

Fellowship Prairies

SPRING QUARTER



AB, SK, MB, NT, NU
FELLOWSHIP PRAIRIES REGION



ENCOUNTER GOD
EQUIP GOD'S PEOPLE
ENGAGE GOD'S WORLD



ENCOUNTER 2019
RECORD NUMBERS,
AND NEW ADDITIONS

NEWSLETTER



Spring to be sprung soon?

Sometimes new life looks very far away. It can also feel distant, too. Take our current “spring weather”, as we round into this quarter of the newsletter. Yet it is amazing that within this three month window, things will look drastically different in our Region in relation to this weather

above - this photo seems optimistic on the front end of this quarter, but new life is around the corner!

analogy! As you'll see in this edition. God has been doing some new things in our midst! And while I can guarantee current temperatures will be cozy for most of us, I know that these stories will warm you up! So grab a coffee / hot chocolate, get by a fireplace, and enjoy this edition of the FP newsletter!

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

- Isaiah 43:18,19



Encounter 2019



Encounter 2019

New is a theme word here this spring. We saw a record number of attenders, and a record number of new pastors at Encounter for the first time! To tangibly see our new church planters in the room with us was a joy. We're also aware of some first time attenders for this upcoming year who weren't able to swing it this year.

Dan Cochrane, from Crossroads in Red Deer was our speaker, and the Lord used him in powerful ways to minister to us through 2 Timothy.

Thanks again to the many who make this event such an incredible experience for us all. So many do so much behind the scenes to make this event one of our highlights each year. And speaking of year - it was yet another one where we marveled at God's goodness in our midst. I love the platform this event presents for us to share and see what God has done among us as a Region.

Something else that was new: we saw a change in hotel management, and God had that transition go exceptionally well. We had such a great relationship with previous management - so it was such a relief to experience and know that moving forward will still have a similar experience attached. I bring this up to let you know of one subtle shift that will be taking place this upcoming year: the hotel is wanting final numbers from us a little (a lot) earlier, which is having us implement an early bird deadline on our end. We'll be able to give you a \$20 discount per registration if you sign



Early bird registration takes effect this year. Sign up before Dec. 18, 2019!

up before *December 18, 2019*. I know it seems far away, but please make note of that now.



We will be hearing from EFC speaker, David Guretzki, along with a panel of church planters. Online registration will be available shortly. Join us on May 2,3 at West Edmonton Baptist for a great year of reflecting, planning and equipping!

Equip 2019

This is our “annual general meeting”, for all intents and purposes. We will share what God has done as we reflect on this past ministry year, and we’ll look ahead to what our plans are for the upcoming ministry season.

There will also be a couple times of equipping for us all. The areas this year will relate to church planting. A panel will dialogue with us about what that looks like, talk about trends we are currently seeing, and open discussion about what it might look like for us as churches to consider a church plant.

David Guretzki, from EFC will also guide us through a time of discussion, pertaining to how we as churches engage in our cultural landscape. We are anticipating another great year together.

Look forward to seeing you in May!

LeadersFormation

Six years ago, Pastor Kim Bauer (West Edmonton Baptist) contacted me to inquire about the possibility of our congregations functioning as co-partners in a new *LeadersFormation* project in the Republic of the Philippines. This partnership would not only allow us to prayerfully and financially support a program that offered educational opportunities to Filipino pastors who would not otherwise have access to that opportunity, it would also allow individuals from MBC to travel to the Philippines on an annual basis to help facilitate that training.

I have just returned from my sixth and final trip with our cohorts in Ormoc and Banga, Philippines. The next time these leaders gather, they will graduate from our *LF* Program.

On this recent trip I was privileged to have MBC’s Board Chair, Jason Eklund attend and aide in facilitation of the program. Jason is a farmer, who has never attended Bible School, but he loves the Lord and has grown significantly in his walk with Jesus in the last ten years. Consistently I had asked different Elders to come with me to the Philippines, and Jason was the first to go.



Late last year Jason participated in a one-day *LF* training day in Edmonton led by Rod Black. It was an opportunity for him to better understand the *LF* curriculum, to receive practice in the *Socratic method*, and to “feel” what it would be like to be one of the participants in a group *LF* facilitates. On top of that Jason and I met to work through our specific curriculum that we would be facilitating, our families met numerous times to talk about the logistics of the trip, and we availed ourselves of one of Edmonton’s fine Filipino restaurants to ensure that the Eklund’s had a good sense of what they were stepping in to.



Jason Eklund, being used by the Lord in new ways.

As we served together, Jason had numerous opportunities to step outside of his “normal world”. The Eklund’s visited with a child that they sponsor through Compassion Canada, he was asked to speak in church during an evening service, he facilitated a couple of the sessions during the cohort weeks and engaged with people and curriculum that allowed the Lord to speak deep into his own heart about His own calling and ministry in Canada. Last Sunday, Jason and his wife Melissa spoke at MBC about the life changing experience they had in the Philippines.

At this stage of his life, Jason has not been called to be a pastoral leader, or even a regular speaker in the context of the Canadian church. He is however a spiritual Leader and mentor who is well respected and looked up to. His experience in the Philippines has

further allowed him to see God’s heart for people, and God’s diversity in His church. This experience has allowed him to engage and grow in areas that give him reassurance about His leadership at home. And interacting with His brothers and sisters in the

Philippines have stirred questions in his heart about what is important in life, what church ministry could look like, and the importance of commitment in the life of believers. When we leave a context that we are comfortable with, God often helps us ask questions about our lives that we never knew we needed to ask. It has been a real blessing for Jason, and it will continue to be a blessing for MBC for years to come. Because of Jason’s experience, and testimony, I am sure he will be but the first of MBC’s lay leaders who will serve with *LF* in our ongoing ministry in the Republic of the Philippines.

- Ian Smith – Lead Pastor, Mayerthorpe



Water for your Soul

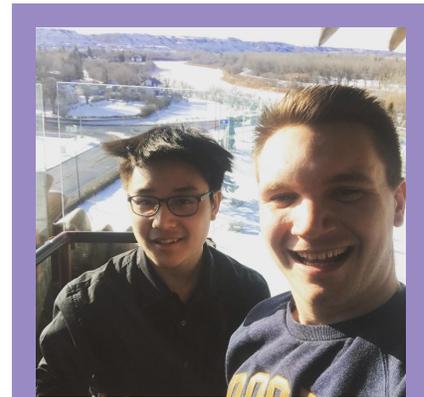
It was the end of October, and our youth had been running steadily for a couple of weeks. This particular Sunday was scheduled to be a low energy pyjama movie night! On these types of nights, I usually don't plan a youth talk of any kind. I was expecting lower numbers, but for some reason we had an influx of new teens coming to check out our youth group.

Among the group of new people was a teen named Water. Yes, you read that right! I come to find out later that Water is an international student from Thailand at our public high school. Let me pause and say this was the least "spiritual night" as we were watching movies in our pyjamas and stuffing our faces with snacks! But God had a different plan!

During the movie, I felt an overwhelming urge to share the Gospel. I figured at this point I have had way too much sugar and should slow down. But as much as I tried to fight the urge, it became stronger. I remember thinking, "God, I'm in my PJs... I don't want to share the Gospel!" I know how selfish I am! I'm sure glad I obeyed the Lord because what happened next blew me away!

There I am, standing at the front of our sanctuary sharing the good news of our saviour to a bunch of students hyped up on sugar and in their pyjamas. I finished and prayed and asked the group if they wanted to know more then to come and see me. Our friend Water, who I mentioned earlier, stopped me and asked, "How do I learn more about this Jesus?" We chatted for a few minutes about Jesus and the Bible. I come to find out he knew nothing about the Bible or Jesus, and when I say nothing... I mean nothing!

That week I buy him a Bible, to give at our next event. It was during that event that Water wanted to surrender his life to Jesus. Water wasn't entirely convinced at this point but in his words, "I feel what you have told me is true." The Holy Spirit was working on Water's heart all week. It was during our weekly meetings that I learned Water was raised in the Buddhist faith, but not a nominal Buddhist, he was trained to be a meditation mentor.



Water, with Pastor Aaron.

The weeks went by as we compared Christianity to Buddhism, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, Water came to an understanding of who Jesus is and why he needs to follow after him. This was evident when he went home for Christmas back to Thailand. On his return when we met, the first thing he told me was, "I think I made other people Christians?" I asked him what he meant, and he replied, "Well I shared with them what happened to me and what you told me Jesus did and they said they wanted to know more about Jesus too!" Praise be to God!

I write this update with a heavy but joyful heart, as Water has been recently moved from Drumheller to Langley, BC. We chatted before he left and he reassured me that he would not give up on Christianity. This brought joy to my heart. I told him once he got settled I would help him find a church to get plugged into. Again, God showed his faithfulness to Water and placed him with new host parents who in Water's words are, "Faithful Baptists, so I'll be okay!"

When he told me that I couldn't help but think that the *Hound of Heaven* is sure tracking Water down. God is after him, and the battle, as you all know, is not over. Please pray that God continues to lead and guide Water into his wonderful presence! Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I pray it brings you joy!

- Aaron Visser – Associate Pastor, Drumheller



Mission involvement in a New Way

Although Crossfield Baptist has had a long and deep interest in missions, and although we have engaged in a number of short-term missions projects, one of our elders had a novel idea as we talked about our next short-term mission project. Why not get advice from some career missionaries? Advice from experienced people... it sounded almost Biblical.

We are very glad we followed this elders' suggestion because our newest project has benefitted immensely from the advice of Phil Webb and Rod Black, career missionaries to Colombia and Pakistan respectively. They had important insights and convictions about short-term missions based on long experience. For example, they suggested that building relationships between our people and those we are helping was important and to that end the project ought to be a five year commitment and that we send smaller teams more often and some people quite often. They also suggested that we work with a church in our target area. After some prayer, thinking, and scouting, we committed to helping a sister church in Medellin plant a new church in an area next to them, called Copacabana. They suggested that we go in as helpers, doing what *they* think needs to be done, and not as if we are in charge.

Phil and Rod also suggested that we raise the bar for what we expect of those who go on short-term missions. Mission tourism is not the way to go and neither should missions be looked upon as a means of rescuing our troubled teenagers. We need to send, for the most part, our best. Short-term missions, they said, should be part of discipleship within the church. To that end we are developing a plan that will require team members to meet together eight times in order to journey together in discipleship. They will share meals together, read and discuss a relevant book, practice obedience-based Bible study together on a relevant theme, create their own plan for practicing spiritual habits (like Bible reading, prayer, and engagement in church life), learn to talk with each other about their journeys, pray together ("If they don't pray together before they go they will not do so on the field") practice Spanish, do a ministry project at our church as a team in order to become a team, learn the skills and create the materials they will use for their particular project.

Finally, they suggested that we look at this as a reciprocal relationship and assume we can learn from those in Colombia. To that end we are hosting six of the Colombia team in May. They will meet our people and be in our homes. They will lead a service and share their insights with smaller groups of people. And we will become attached to them.

We believe that we are doing short-term missions much better now and that this will become part of the DNA of our church for years. We hope it will produce a heart for missions, encourage and further discipleship, help us have a broader view of Christian faith and practice through our connection with Colombians and perhaps help people discover their calling to missions.



Pastor Dave with Medellin church planters.

- Dave Wiebe – Lead Pastor, Crossfield



When people pray, how will God answer?

It started off an ordinary Friday, but didn't stay that way! The coach of the local hockey team asked if he could bring around one of his team members who wanted to be baptized. I invited him to come around so we could talk about it. The coach clearly has a heart for God and recognized the integrity of the young player. "He's the nicest guy you could ever want to meet. And he believes in God." He encouraged him to be baptized—"it was the right thing to do". They had already been to another church that practices baptism by sprinkling, but gave up because of all the red tape. Did God put the block in their way? He led them to Edson Baptist Church.

The coach felt he qualified for baptism because he was such a good kid. I explained that there are conditions: he needed to be born again. That opened the door to share the gospel, and the need for his name to be written in the Book of Life. He soon learnt the difference between "being good" and being born of the Spirit and readily asked the Holy Spirit to come into his heart. I asked him after praying that prayer, what he had experienced. He couldn't describe it, he said. "Something happened. Something left me". He had experienced in a tangible way how the burden of guilt had rolled off.

I encouraged him to share what had happened with his teammates, but the coach was dubious. "Things can be brutal in the locker room if someone stands out as different", he explained. He wanted a low-key baptism, just the three of us. We agreed on a Saturday baptism with just a handful of witnesses, maybe three or four. When I met the coach again a week later he said the entire club staff planned to attend. During the two-week wait, God was clearly working and by the time the baptismal date arrived, the entire team showed up. They wanted to support their colleague. A handful from the church came to support the event and the attendance ended up around 50. God had arranged for a whole congregation to hear a clear presentation of the gospel of salvation!

This was the start of a new relationship. The coach said he expected there would be a repeat with other players. He also said he knew where to send people on his team for counseling when needed from time to time. He asked if I would be willing to give a word of encouragement and a send-off prayer when they leave on a tour. Would I ever? How wondrously God has been working in response to the prayers of his people.

The whole church got excited and in reciprocal support the Youth team plan to attend the next hockey game and spur them on—to victory.

- Harald Froise, Interim Lead Pastor, Edson

