
MINUS40 REPORT

Newsletter of Steve and Lois Donley

Missionaries to the indigenous people of the Far North

September 2019

Dear praying friends,

Tuktoyaktuk is so far north, the compass is +20.81° off. It's called the "Magnetic Degree of Declination." I first learned about this in 1989 while flying in a small plane with Bro Gary Forney. Currently, he is the executive director of All Points Baptist Mission, but back then he was the veteran missionary that taught me the ins and outs of arctic missions. Our relationship has developed into a wonderful friendship and we can bore you to tears with missionary war stories and inside jokes. Recently at APBM's training week, he and I had the opportunity to team teach a course on "Arctic Ministry." There were 4 families that attended this course of 2 hours in cumulative length. What a joy it was to be able to teach alongside Bro Forney and help younger missionaries understand that arctic missions is a little off the flight path of typical ministry in the USA. Just like the degree of declination requires slight adjustment for a successful arrival, so do adjustments need to be made for successful arctic missions. Obviously I'm not speaking of doctrine or error in any way but of philosophy and patience and preparation.

In June, I was able to preach at Rock Crossing Bible Camp in Alaska. It was 2 wonderful weeks unplugged from the world and refreshment in the isolation of a wilderness, Bible camp. A secret about Bible camp is that it is supposed to be for the youth, but in reality, I am usually the one benefitted most and God does powerful things for the camp staff as well. The youth who attend have a mind clear of social media pressures and can focus on eternal things rather than likes and emojis. After I close my preaching time with prayer, I do not stay during the invitations at camp, I don't want the response or lack thereof to influence me. The only real knowledge of any results comes at the closing campfire. Often gratitude is expressed for a particular message and God using the preaching to direct someone's path. This year it was no different and one young lady, with tears of joy, declared she had gotten saved that very night. Others testified as to the Lord calling them to serve Him. At a Bible camp, I surrendered my life to serve the Lord at the ripe old age of 14. After 30 years on the mission field, I'm still working off of that same general calling! So I know the value of summer Bible camp, and want to be a part of youth Bible camp until they kick me out for being too old!

A new minus40 report feature "The Back Page" is... on the back page! I encourage you to follow us as we share with you the decisions and journey of a veteran missionary couple wanting to give every ounce of ourselves for the Lord and remain faithful for the Lord until God stops us. The transition of ministry is often a fuzzy, grey area to most church folk, but we want to open our lives to those interested and allow you to see first hand how God is leading us.

Thank you for your love, prayers and support through all these years. - Steve and Lois Donley

The Back Page...

The “Back Page” is dedicated to the journey Lois and I are traveling that eventually will lead us to “life after Tuk”. Currently, I am focused on facilitating a smooth transition of the leadership of the Tuk Baptist Church to Roy Stelzig. When the Lord gives me peace that Roy can “take it from here”, Lois and I will relocate to reach indigenous people in a new location. We will bring you along on this journey with transparency with the hopes you can better pray for us and other missionaries that face similar challenges.

The first step for us has been to sell our residence in Inuvik. Currently, we are sorting “stuff” from 41 years of marriage, raising 3 kids, 30 years living in the Arctic, 16 of which are in this house.

Once that is accomplished, we will put our “stuff” in storage in Whitehorse, Yukon, awaiting God’s leading as to where to go and when to do it. We packed a utility trailer with the “good stuff” of our arctic life and Lois ruthlessly sorted through her treasures and made 3 piles. #1 Keep, pack and take. #2 Sell, give away or otherwise dispose of. #3 Take to the dumpster. (The dumpster is inordinately full these days)

In the meantime, we will take a minuscule amount of “stuff” with us and live in the one room apartment in the Tuk church building. As you might remember, I am renovating the living space there to include hot, running water and a working, bathroom. We will work side by side with the Stelzigs and help them as much as is needed and seek to see the Tuk Baptist Church strengthened.

As far as WHEN the Lord may lead us to leave Tuk; we assume 18-24 months. But don’t hold us to that figure. God can do what He wants to do, when He wants to do it. I’m just giving you a ballpark guesstimation.

As far as WHERE, the Lord may lead us; Several opportunities have been whispered in our ear by pastors and churches “down south” in Canada and the USA. As well we feel the Lord could still use us to “prepare the ground” for a church plant exclusively for indigenous people in a northern community. I have researched several Yukon and a couple of NWT communities where there is no viable outreach to indigenous people. Or where a gospel preaching church has not been able to successfully reach and minister to the Inuit, First Nations and Métis population.