

# The Spirit

Sherwood Park, Alberta

July/August 2021

[www.bethelchurch.com](http://www.bethelchurch.com)

at **Bethel**

*Sharing the love of Jesus with a hurting world*

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## **The Light at the End of the Tunnel**

Terry Noble

It looks as if there is a light at the end of the COVID tunnel! Thanks to many people in the greater Edmonton area, including Sherwood Park as well as the rest of the province, over 70% of the eligible population have been diligent in receiving their first vaccine shot and, as of this update, over 20% have received their second shot. Thank you for your caring and commitment in getting the vaccine and in enabling so many positive changes to put this pandemic behind us and to start to take steps forward on account of your efforts.

It was most encouraging to see 80 registrants for the first Sunday service in a long, long time at Bethel on June 20 (Father's Day). It was an absolute pleasure to see so many of our Bethel family taking a seat in our sanctuary. Many folks I spoke with were truly happy to be in their Bethel home once again. With the number of COVID cases dropping, it is looking as if we may soon be able to increase the number of worshippers in our sanctuary and to get back into our Bible study groups, along with the many other group activities we have at Bethel. God willing, we may even be able to take off our masks, sing out loud, shake a hand, or even

give a hug. We still need to be cautious as there are significant numbers of folks not vaccinated and some that are unable to be vaccinated, so there is still a need to be mindful and exercise due caution — but we are getting closer!

Speaking of getting closer, VBS is soon starting up, and Roxanne and her team of great returning and new summer students can hardly wait to roll out their fantastic programs and activities, all planned around a comprehensive COVID Safety Plan. The VBS programs are almost full for the summer, so if you are in the area of Bethel, please stop by, say hello, and enjoy the experience. The staff and children alike will have an amazing and memorable experience.

Summer is officially here! The weather is great so let's get out and enjoy each day to the fullest. God created an amazing outdoor world for us to enjoy so let's make time to enjoy God's amazing creation. If you are like us, it is also a great time to chat with God and express your gratitude.

Blessings to all,

The Bethel Relaunch Team



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**Congratulations!  
 You Built a House!**

George Watts

One of the true joys that we get living and working here in rural Burundi is the opportunity to link your generosity with deep needs.

Mama Bella is a woman whom Susan first met at the feeding program several years when she was bringing her extremely malnourished daughter Bella to get food. When Susan started to get to know the family, she learned there was also a son with severe vision problems as well three other children. The father has some significant cognitive disabilities and needs surgery for a growth on his head, and was unable to work.

The family just barely survived. Just barely.



You can see their previous house in the picture above. It was tiny, dark, leaky. The single room had a mud floor as the roof leaked so much. It was also pitch dark as the roof didn’t keep out the rain, but did keep out the sun. It had no door. No windows. It wasn’t even tall enough for an adult to stand up inside. The family ate and slept in that one small mud room that even many rural Burundians here would not use for their animals.

In a culture where social standing is clear and important, having one more strike against you (no proper house) is not just a physical burden, but also a social, emotional, and mental drain. It’s hard to get ahead when you spend so much time and effort just

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**The Spirit at Bethel** is the monthly newsletter of Bethel Lutheran Church in Sherwood Park, Alberta.

Kris Buchholtz serves as editor.

We welcome articles (650 words or less) of people and events relevant to Bethel and the Church. Please leave a copy of your submission with Ann in the office or email it to [spirit@bethelchurch.com](mailto:spirit@bethelchurch.com).

If possible, also include pictures, preferably as separate attachments.

The deadline for the September 2021 issue is **Monday, August 23, 2021.**

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trying to keep your family dry and safe — constantly having to reapply mud to the walls and leaves and grass to the roof was a losing battle that they had been fighting for years.

We talked with our Burundian colleagues and determined that what this family needed was a helping hand. A leg up. They've been hit hard repeatedly, and needed something to help give them hope.

We coordinated some of our construction workers (who were between projects at the hospital) to design and build them a new house.

Yesterday we drove out to visit the family and see the finished house. Actually, we took Mama and Bella back home as Bella had just been released from the hospital for malaria. She's much healthier again and was really excited to get home. (Actually, she was also pretty thrilled to drive in the back of our Land Cruiser. As soon as we started driving away from the hospital, she started giggling to herself and could barely contain her excitement of being in a car the whole way home.)



Here is the family in front of their new house. It is spectacular to see this!

Their new house would not be considered fancy by western standards, but the upgrade is massive. They now have a tin roof that will keep out rain for years to come. The walls are solid brick, built on a proper stone foundation. They have wooden doors and windows that can be closed and locked. The floor is cement. They have four rooms inside and a small outdoor cooking spot out the back.

The difference is shocking.

We hired some of our construction workers who live out near the family, or who owned bikes, to do the work. Our incredible construction supervisor oversaw the work and ensured it was done to the same quality as anything we build. Every guy on the team seemed to want to make sure this family (finally) got something nice.

The kitchen to me is extra special as it was done by our construction workers, but they weren't paid for it. There were some construction materials left over, so the guys used some, traded some with neighbours for what they needed, and volunteered their own labour to build it. It's just a small shed with a clay tile roof, metal walls, and a simple door — but it's a clean, dry place for them to cook over an open fire so they can prepare food without filling their house with smoke.

These are workers who make a couple of dollars a day, who took an hour to get to the work site, who have families of their own to support. They gave their time and expertise to provide a working kitchen for this family.

So now everything is great?

Not even close.

They will still struggle to feed themselves, the father still has no work, the son still has vision problems. However, there is safety, stability, and dignity that comes from having a proper house. A roof that does not leak, a door that you can actually lock. Windows that can be closed. A floor that is not mud. They have a leg up now as a family that should make a difference from this day forward. They can spend less time gathering leaves to patch their roof, and more time tending crops. The kids should get sick less often now that they won't be lying in the mud. They don't have to worry that any item they acquire, starting with a cooking pot, may get stolen.

It's a big deal for this family — and you made it possible.

The Bible tells us over and over that one of the fundamental ways we serve God and worship Him is by taking care of the poor, the sick, the orphans, the widows — those who have been beaten down by the powers of this

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world. In this case, we had an opportunity to do just that.

Your support and our construction team's talent came together to make this family a home.

And that is incredible.

As always, we are so thankful for your continued support for the work that is going on here in Burundi.

And on behalf of these families that you will never meet: know that you have changed their lives forever. It's not an overstatement to say that this could have an impact for generations to come.

So on behalf of these dear image bearers of God...

***Urakoze Cane & Imana Ibahezagire***

(Thank you very much & God bless you)

George and Susan

Jonah, Matea, Micah and Alma



### **Mission of the Month: Watts in Burundi**

Your support of The Great Commission (Watts in Burundi) through your prayers and financial donations will be a tremendous blessing to the people of Burundi who are served by this ministry.

## **June 13 Voters' Assembly**

Kathy Ansell

Bethel's Annual Voters' Assembly Meeting was held virtually on Sunday, June 13 and was attended by 43 people. During the meeting, the financial statements from the previous year of 2020 to 2021 were reviewed.

Pastor Matt and Pastor James then presented Bethel's Strategic Vision, which outlined all the exciting plans, goals, hopes, and dreams for Bethel moving forward.

The budget for the coming year of 2021 to 2022 was then approved. Hard copies of this budget can be picked up at the office.

Outgoing Parish Planning Council members Gabriel Sandstrom, Gary Steinke, and Kathy Ansell were thanked for their service, and the following people were re-elected and elected to Council:

#### **Re-elected**

Chair: Brian King

Member-at-Large: Alicia Strand

#### **Elected**

Vice Chair: Ryan Timmermans

Secretary: Heidi Lang

Member-at-Large: John Olafson

Member-at-Large: Morgan Mergl

Thank you to everyone who attended the meeting so that this necessary business could be attended to.



## Bethel's Fall Worship Schedule

Pastor Marv

At Bethel's Annual Meeting, the question was raised: "What will our worship times look like this fall?" Great question! It is one that we **have** wrestled with and **are** wrestling with. Let me explain.

During COVID, we have all had to deal with uncertainties. I realize this has been wearying and has produced stress and anxiety. However, we anticipate that even when things will "more fully open up," some uncertainties will remain. And as we try to plan, it is practically impossible to envision what our September worship schedule will look like.

We anticipate that the makeup of our worship community has changed in the 15 to 16 months since COVID appeared on the scene.

1. We know some are hesitant to return to in-person worship. How long it will be before (or if) they return? We don't know.
2. We know that some in our worship community have moved.
3. We're expecting that some probably have not worshipped online, so we're wondering: since they haven't worshipped for over a year, will they return when in-person worship opens up?
4. We also anticipate that some will remain with the online worship. They can join worship at a time that is more convenient for them.
5. Also, we know there are some who are, because of health reasons, not able to receive the vaccine. How will they feel about coming to in-person worship?

6. As well, what about parents with young children: how will they feel about bringing their unvaccinated children to worship? And to Sunday School?

As I read reports from churches that have reopened to in-person worship (reports are mainly from the U.S.), there are some churches that are reporting a 20%+ decline in worship attendance post-pandemic.

At Bethel, we have not always had three services. At one time in Bethel's life, we had an 8:30 am service and an 11:00 am service, with Sunday School, Confirmation and Bible classes in between at 9:45 am. When I met with Roxanne this week, we talked about all the uncertainties she is dealing with in trying to envision a fall Sunday School.

I realize some may be expecting that we will automatically return to our pre-COVID schedule. However, at this time the September (Fall) schedule is a blank. During summer we will try to monitor trends and solicit input/feedback from our worshipping community to see if this will provide us direction for setting the Fall worship schedule.

One thing I'm sure of is this: each will be dealing with their own situation the best they know how. In the midst of the ongoing uncertainties, "**we who are clothed with Christ**" (St. Paul's words in Colossians 3) will need to continue being **compassionate, kind, humble, gentle and patient ... bearing with each other**" (Colossians 3:12, 13); supportive and encouraging of one another; and extending God's grace to one another ... for we are family — brothers and sisters in Christ.



## Rocky Railway VBS

Roxanne Theroux

Welcome to Rocky Railway VBS!

This summer we are excited to climb aboard and get on track for trusting Jesus! At Rocky Railway, kids will explore Jesus' power and learn how we can trust Jesus to pull us through when life feels like a valley or a mountain. You can expect a week full of faith discoveries, memorable music, and a serene setting that sets a course for trusting Jesus' power! Contact Roxanne at [roxanne.theroux@bethelchurch.com](mailto:roxanne.theroux@bethelchurch.com) or Kelly at [summer.camps@bethelchurch.com](mailto:summer.camps@bethelchurch.com) for more information.



### Camps

Camp #1: July 5-9

Camp #2: July 19-23

Camp #3: August 9-13



## BLESS Preschool Accepting Registrations

Tamara Avery

BLESS Preschool Administrator

BLESS Preschool has a number of spaces available in our morning classes for three year olds and four year olds. Visit our website at [blesspreschool.com](http://blesspreschool.com) for a peek inside, to book a private tour, or to register.

In the meantime, here's a link to a free printable for some fun summer ideas!

<https://learnincolor.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Summer-Activities-PDF.pdf>



### Bless Preschool

Sharing the love of Jesus  
with children and their  
families



## Bethel Youth Ministry Summer Update

Michael Gillingham

After a very unusual year and during what may be a slightly more normal summer, we will be hosting youth events on Wednesday nights during the summer.

Our first event for Senior High Youth is planned for Wednesday, July 7 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, as we realize that Friday nights are busy for families, especially for those who are heading out to the lake or camping on the weekends.

We'll be sending more information as the summer unfolds.



## Bethel Youth Servant Event Update

Michael Gillingham

For several years now, our Junior High Youth and our Senior High Youth at Bethel have devoted a part of their summer to serving God as they serve others on Servant Event Trips. With the pandemic still impacting lives all around, we have made the decision to move our La Ronge Vacation Bible Camp online instead of travelling to La Ronge to lead one in person. Our friends in La Ronge have asked us to host a weekly online option on Wednesdays from 10:00 am to 11:00 am from July 14 onward. I will be inviting Junior High Youth who are willing and able to help out.

Our Senior High Youth were hoping to go to Jamaica this summer, but that trip has been postponed until November 2021. We are hoping to gather those interested in the trip this fall for some team-building and also for some serving at Bethel's Summer Camp Programs.

Please keep our friends in La Ronge, our "soon-to-be" friends in Jamaica, and our other friends whom we've met in Texas, Mexico, Los Angeles, and Puerto Rico in your prayers during this most unusual time.



## Summer Camps Opening Up

Michael Gillingham

Hastings Lake Bible Camp and Camp Kuriakos will both be opening for overnight camps this summer. Hastings is planning to run programs in July and August while Camp Kuriakos will be running programs in August.

Hastings features Bethel's own Katie Molzan on staff this summer. Michael Gillingham will also be serving as a resource person at Hastings for a week this summer.

Camp Kuriakos will also be offering camping opportunities for families in July and August.

Contact these camps through their websites for more information.

Hastings Lake Bible Camp:  
<https://www.hastingslake.com>

Camp Kuriakos:  
<https://kuriakos.ab.ca>



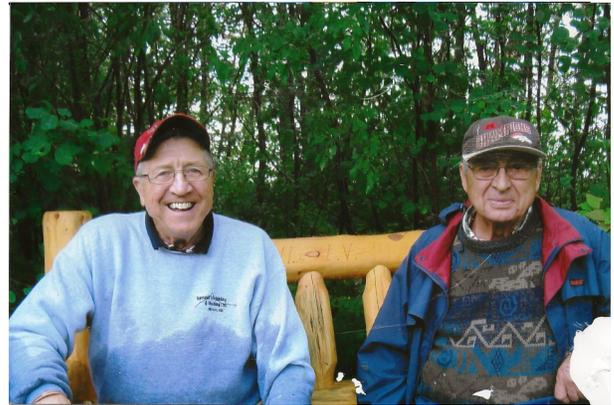
## Christian Nationalism Presentation

Michael Gillingham

One of the small pleasures of the pandemic has been the opportunity to attend so many wonderful presentations online from so many places. I've appreciated discovering the Trinity Forum and the online discussions they present. One particularly good one that was recently posted featured Mark Noll and Vincent Bacote about "The Challenge of Christian Nationalism." (You can view the conversation here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwlK3UfBnp8>.)

While this trend seems particularly concerning in parts of the United States, it is helpful to think about how we as Canadian

Christians can navigate our political challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities as we seek to reflect our faith in God and our love for others.



Roy Teske and Joe Balogh  
Photo courtesy of Gladys Teske

## A Fitting Award

Roy Teske and Joe Balogh were both long-time Bethel members as well as long-time neighbours. Roy and Joe have each been awarded an Award of Excellence by the County of Strathcona, posthumously! Their wives, Gladys and Anne, and their families accepted the awards on their behalf.

The awards were in recognition of their contributions in the category of Arts, Culture and Heritage for the work they did on the J-R Trail on Old Man Creek for many years — improving it and making a lovely walking path by cutting grass, trimming bushes, building bridges, opening up beaver dams, and making a few benches to sit and enjoy the nature that abounds here.

Gladys shares the following:

*A \$100.00 gift certificate to a restaurant of choice went with each award. Anne and I, along with our families, decided that we would like to give the total (\$200.00) to an organization that Roy and Joe would be happy with. They both loved birds, and their friend Don*

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*Gordon (who also did a lot of work on the Trail, as did Bill Dutchak, another neighbour) actually named and recorded a total of 97 birds along the J-R Trail! So we picked the [Alberta Society for Injured Birds of Prey](#) (located at 51562 RR222, Sherwood Park). We found out that they are collecting for a new hawk house, as the other burned down recently.*

A fitting cause and a fitting award for a pair of precious brothers in Christ whom we miss tremendously.



## On Being "Grace Dispensers"

Pastor Marv

June 10, 2021

Dear Family at Bethel,

I was working on a different message for this letter. However, my thoughts took a turn when a couple of Bethel's young adults sent me an email asking, "What role did Lutherans have in the residential schools?"

The story of the residential schools is a huge blot on our nation in general and on the Church as a whole. While Lutherans didn't operate residential schools, we are not excused and we are not guiltless. As followers of Jesus, we understand that there are "sins of commission" — that is, those actions that hurt others — and that there are also "sins of omission" — that is, our failure and inaction in helping others. For example, in Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan, the thieves who left the person half dead committed harm (a sin of commission). Meanwhile, the Levite and the priest who "passed by on the other side" also sinned: they failed to extend compassion (a sin of omission). So maybe we Lutherans (corporately and individually) need to

consider a "mea culpa" — my sin, my fault, my lack of compassion in not speaking out on behalf of the families and victims of residential schools.

I'm almost finished reading the book *Vanishing Grace: Whatever Happened to the Good News?* by Philip Yancey. The copyright is 2014, but the message is very relevant for today. Yancey writes, "**Jesus came from the Father full of grace and truth.**" He adds that we (the Church) have worked tirelessly on the truth part but not so much on the grace aspect. People today are yearning for grace. The word Yancey uses throughout the book is **thirsting** for grace. People are thirsting for **the One who is the Living Water**. The Church is the Body of Christ, and as God's Presence in our society and culture, Jesus sends us out as bearers of grace. To be a people of grace, just like our Lord Jesus, is to assume the posture of humility, and to serve, and to come alongside "the other" in compassion.

Becky and I have a friend, Marlene. She is from the Blackfoot First Nation. She comments that when we are with her at a restaurant, or grocery store, or opening an account at a bank, she is treated differently than when she is alone. It hurts to hear her say that. Each person is created in the image of God and is a child of God, and as such is to be treated with dignity and respect. It takes no grace to relate to someone who looks, thinks, and acts like me. Yancey reminds us that because of the One who died for us and rose again, all old divisions are abolished, that there is "**neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female**" (St. Paul's words in Galatians 3). Jesus, Paul says, has **broken down the dividing walls**.

In my email to the two young adults (whom I referred to earlier), I commented that one of the most powerful ways we (the members of Christ's Church) can be

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"ambassadors of reconciliation" is to get to know at least one Indigenous person on an individual basis — to get to know their culture and understand what they have experienced in life.

Ron Ludke, a member of Bethel, forwarded me an excellent article by his friend, Parry. Parry is an Indigenous man originally from the Alexander First Nation. In the article, Parry writes, "The best way to move forward is to listen to each other. Not just with a polite, 'ok, yes, is that right?' Rather we must learn to listen to each other, seeing the other person as made in the image of God." Parry continues: "The love of Jesus has transformed my life, so there is no issue or part of history that will separate me from the love of God, that will separate me from forgiveness, mercy and grace." He adds, "...On the cross Jesus said, 'Forgive them for they know not what they are doing.' This is how I have chosen to react." What a demonstration of grace on Parry's part!

In a world that is increasingly fractured and polarized, today, as much as ever, our world is in need of grace. Yes, I agree with Yancey: our world is **thirsting** for grace. It will not receive grace by way of the Church's creeds or doctrinal statements. Most people today are apathetic toward the organized and institutional church. And yet those who conduct surveys tell us that many of these same people are open to Jesus, to the One who was grace in flesh and blood. This little rhyme about living the Good News of Jesus and being **grace dispensers** (Yancey's words) is key.

**Matthew, Mark, Luke and John:  
They are the Gospels, it is true.  
But the gospel most folks will read  
Is the gospel according to you.**

Each of us as a follower of Jesus — we who have tasted deeply of God's grace — each of us is called to see "the other" (those who are different than I am), to see them as Jesus did (as people created in the image of God) and to live with a posture of humility (as a listener to "the other" and a learner) so that we can be ambassadors of reconciliation to bring peace and wholeness. This is what it means to live our mission of "**sharing the love of Jesus with a hurting world.**"

Mother Teresa made "**I thirst**" the motto for the Sisters of Charity. To one of her sisters she wrote, "We carry in our body and soul the love of an infinite thirsty God. God thirsts. God thirsts for us, and humanity thirsts for God." Yancey adds, "God thirsts not out of need but out of desire." God's desire is that all would know the grace He has extended to us in Jesus.

God's blessings,  
Pastor Marv

## *Welcomed into the Kingdom*

Welcomed into God's heavenly Kingdom by the rite of Baptism were the following saints:

- Jesse Micah Strand, infant son of Justin and Kristen Strand
- Miles John Strand, infant son of Justin and Kristen Strand

Welcomed into God's heavenly Kingdom to partake of the eternal feast were the following saints:

- Jeannie Donnelly
- Kyle Golinksy

## The Rock: Volunteers Needed

Bonnie Kilford  
on Behalf of The Rock

The Rock is still serving its inner-city guests at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. We thank you for your ongoing support of our breakfast program and for partnering with The Rock to spread the love of Jesus to the less fortunate in our inner city of Edmonton.

We are very hopeful that as of September 7 of this year, The Rock will be able to relaunch our Breakfast Program at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. This will mean serving breakfast again in the Reception Hall of St. Peter's three mornings a week, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. With this in mind we are looking for more volunteers to help cook and serve breakfasts to our inner-city guests in the Reception Hall, as well as for volunteers interested in providing conversation and prayer, which our guests are desperately in need of.

We also are in need of:

- drivers to pick up supplies from the food banks and other donors;
- general help for taking care of the property and the building;
- handymen for small maintenance jobs around the church and Heritage House;
- help to restart (with Marilyn Witte) the Monday Nights Kids program .

Volunteers who are able to help cook and serve breakfasts, please contact Neil Melcher at [n\\_melcher@yahoo.ca](mailto:n_melcher@yahoo.ca); drivers should contact Audrey at [info@TheRockEdm.ca](mailto:info@TheRockEdm.ca); those interested in providing conversation and prayer, please contact Marilyn Witte at [slimwitte@hotmail.com](mailto:slimwitte@hotmail.com); and handymen, please contact Harald Witzler at [h2witzler@gmail.com](mailto:h2witzler@gmail.com).

Thank you and God's blessings.



## Rhubarb Rally Thanks

Charlotte Bragg,  
Eastside Grannies President

The Eastside Grannies are so grateful for the ongoing support of the Bethel community, this time with our Rhubarb Pie and Crisp Sale. Saturday, June 19 was our pickup day in the parking lot. It was fun, with our customers (including many Bethel members) being flagged into the designated area where their order was safely popped into their trunk or backseat. We sold over 130 desserts, which is great for our little group, plus received some donations. Here are some compliments we received about the Pie and Crisp Sale:

*I baked the rhubarb crisp yesterday and am embarrassed to say that we (mostly me) ate half of the crisp.*

*Love the taste! Thank you to you ladies who made this available for us.*

*We have just finished eating some absolutely excellent warm rhubarb crisp with ice cream.*

*Thanks for all the hard work the "grannies" put into making this possible. Great you could keep the tradition going this year.*

We sold approximately \$1,400 worth of product, which will be supplemented by donations made by customers in addition to those secured on our fundraising page or from our contacts who weren't purchasing desserts. The money raised will go to support community-based organizations in fifteen sub-Saharan African countries, who in turn care for grandmothers and their grandchildren who have been orphaned by AIDS. Adding COVID to the mix has made for an even more challenging time. I'm confident we will be over \$2,000 — another gift for our African grannies and their needy grandchildren. Thank you, everyone! We look forward to our in-person Rhubarb Rally next June.

