

Port McNeill Baptist Church – Church and Community Profile

History of Membership, Attendance and General Information

The Beginning

Through 1950-1960 a few Christian families moved to the North Island and began to reach out to the communities where they lived. In the early 1960's a Sunday School for the people of Beaver Cove and neighboring Kokish logging camps was started. A small sanctuary was built for the Sunday School at Beaver Cove, and this building a decade later would become the first Baptist Church building in Port McNeill.

In the early 1970's new industries brought new people to the North Island. A group of several Evangelical persuasions began to hold a bible study weekly in the town's elementary school. The nucleus of the Baptist church was established in 1973 with several Christian families, the first pastor (Reverend Ford) was called the same year. Property was purchased for the church site in 1974. In July 1981 the current church building was completed and services began to be held there. By 1991 membership for the church reached 60.

Current Picture

Currently the Baptist Church has 70-80 people attending weekly, including many young families with children. Of these numbers 34 people are current members. Prior to recent changes with service availability and attendance due to Covid-19, approximately 1/3 of the church attendees were under the age of 12. Our church also has many attendees that either founded the church, or were involved in constructing the building and growing the church through the 1980's-1990's. The church, both historically and currently, has been involved in the community with particular strength in outreach and programming for children and youth. Many church members are long-time residents of the town and are involved in various volunteer and service projects throughout the community.

The Church is led by its elected four Deacons, who work closely with the Lead Pastor to help with the vision and the direction of the church as well as providing leadership for its members and mission. There is also a part-time youth pastor position we are hoping to fill. Other offices in the church are filled by volunteer members, elected annually.

Overview of Local Community and Church Life

Port McNeill is a beautiful small town, located on the North end of Vancouver Island. It is approximately 2 hours north of the nearest city, which is Campbell River. The town offers many opportunities for people who love the outdoors. The sea, rivers, lakes, mountains and woods are all within easy reach. In addition, a well-maintained arena offers figure skating, hockey and recreational skating. A curling rink and an outdoors swimming pool are well used when in season. In the recent years we have

opened up a movie theatre, which plays older movies as well as some newer ones at a fraction of the price compared to movie theatres in the cities. Many groups also use the gymnasiums in the schools for tennis, basketball and other sports activities.

The economy of the North Island appears to be improving. Real estate prices, while still affordable, are increasing. People in Port McNeill are friendly. Many are long-term residents, but we do have a segment of our population that is more transient. We have very good water and clean air most of the time. A one-sentence summary might say that Port McNeill is a pleasant, small town with good future prospects.

In terms of town services, there is a gas station, grocery store, several retail stores to purchase daily/household needs. Several restaurants are available for dining out. The town also has several mechanical shops, six hotels/motels, a pet store and other specialty shops. There are six or seven apartment complexes in town. There are also several home-based and public hair salons.

There are two daycares in town; one is located at Cheslakees Elementary school which is also the location of the town's kindergarten program. Sunset Elementary School enrolls students from grades 1-7. North Island secondary school serves Grade 8-12 students of the town and area including the islands, Woss and Port Alice.

A small hospital, medical clinic, one dentist and a physiotherapist serve the people of the town. Specialists including a chiropractor, make regular visits to Port McNeill. An excellent volunteer fire department, an ambulance crew and a number of RCMP officers also provide for the safety of the citizen. Besides the Baptist church there are four other churches in Port McNeill. These are the Apostolic, the Anglican-United, the Catholic, and the Mormon churches.

Logging and Tourism are the main industries of the area. Western Forest Products has a large administrative office in town. Other logging companies are also established here. Logging maintenance shops, a log sort, a ferry terminal and a small craft harbor are part of the community. Several helicopter businesses also offer employment. A small airport is situated a few kilometers from town. Unemployment is relatively low in the area, although when the logging companies shut down for one reason or another many families are affected.

Port Hardy is a thirty-minute drive from Port McNeill. It offers additional shopping, a major airport, an indoor swimming pool and many other conveniences to those willing to make the easy drive there.

In addition, there are two other nearby communities on islands across from Port McNeill. A 20-minute ferry ride will take you to Malcolm Island and the village of Sointula, originally established by Finnish settlers in the early 1900's. Continue on the ferry and you will arrive on Cormorant Island, traditional Kwakwaka'wakw territory and the Village of Alert Bay. Alerta Bay has two First Nations reserves and is home to the U'mista Cultural Centre as well as the world's largest totem pole.

Activities and Organizations of the Church

Prior to the recent changes due to Covid-19, the church was typically a busy place throughout the week, with programs for both children and adults running weekly. These programs include Awana, Junior Youth, senior youth, prayer nights, worship nights, adult bible study and ladies bible study. There were also regular monthly or bimonthly events including potlucks, men's breakfasts and other fellowship events such as dessert nights, bowling, games nights.

There are also several annual celebrations and service projects that occur including community woodcut, golf tournament, spring cleanup, Passover meal, Christmas banquet, family camp and baby showers.

Most of these events are membership-driven and often membership-led. The church hopes to re-start these events and outreaches when public health advice and regulations allow.

Practical Ministry Matters

We offer a fair wage package, access to the FEBC Healthcare Package, RRSP contributions and a car allowance.