



AGC
ASSOCIATED GOSPEL CHURCHES

OUR PURPOSE

To glorify God by partnering together in obedience to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission

OUR VISION

To be a movement of healthy reproducing churches



Connect 2021

Pointing them to Jesus

As a kid in Scouts, I learned to read maps. We often had outdoor activities, sometimes team competitions that revolved around overcoming obstacles to arrive at a set destination. Understanding how to use a map and compass could get you to the desired location. Today, maps have largely been replaced with a GPS. Whether it's finding an address in a new city or the closest pizza shop, a GPS is all you need. Your navigational system may be attached to your watch, your phone, or your vehicle. A GPS, or even an old-fashioned paper map for that matter, will only help you arrive at your destination when you know where you want to go.

Over this past year, COVID-19 has turned our world upside-down. We have faced situations that had not previously been thought about. We have had to adapt to wearing masks, physical distancing, limited social and religious gatherings, Livestream or pre-recorded/online worship services, online school, and limited capacity for retail shopping. These changes happened quite rapidly, with little time to prepare.

We began to ask new questions; How do we do church in this environment? How do we be the Body and practice the "one another's"? How do we point people to Jesus in a pandemic? In his book *Missional Map-Making* written ten years ago, Alan Roxburgh noted what many of us are feeling today; *"Many of us feel like we are suddenly in unfamiliar land where our internal maps of how things should be no longer match what's going on around us ... We're making it up as we go because our maps of how church operates in the world don't make sense anymore."*

Thankfully, even joyfully, we still have a map that faithfully guides us. The journey has taken a turn for sure; the road is less visible and maybe a bit more treacherous, but God's Word continues to be our map, our GPS, our shining light. The apostle Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:9; *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."* We still know our destination!

I am amazed by how our AGC church family has continued to echo the sentiment of these words in pointing others to Jesus. This past year has been difficult and continues to be so, but our God is sovereign! Our mission remains the same even though our maps and our GPS can't always tell us where we need to go. God's Word helps us focus on this uncertain journey. Take heart, the Lord is with us and He will give us His guidance. **Our job is to trust Him and continue to take the message of hope to the hopeless, a message of healing to those who are sick, and the message of salvation and restoration to those who are lost.**

This year's CONNECT focuses on the theme of *"Pointing Them to Jesus."* I trust these living stories shared by our AGC family will encourage you as you continue your journey!

Rev. Bill Allan – AGC President



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God is Faithful

Centro Cristiano de la Familia (CCF) is a Spanish-speaking ministry founded 10 years ago. The question has been asked, "How did a small group of believers see and experience God at work during a global pandemic?"

Like all churches, since March 2020, we stopped meeting on our premises. This meant we had to rely on technology. We preached via Facebook Live on Sundays and had our Friday Bible studies through Zoom. On Saturdays, we held monthly meetings including ladies', men's, children's, and couple's studies. Gladys, my wife, continued to minister to our ladies using social media and phone calls. Likewise, with the Elders and their wives, I encouraged them to continue meeting within the framework allowed. In the summer we were able to meet on Saturdays at area parks for study and for our children to play. This helped our community feel connected as we coped with the stressors of life, especially during COVID. One of the very hardest things for our tight-knit community was to grieve together, as several of our family members in Mexico died from COVID. These are the times when we learn how much we truly need each other, and we thank God for our church family as the love we show can be used to point people to Jesus!

Regarding our finances, God has been faithful in providing for the needs of the church. The congregation continued to support the church with their offerings via e-transfer. We continued to pay the rent even though we did not use the premises because we honoured our commitment. The church has not stopped despite the challenges. God has been good and faithful. To God be the glory!

Rev. Rafael Mixco – Centro Cristiano de la Familia (CCF), Montreal, QC

"He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it" (1Thessalonians 5:24).

A BIGGAR Harvest

The Global Pandemic made life challenging for us all! However, it's been a joy and privilege to see God at work in unexpected ways.

COVID hasn't stopped us from pointing people to Jesus within our community. Nor has it stopped the Holy Spirit from working in the hearts of people resulting in a harvest of souls. Near the end of August 2020, we had the privilege of baptizing five new believers who are being disciplined and growing in their new-found faith!

Since that time, the Lord has given us the privilege of leading five more souls to Christ. Let me share one of these testimonies with you.

I became acquainted with an 80-year-old lady who had never made church or the Lord top priority in her life. For more than a year I would go and visit her in the seniors' residence. My heart was burdened for her lost condition. One day, her brother, a Christian, called me, and said his sister was having heart issues, so could I go and visit her. It was one day before a complete lockdown that I heeded the call. Once there, I asked her "if you were to die would you know for sure you'd be in heaven?" She said, "you know I've been wondering about that over the past little while. I would hope so." "Well," I said to her, "you can know so!" I shared a few Scripture passages explaining how she could know for sure she would be in heaven. "Do you want to know for sure?" I asked. She leaned forward in her chair and said, "YES!" She prayed and as the tears flowed, she said, "now I am at peace with God!" She has since passed away, and her last words were, "I hope to see you in heaven!"

Rev. Doug Motz – Biggar Associated Gospel Church, Biggar, SK

"When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

(Matthew 9:36-38).



Unchanging Gospel in an Ever-Changing Culture

Like most pastors, I scrambled to increase our church's online presence in the early weeks of the COVID19 shutdown. We could no longer ignore the truth: Canadians were spending more time online than ever before and are more likely to ask Google about Jesus than walk into a church and ask a pastor. This meant that we had to not only convert our Sunday services to an online format but essentially all our ministries. It wasn't an option to say "Well, let's do the bare minimum and hope to get back to normal soon." Being a physical church with a virtual presence was the new normal.

Our congregation was ready and willing to adapt to online expressions of church and share digital church content in a big way. Many had unchurched friends who they knew might click on a link to a presentation of the gospel, so they were happy to have videos, podcasts, and articles to share with them.

We created a video series to teach people how to study Scripture on their own and how to find Christ and hope in the Psalms. We immediately started getting emails from people in our city and around the world. While the videos were intended for Christians, the Spirit used them to impact many skeptics. One such man, David, was an English major who often encountered the Bible and wanted to understand it better. A member of our church introduced him to our videos.

David's interaction started with questions of poetic structure and Hebrew translations but quickly moved to more theological and philosophical concerns. Then the emails stopped. David had started joining on Sunday mornings to watch our online services. One week before Christmas he emailed and said that though he had a lot of questions, he was now certain that Jesus was the Son of God and had died for him.

The world is different. Nearly 40% of people meet their spouses online and more people are meeting Jesus there too. Should we be surprised that technology can be used to *point them to Jesus*? Scripture tells us that God has always laboured to meet us where we are. He's appeared as a burning bush, a pillar of fire, a "still small voice" and even a baby. Why should we be surprised when He meets us online? God seems to love presenting Himself as the unchanging Lord of the universe to an ever-changing humanity.

Rev. Carl Santos – Redeemer Bible Church, Niagara Falls, ON

The Master Builder



While the stressors of COVID-19 took the wind out of many sails, God continued to provide the power for us to find the updraft. God promised to build His Church and the gates of Hell (or even Coronavirus) cannot stop what He is doing and will continue to do (Matt. 16:18).

This hit home in a very personal way within my family. Carla and I have three daughters, whom we have sought to point to Christ since the days of their birth. Two of them are now in their teen years and it has become even more clear to us that unless the Lord builds the house, the builders

labour in vain (Ps. 127:1). We must actively work to point our children to Christ, yet they won't receive Christ unless and until the Lord opens their eyes to their sin and their need for a Saviour.

Our middle daughter (who is now 14) had quite the year! While we didn't talk much about COVID-19 in our home, it was evidently on her mind. During the summer, she was in an all-terrain vehicle mishap that could have been deadly. Yet, by the grace of God, she was unharmed. Then, early in the new year, she was travelling with a few other teens in a truck when it collided with another vehicle. Again, no one was harmed.

On the day of that accident, she was inconsolable. As the day continued, we wondered why she was so upset. That night, through tears, she confessed that she was looking back at God's hand upon her and realized how gracious the Lord had been. She said that had she died in either of those close calls, she feared that she would not have been in God's presence for eternity. She had been "posing as a Christian" (her words). That night, January 10th of 2021, she repented and trusted Christ as her Saviour. She was baptized on March 21st.

During all that this year has brought, God has continually been at work in the hearts of many people. It has reminded me that we ought never to neglect our most important work – to point people to Jesus. The Lord is building His Church and we must entrust souls to His care. He is the Master Builder!

Rev. Matthew Martens – Black Diamond Gospel Chapel, Black Diamond, AB

EVERYONE IS
WELCOME

Feed My Sheep

Our small church is in the heart of Sutton, Ontario, a lakefront town with two main categories of people: those who have moved here from Toronto and those who have been here all their lives. Alcoholism, drug addiction, and poverty make up a large part of Sutton's downtown core population, and our church has focused on reaching these folks. We have seen many of them join our congregation through our Sunday morning services and community meals. Yet, as the pandemic hit, our ability to reach out, especially to people who don't have internet for Livestream came to a halt.

This pandemic made us rethink how we were doing evangelism and discipleship at LCF! Instead of waiting for people to come to our services or Livestream, we knew we needed to bring the Gospel to them. This led us to convert our church storefront into a food pantry! The mission wasn't just to provide food, which is a significant need in our town, but to use the food as a medium of sharing the Gospel. Each of our food drivers is matched with a family to which we regularly deliver food. Through these weekly encounters, we build relationships, pray for needs, and share the good news of Jesus. Through this ministry, we have seen two individuals come to Christ, one who will soon be baptized!

When we began, people were suspicious and rarely let us pray for them. Yet, as they built a relationship of trust with our food ministry members, they began to share about their situations, their families' hardships and allow us to pray for them. This led to opportunities to *point them to Jesus*, and sometimes the Gospel message was accepted.

Through this pandemic, God has taught our church to be more outward-focused and take our command seriously to "go and make disciples."

Pastor Josiah Kenniphaas – Lakeshore Community Fellowship, Sutton, ON

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"
(Matthew 28:19).

Living Hope Springs Forth



With the bleakness of winter and isolation restrictions behind us, how miraculous it is to see new birth spring forth. We have exciting news of an addition to our family of AGC Churches! A reception service was held for Living Hope Bible Church on March 21st, 2021.

There was a thriving body of believers in the community of Prince Albert, SK, but due to various circumstances, they found themselves in a difficult place. Initially, they reached out to my father who had filled in as pulpit supply in the past. After some months of preaching and providing shepherd leadership, it became apparent that this congregation needed to be in contact with a new denomination for oversight. That is where I entered the scene. I was asked to make a presentation to the church leadership regarding membership in The Associated Gospel Churches, where I have done ministry for many years. After considering their options, they voted to join the AGC. They also asked if I would be willing to help them during the transition period. After prayerful consideration, I agreed.

It's been a challenge to navigate the logistics during COVID, but we have seen God at work in and through it all. A couple of new people started attending and there have been several others who have come to check us out. Due to COVID, we decided to go on-line through our new website. In the first 2 weeks, we had 129 brand new visitors! We moved into a series of messages on prayer, including how we can pray for the lost. We asked God to show us how He would like us to point others to Jesus, specifically within our neighbourhood. Like a new sapling, we're still very much in the growing stage, but we are confident that God will use this church to be a light for Him moving forward.

Rev. Larry Rempel, Transition Pastor – Living Hope Bible Church, Prince Albert, SK

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:19).

Creative Gospel Ministry

Many of us have been reminded this past year that 'the Church is the people, not the building.' At Trinity Bible Church, the pandemic allowed us to think through how we might further utilize our facilities for ministry purposes. Our church owns over 100 acres, and we've put the space to use in different ways.

When we first re-opened the church at the end of the summer, we held outdoor worship services to allow for more people to attend. The services were well-received, and the Lord blessed us with favourable weather each Sunday, from early September through the end of October! Those who were comfortable enough sat in lawn chairs in the parking lot, while others remained in their vehicles. Following the service, we enjoyed conversation and fellowship.

Beyond the Sunday experience, considerable time and effort was invested in restoring our trail network. Much of our land is forested, and there are several beautiful trails to enjoy while exploring God's creation. We were thrilled to watch so many people, not only those from our church family but many from the community enjoying our trails, taking advantage of the solitude and serenity they offer. Our prayer is that those who don't know the Lord would encounter Him as they experience the *jubilation of the fields and the joy of the forest* (Psalm 96:12).

We long for the day when we can return to some semblance of a 'normal' worship service. We certainly lament the various restrictions that limit our ability to gather everyone in the same space at once, but we are thankful for the Lord's leading us to rethink how we can point others to Jesus in creative ways.

Rev. Matt Rice – Trinity Bible Church of Ottawa, Osgoode, ON



New to The AGC National Staff



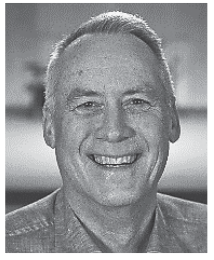
Rev. Rob Cochrane, Regional Director, AGC West

Rob has served in pastoral ministry with Western AGC churches for over 36 years. Rob and his wife Wendy live in Swift Current, SK and they have three adult children. Rob's ministry has been characterized by an emphasis on expository preaching as well as mentoring and discipling numerous young pastors.



Rev. Dr. Paul Brittain, National Coordinator of Doctrine & Credentials

Paul served at Peoples Church of Montreal before serving these last 22 years as Pastor of Connect Community Church in Hamilton, ON. Paul and his wife LaFaye have five children and seven grandchildren. Paul has volunteered with Doctrine and Credentials for most of his years with the AGC.



Rev. John Garner, Associate Regional Director, AGC East

John served for 43 years in pastoral settings, most recently at Redeemer Bible Church, an AGC church in Niagara Falls. John and Peggi are grateful parents to two sons and their wives, with three grandsons rounding out the family circle. John has a passion to help people grow in becoming courageous and compassionate followers of Jesus.

By the Numbers 2020

Applications Processed: ■ 37

Interviews conducted: ■ 26

Inductions: ■ 25

Inductions Pending: ■ 11

Credentials Issued: ■ 15

New to the AGC 2020/2021

- Bonanza Gospel Chapel, Bonanza, AB
- Mannville Community Church, Mannville AB
- Living Hope Bible Church, Prince Albert, SK
- Église Évangélique Bérée, Laval, QC



Remembered

Rev. Rey Catangay (*God's Dwelling Place Christian Ministries, Brampton ON*) was called home to be with the Lord during the COVID Pandemic. Rey demonstrated the joy of the Lord and always had a smile on his face as he served those God called him to lead. We continue to pray for his wife Virginia and family. Rey is greatly missed by his loved ones including his AGC family and friends.



Rev. Randy Jost (*The Met, Ottawa ON*) will be remembered as a kind and compassionate man who reflected the love of Jesus. We imagine him singing in the presence of God with that great baritone voice that has blessed so many. Randy began his AGC ministry in Kelowna, B.C, before serving these past 31 years in various pastoral roles at the Met. He served in leadership roles within the AGC, including two terms as National Board Moderator. He was loved and well-respected by us all. Randy will be greatly missed. We continue to pray for his wife Evelyn, and family.

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Planting the Seed

On February 7th, 2021, Église Évangélique Bérée joined the AGC family! Although attendance for the reception and ordination commemoration was limited to ten people due to COVID restrictions, the celebratory spirit was not dampened. An exceptional service was held!

- **How was the initial seed planted?** - In 2019, Pastor Eden McGuffie of Église Évangélique Philadelphie, an AGC church in Saint-Léonard, QC encouraged Élysée Isidor and his wife, Micheline, to consider planting a new church.
- **What were the next steps of growth?** - This new gathering of believers began meeting on Laval Island, which is just north of Montreal.
- **How was discouragement overcome, especially during COVID?** - Pastor McGuffie and Lisson Morisseau from Philadelphie and Pastor Timothée Jovin from Chapelle Évangélique Emmanuel greatly encouraged this new church plant during the period of pandemic confinement. Pastors encouraging pastors is deeply valued within the family of AGC churches.
- **What makes this mission unique?** - Bérée is a multicultural church that has a local evangelistic outreach as well as ministry connections on two Indigenous reserves several hours north of Laval. They are an enthusiastic group of believers who share a ministry of hospitality as well as a heart and passion to point people to Jesus.

The AGC warmly welcomes Pastor Élysée and Micheline and the congregation of Église Évangélique Bérée!



Pandemic Ponderings

Pointing them to Jesus - I am arrested and unsettled by this simple yet thought-provoking phrase. Who are the 'them' in my relational circles? How, amid this era of COVID, with the limitations and restrictions which impact our relationships do I **'point them to Jesus'**?

I enjoy people, whether meeting responsibly in person or through technology. I have noticed that spiritual questions are brewing and percolating in many minds and hearts. As Jesus said, *"the fields are white unto harvest."* This is true today, in your circles and mine.

I eagerly engage in important conversations at Starbucks while waiting for my Grande 5 scoop decaf to be made. Questions are quietly whispered to me, sometimes hard to hear ones through the masks and plexiglass! An honest vulnerability has been voiced and the opportunity to share spiritual truths about Jesus has been presented. Some of these green-aproned adults are followers of Jesus and some are interested listeners. Yet, how critical it is to thoughtfully listen to people, to learn about their likes and fears, their dreams, and deep struggles. I want to **'point them to Jesus'** with wisdom and grace, helping them see that He is ready to meet them right where they are, in the middle of their doubts and cynicism, their hopes and ambitions.

In this journey, an undercurrent of fear courses through my soul, often in the shape of questions such as:

- *How direct should I be with this person, in this moment?*
- *How do I point family members to Jesus when their cynicism and disenchantment run deep and have hardened over the years?*
- *How do I show the message of God's love to someone who knows the basics of the Gospel, but has made it plain that a personal commitment is not an option for them?*

My ponderings lead me to this conclusion . . . I hope that my life, as imperfect as it is, will express something of the grace and truth of Jesus, in word, action and attitude, as I prayerfully point people to Jesus, our Saviour.

Rev. John Garner – Associate Regional Director, AGC East

Living the Dream

Being submerged in a global pandemic, political unrest, lockdowns, and a time of uncertainty caused a downward spiral in many people's emotions. As a single person, I can testify to this reality. Yet, God in His grace brings us through. While working through discouragement due to the above-mentioned realities, God once again spoke into my life.

A wise team member shared these words with me; *"We are so very blessed to be doing this ministry. We get to meet many modern-day heroes of the faith and hear and see from our great and awesome God. Most days, I must pinch myself to be sure this is not just a dream. I'm living the dream!"*

These wise words of encouragement helped create an attitude shift. I recall all the ways God in His wisdom guides me out of the valley. In my aloneness, I can choose to have a pity party, or I can reach out to others with a kind

word, a phone call, and a prayer. Lamenting that I was feeling disconnected, I prayed, talked it over with a friend, and started a Bible study that includes eight women. We meet by Zoom, yet it created community and is helping us grow our faith so that we in turn can point others to Jesus.

Pointing people to Jesus requires that we rise above our inward focus and shift our minds towards all that we have in Christ Jesus. Once we count our blessings, we gain traction and are much more compelled to share the Good News of God's grace with others, whether in word or deed.

As we've seen by the stories that have been shared . . . **POINTING THEM TO JESUS . . . IS LIVING THE DREAM!**

Thanks be to God,

Susan Page – AGC Church Relations Coordinator

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20, 21).



Visit our website @
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