Storyline

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a letter from Pastor Scott

The whole world holds its breath in wait of the winter Olympic Games. No country has higher hopes than Canada – for we are made for this! Winter is our playground … hockey our sport … and snow is a normal thing. Soon our athletes will wave the maple leaf and show the world that we are the masters of the harshness that winter brings. And we will be gracious in the process.

We are not Olympic athletes – but we are running the race toward Jesus. Our prize is not for Canada … our prize is Christ. This edition of Storyline is all about folks like you who are living all for Jesus. Read, enjoy, and be inspired. God is doing great things – and we are telling His story!

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(Senior Lead Pastor)

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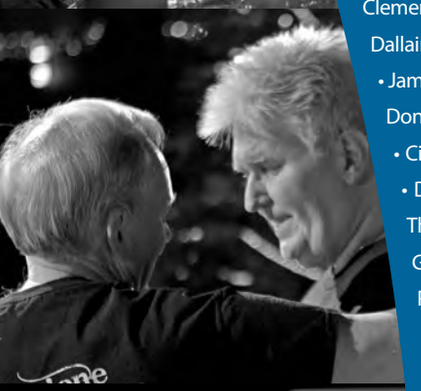
Building lives that honour God ... All For Jesus

What makes us tick? In a nutshell, God – and you! Thousands of us come together each week, from all walks of life, with ethnic diversity and from all ages, to "build lives that honour God ... all for Jesus." The Bible is our plumb-line ... the absolute truth that sets in motion our teaching, our music and how we relate to each other and to God. We want more than anything as individuals and as a church to impact the city of Calgary and beyond. As part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Canada, we also think it's very cool that we get to partner with some amazing people in other parts of the world as they also "build lives that honour God."

We are committed to ...

CONNECTING in Life Groups – small groups of people who meet regularly to study the Bible, pray, serve and build relationship together. **GROWING** in our understanding of who God is and who He wants us to be – learning through prayer and the Bible how to live in vital connection with Him. **SERVING** God by serving other people within the church and our community. **SHARING** the love and hope of Jesus Christ with others, both locally and globally.



Baptisms 2013

• Omojadesola Ade-Yusuf • Emmanuel Affran • Emerson Alfaro • Liliana Alfaro • Jill Altamirano • Craig Andrews • Laurie Andrews • Luis Apostol • Marlon Apostol • Paul Armitage • Christina Ashbourne • Colleen Atkinson • Jim Baayens • Alyssa Bailey • Sean Bailey • Shayn Bailey • Lucinda Bareham • Bruce Barkley • Carolyn Barkley • Joshua Bartlett • Marg Berg • Warren Berg • Caitlin Berry • David Bertram • Davin Bieker • Grant Bieker • Yena Bieker • Cynthia Biggs • Tony Bihn • Grant Binder • Tammy Binder • Carter Boissoin • Elizabeth Booth • Leona Booth • Nicholas Boskers • Andrew Boulton • Richard Boulton • Erin Bracko • Jorie Brady • Winston Brandt • Ryan Branston • Robert Brewster • Jayna Brisibe • Brandy Budd • Brook Buenaventura • Sydney Buenaventura • Kim Buhler • Brennan Burback • Jessica Burback • Randy Burke • Ron Buschman • Teresa Buschman • Laura Bushman • Marlene Butler • Rhoderick Cano • Alejandro Cantre • Alex Cantre • Lita Cantre • Mikayla Carlin • Owen Cary • Jordan Casello • Gemma Castillon-Baayens • Lawrence Cayetano • Andy Chan • James Chan • Fabian Chang • Jeremy Cheng • Dora Chizek • Candice Clark • Krystal Clements • Sawyer Clements • Colin Cooper • Nicole Cooper • Abner Cubid • Janice Cubid • Hannah Curlock • Dylan Dallaire • Justin Dallaire • Riley Dallaire • Sarah Daniels • Danielle Dardis • Lisa Dardis • Elizabeth Davis • Murray Davis • Jamie Deisting • Leann Deisting • Vince Delancey • Janelle Dethmers • Alice Dicer • Maggy Dippenaar • Charlene Donahue • Krista Donkersloot • Katie Donohue • Marie Donohue • Joshua Drener • Grapes Du • Robert Dubeau • Cindy Duffin • Jeremy Duffin • Cheryl Dunkley • John Dyck • Rachel Dyck • Drew Eaton • Nancy Eberwein • Daniel Eisan • Janelle Emery • John English • Ester Evin • Debbie Farrell • Julie Fedorvich • Brian Feng • Thomas Flowers • Grace Fogg • Meagan Frey • Nathan Frey • Ethan Geerlof • Michael Giesbrecht • Stephanie Gingues • Chami Gonzales • Hannah Gramatovich • Katie Gratrix • Megan Gruszecki • 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Melody Majauskas • Luis Manzur • Aman Marchildon • Loralee Martin • Larry Martinuzzi • Amanda Maschner • Sanjay Mathew • Ella Matte • Taylor McAlpine • Chris McCaffery • Robin McColl • Kaelyn McCombs • Michael McDonald • Kieran McDowell • Darrah McGowan • Amy Meckelburg • Emily Meckelburg • Wington Mentor • Brenda Merkley • Jamie Miller • Tracy Montgomery • Marcie Morin • Dawn Mueller • Ryan Mueller • Annette Muise • Raymond Muise • Gabriel Murillo • Lucus Murphy-Symmond • Ty Nakano • Kuldeep Narang • Melissa Nay • Emily Nielsen • Evan Nielsen • Kobe Nielsen • Marcy Nielsen • Arianna Nikkel • Dennis Nunez • Emily Nystrom • Madison Nystrom • Abbey Olive • Monica Oliver • Angelee Oteng • Natasha Ovtchinnikova • Mathew Park • Bradley Parker • Gavin Parker • Alisha Pearson • Lily Pekakuziyil • Cathy Penner • Talia-Lee Penner • Edwina Perante • Alla Petrova • Elandra Pierini • Matteo Pierini • Lorraine Pinsent • Nora Poffenroth • Ryan Poffenroth • Ales Prajzler • Joan Pulyk • Indira Rannath 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WHAT'S UP IN STUDENT MINISTRIES?

"SHS, in my opinion, has brought me closer to God this year than before. I was really in a low and confusing part of my life last year but now, with the close and trusting relationship I have with my youth group, I don't really feel as confused and low as before. My favourite part of this year so far was the boys vs. girls night!" - Jan Resus, Grade 12

"SHS (Senior High students ministry) has helped clarify my relationship with Jesus this year, while also strengthening it. My favourite part is being able to meet other kids who understand and share my faith."
– Kelsi Gilbert, Grade 12

"JHS [Jr. High students ministry] has made me more aware of the fact that you need to be in your Bible more and more and that church isn't just a Saturday/Sunday activity." – Andrew Cooper, Grade 9

"I love JHS because it's where my family is! I love getting to share my thoughts and ideas on Christianity with the Alpha videos."
- Sydney Cooper, Grade 8

"SHS is my get-away for the week. I can go and know if I am in a rough time, I can talk with all the loving people there."
- Melanie Mueller, Grade 12

"It really gives me a chance to learn even more things about [Jesus] that I maybe wouldn't interpret from the Bible.." - Emma Petropoulos, Grade 11

"SHS helps me grow in my relationship with Jesus by educating in things I do not know ... It also makes me feel safe and is a time to worship Jesus. My favourite part is being with my friends and the songs we sing ... SHS is one of my favourite places to be." - Jaclyn Kurtz, Grade 11

ABOVE: Some of our Sr. High students at the fall SHS Retreat at Camp Harmattan (photo taken by Wally Eng). SHS (Sr. High) meets Wednesdays, 7-9 pm in the Gym. JHS (Jr. High) meets Saturdays in the Harvest Rooms during the 4:30 & 6:30 pm services.

WORTH PURSUING

Discovering purpose in life beyond Olympic dreams.

Like many around the world, much of my attention over the next two weeks will be focused on the 22nd Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

I will be glued to my television set to cheer on athletes I have never heard of who are competing in sports I never knew existed. What, pray tell, is slopestyle snowboarding and team figure skating? But every Olympics also causes me to reflect on a significant turning point in my life. Like the 6,000 athletes competing in Sochi, during my youth I too aimed to go to Russia to live out an Olympic dream.

For eight years I trained four to five hours a day as a competitive swimmer in Vancouver. Moscow '80 was my mantra. It's what got me (and my long-suffering father) up every morning at 4:30 a.m. for a two-hour workout and got me back in the pool after school for another two and a half hours.

My hard work and dedication paid off. I was the Canadian record holder as an 11-12- and 13-14-year-old girl in the 200 metre Individual Medley and 400 metre Individual Medley events.

I was passionate about swimming, I loved my teammates and my goal of swimming for Canada at the Olympics was what gave my life meaning.

In the winter of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and in response to that act of aggression, much of the western world, including Canada, decided to boycott the summer Olympics in Moscow. That decision turned my life upside down and shattered my life dream. **How could something as beautiful and real as the Olympics just evaporate like a mirage?** Was my pursuit just a "chasing after the wind", as King Solomon asked thousands of years ago in the book of Ecclesiastes?

Eventually, I came to the conclusion that my pursuits – going to the Olympics or getting good grades at school – were all meaningless. Indeed, I came to the realization that life itself was meaningless.

After I graduated high school I spent a year travelling around Europe and North Africa but I felt my pursuit of pleasure and freedom from responsibility was also ultimately empty and meaningless. I devoured the works of the most renowned secular philosophers and discovered most of them died in despair. None had any answers, just lots of interesting theories and questions.

It was while I was in my third year of college studying journalism that I finally understood what was missing in my life – why no accomplishment or pursuit could fill the void I felt in my heart. I finally understood that the void was God-shaped and **if I wanted my life to have meaning, purpose, joy and peace, I would need to enter into a friendship with God and that void would be filled.**

The only problem was that sin had separated me from being able to have a relationship with the creator of the universe and the lover of my soul. But God had a plan to bridge the gap between us through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. I learned that "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." (John 3:16) So on Oct. 21, 1984 I invited Jesus Christ – God's one and only Son – into my life to forgive me my sins, and to be my Lord and Saviour.

That – and only that – changed everything. I am not a religious person at all. I am, rather, a person in relationship with Jesus.

Ironically, while I no longer pursue accomplishments to give my life meaning, I have nevertheless lived a life filled with rich experiences, relationships and adventures that far exceed what I had planned or dreamed for myself. And through it all, while the road has sometimes been bumpy, I have met every challenge with a peace and joy "that surpasses all understanding" and comes only through a relationship with Jesus who, after sacrificing himself for me was resurrected from the dead. He is alive still and getting to know Him better every day is the only pursuit that gives life meaning and purpose.

If there had been no Olympic boycott and I had made Canada's Olympic team, it would have been nice but it wouldn't have satisfied me. Only Jesus can do that. •

LICIA CORBELLA *is a columnist and the editorial page editor at the Calgary Herald and is a member of FAC.*

home for Christmas

BY MICHELE FLYNN

Life has brought us all happiness and hardship. At different times in my life I have experienced the happiness of love and marriage; the hardship of divorce and loneliness. The happiness of a pregnancy; the hardship of the unsuccessful birth of that child. Through all of life's ups and downs I have known there is an everlasting hope, but it took me many years to learn that hope comes from God and that joy comes from a personal relationship with Jesus. I have longed to have a family of my own, a successful marriage, children and a successful career. **In putting my life in Jesus' hands my perspective of success has changed.** My career goals have changed from the big titles and paycheques to using the gifts God has given me to serve others. Wow … what joy it brings my heart to serve and love others – and what success I have felt in my new career.

But the desire for a normal family with a husband and children has been a harder dream of success to change. There have been many times when being alone has felt unbearable and I have pleaded with God to bring me someone to share my life with. God has been faithful to bring me someone – but that Person has not been a husband but a friend. **God has blessed me with a new family – not the traditional one I wanted, but a family of friends at FAC.**

It has been very hard for me to accept this family as enough in my life, and especially during the holiday season. As a child I loved Christmas more than any other holiday. It was a time of family gatherings with wonderful memories of many cousins and aunts and uncles coming together and having fun. And everyone would go to midnight mass together to celebrate Jesus' birthday. As an adult things changed and my family seemed to shrink to just my mom and sister. Then my mom remarried and we expanded to a blended family; but with my mom becoming a snowbird, my sister and I celebrated Christmas alone for a few years. With changes in work schedules, one year I found I was going to be alone at Christmas – and the thought was totally unbearable to me. All my failures seemed to rush back and overcome me; to be totally alone on Christmas day to me was the ultimate failure in life.

I heard the church was having a Christmas Day lunch. I signed up to volunteer, hoping that at least for a few hours I would not have to be alone, and maybe I would survive the day. It was terrifying to come to church that Christmas Day, thinking everyone would see I was the failure I felt inside. Arriving that day and being welcomed and loved by the volunteers and guests turned my feelings of failure to joy, my feelings of hopelessness to hope. **After serving that day in the kitchen and sharing Christmas dinner with my new family I learned that God's family includes everyone – and so does mine.**

I have served Christmas Day at the church for many years since then. My joy at Christmas is beyond what I could have imagined; in serving our guests who come from all over the city I get to share the love and peace Jesus has given me. **It may seem like a small thing to some to have Christmas lunch; just a free turkey dinner. But to me the lesson of love and acceptance has changed my view on family.** In my heart I know God loves me, and I have a family who loves me even if my family is different than most. My life matters to God and in my heart know I am not a failure in God's eyes. I still sometimes fall back into comparing my life to others, feeling so different, an outsider in many ways. But God always reaches down to pull me back up … I just need to reach up and grab onto his love. Jesus is my hope, my joy. My prayer is each of you may know him, too. •

FAC CHRISTMAS

Just a sampling of the excitement of Christmas at FAC! **ABOVE:** We welcomed our community December 3-6 to our engaging production of Frank Dickens' Christmas Carol (by Alberta playwrights J.E. & Marie Russell), where we brought to life Dickens' classic story with a local, historical twist! Net proceeds donated to the Calgary Dream Centre.

RIGHT: Glenmore Christian Academy, our K-9 school, performed for friends and family in our auditorium December 17.

God **Always** Provides

Written by Jamie Unruh

During a service last October, Pastor Scott Weatherford spoke about the importance of being a part of a Life Group, and **in that moment Alla Petrova felt the Holy Spirit telling her that she needed to start one of her own.** But she had no idea where to begin.

Right after that service, Alla (pictured right) went to Cornerstone Café where she was volunteering and a couple mentioned to her that they were looking for a group to join. Alla knew the Lord had provided. The group now has nine members.

In December, Alla thought her Life Group was going to come to an end after only two months. Alla's roommate moved out of their apartment leaving her with no furniture, and nowhere for her group to sit. In the meantime, Alla was waiting to hear from a woman who was interested in joining the group, and that woman happened to call just after Alla's roommate moved.

Alla explained that she would love to have her join, but she now had an empty apartment and no way to host the Life Group. The woman told Alla that she had furniture for her, and again, God had provided.

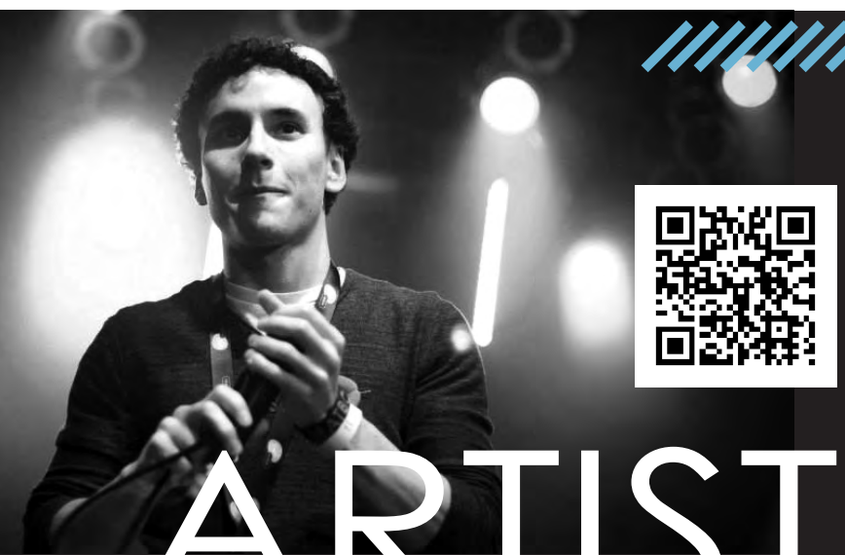
"I didn't think to join a group. God told me: 'You need to start one.'

And it was His will when I would find the people. **If it's God will, He will provide.** He will provide the people, He will provide the resources, and He will provide the furniture," she laughs. "It was absolutely amazing, amazing that it could happen."

While the group has only been together for four months, they have already built close relationships with each other and grown in relationship with Jesus.

Alla moved to Canada from the Ukraine, and with no family near-by, she understands loneliness. **"I'm by myself here. I have no family here, and these people have become my family now,"** she says. "Most of the people that are here, they don't have any family either. They became a part of this family and it's really great."

The group, like any other, encourages each other and prays for each other, and Alla can already see how God is working in the life of each member. "Their thinking has changed, attitudes have changed; God is working in their hearts." •



ARTIST IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PETERPOT is a Canadian beatbox artist with a pineapple, known for his positive message and creative approach to making music. FAC is his home church, and having won Canada's largest youth talent competition in 2008, he continues to share his talent internationally while challenging others to live positively. Recent accomplishments include winning the online world wild-card competition, performing at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, and competing at the 2012 world beatbox championships in Berlin. **Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch his performance during our weekend services here at FAC in 2010.**

www.thepeterpot.com

WINTER OLYMPICS QUIZ

Compliled by Andrea Zacharias

1. ***Who is Canada's most decorated Winter Olympian?***
   a. Clara Hughes (Speed Skating)
   b. Catriona Lemay Doan (Speed Skating)
   c. Cindy Klassen (Speed Skating)

2. ***How many gold medals did Canada win in the 2010 Winter Olympic Vancouver Games?***
   a. 26 b. 14 c. 16

3. ***Who won the first Gold medal for Canada at the 2010 Winter Olympic Vancouver Games?***
   a. Alexandre Bilodeau (Freestyle Skiiing)
   b. Jennifer Heil (Freestyle Skiiing)
   c. Jon Montgomery (Skeleton)

4. ***What were the first two Canadian cities to host the Olympic games?***
   a. Quebec City and Montreal
   b. Calgary and Ottawa
   c. Calgary and Montreal

5. ***Who were the mascots at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games?***
   a. Quatchi, Miga and Sumi
   b. Gord, Franki and Margerie
   c. Inuki, Snowi and Cooli

ANSWERS ON NEXT PAGE!

Written by Jim Hunter

RUN THE RACE

"You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally. I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No sloppy living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself."
I Corinthians 9: 24-27 (The Message).

Paul uses the athlete as a metaphor because, to be like Christ in every situation, we have to submit and train – which is a parallel process for an athlete.

To be an Olympian you put your life on the line preparing physically, mentally, emotionally, technically and tactically. What gets in our way is our head and heart. You have to develop a winning attitude, positive self-talk and visualization focused on giving your best. Athletes do not lose because they can't do it; they lose because they have not prepared enough or in the correct way. They haven't learned to focus from start to finish. They let destructive words sneak in and sabotage their thinking. They are distracted by thoughts and images of inadequacy. They are unwilling to give all of themselves to the effort because of what might potentially happen. Why do some win and others don't? Because what they believe is riddled with lies.

If you come to the place where you give your life to Christ and you want His blessing, He has to train you through the rules, the "correct way" of the jungle (the Garden of Eden was a jungle) to become the best. In my training as an athlete, a pattern has become apparent …

Confrontation You are traveling on the road of life and you are confronted with something that needs to be changed. You have to temporarily get off the road and deal with it. **Athlete:** *You just got beat; you're not good enough.* **Christian:** *All have sinned and fall short of perfection.*

Deconstruction What you believed is deconstructed because you agree that you have to change. **Athlete:** *My technique is all wrong.* **Christian:** *I can see the truth, Lord (Coach)… help me change.*

Regeneration You have to learn new things while feeling you are not fit enough, strong enough, tough enough. You have to grow into what you are saying and visualizing. You're being regenerated to a new you. **Athlete:** *The Olympic Motto, "Citius, Altius, Fortius!" (Swifter, Higher, Stronger)* **Christian:** *The Fruit of the Spirit start to show up!*

Transformation You're not perfect but you are becoming the "finished" performer because you have been transformed. **Athlete:** *The top step of the podium defines the sport on that day.* **Christian:** *Washed as white as snow in a sinful world!*

What God wants is for you to run the race He has for you, so He can shape you to become what He wants you to be … far beyond what you can do on your own! That's running the race. That's winning God's way.

AN OLYMPIAN'S STORY

I was raised on a dairy farm on the prairies of Saskatchewan. At eight years of age I gave my heart all to Jesus at a missionary convention and told Him I would do anything He asked me to do.

At thirteen I embraced the story of Gideon in the Old Testament, another farm boy who had been obedient to God and had won a great battle. This rededication of my life to Christ happened when another missionary spoke of Gideon and asked for young people who were willing to go where God would send them. I prayed with the missionary. I told him my dream of becoming an Olympic athlete but that I had committed to being a missionary and was willing to give it all up to go to the mission field. **He asked me if I would be willing to be a missionary on the World**

Cup ski circuit and the Olympics but give it up if I stopped improving. I told him was all in and he said, "Then go in God's power with the Sword of the Lord … God's Word!"

Every year I embroidered on the inside of my hats "The Sword of the Lord" and on the other side, "The Skis of Mark James." My first name is actually Mark, not Jim, but, the next summer after this commitment, God did what He does with many people: He called! And with the calling came a new name; a reporter gave me the nickname "Jungle Jim!"

I don't know why He takes a shepherd and makes him a king. I don't know why He takes a prisoner like Joseph and puts him in a palace, but I do know **Jesus uses those who are willing to be transformed from what makes no sense to making sense out of nothing.**

*A long-time FAC member, Jim is the host of a syndicated radio show called **Sportcology with Olympian Jungle Jim Hunter**, heard across Alberta. He trains coaches, athletes, parents, and leadership by motivating, educating, and communicating excellence for life. He is passionate about connecting biblical principles with personal and professional growth (pictured below). Learn more: **www.sportcology.com***

QUIZ ANSWERS: 1.) c 2.) b 3.) a 4.) c 5.) a

the Cross

One weekend in October, First Alliance Church's congregation marked the culmination of 75 years of ministry All for Jesus with a grand celebration of God's faithfulness. Alumni pastors Wendell Grout and Terry Young spoke of their piece of the great story of grace lived out in our church's history.

This celebration was more than just the history of our church. It was and continues to be the great celebration of our story linked to Jesus' story of redemption and mercy. It is the story of the fellowship of His people, the fellowship of the cross. And we all have a piece of that story in how God is working in and around and through us to grow His people into heaven.

As a symbol of how we have and will continue to be All for Jesus, the people of God's fellowship, from our children through our senior members of the church, dropped a single nail in a bucket to say we are all in … past, present and future. All in. All for Jesus. ***That nail stands for life and the part of God's heart we hold as we pursue our story and link it with His.***

Three thousand nails were collected and passed on to David Schmidt who wove them (and welded each one) together into a grand symbol of our commitment. ***On the second floor balcony overlooking the atrium hangs a cross of nails, four feet across by six feet high, 50 pounds in weight, hanging in front of the tags that talk of our personal stories***. 'Because of His love …' Each nail represents the story of our lives in Jesus, the agony and joy, the desperation and celebration, the misery and the ministry of the people of His story.

Take a moment to get close to that cross of nails. Consider that – whether you physically dropped a nail or not – one is yours … amidst the many that represent the past, present and future of First Alliance Church and the part they have and will play in God's story.

And when your eye passes by that cross over the next days or years as it hangs there, ***let it be a reminder to refocus and reframe our story***. If the strongest thing in our life is what we are looking at, what are we looking at? Let the cross of nails be a reminder of Who our focus is. And let us be reminded that the cross is enough. BY TERRY SCHMIDT

Do you remember dropping a nail in the bucket? **#crossofnails @faccalgary**

LIFE INTERRUPTED

Written by Darcey Jerrom

A

When I visualize the term "Life Interrupted" I see a series of connect the dots. Straight lines represent normal life or as close to normal as that segment can represent and the dots are events that interrupt that 'normalcy' and trigger whether the lines travel up or down or in hills and valleys.

When I look at my own lifeline I see constant interruptions. In some instances I can see a series of closely connected dots seemingly leading me down a steep hill into some sort of long drawn out plateau of a pit followed by an almost forever gentle slope pulling me back up that hill. And then before you know it, hello slippery slope!

You may not picture life in movements as extreme as I paint mine but we all experience similar cases and our lifelines of normalcy are all relative to what we call normal at that segment in time. Having your life 'interrupted' is a natural occurrence and how hard we fall comes down to how we handle it. Sometimes we pull a Jonah and flee God's way and end up in the belly of some big whale. Today that big whale could be anything that swallows you up – alcohol, drugs and other addictions. It could be just 'plain' old bad habits or hurts and old wounds that have been left to fester and prevent us from really living.

What we forget and/or simply do not know is that our Heavenly Father is in constant pursuit and his plans for us will not be thwarted by schemes we fallen devise to get around them. God provides, and He always provides a lifeline out.

To be more forthright, we are not all Children of God or some other benign platitude that exists to make you feel good. We were born prone to do wrong and our true lowest common denominator is that we are all actually Children of Wrath. It is only through faith in the will of God that you can be the other. It sounds nasty because it is and this truth tends to get painted over as our modern world tends not to have the deep-seated fear and respect for God that we should have. It takes work to go against your nature and transform into whom you were meant to be but once again, God provides and He will always provide a lifeline out and quite naturally, events to go along with it.

Sometimes though, due to lack of faith we don't see the things that God has positioned us to see (Exodus 3:3) and we need some additional guidance and fellowship to put it all together. Life Interrupted is an FAC ministry where the broken and not so broken (depending on your idea of normalcy) gather together to pick away at the stones cluttering the path that God has made for us. Recovery. Saved.

B

This program is based on eight blessings taken from the set of teachings by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12):

1. ***Realize I'm not God; admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable. (Matt. 5:3)***
2. ***Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover. (Matthew 5:4)***
3. ***Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control. (Matthew 5:5)***
4. ***Openly examine and confess my faults to God, to myself and to someone I trust. (Matthew 5:8)***
5. ***Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects. (Matthew 5:6)***
6. ***Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others. (Matthew 5:7 & 9)***
7. ***Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible-reading, and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to follow His will.***
8. ***Yield myself to God to be used to bring this good news to others, both by my example and my words. (Matthew 5:10)***

Check out Life Interrupted online: www.faccalgary.com (click on EVENTS > REGISTRATIONS). Small groups are gender and issue specific, and you can join anytime. No cost or registration.

I CHOOSE TO BE *all in*

Our son Jordan graduated from Trinity Western University in April 2012. With his newly acquired knowledge, he began his career with a Calgary environmental company. At 23 years of age, Jordan felt excited about his future. On October 6 of that same year, with Pastor Scott officiating, Jordan married his sweetheart Elise in a beautiful outdoor ceremony. He was eager to embrace his new role as husband. Life was great!

Just twelve days later, Jordan fell to his death in an elevator shaft at a power plant.

Jordan had managed to grip onto a beam, expecting to be rescued. His co-worker, helpless to reach him, said he was certain Jordan was going to make it; he kept calmly repeating, "I'm okay. I'm okay." Those were Jordan's Last words.

I don't know about you, but I can't imagine being described as calm while supporting my entire body weight with only my arms … suspended 300 feet above the ground and coming to the realization that this was likely not going to end well.

Only the Prince of Peace can give us a sense of calm and peace in our last moments.

The only eye-witness told me he clearly heard Jordan take a big, deep breath before he heard the impact of Jordan's fall. The instant Jordan took his final breath on earth, he took his first breath in Heaven. I know this because Jordan had already surrendered his life to Jesus Christ years before. His eternity in heaven was secured.

From the very start of my grief journey, I determined that rather than struggle to disguise or deny how broken and fragile I felt, each day I would ask God to leverage my grief for His glory. I consciously decided that my response would always be "Yes, Lord; I'm all in!" Never in my wildest imagination did I anticipate it would include sharing my story publicly eight times in these last 15 months. Although I am completely out of my comfort zone, God's strength overshadows my weakness. It is so easy for me to have a black and white list of the things of which I am not capable; a hard limit, a boundary that says, "I just don't have what it takes to …" It is so easy to disqualify myself before I even begin. But I can't let fear have the last word. I am learning that when I take on a challenge with God's strength, it builds the core of who I am – even if I don't perform flawlessly.

Galatians 6:4-5 says: *Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.*

When we do our creative best with our life, we bring God glory … and that, my friends, sums up our life's purpose. Think about this: If the God of Heaven loves you infinitely and wants you in His presence every moment, and if He knows that Heaven is a much better place for you, then why on earth has He left you here? Because **God wants you to leverage everything He has given you – knowledge, experiences, skills, relationships – to make Jesus famous and bring Him glory.** Nothing else will give you lasting joy, fulfillment and eternal rewards.

Before God can fully use you to your redemptive potential, it is important to have a DTR talk with Him.

I vividly remember the day Jordan shared that Elise had asked if they could have a DTR talk. My poor boy had no clue what it meant. Elise had to explain: DTR meant 'Define the Relationship.'

The most important opportunity you can step into is responding to Christ's invitation to have a DTR talk with you. He wants to know! Are you exclusively committed to Him? Are you all in?

If you are not in a relationship with Jesus, why not? He loves you! He offers His strength and His wisdom. You don't have to do life alone.

My relationship with Jesus has literally carried me through the most devastating year of my life. There is no way I want to do life without Jesus. He is my only hope. More than ever, I certainly don't want to be casual about our relationship. I am all in. • **BY SHIRLEY THIESSEN**

This is a great recipe to play around with – ingredient amounts are approximate and flexible to your taste. When complete, it's a great addition to sauces or sandwiches.

- Sterling Hunter

HARVEST

ONION JAM

- 10 large red onions, sliced
- 2-3 tbsp. oil
- salt & pepper to taste
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2-3 bay leaves
- 4 cups apple cider vinegar
- 2 cups liquid honey

Start by heating a wide, straight-sided pot with 2 loop handles; when hot, add the oil. Add the onions, salt and pepper. Cook over low to medium heat, stirring frequently and keeping the heat low enough to generate only a gentle sizzle. This is called "sweating" the onions; the goal is to soften them and draw out the moisture without browning or crisping them. The colour will darken and flavour will intensify.

Once onions have softened somewhat, add the bay leaves and sprigs of thyme (whole) and continue to sweat the mixture, stirring frequently to incorporate the flavour and anything that sticks to the bottom surface of the pan.

When the onions are very dark in colour, add the honey. Bring back to a simmer; simmer for 5 minutes. Add the cider vinegar; slowly simmer until liquid is mostly evaporated.

Place the mixture in a 300º F oven, ideally in the same pan. Bake uncovered, continuing to stir frequently (stir every time a "crust" forms on top) until onions are somewhat dry.

Remove from oven and cool. Remove bay leaves and thyme sprigs and blend to your choice of consistency.

Enjoy!

HARVEST is the food services of FAC and is an easy place to serve and get connected. To learn more, visit www.faccalgary.com and look under SERVE.

PHOTO: http://dishinanddishes.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/onion1.jpg

PROMISES
THERE IS ONE GREATER THAN I
WHO IS COMING TO RESCUE ME
MARCH 22/23, 2014