

the SCRIBE

STORIES OF COMPASSION & HOPE

QUARTERLY | FREE

RECORDING WHAT GOD IS
DOING IN & THROUGH THE
PEOPLE OF CROSSROADS

ISSUE 01 — 2025

"FOLLOWING HIM TOGETHER"

**THE GIFT OF
COMMUNITY** Pg. 12

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CELEBRATE
RECOVERY* Pg. 4

**A TAPESTRY OF
KINDNESS** Pg. 16

*Plus many
more amazing
God stories!*



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SO YOU DON'T MISS ANYTHING!

WELCOME TO THE SCRIBE!

THIS IS THE FOURTH EDITION OF THIS PUBLICATION, AND WE'RE SO GRATEFUL FOR YOUR POSITIVE FEEDBACK. WE HOPE YOU ARE BLESSED BY READING THE STORIES OF HOW GOD CONTINUES TO DO AMAZING THINGS IN OUR COMMUNITY!



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TRANSFORMING
LIVES IN UGANDA

SEND US YOUR STORY!

What's God doing in your life? Or maybe you love writing and want to contribute? We'd love to hear from you! Let us know how we can reach you — please email us at: communications@crossroadschurch.ca or phone: 403-347-6425.

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CELEBRATE

RECOVERY



HEALING HURTS,
HANGUPS & HABITS
IN CENTRAL ALBERTA



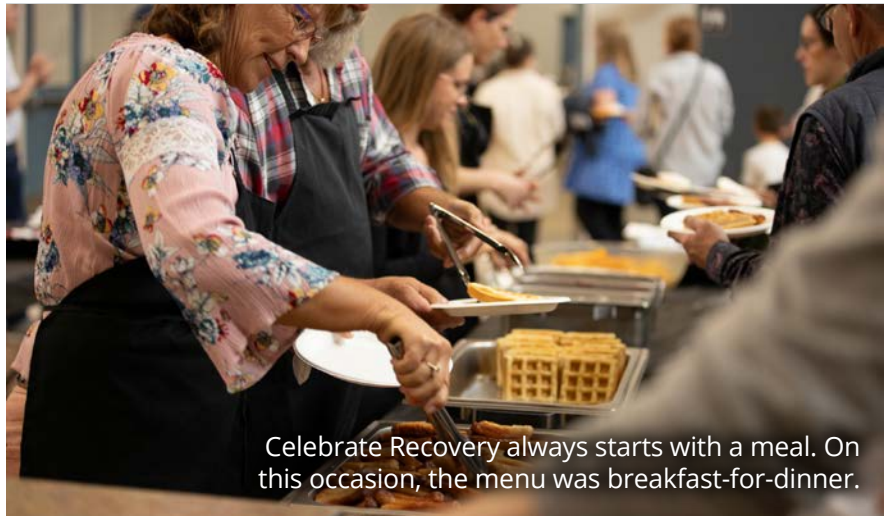
By Schuyler Weisse

THE SCRIBE ATTENDED A FRIDAY EVENING SESSION OF CELEBRATE RECOVERY (CR) AT CROSSROADS. THIS ARTICLE DELVES DEEPLY INTO EVERY ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM AND THE TRANSFORMATIVE WORK GOD HAS DONE THROUGH THIS MINISTRY.

VINCE LECKIE, WHO HAS BEEN THE POINT PERSON FOR CR AT CROSSROADS FOR ABOUT FIVE YEARS, GUIDES US THROUGH A TYPICAL EVENING. THE ACCOUNT THAT FOLLOWS IS BASED ON REAL EVENTS AND TRUE TESTIMONIES OF ATTENDEES AND VOLUNTEERS. SINCE ANONYMITY IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE, NAMES AND DETAILS HAVE BEEN OMITTED OR ALTERED. WHERE NAMES ARE INCLUDED, IT IS WITH EXPRESS PERMISSION OF THOSE IDENTIFIED.



Vince Leckie,
Celebrate Recovery Leader



Celebrate Recovery always starts with a meal. On this occasion, the menu was breakfast-for-dinner.

Arriving at CrossRoads on a cool but pleasant Friday evening, I battle an internal sense of apprehension. Entering through the east door, I notice two teenage girls sitting on the floor against the wall to my left, their heads bowed together. A brunette has her arm wrapped protectively around a blue-haired girl, who seems to be wiping at her face. The sight tugs at my heart, leaving me unsettled.

A little unsure of where I'm supposed to be, I linger for a moment. The smell of food wafts from somewhere out of sight. Suddenly, a voice to my right calls out, and I turn to face Vince Leckie. "You made it!" he says warmly, his mustache barely containing his grin.

"I did," I reply, shaking his firm, welcoming hand. I cast a momentary glance toward the girls, hoping Vince might notice and address the situation, but he seems unphased and leads me toward the fellowship area.

The room is buzzing with activity—over a hundred people chatting, walking with plates of food, and greeting one another with hugs and handshakes. The tables are occupied by a mix of people: a family of five, a circle of middle-aged women laughing, and others enjoying casual conversation. Meanwhile, a line of hungry people shuffle along the buffet tables, where servers are passing out plates of food. The movement between the kitchen and the warming trays is constant. It's a far cry from the subdued and somber gathering I had envisioned.

"I didn't expect any of this," I admit.

"Which part?" Vince asks with an amused expression, subtly guiding me toward the food line.

"Honestly, all of it," I say, gesturing to

the bustling room. "I thought it would be more like an old-gent's club, with five o'clock shadows and smokers' cough," I add, slightly bashful. Vince chuckles.

"Well, some of us have more facial hair than others," he grins, stroking his thick beard. "But yeah! CR isn't just for old guys. We've got something here for all ages."

I digest his words as we gather our plates. Tonight's menu is breakfast-for-dinner: pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausages, and crispy bacon.

"Celebration Place is another part of our Fridays," Vince explains as he drizzles syrup over his plate. "It's for 5- to 11-year-olds. The beauty of this setup is that entire families learn to speak the same language about their hurts, hang-ups, and habits. It's not just child-care—we're equipping young and old to let go of self-destructive tendencies and fully rely on God."

"Louise and her kitchen volunteers always take care of us," Vince remarks as we sit at one of the few empty tables. "There's coffee or water over there," he adds, gesturing toward the wall. I take him up on the offer.

When I return, the hum of community has spread to our table. Most of the previously empty chairs are now filled with strangers. Before I settle into my supper, five hands extend toward me, and new names fly at me like confetti, each landing with cheerful splashes of personality. Next to Vince, a lady introduces herself as "Keren, Vince's wife," and comments on how full the room is.

Vince, addressing her observation for my benefit, explains, "We're hosting a few other Celebrate Recovery groups tonight—folks from Lacombe, Rocky Mountain House, and Living Stones


Church." I nod appreciatively. "It's an honour to support other groups in Central Alberta. The more people who go through the program, the more healing happens in our communities."

Scanning the busy tables, my attention is drawn to a man across the room. He's tall and barrel-chested, his tattooed arms bulging as he leans against the wall staring at his phone. His rugged appearance and stern demeanor suggest a troubled soul. This is exactly the kind of person who needs a program like this. I turn back to Vince, trying to focus, but the image of the burly man lingers in my mind.

Our conversation continues. "My wife Keren runs The Landing, for 12- to 18-year-olds," Vince explains, noticing my blank stare. "Everyone—no matter their age—has experienced some kind of hurt. If those hurts go unaddressed, they become hang-ups. And if we don't turn our pain over to Jesus, they turn into habits that take over our lives. CR helps people find the tools to surrender those hurts to Jesus. He's our 'Higher Power,'" he adds, air quoting the term.

(Cont'd next page...)





"[WORSHIP] IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE PARTS OF CR. IT FEEDS MY SOUL TO START MY WEEKEND PRAISING GOD."

- VINCE LECKIE

"The process of submitting to Christ is the heart of what we do here."

I want to ask more, but we're interrupted by an announcement that the large group session is about to begin. Tables around us empty as people finish. I still haven't got a complete picture of what we'll be doing this evening, so Vince explains that, after a meal, we worship, hear testimony, and then break out into 'Open Share Groups.' He is clearly looking forward to the rest of the evening. "I never thought I'd be part of a recovery program, but now..." He has a sparkle in his eye when he adds, "...I have a group of guys in my accountability circle who I can call at any moment."

Music from the Chapel begins to reverberate through the hall. The kick drum and bass rattle the water in my cup, so I finish it quickly before we dispose of our plates and head to the Chapel. Keren bids us 'Adieu,' and Vince and I follow the crowd in search of empty seats.

The room is alive with music. Troy leads with his acoustic guitar and is flanked by a four-piece band, and people sing along. Some sway, others raise their hands. The words "How my heart leaps, how my soul sings, for I know where my help comes from" are projected on the screen.

Vince leans in, speaking loudly over the music, "This is one of my favourite parts of CR. It feeds my soul to start my weekend praising God." I observe the diverse expressions of worship around

me: some clap to the beat, others to their own rhythm. A woman near the front prays with her hands folded; a young man dances in the aisle. I look around to see if the burly man made it into the Chapel and cannot pick him out of the crowd.

The camaraderie in this room is palpable. I've had the privilege of attending services in a variety of places with wide-ranging theological dispositions but have never experienced such authenticity. Throughout the large group session, there is a total lack of self-importance, and everything directs me toward an honest examination of my own submission to Jesus. The worship is earnest; the testimony of all those who share is humble; and the 8 Principles and 12 Steps of Recovery are read from the front, with all of us reading—in unison—the accompanying scripture passages. I'm especially moved by Step 4: "We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves," followed by "Let us examine our ways and test them and let us return to the Lord", from Lamentations 3:40. This room feels unified in this prayer.

Near what I believe to be the end of the session, I try to whisper to Vince about the interview for The Scribe. He's engrossed in the testimony being shared from the front, and it takes a gentle tap from me to get his attention. I ask quietly about excusing ourselves for a one-on-one chat.

"I'll be in the Open Share group after this," he says. "But you are welcome to attend the Newcomer's class. There's a fellowship time following that, and I'll be happy to answer any questions you have then."

I have many questions. But Vince's response suggests the experience is more important than the data and that the men's share group is important to him. My curiosity is piqued about the 'Newcomer's' class. Previously, in the large group session, a lady who named herself 'Lois' had invited first-time attendees to attend and learn about CR during the share group break-out. It didn't sound too intimidating, so I decide journalistic integrity demands I follow this course.

The room is formally dismissed, and Vince points me toward the front of the Chapel. "We'll catch up in a bit, and you can ask me anything you want." Much of the apprehension I noticed in myself at the beginning of the evening has completely evaporated. The large group session has a disarming quality that leaves me open to being vulnerable. I take a seat in a small circle where Lois, her co-leader Ken, and a young couple are seated.

Once we introduce ourselves, Lois describes the purpose of CR. Her voice is steady, and she makes eye contact with each of us as she speaks. "All of us have experienced hurts that can have an emotional, physical, or spiritual impact. If we can't authentically walk

through our hurts with Jesus, our view of ourselves, of God, and of others can become distorted, and we get hung up on our trauma. These distortions can then lead us to destructive coping mechanisms—compulsive or addictive habits that consume our lives. CR is about walking through our trauma with Jesus and letting Him affect real healing.” I’ve begun to not only hear but understand what this is about since so many talking points in the class sound similar to Vince’s description earlier.

Lois and Ken explain every component of CR at CrossRoads: its history, the constituent parts of the ministry, what to expect in the Open Share groups, and more. It strikes me that both the mission of this ministry and its execution are steeped in Biblical principles. Lois exudes the same kind of gracious, non-judgmental, matter-of-fact submission to Jesus that I’ve seen on display in many instances since I entered the building.

The class lasts an hour, and I eventually make my way back to the coffee station to reflect on everything I’ve seen. The atmosphere of the evening, from the lively fellowship to the earnest worship, has left an intense imprint. Vince finds me with my cup mostly empty on a couch and seems eager to share more about the program.

I ask about challenges CR encounters, and Vince admits reluctantly, “We are aware that about 50% of people who attend the Newcomers class never return to CR. Recovery is something the Holy Spirit does, and it’s not something I can personally impact. But as a leadership team, we are always trying to encourage people to come back to CR. We trust that God will bring those who need to be here, and we want to be faithful to providing a welcoming environment for anyone who makes the brave choice to be here. I think everyone in the church could benefit from participating in a step study, but it’s the Holy Spirit that will make that happen.”

I wonder if Vince believes CR can impact even the toughest characters. “That man

I saw earlier,” I begin, describing the burly figure who caught my attention. “Do you know his story? Or would he be the kind of guy who may never return?”

Vince’s face lights up with a fond smile. “Ah! That guy was in a step-study I led at Bowden Penitentiary. I know he can look intimidating, but he’s one of the kindest people you’ll ever meet. He’s been through a lot, but God’s done incredible work in his life. He’s sponsored quite a few people in the program and is always ready to help others on their recovery journey.”

I’m taken aback. “I wouldn’t have guessed that,” I admit. “He looked troubled when I first saw him.”

Vince nods knowingly. “He was trying to get in touch with someone he’s sponsoring. And you might’ve met his daughter already. Do you remember the girl you first saw when you walked in?”

I recall the despondent scene that had greeted me when I arrived. “Yeah. Are they okay?”

“More than okay,” Vince assures me. “That brown-haired girl helps Keren with The Landing and has been instrumental in caring for other teens navigating their recovery. That girl she was praying with earlier has been struggling with depression.”

I’m floored by the revelation, my assumptions crumbling in the face of this truth. The burly man and the quiet girl I misjudged are pillars of this community, their lives transformed by God’s grace and their commitment to serving others.

Vince leans back into the couch next to me; we survey the room together. “Jesus changes lives and hearts—including the way we see and interact with each other. I would challenge anyone to join the program and go through the steps and not have their lives impacted. I don’t believe that is possible. Learning to submit to Christ on the Cross will make a difference for everyone.” The lingering fellowship in the room and the love of God on display are unambiguous evidence to me that Vince is correct.

“JESUS CHANGES LIVES AND HEARTS ... I WOULD CHALLENGE ANYONE TO JOIN THE PROGRAM AND GO THROUGH THE STEPS AND NOT HAVE THEIR LIVES IMPACTED.”

- VINCE LECKIE



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- LARGE GROUP 7-8PM
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COUNTING BLESSINGS

STAFF
PROFILE



BECKY
AMTHOR

A STORY OF FAITH & FINANCE

By Julie Nobel

The aroma of freshly brewed coffee filled Becky's kitchen, a comforting start to a day that promised to be anything but quiet. Christmas was approaching, and with it, the annual Compassion Campaign and her busiest time of the year. This wasn't merely a season of heightened workload; it was a confluence of competing demands—a surge in donations, holiday schedules, and the added pressure of her husband's time off. The sheer volume of year-end donations, particularly from new donors attending the Christmas Eve services, kept her constantly on her toes.

Becky, the Accounts Manager at CrossRoads Church, has been a vital part of the Finance Department for over five years. Her journey began with a part-time role, but her dedication and skills quickly led to her current position. She brought not only financial expertise but also a deep-seated passion for

servicing her church community. This dedication is what truly fuels her work ethic.

"The pace can be intense," Becky admitted, smiling. "Unexpected requests are part of the job, demanding quick thinking and prioritization. But it keeps things interesting! Each day brings new challenges and opportunities to problem-solve efficiently." The ability to juggle priorities is a strength she's cultivated and enjoys.

But amidst the flurry of spreadsheets and reconciliations, Becky found her purpose. Her work at CrossRoads isn't just a job; it is a calling. "The joy comes from using my skills to serve," she reflected, a smile softening her features. Serving the Lord, her church family, or anyone in the community fills her with a profound sense of satisfaction. "That's what makes my job so fulfilling; I get to do that every day."

Outside the church walls, a different kind of joy awaited. The simple pleasures – playing with her Bernese Mountain Dogs, Luna & Aspen, in the backyard, watching vegetables grow from tiny seeds into plump, healthy plants, spending quality time with her husband, Justin (even if he wasn't a gardening enthusiast)—bring her immense happiness. The ideal scenario? A fun family outing with her dogs, ideally amidst the bounty of her vegetable garden. “It’s like a unicorn opportunity,” she laughed, “because he doesn’t like gardening!” Visits from her family in the States brought an extra dose of happiness. Although these visits were infrequent—roughly once a year—the joy of these reunions remained intense.

The challenges, the unexpected demands, the juggling act—all of it faded into the background when she focused on the bigger picture. The Christmas season, while demanding, was a time of profound faith and community. Seeing the church thrive on the generosity of its members fueled her perseverance. The seemingly small tasks weren't merely entries in a ledger; they were essential components in the church's mission to spread hope and compassion, and in that, Becky finds deep satisfaction. The work is demanding, but it is work that truly matters.

It's a life filled with meaning and purpose, a life that exemplifies the power of faith, family, and unwavering dedication. The conversation left a lingering sense of admiration for Becky's unwavering commitment and the profound sense of purpose that permeates every aspect of her life. Her story is a testament to the power of serving others.



**A LIFE FILLED
WITH MEANING
& PURPOSE**



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PALM SUNDAY: APRIL 13

EASTER SUNDAY: APRIL 20

THE HOLY SPIRIT & HER



By Jill Clark

I watched her today like I always do.

She rolled out of bed, trying to find her energy and strength. She trudged into the bathroom while signing into her phone. She always starts the day by reading a daily Bible verse. She takes in My words and reflects. I love that she starts her day with Me.

Then she starts her normal routine; brushing her teeth, putting on just

a little mascara, covering a few blemishes with some concealer and curling her hair. She got frustrated when a piece of her hair wouldn't curl the way she wanted it to, even though she tried three times to fix it. Then she got dressed and looked in the mirror. She adjusted her shirt and re-adjusted, frowning at her saggy tummy—the same tummy that brought her beautiful boys into the world, and that helped grow another family's precious child for them. I tried to remind her that her body has been through a lot, and that she is perfect, but she didn't hear Me. She finished her adjustments and smiled; not the smile that she uses when she sees her husband, or giggles with her boys, but the smile she uses to convince herself that everything is going to be ok.

Then she sighed and told herself, "You got this!", even though she didn't really believe that. I wish she heard Me when I whispered, "You're one of My best creations and I will help you today." But she didn't. She was already out of the bathroom and headed to start her busy day. She tip-toed through the kitchen so she wouldn't wake her family. She leaves for work before they wake up. She was out the door without even grabbing breakfast. She thought lunch would be good enough and she would eat later.

She drove to work in the Operating Room at the hospital, where everyday she helps so many people. Her work is hard; so hard. I wish she knew I placed her there because she is so good at what she does and there are a lot of people who really need her. I am always with her at work.

Lunch came, but she was busy helping a patient, so she didn't get to eat for a long time. Eventually, she sat down in the busy Nurse's Lounge. She closed her eyes for a second to talk to Me, pray, and say thanks for her meal, but a co-worker

distracted her with a question, and she forgot about it. I blessed her food anyway.

She was exhausted when she got home, but she greeted her family and started to tidy up and make plans for supper. She really wanted to rest, and I could see that she was tired, but she is a good mom and wife and takes care of her family, so she carried on as always. I gave her some extra strength for her busy evening ahead.

She cooked a nice meal for her family, and they sat down at the table. They always pray and talk to Me before supper—I love this part of the day and connecting with them. They finished supper and she tidied up quickly so she could take her boys to their activities. Her husband rushed to work. She sat watching hockey practice. It was quiet and I tried to talk to her, but she sent messages, caught up on emails and scrolled on her phone instead. She's been so busy today.

Finally, she came back home. It was so late. She got the boys tucked in and had a quick shower. She's had a long day, but she always talks to Me before bed. I look forward to it everyday. She crawled into bed, her husband hugged her, and sure enough, she closed her eyes as she said, "Father, thank-you for today." She thanked me for her husband and her boys and asked me to protect them and keep them safe. She forgot about herself because she cares so much for them. I told her that I am with her and her family always. She told Me she missed Me today and said, "Sorry, I got busy and forgot to talk to You today." I reminded her that I was there the whole time.

She promised to try harder tomorrow, and although I knew how tomorrow would be, I whispered, "I'll be there tomorrow too!"

A LIFETIME OF CHRIST-CENTERED CONNECTIONS

GOD'S GIFT OF COMMUNITY



By Shannon Flaman

CONNECTING IN HAPPINESS & HEARTBREAK

Modelled by their parents from an early age, community has always been a part of their lives. "I remember getting up in the morning and there was a whole college hockey team sleeping in Mom's living room. Their hotel plans had not worked out, so, there's 15 boys there for breakfast and she was cranking out pancakes and other food, and whatever she could." Bernie shares with a laugh. It's moments like this that remind Bernie and Teresa how God's gift of community has not only blessed them in their lives but has also been their rock when they needed it most.

Having each grown up in Central Alberta, it was the Christian community that brought Bernie and Teresa together at the tender age of 16. While both were raised attending Christian schools and churches in the Red Deer area, it was that initial first meeting, at a church youth event in Calgary, that would

prove to be the catalyst for a lifetime of building community together. "She was stunning," Bernie shares with a big smile. Teresa humbly laughs, showing how after 36 years together, through trials and tribulations, they are still as close as ever. Dating at 18, and then married a few years later, they soon came to realize how important community was in their lives. They were blessed with two boys, Bowen and Travis shortly followed by two girls, Brittany and Taylor. Having first lived on a family farm, the TenHove's eventually moved to a modest trailer on an acreage that God had blessed them with. Quarters were cramped, but that never stopped them from welcoming friends and family over for extended visits. Teresa chuckles now, remembering how at times, 12 people stayed in the small space. "I think we were blessed," she says, "that our kids had to really learn how to live



“I THINK [TRAGEDY] TAUGHT US A LOT ABOUT THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY, THE GIFT OF BEING CARRIED BEFORE GOD IN PRAYER BY A COMMUNITY.”

- BERNIE

together and get along.” What was supposed to be two years in the trailer before beginning a house build, turned into 18. The trailer had finally lived its lifespan, and the TenHoves decided it was time to build a new house on their property. While they recognize the new space is much more than they were used to, Bernie says, “It’s our place, but it’s God’s space. We use it for lots of different things, and it is a blessing.”

It was around this time in 2013 that the TenHoves found CrossRoads Church. Having already built a strong Christ-centered community of friends in previous churches, God drew them to CrossRoads. “We felt fed,” Bernie says. “We went home with something to chew on and apply.” Teresa agrees, “This church just speaks the truth, and very boldly, and I think that’s important.” The community at CrossRoads proved to be so fruitful for their children as well, as two of the TenHove’s children went on to marry friends they met at CrossRoads Sunday evening volleyball.

In 2020, tragedy would unfold, and the community would show up in their lives like never before. Their son Travis, only 28 years old, went to

Heaven while enjoying one of his many favourite mountain adventures, ice climbing. Travis fell while exploring Mount Andromeda near Jasper. Travis left behind his beloved wife, Megan, and their precious son, Jess. The loss of Travis changed Bernie and Teresa’s life’s path in unfathomable ways but also managed to draw them closer together in their marriage and their walk with Christ. The community that God had been actively building soon swept into their lives. Friends from decades past, as well as newer friends, helped hold them up and keep their faith strong while they navigated this new journey of grief. “The loss of Travis shattered me,” Teresa says, “and changed who I am, probably forever.” She continues, “It was completely heartbreaking, and I don’t always know how to cope with that. There are days that you can’t move forward, days that you just have to breathe and that’s all you can do. Not every day is a jump up and run for joy day because it broke us.”



Travis Tenhove
1992-2020

Bernie reflects, “I think it’s taught us a lot about the need for community, the gift of being carried before God in prayer by a community. I don’t know how you do it without,

because it’s brutally hard with a community. How do you do it without? I don’t know?”

They soon became members of a life group, a fellowship community at CrossRoads. “Just an answer to a thousand prayers to God,” Teresa says. “We were invited into this group right when we needed it. We hadn’t really been part of a group before.” Bernie shares “We were busy doing life, busy with kids and work.” The fellowship proved nurturing. “We have such strong bonds with all of them. Each person that has either been in the group and moved on or is currently in the group” says Teresa. “This life group is so good with us when we are not okay. There are days we don’t make it to an event, and we don’t have to explain.” Their larger community of friends, who have been in their lives for years and who they raised their kids with, proved a pillar of strength as well. “I don’t think we could have gone on without them,” Teresa shares. “They put their own commitments on hold and moved into our yard and didn’t leave for a week, lovingly caring for us in some of our darkest moments.” Looking back, they realize how their community was grieving Travis much like them, yet they found a way to carry the TenHove’s through and validate their feelings of grief and loss.

(Cont’d next page...)

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While the grief never completely disappears, Teresa quotes Psalms 34:18: *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* She felt beyond crushed and overcome with grief. "But you don't have to live in that forever. There is hope in Jesus. Yet, it doesn't have to go away either. We are okay to not be okay. You can have moments of joy, and you can have moments of absolute sorrow. Both are okay. Both are covered by the love of Jesus." He recalls a verse, Proverbs 14:13 that also speaks to this as it says, *"Laughter can conceal a heavy heart, but when the laughter ends, the grief remains."*

Their own family has grown even closer since the loss. Blessed with nine grandchildren, they all live within 20 minutes of each other, except for their daughter who is currently working at Camp Homewood in British Columbia. While enduring their own grief, it was only after the fog lifted, they were able to recognize their children's grief. "When we came out of the fog of grief we saw our kids, and went, 'how are they?'" says Bernie. "We could have done that better". "That's where the grace and the apology comes in. You have a hug and realize we can't change the past, but

we can go forward." Teresa nods and affirms "Our family is super important to us in every way."

Since the tragedy, both have taken more active roles in the CrossRoads community. Along with joining the life group, Bernie now serves on the Board of Elders and helps with tech support during Sunday service, while Teresa dedicates time to the children's nursery. "Serving makes you part of the community, it draws you right in. You get to know people in different areas." Bernie says. Teresa enjoys the connections she makes. "I love to be in the nurseries and just help out there," she says; "meet the families, meet the moms and dads and take care of their precious little ones. I hope it makes them feel good. I hope they feel like they can sit in church and have that moment to just breathe; to just exhale and have the worship wash over them. Parents have a hard job all week."

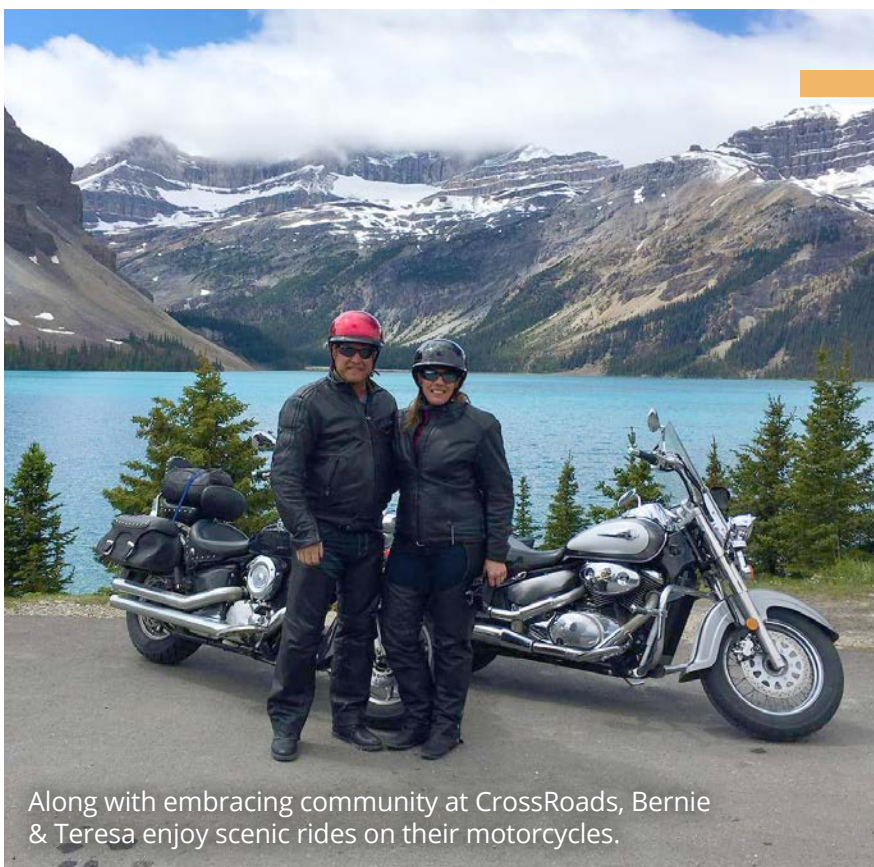
When asked what advice they would give to someone lacking hope, they both have plenty. "Well, mine is to place your hope in Jesus," Teresa shares, "and the way to find that, of course, is to connect. Connect with people. Reach out to God."

Bernie agrees, "Reach out to God for sure. You need His community. At times there are those moments we just need to be alone, we just want some quiet time to grieve. But ultimately people need people and if you even invest a little bit, God gives back and that is just huge. You just need the people right now, just start there." The Church also leads to their strong sense of hope. Reminding them we are all connected in the community of Christ. "The people who love Jesus. Bernie recalls a time when Pastor Dan spoke about praying blessings over the many churches gathering as he drove to church.

Community will always be central in the TenHoves' lives. They have been keenly aware of this as they grieve their son. From their own family to their childhood friends and the families they connected with raising their children, and the fellowships they have found through CrossRoads Church the bonds continue to grow. "At our best, He is with us and at our worst, He carries us", Bernie says. They give all praise and glory to God for surrounding them with all the community they have.

**"SERVING MAKES
YOU PART OF THE
COMMUNITY, IT DRAWS
YOU RIGHT IN. YOU GET
TO KNOW PEOPLE IN
DIFFERENT AREAS."**

- BERNIE



Along with embracing community at CrossRoads, Bernie & Teresa enjoy scenic rides on their motorcycles.

Sitting at the ocean's edge
Contemplating the vastness of it all,
Knowing all the creatures just like me
Are so very, very small.

It's truly more than I can understand,
the greatness of our Almighty God;
He made the tiny little spineless blobs
And great white whales that travel in a pod

My heart is sad to my very core,
Because of pain and loss;
I wonder how everything can live or
All the trees, blobs, whales and moss

And yet my boy has died too soon,
It seems wrong that he's not here,
I cry out to God and ask of Him
If He can even see my tear.

Gloomy clouds hang all around,
They seem to reflect my mood.
My mind is spinning round and round,
I feel so misunderstood.

And yet in His word He says, "To die is gain"
But to me the loss
Keeps bringing pain
whales that travel in a pod

How long, Oh Lord, till I see the light,
That can brighten up the soul?
Because, Oh Lord, this grief I feel
Is taking a terrible toll

My mind and body suffer under the weight,
This load is hard to bear.
My heart aches deep inside me
And ask the question, "Does He Care?"

My reasoning mind says, "Yes, He does"
Remember all that you have learned,
So many versus hidden deep inside
And now they've all returned.

One day the beauty
will be restored
Then we'll bow on knees together
before our Saviour Lord.

But until then,
I'll face each day, one and then another,
Being held up in power
By a sister or a brother.

by Teresa TenHove



A TAPESTRY OF

KINDNESS



MARILYN & STEVE'S JOURNEY TO LOVING THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

By Tracy Minke, Karen Marriott
& Julie Nobel

**“WHEN A FOREIGNER
RESIDES AMONG YOU
IN YOUR LAND, DO NOT
MISTREAT THEM. THE
FOREIGNER RESIDING
AMONG YOU MUST BE
TREATED AS YOUR NATIVE-
BORN. LOVE THEM AS
YOURSELF, FOR YOU WERE
FOREIGNERS IN EGYPT. I
AM THE LORD YOUR GOD.”**

- LEVITICUS 19:33-34

“Steve, what do you think that banner up there means when it says, ‘Loving Muslims?’” asked Marilyn one Sunday. “Who is doing that!?”

Have you ever unknowingly opened a door to your heart simply by noticing something and asking a question? God began to pull a thread in Marilyn’s heart many years ago that is now being woven into a beautiful tapestry, rich with the colour of cultures and people once foreign to her. Members of CrossRoads Church, Steve and Marilyn Cannon were led on a journey that would flip their world view and intertwine their lives with the vibrant and diverse immigrant community in Red Deer.

It all began with an act of service; Marilyn volunteered to teach a sewing class at the Central Alberta Immigrant Women’s Association (CAIWA¹). There, she found herself surrounded by Newcomers from all parts of the world, many of whom were Muslim. Their resettlement stories, heroic and often horrific, moved her.

An early encounter was pivotal. As class was about to start, a woman arrived, wanting to join the sewing class. We will call her Aya. Aya had walked a long distance in extreme cold, only to be told

that the class was full. She was devastated. Seeing her distress, Marilyn found Aya a place in the class. She saw her, she welcomed her, and she invited her in. She offered that woman, that night, the hand and the heart of Jesus.

After class, Marilyn offered to drive Aya home. Once there, Aya insisted Marilyn come in for tea - a customary gesture for this culture. Aya’s family served the tea, and they used Google Translator to help with communication since the children spoke English, but Aya did not so very little English was spoken in the home. Once she had finished her cup, Marilyn thanked them and excused herself to continue her journey home. It was 10:30pm. However, the family reacted with shock that she would leave before they had served her supper! Marilyn related the surprising details of a late-night shared meal on the floor, and the unexpected experience of eating without utensils. This cross-cultural encounter deeply impacted Marilyn, marking the beginning of her journey towards “loving Muslims”. God was working in her and changing her heart to be more like His.

Steve became the official ‘chauffeur’, transporting Marilyn and the women to and from classes on the coldest nights



"I HAVE A NEW APPRECIATION FOR REVELATION VERSES. EVERY TONGUE TRIBE AND NATION. IT'S NOW A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE IN MY MIND THAT GIVES ME SUCH HOPE AND JOY."

- MARILYN CANNON



"I AM THANKFUL THAT GOD HAS PUT ME IN SOME (AWKWARD) SITUATIONS THAT MADE ME FEEL VERY UNCOMFORTABLE. IT WAS THROUGH THOSE TIMES THAT GOD CHANGED MY HEART AND MY THINKING THAT I SEE AND LOVE PEOPLE MORE LIKE GOD SEES THEM."

- STEVE CANNON

so the women didn't have to walk or wait for the bus. These rides gradually broke down cultural barriers, often culminating in spontaneous acts of hospitality—late-night dinners where simple words were lost in translation but smiles and gestures filled the gaps.

Marilyn and Steve felt God calling them to move their ministry into people's homes, where they could build deeper relationships. This was something learned from their rich time with Nik and Ruth Ripken who had come to teach at our church in 2021. They started seeking out and repairing sewing machines and donating them to women who needed them. The machines were a starting point; once there, Steve and Marilyn were able to connect with the family, building relationship. They were inspired and guided more when they took the Kairos Course² and embraced the Biblical call to care for foreigners amongst us. With every interaction they were welcomed with open arms. People were hungry to be seen; this flooded their hearts and filled them with a joy deep and transformative.

The next step was intentional and intimidating; Steve and Marilyn signed up for the Match³ program where a Canadian family is "matched" with a

newcomer family for a 6-month period. In that time, it is hoped that newcomers will learn about Canada and their new community from a personal, one-on-one relationship. It is a beautiful and simple way to connect, help others and invest in the lives of newcomers.

They were matched with a newly arrived Syrian family, an encounter that is indelibly shaping their lives. Among other things, they invited the family to their farm, exposing them to the beauty of rural life. Despite language barriers and vastly different cultural backgrounds, they have found common ground in shared efforts on the farm, such as cutting and splitting wood and preparing meals together. Of course, there are times when translation difficulties arise, leading to moments of confusion; but navigating these challenges has brought a richness to this relationship that both families deeply appreciate. Steve shared that as the 6-month date approached, his heart was not to abandon this family for another; friendship does not have a time frame.

The Cannons' journey highlights the power of seemingly small acts of kindness—a ride, a meal, a helping hand, a listening ear—that has had a monumental impact on the lives of many

newcomer families, as well as their own. Their journey is a testament to the remarkable tapestry woven from threads of empathy, compassion, and shared humanity.

Today, as they look at the outreach banner and see "Loving Muslims", their hearts are full, knowing that they are following Jesus into loving and ministering to Muslims. Will you join them?

Ramadan, the Islamic holy month, begins February 28th. This is a great time to pray that God would reveal Himself to Muslims. Look for the *30 Days of Prayer* booklet and join the global church as we pray.

¹CAIWA helps immigrant youth, women & families new to Central Alberta through providing information, education and employment training.

²Kairos Course is offered at CrossRoads. A new session starts February 13th. Find details at: crossroadschurch.ca/groups.

³"Match" is an initiative to help newcomers settle by matching them with Canadian citizens or longtime community members. For info contact: alona.hladysh@carefornewcomers.ca or 403-346-8818 ext 248



LUKE SPICER'S STORY

by Chad Verity

REFLECTION

An explosion of light brightened the faintly lit room. The monotonous hum of the phone's vibration off of the bedside time jolted Luke Spicer's attention back to his device. He gingerly read the unexpected message from its illuminated screen. The message though not expected or solicited came with a flood of mixed emotions. The initial impact left him feeling in shock. As though, without anyone knowing, someone was overhearing his inner monologue and had responded in the very way he had hoped for to his private longing. The second thought left in the wake of the first was that the message was the same familiar invitation he'd received in the past and wanted no part of; bathed in zealous religious overtones or was his perception. It was, after all, an invitation to go to church...on Christmas Eve.

Luke's former aspirations gave way to his latter and he promptly tapped out a quick reply.

"Hey, thanks a lot. Church isn't really my thing, and I appreciate you."

But before pressing 'Send' he paused. He was genuinely caught off guard by the message. Moments earlier, and several times over the past few weeks he had been looking for information for the Christmas Eve service. And now here they were, sent to him without asking, from a friend he cared about. He couldn't

help but sit in stillness in the idea that this may be, just maybe, God answering his prayer.

For the past few weeks the stress of work and keeping his construction company afloat had kept him from sleeping at night. The constant thoughts of failure haunting him as he lay in bed staring at the ceiling, searching for reprieve. In the past this cycle would have led him down darker paths. However, something from deep within him, possibly from his Roman Catholic upbringing, or from his childhood going to church, urged him to take a new path; so he began to pray. In his prayer his slowly drifted off to sleep and found rest. He fell asleep thanking God for everything He had done in Luke's life. When he woke up he felt like a different person. A new person. This new habit formed over the coming months until a new thought came into his mind.

"I want to go to church on Christmas Eve."

He didn't know where, when, or with whom, but he felt compelled to go, despite internal resistance. Staring at his initial reply, he slowly erased it, replacing it with, "I'll see you at 9:00 am." This response would change Luke's life and his family's. It was ten years in the making.

Up until that point Luke's life had been both hard and fairly typical of most

(Cont'd next page...)

■ **HEAR LUKE'S INSPIRING STORY OF TRANSFORMATION, AND HOW A DECADE OF DENIAL ALL CHANGED BY A SINGLE TEXT MESSAGE.**



(...cont'd from previous page)

growing up in Central Alberta. Though very smart and academically gifted he left a pathway toward architecture and engineering to pursue a career in the trades. He loved working with his hands and creating things. He loved the challenge of starting something from scratch. Gifted with charisma and an ability to understand people at a deep level his skills and passion lead him to a life of entrepreneurship and the start of a concrete business. He ran that business for 20 years and along the way experienced both divorce and remarriage. Alcohol became an easy and effective coping strategy. Or at least he thought.

Luke had grown up Roman Catholic and had a foundational understanding and belief in God. He attended church as a child enough to know his way around a pew and knew the right words to say when in earshot of the people who cared. It never felt like the hymns and the homilies made their way down to the root of pain and pride that we all have. Truth and grace were disconnected. Luke walked away.

Jeremiah 29:11 says *“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’* This is only one of dozens of scriptural references for not only God planning, but God planning for good. Our good. The word that we translate as ‘plans’ also could be used for purpose or imagination. It’s incredible to think of God using his imagination to think of good things for us. As though God daydreams about us and his good, perfect and pleasing will for us.

Part of God’s character is strategy. He is a planner. Jeremiah 29:11 is ultimately pointing his people, who were then in exile because of their sin, towards the cross that Jesus would die on. He has an incredible plan and He is rolling it out as you read this.

Like pieces on a chessboard, God began moving people into Luke’s life. While working on a large concrete project, Luke discussed a potential career change with a longtime friend, Brad, a faithful believer. Brad prayed regularly for Luke for years, becoming a mentor and eventually a business partner. It was Brad who orchestrated the events leading to Luke receiving an invitation to church via text message one year ago. This invitation—a decade in the making—would be a turning point.

Through his business Luke joined a local business networking group. Also a part of that group was a faithful believer named Dwayne. Dwayne would begin praying for Luke regularly. For ten years Dwayne built a friendship of trust with Luke which would prepare him to receive a text message from Dwayne inviting him to the Christmas Eve service. A text message ten years in the making. A text message that was a push of the ‘Send’ button away from being brushed aside and forgotten.

Standing to sing on that Christmas Eve tears began to roll down Luke’s cheeks. The awkwardness of being a stranger in an unfamiliar setting, especially a church, quickly faded away. Instead it felt as though he had walked into his childhood home, into the long expectant arms of his Heavenly Father.

Christmas Eve became a weekly habit. He would bring his wife and his kids and stepkids. One Sunday there was a promo for Alpha, a 12 week video series that helps those exploring faith in Jesus ask the really big questions. Luke went.

After making the decision to end his 25 year concrete business and go to work with Brad, he met Shari, another faithful believer who also worked with Brad. Shari was a table host at Alpha. So when Luke made the decision to check out Alpha, there was a familiar face smiling back at him.

IT ALL STARTED WHEN GOD IMAGINED LUKE. WHEN FAITHFUL BELIEVERS SAID “YES” TO HIS PROMPTING TO DRAW CLOSE TO SOMEONE... AND PLAY THEIR ROLE IN INTRODUCING LUKE TO HIS HEAVENLY FATHER.

After completing the Alpha course Luke became a table host, just like Shari. Luke began to change. John wrote in Revelation *“He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’* Another part of God’s character is creation and creativity. Not only did He create all things, but He is actively at work recreating all things, including you and I and Luke. He does this through His Holy Spirit living inside of us. The Holy Spirit began to recreate Luke; resurrect Luke, you might say. Though recognizable—like Jesus outside the tomb on Easter Sunday—not at all the same. The change in Luke was noticeable to everyone who knew him, but especially at home with his wife and their children. As the fruit of the Holy Spirit began to grow in Luke, a transformation took place.

It would be natural to write, *“And it all started with a text message 10 years in the making.”* But that wouldn’t be accurate. It all started when God imagined Luke. When faithful believers said “Yes” to His prompting to draw close to someone with divine destiny and play their role in introducing Luke to His Heavenly Father.

Everyday we interact with people who have divine destiny. People who are the focus of God’s imagination. As image bearers of a creative God we reflect the nature of God to those around us, and reflect the praise of His creation back to the Father. Sometimes this looks like going for coffee, buying lunch, or sending text messages.

Sometimes it takes ten years.

It only requires you to be you, created in the imagination of your Heavenly Father to reflect Him to those around you.

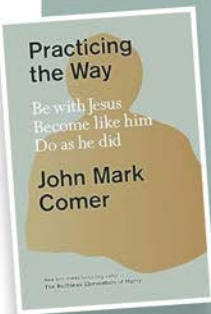


STAFF
RECOMMENDED

READS

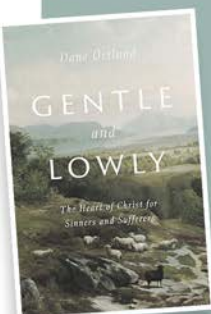
LOOKING FOR INSPIRING BOOKS TO DEEPEN YOUR FAITH? CHECK OUT OUR RECOMMENDED READS, A CURATED LIST OF CHRISTIAN BOOKS OFFERING WISDOM, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH. WHETHER FOR GUIDANCE OR INSPIRATION, THESE PICKS ARE SURE TO ENRICH YOUR JOURNEY. FIND YOUR NEXT MEANINGFUL READ TODAY!

Recommended by KOLTEN ZENNER:



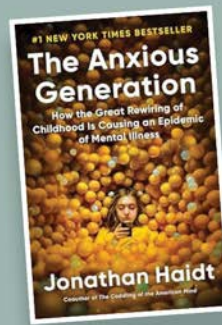
PRACTICING THE WAY By John Mark Comer

We are constantly being formed by the world around us. To be formed by Jesus will require us to become his apprentice. To live by what the first Christian disciples called a Rule of Life—a set of practices and relational rhythms that slow us down and open up space in our daily lives for God to do what only God can do—transforms the deepest parts of us to become like him.



GENTLE AND LOWLY By Dane Ortlund

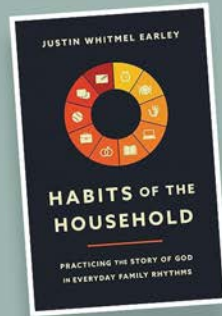
Pastor Dane Ortlund explores Jesus's heart to reveal his tender love for sinners and sufferers. This book draws us to Matthew 11, where Jesus describes himself as "gentle and lowly in heart," longing for his people to find rest in him. The gospel flows from God's deepest heart for his people, a heart of tender love for the sinful and suffering.



Recommended by CHAD ROSELL:

ANXIOUS GENERATION By Jonathan Haidt

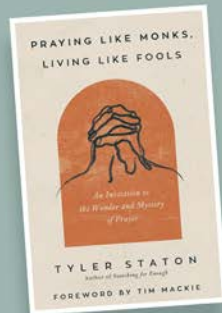
A must-read for all parents: the generation-defining investigation into the collapse of youth mental health in the era of smartphones, social media, and big tech—and a plan for a healthier, freer childhood.



HABITS OF THE HOUSEHOLD By Justin Whitmel Earley

Discover simple habits and easy-to-implement daily rhythms that will help you find meaning beyond the chaos of family life as you create a home where kids and parents alike practice how to love God and each other.

Recommended by CHRIS MOELLENBECK:



PRAYING LIKE MONKS, LIVING LIKE FOOLS By Tyler Staton

Transform your faith through the unexpected gift of prayer. Prayer is the source of Jesus's most astonishing miracles and the subject of Jesus's most audacious promises, and yet, people find prayer to be boring, obligatory, or confusing. Join Tyler Staton, author, pastor, and national director of the 24/7 Prayer movement, as he invites you to discover the incredible gift of prayer.

A GLIMPSE INTO MARRIAGE MINISTRY

by Haley Clews

MEET ANDREW & KAREN WIEBE: A GENUINE, DOWN-TO-EARTH COUPLE WHO HAVE FAITHFULLY SERVED AT CROSSROADS CHURCH FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS! OVER THIS TIME, THEY'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN MARRIAGE MINISTRY, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY, THE WORSHIP TEAM, AND BOARD MEMBERSHIP. IN THIS ARTICLE, WE'LL SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON THEIR SERVICE IN MARRIAGE MINISTRY.



THE EARLY YEARS

As children, Andrew and Karen's foundations of faith were built in their homes and at Oriole Park. Karen came to Christ as a child, with evidence of this in a note from her Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Reason, stating that she accepted Christ. On the other hand, Andrew has always identified as a follower of Jesus but doesn't view his journey as an "on- or off-switch" scenario. Instead, his faith has been a lifelong journey with key moments of recommitment and growth in his teens and early twenties.

Although they attended Sunday School together, Andrew and Karen weren't acquainted until Youth Group. In 1997, the pair began dating and married two years later, in July 1999, when Andrew was 19 and Karen was 20.

One year into marriage, Andrew's parents recruited the pair to serve on the Marriage Ministry Team for the Engaged Encounter retreat. In the 2000's, an influx of young couples needing pre-marital counselling overwhelmed pastors, resulting in the creation of retreats where couples could complete the curriculum on the weekend. 25 years later, Andrew and Karen still serve on the Marriage Ministry Team at the retreats! It's important to note that this ministry is truly a team effort. Around six couples work alongside Andrew and Karen, planning, preparing, and presenting at each retreat. This shared leadership model, spearheaded by other couples throughout the years, has been vital to the success of the program.

PASSION FOR MARRIAGE MINISTRY

So, what has motivated Andrew and Karen to continue serving in marriage ministry? "We have a real passion for married relationships. Big picture, we believe in the foundation of, if you get strong marriages, [it results in] healthy families and children," Andrew says.

Andrew's passion and fascination for marriage were evident when he shared his thoughts and insights: "Marriage is such an incredible gift because we are going to have horrible things happen in our life, and here is someone who wants to do it with you. What an incredible gift we have, that this person is like 'Yeah, I'm here for it!'. Where else in life do we have that?" He also shared that when it works the way it should, "[marriage] is the most safe relationship you have, other than with the Lord".

AUTHENTICITY IN MARRIAGE MINISTRY

Couples attending an engaged or marriage retreat at CrossRoads can expect a safe environment to talk while preparing for marriage. "We want to give [couples] a realistic reality and then tools to use. Should something arise, you'll be glad you have these tools at your disposal to get you through something tough," Andrew explains. "Our main goal in the retreats is to make couples aware of the barriers to communication that show up early on, yet can have a very devastating impact later on."

Couples can also expect to see authenticity and vulnerability in themselves and others. "It's very rare [that there is] a ministry where things go that deep; where it's that real." Andrew shared the story of a couple who experienced a heated argument during a retreat over an issue they had avoided for years. "If they hadn't been prompted to have that fight...it was leading them somewhere where their confrontation style could have gotten dangerous," Andrew explained. "They would tell you today that that fight saved their marriage." As Andrew described, this story is extremely common among couples who attend the retreats.

Andrew thoughtfully explained that Christians tend to put on a "we've got it all together" facade, but this can be damaging to marriages. "One of the things that we're very passionate about is authenticity in marriages so that we can model good behaviour, but also so that when we get together and share, people say, 'Oh, wait a minute! The struggles that we're having are not unique to us. Lots of couples also have this struggle!'"

THE POWER OF SHARING

To Andrew and Karen, the most important part of the retreats is the sharing opportunities. "Something profound happens when couples have the opportunities to share their experience, or when leadership shares their experience; you can hear a pin drop." Andrew explained. He then compared the feeling to the same vibe or energy at a worship service, saying, "It's just really powerful."

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SHARING THEIR OWN STORY

During the retreats, Karen and Andrew share their story about having to “get the tools out” after communication broke down and feelings of resentment and bitterness set in. They openly describe significant life changes, such as intensive educational journeys, raising two children, feeling unacknowledged, playing the comparison game, and being gone for extended periods. Emotions were raw, and certain doors were firmly closed. When Andrew and Karen unpacked it all from the beginning, Andrew began to understand the depth of Karen’s feelings, and Karen realized how vital it was to acknowledge emotions: “We teach that feelings are neither right nor wrong. Whatever your feelings are, they’re valid. However, you need to acknowledge them, you need to share them.” Karen says.

Through this process, the pair learned more about themselves and each other and to communicate their needs better. Karen shares, “[I learned that] your life doesn’t have to look a certain way. You have to be on the same team as far as what you can support each other to do in life. And sometimes that means making sacrifices or encouraging.”

By openly discussing their journey and mistakes, they encourage other retreat couples to be transparent. Guests at the retreats have told Karen and Andrew: “Because you were vulnerable in front of us, we chose to be vulnerable together, and we haven’t done that before”.

THE REWARDS OF SERVING IN MARRIAGE MINISTRY

For Karen and Andrew, the most rewarding part of Marriage Ministry is “the people and their vulnerability for the betterment of their whole family.” Karen also values the feedback at the end of the retreats. “To hear from couples who have breakthroughs on a topic that they have been afraid to talk about for twenty years, and finally broached it and found some healing, that means the world at the end of a weekend, to know it was all worth it.” Karen says.

Karen also described the fellowship at the marriage retreats, noting that at one retreat during the pandemic, couples who had felt isolated longed for connection. Many reported staying in touch, encouraging one another, and studying the Bible together. “It was like God brought them there. He knew who needed to meet who. The Lord knew that that particular [retreat] was needed—and it was powerful. You couldn’t tear these people away from each other. There were lifelong friendships made”.

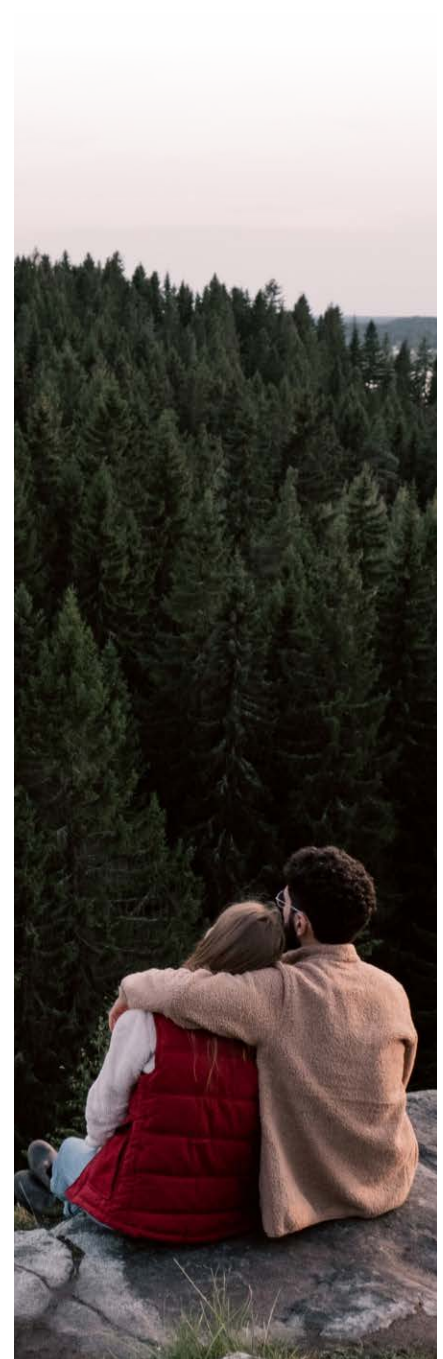
Reflecting on 25 years of service, Andrew and Karen keep a binder at home with photos of each couple from the retreats. “I think of the impact that this has had on the community. 25 years or more of marriage ministry [at CrossRoads]...it is incredible,” Karen says. “Going to the weekend every year and watching the couples put in the work makes us want to keep putting in the work. If I wasn’t observing that, I could get lazy, but seeing it, I know it’s worth it, and we have to do it too.”

PRAY FOR THEIR WORK AHEAD!

Looking back, Andrew and Karen are leaving behind an outstanding record of service in marriage ministry, as well as in other areas of the church, including children’s ministry, board membership, and the worship team.

If you happen to see Andrew or Karen, please take a moment to thank them for their unwavering service and pray that God continues to move powerfully in their work, especially in the retreats.

IT IS EXCITING TO THINK ABOUT WHAT GOD HAS IN STORE FOR ANDREW AND KAREN IN THE YEARS AHEAD. WHAT AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY OF SERVICE HE HAS GUIDED THEM ON SO FAR!





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Ask PASTOR DAN

▶ What do you love most about your job?

I absolutely love the Word of God. I love preaching, teaching, anything to do with the Word of God, I love! It's my passion, and it has really been my passion my whole life. After I step out of my role here, I still want to keep doing that. I'll be looking for places to preach and teach hopefully until the day I die.

▶ Who are the mentors in your life?

You know, my mentors have long since gone to heaven, but **Martyn Lloyd Jones**, was a British preacher in the 20th Century who was a huge influence in my life in terms of my approach on the Word, my priority to preaching, and even the style of preaching. Martyn Lloyd Jones – any of his material has always fed me and helped me. He has been a huge mentor in my life.

After Martyn Lloyd Jones in terms of preaching, there is **Eugene Peterson** in terms of shepherding and pastoring. I have gleaned a lot from him both personally and in his books. He taught me that core DNA of the Pastor is a shepherd, not a leader. Pastors are shepherds who lead, not leaders who shepherd.

Those who two huge mentors in my life!

▶ Who has influenced you the most in your life?

My Father was a massive influence in my life. He was a great communicator; great storyteller. A Godly man, who loved the Word, and a tremendous influence.

Bruce Waltke was another great influence in my life! He was one of my professors at Regent College where I went to school. Bruce Waltke is a very Godly man who loves the Word of God. He is in his mid-nineties now and I developed a passion for the Word and a hunger for the Word through Bruce's teaching. A lot of what I bring to CrossRoads comes out of people like Bruce Waltke and even my dad, Martyn Lloyd Jones and Eugene Peterson.

FOLLOWING

JESUS

TOGETHER



AT CROSSROADS, FOLLOWING JESUS ISN'T A SOLO MISSION...

IT'S SOMETHING WE DO TOGETHER—WITH PURPOSE, LOVE, AND A DEEP DESIRE TO REFLECT HIS HEART IN EVERY PART OF OUR LIVES. OUR FOUR PRIORITIES GUIDE US ON THIS JOURNEY, SHAPING WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE LIVE AS A CHURCH FAMILY.

THESE FOUR PRIORITIES ARE HOW WE FOLLOW JESUS TOGETHER. AS YOU EXPLORE THE STORIES IN THIS ISSUE OF *THE SCRIBE*, YOU'LL SEE HOW PEOPLE IN OUR CHURCH FAMILY ARE LIVING OUT THESE PRIORITIES EVERY DAY. THEIR JOURNEYS REMIND US THAT WE'RE ALL PART OF SOMETHING GREATER—A COMMUNITY FOLLOWING JESUS TOGETHER AND IMPACTING THE WORLD WITH COMPASSION AND HOPE.

1

BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS

Our journey starts with transformation. God's grace doesn't just forgive us; it changes us from the inside out. We call this priority **Living Godly Lives**. We grow by spending time with God—reading Scripture, praying, and being honest about our struggles. As we depend on the Holy Spirit, we find strength to resist temptation and live in step with Jesus. It's not about being perfect but about progress and surrender each day.

2

WALKING IN COMMUNITY AND LOVE

We were made for community. Real love is more than words. Jesus showed us that love is practical—expressed through acts of kindness, encouragement, and service. Our second priority is **Loving Each Other Deeply**. It's sharing meals, lending a hand, doing ministry together and being present in both joy and sorrow. Jesus said others will know we are His disciples by the way we love each other.

3

CARING FOR THOSE IN NEED

Jesus had a heart for those on the margins. He calls us to follow His lead by **prioritizing the last, the lost, the least, the little and the nearly dead**. This third priority means sharing our stories of faith, praying for God's direction, and serving those in need—whether locally or globally. We do this through acts of compassion, generosity, and hope. It's a powerful way to reveal God's love to those who need it most.

4

OFFERING OUR LIVES IN WORSHIP

Worship is more than a Sunday service—it's a lifestyle of devotion to God. Our fourth priority is **Delighting Ourselves in the Lord through Worship**. When we gather to sing and pray, we lift God's name high and strengthen our faith. But worship also happens in everyday moments—when we trust Him with our work, relationships, and rest. By offering our whole lives to God, we discover deep joy and peace in His presence.

A JOURNEY OF HOPE & COMPASSION



IN SEPT./OCT. OF 2024, WILMA VANDER LEEK AND MARLENE WOOLWARD EMBARKED ON A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY TO UGANDA. THIS TRIP WAS FILLED WITH MOMENTS OF JOY, DEEP CONNECTIONS, AND SOME HEART-WRENCHING REALITIES.

FOR MARLENE, IT WAS HER FIRST EXPERIENCE IN THIS VIBRANT COUNTRY, WHERE SHE ENCOUNTERED THE STARK CONTRAST BETWEEN POVERTY AND THE UNWAVERING SPIRIT OF ITS PEOPLE. TOGETHER, WILMA AND MARLENE WITNESSED THE PROFOUND IMPACT OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT, THE LOVE OF CHURCH LEADERS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPASSION IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THOSE LESS FORTUNATE.

HERE, WE SHARE HIGHLIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM THEIR EYE-OPENING ADVENTURE.

In their first week, Wilma was invited to speak at the Bridges of Hope Church in Najja. She unpacked a sermon series on the Lord's Prayer, breaking it down and sharing it with area church leaders at a one-day teaching conference. It was a highlight to see their faces as they listened intently and absorbed God's truths.

They had the opportunity to meet one of Wilma's sponsored students, Joseph, who shared that he was no longer attending the secondary school on campus. Instead, he expressed a desire to pursue a two-year mechanics course in Kampala. Though this news was initially disappointing, Wilma and her husband agreed to continue supporting Joseph in his new endeavour. Before he returned to Kampala, they visited Buikwe town to purchase a food package for him and his sister.

The journey also brought them to Proscovia, a woman who had sold everything to pay off the medical bills left by her late husband. With nothing left for herself and her five children, her dire situation

was shared with the Vander Leeks. After prayerful consideration, they connected with some compassionate friends who offered to help her. Proscovia's gratitude was overwhelming as she repeatedly thanked God for saving her. She now has a renewed sense of hope, and her children, who are sponsored by families from Cross-Roads Church, attend the Makonge School on the compound. Together, they strive to help others in need whenever possible.

A highlight for Marlene was joining the Ontario team to experience the WASH (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene) program, a vital initiative in Uganda. This program identifies villages in need of a clean water supply, educates them on the requirements for receiving a borehole, and outlines their responsibilities for maintaining it. Joab and Sarah, staff members from IN Uganda, explained the process in detail before taking them into the field to witness it firsthand. Marlene was deeply moved by the community's effort to identify the best location for a borehole, their pride in taking responsibility for it, and their respect for their elders. However, she also felt the heartbreak of knowing that many communities still lack access to clean water for drinking, cooking, bathing, and staying healthy—yet remain gracious and resilient.

On the following Sunday, they returned to Bridges of Hope Church, where Wilma shared the Word and led Communion. The preparation for Communion was done during the service, and everyone partook of grape juice and bread together. It was a blessing to share the Word and celebrate what Jesus has done for believers around the world.



Wilma Vander Leek (2nd from left) and Marlene Woolward (far right) with Ugandan friends, Irene (left) and Rose (2nd from right).

During their 10-day visit, Wilma and Marlene formed strong connections with the other team members. They encouraged each other, shared information and best practices, and celebrated the unity that God had brought among them.

Another poignant moment was their visit to Jajja (Grandmother), a woman Wilma had met on one of her first trips to Buikwe. Jajja, known for her generosity, faithfully brought fresh bananas, groundnuts, and other treats to the guesthouse for visitors. Though she could only say “Thank you” in English, she and Wilma shared a special bond, often exchanging playful expressions— Jajja would make the craziest eyes at Wilma, who in turn would try to mimic them back.

Despite never having her own children, Jajja had raised and cared for her nieces, nephews, and other community children, finding sponsors and helping with school fees. Jajja has always shown a caring heart for kids in the community.

During this visit, it was clear that Jajja’s health was failing. She asked Ivan, their translator, to convey one of her final wishes—to find a sponsor for a young boy she deeply cared about. Wilma’s prayers were answered when she found a sponsor from CrossRoads for the boy. Jajja was overjoyed, and her relief was evident.

Earlier that week, Mark, a member of the other Canadian team, visited Jajja. She shared her desire to know Jesus, having been disillusioned by her lifelong experience with Catholicism. Through an interpreter, she expressed gratitude

for the “born-again” Christians who had shown her love and care. Mark led her in a prayer of salvation. Not long after, Jajja passed away, entering into glory with her Lord and Saviour. Praise His name!

Uganda is a beautiful country filled with contrasts: the rich and the poor, the secure and the vulnerable, the Christian and the non-Christian, the bustling cities and the serene villages, the lush greenery and the red soil. It is a country to be experienced, prayed for, and loved. Wilma and Marlene expressed immense gratitude to the International Needs staff for their care, attention, and explanations during the trip. They have become treasured friends.

Reflecting on their time in Uganda, Wilma and Marlene are profoundly grateful for the experiences that deepened their understanding of the country and its people. From supporting local families to engaging with compassionate church leaders and witnessing the impact of essential programs like WASH, their journey revealed the resilience of the Ugandan spirit in the face of adversity. They saw how serving God transforms lives, offering hope and purpose to many. This connection highlighted the transformative power of faith within the community.

As Wilma and Marlene look forward to future trips, they carry cherished memories, newfound friendships, and a commitment to continue making a difference. Uganda, with its rich culture and diverse landscapes, has forever changed their hearts. Weebale Nyo! (Thank you so much!)

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7 Signs of Life

EXPERIENCING MORE WITH JESUS

Check out the **7 SIGNS OF LIFE** series resource page at crossroadchurch.ca/7SignsofLife

Use these resources to go deeper into the message each week!

SERIES HIGHLIGHTS

Through the coming weeks, Pastor Dan will guide us through seven miraculous signs recorded in the Gospel of John. These signs aren't merely acts of power, they reveal who Jesus is and offer a glimpse into the compassionate heart of God. From turning water into wine to raising Lazarus, each miracle points to the abundant life God offers—a life beyond mere existence.

John wrote his Gospel with a clear purpose; that we would believe Jesus is the Christ and, through believing, experience life in His name. It's a call to both deepen our faith and invite others to discover Jesus personally.

In this series, we're reminded that Jesus is not just a historical figure but the living Word who came to reveal God to us. As we study these signs, expect to encounter His presence and be transformed.

Join us every Sunday or watch online as we journey through these powerful signs, experiencing more with Jesus together.

FEB. 2

Water into Wine
John 2:1-11

FEB. 9

Healing of the Royal Official Son
John 4:46-54

FEB. 16

Healing and the Pool of Bethesda
John 5:1-17

FEB. 23

Feeding of 5000
John 6:1-14

MAR. 2

Calming the Storm
John 6:15-21

MAR. 9

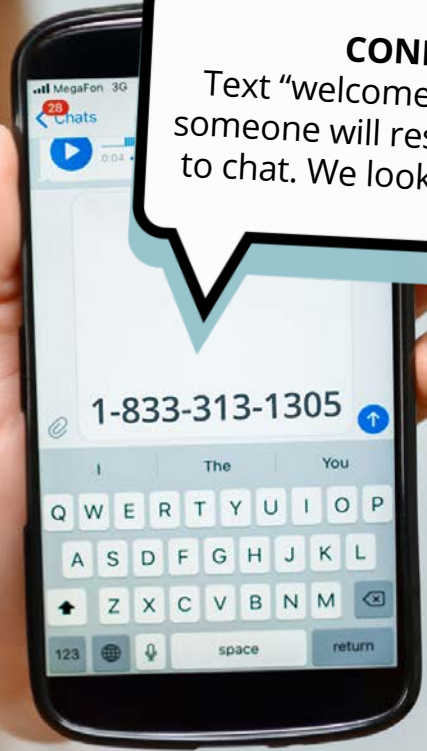
Healing of the Blind Man
John 9:1-41

NEW?

WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

*WELCOME,
WE WANT TO
MEET YOU!*

CONNECT WITH US!
Text "welcome" to 1-833-313-1305 and someone will respond as soon as possible to chat. We look forward to meeting you!



We would love to connect with you to meet you and find out if there is anything we can help with. Maybe you have questions about CrossRoads, or questions about faith in Jesus, or how to get more connected in the CrossRoads community.

On Sundays, there is always a smiling face to greet you at The HUB, located in the church Foyer. Please stop by and let us know you're new—we have something for you! If you prefer, we have a simple online form that can also help get our conversation going; you can introduce yourself and ask any specific questions you may have. Hit the "Connect With Us" button at: crossroadschurch.ca/welcome.

A great way to check out what happens at CrossRoads is to try it online first; the 9am & 11am services are available via Livestream at: online.crossroadschurch.ca

For a quick introduction of who we are, check out the short video at: crossroadschurch.ca/welcome



**EVERYONE IS ALWAYS WELCOME AT CROSSROADS!
SUNDAY SERVICES START AT 9AM, 11AM, & 6PM.**

