

Our Stories September 30, 2020

Bergthal Mennonite Church

What does a church do when they haven't met in person since the middle of March due to a pandemic and now it's July? You bring in a Pastoral Intern! **Steve Guigovaz** and his family have been attending Bergthal Mennonite Church for just over 2 years and he had approached Pastor Anna-Lisa Salo about doing his internship with us as part of his Pastoral Ministry studies.

Since starting his internship Steve has created a 6 sermon series on the excuses we use to avoid answering God's call, participated in one funeral and visited as many congregation members as possible either by phone or in person to better understand their views on church and pastors. Pastoring in the midst of a pandemic means thinking outside the box so he's presented one sermon by audio and one sermon by video. Steve and Anna-Lisa meet once a week to discuss what he's learning and observations he has made. "He's made me think and look at things differently; it's been a very good experience" Anna-Lisa says. We are grateful Steve was able to take time from his busy schedule of class work, interning and parenting to answer a few questions about his experience.

What/where are you studying? I am currently in my final year at Prairie Bible College in Three Hills, where I am studying Pastoral Ministry.

What was your first surprise about Alberta when you moved here. When we moved to Alberta, the first thing that struck me was how long the sun stays out in the summer. When we lived in Ontario, we used to tell the kids that they had to go to sleep when the sun goes to "sleep", but that didn't work as well in Alberta when the sun would be up well after 9:00pm. I remember it getting late one night, and the kids were arguing with us that the sun was still up, so they didn't need to go to sleep. So, we had to change our

strategy and tell them that was an “Ontario” rule. In Alberta, they needed to be in bed by 8:00pm, even if the sun is still “awake”.

How do you see God working in what you are doing right now? God has really given me a great opportunity to do my internship in the church at a time when things are not “normal.” I believe that this has allowed me to be able to meet with people at a time when they are deeply craving connection and fellowship, which has led to some amazing conversations. I have loved hearing the hearts of the people, and have been so grateful for their willingness to share their hearts with me. Every time I meet with someone, I can just sense God at work in the conversation, not only in how people talk to me, but in how I listen to people. He has shown me so many things through my conversations. Also, I have to say, that I have been amazed at how people have received the sermons that I have had the pleasure of delivering on Sundays. I am often very nervous on Sundays when I have to speak, but it is all worth it when I see that God has used the message to really speak to someone's heart. There is nothing more joyful for me than to see God at work in someone's life, and to be able to be even a small part of that work is so humbling and rewarding.

What do you hope to learn during this time? The biggest thing that I am hoping to learn is how to engage with the congregation on a personal level, and to discern how God has been at work in each of their lives both individually, and corporately. I know that one day God will entrust a group of His people under my care, and I never want to lose sight of the fact that these are HIS people. He has been at work in their lives, in the community and in the church long before I came along, and I want to partner with Him in what He is already doing. I believe one of the jobs of a pastor is to help the people to discern what God is trying to do in them and through them, and then to partner with Him in “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). This requires an ability to sit with people, pray with them, ask them questions and really listen to them and to the Spirit at work. Active listening is a discipline that I am really trying to work on, and this internship has really helped me to do that. I am eternally grateful to the people at Bergthal Mennonite Church for their willingness to grant me this opportunity, and to God for how He has worked in my life during this time.