



Dear Prayer Partner,

First, it is good to be back. This letter is later than usual because I was granted leave to spend the month of February in Lesotho, Africa. It was a time for visiting friends and acquaintances from a time when my wife and I lived there. Lesotho is also where God added our youngest son to our family, and it was an opportunity for him to go back 'home'. Overall, it was a wonderful time, though now I have some catching up to do back in the Shalom office.

Since returning, I have been challenged. On a Monday, I heard how God is at work in mighty ways in our world. On the following Wednesday, a man's story reminded me of the lost, lost condition of man. He also reminded me that in our efforts to make a difference in the lives of the lost, we are often fighting, not against flesh and blood but, "against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"¹. More recently, I was reminded that because of his kindness, love and mercy, God, through the work of the Holy Spirit still saves the lost². What is my response to be, as one who has the hope of eternal life - "to be careful to devote [myself] to doing what is good,"² to persevere, to keep striving. God is also at work in Central Alberta, seeking those who are lost. The battle is the Lord's and it is He who will overcome the powers and forces of evil. Our call is to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" ... and pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.¹

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Ephesians 6:18

Benno Fath, Executive Director

¹Ephesians 6

²Titus 3

Thankful for:

- Board members who commit much time and energy to further the ministry of Shalom. The beginning of the year brings significant decisions that impact the year ahead. Praise God for the unity of direction and purpose the Board members shared in making important decisions, unity that implies God's hand in directing Shalom's path.
- You have been praying regarding two grant applications. While we are disappointed one was denied, we are grateful that the other was approved. The grant approved is from the United Way of Central Alberta. It will help enable us to continue providing subsidized counselling to lower income Central Albertans.
- Two other minor funding sources have redirected their funding elsewhere in 2018, but I continue to stand amazed at how God continues to provide. Two other cheques arrived this week from unexpected sources. Thank you, Lord.
- We are so thankful to God for you and the company of believers who, with you, stand with us faithfully in prayer.

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

Titus 3:8

Requests:

- Health needs of our staff. We have two staff off on medical recovery. Pray that they would recover fully. For one their recovery has been long. Pray that they would be able to rest in God's arms in trust, and that they soon will be fully recovered and able to return to a full life both at work and at home.
- Having staff off has resulted in less counselling hours. Pray for our clients who have had to wait a bit longer to see a therapist. May God sustain them until they can be seen, or may they find alternate services as needed.
- Pray for all staff. Having therapists away, as well as myself, meant others have to pick up extra work. Staff are feeling a bit tired. Pray for strength and rejuvenation. I know that spring will bring some of that, so am also thankful that winter, though hanging on, will shortly give way to spring.
- Also, pray for all staff that in our interactions with those who come to us, we would be God's hands and mouth, speaking words of compassion and encouragement.
- Pray for a long time client. Sometimes, we struggle to get to a place beyond our own hurt and past, a place where we can engage with others productively. Prayer that this client's therapist would have wisdom in counselling and confronting the client. Pray for others in the office that must interact with the client that we might watch for opportunities to encourage, and pray for the client that God's spirit would be at work in the client's heart, that the client would acknowledge her need to grow, change, and see beyond herself.
- Central Alberta still is not economically where it was four years ago. Pray for our fundraising efforts that they may bear fruit, enough fruit. God wondrously met our financial needs through 2017. Pray for his continued provision of our needs, as we continue to serve those going through difficult times in their lives and relationships.
- Pray that in the course of the work we do, God will open opportunity to share his grace with those receiving our services and those who attend our workshops.
- Shalom's AGM is coming. It will be held on 23 April 2018. Pray that there will be interest, that a few new folks will check out Shalom, and that it will be a time of rejoicing in what God accomplished in 2017
- Above all, please continue to pray for the Holy Spirit's presence in our office and that we who work here would be conduits of the Spirit's presence. Our desire is that those coming through our doors at Shalom may sense God's presence and peace. Prayer that they would leave uplifted and with a hunger to experience more deeply the source of that peace.

Below are some recent client comments that give some sense of their journey and progress.

- I feel a little more hopeful.
- I have had a major shift in my interactions with my partner, and seeking to be less defensive.
- I am more patient, less critical, showing more grace.
- Felt encouraged and reassured that we are on the right path.
- Finding new ways to manage stress and to take care of myself.
- I have gained understanding that will help me in my approach and interactions with people.
- Very happy with the progress made so far.
- I so appreciate the counselling I am receiving at Shalom. It has been life giving for me!
- We may need to continue talking about how God views my self-worth.
- I can finally say that I have hope for my future.
- I felt listened to and challenged. My counsellor shared life and God experiences as examples.