

Our History

History of the Bonnyville Baptist Church - Last updated August 2009

The beginning of the Bonnyville Baptist Church began in July of 1979 when Pastor Art Hoehne, with his wife Ella and family moved from Fort Chipewyan to the Bonnyville area under the auspices of the Fellowship Baptist Home Missions program to plant a church in this area. Soon after their arrival, preparations for the first service began, including a pamphlet blitz on the town welcoming them to the soon to be held church services, and a float in the Annual Rodeo Parade in early August. In fact the main attraction of the float was preserved as a table top which is still used in the church today. The following day, August 5, 1979 the first service of the Bonnyville Baptist Church was held. The facility was the Agriplex and 12 people were in attendance; by the end of the month 49 were attending. Sunday School classes commenced on September 2, 1979 and the Lord's work of ministering to the small community of Bonnyville, then with a population of 3500, began in earnest.

Steady growth and a realization that services could not continue indefinitely at the Agriplex sent Art Hoehne and others from the church in search of a place of our own. With prayerful supplication the Lord directed them to an old church building in the summer of 1980. The price was right, four years rent would be the cost of renovating the condemned building to code standards. With hard work, which included hauling mud and rock out of the basement by hand, and the Lord's grace, all work was satisfactorily completed by October of that year. The dedication of the "new" Bonnyville Baptist Church at 4812 - 52 Avenue was held on November 16, 1980. A small congregation of ten families were present to celebrate the Lord's provision of labour and money to see the job through.

During the next three years our church's growth was slow and oft times frustrating. One factor contributing to this was employment in the area was not stable and the promised influx of people with the oil patch never materialized. Nevertheless, church work and services continued to be steadily provided and church membership remained constant at 5 active members. Renovations continued on the old church building on 52 Avenue and the building was finally purchased from the owners in early 1983.

Praise, prayers, great hopes, and disappointments were all part of the Bonnyville Baptist Church legacy during the years of 1984 - 1989; but it was all part of God's perfect craftsmanship in molding us for the future. Growth continued for the church, albeit slowly at first, but the Lord steadily continued to change lives in Bonnyville and bring people to the doors of our little church. In fact, by early 1989 it was realized that the "old" church was not big enough for regular Sunday morning services and this fact once again led the leadership of the church to look for an alternate place of worship. The Lord graciously answered this prayer in the form of the Parent Child Centre and on November 19, 1989 after a grand outdoor march from the 52 Avenue church to the Parent Child Centre, Sunday School Classes and Sunday Services began. Although change is sometimes difficult, the switch to the Centre for Sunday mornings was also an exciting period in the history of the Bonnyville Baptist Church. Not only was it now possible to have separate classrooms for the Sunday School, but it was joyfully obvious that the Lord was greatly increasing our numbers and the additional space at the Centre now provided us with opportunity to invite even more friends and family to church.

The move to the Parent Child Centre was also another indication that the Bonnyville Baptist Church was now able to be a self-supporting church and it was with great joy and faith that pastor Hoehne was able to go off the Home Missions grant in January, 1990. This move was a time of tremendous growth for our church.

And the Lord was only just beginning to prepare Bonnyville Baptist for better and challenging service. In June of 1990, just months after commencing Sunday Services at the Centre, our church was offered a prime location for a church building. The prospect of a new, larger building of our own was exciting but it would not be possible to build it in the foreseeable future. But the Lord is able! Within a few days of the land offer, Bonnyville Baptist was approached by Fellowship Project ‘91 to be considered as the fourth in a series of churches that would be built with financial aid and volunteer help all contributed by associate Fellowship Baptist Churches! The Lord was leading and the prospect of our own new facility with adequate room for all our needs was exciting. The road to church building was not without its tense moments and frustration and eleventh hour sale of our old building, but the Lord went ever faithfully ahead, providing for the needs as they arose. The maturing of our church was evident during this time of preparation, fully ready and able to accept the fiscal responsibilities and the technical challenges to get a project of this magnitude off the ground.

What excitement there was in Bonnyville on the week of May 28 - June 6, 1992. Volunteers from Ontario to British Columbia converged at Bonnyville Baptist early Sunday morning to dedicate their energy and enthusiasm to the Lord's service in building our new church. The hub bub at the corner of 43 Avenue and 41 Street did not cease until early Sunday, June 7, 1992. Amidst drywall dust and aching bones, a hundred and fifty plus voices were lifted in praise to our Lord who was able to accomplish what many in the community thought impossible. What an awesome God we have!!

The Lord continued to do great things at Bonnyville Baptist Church. By October of 1995, our church building was 99%

completed and had undergone a couple of minor renovations. The Lord continued to bless us and increase our numbers. Sunday morning services usually saw approximately 130 worshipping with us and our membership had grown to 36 active members. In fact, we had grown to the point where a building fund was established to make changes to our facilities to accommodate our large and growing Sunday School classes.

In the fall of 1996, we had the pleasure of welcoming Shane Adam and his wife Arleen as a student (intern) pastor. In concert with completing his internship, Shane was added to our staff for a period of four months in 1997.

Our blessed Pastor Hoehne and his gracious and loving wife, Ella, continued to serve us with diligence and compassion until their retirement in August of 1997. They left a lasting impression on the community of Bonnyville and area. We thank the Lord for their selfless service, for their visions for our church and personal growth and for their dedication to see all these things accomplished in the Lord's name and for his glory.

Over the next few months as the Pulpit Search and Supply Committee sought a new Pastor, the Lord continued to bless and provide for us, as Pastor John Bonham, and then Pastor Glen Richardson ministered to us as interim pastors.

In the winter of 1997, Reverend Robert Adam and his wonderful wife, Diane, accepted the call to be our new Pastor. Their arrival in May of 1998 was anticipated with much eagerness on the part of the entire congregation of Bonnyville Baptist Church. The vision they had for our church, the love and dedication with which they served our Lord became more evident day by day and we thank our Lord for the time they spent ministering to us. We were greatly saddened when Pastor Rob resigned in June of 2003.

Our church family pressed forward and we completed a major addition to our facility in 2003-2004 doubling our square footage and adding sufficient space to our sanctuary to seat 300+. God was faithful to us during this time without a pastor and blessed us with speakers each Sunday.

In December of 2004, we were excited and happy to have Pastor Harald and Marjorie Froise begin their ministry with us. Their passion for evangelism is greatly appreciated and we look forward to what God will do through them and the Bonnyville Baptist Church in the years ahead.

In February of 2006, we added a part-time Director of Children's Ministries, Gianne Stover, to our staff and in July started Camp Shekinah - one week of summer camp for 8 to 11 year olds and one week for teens, using the Moose Lake Baptist Bible Camp facility.

In June of 2007, we successfully completed our search for an Associate Pastor to focus on our Youth Ministry with Morgan Allen accepting the call. Morgan and his wife, Joelle, were with us for the summer and began their full-time ministry with us in January of 2008. We are very much looking forward to the enthusiasm, energy and love for God that they have to bring to their ministry with us.

In June of 2007 the church also approved the board's recommendation to commence searching for another Associate Pastor - to focus on Adult Ministries.

In January of 2008, Pastor Harald gave one year notice that he would resigning and the search for a new senior pastor began. With successful completion of the search with Dr. David McClain accepting the call to be our new Senior Pastor, Pastor Harald retired the end of May 2009.

Pastor David and Vaunda McClain arrived in late July and he began his ministry with us August 1st. We are looking forward to the direction he will lead us in as we continue to fulfill our Lord's commission to reach people for Christ.

We are averaging 150 at our morning worship services. At time of writing, we have 71 active members.

God's hand has been at every turn of Bonnyville Baptist Church's growth over the past twenty-eight years and our growth as a church certainly is not at an end. We still have years of joyful service as well as growing pains ahead of us. Let us be humbly mindful that God has been our faithful provider and keeper constantly preparing the way. Let these reminders be as a heritage to us in the years to come so that the Lord will always find us joyfully ready to do His work both in and through the Bonnyville Baptist Church.

Now unto him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.
Ephesians 3:20-21