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BETWEEN THE PEWS

THE LORD WATCHES OVER THE FOREIGNER *an update by Inglewood’s Refugee Sponsorship Committee*

September 2, 2016 marked the first anniversary of the tragic death of three-year-old, Alan Kurdi, whose small body washed up on the Turkish shores as his family attempted to reach the Greek Island of Kos.

The refugee crisis sparked a wave of outrage and compassion throughout the world and many promises were made to do more for the resettlement of refugees. Since November of last year, Canada has resettled over 30,000 refugees. About 11,000 of those were welcomed through private sponsorships, a uniquely Canadian program that includes sponsors from faith-based communities, ethno-cultural groups, settlement organizations, and groups of individuals. These sponsors provide refugees with financial support and settlement assistance for one year after their arrival.

As a response to the worldwide crisis, ICRC formed a Refugee Sponsorship Committee with the specific mandate to investigate the application process and to coordinate the sponsorship needs of two families. This was no easy task. The Canadian Council for Refugees report recent changes that make it difficult to sponsor non-Syrian refugees. These changes include burdensome paperwork and very slow processing of applicants, especially those from Africa. This is disconcerting news for one of our two families, who are waiting in Burundi. These three brothers—Salvator, Patrick,

and Kevin—have been victims of much violence and warfare, and yet in all likelihood they will have to wait four years before setting foot in this country.

This process has been humbling and rewarding in so many ways. When we quickly realized it would take much more support than a committee of eight people, the congregation responded with kindness and generosity. Over 30 families signed our sheet ready to help with the resettlement process and \$10,000 was generously donated to help support refugees once they arrive in Canada.

In our opening meeting last May, Pastor John read Psalm 146. In verses 1 and 9 the psalmist says: “Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, my soul. The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.” May God watch over the 60 million refugees worldwide and be especially close to the three brothers from Burundi, waiting for their application to come through.

Latest update: We just received the wonderful news that the application for the Syrian couple we are helping to sponsor financially, alongside The River and Ebenezer CRC, has been approved! Samaan and Rima will immigrate to Canada within one to three months! Praise the Lord! May the preparations leading up to their settlement go well.

by Martine Ooms



INGLEWOOD OUTREACH

The Outreach Committee was focused on two programs this past year. One program was the Neighborhood Table, a twice monthly free nutritious meal served in the Inglewood Community league on Monday evenings. This dinner project developed after a successful six-week summer pilot project in the summer of 2015 which was designed to reduce hunger, promote healthy eating, and improve mental health.

Dinners were funded through a grant from the City of Edmonton, the Outreach committee budget, private donations, and the Edmonton Food Bank. While many people worked together to make it happen, including 12 community partners, many of the regular volunteers who cooked and served were from Inglewood CRC.

Statistics were collected and indicated that the project provided 2454 meals in the past year in the Inglewood community. Statistics were also gathered about the nutritional and health effects of this program. More than sixty percent of respondents indicated they had learned about healthy food choices, and fifty percent felt they were choosing healthier food for themselves and their families. Statistics on mental and emotional health were gathered as well. More than ninety percent of attendees reported better mental and emotional health because of attendance at the Neighborhood Table. Almost fifty percent felt less lonely and felt good about meeting other people from their community. Statistics gathered also indicated many people are interested in participating in a health and wellness talking circle; that is a future direction we hope can be incorporated in future dinners.

A large percentage of the participants were of Aboriginal heritage, and many people were regular attenders. Refugee and new Canadian population were joining in increasing numbers. Many families came, often urged to attend by their children.

The Neighborhood Table project had their last dinner in August of this year, and is currently evaluating the future and looking for more leadership. The feedback received from the community indicated that the food was greatly appreciated; people loved the community of getting together and meeting their neighbors; believed their mental health had improved; and felt they could feed their families better with the extra food they received.

This project was initially feeding 50 to 60 people in the fall of 2015, and recently was feeding 120 or 130 people. It is felt that to make this project sustainable, it would be best to seek out a kitchen facilitator who could be paid through an honorarium. The plan is to invite interested groups and people to get together to plan for future dinners, with the goal to continue the dinners and build meaningful relationships with Inglewood residents.

The second Outreach initiative was the second annual soccer camp partnering with Athletes in Action at the Inglewood community soccer fields. We hosted more than 40 children including quite a number from the neighborhood. Several immigrant families sent their children to participate. We were able to provide snacks and lunches to the group, and there was always enough to feed the other children in the park. We were very grateful for the enthusiastic athletes and volunteers who participated.

by Judy VanderVinne

Inglewood CRC / Athletes in Action Soccer Camp



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LGBTQ+ CONVERSATION

I walked into the crowded room where I saw people who I didn't know and they didn't know me. It is a little warm, my palms started to sweat...I am here now I should find a seat. I purposefully come late so I wouldn't have to talk with anyone before it starts but now I have to find a seat. What if I sit down and people are cruel again or worse they ignore me again? I am not going to share anything until I hear from everyone else. I don't have the strength to hold in the tears this time if I am put down publicly again. I'll just listen and wait to see what people think of other people like me. I told myself I would never put myself in a position like this again yet here I am hoping, praying that I find a faith community that can help me grow in Christ and set aside the fact that I am gay. I am so overwhelmed with figuring out what this means for me. Believe me I have spent so much time thinking and praying and reading about this that I really need someone to listen to me without judgement. I don't want to talk about that tonight...oh I hope that doesn't happen today. I am really hoping to get to know some people, have them get to know me and...okay here we go the conversation is starting, the first person is talking. I hold my breath...

A local CRC denominational conversation on care of LGBTQ persons us held Sept 11, 2016. There were eighty-five people who participated in small group discussions as well as ten local pastors and lay people facilitating small groups. We worshiped together with our brothers and sisters who are LGBTQ, parents with children who are LGBTQ, leaders, and interested CRC members.



People listened to varied viewpoints but focused on what we have in common and how we can care well for people among us who identify as LGBTQ. We reflected on personal experiences of belonging and exclusion. We discussed questions like how are we already caring well for our brothers and sisters and what are the opportunities to do better?

Some of the comments made by participants about how the event was helpful included:

“Being able to talk openly in an accepting environment.”

“Sitting around a table. Being challenged to sit with people that I didn't know. Not necessarily sitting at a table with like-minded people – that's the body of Christ!”

“Listening to the other table members' thoughts, ideas and opinions.”

“Being able to openly discuss the issues of the LGBTQ community and sexual orientation”

Phew...that wasn't so bad, in fact I felt listened to and I heard a genuine desire and need to have more of these open and respectful conversations. Mmm, maybe I'll even come back sometime soon.

If you wish to know more or want to be involved in having more of these types of conversations at Inglewood CRC feel free to come talk with Tricia Boonstra, Amy Nydam or Geoff Vande Kuyt.

By Tricia Boonstra

COMMUNITY IN HIKING

I love hiking. Ask any of my friends, and I'm sure they'll tell you I've driven them crazy with more than a story or two about a hike my husband and I have done. I spend my free time planning the next trip to the mountains, wearing our hiking books out just to find the perfect trail.

I've suffered blisters in my boots, and ruined the handles on my hiking poles. I've created a monster—but I like to think it's a good kind of monster. So when we were approached to take a group of our fellow church members for a weekend of hiking, how could we say no? Here was the perfect opportunity to create more monsters, people crazed with the need to stand on top of the world, literally, or stand at the edge of a lake, embraced in the arms of a magnificent mountain.



We'd hike a couple of trails, inhale the scent of pine deep into our lungs, and stand at the bottom of a canyon. What more could I ask for? The truth is, I got so much more. Yes,

as expected, we enjoyed the challenge of a couple of trails, and breathed in the beauty of the mountains. We celebrated everyone's accomplishments, having completed the trail of the day, blisters and all. But what I hadn't expected was to share a laugh sitting next to a young member of our group at the campfire, or share a meal with one of our more "mature" members. I hadn't expected to have so much fun playing a game with people who I normally only see sitting across the aisle in the pew.

The fellowship we shared at the campground was really the highlight of the weekend. Getting to know my church family was the real reward, the icing on the cake. Who will I get to know next year?

by Helen Versluys

INGLEWOOD'S HIKING TRIP TO KANANASKIS



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LA AVISPA: OF EVALUATIONS AND VISITS

For the past four years Inglewood CRC and La Avispa in Honduras have had a special, mutually-growing relationship. In 2012 a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was created between Inglewood CRC, La Avispa, and World Renew (WR), and an agreement was made to review the progress of the relationship in five years' time. The review would help to determine whether the objectives of each partner were met, as well as to decide whether this partnership would continue for another period of time. This review would also include a three-part evaluation that included a meeting with members of the La Avispa community to hear how they viewed our partnership; asking the participants in the five Inglewood teams how the preparations, team work, and actual time in the village impacted their faith, lives, and views; and asking the Inglewood congregation what impact this has had on the ministry of the church.



Parts one and two of the evaluation have now been completed. Some members of the 2016 team, a translator, WR staff, and two staff from Diaconia met on two separate occasions with La Avispa community members, beginning with those who were beneficiaries of a floor, pila, or a latrine. Next we met with people in community leadership: church, water board, community administration, school board, medical services, infrastructure, and representatives in various other roles. The questions were both general and specific, such as "What are some significant values in La Avispa?"; "What are some of the opportunities and challenges of La Avispa?"; and "How has ICRC's involvement made a difference for you

personally or for your family?" The answers were spontaneous, passionate, heartfelt, and emotional, which left the interview team with gratitude for the relationships that have become real and deep. The discussion first and foremost revealed the people's great love and faith in God and their dependence on Him, and second revealed the special love and relationship that has developed with Inglewood church and their representative teams. The meeting with the community leaders was no less inspiring, giving gratitude to God for all the blessings they see because of the partnership.

Part two was a questionnaire given to all the members of Inglewood teams from 2012 to 2016. While the answers revealed a variety of experiences, gratitude was expressed for the opportunity to serve; to learn; for real and personal relationships that have developed; for reciprocal understanding of each other's culture; and for a realization that under the canopy of God's great love, we all are called to love Him, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Another part of our MOU was to create an opportunity whereby people from La Avispa could come to visit the Inglewood community, observe and participate in our daily lives, and see the ministries in which we are engaged. The idea will soon become a reality when Pastor Nelson Salinas of the Cristiana Reformada de Honduras, Arturo Colindres of Diaconia Nacional, and Rolando Pinzon of World Renew Honduras will come to Edmonton. We are truly grateful to God that the plans are falling into place and for all that has come of this wonderful relationship between Inglewood CRC and La Avispa.

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by Henry Bosch

BULLDOGS & AIRSTREAMS REACHING BEYOND OURSELVES

Over the past couple of weeks I had a chance to get away on some weekends to play in the weird subculture of the dog show. This isn't a new hobby. Prior to coming to Inglewood eight years ago we had boxers, who died in our first couple of years in Alberta and after a couple of years with no dogs, we got our first bulldog - Priscilla. I'm not sure when or even how I got interested in showing purebred dogs, and I recognize its a weird sport. When Miranda and I started with it we had no kids and the dogs were a giant part of our lives. Often weekends were filled up with driving for hours, dressing up nicer than I do for church and running dogs around a ring for 20 minutes each day - absolutely ridiculous. Over the past couple of years I have re-entered into this crazy world with our bulldogs.

Since moving to Edmonton camping has become something that has grabbed our attention - although reluctantly. I never really thought that hanging out in a tent, not showering for days and trying to find "facilities" in the woods as enjoyable. A couple years ago we bought our first tent trailer, upgraded to a small teardrop trailer and finally got interested in giant tin cans known as Airstreams.



Both these hobbies have allowed me to build friendships with people that have similar interests. Dog show people are cut from a different type of fabric and can sit around for hours talking about all sorts of dog related topics. Airstream people are just as

weird - from online forums, to massive Airstream only camping get aways - the community of both these groups is impressive and I think that is what grabs my interest. Working in the church, and even being part of a church community has often hindered my friendship pool. I found early on that it is easy to get comfortable in "the bubble of church life" - and even though that is where my primary community is found, my ability to connect with people outside of "the Christian Church" was difficult and was slowly disappearing.

This month we are talking about outreach at Inglewood and how that plays a role in our lives - I ran across this verse again in Romans and it seems to fit with my hopes and desires with my Bulldogs and Airstreams and connecting to friends who don't know Christ or the church. Reaching out requires you to know people outside of the walls of the church and to be a blessing to who God brings into your life.

"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you."
Romans 12:1-2 - The Message

INGLEWOOD SUMMER SER- VICE TRIPS



This past summer we had two teams go out to do service work in Fort Defiance, Arizona and Bellflower, California. Both trips challenged students to serve others, connect with old and new friends and to explore their faith. Please continue to pray for these students as they continue to serve at home.