challenged me on several occasions in a number of conversations that, if I truly believe *the Scriptures* teach "**change is the constant of the authentic Christian life,**" then **I must demonstrate and model change** – both my willingness to **change** and by embracing actual, ongoing, transformative **change in my own life**. This would be especially necessary, if I'm asking anyone else, and especially our congregation, to embrace such change.

Over the last year, I've tried to discern areas in my own life where I need to embrace change in order to *become more conformed into Jesus's image*. This has included my own personal and family life, as well as my approach to leadership, teaching, and preaching in the church. I hope you would have noticed. But even if you haven't, it has been a very good exercise in humility, perseverance, faith, and not without resistance – both fleshly and spiritual. *It continues ....*

Back in the summer of 1993, as I was preparing to leave the U. S. Army, Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, North Carolina, and my love interest<sup>2</sup> for seminary, a dear friend<sup>3</sup> told me, "*Mark, the closer we get to Jesus the more we become aware of our own sin, and the sins of others.*" **WOW!** Was he ever right! He helped me to process this stark reality with words I offer now, as we contemplate the sort of change that brings us further into conformity with Christ: "**Do not be dismayed!**"

At this point, you might be asking, "*What change are you talking about, Pastor Mark?*" That's a very good question for us to ask, and the answer is as simple as it is daunting: *The change we need is whatever change will be necessary for us to follow Jesus into the future He is preparing for us, and that will keep on forming us – as individuals and as a congregation – into His image, His character, His fruitful disciples, His church, and His household in the world in which we live.*

For some time and to her credit, Flo has been working above and beyond what we brought her here to do. To be perfectly honest, Flo and I are "tapped out" in terms of what we can do, and

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, whenever I mention "*a dear friend who challenged me*" in some aspect of my Christian life, or kicked me in the proverbial shorts, *you may assume it was Neil Craton!* Yes, Neil is God's gift to your pastor! To be fair, Neil encourages me much more than he confronts me, but I'm less likely to mention that aspect of our very good relationship.

<sup>2</sup>Just to be clear, the former **Shelly Nicole Register** of Fayetteville, North Carolina, was the aforementioned 'love interest'!

<sup>3</sup>Not Neil Craton but Don Bray, a retired U. S. Air Force lieutenant colonel and one of the groomsmen in our wedding.

we're hoping to have some help before too long. We never want to be the sort of church that takes advantage of our people, so we need to get some help – *for God's glory, for the good of His people, and to the advance of His kingdom*. Jeremy mentioned in his report that we've been in conversation with a local ministry leader about the possibility of him joining our staff team, initially on a part-time basis, and his family joining with our congregation. *Please stay tuned ....*

I'm confident the Lord Jesus Christ has something good and difficult, something exciting and sacrificial, something impossible and fulfilling, something God-sized and God-blessed in store for us, as we follow Jesus into a future that we cannot see but He has already secured for us.

We do believe that the Lord Jesus Himself has given us a specific and worthy sense of vision for our future. Neil already made reference in his report to our *vision statement*, which is:

***"Building into God's family, one person at a time!"***

And every Sunday on the front of our bulletins, we see our *mission statement*:

***"Bethesda Church exists to glorify God by joining Jesus in making His disciples from all nations, relying on God's Spirit and Word to guide and equip us."***

We also see the *core values* that ground, gird, support, and affirm our mission's fulfillment:

***Manifesting*** passion for God and ***compassion*** for people;

***Worshipping*** the One True and Living God;

***Exalting*** Jesus Christ as Risen Saviour and Lord;

***Following*** the Holy Spirit's lead;

***Being Biblical***;

***Praying*** in the Spirit;

***Nurturing*** Spiritual life and fruitfulness;

***Stewarding the things of God by faith – His grace, His gospel, His people, His resources.***

I do hope that every one of us will be able to choose to go with Jesus – *wherever He goes, doing whatever He is doing, and being His disciples and His church*, increasingly representative of Him in the world. *This is what we're made for; this is what we're saved for; this is why we're here!*

## **Administration & Events Report**

*Florence Fullerton, Administrative Coordinator*

With great relief, this year we will be finalizing our claim from the sewage backup we had almost two years ago. I have felt very blessed to have had the tremendous support and help of several persons in our church leadership and body. Again, I thank all those who have been involved in various aspects of this. They know who they are, and I would like them to know how thankful I am.

As this church year is coming to a close, my thoughts now turn to the catch-up work that is needed. Over this year, my toughest challenge has been trying to find a balance with children's ministry, church events planning, and administration. I have learned that out of all three priorities, the administration aspect always becomes victim to being treated last. It has been a realization for me that, despite my best efforts, I am regularly fighting daily fires rather than doing fore-planning in the administration side of the house. Too often, time slips between my fingers, and suddenly what I once had planned to do a month from now becomes three months from now, six months, etc., until such a time I wonder where the time disappeared!

As administrative coordinator, it is my job to remain ahead of the calendar and ensure that important things do not become forgotten and turn into crises. So, with this in mind, I have made a plan to head back to my administrative roots and re-align my priorities this summer to ensure some of the administration requirements get the attention that is needed. Most of the focus will be on reviewing/completing policies, organizing documentation, general records, historical records and archives. Please pray that I will have the opportunity to accomplish a large chunk of this workload.

Thankfully, I am encouraged that the Church Council recognizes the challenge in this balance and the need for a children's ministry leader with the spiritual gifting appropriate to lead this ministry. Through this year, I have seen that I am the right person to provide the supportive role to this ministry, but I am not the right fit for leading this ministry. My hopes were great, and I was prepared to take on the task when this position became vacant and needed to be filled, but I was quickly humbled in the months after. On the administrative side, I have also been encouraged by other church administrators that are part of the city-wide administration meetings, which I attend quarterly. I have learned quite a bit from my administrator peers. I pray that what I have learned will translate into good practices here at Bethesda, so that we can continue to do the good works God desires us to do.

There have also been some activities and events we have been conducting to encourage community-building. We kicked off our ministry year in September with a fellowship meal handled by Rose Marie Tan and her team. We've had several community meals together and been blessed by those gifted with hospitality to serve in such events. We had a successful men's ministry night and women's ministry night this year. Thank you to Neil Craton and Shelly Wilcoxson (and all their helpers) for leading these events. We were unable to have a family fun-and-games night, as we did not have a volunteer for it, but we hope that, if this is a need in the church next year, God will place that desire in someone's heart to help lead such an event. Our Joint Worship seemed like our biggest one since I first came to this church three years ago. It was a wonderful time of celebrating between two different congregations, all united under one roof and one love for Christ. May the Lord continue to bless our relationship with the Korean Church of Winnipeg.

As much as this year was a whirlwind for me, I am still looking forward to what the next ministry year will bring. I hope to catch up on some rest and administrative work in the summer, but also enjoy a bit more of a balance in my other roles, hopefully in the near future. I am thankful for our newest custodian, Kambiz, and for all our previous custodians who have served faithfully in the past. I am so thankful God's hand is in all of this, and that He continues to guide our leadership to fulfill our purpose!

## **Worship Team Report**

*Shelly Wilcoxson, Worship Leader*

It's hard to believe that another ministry year has passed. I continue to be so very thankful for the many faithful volunteers who serve in the worship ministry of Bethesda. From PowerPoint preparation and support, sound set-up and delivery, to platform presence and leadership, these dedicated servants give of their time and talents beyond our weekly Sunday morning gatherings from 10:00-11:30. Thank you all for giving of your time and talents to the Lord as you serve the body of Bethesda.

As I was reflecting on what I would say to you as part of my worship ministry report and how I would say it, I began to think about the weekly duties of leading worship in comparison to preparing a meal. The worship ministry of any given church should seek to work in partnership with the proclamation of the spoken Word to feed and nourish the souls of those attending. Preparing the weekly meal is both an act of service and of love with the goal of creating an environment in which the Holy Spirit is able to work freely and move powerfully among us.

What you may not be aware of from your vantage point of coming to the table to enjoy a meal is that our worship ministry cupboards have been a little bare lately. Due to graduations and relocations, we have lost several members of our platform worship ministry team. This has created quite a challenge for me as I assess the “ingredients” needed for meal preparation each week. For the cooks among us, you know that before you decide what you’re going to prepare you have to first check the cupboards to see what you have to work with. Some weeks we are able to partake in a very flavorful meal, while other weeks we enjoy simpler fare. On occasion, I have had to retain the services of other pianists in the area, which has been a billable event. (I guess this would be akin to ordering take out!)

As we continue moving forward in faith and to begin another ministry year together, I invite you to join me in praying for God to provide all that we need for our weekly worship gatherings. Please pray for those who are faithfully serving: that they would “not grow weary in doing good” (Galatians 6:9), and that they would be able to serve by means of the equipping of the Holy Spirit and with the energy of Christ (Colossians 1:29).

If you or someone you know is gifted musically and/or perceives a calling to serve in worship ministry, please come talk to me. I’d love to begin a conversation with you and join you in discerning your place of service within the body of Bethesda Church.

## **Union Gospel Mission (UGM) Report**

*Darrell Falk, on behalf of the UGM Team*

Union Gospel Mission is a non-profit, evangelical, non-denominational Gospel rescue mission that administers Christ-centered programs for the addicted, and for the poor men, women, and children of Manitoba, so as "***to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me***" (Acts 26:18).

We at Bethesda Church do our part in fulfilling this mission by having a 30-minute service on the third Saturday of every month from 7:30pm to 8:00pm. We meet at 7:15pm to organize and pray. After the service, we wait in the sanctuary for anybody who would like to come and talk to us. When we do our small part ministering to the poor, we are also ministering to Jesus:

***“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me’”*** (Matthew 25:40).

Pastor Mark also preaches the daily luncheon service once per month on the fourth Tuesday, and enjoys a growing and mutually beneficial relationship with the staff and patrons of UGM.

You can do your part by praying for Union Gospel Mission, by giving us supplies to bring to UGM, or by coming and ministering alongside us. It's only 30 minutes a month, but it can be of eternal value for the patrons of UGM. For a missionary experience right in the inner city of Winnipeg, please join us. We could always use more people, as our participation numbers usually range around 3. The only prerequisites are that you love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. For more information about Union Gospel Mission, check out the UGM link on the Bethesda Church website, or pick up their newsletter entitled *Voices from the Street*.

## **AWANA: Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed**

*Ruth Rennie, AWANA Commander*

***“Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.” – 2 Timothy 2:15***

After 33 years the AWANA ministry continues to bless many in our faith community and beyond. Our weekly average attendance was 68 which kept our leaders and listeners hopping.

It is remarkable that our club has reached out to Ukraine and Zimbabwe by way of club sponsorship and missionary support for over 22 years. Our own AWANA missionaries, Len and Pam Friesen, have taken several trips to Africa to encourage outreach through soccer camps. Whole churches have been planted there as a result.

I am so pleased to report that Karen Homuth will be taking over as commander of our AWANA club. It is time for the younger parents to lead, and I trust that you will support Karen and her family in this new challenge. Irene Hedlin will be stepping down as Sparks director after 17 years – thank you, Irene! James Fehr will take on this role with much enthusiasm.

I have received far more than I have given to this ministry. *That's the way God blesses, isn't it?* He promises to take whatever we give, to use it, and to bless it. I have been blessed for 23 years and encourage all to consider joining the AWANA team. It is exciting to see God's Word come alive to young minds and hearts, and to see lives changed.

Many thanks to our wonderful team, who worked so hard this past year, and a special thanks to the prayer partners who held us up each week before the throne of grace.

## **Facilities Report**

*Kate Craton, on behalf of Facilities Committee*

Our Facilities Report of a year ago reported on the enormous scope of restoration and renovation work which had been done in the Bethesda Church lower level in the months following the flood of June 2013. By comparison, this has been an unremarkable year for our facilities. Flo Fullerton has worked diligently to finalize our insurance claim and to oversee replacement of the various furnishings and other items which were lost in the flood. The new partition in the Fellowship Hall had detached from the wall, and the necessary ceiling and wall repairs were undertaken. We carried out routine maintenance, including replacement of light bulbs and ballasts on the gymnasium ceiling. We have ordered stand-up handicapped parking signs which will have improved visibility in snowy conditions.

We have had a number of recent transitions in our custodial staff. Nathan Voigt had taken over the role upon the retirement of our longtime custodian, Dayton Kemp, at the end of 2013. This time last year, Nathan moved on to other full-time employment, and Elijah Mogilevsky stepped in and capably served us until the New Year 2015, when he too moved off to pursue his career training. In February, we met and hired Kambiz Mesgarzadeh, and he is proving to be an excellent addition to our staff. We are so thankful for the dedication and faithful service each of these men have contributed to our church building and body.

Several projects are being considered for the coming months and years. Sporadic leaking has made it clear that our roof needs to be replaced soon, and we are consulting with Above All Roofing to plan how and when we might best undertake that major project. We are also getting quotes to repaint the walls and to replace the bulletin boards and flooring in the main foyer and the office-wing washrooms. The gymnasium walls and AWANA lines on the floor need to be repainted, and we are looking for volunteers from the congregation who might be willing and able to tackle that project. Before painting, we will need to find volunteers who can help remove some items to the Brady Landfill (i.e., broken ping-pong tables, old stage pieces, etc.).

We recognize also that several items which have served us well in the past are reaching the end of their lifespan, so we will need to plan and prepare for their replacement (i.e., fellowship hall chairs). Lastly, we would like to explore the possibilities for some sort of renovation or even cosmetic enhancement of the kitchen; we would welcome the creative or financial support of anyone interested in helping with that project.



## **Missions Team Report**

*Eunice Hill, Missions Team Leader*

This has been a year with challenges in believing for what God has for us as a church in missions. God has also provided encouragements to trust Him.

One of the first encouragements was an offer from the congregation to provide help for one of our local missionary couples. Matt Fullerton's home group took on the leadership of an Inter-Church New Comer Awareness Breakfast for Tim and Sue Nielson who work with many newcomers to Winnipeg out of City Church. The Chin people did a lovely job helping us understand better what families face as they come to Winnipeg. They also provided their bountiful share of Chin food for the breakfast table.

Let's pray for more ways to be involved with our local missionaries, in understanding what they are doing and encouraging them with prayer and support.

In June our team interviewed Allison Moore, the daughter of Howard and Caron who have been supported by Bethesda for years. How delightful, then, to hear her present the work she sensed God calling her to. We had no financial support to offer but felt she had much to offer us in vision. And so in September, the congregation was encouraged to hear of her concern for the Muslim immigrants in one of the poorest areas of London, England. She was very encouraged by her time with us and gained some prayer supporters.

Our Christmas luncheon featured Carla MacKay. Ruth Rennie and her able team planned a full program with Rose Marie Tan heading up the meal and Arlene Rempel the children's singing. There was much interaction and fun. Carla shared some about her work and challenged us with some of the things aboriginals face in Winnipeg. Her talk encouraged us to continue in our support of Indian Life Ministries and the magazine they produce. We were able to pray together for all our missionaries and give toward their Christmas gifts. Ruth saw that the gifts were all equally dispersed to each one in the form of a gift card. Our offering was the largest yet. Thanks to all of you who gave so generously.

It was a real challenge to hear that Bill Rennie would not be continuing in attendance on our team but was still willing to give valued advice. Ruth Rennie also took a leave of absence from active duty, which was a test to my faith personally. How good that God has given us Angie Evans to join her husband Paul in helping with the administrative work. Do pray for the right people to join us. If you are considering it, we DO need you!

Another encouragement was an interview with David Sawatzky who is a regular of our church and has had experience in short-term missions in Thailand and Australia with YWAM. David will likely be pursuing more training but senses a call to missions in the future. Do ask him questions and pray for him.

Correna Janzen has arrived back in Canada and was with us May 3rd. We are eager to hear more about what God has been doing in the Sos Kundi tribe of Papua New Guinea where she has been doing literacy and translating *the Scripture* under Wycliffe Bible Translators. Welcome home, Correna!

The cloud over much of my year has been thinking of finances. We were short \$18,000 from our 2014 Missionary Fund. At one time we were asked to consider cutting our missionary support in some way. I have been so generously supported by Bethesda over the last 50 years that it's hard for me to be chairperson of a committee that might make decisions for others to have to be cut. We have been asking God for an answer. I spoke to the congregation about whether it would be better for us to bear the burden or ask it of our missionaries.

One of my greatest encouragements was when Saxon Funk wrestled through the deficit (which seemed enormous to me) and enthusiastically put a PowerPoint together showing us that \$10 per person per week for 40 individuals would cover it. It looked doable.

The Treasurer's Report given by James Fehr indicated that this year we are down \$1,870 over the last three months. That looks bad but in the same period of time last year we were \$3,686 in deficit. So our giving has increased. I want to thank those who have taken up a challenge to give more. I was praying about whether I was being unrealistic. It's true that we are not as large or wealthy as the congregation that made these commitments, but I was reminded of a Council meeting a few years ago. We had a telephone contract that none of us had signed, seemed unreasonable, and that we could get out of legally. One voice spoke up: "A contract is a contract, and a church should honour it." We liked that integrity. I'm wondering if a legal contract is more binding than a covenant before God to support families who are serving Him?

I welcome your feedback and want to believe that God has only blessing in store for us, as we are faithful to what He asks of us. I think God loves us to prove His adequacy in matters like this. Malachi 3:10 says "*Prove Me with this, and see if I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*"

I thank God for each one of you and the ways you give to our church. Thank you for your encouragement and do pray for our missionaries that God will multiply their impact for His Kingdom, as He multiplies our funds to support them.

Our Missions Team at present includes: Patti Poirier, Paul and Angie Evans, Eunice Hill, and Pastor Mark Wilcoxson.

## **New Canadians Help Network**

*Patti Poirier, Tuesday English Class Leader*

It's been another exciting year of New Canadians English classes. In September, we purchased a Bible-based English curriculum (HIS-Helping Internationals Succeed) to use with the students. The curriculum provides a useful framework for lesson planning and our *Bible* study.

Neil has been giving a devotional talk and prayer to begin our English classes, which is appreciated by the students. He also continues to lead a *Bible* study using the HIS *Bible* reading curriculum on *the Gospel of John*. Several students asked if they could skip the English lesson and go straight to *the Bible* reading section, which of course we encouraged. Several Bethesda members also attend the study along with the newcomers.

In response to popular request, we held a special Saturday class where the students learned to make chocolate chip cookies. The students had a great time and are eager to have another cooking lesson. We also held a Christmas potluck supper and invited a home group to come and share a message about Christmas.

One of the greatest blessings of this ministry is the chance to extend friendship and hospitality to our newcomers. Several close relationships have been formed between teachers and students during coffee chats and dinner invitations. We also were able to support a newcomer family through a medical crisis.

Because we have an open registration policy, we see a lot of turnover in attendance. As of April 2015, we have 44 students registered with New Canadians and an average of 10 students attending per week. This year our volunteers are: Roger Green, Gail Henry, Eunice Hill, Doris Tibbs, and Mandy McRuer.

## **Children's Ministry Report**

*Flo Fullerton, Children's Ministry Leader*

In my earlier report for administration, I had mentioned the learning and humbling experience I have had this year in regards to children's ministry. So for this report, I wish to highlight the praises and hopes for children's ministry at Bethesda Church.

Thank you, parents, for entrusting us with your beautiful children. I don't know if you know this, but we have some of the most dedicated and wonderful leaders in the Nursery, Saplings, and KidZone! Our Nursery numbers on Sundays have been lower, but many of those children had graduated into Saplings age group of four to five year olds in the recent years. I have missed working with the little ones this year as I have been filling in the gaps as a leader in the Saplings and KidZone. Thank you, Nursery workers, for your tender love and care!

Saplings (ages 4-5) has been a fairly busy classroom. The children enjoyed hands-on teaching of the Gospel this year. I was delighted to have a couple of new classroom leaders. I appreciate all those that serve in this age group for their patience and commitment to the children.

Last but not least, this was also a memorable KidZone (grades 1-5) year. When everyone was in attendance, we had a bigger class size of fourteen kids, which was fantastic! The leaders have enjoyed the intriguing questions posed by the curious minds of our children, and the energy level that the children bring to the classroom lesson. I have also enjoyed seeing how much my leaders have embraced their roles in the classroom, and the enthusiasm they have towards teaching on Sundays.

Our servants in this ministry are dedicated to helping our kids learn God's word. As we have been slowly getting some new helpers this year, I am hoping they can develop and someday become classroom leaders themselves. I pray that we can find the right person with spiritual vision and leadership to lead in children ministry, and can equip new classroom leaders.

Please pray that we will have another Sunday school leader step in for Saplings and for KidZone, as I anticipate a couple of gaps in those areas by fall 2015. If you find yourself wondering if you fit into this leadership role, or just children's ministry Sunday school leading in general, please let me know. I would love to speak with you about this.

You may realize that some of our children are growing up too fast and soon will grow beyond what our children's ministry provides. The need for youth ministry will be even greater in the years ahead. Pray that God will work, that we will be patient, and that we will respond in this.

## **Library Report**

*Patti Poirier, Librarian*

Our library collection continues to grow as more books are added to our online catalogue. Kathy Green has put in many hours to help. Currently we have 2767 books in our searchable database. To register as a patron is absolutely free; just contact me. We have 24 books on loan.

To keep flexible, library items can be checked out thirty minutes after the Sunday worship service, or by contacting me in person, by phone or email [library@bethesdachurch.ca](mailto:library@bethesdachurch.ca). Requests for resources of specific titles, on a particular topic, or by a specific author can be forwarded to me as well. I encourage us all to take advantage of the wonderful opportunity we have to read, learn and grow.

## **Church Council Secretary Report**

*Roger Green, Church Council Secretary*

### **Attendance Data**

Average Sunday morning worship attendance by month:

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2009	113	116	119	128	130	106	110	--	122	122	125	132
2010	128	129	122	127	110	120	91	95	136	126	127	112
2011	108	105	142	124	134	114	89	71	105	119	127	116
2012	102	115	109	114	103	104	86	63	102	108	106	85
2013	96	94	101	104	104	101	82	76	91	105	107	88
2014	104	94	97	106	94	92	82	67	99	92	105	105
2015	99	80	93	*129								

All joint worship services have been excluded, as well as occasional days when attendance was not taken.

### **Church Council Meetings for 2014-2015**

Some might be wondering what Council talks about at our meetings. I would like to give just a very brief, not comprehensive, roundup of the recurring themes based on the minutes from this year. There is always a mixture of ministry matters and business matters to discuss.

There were six Council meetings since our last annual meeting: June 23, August 18, and December 15, 2014; and, January 19, April 8, and April 30, 2015.

We complied with federal anti-spam legislation by creating a process for getting client consent before sending e-mail communication from Bethesda.

We oversaw the transitions of three different custodians throughout the year: Nathan Vogt, Elijah Mogilevsky, and now Kambiz, with some professional cleaners hired during the gaps.

Ian Mogilevsky moved his professional office out of the church in the summer of 2014.

Our monthly rent received from the Korean church increased from \$1800 to \$2000 in Feb 2014, and to \$2200 in March 2015. After much discussion, we agreed to offer Pastor Chan Seok use of the office that Ian vacated in our office suite, starting in March 2015.

We have had an ongoing discussion of replacing the sound system, and quotes have been gathered.

We've had several discussions of how we might use the Scholarship Fund, including using it to send children to Christian camps in the summer.

Ministry to our youth was started in early 2014 with a Sunday school type class before worship with up to seven attending, but discontinued. Since then, there has been discussion with several people about leading a youth ministry.

We have discussed the progress of children's ministry and New Canadians.

We have received the report of our pastor and elders about the ministry of Bethesda, and discussed staffing several times, with the hope of having an associate pastor.

Each meeting starts and concludes in prayer, and we are thankful for God's guidance through the issues that we have dealt with.

# **Treasurer's Report**

*James Fehr, Treasurer*

In this report, I will provide the congregation with an overview of the church's finances including:

- 1) Discussion and analysis of the 2014 fiscal year
- 2) Appendix A – Missionary Fund and Missionary Trust Fund Recipients
- 3) Appendix B – Adjusted Accounting Fund Balance Statement
- 4) Appendix C – Income and Expense Statement

## **Discussion and analysis of the 2014 fiscal year**

### **Summary of 2014 Finances**

I'd like so summarize on a high level some events of interest. Bethesda benefitted again from bequests; this year they totaled roughly \$5,467 between bequests from the estate of Muriel Waldie and the Barb and Pete DeHoff Foundation. The church continued to receive rental income from the Korean Church of Winnipeg – this contributes about 8% of Bethesda's revenue.

The Facilities Team – which includes Kate Craton, Ruth Rennie, Flo Fullerton, Pastor Mark Wilcoxson, and me – is investigating the possible need to replace our roof after we've had a few leaks in the last year or so. We're waiting on estimates of what that might cost the church and the timeline for how soon this will be required. It may be in the order of \$30,000 to \$50,000. The team also has some other building improvements to which your contribution of time or dollars may be requested. Hopefully there will be opportunity to solicit your input, comments, and feedback at the AGM.

Please be aware of the missionaries whom we support and our commitments to them (Appendix A). If you don't already, please consider giving in addition to your tithe to the Missionary Fund as it was underfunded by about \$14,000 in 2014, slightly worse than in 2013. Perhaps yet more people would be willing to take on Saxon's challenge of giving \$40/month to the Missionary Fund. Beyond that, I'd encourage you to become better acquainted with a couple missionaries and get involved.

Regarding offerings, I wonder if people would appreciate setting up pre-authorized withdrawals for their tithes. I know, for myself, I'm sometimes forgetful about when I've tithed or not. If there is sufficient interest, we'll explore this further.

Regarding financial statements, I've aimed to provide a simplified overview of the church's finances by category (See Table 1). This should give a nice high level view of where the money goes. For those interested in more detail, please see Appendices B and C for detailed financial statements.\*\*

## **Thanks and Closing**

I invite your questions regarding any details or concerns I have not addressed or clarified regarding the church Treasury or facilities. You can reach me at [jamesfehr@gmail.com](mailto:jamesfehr@gmail.com) or (204) 478-5267.

I would again like to bring to your attention the dedicated people who make the Treasury function. This includes Annette Warkentin, our bookkeeper. By the way, if you ever meet her, she has a seemingly inexhaustible treasure trove of stories. Thanks also to the offering counters: Matt Fullerton, Roger Green, Shanlee Birrell, and Saxon Funk. Rose Marie Tan also works to compile all our donation receipt data for tax purposes. Thanks so much to these folks for giving their time on a regular basis in this crucial functional capacity.

Thank you to the many dedicated people who give of their time, energy, and finances to permit the church to function. We value the skills and gifts of those who, like Martha, fulfill functions. However, we all ought to enjoy our Lord's presence as did Mary. Your persistent giving permits us to pay wages and salaries to our staff, support local and overseas missions, and maintain our building and manage around undesirable events like a possible roof replacement.

\*\*Bethesda Church members and regular attendees who have need of our financial statements may contact our administrative coordinator Flo Fullerton for further information at 204-987-2890 or [office@bethesdachurch.ca](mailto:office@bethesdachurch.ca).



