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WINTER 2016

Storyline

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JUST A FEW THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR JAMES ...



Building lives that honour God ... all for Jesus! These are more than just words on a wall. They describe the heart of FAC. That's why we were asking the 'Are You' questions in September, because we truly believe that connecting, growing, serving, and sharing are life commitments that build lives. I hope each person here at FAC found a

next step to take in their own journey of following Jesus. If you're still looking for your next step we have lots of possibilities for you. Please stop by our Next gathering in Meeting Place 2 after a weekend worship service and I'd be glad to meet you there.

During the season of Advent we begin a new teaching series called 'Heaven Came Down' which looks back towards Jesus' birth and looks forward to His return. We're going to explore that longing for God that we all experience in different ways, try to figure out what God is up to right here and now, and experience the hope we have in Jesus. Our Christmas Eve services are the highlight of the series and have the theme 'Waiting for Heaven.'

Right after Christmas we're going to have conversations about something that's on our minds but not often talked about in church. 'Let's Talk About Sex' is an invitation to conversations about human sexuality as we consider the themes of desire, design, damage, and destiny.

We've got all those new chairs in the sanctuary so please bring a friend with you. I'd love to meet them! – *James Paton, Lead Pastor*



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a christian & missionary alliance church

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"BUILDING LIVES THAT HONOUR GOD ... ALL FOR JESUS."

*"We read to know
that we are not alone."*

– C. S. Lewis in the William Nicholson film, *Shadowlands*.

Who are we? Several thousand come together each week from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds, and ages to "build lives that honour God." 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 – all for Jesus. As part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Canada, we also think it's pretty amazing that we get to partner with people around the world as they also "build lives that honour God."

We honour God by ... CONNECTING in small groups for regular Bible study, prayer, serving others, and building relationships; **SERVING** God by serving other people within the church and our community; **GROWING** to understand who Jesus Christ is through the Bible so we become more like Him; and **SHARING** Jesus and His love wherever God places us locally and globally.

Storyline is a platform for stories to be shared here at FAC: stories to make us smile, cry, laugh – and ultimately to guide us toward a transcendent hope in Jesus in the midst of a broken world. This quarterly publication also leverages the talent of volunteer photographers, writers, and graphic designers from within our church community, giving them the opportunity to serve God by connecting their passion and skills to the people behind each story. What has God been doing in your life lately? Have a story to share? We'd love to hear from you: ✉ storyline@faccalgary.com. •



"...it was worth it to wait for God's time to conduct."

ARTIST IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Written by Joyce Rempel



Music and faith have always been entwined for our volunteer **Orchestra Conductor**. Humberto Vargas Herrera came to faith after the church choir in Mexico sang "My

Tribute". He was 15 years old, hearing what Jesus did on the cross for him. "It's curious," he says, "I couldn't resist, but go to Him and say, 'Lord I want to accept you. Please transform my life, make all things different.'"

While attaining his bachelor's degree in Electronics Engineering, he sang in the church choir and began to conduct, "without knowledge, by ear," he said, "Because I liked to do it." He then auditioned for the National School of Music in Mexico City. As he prepared, he promised the Lord he would dedicate the music first to Him. He was accepted to study Bassoon, but due to a school strike, was unable to complete his degree. He continued working as an Engineer, "Because you have to eat!"

Still, his heart longed for music. Through a series of miracles, he was accepted to a Master's in Conducting in Montreal. Humberto recounts, "The Lord opened the door like only He can." Getting his Masters was like preparing for the Olympics; training with world-renowned Maestros, learning instruments and new compositions every day, even traveling to Europe and the USA to conduct. Humberto is deeply thankful and feels the Lord gave him this talent so that he can do more for God. "The talent comes from God, not from yourself. It is to serve and share; not to be pretentious."

While conducting is wonderful, it only pays well in big orchestras, so to make a living, he relies on the other talent God gave him: Engineering. He worked 12 years in Montreal before transitioning to Shaw Communications in Calgary. Once here, he felt drawn to First Alliance Church. Though he wanted to use his musical gifts, "You don't just come and start conducting, you have to serve in other ways". So the Lord opened the door to sing in the choir.

After music pastor, David Klob, got to know Humberto's skill and heart, he invited him to conduct the orchestra beginning September 2014 (pictured above, left). Humberto prepared the orchestra for the Paul Baloche concert in December. "Though I didn't conduct in the concert; it was worth it to wait for God's time to conduct later. The blessing comes from putting Him in first place."

"There is a temptation," Humberto says, "to receive applause and honor for oneself. I ask the congregation to please pray my heart never goes in that way; the honor and glory belongs only to God." Of course, it is very important to be well-trained, skillful musicians. "We are to be perfect as He is perfect — with God's help."

"The music itself is just a tool," Humberto concludes. "It increases our receptivity to the message of Christ." As we worship God in spirit and truth through the music, the Holy Spirit moves and miracles happen. ▲

Explore serving in FAC music: faccalgary.com/arts



You Called I answered

written by Jill Hopkins

*And I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."
(Isaiah 6:8 ESV)*

Twenty-one year old Jessica Ward heard the call clearly on the morning of August 28. That weekend at FAC her friend, Sara Apostoaei, shared her own journey with the congregation. She related how she had been praying for some time for God to speak to her about His will for her future and for Him to open her eyes to what hurt Him the most – to break her heart for what breaks His. Over time, she became aware of the worldwide crisis in human trafficking and had an overwhelming sadness and sense of helplessness for entrapped women and children. Shortly after, a lawyer working with International Justice Mission spoke at FAC, telling of the inroads he and other legal counsel had been having in breaking this chain of slavery. Suddenly, Sara's eyes were opened, her prayer answered, her calling made clear. A plan to become a lawyer to fight the injustices of slavery was put into place.

Jessica, listening to Sara's story, was awestruck. What did God want her to do? What could she do? She had been working to support herself financially since the age of eighteen. She was employed in a place she called 'spiritually draining,' where the dollar and power were paramount, but which provided the monetary security she craved. She, too, had been praying for God's will to be made known to her, but she felt handicapped by her circumstances. Having just returned from her second mission trip to Belarus,



Jessica found her heart for outreach was awakened and she was fully alive when ministering to others. She had difficulty reconciling the contrast as she returned to her workplace.

As she listened to Sara's story, a passion began to stir in her heart. Inspired, she left the church that Sunday morning, secured a student loan from the bank by the afternoon, and was registered in the Faculty of Theology at Ambrose University by Monday morning. She had sent a letter of resignation to her employer the evening before, facing her greatest stronghold and stepping out in faith to follow Jesus. Jessica had clearly heard the call to a life in ministry and was willing to follow it at all costs.

So now what?

Currently, Sara is waiting to register in a university program that ultimately will lead to a degree in law. In the meantime, she's joined various Calgary-based groups that work with those involved in the sex trade. CHILL (Christ Heals in Low Lights) is a group of young people who come alongside exploited and vulnerable women, providing support and education. She is planning a youth event in our church to educate and raise awareness of sex trafficking in Calgary.

Jessica and Sara also plan to join The Walk, a group of prayer focused believers that walk the stroll on Friday nights in downtown Calgary, with the intent to build relationships of trust and caring with those involved in the sex industry.

Jessica struggles to make ends meet every month, and the student loans are mounting. Still, she counts this new

direction as a huge blessing. To not follow is to waste the gifts God has placed in her heart.

Both Jessica and Sara are learning and growing as God continues to lead them on the paths He has set in front of them. If the road ahead sometimes feels daunting and overwhelming, Jessica is reminded that God's light doesn't illuminate the complete journey, but rather, like a candle, provides just enough for the next step. Jessica and Sara heard the call and now, in trust, they follow. •

Inspired?

//CHILL

christhealsinlowlights.com

🐦 @lifewithCHILL

📷 @christhealsinlowlights

The Walk

thewalkkycc.com

🐦 @TheWalk_

📷 @the_walk



International Justice Mission

ijm.ca

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FAC Community & Global Partnerships

faccalgary.com/communityimpact

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ASTORY IN ALL OF US



Written by Jospephine Tse

Background Photo by Mike Lang | Headshot by Jeremy Fokkens

"Everyone's story matters and that's a really exciting thing!"

Met Mike Lang, a born adventurer whose passion flourishes in the great outdoors. He and his wife Bonnie were guides for wilderness ministry for youth, leading groups through adventures like rock climbing, rafting, and kayaking. At the age of 25, Mike was diagnosed with cancer and felt abruptly torn away from the path he thought he was meant to be on. It just didn't seem fair.

One night, half-way through his chemotherapy treatment, he lay awake alone on the floor in his parents' basement, completely frustrated and confused with God. It was the lowest point in his life; he just couldn't understand why this was happening to him. In that moment he felt a sudden sense of calm peace he would never forget. As Mike explained, "it was that peace that the Bible talks about – the peace that surpasses understanding – that came over me."

Mike realized despite his circumstances God still had plans for his life.

That realization was a big turning point; Mike changed his perspective and started asking, "What does God have for me through cancer?" This led Mike and Bonnie to start *Survive & Thrive*, leading adventure trips with young adult cancer survivors and documenting them through film. "These trips have been absolutely incredible for everyone," says Mike. They have completed 17 expeditions over the past 8 years and almost 300 young adult cancer survivors have come on the journey with them. These films and experiences led him to help start cancer survivorship programs at Alberta Health Services. Over the last 5 years Mike has impacted thousands by planning and facilitating cancer survivorship education events as well as completed his master's in Health Services Research, and is pursuing his PhD, focusing on Storytelling in Health Care.



One of the greatest and most unexpected lessons revealed to Mike was the importance of sharing authentic stories that teach us how to live a meaningful life. Health care focuses heavily on empirical facts and Mike wants to restore and highlight the wisdom we can glean from sharing and listening deeply to each other's stories.

Through story sharing, Mike and his wife are able to talk about their faith. **"Most people we connect with aren't Christians but because we value their story, they want to know ours also. And our story just happens to include redemption through Christ."**

For Mike and Bonnie, the evening campfire on their adventure trips becomes a level playing field where everyone's story matters. When everyone's story matters, you can get to the deeper level of relationships where authenticity exists. Here is where people are willing to listen to a story of a Christian and how God has changed their life.

"There are no experts around the campfire, no one needs to have life all figured out. All that we ask of people is to listen deeply to each other's story and glean the wisdom it has for us." Mike and Bonnie have been able to share their own story with hundreds of people who actually want to hear what they have to say.

That pivotal moment of overwhelming peace in the basement allowed Mike to embrace the questions in his life and be patient for answers. Mike and Bonnie talk a lot with young adults about what kind of story they are living. "I want to live a good story, but for that to happen I realize there needs to be conflict and struggle in my life or else it's not an interesting story." With every trial, every celebration, and through unclear and wandering chapters, God is writing a great story in our lives. Trust in the Great Author to make your story an amazing one. •

Survivethrive.org



@SurviveThrive_



@survive.thrive



'TIS THE SEASON

By Jill Hopkins & Judith Tuck

UNMENTIONABLES DRIVE? WHAAAAAT???

Well, it's just one more way we're stepping up to the plate as a church to serve our greater community in this season of giving. From **November 26 to December 11** we're inviting you to donate brand new, packaged underwear for men and women, the most needed item for guests at The Mustard Seed. Collection bins are at the north and south entrances – so you don't have to carry them with you when you meet friends for coffee in one of the atriums. After all, they are ... *ahem* ... unmentionables!!!

We've already been amazed at your generous response to the Christmas Decor Drive for Fort McMurray, the number of Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes you've packed with love for children around the world, and the many gifts you've given through our Teen Challenge Christmas Wish Tree over the last two months! If you missed out on those opportunities or are excited to do even *more*, there are still a few ways – including the Unmentionables Drive – you can have fun while helping others in our community this Christmas:

CHRISTMAS GIFT DRIVE (DECEMBER 14/15)

The goal is for small groups and DiscoveryLand to donate 500 gifts for a White Elephant Sale at one of our three partner schools to provide underprivileged kids with very affordable gifts for family and friends.

CHRISTMAS HAMPERS (DECEMBER 17)

Partnering with Victory Outreach Centre and The Mustard Seed, volunteers from FAC will pack over 230 customized food baskets. To volunteer, email Michelle Peters: mpeters@faccalgary.com.

CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH (DECEMBER 25)

Be part of making Christmas Day memorable here at FAC for those who have nowhere else to go. Volunteer in food service, entertainment, or providing door prizes. Contact Michele Flynn: mflynn@faccalgary.com.

So, what tugs at your heart? Why not grab your family and friends and jump in! It will do The Body good! •

... the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit You?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me.' (Matthew 25:37-40)

The background of the entire image is a collage of various old, sepia-toned maps and documents. Some of the visible text on the maps includes "LANDSUT", "MÜNCH", and "JANUARY".

Inspire. Equip. Empower.

WRITTEN BY BRIANA SOUTHERLAND & TIFFANY HO

DON'T LET ANYONE LOOK DOWN
ON YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE YOUNG,
BUT SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THE
BELIEVERS IN SPEECH, IN CONDUCT,
IN LOVE, IN FAITH AND IN PURITY.

1 Timothy 4:12

INTRODUCTION. LITERALLY.

Six months ago, Tiffany was a member of the Global Impact Team and I was working as the administrator for SHARE Ministries (which includes Global Impact) at FAC. God was beginning to stir a desire in our hearts to see young adults involved in missions. Meanwhile, Pastor Craig (Global Impact Pastor) was given that same vision for FAC ... so he introduced us and encouraged us to move forward. When we met, we had no idea where to begin and in all honesty, we didn't feel capable of the task. Our church was large and we didn't know of many young adults outside of our small groups. How could God use us?

TRAINING.

Then, we were given the opportunity to attend an Envision Summit – a week-long leadership conference designed for young influencers. Roughly 50 young adults gathered, from a variety of cultures, locations, and professions, but with a common aspiration. We wanted to become the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in our everyday context, no matter what that context looks like!

Our week at the Summit was an opportunity to deepen our faith and learn what it takes to be leaders in our millennial generation. We were challenged to be authentic and reminded of the importance of cultivating genuine relationships in community. We were encouraged to apply, not rein in, our passions towards the kingdom of God. We were mentored as young leaders and inspired by each other. And finally, we were reminded of the importance of prayer – and witnessed our prayers being used in powerful ways. God used this training to unify and confirm our desire and passion to see an authentic community of young believers step up at FAC. We were full of inspiration and armed with a fresh perspective, ready to return to Calgary to make an impact.

But God was just getting started. We felt Him calling us to pray for other young leaders in our FAC community. So we waited and prayed that God would stir a desire for missions in other young leaders. It was – and still is – challenging. God has continued to work in our hearts, to shape us into people who rely fully on Him. He is teaching us that this is His task to accomplish, not ours.

GROWTH.

Since we began to pray, God has brought forth other young leaders to join us. We are hearing more and more names of people who are being called to make a difference in Calgary. God is amazing! These are people we've never met, but God is already



working! He is on the move in our church and we are so excited to see where He leads.

Looking forward, our goal is to be a platform that inspires, equips, and empowers our generation to pursue God's calling in their lives. We want to make faith our lifestyle. We want to use our lives as a witness; to use our words to encourage and share; and to use our strengths and passions for God in our communities. We want to be an authentic community that challenges and grows with each other.

This is an unfinished story. We want this story to grow; we want others to join in and help write this ending.

If you feel God calling you to join this conversation, we want to be in touch with you! Find us on Facebook or email Briana Southerland bsoutherland@faccalgary.com.

Save The Date

BRAINSTORM & SERVE EVENING

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10 7:00 PM

MEET AT MONOGRAM COFFEE IN ALTADORE

4814 16 ST SW CALGARY





GOD'S CALLING TO **THE UNKNOWN**

WRITTEN BY LUZ HERNÁNDEZ

Tito and Jennifer Avilés worked for more than ten years with YWAM (Youth With A Mission), based in Argentina, discipling and preparing young people in for ministry and missions. Then God began to call them to move to Canada, and during this time they were praying for God's direction and confirmation. God didn't give specific details of His calling, but the time came to obey ... and just like that, in August of 2016, they moved to Canada with their two small children, leaving behind the comfortable and stable life they had in Argentina to face a situation of unemployment and uncertainty as they wait for the doors that God will open to fulfill the purpose they've been called towards ...

LUZ: How did this calling start and how did you know that Canada was the place that God would send you?

TITO: Years ago, God spoke to both of us at different times in different ways. On one hand, He spoke to my wife that she would one day return to Canada. At that time, I didn't want to leave my culture and language and didn't think too much of it. Later on, at a conference, God put a burden on my heart for the youth of North America and especially of Canada, so we started to pray and wait for confirmation from the Lord. That's how we, seven years later, are here today in Calgary.

LUZ: Why did it take so long to obey God's calling?

TITO: **Esperar el tiempo de Dios para obedecer su llamado es lo más importante.** (*Waiting on God's timing to obey His calling is the most important thing.*) One of the things we asked the Lord was for the confirmation of His timing, because when we make decisions based on our own rationale, we can make mistakes. We believe that this is God's timing. The last time we came and worked with youth in Calgary, the Lord really grew the passion in my heart for the youth here. At the same time, our leaders in Argentina – who supported us in prayer throughout this whole process, though they didn't really want us to be here – one day said to us, "We think it's time to start walking towards your calling."

JENNIFER: It's important to wait for the confirmation of God's specific timing. The nearly seven years that we waited was a time of prayer and a process where God continued to work very deeply in different areas of our lives, which helped us to grow as individuals and in our marriage, and really strengthened our trust in Him.

LUZ: What are the challenges you've faced in this time?

TITO: **Todo llamado de Dios viene con desafíos.** (*Every calling from God comes with challenges.*) I think leaving behind family, friends, comfort, and language has been the most difficult part for me. The first week in Calgary, all I could do was think and compare the comfortable situation that we left behind with this situation of uncertainty – lacking a stable job – that we're living now, but one day, God spoke to me through the passage where Jesus, before going to the cross, told His disciples to pray so they wouldn't fall into temptation. So I began to pray, telling Him that I didn't want to fall into temptation and asking Him to help me and give me patience as He reveals to us His will for us in this place.

JENNIFER: The hardest part for me, aside from what my husband mentioned, is readjusting to Canadian culture; even though I am Canadian, so much of my growth, physically, mentally, and spiritually, occurred over the ten years that I lived in Argentina and now I'm living the process of culture shock. We believe that God brought us here and that He is going to open the doors that need to be opened to carry out in us the purpose that He called us to. **Y lo que nos sostiene y nos mantiene firmes es saber que, si estamos allá en Argentina o aquí en Calgary, Él es fiel** (*And what sustains us and keeps us steady is the knowledge that, whether we are there in Argentina or here in Canada, He is faithful.*)

Just as, by faith, Abraham obeyed God's calling to the unknown to receive the promised land, it is also by faith that Tito and Jennifer have obeyed God and expect with conviction that which will be even though their eyes do not yet see it. 📢



Photo provided by Jennifer Avilés



TAKING JESUS WITH YOU

WRITTEN BY TARA KLAGER

When you're alone in a new city, surrounded by people you don't know and trying to navigate a brand new world, how tough is it to keep faith alive? How does a student already swimming upstream in a torrent of new experiences hold onto a personal, vital relationship with Jesus?

For Caleb Klager and Caleb Geerlof, two first-year students at the University of Toronto and University of Regina respectively, moving on to post-secondary schools far from home has brought some unique opportunities – as well as challenges.

"The predominant message I got was to get connected right away," says Geerlof. "Find a church, get connected right off the bat!" Klager agrees. "We looked at a lot of churches even when I was in Grade 12, just prepping for being out here. That was a big thing we really focused on."

Finding those new communities of believers really wasn't that difficult, although it does take some persistence. For Klager, it means an hour on public transit to get to People's Church where he participates in regular services and on the rotating worship team. Geerlof is attending the Living Hope Alliance Church, has joined a small group and also lends a hand on the worship team.

While university living is totally unlike anything they've ever experienced before, both Geerlof and Klager have been blown away by the way God has kept putting opportunities in front of them. "I was so scared I'd be alone," says Klager. "But it wasn't even the first week of classes when I ran into some people in the EXACT same boat as me. We were all looking for a church, a bit

nervous, anxious to maintain our faith. Now, it's the same small group of friends regularly attending church every Sunday."

"Having people hold you accountable has always been important to me," says Geerlof. "Now that I'm in a new city, I've had to adjust what this kind of grounding looks like." Klager agrees. "Finding community hasn't been the hard part, it's more just realizing that it's going to be different and that's okay."

Different but still familiar. While locations have changed, the daily disciplines haven't. "University is incredibly different from high school," says Geerlof. "There are thousands of young adults left to their own means, making their own choices. For me, I found that setting time aside every day to reflect and ground myself in His Word is immensely helpful, helping me to honour God."

"If you don't set up time for important stuff as soon as you start, life seems to find a way to eat up all your time and set you up with other commitments," he says.

"I have a 20-minute walk to school everyday and I usually spend that time in prayer," says Klager. "I really try to invite God's presence into all the things I do. This is part of my mission field, what God has called me to do here in Toronto – sometimes I'm gigging at the back of bars or in people's basements ... No matter where I am or who I'm with, I want to bring God's Kingdom."

"Remember, God isn't restricted to the walls of our gym," he says. "Believe me when I tell you that God wants to speak to you and



CALEB GEERLOF
(PHOTO BY ENOCH TSENG)

be part of your life as you go through this exciting chapter. Sometimes it feels easier said than done – I get it – but never be afraid to ask for help if you need it. You don't have to do this alone."

With so much coming at them, both Geerlof and Klager value the prayers of their FAC family – for confidence and guidance as they pursue their studies, for constant reminders that God is bigger than any of their problems, and that they will have the discipline to constantly seek God's direction in their daily lives.

"I don't want to miss the plans God has for me in the city of Regina," says Geerlof. "I want the next five years to deepen my faith and build me into the person He desires me to be."

"I'm practicing for a performance," says Klager, "but I'm also striving to perfect a craft. I believe God has given me the gift of music so that I can offer it back to Him in worship. I do ministry in the Jazz Performance program."



CALEB KLAGER
(PHOTO BY KYLA EWERT)

Whether you're sticking around in Calgary after graduation or have plans to move next year, we're committed to helping you stay connected in Christ-centred community – give us a shout!



Pastor Dave Conrad (Sr. High)
dconrad@faccalgary.com



Pastor Jonathan Klein (Sr. High & Young Adults)
jklein@faccalgary.com



Power to Change
60+ university & college campus groups in Canada
p2c.com/students/transition/



In Christ Alone

WRITTEN BY SHEILA BALL



One of the first things you notice when you walk into Marg Baker's kitchen are the words carved into the small stone tablet lying on her kitchen island:

Psalm 62: 1-2

*My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress.
I will never be shaken.*

I met Marg for the first time in her Calgary home, recovering from chemotherapy and radiation treatment following a cancer diagnosis. While her hair is thin and her legs are weakened, her eyes continue to sparkle and her voice is strong as she tells about the unexpected and miraculous journey she has traveled in her faith over the past 25 years.

I am fascinated by the clarity, wisdom and strength that emerges from those who, like Marg, have lived lives of notable challenge and struggle. How is meaning made of events that seem on the surface to be disconnected? What purpose can be found in pain and loss? How do we understand our life story through the eyes of God?

Marg's personal faith journey begins in earnest with the ending of one relationship and the beginning of another. Newly divorced and still adjusting to a new life, daily scripture readings continually spoke to her about serving widows and orphans. In answer to that call she took employment as a live-in caregiver to a 90-year old widow. Still healing from her divorce, Marg went to bed the first night in her new home and asked God, "What has happened to my life? I surrender it all to You." Looking back on those early days Marg understands now that over 8 years as a caregiver, "I learned what a true servant heart was."

Several years later Marg felt a strong calling to serve in Thailand, and

a 4-month trip turned into a lifetime commitment to abandoned and abused Thai children through the Mercy Ministries Foundation and the ChiangSaen Babies Home. Her first months in Thailand were spent grouting tile in the new nursery. Never having done construction work before, she had to learn new skills quickly while struggling with the 40°C temperatures, no electricity, and "spiders bigger than your hand." 16 years later, Mercy Ministries has grown; to date, approximately 500 children have found safety and Christian love in the Ministry orphanages. **Marg is profoundly grateful to members of FAC who provide ongoing support to her children through short-term mission work, financial sponsorship, and shipments of handmade clothes from the FAC sewing groups.**

Earlier this year Marg was diagnosed with cancer in a Bangkok hospital and elected to receive her treatments in Calgary where her birth children and parents reside. From the beginning of an arduous treatment program, Marg declared that "God is a great physician" and that her health issues were His open door for her to witness to hospital staff about the Word and to share stories of her Thai children. **"When you have cancer, people listen to you," she explains. When asked why she thinks cancer happened to her, Marg clearly responds with "Why not me? I am the best one to deal with cancer because I have God."** Marg's

treatments are now completed and her tumor is no longer visible on her MRI. She clearly has felt the hand of God healing and guiding her through this part of her journey in faith and service to others. She now eagerly anticipates her return to Thailand and to her beloved children.

Marg now sees each chapter of her life as connected. The miraculous unfolding of her journey of faith and service began at a time when it seemed so much was lost to her. And yet in her surrender to God's unrevealed plan and her commitment to "follow God wholeheartedly and with unshakeable faith" she has come to serve and love in ways she never imagined. •



MY STORY



Photo by Teen Challenge Alberta



MY NAME IS ADAM. I grew up in a Christian home, but even with very strong Christian parents I wasn't immune to the negative side of the world. At 10 I professed Christ to be my Saviour and was baptized shortly afterwards. But as a teenager my faith was tested and I began to fall away from my Saviour. Though my family was very loving and accepting I desired acceptance from my peers. This led me into a lifestyle that was questionable to say the least. I turned to drugs and alcohol to be accepted. My choices caused me to stray far away from God and to have a life full

of confusion and emptiness. Because of the way I felt and acted, my relationships with others became rocky and I hurt many people.

In March of 2016 I chose to come to Teen Challenge – a decision heavily influenced by God and the prayers of many people, including my parents. I am very grateful ... Teen Challenge has given me the tools I needed so desperately to fix many areas of my life. My main goal when coming to Teen Challenge was to restore my severely broken relationship with God. This has been more than successfully completed, and everyday this relationship with my Saviour grows stronger. Because Teen Challenge allows me a place where distractions have been removed, I can take this time to properly learn what it means to have a personal relationship with my Lord and Saviour. I now know I am accepted because of who I am in Christ.

Many days here at Teen Challenge are full of laughter and joy because my brothers and I have learned our true identities, as children of our loving heavenly Father. Teen Challenge has allowed me to create friendships here and to start the restoration processes on the relationships I brought harm to over my years. My foundation with God has never been stronger and because of all God has done to save me from myself, **I have given Him complete control of my life.** Teen Challenge has provided me a place where I can not only learn about God but also how to live my life in a godly manner. After my time here I would like to continue to help my brothers and sisters in Christ. I want to fight alongside others that are battling with things like substance abuse and emotional trauma and be the one who is strong enough in Christ that others can depend upon. • **Written by Adam R. Teen Challenge Alberta is a residential alcohol and drug addiction faith-based program located near Calgary in Priddis, Alberta. Learn more: tcalberta.ca.**

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the **STARS** of
Christmas

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The Promise

Well Donna, I have been waiting five years to unveil this photograph. When God first disclosed to me that I would be getting married one day I dreamt of the idea of such an image. But I could not imagine coming across such a scene, thinking I would have to search far and wide for something this unique, and knowing also my limited time for photography at that time in my life. I remember thinking however that it was not beyond God's power to provide such an opportunity if it was His will and plan. As time passed by, and the idea had somewhat faded, I was walking one day at Edworthy Park by a stand of trees that I must have passed hundreds of times over the years, but this time I noticed the two trees, and stopped to investigate. Walking around to the other side revealed the very scene you see here. How could I have missed it earlier! I am completely convinced that God in His perfect time revealed it when He wanted to remind me of His promise. The promise of His gift of YOU into my life!



A LOVE STORY

Orchestrated by God

Six years ago, God used three distinct things to bring me to surrender to Him completely, to stir a desire to get married, and to make it clear He would turn this desire into reality.

He used a weekend message about how God plants desires in our hearts and brings them to fruition; a bold query from a casual acquaintance about my marriage aspirations; and a scripture passage declaring to me that God knew my heart's desire and my petition had been heard! He asked if I was willing to wait five years for the right person, and spend a season of caring for my mom during her journey with Alzheimers. It was a season of great blessing and indescribable joy!

One day, while walking in my favourite city park, the idea struck me to make a photograph to present on the day of my proposal. I had an image in mind I knew would symbolize the joining of our lives. The odds of finding what I was looking for were against me. Then I realized if God was in it, He was more than able to bring the opportunity to pass. Some time later, in the same park, in a place I'd passed hundreds of times before, I was surprised to find the very scene I'd imagined. Later that summer, during my vacation, God provided the perfect lighting and clouds for the backdrop, and the time to capture the image perfectly (*pictured above*). This fueled my conviction that He truly would complete His plans for this marriage.

One Saturday some time later, I noticed Donna Staddon walk into the service. Feeling myself drawn to her, I wondered if she might be the one. I'd served as sound technician at her daughter's funeral service in 2003, and had recorded her story some years later, but it still seemed a stretch. Yet God planted a seed that day!

Nearly five years into attending to Mom's needs, our family celebrated her birthday and then Mother's Day, and then saw her take a sudden and unexpected turn for the worse. God called her home to be with Him one week later. I realized there was now nothing preventing Him from revealing the person He wanted me to marry.

God had also planted the idea that I would meet this person at a Bible study led by my sister; later that fall, Elaine told me she already thought she knew who it was! Knowing of my wish to have God reveal His choice to me, she told me no more. That New Year's Eve I was invited to a party with a small guest list, all people from the Bible study. Donna was on that list. God had my attention! The evening only confirmed my sense that this was who God had in mind for me.

In the New Year I started attending the study, and got to know a few who would linger afterward – including Donna. My feelings for Donna grew. As the study was ending for the summer, I asked Elaine the name of the person she was thinking of, believing if God had led both of us to the same woman it would be further confirmation. I was not surprised to hear it was Donna!

The next step was mine. I spent an intense weekend querying God to be sure this was His plan for me. I knew from His Word that my responsibility as a husband would be beyond my ability to fulfill apart from His equipping me, so I needed to be sure. He reminded me of how He rescued Israel from Egypt, and yet after all the signs and wonders He performed, they'd still turned back at the Promised Land. He reminded me of all the signs He'd given me over six years, and I knew I had the same choice to make.

I felt Him say, "Just pick up the phone and watch what I will do!" I made that call, and God more than abundantly fulfilled His promise – in less than two months we were engaged!

Reflecting back, Donna can see how God had also been working in her life, granting her a heart content in Him and fully surrendered to His will.

This work of the Lord was truly completed at the end of May – just as I became fully convinced Donna was indeed God's choice for me. His timing is always perfect!

We marvel at the evidence of His impeccable matchmaking skills through all we have in common and the depth of love we have for each other. God is so good, and we celebrate the gift of His love in bringing us together! We will formally celebrate this on our wedding day early in January 2017. All praise, glory, and honour belong to Him! •

Wayne Jeschke serves on staff as one of our Technical Associates and oversees the sound in our main auditorium during most weekend services. Photos by Wayne Jeschke.



"... IF GOD WAS IN IT, HE WAS *more than able*
TO BRING THE OPPORTUNITY TO PASS."

The Witness of God

"I came to Canada 13 years ago from China. It wasn't easy to adjust and integrate into a new culture and country, especially when the life did not turn out the way I had planned."

We love the cultural diversity here at FAC. Did you know we offer live translations in our Sunday services? To learn more, visit faccalgary.com/intercultural.



Through several series of struggles, my marriage ended up in a divorce; there was a sense of rejection, and confusion. Moreover, when I found out my only son was struggling with his life and future, I felt that I was powerless and desperate. Four years later, I had heard that my ex-husband was ill and was going through a difficult time and could not look after himself. I invited him back into my home, which added serious struggles for my family. My son became rebellious and there were ongoing conflicts among us. I really didn't know what to do and what God wanted me to do.

In desperation, I started to join Sunday afternoon prayer gatherings here at FAC. It has been a tear-filled time of prayer and in the process, I surrendered my will and desire to God, saying, 'God, it is all Yours'.

My son and I joined a small group of parents with teenagers called 'teen night'. My son started to change. He was able to focus more on his school work and began to

control his addictive computer and internet habit which have been quite destructive. Eventually, he made a decision to come to church. The weekend I walked into the church building with my son, I felt a sense of fulfillment. This year, he was able to enroll into a university program. My marriage has been restored; the powerful name of Jesus Christ changed my perspective and led me to repent and to see the truth. We remarried this spring with the blessings of many brothers and sisters.

I have learned that the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to change our lives when we believe. •

(The author's name has been omitted to protect her privacy in the Chinese community.)



见证

我们非常喜欢FAC的文化多样性。
你知道吗，在FAC的周日崇拜，
我们还会提供即时传译，详情请登陆



faccalgary.com/intercultural

十三年前我带着憧憬和梦想从中国来到遥远的枫叶之国加拿大。生活并不象我当初计划的那样，想要融入一个文化截然不同的异国真的不是一件容易的事。

不幸的是我的婚姻也出了问题。特别是当我看到我的儿子也在为他的将来挣扎时我非常地绝望和无助。四年之后，我的前夫生了一场大病。我决定接他回家康复。与此同时家人之间的冲突也此起彼伏。

那时的我非常的困惑，不知神在我的生命之中有如何的安排。绝望之时，我开始加入周日下午的祷告会。在祷告会上，我时时泪流满面。我对神说“神啊，我愿意放下自己的意愿来跟随你”。

之后，我和儿子参加了由父母和孩子共同组成的“青少年之夜”聚会。我的儿子也发生了变

化。他开始能够专注学习，减少玩游戏的时间。最终他决定来到教会。今年他也进入大学开始了大学生活。我的婚姻也得以恢复。今年春季，在众兄弟和姐妹的祝福之下，我们重新在神面前立约结为一体。

是耶稣基督的爱让我认识到，他是一位有能力的，信实的神。当我们相信这一点的时候，我们的生活就因此而改变了。



WAITING FOR *heaven*

CHRISTMAS EVE @ FAC

12 NOON, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00 & 11:00 PM

FACTHISWEEK.COM #FACCHRISTMAS @FACCALGARY

(NO SERVICES DECEMBER 25)



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