



The Associated Gospel Churches exist

to glorify God by partnering together in obedience to the Great Commandment

Matthew 22:37–40

and the Great Commission

Matthew 28:19–20

The vision of the AGC

is to be a movement of healthy reproducing churches

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

Connect 2015

Remarkable *Transformation*

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” Jesus declares. “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

THESE VERSES RAISE THE QUESTION:

“What is our mandate as the Church?”

VERY SIMPLY IT IS: {

- *to live under the authority of Jesus Christ in all we do.*
- *to go and make disciples.*
- *to baptize new believers, identifying them as disciples of Jesus.*
- *to teach believers to obey the clear teachings of Jesus found in the Bible.*

THIS MANDATE ESSENTIALLY LAYS ON THE CHURCH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO *be a witnessing Church.*

A HEALTHY CHURCH IS ONE THAT: {

- *has faith in the resurrected Jesus.*
- *lives in and under the authority of the living Jesus.*
- *is filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.*

Is this true for each one of us and for our churches? If so, we can expect to see a remarkable witness for Him in our world. Where the Spirit of God is present and at work there is remarkable change. It is transforming.

I have the privilege of seeing and hearing many remarkable transformational stories throughout my travels to our wonderful family of AGC churches. As you read Connect 2015, I pray that you will be encouraged and inspired to be Christ's witness in your own unique sphere of influence.



Bill Fietje
President

bill@agcofcanada.com

TO BE A (*remarkable & transforming*) MOVEMENT OF HEALTHY REPRODUCING CHURCHES ... FOR HIS GLORY!

From our small beginnings ...

God has grown us into an Association of 165 congregations across Canada, united in vision and purpose. Our desire is to be a people who are continually being transformed into His likeness. It is this transformational process that God uses to draw others to Himself.

Throughout our 90 year history, there have been thousands of encouraging stories of Christ's transforming work. Storytelling helps pass the witness to future generations.

Paul's prayer for the Church at Ephesus is our prayer for the Associated Gospel Churches today.

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.” **Ephesians 3:14-21**

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Roller Coaster Ride

My journey towards transformation has been a roller coaster ride of epic highs and lows. The downhill slide began with my parents' divorce. While I attended a Catholic church every Sunday with my mom, at home I had to deal with her drinking. The downward spiral escalated when my father announced that he was moving away with my stepmom to start a life with his new family. I was crushed.

As a teenager, I thought I had all the answers. My father was no longer around to help me and I didn't even want to talk to God. At the age of 16, I left home because I couldn't take my mom's alcohol abuse or my stepfather's discipline. Instead of seeking God, I turned to drugs and alcohol. After I graduated from a Catholic school and found employment, I continued making poor choices.

I was back on speaking terms with my mother when I received terrible news that I needed surgery to remove some pre-cancerous cells. I called out to God with my uncertainty and questions, but I could not hear His voice. I was too full of hate.

A few years later, I had a miracle child of my own and I took her to church because I wanted to do the right thing. Unfortunately, I was now the one with a bottle in my hand. I was so ashamed and didn't want my daughter to see me like this so she went to her Nana's. The ride plummeted.

As the years passed, I became sober and started attending college. I entered into a relationship with a wonderful man but was very hurt when he moved to Provost, five hours away from where I lived. I had a decision to make – should I move to Provost? I prayed to God for direction or a sign. That very night there was a murder that took place four houses down from where I lived. My decision was made and I moved to Provost.

Hold on to your hats because this is the best part of the ride! My second child was born and I was introduced to a wonderful person named Sylvia. Sylvia knew of my struggles in faith and she invited me to her church (New Hope Gospel Church).

As I sat and listened to the Word of God, it began to make sense. Pastor Doug quoted Acts 16:30 **"He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"** followed by John 3:16 **"For God so loved the World that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."** I could feel God's love for me. On that day, I asked for forgiveness and accepted God into my life. I rejoice to say, that I have been transformed! Now, the roller coaster is the ride of a lifetime!

Nicole New Hope Church Provost, Alberta



Mission Transformation



As a young couple starting out in life, the one thing that my wife Kerri and I sought was stability. My career path of choice was that of a Paramedic. I had settled into my job and a new home that my bride and I both loved. We were putting down roots, and feeling very blessed. While we loved and served the Lord, I don't think we ever believed that our love for Him would unsettle our stability.

What we soon learned is that the Christian journey is a life-long process of transformation. Christ-like transformation and our own personal comfort can frequently be conflicting realities. For my family, obedience to Christ meant that we would follow His call, leave my profession and enter into vocational ministry.

Fast-forward eight years. God wanted us to be a part of His transformational work in a new community. We moved to Oro-Medonte where I have the great privilege of being the Pastor of a new AGC church plant, Countryside Community Church.

Our people are committed to the transforming message of the gospel in their lives as well as in the lives of others. They are determined to resist the temptation of putting on a mask of "Christian perfection." They're choosing instead to live in community as real people, with lumps, bumps, and bruises. Why? Because the transforming work of God in our lives will never be complete while we walk this earth. Pretending that we've been fully transformed doesn't fool anyone. The demonstration of authentic and ongoing transformation in the life of the Christian points to the glory of God, so we want to make sure that it's seen.

We are also focused on a transformation of mission. When by faith in Christ we died to self, we were raised to a new life in Him. This means that our old mission also died with the old self and we've adopted Christ's mission as our own. We understand that every member of the Body of Christ is in fact a missionary. Imagine what it looks like for a local church to be unleashed on its community – real people who have encountered the only real God . . . who are continuing to be transformed by God's love and grace through faith in Christ. That's the Church in action. At Countryside Community Church we are overjoyed to be experiencing God's transforming work in the lives of His people.

Pastor Josh Davy

Countryside Community Church Oro-Medonte, Ontario

Cross-Cultural Transformation



Karal, John, Pastor Richard Hovey and Jacob

The past 2 ½ years, serving as the Pastor at Sunningdale Community Church (Moose Jaw, SK), has been nothing short of amazing. My first Sunday, there were

just under 20 people in attendance. Today, we are a church of roughly 100. This is an amazing testimony to the transforming work of God in our midst.

Recently, we have been blessed by a number of Sudanese families who have begun to fellowship with us. Their connection with Jesus began not at Sunningdale, not even in Canada. In the 1930's a missionary couple, Malcolm and Enid Forsberg, arrived in what is referred to as the "land beyond the Nile." They began to minister to the Uduk people – a tribe significantly untouched by civilization. The Forsbergs were ministering for a year and a half before seeing their first convert. This was the beginning of many others coming to the Lord.

Due to the strife and war in their country, many Uduk people ended up as refugees in Ethiopia. John, one of the Sudanese men in our church became a child soldier at the age of 7 before becoming a refugee in Ethiopia. In 2002, he came to Canada and is now here with his family. One day John showed me his Uduk Bible and hymnbook. I asked him if he sings. He replied that he did. Many of the hymns are hymns I recognized – sung to the tunes we sing them to in English. I asked John if he would sing for us one Sunday. He replied with an emphatic yes! John surprised me. He, along with others sang two familiar hymns to us in Uduk. The impact was significant!

John shared that he hopes to have help teaching their children and youth more about Jesus. We are on board with that! At the same time, we recognize that in just a couple of months, the Uduk people have already taught us so much about the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ! In reflecting on the missionary work among the Uduk people, Malcolm Forsberg wrote: "We want to help these people all we can and we think the best way that we can do that is to give them Christ" (*Land Beyond the Nile*). God's transforming work continues!

Pastor Richard Hovey

Sunningdale Community Church Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan

Get Out of the Truck!

Where do I begin? Let me give you a brief faith history. I grew up in a Christian home and attended church every Sunday. I knew there was a God who loved me, who sent His Son to die on the cross for my sins. I had what you might call a passive spiritual life. I was at church, filling a pew, almost like an "I'm here, aren't I" type of Christian.

Then came the moment when God rocked me to the core. It happened while I was driving home from work. While crossing over a bridge, I glanced to my right and saw a woman in the distance. She was bent over against the railing. As I got closer, I made a split moment decision to ignore the situation.

As I drove past, God placed an overwhelming burden on my heart. I came to the next light and turned around. The woman was now leaning out over the railing. She then climbed halfway up on the rail. She was only a few feet from plunging to her death. My heart was racing!

I would like to tell you that I was overwhelmed with compassion and jumped out of my truck and saved the day . . . but that would be a lie. I stopped my truck approximately 20 feet away and put it in park.

A lady who was on the bridge walkway approaching the woman was obviously going to help . . . so, I just sat in my truck. Another man briskly walking from the opposite direction was about to engage in the situation . . . so I continued to sit in my truck. I did what I thought I could manage and started to pray with all my heart "Oh Lord, do not let her jump, do not let her life end like this." Another person riding on a bicycle, stopped. There were now three people gathered around the woman. She had stepped off the rail and was standing safely on solid ground. She was sobbing and in her face I saw such desperation. "How did she get to this point?" I wondered, as my racing heart slowed. I said another prayer for her as I drove away.

As I tried to process what had taken place, I was overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit's presence and conviction. I wept. In that moment, I felt that God was asking me two piercing questions: "Jamie, do you know me?" "Jamie, do you love me?" These questions made me realize my need to get "out of the truck." God has done His transforming work in my life through this experience. At Grace Church the leadership has helped me grow by giving me the opportunity to serve. Who knew that as I grew, God would put me into a leading role within our men's ministry? Thank God for His transforming work. I no longer want to stay in the truck!



Jamie

Grace Church Newmarket, Ontario

Someone Greater



Ever since my early childhood, I always knew there was something out there greater than myself. Being born and raised in a Buddhist family, I was never taught the teachings of Christ. All I knew about God came either from movies, television or friends who were mostly of the Catholic faith. As I grew older, I had atheist friends who were rejecting the very concept of God, which led me even further from the truth.

One day, I met someone who would eventually become my wife ... Isabelle. We were so different. She tried to bring me closer to

God by taking me to Sunday church services. I was attending only to please her but not actually listening to what God was trying to tell me. Yet, slowly and surely, I began to pay more attention to the sermons and the Word of God was reaching me. Even so, I wasn't fully prepared to put my trust in Jesus and was holding back on accepting Him as my Saviour.

Isabelle and I decided to move forward and get married at the church. We met with Pastor Bryan Guinness (Pastor of Onward Gospel in Verdun, QC), for pre-marriage counselling. In the beginning, he explained to us that a successful marriage is not just a relationship between two people, but it is a relationship that should include God at the center. One day, I decided to meet with Pastor Bryan one-on-one. Knowing that Christ was important to my fiancé, and knowing how very important she was to me, I needed counsel. I remember Pastor Bryan asking me why I hadn't accepted Christ as my Saviour. I told him that I was waiting for God to show me a sign ... like a miracle. Pastor told me that I didn't need a sign from God, because I already had the greatest sign, which was that Christ died and rose again for my sins and all I needed was to take a step of faith to surrender my life to Christ. Then and there, I decided to ask God to forgive my sins and I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour and was baptized. What a transformation! Eventually, Isabelle and I got married and since that day, our relationship is better, stronger, and healthier because of Christ. I am proud to show everyone that I am a transformed (new) creation in Christ Jesus. I didn't find something greater, but rather, Someone greater!



Binh and Isabelle

Onward Gospel Church Verdun, Québec

Chaos To Christ

I was trapped under the rubble during the earthquake which occurred in Haiti in 2010. As I lay in the dust, amidst the confusion and chaos resulting from this terrible tragedy, many thoughts raced through my mind. I knew deep within my soul that I should give my life to Christ.

In the days that followed my rescue, I was referred to a center for amputation because my hand had been seriously injured. You can only imagine my fear. I prayed, "Lord, if you let me keep my hand, I will use it to serve, and glorify You for the rest of my life." God heard me! Incredibly, that same day, someone told me about a specialist who had just arrived in Haiti ... a hand specialist! They started helping me before they had unpacked their suitcases. After nine operations and two skin grafts, the members of the team felt it was a miracle that my hand was healed! God is so good! **"The Lord is near to all who call on Him."** Psalm 145:18

Following this life changing experience, my brother and sister-in-law were able to receive us as refugees in their apartment in Verdun, QC. We were in total, six young adults . . . all new to Canada. My brother organized home prayer meetings and brought us to his church where I accepted the Lord and was baptized.

My brother and his mother-in-law, Thérèse, are great influences in my spiritual life. I want to be like them. I started attending church in my neighbourhood (Église Evangélique Associée de Verdun), where Thérèse has been active for many years. I gradually grew in my enthusiasm for the Lord with a strong desire to grow in His Word. I wondered how I could take care of my baby, go to business school and study the Bible. God blessed me in so many ways. My baby would sleep late and I met with Thérèse twice a week to study God's word before I went to my classes. Now we meet in the evenings and sometimes I study on my own.

I am so thankful for the Lord's transforming work in my life. I'm thankful for my brother and his wife and for Thérèse who God uses to encourage me in my faith in Christ. I hope you can see the wonderful way the Lord has led me to Himself. God has given me so many blessings. I just want to serve Him ... serve Him with all my heart.

Jacqueline

Église Evangélique Associée de Verdun Montréal, Québec



AGC NATIONAL TEAM MEMBERS

We are blessed with a National team of eight uniquely gifted individuals who are passionate about the mission and mandate of the AGC ... they live out their "stories" in their homes, local churches and communities.



Bill Fietje President bill@agcofcanada.com

It is an honour to serve my Lord as President for this wonderful Association of churches. I love the Church. My main role is to promote the vision and values of the AGC with clarity and passion. I thank the AGC for the added privilege of representing our Association internationally. My desire and prayer is that the AGC will continue to be a movement of healthy reproducing churches ... for His glory!



Donna Leung Administrative Assistant donna@agcofcanada.com

I am privileged to serve in the AGC as Administrative Assistant. I work with financial and legal matters, help plan conferences, oversee our website, and function as the secretary for the National Board. Providing counsel to church treasurers and administrators is an area of service that I greatly enjoy. Music ministry is a passion of mine; participating in our church choir, worship team, and leading a sing-a-long at a local nursing home have allowed me many opportunities to join with others in praise to our God.



Susan Page Church Relations Coordinator sue@agcofcanada.com

I am so blessed to work in ministry. My passion is serving and connecting with people. My role includes administrating AGC Group Benefits, processing Ministry Applications, facilitating Staff meetings, and overseeing AGC communications. I love to come alongside others to encourage and build up. Small group leadership is a good fit for this gifting. It's amazing how God can grow and stretch us as He transforms us into His own remarkable people whom He will use to reflect His glory.



Laird Crump Canada East Superintendent laird@agcofcanada.com

What a delight to serve the Lord in ministry supporting our 90 churches and pastoral staff throughout Ontario! I am passionate about developing leaders who are committed to the ministry of discipleship. My life mission is to inspire, teach and equip people to express their love for God and others through developing biblically based relationships and missional ministry strategies that honour God and expand His Kingdom.



Russ Wilson Canada West Superintendent russ@agcofcanada.com

I love to travel. The distance between Victoria BC and Winnipeg MB is over 2300 kilometres, spanning 4 different provinces. There is joy in the journey because as I connect with our churches, I have the privilege of hearing stories of transformation. I love consulting, equipping and encouraging our church leaders. Together we are focusing on our obedience to the Great Commission to go and make disciples.



Del Gibbons Québec Director del@agcofcanada.com

My role is connecting Québec pastors and churches (including Haitian, French, English and Spanish both in Québec and Ontario) with the AGC. It's a blessing to serve alongside the Québec Committee, seeking to encourage and help other servants and churches to be spiritually healthy and to multiply. Connecting and serving with younger people for mutual encouragement and ministry is a special blessing for me! I also love to meet and build relationships with people from around the world. That's easy to do in Montreal!



James Herzog Fair Havens Executive Director jherzog@fairhavens.org

I enjoy being part of the AGC team. My role is to lead the ministries of Fair Havens. Fair Havens exists to facilitate life-changing experiences for the glory of God, by giving people opportunity to refresh, refocus, and reconnect with God and with others. My passion is to see God speak to people's hearts and to make a genuine lasting difference in their lives and relationships.

Fair Havens

Fair Havens is all about transformation! **Our mission is to facilitate life-changing experiences for the glory of God.** Our passion is to give everyone the chance to refresh, refocus, and reconnect with God, friends and family. In our 70+ years of ministry we have had the privilege of seeing God change the hearts and lives of countless individuals. Here are two recent stories of transformation that took place at Fair Havens.



When I first came to Fair Havens, I was a cocky young man who was determined to change the world. Over the last few years, my life has had some highs and lows, all the result of my own doing. I am thankful to have had the chance to return to Fair Havens. I know what a miraculous place these grounds can be. I believe God planned for me to spend time at Fair Havens in order to prepare my heart for Him. I am preparing my heart daily, and while I have no idea where God will lead me, I know He has a plan, and part of that plan includes this time at Fair Havens, a place where God can transform lives.

Being a part of Fair Havens community is truly a life-changing experience! The people in Stepping Stones (Fair Havens summer youth staff program) are openly passionate about Jesus. They show love towards each other, and are a living witness to the life transformation that God can work in peoples' lives.

The second summer I was in Stepping Stones, I had the opportunity to proclaim my commitment to Jesus Christ and I was baptized! I will never forget that day. God has changed so much in my life. He changed my work ethic, my relationships with my family and He even changed how I think of Him. I pray that the Stepping Stones program will continue to transform others as powerfully as it has changed me!

God is transforming lives at Fair Havens. Do you sense God calling you to refresh, refocus, and reconnect with Him? Is God calling you to make a difference in the lives of others? To explore how we might be a blessing to you or how you might be a blessing to others, please visit www.fairhavens.org.

James Herzog Executive Director
Fair Havens Ministries Beaverton, Ontario



"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

2 Corinthians 3:18

Following a trip to the Niagara Butterfly Museum, I couldn't help but ponder the miracle and beauty of transformation as seen in nature. How much richer, deeper and everlasting is the beauty that is seen in individuals who are transformed into new creations in Christ.

Once again, it has been a humbling experience to work on **AGC Connect Magazine, edition 2015**. Thank you to those who so graciously shared their unique stories of transformation. Thank you to our Graphic Designer, Rebecca DeGraaf, who always makes it such a pleasure.

As Christ, through His Holy Spirit, continues His transforming work, may we be willing to share our transformational "stories" to reach others with His amazing love.

Being transformed by Him,

Susan Page Church Relations Coordinator