

Connect 2012



Church in the Community *The Hands & Feet of Jesus*

One of the high values in the AGC is to love in ways that transform the people around us. This transformation is "God's Work" first in the life of the church and then out into the community.

Living the gospel in the community is the focus of this year's Connect. Our desire is that our AGC churches are agents of transformation, extending grace and mercy throughout the communities that we are in. (The hands and feet of Jesus.)

Our AGC Connect Publication for 2012 features stories from a cross section of AGC churches. As you read these stories may you be inspired to love in ways that transform the people in your 'world'.

Rev. Dr. Bill Fietje
President

*We will act as the
'Church in the Community'... being
an integral, authentic, positive,
transformational agent of good.*

The Gathering House, Chesterville, ON

A Longing for Community, a Longing for Christ

"I've been waiting for you"

Those words; "I've been waiting for you", spoken by one of our new friends, "Timmy" came as a wonderful confirmation of God's call on our little church. Seeking God's direction, we joined Him in a work that had begun long before the thought of changing location, identity, and mission had even registered on our radar.

Our dramatic change of location was brought about by realizing that an "attractional" vision for our church seemed to get frustrated at every turn. It was out of that frustration that God began to raise a "missional" vision in our hearts. We asked, "How can we best serve our community?" Compelled to sell our property in Winchester, we looked for a new place where people could slow down, have a coffee, enjoy good conversations and share common interests. Little did we know that this new vision would require a new name and a new town, but as Timmy so succinctly confirmed, that was what God had planned all along! So our move from Winchester to Chesterville took place.

Now, after one year in our newly renovated building in the heart of downtown Chesterville, we can see God's fingerprints all over the place. The town has embraced us and we can't find the time to get to all of the service opportunities. Whether we are serving coffee in our coffee shop, acting as the "warming and refreshment station" for Chesterville's winter carnival, providing recreational clubs for kids or opening our doors for local artists to display their work; we know we are right where God wants us to be. By serving in these many ways, we at The Gathering House are making new friends while providing a place where people can come and satisfy the longing that God has been cultivating in their hearts... a longing for community... a longing for Christ.

Pastor Tim Edwards



To ALL Generations!

*For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to each generation.*

PSALM 100:5, NLT

As we celebrated the 70th Anniversary of Fair Havens Ministries this past year, I was reminded again of the importance of places like Fair Havens where the



consistency of God's message is presented over time, to many generations.

Fair Havens exists to provide a place where people can have a life changing experience with God. Perhaps the greatest impact results from the fact that not just one generation of family

is impacted. The nature of family camp is such that not only are children influenced for God's Kingdom but so are parents and even grandparents. One grandmother wrote the following:

"Grandpa walked into the Tuck Shop one afternoon and saw a youth leader praying with our granddaughter and two of her friends - how great is that!"

Another guest wrote:

"We have camped here for 30 some years; our 4 children always looked forward to coming. So much so that our teenage daughter missed 1 year and had to come along the next year. . . . and then met her husband here!"

These are just two examples of families being impacted across many generations and of the ability of God's Word to stay true and consistent in the lives of our guests even as our society around us clamors to find its footing in a sea of change.

We praise God for His willingness to use a ministry like Fair Havens to keep His truth in the minds and hearts of the generations and we are thankful that the AGC has been faithful in encouraging this ministry over these many years.

John Friesen

Executive Director, Fair Havens Ministries

Compass Point Bible Church, Ellis Campus • Hamilton, Ontario

His Kingdom Come *As I Serve, I See Jesus*

During my early twenties, like so many people my age, I found myself drifting away from the organized church and began to wrestle with all that I had learned and was seeing. It was difficult to reconcile the rhythms of the church with the life that Jesus calls His followers to.

At the end of 2010, an opportunity presented itself to spend a few months in Malawi with a family who has given everything to God, trusted Him wholly and put the gospel into action. On returning home, I desperately wanted a piece of that in my life, desiring to see my faith as more than a Sunday morning faith and a promise of eternity, but a faith relevant in the here and now.

I was asked to help out at one of the programs at the Ellis Campus and learned that we can serve Jesus and be His hands and feet here in Ontario. Over the last year, God has been using the teaching and service opportunities at the Ellis Campus of Compass Point Bible Church to transform my faith. Serving at Ellis has provided me with an opportunity to see His Kingdom come. As we worship and serve in one of the most under-resourced neighbourhoods in Canada we have front row seats to watch the Gospel come to life. We get to partner with God as Heaven comes to earth; with every meal we serve, every child we clothe and every relationship we build. Ellis has shown me that a church can and should engage 24/7.

Spending time at Ellis investing in the neighbourhood, I get to meet Jesus and have begun to see Him in the kids of our drop-in, the families picking up food from our grocery program, and in Sister Care – Hamilton, as we reach out with kindness to those working the streets.

As I serve, I see Jesus and learn that one of the greatest things our faith can offer is the Kingdom here and now.

Kyle Ford

What would you do with \$100?

"Pay it Forward" - alungstory.ca

What would you do with \$100? Imagine the surprise in the community when in this real life "Pay-it-forward" project Pastor Steve Stewart gave at least one \$100 bill to each family in the congregation for a "Kingdom Assignment" to "do something good" (Parable of the talents - Matthew 25:14-30). This originated from an anonymous gift of \$10000 given to Pastor Steve Stewart of Community Bible Church in Stittsville, Ontario.

For my own "Kingdom assignment" I wanted to try an online initiative with my \$100... and then the next day, two of my coworkers joined in and donated an additional \$180!

Later a need arose when a family friend H  l  ne, a bright, talented, 20-year-old had increasing difficulty breathing. Physical activity was draining and it was obvious something was very wrong!

She was diagnosed with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis meaning that her lungs are losing elasticity. Her only option is a double lung transplant at Toronto General Hospital (TGH).

In January 2012, H  l  ne had to move to downtown Toronto to be close to TGH. Her mother, Manon, took an unpaid leave of absence to accompany H  l  ne while her father and three siblings stayed in Ottawa. They needed help covering their living expenses while waiting for the transplant.



The \$280 set up a website where H  l  ne and her mom discuss needing/receiving a double lung transplant. H  l  ne's story has attracted media attention.

Total donations toward H  l  ne's expenses had exceeded \$8000. Organ donor registrations had increased by 600% over one week.

This is a great example of how "paying it forward" has turned a "Kingdom assignment" into a life-changing experience. Community Bible Church has succeeded in turning a biblical parable into a modern day miracle.

Taber Bucknell





Varsity Bible Church • Calgary, Alberta

The Lowly Hotdog is Warming People Up to the Idea of Church *The Bridge*

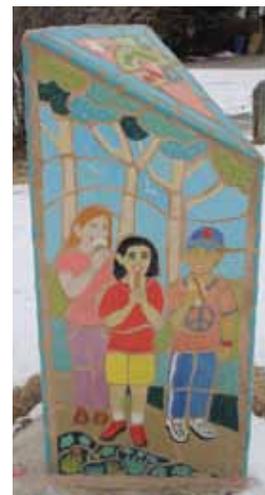
Chain link fences and a busy four lane road separates our church building from the 7-11 across the street. There is also a pedestrian bridge that connects us. During school days we would see herds of kids making their way over there, walking right past our church, in search of junk food.

I think that Jesus' words "do not work for the food that spoils but work for the food that endures to eternal life" inspired us. Why not use the food that spoils for eternal purposes? "Hot Dog Day" was born as a way to answer that question. Mat Eapen, our youth pastor, found himself in our parking lot at noon hour one day serving a total of three hotdogs to kids who were passing by. Since that time, four years ago, this ministry has grown and there are over four hundred hotdogs being eaten each Thursday at noon by hundreds of kids from several local schools. Mat has a team of wonderful volunteers who range in age from high school kids, to 80 year olds who work boiling wieners and setting things up. They then spend time in the parking lot getting to know these young people. During the winter months the kids come inside - yes, into a church building and play games and talk. Friendships are being built. Prejudices are being broken down. The lowly hotdog is warming people up to the idea of church. They discover that they can enter the building, eat a hotdog, and not be vaporized immediately! We are providing a place where these kids feel welcome and safe.

I've included a photo of a piece of art done in our community last fall by a local artist, with some time contributed by the people of our church as well as the local schools. It is a mosaic, which says, "Among Friends". When I saw this piece of art, situated now in a little green space between our church building and the pedestrian overpass - yes, right beside where all the kids walk to 7-11, I was just plain grateful. Grateful that God was giving us a reputation as a 'friend' in our community, and grateful that God was helping us to make connections.

The people of our church offering hospitality, had become a bridge themselves, extending the love of God and touching lives in His name.

Pastor Keith D'Eall



Bridgewater Open Bible Church • Bridgewater, Nova Scotia

Prayer is our "Declaration of Dependence" upon God *We Were Not Satisfied with the Status Quo, Ho-Hum Prayer Services*

It was about two years ago that we decided that we were not going to be a "prayerless" church. Furthermore, we were not satisfied with the status quo, ho-hum prayer services that have choked the life out of corporate prayer for many of us throughout the years, with endless prayer requests and frankly, little prayer.

Our desire was to ignite in God's people a passion to pray and seek God's face (adoration) not just His hand (requests). So, instead of cancelling our mid-week prayer meeting, we gave it even more "Prime-Time" - Sunday night. But this is not your usual Prayer Meeting. We gave it a complete overhaul. Everything we do is born out of Scripture - whether it is our singing, our praises, our prayers, or our instruction in the word. We begin with praising God for who He is in song. Then we read the text for the evening and begin praising God aloud for His attributes. We follow that with a relevant song before diving a little deeper into the text to make life application. Finally, we continue to bring a variety of requests before the throne of grace intermingled with songs of worship. The key for us is - it's never the same.

We believe that this increase in our passion to pray with others and exalt the Savior has blessed our congregation in ways we don't yet, nor ever will, fully understand. We believe prayer is our "Declaration of Dependence" upon God. Since refocusing ourselves on that dependency, we have not only observed a steady increase in the faith of our congregation, we have also witnessed a significant numerical growth spurt. Our faith is up. Our number of committed lives is up. Our measure of impact upon our community is up. All of these results because of a refocus upon prayer? Well, for us, we humbly believe that's where anything good begins.

Pastor Jeff Woodcock



AGC Foundational Values and Vision...

As a MOVEMENT of Healthy Reproducing Churches

AGC Foundational Values...

Biblical Authority:

"We will demonstrate radical absolute dependence on the truth of the Bible in its entirety, in an age of intellectual drifting that is seeking for truth"

Dynamic Spirituality:

"We will seek to bring glory to God by living out, in diverse ways, the reality and integrity of our new life in Christ."

Intentional Reproduction:

"We will reproduce healthy churches whose passion is to reproduce and multiply the life of the Kingdom of God."

Loving Relationships:

"We will love in ways that transform the lives of people around us, regardless of age, race, gender, religion or social standing."

Effective Disciple making:

"We will strive to make devoted followers of Christ who learn to follow Jesus, in ways relevant to the time and context in which we live."

Strategic Partnerships:

"We will develop partnerships for greater effectiveness locally and nationally among AGC churches and like-minded organizations by intentionally removing barriers, while respecting historic and theological distinctives."

Cultural Transformation:

"We will act as the 'Church in the Community'... being an integral, authentic, positive, transformational agent of good."

Leadership Development:

"We will strive to have Spirit filled leaders passionately committed to developing healthy churches and servant leadership."

We see ...

Intentional Reproduction:

"We see a minimum of five new churches or congregations birthed each year."

Strategic Partnerships:

"We see the AGC partnering with four other denominations in strategic Kingdom projects within three years."

Cultural Transformation:

"We see the AGC engaged in local, regional and national initiatives of mercy and justice that serve to inform, reform and transform our society."

Leadership Development:

"We see all AGC leaders on a life-long learning program that will include mentoring as well as formal and informal training."

Resource Centre:

"We see the AGC as a resource to equip, train, motivate and mobilize churches of all sizes toward effective ministry."

Église Évangélique de Blainville, Blainville, Québec

"I am with you always"

The greatest asset to be acquired in our generation is to invest in winning Canadians to Christ from coast to coast including the 8,000,000 lost souls of Quebec.

Lysa, Ernest and their five children recently moved to Blainville. Before coming to Quebec, Lysa found our church through our website. Lysa's family has shared the gospel with their plumber, the pizza merchant and several French-speaking neighbors. One afternoon, Lysa put me in contact with Eric, their plumber to tell him about Jesus. I was encouraged to see how God is on a mission in Blainville!

Blainville church is seeking to be more visible in our city. We have a website designed to reach non-Christians. Last Sunday, one family attended following their visit to our web site, www.egliseblainville.ca. Incredibly, this family who lives in Blainville, knew nothing about the existence of our church.

When our churches invest in prayer and evangelism for church planting projects, this will have an eternal impact in winning families to Christ.

The stories of families from Blainville, are a demonstration that the Lord is faithful when He says "I am with you always".

May the Spirit of God be upon us all in the mission of the Gospel.

Charles-Henri Côté

Pastor-Churchplanter



Thank you...

What a blessing it has been to compile and edit the articles for this years Connect. Thank you to those who willingly shared. No doubt there are thousands of untold stories yet to tell. The blessing of community is that in the sharing, we encourage and spur one another on. I'm inspired by quotes that have lasted down through the generations. This quote speaks to our topic.

*"Christ has no body now, but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth, but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which
Christ looks compassion into the world.
Yours are the feet
with which Christ walks to do good.
Yours are the hands
with which Christ blesses the world."*

~ Saint Teresa of Avila

May God continue to transform our hearts, our churches and our communities.

Susan Page

Church Relations Coordinator

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