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# MINUS40 REPORT

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*Missionaries to the indigenous people of the North*

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## August 2024

On July 21, Northern Light Baptist Church organized in the sight of God and we had a big Sunday to celebrate. We had two guest Preachers, a catered meal and great fellowship. Pastor Jeff Jamieson from our sending church preached, and Pastor Reilly Featherstone, who pastors our old church in Inuvik, NWT, challenged our church immediately after our formation. We were blessed by a great attendance of 37 souls. To be clear, yes, there were visitors from out of town that inflated the numbers, but there was also a good attendance of our usual attendees. I was disappointed that there were only 7 charter members, but not surprised.

Please allow me to elaborate on that last statement. For four years, we started meeting and functioning like an established New Testament church. The groundwork was done as we studied through a doctrinal statement and membership covenant. We support three missionaries, had special meetings, handed out financial accountability reports, consistently held two church services per week, and on and on the list goes.

Disappointing and not surprising at the same time was the hesitation and lack of commitment to becoming a church member. Disappointing because we had been functioning as a church all along. Everybody knew what to expect. There would be no surprises. They knew my demeanour and ministry philosophy. They knew my heart. There was trust built and established, which is extremely important these days, especially within indigenous cultures. I was disappointed that despite the patience and effort to eliminate the question marks, the hesitation to associate with the church overcame the clear biblical directive to assemble ourselves in unity as a New Testament church.

Not surprising is that these issues affect not only indigenous culture but also the growing philosophy of many Christians in North America. Involvement but not commitment. Acceptance, but not association. Appreciation, but not obligation.

So that leaves me right where I was four years ago: on a mission field, working with a culture hesitant to trust, resistant to change, and distracted by social ills and injustices. Our plan is to press on with truth and faithfulness. These troubles aren't going away.

But neither are Lois and I. We both turned 64 this month and realize we are in for the fight of our lives. Our focus remains zeroed in on our calling. The acceptance by the indigenous souls in the arctic of the NWT is long gone. Ministry-wise, nothing here is easy. Every inch of success must be earned and tenaciously defended. Nevertheless... A church was born on July 21st, and like all newborn things, it's pretty special. And it'll grow.

*Steve and Lois Donley*