

NEWSLETTER 23

May 2011

We have now returned home after three wonderful months in Midway, BC in the beautiful Boundary Country. Midway is 'midway' between the Pacific coast and the Rockie Mountains; 'midway' between Osoyoos and Grand Forks, ~ 500km from Vancouver. Gold was discovered in that area about 100 years ago so Midway became famous for the Kettle Valley Railway line that started there (Mile 0) on its way to Hope where it linked up with the main line. Many thousands of people lived there then but now it is a quiet little town of ~ 500, boasting a magnificent ice hockey arena and a curling rink – and Boundary Community Church, formerly a Mennonite church plant but now morphed into a community church.

Pastor Mark needed a sabbatical leave so I was invited to look after the church and to mentor the young youth pastor Mike, and his wife Netta. I had known them both when they had lived in Victoria. This was the first time for us to live in the countryside since arriving in Canada in 1975, so it was quite a new experience. We lived comfortably in the pastor's home while he spent the latter half of his sabbatical with his family in our Victoria home. I preached each Sunday and taught a weekly Bible Study, attended some 'refocussing seminars' presented by the Mennonite Church and mentored the young couple. The latter was an exciting time as both of them were eager to learn, so for two sessions of ~2 hours each week, I met with Mike and, when she was not teaching at a local school, I met with Netta. The former mentoring was for all things pastoral but the latter was mainly concerning leading worship. I was so pleased as I watched their progress, particularly when Netta led what Anne and I considered to be the "best worship time we have experienced in the last eighteen years"! She truly led us into the presence of God.

The pastoral highlight of my time there, was "The Turkey Club" each Sunday morning at 7am when, with 5/6 other men I attended a prayer meeting. Several of the church members owned farms or small holdings, high up in the hills, several kms of rough roads being driven to get there. It was necessary to have a 4-wheel drive to manipulate the snow-covered road each week. Here we woke up with a strong coffee before getting down to the real business of prayer.

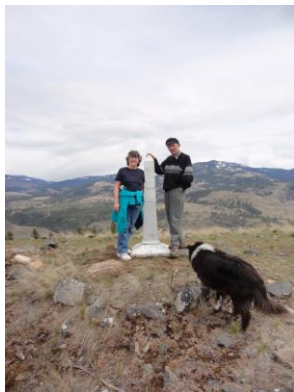
There were lots of visits to members' homes for fellowship and good meals, where we became aware of the many different personalities that made up the church. When Pastor Mark and Chris returned, we stayed on two weeks more, as he had requested I stay to mentor him on his return. I had the privilege of doing so several times, a couple of which were in the company of two other pastors from that area, with whom Mark has a good relationship. One really saw the need for pastors in such small communities to have someone to mentor them on a regular basis, or good elders to support them and hold them accountable in their work. Our last two weeks were spent at the home of Norman and Kris, both now considered as special friends. He is a local president for the Teachers' Union, and a very interesting man - remember I was once a teacher.

Easter Weekend all three churches joined together – an excellent 'seder supper' was held at Christ the King Pentecostal church on Thursday, led by its pastor Rick, a sunrise service was led by Pastor Paul on the mountainside, followed by the Sunday morning service which Paul led and at which Mark spoke. You can hear his message on my links page. I was thrilled to be asked to sing a duet with Paul at that service.

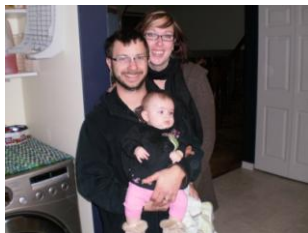
There was little to do for entertainment but relax and read – or climb the local mountains which I did often. My first trip was with Len, up through the snow on the north side of the valley. “We wont be able to do this when the snow has gone as the grass with bear many ‘ticks’, blood suckers that are hard to detach” Len told me, and then he added “and the rattle snakes will be everywhere after that!” There are, however, some magnificent trails through the tree-clad mountainside on the south side of the valley, some of which lead right to the 49th parallel – the USA border. On one occasion Anne even ventured to walk with me, as slow as she wished, eventually succeeding in reaching the top. I was so proud of her!

Now we are back home waiting for the next telephone call or letter ‘from the Lord’ indicating where He wishes to lead us next. I was reading today from Numbers 10 how the Children of Israel would only move when the cloud of God’s Presence moved. That is my philosophy of ministry. I will onle go when and where He leads. I see so many believers rushing about ‘doing God’s work’ with little evidence of the Lord’s leading or anointing (presence). It is so fulfilling being in His hands – “I do not know what the future holds but I know who holds the future”.

Gareth



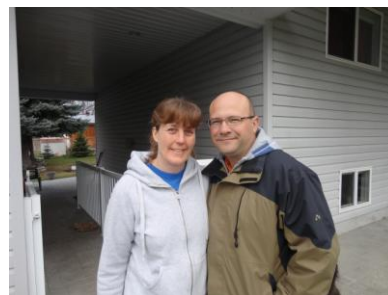
At the summit border with Norm & Kris’ dog, Ty.



Mike & Netta with Isabela



The Turkey Club



Pr Mark & Chris

