



THE PARK BENCH

The magazine of Oak Park Church of Christ | December 2024

**WHY WE SERVE:
COMMUNION TEAM**
PAGE 2

**REFLECTIONS ON
THE CROSS**
PAGE 4



WHY WE SERVE: COMMUNION TEAM.



by Shane and Rhonda Free

The Communion Team prepares communion (breaks up the crackers, fills the trays with communion cups, pours the grape juice) before service and cleans up after. This is a behind-the-scenes ministry, but a very important one. The more volunteers we have, the less frequently each individual or couple is scheduled.

Shane and I have been a part of this team for a very long time. When our kids were little, they used to help us; they especially liked to carry the trays to the table – they are 29, 27 and 25 now! At some point many years ago, we stepped up to lead this team, which involves finding members of the congregation to help out, training new members, creating the schedule, communicating with the team as needed, and ordering supplies. Currently we have a great team of seven couples.

We have been deeply fulfilled and blessed by leading this team. Here are a few of the main reasons why we choose to serve on this team:

1. **Spiritual Growth:** Being part of the Communion Team allows us to engage more intimately with our faith and the sacrament of communion, deepening our understanding and appreciation of its significance.
2. **Community Connection:** It's a wonderful way to connect with other members of the congregation, fostering a sense of community and belonging.
3. **Service to Others:** Helping to prepare communion is an act of service that allows us to support our church family and contribute to the worship experience.
4. **Shared Purpose:** Working with others who share our beliefs can create a strong bond and enhance our sense of purpose within the church.
5. **Personal Reflection:** The act of serving communion can offer moments for personal reflection and gratitude, helping us to focus on the spiritual aspects of our life.

Overall, it's a way to express our faith while actively participating in the life of our church community.

If you would like to be part of our team, please reach out to us:

403-701-8590 or freerhondam@gmail.com.



LESSONS, LEARNING, AND LOVE.

By Ethan Le
Community Tutoring
Student



I first learned about the Community Tutoring at Oak Park Church of Christ a few years ago through a friend of a friend who attended the church and knew one of the tutors volunteering there. They told me it was a great program to check out if I had struggles with anything in school or was interested in boosting my academics for free, and that it was run by great leaders who are also teachers, Kenzie and Laura.

Interested, I registered online. When I showed up for my very first session, the tutors showed me

I have learned from the volunteers' generosity and service how to better serve my friends and peers.

and my peers so much love right from when we walked through the doors! The environment was so welcoming and comfortable. Everyone on the tutoring team is very generous in committing their time to benefit students' education,

practicing patience and diligence while working with the students.

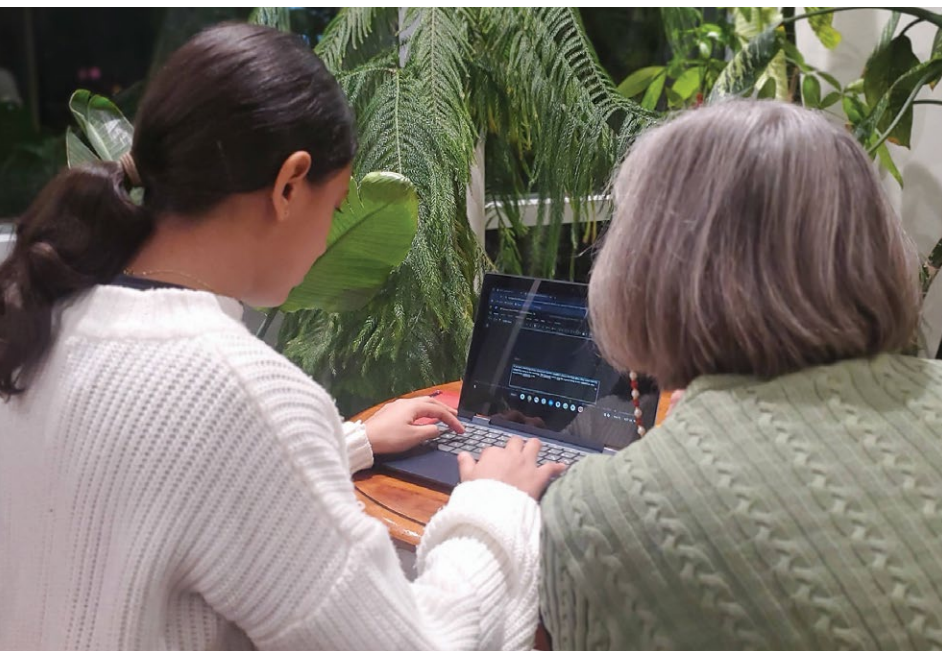
I have been attending Community Tutoring at Oak Park Church of Christ almost every Thursday for the last 3.5 years, because the tutoring program both Kenzie and Laura set up has been incredible! Since attending, I have seen improvement in my grades and I have become more inspired to learn with the help and knowledge of the tutors, who motivate me to study and work with my best efforts. I have not only been able to increase my knowledge and overall understanding of topics in school, but I have also learned from the volunteers' generosity and service how to better serve my friends and peers.

To this day I am very grateful for the free tutoring program provided at Oak Park and the nourishing environment it offers.

Oak Park Community Tutoring is a program built from the calling to share our gifts and talents with others. We are a team of educators and bright minds who are excited to share our love of learning with others. This is a free program for those who might not otherwise be able to access weekly tutoring, where we gather together to help with learning in a safe and welcoming environment.

Registration is on a week-by-week basis and must be done at oakpark.ca/tutoring (by the Wednesday before tutoring). We tutor every Thursday from 6-6:45 (for Grades 1-6) and 6-7:30pm (for Grades 7-12), and new tutoring registrations are always welcome. Come check us out.

We are always looking for more educators, so if you would like to be part of our team, please contact Kenzie Rushton: kcrushton@shaw.ca



REFLECTIONS ON + THE + CROSSES


BY FREEK VAN DEN BEUKEL

My name is Freek (“Frake”) van den Beukel. I was born in 1982 in the Netherlands, and I moved to Canada in 2005 for a cute and special girl named Jessie, who I met at a Bible school in Germany. Jessie had been attending Oak Park since her childhood, so when I came here, I joined her at Oak Park. In 2020, we moved away to become the facility managers at Pine Lake Christian Camp; I also run a small business called VDB Woodcraft Ltd, specializing in custom cabinetry and interior finishing. My wife Jessie and I are both artists. We are happily married and have three young sons, Benjamin, Reece and Caspar.

Throughout my life, art and music have been a powerful way that God communicates to me. It is through painting and hearing worship music that I really connect with God’s Holy Spirit. I know it is God, because there is overflowing joy and life there, and He is the Creator. In the same way, I try to testify of God through my art and the things I build. I’m not a great speaker or social butterfly, but by creating beautiful things, I hope to communicate something about God and bring a bit of beauty and hope into people’s lives.

When I made the wooden crosses for Oak Park (one above the fireplace and one on the communion table), my main thought was to illustrate that Jesus made His sacrifice for everyone. The crosses are made up of different solid woods, including maple, mahogany, walnut and white oak, and so they represent the different races and types of people in the world – salvation is available for everyone! Together we make up humankind, and He has made a way for us all to be His people (Romans 9:25-26).





ROMANS 9:25-26

25 As he says in Hosea:

“I will call them
‘my people’ who are
not my people;
and I will call her
‘my loved one’ who is
not my loved one,”

26 and,

“In the very place where
it was said to them,
‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called
‘children of the living
God.’ ”



MISSIONS FOCUS: PIONEER BIBLE TRANSLATORS

Does God speak your language?

“We are so blessed to have the Word of God in our own language.” Millions of people around the world can say this sentence, especially those who speak English, French, Mandarin, Swahili, German, Indonesian, or one of the many other so called “world languages”.



by Norm Weatherhead

And for those of us who speak English, we have the privilege of being able to read the Bible in dozens of popular English translations.

In 2024, we are very close to having 8 billion people living on planet Earth. With great joy, we know 11% of the world’s language groups have at least some portions of God’s Word, and 88% of the remaining languages have some current Bible translation work being done among them. As wonderful as this sounds, there are at least 90 million people whose Bibles are filled with blank pages. Not even one verse of Scripture exists in their language. Many of the remaining 1,300+

languages which have no verse of Scripture, have less than 5,000 speakers.

Pioneer Bible Translators of Canada is one agency seeking to reach these small language groups with translated Scriptures, one of them being the Akukem people who live in Papua New Guinea. Working slowly on their own, some translated materials were published over a 15-year period, though the quality was mediocre. Then in April of 2019, my wife, Jill, and I took on the role of Translation Advisors, working with the Akukem national co-workers. Very quickly we saw translation work increase greatly, literacy workshops being run, and audio recordings of their translated portions were started in March of 2024.

In traditional language projects, a great deal of work focuses on the translation of Scripture, and it can take many years to produce a Scripture publication. There are five major stages of translation: rough draft, peer check, exegetical check (to match the original Greek New Testament or the Hebrew Old Testament), community check for naturalness of the translation, and



a final outside consultant check. The end result is Scriptures in their local language. But wait! Many groups never had an official alphabet until we worked with them, thus the need for literacy workshops. This is a good thing, and yet, it can

...there are at least 90 million people whose Bibles are filled with blank pages. Not even one verse of Scripture exists in their language.

still limit the widespread impact of God’s Words on their people group, when only a few can read what is being translated. So, we praise God for our modern technology, such as audio recordings of the printed vernacular Scriptures, and when these are released, then ALL the people will

have access to God’s Word, whether in printed or in audio format.

As of October 2024, the Akukem now have five books (Mark, Luke, 1&2 Timothy, and Titus) translated, checked and ready to be recorded. Praise God that He is reaching to the very ends of the earth to bring His Word to people in their heart language.

HOW CAN WE AT OAK PARK HELP?

1. Pray for the Akukem Translation, Literacy & Scripture Impact project that God’s Word in every format will touch and transform the hearts of the Akukem people.
2. Sign up to receive the Weatherhead monthly “Prayer & Praise” email update by writing to Norm at: norm.weatherhead@pioneerbible.org
3. Ask God to provide a “Point Person” (or two or three) who can travel occasionally to PNG for a month to help the Akukem translation work sessions by being a facilitator who works alongside of Norm when he is connecting remotely with the team in PNG.



Akukem Important Key Terms For Luke

Verse(s)	Greek	English	Tok Pisin	Akukem Key Term
Luk 8.31	ἄβυσσος	Abyss; place of the dead	hul i nogat as ples ol daiman i stap	mbinih patisir toon*
Luk 1.13	ἄγγελος	angel	enzel	enzer*
Luk 4.34 Luk 2.25	ἅγιος πνεῦμα ἅγιον	holy/clean ___ in God’s eyes Holy Spirit	i stap klin long ai bilong God Holi Spirit; Spirit bilong God	Gotin arimasi rifaahn * uzuesi* Gotin Ijeroon*
Luk 14.26 Luk 10.39	ἀδελφή	big sister; big sisters; little sister; little sisters;	bikpela susa liklik susa	aveennameen* / umbuaramisi* afumuun* / afumuir
Luk 16.9 Luk 10.25 Luk 21.19 Luk 9.24	αἰώνιος ζωὴ αἰώνιος ψυχὴ ψυχὴ	eternal eternal life Context: [complete] life Context: [natural] life	i stap oltaim gutpela laip i stap oltaim gutpela sindaun gutpela laip	mighasigha mamaghre iti* / ika* mighasigha * itir ikirimiran aghuun* ambirambijn aghuun* ikiran aghuun*
Mat 9.11 Luk 5.13 Luk 4.33	[ἀκάθαρτος] in FN [ἀκάθαρτος] in FN ἀκάθαρτος	unclean before God’s eyes not clean before God evil; bad	doti long ai bilong God i no klin long ai bilong God nogut	Gotin arimasi rifaahn mbize* Gotin arimasi rifaahn uzueghem pati* maghatigh* / maghatisi*
Luk 15.18 Luk 17.4	ἁμαρτάνω	to sin, do wrong behavior	mekim pasin nogut	otivan maghatigha* * *amu* (sg) otevir maghatisi * *amu* (pl)
Luk 5.20 Luk 18.13	ἁμαρτία ἁμαρτωλός	sins; wrongdoings sinner; sinful	ol pasin nogut man nogut [i mekim pasin nogut]	otivir maghatisi* (*amu*) gumaghan maghatigh*
Luk 13.6	ἀμπελών	vineyard	gaden rop wain	uainir umbeer migh*
Luk 6.13	ἀπόστολος	Apostles; messenger	Ol Man [Jisas] i Bin Makim	[Ijesum] Mbisevisi* Gumasi* / Gumagh*
Luk 22.54 Luk 9.22	ἀρχιερεὺς	High Priest Chief Priests	Hetman Bilong Ol Man i Givim Ofa Long God Ol Bikman Bilong Ol Man i Givim Ofa Long God	Gotin Apurapurir Gumasir Apan* Gotin Apurapurir Gumasir Ikii*
Luk 8.49	ἀρχισυναγωγός	head man who looks after the things of a house for talking with God	hetman i save lukautim ol samting bilong Haus Bilong Toktok Wantaim God	Gotin Porugha Mbingeer Ripenan bisir garir gumaghan apan
Luk 24.20 Luk 18.18	ἄρχων	ruler(s); leader(s) ruler(s); official(s)	bikman; ol bikman hetman; ol hetman	gumaghan ikiv* / gumasir ikii* gumaghan apan* / gumasir apan*
Luk 5.37	ἄσκός	wineskin	kontaner bilong skin abus	asighan nerim mbsiv*

EXPLORING FAITH TOGETHER.

Our journey to faith has been slightly unexpected. Yet, it feels like we found God together at the right time in our lives.



by Matt and Ashleigh

Matt had a Catholic upbringing but drifted away from regularly practicing his faith during his 20s. Meanwhile, Ashleigh recalls spending most of her life as an atheist, until she became agnostic in her mid-20s. About a year ago, a series of discussions during lunch breaks and after dinner had us considering the deeper questions of life. After

watching talks from Christian theologians, we debated topics like morality, purpose, and what it means to live a life of integrity. These conversations opened the door for us to consider (or re-consider) faith, and it became clear that we wanted to explore Christianity more intentionally as a family.

We started looking for churches in our area and came across Oak Park. It immediately piqued our interest, but the idea of attending was intimidating. Ashleigh had never been to church before, and Matt hadn't attended regularly in years, so stepping into such an unfamiliar space made us both a bit anxious. To add to that, our daughter was not quite two years old yet and, like any toddler, could be fairly unpredictable. Thankfully, Oak Park offered a way to experience the sermons through YouTube, allowing us to get a feel for what the church was like before attending.

After just over four months of watching from home and reading about the Kids' Park program, we gathered the courage to take the next step

and attend in person this past August. And we are so glad we did! From the moment we walked through the doors, we were overwhelmed by how welcoming and kind everyone was. There's truly no comparison to being part of the service in person. There's a unique sense of community, warmth, and shared experience that makes it something far more meaningful than we had anticipated. Our daughter appears to feel the same way. She loves the worship time at the beginning of the service and always seems to have a great time up at Kids' Park. She'll randomly ask us if it's time for church throughout the week and is all smiles at pick-up time. Sometimes she's having too much fun to want to leave!

We are so grateful for the open arms we've been met with at Oak Park and look forward to continuing this journey of faith together.