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# MINUS40 REPORT

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Missionaries to the indigenous people of the Far North

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## February 2022

Dear praying friends,

The new year started out with the Yukon Government grasping for straws and repeating the same old failed approach in dealing with the Omicron variant of Covid. They once again chose to use a state of emergency to unleash unlimited and unchecked power of unelected officials to choke freedoms and require worship leaders to check covid vaccine documentation. If someone does not have or is unwilling to show their proof of vaccination, I would have to turn them away from entering the place of worship. I would have to deny someone the opportunity to learn of the creator God, His Son and His provision for eternal salvation and to quench the Holy Spirit who literally indwells a believer. I would have to turn them away from hearing the eternal, preserved Word of God and send them off without ever hearing of the final authority and absolute truth of the Bible. Furthermore this is a backdoor racial and social attack against Indigenous peoples and minimizing at risk people who are struggling with addictions. These souls at risk often live on the streets and frequent homeless shelters or engage risky housing arrangements. These groups are notoriously under vaccinated and that issue, according to the Yukon Government, stops them from accessing real hope. That hope is the hope of Jesus Christ. Honestly, I do not care if someone is vaccinated, unvaccinated, boosted or trying unconventional methods to stay healthy. I'm here to preach the Bible. The words, "all" and "whosoever" and "every" hold powerful meaning to a Bible believer, and therein lies my stubbornness on this issue. Don't tell me I can't preach; don't tell me who I can and cannot preach to. Jesus didn't say, "Come unto me ye vaccinated and I will give you rest".

So we have for the time being lost our meeting space. I know, this sounds like an "Oh poor me" newsletter, but real is real and you can't make this stuff up. Our testimony in the hotel where we rented a meeting room was impressive enough that when I declared I wouldn't check vaccine passports the manager said she wouldn't open up Sunday bookings to anyone else, but save the spot for us. I guess if you're looking for a praise, that would register pretty high.

As well, the alternative we have decided to use while we ride this thing out has proved to be pretty effective. We are online on Facebook Live thru Northern Light Baptist Church's page. The reach has been far and wide. Our indigenous audience is seriously strong and I don't mean hits or clicks, but solid full viewing with encouraging comments. We reach out to folks as best as possible and God is doing something strong even with a cranky old missionary in front of the camera.

Lois and I face some health speed bumps with regularity these days, but nothing we can't handle with the Lord's upholding hand. To date, our difficulties have not been too serious, just frustrating and annoying. I understand this and have experience in this department. It is par for the course as we age.

In the midst of these trying times we remain encouraged. We are maintaining a singular focus on indigenous souls and God is blessing us within that endeavour and adding folks with other heritages as well. God has given me inroads to those entangled in the web of substance abuse. It's slow, seemingly futile work. But accompanying the faithfulness He requires, is the gift of hope. And where there is hope, there is potential victory.

You might notice in this letter a bit of annoyance coming through. A twinge of irritation topped by frustration. When these types of newsletters develop, (usually in the middle of winter), I would always send them off to Brother Gary Forney to get his opinion. He would sometimes encourage me to go ahead and be raw, but other times he would infer I needed to tone it down. I counted on Brother Forney to help me make it as a missionary. Even after 30 plus years on the mission field, I still need him to help me.

But God in His infinite mercy, impeccability, and unfathomable wisdom, chose to call Brother Gary Forney home just before CHRISTmas. I was handling things well, until I started to write this newsletter. I thought about how I always sent these flame thrower newsletters to him first. As I sit weeping before my computer screen, I cannot describe this experience adequately. I feel so utterly alone in a way. He and I shared the burden for indigenous souls and arctic ministry alone for many, many years. Before PNBM, APBM and before there were any PNBM missionaries in Iqaluit, Norway, Rankin Inlet, Newfoundland, Siberia or Greenland, we were alone together in the Western Arctic of the NWT. It was just Gary and Steve. I was nobody from nowhere and he took a chance on me and invested his time and effort into training me for arctic ministry. I was probably a terrible student, but Gary never gave up on me. He was always wanting me to do things I knew I couldn't do. To handle things I thought were too big for me. To do things I didn't have enough faith for. Many PNBM and APBM missionaries picked up the gates of our cities and carried them up Hebron's hill with Bro Forney cheering us on. Backcountry kids and unspectacular city boys became Samsons under his influence. Closed countries are now open to the gospel and Gary Forney was the one who handed them a battering ram. Faithfulness ran deep in Gary Forney's veins. He expected nothing less from us. Loyalty was expected to run from our pores mingled with the sweat of commitment. He didn't spoon feed us a 1,2,3 plan to build these qualities, he just expected us to man up and find it within ourselves, or move on. Yet in all his "face to the wind" way of challenging me, was a man that had more compassion in his little finger than I had in my whole body. Many times we wept together as he wondered why no one cared for the indigenous souls of the north. In honesty, he wept for them and I suppose I wept because he was crying. I was so inept and in over my head with it all. I was struggling to keep my head above water with the next message, a wonderful yet difficult culture to navigate and the issues of a young family. He wept for a world of northerners going to Hell and I was simply so overwhelmed, I didn't get it at first. Then, miraculously, almost unknowingly, bit by bit, he transferred that burden to me and attempted to do so in other PNBM and later into APBM missionaries.

He was simultaneously a commanding general and a sergeant who kept me from getting my head blown off in spiritual warfare. Also, he could be a jokester and cut up buddy in a fox hole in missionary battle. Gary Forney. I love that guy.