



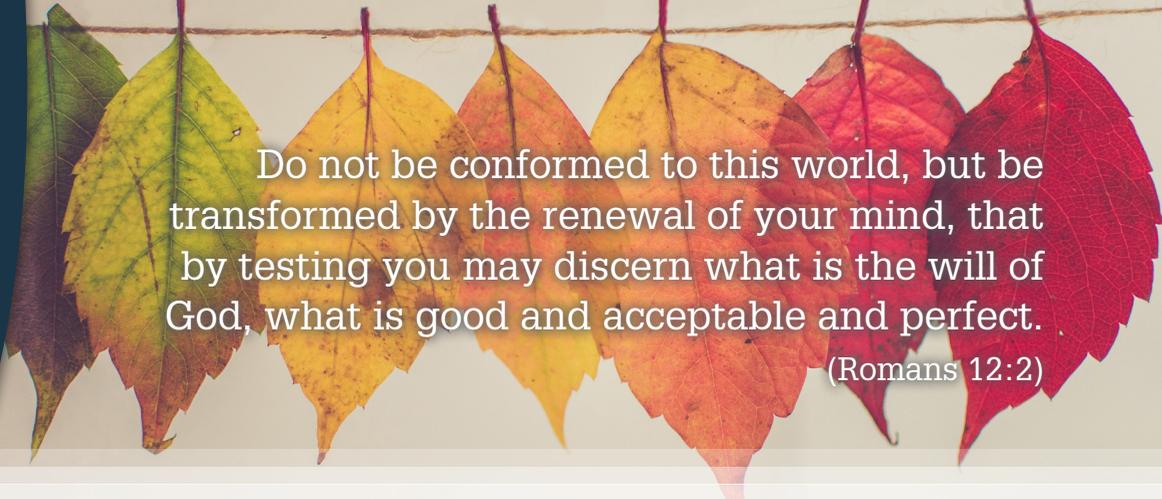
AGC
ASSOCIATED GOSPEL CHURCHES

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



Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 12:2)

Connect 2020

Transformed

Anniversaries are a time to celebrate, a time to remember and reflect upon some significant event. 2020 marks the 95th anniversary of the Associated Gospel Churches. In many ways, it is the continuing story of a small group of believers from humble beginnings. Beginning in Southern Ontario, we grew to an association of over 150 congregations spanning across Canada, representing 11 different language and cultural groups. Yet, it is more than times and dates, it is a story of people transformed by the power of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the early believers in Corinth about this transforming power. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come”* (2 Cor. 5:17). These words convey that even the hardest of hearts can be completely changed through the reconciling work of God through Christ. Because of the cross, a sinner can become a saint, an outsider becomes family; wanted, loved, valued and treasured. When we are in Christ, we are transformed and are never the same.

Paul mentions three specific results of this transformation as recorded in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20: First, we have been given the *“ministry of reconciliation”* (vs. 18). We are living proof of the power of the Gospel to transform lives and we take this hope to a lost world. We have been commissioned to share the message that Jesus saves, transforms and restores. It is a message of inclusion, in that nobody is excluded or beyond hope.

Second, we have been given the *“message of reconciliation”* (vs. 19). The Gospel message, the Word of God is truth, not just our words or opinions. The Word of God communicates this hope that in Jesus alone we find acceptance and transformation. When we come to Him in repentance, recognizing our need for His transforming touch, we are restored to fellowship with Him.

Third, we have been commissioned as *“ambassadors for Christ”* (vs. 20). We no longer represent ourselves, but Jesus, the one who saves. An ambassador has no authority in and of himself, but rather in the one he represents. Each of us represents Jesus in all we do.

The strength of the AGC is not in the number of churches we have or in our long history. Our strength is not in our many pastoral and ministry staff members, the education we acquire or our church buildings. Our strength as an Association is in the testimony of each life transformed by Jesus, each life that is moved by the Holy Spirit to serve as a living witness in all that He calls us to do. For some, that will be a vocational or bi-vocational ministry. For others, it will be to serve in the local church, the marketplace, the university faculty, the classroom, the factory or the office cubicle. Each of us contributes to the strength of the AGC as we faithfully serve where God has called and placed us.

In this edition of CONNECT, you will read stories of the TRANSFORMED, living witnesses that speak actions, not just words, of how their lives and their churches have been changed by the power of the Gospel. We celebrate this 95th anniversary and give praise to God for each one of you! May these transformed and living testimonies encourage you as you seek to be an ambassador for Christ wherever He calls you!



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The Open Door

Our Lead Pastor presented a challenge to the congregation. We were asked to write down the names of three individuals within our sphere of influence who did not know Jesus. We were then invited to put their names in a box at the front of our church. Our pastor challenged us to begin to pray for opportunities to share our faith.

It's been amazing to hear the stories of how God has opened the doors of opportunity for people to talk about their faith. Recently, one individual told how he was able to share his faith story with his coffee buddies. He recognized that a comment that had been put on the table was the open door he had been praying for! We've also been encouraged to hear about missed opportunities of sharing our faith because that's an indication that we're at least thinking missionally.

I personally serve as the chaplain of our local junior hockey team. There was some indifference and maybe even a bit of resistance at the start, but we are now at the place where I lead a Bible study every other week with 6-12 players. I also host a team event every six weeks that the coach expects the whole team to attend. We hosted a Christmas supper to which the team, coaching staff, and board members were invited, and we were once again able to share our faith, telling the difference Jesus can make in our lives.

One of the tools we've been using as a church has been the Alpha program. We just completed our fourth year of running Alpha and we have seen several people make decisions to follow Jesus.

I don't think I would be misrepresenting our church if I said that having an outward focus is slowly becoming part of our DNA. However, we are aware that if we "take the foot off the gas," even slightly, the focus could quickly change. Transformational ministry requires discipline, consistency, and intentionality. Consistently praying for opportunities to share our faith has been transforming. Praise God for opened doors!

Rev. Larry Rempel – Park Avenue Bible Chapel, Melfort, SK

"We take what we think are the tools of spiritual transformation into our own hands and try to sculpt ourselves into robust Christlike specimens. But spiritual transformation is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the Master Sculptor." - Jerry Bridges

A Great & Big God

A young woman exclaimed, "I haven't seen you smile and laugh like that in a long time" as she observed her friend at one of our Sunday services. At Northside Community Church we've been living with the motto: "Christians ought to have the most fun!" That reality has been experienced every Sunday as we worship God and celebrate life together. There's energy, enthusiasm, excitement, gratitude, and anticipation for what God will do next. People's lives are being transformed in awe-inspiring ways:

- *Our Kids Ministry was launched and has grown from 2 to 13.*
- *A young couple had driven by the church several times before they started*



attending. They are now brand-new believers. We just baptized one of them and the other plans on being baptized as well.

- *Every age group is interacting with each other in a friendly, caring and encouraging environment that goes beyond Sundays.*

All this is possible because God through His Holy Spirit is leading and moving in our midst. I am so abundantly thankful that we are a church filled with leaders and people who pray, love and serve with a unified determination to be the church God calls us to be. It is transforming!

This all started with letting God take me where I never thought I'd go. I've never pastored a small church. I've never been a solo pastor. Yet, when God calls, we obey. It has been an amazing adventure filled with multiple blessings. In addition to all the blessings, our theme for 2019 was "Preparing for Growth" and it's quickly become our philosophy of ministry.

God has grown His church. We stand in awe and we give Him the glory. What will God do next? What does He have in store not only for this church but for His Church? I believe GREAT THINGS . . . because we worship a GREAT & BIG GOD!

"Being confident of this that He who began a good work in you will carry it onto completion" (Phil 1:6).

Rev. Steve Boctor – Northside Community Church, Kitchener, ON

To Me He Was Daddy



There is an oft-repeated phrase that trials can make us bitter or better. In the lives of Frank and Daria Humphrey and family, we saw the better. When a family goes through an event that completely alters life as they once knew it, yet displays a faith that is resilient and lasting, their testimony can and will transform others. Frank lived out his faith, despite dealing with ALS for fourteen years. He had a passion for loving God, his family and anyone who crossed his path. Frank's life exemplified a transformed life, and how our faith can endure through any situation because of the Spirit's transforming work in us. The following tribute was lovingly submitted by Frank's daughter, Anna.

On November 24, 2019, my Daddy went to be with Jesus. Those of you reading this may have known him as Rev. Dr. Frank Humphrey of Peoples Church, Montreal, but to me he was Daddy. I don't know where to start, but I'd like to talk about his heart. He had the biggest, bravest, most loving heart I have ever seen and during the fourteen years of watching him suffer from ALS, I only saw that heart get bigger and stronger.

Dad loved Jesus and he loved people. He enjoyed talking to people and finding out what made them who they are, and he loved them for it. Because he loved people, he had to tell them about the transforming love of Jesus and the strength and hope God gives even in suffering. For years he had to take the Transport Adapté to and from the church. He would practice his French and talk to his drivers, many of them Muslim, about the love of God. He would frequently come home excited about having such good conversations, and he would tell

us about his drivers – their names, their stories, where they were from.

When my dad spoke from the pulpit on Sundays, words that might have sounded like platitudes didn't. Words about God's faithfulness rang true because he was in the pit of suffering, yet he was at peace and was unfailingly loving and compassionate. The joy of the Lord was his strength.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Anna Humphrey – Peoples Church, Montreal, QC

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Transforming the 'Us and Them' to 'We'

Experiencing transformation in Native fellowships has been both fascinating and heartwarming. In 2012, two years after I arrived at Wiky (Wiikwemikong) Fellowship, there was a leadership vacuum due to the pastor's health issues. God called me to 'walk alongside' him, so I made a commitment to the Fellowship. As one of the elders, I was supported by multiple men who stepped up to preach and teach, in rotation. Other changes included recognizing deacons and deaconesses, and crucially including Native women who became an integral part of the decision making and accountability practices of the Fellowship.

Meanwhile, the nearby AOK (Aundeck Omni Kaning) Reserve, longing to have their own meeting place began a Bible study. A former local pastor offered AOK the use of his abandoned church, and members dove in to renew the space while developing activities to engage the wider community.

What does transformation in our communities look like?

- *Kickboxing at the local community centre, where Pastor Jonathan Edralin models Christian values to kids.*
- *The revival of old-school camp meetings where the whole community is invited to witness the unity of multiple reserves in worship.*
- *Funerals where the Christian leaders tell the good news amidst traditional drumming and singing.*
- *Baptisms in lakes and hot tubs where Natives give their testimonies in English and Ojibwe.*
- *Open door potlucks and feasts, yard sales and Bible studies, providing a safe place within the community to share fellowship, as well as the burdens of facing multi-generational family challenges.*

We are small congregations, but seeds have been planted, hearts have been changed, and a compelling bond has emerged between those of us who long to see God glorified in our communities. Our Lord knows what the future holds, and He bids us come together to see His mighty hand at work. 'Us and them', both within our fellowships and the wider community, has transformed into 'we'. Please pray for the First Nations families who have made a stand for the Lord.

Pastor Gerald Legault – Co-Elder at Wiky Fellowship & AOK Fellowship, Manitoulin Island, ON



"Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness is not going to happen unless we act.
What transforms us is the will to obey Jesus Christ." - Dallas Willard

You Have Opened the Door to our Cage

"You have opened the door to our cage." The young woman's smile beamed out from the computer screen. We had just told Irene and Samson that our church had agreed to sponsor their family as refugees to Canada. It would take over two years and an emotional roller-coaster ride to accomplish that goal.

With only fifty people in our congregation, it was a big ask to suggest we sponsor a family of five. Over thirty thousand dollars needed to be raised. In faith, the paperwork was submitted to Canada Immigration.

Then the waiting began. First, for the call that they had been granted an interview. We prayed when it was scheduled. Three months later a tearful call told us their application had been rejected. The devastating news could have crushed us all into giving up, but our Sponsorship Agreement Holder suggested contacting an immigration lawyer. We found a good one and after many hours of diligent work, she submitted an appeal. More months of waiting. The couple would later tell us that was a time of fasting, weeping and pleading with God.

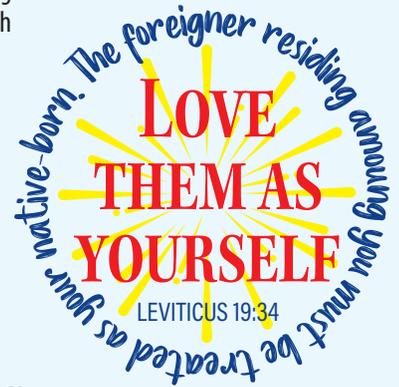
Then another phone call: "We have been told to have our medicals done. What does that mean?" A formal acknowledgment that the appeal had been successful never came, but the next communication told them to pick up their plane tickets!

We and our congregation experienced many levels of transformation over those

years of praying and waiting. We were transformed from those who desire to do good, to those who were actively engaged in it. The fear that the family might be arrested, separated and deported to Pakistan transformed our prayers from vague requests to specific, desperate pleas. Seeing the consistently strong faith of that family inspired our faith and humbled us.

Now, having the family with us, the transformation continues as we help them integrate. Prayers are ongoing as is self-examination. We have pushed out of our comfort zones over and over again, as we take to heart the words of Leviticus 19:34: "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself."

Marcia Lee Laycock – Faith Community Church, Blackfalds, AB



We Have Been Transformed

Susan Davis, our AGC Compassion & Justice Coordinator shares her thoughts on the topic of transformation.

Susan, our theme for this publication has been ... Transformation. Based on the work to which God has called you, how has your life changed?

The transformation feels subtle and yet when I reflect, the change has been huge. In 2008 God set me free from emotional darkness. Since then, I have simply paid attention and listened to Him, stepping into opportunities He has provided. The key to moving from there to here was saying 'yes' even when I was certain someone else would be much better at the ministry to which I've been called. As I look back, I can see that transformation happened as:

I took God at His Word ...

which transformed my mind, and set me free. . .

which has brought me to this present ministry (where I feel His pleasure).

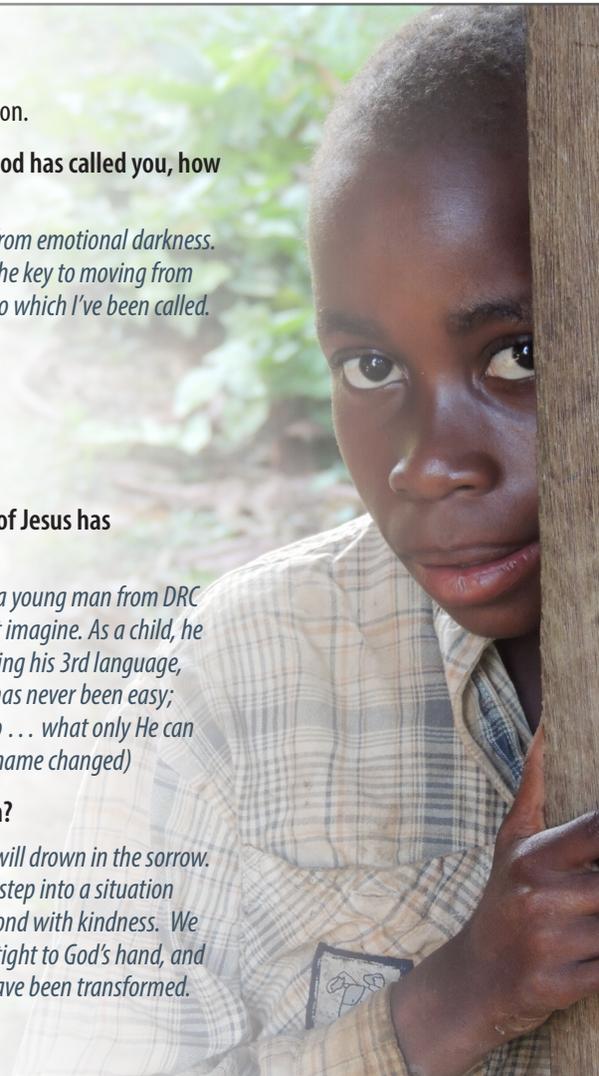
I am living differently. Obeying God is the key to getting "unstuck" and experiencing a transformed life.

What has been the most transforming story that you have been interacting with where the love of Jesus has completely changed the worst situation into a miracle of sorts?

I see many stories where the love of Jesus transforms horrendous situations into things of beauty. Yanis is a young man from DRC whose family was killed leaving him an orphan. He has witnessed and experienced violence that we cannot imagine. As a child, he hid alone for days in the bush until he was taken to safety. Today he is in Hong Kong, seeking asylum, learning his 3rd language, safe, but still looking for a place to call home. If you see him, his smile is contagious. He says, "It is not and has never been easy; through it all, God has been my provider and comforter! Now, I am doing what I can . . . believing Him to do . . . what only He can do." Yanis is the drummer in the worship band at the church he attends. When I see him, I see a miracle! (*name changed)*

How can we as God's Church transform our thinking when it comes to the world refugee situation?

We must engage. It's easy to become paralyzed by the size of the need, to disengage because we know we will drown in the sorrow. God calls us to minister to the orphan, the widow, the vulnerable, and the persecuted. It is an act of faith to step into a situation where we do not have the resources to fix the problem. God asks His children to love. We love when we respond with kindness. We love when we pray, give, or provide the means for a new home. In this place of engagement, we must hold tight to God's hand, and as He grows our faith, we discover He is doing something greater than us, and one day we notice that we have been transformed.



Happy 95th Anniversary Associated Gospel Churches!

The Associated Gospel Churches was officially incorporated as a charitable organization on March 18th, 1925.

- *In 1892, an evangelist by the name of Peter Wiley Philpott rented space in Hamilton, ON to hold evangelistic meetings. He befriended A.W. Roffe who was pastoring a church in Toronto, and together they formed The Christian Worker's Churches of Canada, later renamed Associated Gospel Churches.*
- *In March of 1925, the "Associated Gospel Churches" was officially registered.*
- *The AGC continued to grow as the leadership changed and the vision was further developed.*

What began as a grassroots vision has grown into a national coast to coast ministry, encompassing 11 language groups. There are churches in both rural and urban centers. Ministries have also been born out of our member churches; churches planting churches as well as some churches having multiple congregations.

The AGC continues in its mission *to be a movement of healthy, reproducing churches*. By God's grace, power and direction, we will seek to glorify Him by partnering together in obedience to the Great Commandment and Great Commission.



Think Outside The Box



On January 26th of this year, WestVillage Church celebrated our fourth anniversary. This journey began nearly a decade ago when God placed a desire on the hearts of Pastor Jeff and Ruth Scott and the leadership of the Metropolitan Bible Church (MET), Ottawa to plant a church. The goal was to plant a church that would bring gospel transformation to the community of Westboro which was void of a gospel presence. Before a public worship service ever occurred, groups of people prayed to ask the Lord to do a transforming work in His people and the community to which He had called them.

Since its inception, WVC has sought to be actively engaged in living out what we call our 4 C's (Connect, Challenge, Celebrate and Christ) which we believe are essential components to spiritual growth and becoming more like Jesus. We seek to include these elements in our Sunday gatherings and our Community Groups. These groups are formed based on geography with 8-15 people of all stages and ages in each group.

As a church family, we have sought to live out the gospel with authenticity and generosity within our city and have engaged in life-changing activities such as:

- *The celebration of baptisms held annually at a public beach.*
- *The donation of our Easter offering to community non-profit groups.*
- *Conducting Alpha at a favourite local coffee shop.*
- *Participation in the local Westboro street festival called FUSE.*

Our Community groups have engaged in the following:

- *Student groups who are well known and loved within the neighbourhood collect for the local food bank.*
- *One group holds pancake breakfast gatherings in a community housing development.*
- *Other groups partner to hold a monthly dinner/game gathering at a Seniors' apartment complex by invitation of the city of Ottawa.*
- *Some groups are serving in local charities that help both new immigrants to Canada and homeless youth.*

We are grateful that as the years go by, we continue to have favour within the local community as we see the gospel being lived out in such tangible ways by God's people. No one could have dreamed that God would bless this ministry as He has. Over 400 people worship together on Sunday mornings and our Community Groups continually seek to be on mission throughout the Ottawa Region. Gospel transformation is happening in Westboro!

Rev. Tim Auld – WestVillage Church, Ottawa, ON

Become What We Behold ...



The topic of transformation is ... quite frankly, transforming! Consider the renewal we see all around us when we take the time to observe. The tadpole changes into a frog. The caterpillar metamorphizes into a beautiful butterfly and the downpour of a fresh spring rain brings renewal. Transformation is displayed in God's very own handiwork.

Daily renewal in Christ changes our attitudes and revolutionizes our behavior. Just like in nature, we, by faith, become new creations in Christ Jesus and that's a beautiful thing. New and improved, the salt and light that flavours and brightens our world as referenced in Matthew 5: 13-16.

Sometimes, this newness quickly fades or becomes lack-lustre when our focus on Christ shifts or grows dim. This is reflected in our thoughts, deeds, and attitudes. We become weary in doing good when we operate out of our own strength, for our own glory. We become impatient, intolerant, and perhaps even brittle or bitter if we are focused on our selfish wants or desires. The truth is that whatever we behold is what we become. If our focus shifts from the eternal and if we allow the enemy to take a foothold, then we become less than God calls us to be. We become what Christ wants us to be when we behold Him by sitting at His feet, leaning in and learning to be more like Him.

Ruth Chou Simons in her book *Beholding and Becoming* states "It's supernatural to be transformed and changed in heart so that we are able to love God though we have not seen Him... to trust Jesus though we've never touched Him. When God spoke to Israel through the prophet Ezekiel, He described the heart change that only God can do".

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules" (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

Susan Page - AGC Church Relations Coordinator

"Give up the struggle and the fight; relax in the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus; look up into His lovely face and as you behold Him, He will transform you into His likeness. You do the beholding--He does the transforming. There is no short-cut to holiness."

- Alan Redpath

By the Numbers 2019

Applications:

- 50 - 60 Applications processed

Ministry Interviews conducted:

- 6 Certificate of Ministry
- 7 Ordination
- 10 Recognition of Ordination

Credentials Issued:

- 5 Certificate of Ministry
- 10 Recognition of Ordination
- 7 Ordinations

New Churches:

- 6 NEW Churches
(4 One Hope Canada + 2 others)

Coming Soon!

establish 
establish & expand

The launch of AGC
Shepherd Development
Initiative



Visit our website @
agcofcanada.com

Find out more about:

- Our AGC Staff
- AGC Doctrine & Statement of Faith

- AGC History
- Locate an AGC Church
- Upcoming events & much more ...

