

# **“MORE” (Mission School)**

## **Module 2 – Focus on More**

### **SUBURBAN/TOWNS - CASE STUDY**

“**St. Bede’s on the Outskirts**” is a suburban church that was planted in the late 1970s on the main road.

The relatively-modern building and hall are on one level. There are wheelchair accessible washrooms. Last year they installed a top-notch audio/visual system in the sanctuary and the hall. Parking is very limited around the building.

There is a small Sunday school with two talented teachers. Sunday attendance at the 10:30 a.m. service averages about 55 people. Worship music is led by two gifted guitarists. There is no choir.

A new rector was just hired. His name is Rev. Gerald Goode. Although there have been a number of transitions with short-term rectors in the parish over the last seven years, there is a core group of dedicated lay leaders who are eager to explore future ministry ideas.

Financially, the congregation is barely holding their head above water. There are no investments and they have not conducted large fundraising events in several years.

Recently, several members of Parish Council have been meeting as a small group to study the Bible in a home. They have been praying for the families who live in a government-subsidized housing complex nearby.

The neighbourhood is a mixture of small apartment buildings, single family homes and two strip malls with typical businesses like a pub, hair salon, small grocery store, a used book store and a funky coffee shop. The population and local industry in the area are stable.

There is a Fire Station next door to St. Bede’s and a Community College less than a kilometer down the same street. There are no sports fields or playgrounds in the area.

In the last few years, the police have identified a growing crime rate with more break-ins and an increase in drug dealing. A few parishioners have mentioned they have noticed a group of teenagers hanging around the church’s front steps.

The most actively involved parishioners also have day jobs. Three of the guys belong to the same photography club. Several of the women are into yoga. One couple owns a very successful outdoor equipment store (4-wheelers, hiking gear, fishing rods, etc.).

## **Moving to be more missional...**

At a recent meeting, Parish Council voted to explore the idea of a monthly event for teenagers called "Northern Exposure." Each outing would include a hike in the woods, photography lessons, a short 'wilderness worship' time and a picnic lunch. The photography club guys said they would organize it and the outdoor equipment store owners offered to promote it and donate hiking supplies (water bottles, etc.). ACW members will make brown bag lunches.

Their aim is to connect with young people who frequently gather on the church steps. These are teens who are not currently active in a local church. They hope to build relationships with them, offer them a wholesome activity and share a Good News message about appreciating God's creation.

One council member, Frank Burns, voted against the idea. He said he objected because it was going to cost the parish money to provide cameras and lunches. "Why are we buying all this photography equipment for a bunch of street kids? They're going to smash those cameras on the first trip. Kids like that don't appreciate things anymore," he said. "What a waste of hard-earned money! We should spend our money on the new church flooring we need."

Mr. Burns threatened at the meeting that, "If the Northern Exposure idea went ahead, he would not put one more red cent into the offering!"

Once the news reached some congregation members, another parishioner voiced her objections.

Tammy F. Bakker, called up Rev. Gerald and stated that she was not prepared to support the hiking/photography event for teens because, once again, seniors are being ignored. "Why is everything for the youth? What about us old people?" she said. "Why aren't there more visits to the elderly? We were the ones who worked for years for this church and now we are forgotten!"

### **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:**

Mr. Burns is the Parish Treasurer and a former business owner. His bowling alley enterprise in town, closed earlier this year. League membership has waned and bowling patrons interested declined to a trickle. He also has the first dollar he ever earned! The Burns family is in the top three of Parish envelope givers. Last month he shared privately with Rev. Gerald that his son is hooked on Fentanyl and living in shelters in Vancouver.

Ms. Bakker is the daughter of a priest (who is now deceased), and often refers to herself at congregational meetings as "the Devil's Advocate" and "the voice of the voiceless." She is the church historian and storyteller of grand times of years past. Tammy has been a faithful member of the ACW for 54 years.