



Demonstration and Proclamation

Sabbath School Feature

For Sabbath, August 22, 2020

Our Sabbath School lesson this week concluded with the inspiring words, *"The unselfish ministry of Jesus opens hearts, breaks down prejudice, and creates a receptivity for the gospel. The church is the body of Christ meeting needs in love everywhere. Christ sends us out into our communities to make a difference in His name."* This week's lesson explored Jesus' example of just how to do that.

ADRA has a story to share of how one of our churches is doing that right here in Canada.

North of the Arctic Circle, Igloolik, Nunavut, offers many once-in-a-lifetime experiences. In the winter, the northern lights dance across the sky. In the spring, visitors can camp in an igloo and climb on icebergs still bound in the frozen water. For much of the summer, there is 24-hour daylight. Icebergs set adrift flow past the community, accompanied by migrating beluga and bowhead whales, walruses, and pods of narwhal.

Igloolik is also considered a cultural hub of Nunavut. A creative community, it celebrates its Inuit heritage and identity through its own circus, an arts festival, and a community feast.

Living so far north, however, comes with its own set of challenges. With scant agricultural opportunities, food must be brought in by sea during the summer and by air during the winter. This drives up the cost of food. Though the government has instituted price freezing and subsidies on essentials such as milk, food costs are still staggering.

The burden of these food prices is carried by a community lacking in many job opportunities.

This was the situation before the COVID-19 pandemic. The coronavirus has only made things worse.

With mounting concerns over the capacity to effectively respond to an outbreak, the province closed its borders to non-residents in late March 2020. It also instituted strict self-isolation measures. These measures were particularly difficult for the Inuit as their culture is a very social one. The self-isolation took its toll on the mental health of the community in a variety of heartbreaking ways. It also affected people's ability to find and keep work and

thereby provide for their families. As the cost of living increased in these difficult times, the community's ability to keep pace significantly decreased.

The Igloolik Seventh-day Adventist Church has been reaching out to the community of around 1,600 residents since before the pandemic. With the onset of the pandemic, the church has looked for ways to step up their involvement in the community by meeting its mounting needs. When they learned of the opportunity to receive a grant from a partnership between ADRA, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, and Adventist Community Services – North American Division, they quickly applied.

Their application was granted. With the money they received, they moved quickly to provide 1,620 food hampers to the community, along with sanitation and hygiene supplies. To help community members cope with the many stressors stemming from the pandemic, the church also offered mental health support.

The Igloolik Church is reaching people where they are, meeting their immediate needs. Through this ministry, as the lesson this week points out, God's love is being shown and hearts are being touched for His kingdom.

Our lesson showed that Jesus' "strategy" for reaching people was simple and authentic. He genuinely cared for people and he showed his love through acts and words of kindness and compassion. As the lesson stated, *"Jesus recognized that the world needed a demonstration of the gospel as much as it needed its proclamation... Every day we rub shoulders with people who have all kinds of needs: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Christ is eager to meet those needs through us as we show concern for people's loneliness, sorrow, and heartache, and as we show an interest in their joys, hopes, and dreams."*

As Jesus surveyed the multitudes, he saw rich and poor, healthy and sick, wise and foolish, those close to God and those far from him. He saw humanity in all its states, and he was *"moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd."* (Matthew 9:36, NKJV)

We all are or have been like sheep, weary and scattered. We all need a protective, faithful, tender Shepherd. This year especially, we have all been worn down in one way or another by the pandemic. None of us has been left untouched. We have all walked this path; we can all relate in one way or another to the struggles it has brought on.

But many of us know the Shepherd. We are comforted by him as we look to him to provide for our needs. There are many more in our neighbourhoods, communities, and country that do not know our compassionate Shepherd. We have this amazing chance to



demonstrate our God's compassionate heart and his tender care by showing a real interest in our neighbours' needs and striving to meet them as best as we can.

The Igloolik Seventh-day Adventist Church is doing this, as well as so many other churches, food banks, and senior care centres across the country. You are doing this, as well, by enabling this kind of work to continue with your generous gifts. ADRA is so grateful for your support. You give us the means to show God's love to some of the most vulnerable in our country and in the world. We could not do this work without you.

As people's lives are touched by our genuine care and concern, we can have the confidence that their hearts are softened to the God who inspires us and leads us.