

# First Baptist Regina Weekly News

*For the Week of March 29th*



*Easter Alleluia, 2019*

Perhaps God has given you the gift of a sign of spring from your window or your balcony, or maybe even on a walk you've treated yourself to. Robins are back, buds are softening, and the weather has warmed up. It is time to watch for the green tips of the earliest bulbs.

Winter on the prairies heightens the joy that spring brings. Similarly, without question covid 19 is heightening our appreciation for our friendships and our church community. Many people are in touch more often and contacting people they haven't spoken with in a while.

Many of our ministries (Learning for Life, Children's ministries, Youth, Voice, Morning Prayer, small groups) are now online. We can still meet live online together in groups using video for prayer, study and fellowship. Call the church if you would like help learning how to do that.

As well, on Sunday morning, anyone can use their phone to be part of the Sunday morning worship service at 11.

If those are not options, we are sending these letters and calling around. Know that each of you are in our prayers.

With love, Pastor Joel



## **An Interview with Enosh Ernest Lal**

*1. Enosh, I've appreciated the opportunity to chat with you from time to time. You know, as people from other countries join our congregation we become more authentically the body of Christ.*

*Please tell us something about where you were born and raised and who your parents and siblings are.*

I was born in a small village located in one of the biggest states in India called Utter Pradesh. However, I did not live in that place for long, as my father got a job in a big city in a different state. When I was 16 months old, we moved to Faridabad City in the state of Haryana. We lived in a small room without a kitchen and with a shared a bathroom.

My dad, Sushil Kumar Lal, worked very hard to provide us with a good education, housing, food, and all the necessary things. He used to work with YAMAHA Motors and was able to complete 30 years of service whereupon he received the title of QA (quality analyst). He is currently involved in community work for Christians and serves as secretary for the Faridabad Christian Cemetery. He is also a very active member of our Church, where he has held numerous office postings.

My Mom, Shobha Lal, has taken care of the house her entire life, though for some years she worked as a teacher in a playschool. My brother, Amos, is 6 years younger than I am. I have always loved him as though he were my kid. He was always really good at studies and was well focused in achieving his goal. He left home to study at the age of 18-19; following this he spent time traveling. Currently, he is associated with the Mayo Clinic in the US as an MD--doctor of internal medicine.

*2. I imagine schools in India are quite different from ours. Tell us something about your early school days and those of your youth.*

I attended an English Medium School called St. John's Public School. However, before my 10th board/grade, I had an eye injury due to which my schooling was stopped. However, I was determined to study, so I looked for private or distance schooling and got myself enrolled for the exams. In this way, I passed my 12th Board, which is comparable to grade 12 in Canada. After that I went on to higher education.

I have a one-year diploma in Computer Education, a two-year diploma in Medical Lab Technology, a Bachelor of Science and a Masters in Business Administration, specializing in Operations Management.

*3. It seems you were an ambitious and successful student. What motivated you to come to Canada? How long have you lived here?*

While looking for better opportunities outside India, I applied to 3 countries: Australia, Canada, and Great Britain. By the grace of God an opportunity was presented to me in Great Britain to become a Customer Relations Manager in the Royal Bank Of Scotland. However, this required a face-to-face interview in Scotland, which was not possible for me. I was very hurt and disappointed, but my faith in Christ was strong. After a few months someone introduced me to the Canadian PR (permanent resident) program. Hence, in 2014 I started the process. In 2017 positive news was shared with me that my application for PR was accepted by the Canadian Embassy. By the blessing of the Almighty Lord our God, PR was awarded to me in 2018.

It is very hard to explain why Canada, but I'll say this: it's all God's will. Always from my youth I was attracted to Canada, though I never thought that it would be possible someday for me to live here. Now as God has presented me with this opportunity, I would like to utilize it and try to do something good for my family. I always wanted to give them a better life. In other words, it's my time to repay my parents for all their effort to give me and my bother a better life and to become better individuals.

4. *This attitude certainly does you credit. Your life here in Canada is no doubt very different from that in India. Is it what you expected it to be? What do you like the most? Is there anything that makes you uncomfortable?*

The life here is good and I have no complaints as this is God's will, though some times life is hard. In hard times this Bible verse helps me: **"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me"** John 14:1

5. *I believe you practiced your profession in India. Tell us something about that.*

I was a dedicated and versatile operations leader with over 10 years of experience in business strategy, customer service, public relations, people management, project management, and leadership. Also, I was recognized as an astute problem solver with strong communications skills, and with the ability to facilitate projects that could improve functions and services. Professional friends and colleagues referred to me as a motivator of teams, able to build and sustain partnerships throughout the organization to improve overall organizational objectives through applied leadership skills. Beginning in 2002, I worked in a number of pathology/health agencies serving in different capacities such as supervisor, manager, and administrator. From 2006-2010, I was a Motor Claims Manager for Viva Insurance. Finally, for four years before coming to Canada, I worked for a Christian organization which focused on misguided youth from below the poverty line, educating them and guiding them toward a productive life.

6. *You have obviously had an interesting working life in India. Upon arrival here in Canada, what motivated you to come to First Baptist Church? What has made you stay?*

I remember that on my second day in Regina I was looking for a Church close to my place. Because I did not have any transportation, and no awareness of bus routes, I prayed and looked online for a church. The first church which I found was a Roman Catholic Church. I got up early the next Sunday morning and prepared for Church; however, when I was about to

leave there was freezing rain outside. I was disappointed, but I prayed and looked for a Church where the service starts around 11 am. Believe me, this is a testimony. The next Sunday I found First Baptist (A Place to Belong). This was a sign for me, because back home in India my family and I had attended First Baptist Church from time to time.

The atmosphere in the Church was divine and people around me were very helpful, welcoming, loving, caring, and accepting. I am not sure if it is appropriate to mention names, but a wonderful family in the church accepted me and prayed for me, and I surely thank them. I lost my grand mom a few years back but in First Baptist I found my grand mamma again. I have been loved and cared for like their child. I, in turn, regard them as my family and always will. **First Baptist Church stands for its slogan – A place to belong”** I feel at home here.

*7. I've already indicated that we welcome people of all nationalities. Was this obvious to you when you came to our church? How can we improve our welcome?*

As I mentioned above, it's a place to belong and yes, I felt welcomed and I don't think of any improvement.

*8. How does it happen that you know English well?*

I was not very good at speaking English during my youth. Once, after I had been rejected in an interview, a receptionist stopped me and asked me why I wasn't qualified. I answered it was because of my poor English. She told me that as a graduate of an English school, I should do better. I thanked her and began to aggressively practice my English. One of my strengths is being open to feedback from anyone, because I believe we can learn from our mistakes.

*9. I think we all need to adopt your attitude. Tell us something about your church in India. What do you miss the most of your church life there?*

My church in India has a congregation of 350+ and a service pattern different from FBC. After the morning prayer and welcome, the pastor gives the announcements and the financial report. This is followed by praise and worship, Sunday School skits, testimonies, a sermon, more prayer, song and offering. The service ends with a closing prayer and benediction. After the service the entire congregation gathers in the courtyard and participates in a social gathering, enjoying tea/coffee and snacks. On special occasions, there is a lunch or supper arranged by the church.

*10. It sounds like a very fine church. Before we end this interview, I would like to know: Is there something that you would like to say that I haven't asked?*

The only thing that I would like to say is a big thank you to the entire FBC community for welcoming me into the family.

Interviewer: Esther Wiens

---



"My dear fellow church mice .... in all our records for over 126 years ... we have not had a Sunday when only one person showed up -- until now. There are no cookie crumbs, no bits of casserole, and not even any dropped communion crumbs. Mysteriously, other church mice groups are reporting the same phenomena. We have dubbed this strange happening, "The Great Stay Away". We are sending out search parties in hopes of finding some additional food. Effective immediately everyone is on half rations from our reserve supplies. We have no idea when this will end... nor its cause ... and naturally it is a grave concern to us all ...."

## **Dinner with Jesus**

Jennifer Holtlander's sermon on Sunday March 29th, 2020.

Psalm 38:9-16 Matthew 26:17-30

Thank you for reading for us today Esther and thank you to all of you for joining in the communal experience of sharing spiritual nourishment together today. In a sense, we come together to do as a community, what we can do each day in our homes. Sharing in the experience communally, can strengthen our at home practices of being a follower of Jesus.

Our Psalm reading today expresses the feeling that the community was aloof. We are experiencing we cannot see in person or hear in person those people who we long to be with. In the midst of it all we can stand together to wait and to see the glory of our God, who is with us in the midst of every circumstance, who feels our suffering with us, and longs to offer us comfort and succour in the midst of it all.

Today is the fifth Sunday of Lent. We are coming so close to the end of this Lenten Journey. We are almost to that great moment of celebrating the work of new life that the Divine have been preparing us for through Lent.

In preparation for Lent this year the Life-Giving Spirit opened the opportunity for me to live inside a Retreat in Daily Living that had those of us following the retreat praying with the Scripture texts of Jesus in the Upper Room. Those experiences inform my reflection this week.

An Upper Room is just another name for a dining room in the Roman style of that would have been common when Jesus was very humanly walking around in the dust and the dirt of the world. A Coenaculum, or dining room where evening meals were taken, was often on the second level of a home, reached by stairs up the outside of the home.

So many stories of Jesus place him sharing a meal with the people around him. It is likely in an Upper Room that we meet an unnamed woman who

washes Jesus' feet and anoints them with perfume in an extravagant act of love for Jesus. I can only imagine that her extravagance comes out of gratitude for the healing Jesus has brought to her life.

In an Upper Room we will see the friends of Jesus gathered following his death, terrified because their world has been turned upside down. They've hidden in an Upper Room and locked the doors. For all the scripture to this point when someone supernatural arrives on the scene they say, "Do not be afraid!" but Jesus says, "Peace I give you!" Jesus gives them a new language and a new story to tell when arrives in the room even though the doors are locked.

In an Upper Room we will again see Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the followers of Jesus gathered to share nourishment when the Life-Giving Spirit bursts upon them like wind and fire to give them energy for the work ahead.

But today, we have a story of Jesus gathering with his dearly beloved companions. In John's retelling of this story, Jesus turns the love that he has experienced in foot washing, and pours it out on his companions. They are tired and footsore. There is uncertainty in the air. Jesus' invitation to the action of caring for one another in practical ways, of living so full of love that it spills out everywhere, is how Jesus says the world will know that his followers are around.

As you listen along with me today to this story, can you imagine yourself there? There are unnamed followers, women and men, children and teens. There are the named followers around as well.

We all sit on the floor to share a meal, Roman style. And Jesus knows that Judas' betrayal is coming. Jesus lovingly shares this meal with all of us. Everyone, the betrayers and traitors, the ones who choose community and the ones who choose isolation, get to eat and drink.

Imagine the reality of meal shared with a group of people.



Today you sit in your home. Perhaps you can see your table from where you are right now. This is not the scene of a famous painting. This is the scene of a family meal.

There are spills and messes. There is hunger and nourishment. There is shared love and laughter.

In the middle of all that normal, human life, Jesus takes a loaf from the table and gives thanks to the Divine Family and breaks it, passing it around, sharing it with everyone.

It is like Jesus is saying, "Eat. Eat. Sharing physical food together will nourish your bodies. Sharing spiritual food together will nourish your spirits.

It's like Jesus is saying, "I want you to be well fed. I want you to have energy to walk through the hard stuff in life."

Later, Jesus picks up the cup from the table.

At our house cups are full of water, sparkling or still, or milk, but it seems likely that Jesus' cup was filled with wine. "Share this cup. Our relationship, our connection to one another is strong and will live in you beyond mistakes, beyond violence, even beyond death. Nothing can separate you from my love for you."

Can you hear Jesus say that to you today, "Nothing can separate you from my love for you."

Every time we eat or drink, we can remember that Jesus knew a God who was loving, who was present in suffering, who could be known as a healthy Abba Father, who would fill us with the Life-Giving Spirit, a healthy mother.

Every time we share physical food together, and the gift of dialogue and spiritual nourishment together, we live out in our physical bodies the death and resurrection of Jesus, our brother, our Lord, our Master.

So, what are supposed to do in these days, where we are in separate houses joined in a great act of community care and compassionate retreat?

1. Everyday, take time in prayer to join Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit for spiritual nourishment.

Listen for the extravagant love of your God who says, “Nothing can separate you from the love of the Divine Family. Not life, nor death. Not hunger or plenty. Not corona virus, or anxiety or depression or uncertainty. Nothing! Nothing! Nothing can separate you from our love.”

Nourished by our experiences of Dinner, and breakfast, and tea, and night time snack, with Jesus, we will be able to live with faith and relationship and peace in the midst of the challenges of the week ahead.

2. Everyday, treat your meal table like the sacred space that it really is.

Listen for the voice of the Life-Giving Spirit encouraging you to call someone, to share in dialogue, to be in touch and to share spiritual nurture with one another. Draw a picture and have your parents text it to a friend. Take a photograph of what is stirring gratitude in you today.

Listen for the invitation to feed the parts of yourself that betray you, that turn on you. They need to be brought into the light and the love of Jesus’ presence.

3. Everyday, treat your Zoom room or other connecting points like the Upper Room.

Every prayer, every conversation, every text, every social media interaction, every generous expression of gratitude to God, and to your grocery store worker, has the possibility to contain the bread of nourishment, the joy and delight of refreshment, in it.

We are God’s people everywhere we go, and everywhere we stay.

We share in this bread of life, we drink the life-giving water of Jesus' shared faith, as a sign our relationship with Jesus and with the Community of the Beloved.

With gratitude, through dialogue, we bless and make holy the actions of our everyday lives and through them we become the body and blood of the Divine at work in the world from our homes, or in the hospital, the walking path.

With gratitude, through dialogue, we bless and make holy the location of our everyday lives whether we are called to wait, to retreat, to speak, to listen, to be. This is what we have been training for as disciples and followers of Jesus for our whole lives of faith.

Come with me! Let's eat with Jesus and be deeply nourished through our dialogue with God and with one another.

Amen.

## **Benediction**

1 Peter 1:3b Now we live with great expectation, 4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. 5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

6 So be truly glad.[b] There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

So, go from this gathering, to love and and serve Lord and blessing of our loving God protect and keep you, lead and guide you until we meet again.

Amen.

## Tithing during the pandemic

With the COVID-19 crisis limiting contact with others and restricting meetings of groups, please do not neglect the financial needs of our church. We still have salaries and bills to pay, which amount to over \$1,000 per day!

We have several ways to provide your regular tithes and donations to the church:

1. Mail your gifts to the Church Office or call to arrange in-person pick-up. Please do NOT send cash through the mail.
2. Establish a Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) Plan. This will automatically transfer funds from your account into the FBC Regina account on a regular basis. Please email the church or contact the Treasurer if you would like to set up PAR, or change your commitment.
3. Make an online donation:
  - Use **Interac e-Transfer** to donate from your phone or computer to [FBCRegina@gmail.com](mailto:FBCRegina@gmail.com) *(no fee or cost to the church)*
  - Use a credit card or PayPal via the **PayPal Giving Fund** *(no fee or cost to the church)*
  - Use a credit card via **CanadaHelps** *(a fee of 3.75% is deducted from the donation)*

**PLEASE** refer to more specific information on these contribution methods that is available on the church website. You may email the church or contact the Treasurer for further details.

