

EAGLE BAY COMMUNITY CHURCH HITS 75+ YEARS!

Eagle Bay community is rich in its traditions, volunteers and organizations that make it unique, but many claim that the “soul” of the community is the Eagle Bay Community Church. 2021 witnessed the diamond anniversary for Eagle Bay Community Church, however, due to COVID restrictions, the little church was not able to celebrate this milestone. One year later with a vibrant and growing membership, Eagle Bay Community Church reflects on its 75 years of continued faith. What a wonderful opportunity for the whole community to relate to stories of the present, and listen to tales of the past days – to consider how old and new can combine while moving forward.

The world was changing and shifting in the midst of World War II when talks of a cemetery in Eagle Bay were first considered. The Eagle Bay Farmer’s Institute, a sounding board for many community concerns, started to investigate into the possibility of purchasing land for a local cemetery. At the time (1942), residents who passed away were either buried on their homestead or in a small cemetery in Blind Bay. In December 1945, George Galligan, W. J. Brooks, and J. Russell formed a committee to look into acquiring a site for a cemetery somewhere in Eagle Bay.

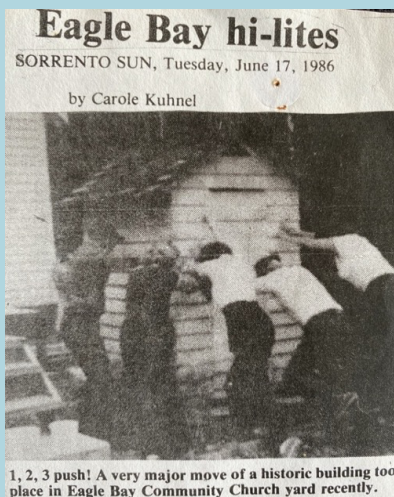
Fortunately, local residents Signe and Robert Davidsen, donated a piece of land for the cemetery, and in addition, made a request for a small church to be built along side. In 1946 a pragmatic group of local citizens (Muggeridge, Ellingsen, Asay, Adley) cleared the land for a cemetery, and constructed a small church. It was decided from the onset that the church would be nondenominational. Such foresight has allowed diverse backgrounds and theologies to find common ground, allowing the church to thrive for over 75 years. Nondenominational services bring Christians of all together. Ministers from other churches, retired pastors, lay people, and missionaries from Canada and abroad bring their interesting stories and insights to all who attend. Their motto is, and always has been, “come in and sit down, you are part of the family”!



By Easter of 1947 regular services were held; Reverend Wheeler from Sorrento was often asked to preach. There was no running water, and an outside biffy “little old house” served the congregation’s needs. The first baby christened in the church was Donna Turgeon, daughter of Leo and Janet Turgeon. The first person buried in the cemetery was Adelbert Galligan, and the first couple married in the church was Elizabeth Swanton and George Galligan.

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As the population of Eagle Bay increased, so was the need for a larger church. In the 1980's through volunteer work, construction of a new church began. However, church members knew in their hearts that they owed much to the pioneers of the heritage church, and that utmost care and respect for the original building needed to be restored and maintained. How could both buildings be brought together? In 1985, with the help from a company from Kelowna, the small heritage church was moved to the back of the new church. The move kept everything in place, even the stain glass window.



With the move of the heritage church and the building of the new church, the "little old house" (outhouse) found itself situated in the front of the church. It became a "bone of contention" as it was left in an awkward location; just outside the front entrance. Finally in June 1986, the "little old house" was moved to its rightful location, out at the "rear" of the two church buildings.

In 1989, a common foyer with a bell tower was erected, and an antique bell installed to call the Eagle Bay residents to worship. Nick Whitehead, the oldest son



of a pioneer family, was the first to ring the bell at the Thanksgiving service October 8, 1989. Today the youth of the church take on this task with enthusiasm and joy.

Everything in Eagle Bay Community Church is unique. Walk around the grounds or visit the inside of the church and feel the "soul"! Look at the beautiful crafted pews, lectern and altar crafted by Mr. Ellingsen, the stained-glass window donated by Elizabeth Galligan, the crocheted picture of the "Last Supper" by Anna Whitehead. This place is truly a community church. As Eagle Bay continues to grow, it is a good time to reflect upon the important things in our lives - things that money cannot buy; faith, fellowship and service to others. Blessings to those who went before, and those that continue to serve in the Eagle Bay Community.

Highlights from the heritage church will be submitted throughout the year in the Eagle Bay Eye. If you have any further information, stories, articles, or pictures to add to these growing memories please feel free to contact Karen Loerke (email: kloerke@telus.net) and I will do my best to include them.