

BABINE BULLETIN

Monthly Newsletter of Mission Smithers – Fort Babine -- Vol.4 No.1 January 2003

There are many times when I wish that my study didn't have a window. In a desperate attempt to deal with the "problem," I have my desk facing the opposite direction. But it doesn't seem to help. I have to get up to get a book, I look out the window, and before I know it, the binoculars are out, the camera is out and I'm absorbed into the outside environment. My latest temptation is peculiar to this time of year: wolves. You see, the ice finally came on the lake (not much, but it's there), and the wolves come with the ice. For most of the year, we don't see them, but the lake becomes a smooth wolf highway in the winter. When you read how wolves are at risk in many other parts of North America, then you really start to appreciate these creatures that make regular appearances in front of our house. I can remember camping as a child in national parks such as Jasper and Prince Albert and hoping with all my heart to see a wolf. It never happened until we lived here. I certainly never tire of seeing these phantoms of the forest. They continue to be an inspiration to praise for their Creator.

We praise Him, not only for this beautiful world in which we live, but also for His work in creating hearts of flesh from hearts of stone. We recently had the opportunity to reflect on this miraculous work of God as we undertook our annual evaluation. On December 11, the Home Mission Board, the Council and I came together for a special meeting in Smithers. One of the main items on our agenda was a discussion of the work over the past year.

As I have mentioned previously, we have a

detailed planning schedule which forms a guideline for the progress of the work in Fort Babine. The planning schedule includes two different kinds of evaluations. Every year we have an "annual evaluation." After three years in phase 2 (which will be in September 2004), we also have a major evaluation. In due time, I hope to write more on that major evaluation.

Our annual evaluation is done by a team of two; up till now these two have been members of the Council in Smithers. The evaluation team makes a series of visits to Fort Babine to assess the progress and whether the goals of our planning schedule are being met. At the same time, they make an evaluation of the preaching at Wit'at Reformed Fellowship. After the visits are done, the brothers prepare a report to present at the annual combined meeting.

We are very thankful that this annual evaluation could be positive. It was a good reminder that we have much to be thankful for in this work. If we look at our planning schedule and then see how things are proceeding, we have to praise God. What looks impossible to men is possible with the Almighty.

If God blesses our plans, in the coming year we hope to celebrate both sacraments at WRF. Once we have our first communicant member (May or June, D.V.), we will be able to celebrate the Holy Supper. And, God willing, once our child is born, baptism can be administered as the sign and seal of God's covenant. In preparation for that, we are very grateful for a beautiful gift that we

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His wonders among all peoples!" Psalm 96:3

recently received from a member of the congregation in Smithers. At the combined meeting mentioned earlier, Br. Walter VanGrootheest (Sr.) presented us with a handcrafted baptismal font. Thank you again, brother! Our prayer is that this font will see much use over the coming years. This may not look possible from a human point of view, but we know that God specializes in the apparently impossible. We trust Him and we have unquenchable optimism in the power of His grace!

As I look over the past month, we had several highlights definitely worth bringing to your attention. First, we could again have worship services at WRF every Sunday. I mention that because we can't take it for granted. Second, we praise God that we could also have services on Christmas and New Year's Eve. On Christmas Day, we had our worship service and then afterwards we enjoyed a fellowship lunch together. At one point, we had considered doing something like that on a monthly basis, but for now, we are keeping it to Good Friday and Christmas. It was simple: buns and soup, with ice cream for dessert. On New Year's Eve, there was a good opportunity for nearly all of our regular attendees to consider God's Word to them as they looked ahead to 2003.

An important part of our ministry continues to be visits – in their homes and in ours. As I was writing this newsletter (9:00 – 10:00 on a Monday morning), we had a visit from one of our regular attendees. This happens more often and presents us with opportunities to give help with the Word of God. Just being here for people is very important.

The Sunday School recently started up again, after a brief hiatus because of the holidays. One change we have made is that

our next set of materials is at a different age level. We continue to use the curriculum of Great Commission Publications, but have now stepped it down to a lower level. When we first started with the Sunday School, most of the kids were about 8-12 years old. Since then, the average age has gone down to about 6 or 7 years old. So, we have to adapt to the changing circumstances.

This coming week (January 5-11), we hope to start up with most of our regular activities again, including catechism, Bible studies, and preconfession instruction. Since the safety issues have been resolved, we also hope to revive the Sports Night in the near future.

Finally, I recently made a request to the Council in Smithers to continue my studies. They approved my request and so I am currently in the process of applying to a doctoral program. If I am accepted, I will be studying in a Doctor of Theology (Th.D.) program with Reformation International Theological Seminary in Fellsmere, Florida. This program allows for a specialization in missiology (the study of missions) – which is my field of research interest. The degree program can mostly be done from home and promises to complement the mission work. I estimate that it will take 4-5 years to complete. I will also keep you posted on developments in this area.

We thank all of you who took the time to send cards and even a few gifts over the holiday season. This was much appreciated. May God give all of you a blessed 2003!

Rev. W. Bredenhof

Snail: Box 3868, Smithers BC, V0J 2N0

Email: wbredenhof@canrc.org

Web: www.babine.org

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