

OUR PURPOSE

To glorify God by partnering together in obedience to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission

OUR VISION

To be a movement of healthy reproducing churches



Behaving the Gospel... *Stay Salty & Shine Bright!*

Behavior is often a reflection of character, and character reflects the person. If that is true, then how we behave as Christians toward one another, and others, is a demonstration of our understanding of the Gospel. Behaving the Gospel takes the intellectual understanding of the Gospel message and puts it into action in our relationships with others and through our witness to those around us. It is easy to talk about the message of the Gospel, how Jesus died for our sins, was resurrected, and invites all to come to Him. It is, however, a different thing to live out the Gospel in our behavior and actions consistently each day.

As an element, salt preserves and adds flavour. To *stay salty* as a Christian is to influence others, leading them to encounter Jesus personally. To *shine brightly* is to behave in such a way that we reflect the light of the Gospel in every circumstance. Salt and light combined give us a picture of what our lives should be like with one another and others.

Life can, at times, rob us of some of our saltiness and dim our brightness, diminishing our effectiveness as His witnesses. At those times, we need to keep our focus on Jesus and His Word, which reminds us of our calling as witnesses and our mandate to behave the Gospel by staying salty and burning bright! God has given us unique opportunities and relationships to be salt and light in a world of darkness and sin. I encourage you to reflect on how salty you are and how bright you shine.

In this edition of CONNECT, you will read about how God is moving among our Association in ways that demonstrate our activity of behaving the Gospel by staying salty and shining bright! Be encouraged!

Rev. Bill Allan – AGC President



“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Salty Conversations

Vincent loved learning about Christianity just to find new ways to argue that Christians were wrong. He thought Jesus was nothing more than a great teacher. Yet, according to his own confession, he was unhappy.

So how is it possible that Vincent is now a dear brother in Christ whom I had the joyous privilege of baptizing in the Ottawa River? How did God make this happen? God miraculously worked through a series of unplanned, seemingly ordinary, relational connections which is exactly what being “*salty and shining brightly*” is all about. As believers, we are to season our conversations with salt as we spread the light of Christ to all who cross our path. The first in our story to cross Vincent’s path was a couple from our church, retirees Barry and Lu. They noticed Vincent (a stranger at that time) looking at a used violin in a Thrift store. They initiated a conversation with him, invited him to our church, and prayed for him in the store. When Vincent showed up that first Sunday, Lu sat beside him. Vincent was so touched by the joy and warm hospitality of the church, and so stirred by the preaching and singing of the Word of God, that he kept coming back.

Vincent and I would regularly go on walks together, during which he asked me the same questions I had asked decades ago, right before God had saved me. Questions like, is the Bible trustworthy? Is Jesus really God? Why did Jesus die for us? Through this series of seemingly ordinary, unplanned relational connections, God convicted Vincent of his sin and brought him to faith in Christ. Recently, I asked Vincent why he was so happy. He replied, “*The weight of my sin has been taken off of me, and I constantly have a Person with me to pray to.*”



Pastor Jason Duermeyer (left) with Vincent Drouin (right)

Rev. Jason Duermeyer – Grace Community Bible Church, Shawville, QC

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Colossians 4:6).

Outreach and Inreach

If I’ve learned anything in thirty-five years of pastoral ministry, it’s that we need both *Outreach and Inreach*, just as we need to be both salt and light to this needy world. God has blessed our church with health and growth in numerous ways. It seems that people are hungrier than ever for the truth of the Gospel.

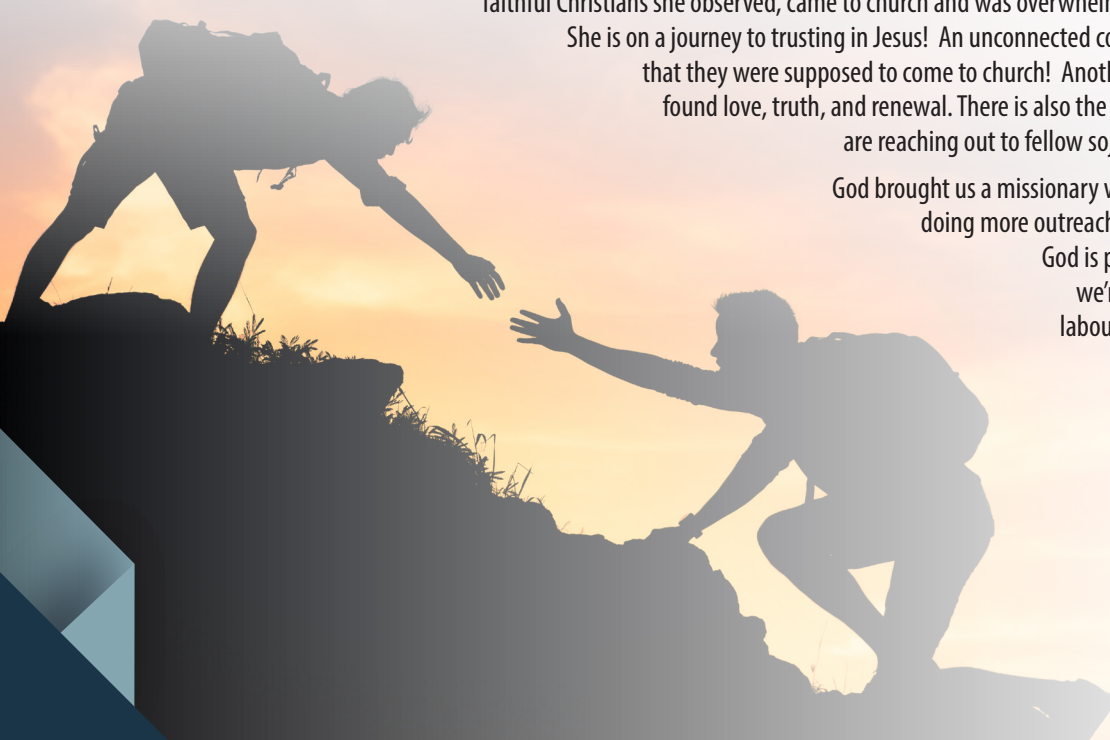
We are constantly seeing pre-Christians discover the gospel on Sunday mornings, during mid-week programs and through Alpha, or other outreach events. A mother and daughter knew they needed to get closer to God when a family member directed them to our church. They came, were loved, and soon became part of a Bible study. One renewed her faith, the other gave her heart to Christ and then both were baptized. It was a beautiful thing. Another woman who was drawn to the Light by the faithful Christians she observed, came to church and was overwhelmed by the love and friendship she experienced.

She is on a journey to trusting in Jesus! An unconnected couple came to our services because they just felt that they were supposed to come to church! Another couple long ‘de-churched’ came to *Grace* and found love, truth, and renewal. There is also the wonderful testimony of recent immigrants who are reaching out to fellow sojourners in their hotels, inviting them to church.

God brought us a missionary worker to join our staff as we have committed to doing more outreach while “*Behaving the Gospel.*” At the same time, God is prompting us “insiders” to pray more, and I think we’re ‘getting it’... learning to be salt and light and labourers in the harvest to build God’s Kingdom here.

Rev. Martin Goode, – Grace Gospel Church, Niagara Falls, ON

We aren’t called to shine our own lights; we are called to reflect His.



Good News is On the Move

"Why did you guys love me like you did, without expecting anything in return" was the question that a Japanese international student asked us as we dropped him off at the airport. Haruto* had lived with our family over the last four months while studying English in Toronto. During this time, we had the awesome opportunity to live an example of God's love for him and had multiple opportunities to share the Good News of the Gospel. We responded, "We love you because God loves us, and He loves you too and He desires to have a personal relationship with you!"

Our family is blessed to be a part of God's Gospel proclamation to the millions of newcomers who have never heard of Christ and His love for them. God has brought the nations to our doorstep and the Church has an amazing opportunity to simply be salt and light to the lost world. God is using this ministry to which we've been called to proclaim His Good News that spreads farther than we could ever imagine. Many who do not know Jesus are hearing of Him for the first time, and in response some are sharing this Good News with their family and friends back in their home country. Light is seeping into the darkness. Good News is on the move! (*Name changed for privacy reasons)

Isaac and Nikki, along with their children, Esther, and Gracie, are serving the diaspora whom God is sending to Toronto. They are working with international students and newcomers to Canada to love and share the Good News with the least reached. They desire to empower the Church of Canada to reach the unreached with God's love. They served at Calvary Church, Toronto from 2016-2023 and now continue to work in the city God has called them to with SIM. They appreciate your prayers and support as they seek to serve God in this way!

Isaac and Nikki Medler – SIM Canada



Snowflake Saturday

Every year, our small village hosts an annual community celebration called *Snowflake Saturday*, during which we open the doors of the church for the community to decorate gingerbread cookies. On average, we have around 70-80 participants, making it a valuable opportunity for connections. However, during the most recent *Snowflake Saturday*, we implemented a new initiative that within a 4-hour time frame attracted 180 individuals from the community. In addition to gingerbread decorating, we introduced *The Kids Christmas Mall*.

The Kids Christmas Mall is a specialized event designed for children aged 4 to 9 years old, where they can purchase Christmas presents for their immediate family at an affordable price of \$1.00 per item. Our congregation generously donated new or gently used items. We offered a wide selection of gifts suitable for mothers, fathers, and siblings of all ages. Our church youth group actively participated by wrapping the presents and assisting the children in selecting the perfect gifts for each family member. In total, we were able to assist 75 children in their shopping, wrapping a total of 234 presents.

This event surpassed our expectations, drawing in a substantial number of families. We had the opportunity to have meaningful discussions with parents and guardians while they waited for their children to conclude their shopping. Furthermore, we used this chance to extend invitations to our Christmas Eve service and our upcoming Christmas youth skit night the following week.

Who knew that "staying salty and shining brightly" could involve gingerbread cookies and a Christmas market? God worked through the willingness of His people, from our youth to our seniors as we came together as a united body in Christ, opening the doors of our church, and letting His light shine into our community. Without a doubt, *The Kids Christmas Mall* will now become an annual event for us as we continue to walk as children of light!

*John Miller, Pastor of Family Ministries
– Delburne Gospel Church, Delburne, AB*



God's Church is meant to be the brightest light the world has ever seen, and we get to be part of that!

Good-bye, Au revoir! Hello, Bonjour!



Thank you to Donna Leung and Rev. Del Gibbons!

Donna faithfully served our Association of churches in her role as *Administrative Assistant & Finance Manager* for the past 24 years! We will miss her engaging smile as well as her many giftings. *We wish Donna all the best in her new role as Executive Assistant at the Burlington Performing Arts Centre.*

Del faithfully served as *Regional Director* for AGC Quebec for 17 years. Del still serves with *Crossworld* and with *Église Évangélique de Verdun* in Montreal. *All the best to Del and Barb as they continue to impact others with the Gospel.*

Welcome, Samantha Manaloto, Financial Administrator and Rev. Virgil Jones, AGC Quebec Regional Director!

Originally from the Philippines, **Samantha** came to know the Lord at an early age and came to Canada when she was 14. She graduated from Sheridan College with a degree in accounting and finance. She has many years of financial management experience, most recently serving as the Financial Administrator of an evangelical mission agency.

Virgil has served in Québec with *Crossworld* and the AGC since 2006. He is in ministry at *Église Évangélique de Lachute*, where he serves in a variety of roles. Virgil and his wife Toni met while attending the University of Pennsylvania and have been married for 34 years. They are the parents of 6 children and an increasing number of grandchildren.

I Love My Neighbour

This past fall, *Calvary Gospel Church* invited volunteers within our church family and within our community to partake in a local outreach event that we call, "*I Love My Neighbour.*"

We simply invited anyone within the rural community of Beamsville to let us know if we could assist them with any practical needs that they would like help with. Some seniors responded who needed help raking leaves, clearing eavestroughs and weeding flower beds. Others were single parents who needed assistance in cleaning the interior and exterior of their homes, and there were even families who needed an upgrade on their homes that required some light renovations.

Our Calvary family stepped up, as a strong team of 52 volunteers (aged from 10 to 76), giving of their time and giftings to contribute to the 18 projects at hand. What fueled this initiative were the words of Jesus when He told us to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Simple words, but when lived out, this important truth is how we "*stay salty and shine brightly*" . . . by humbly loving our neighbour!

We heard many encouraging stories and testimonies from our volunteers about their time spent in various homes. One single woman said, "*The volunteers felt like family. I could not have done the work on my own. I am very grateful.*" There were homes where we had the opportunity to pray and we always received an endless amount of thanks and gratitude from those who had received assistance. We have had community members come to our church based on this initiative which we are very grateful for.

We have also seen some incredible relationships develop between members of our congregation and members of our local community! All this was accomplished for the glory of Jesus Christ as we shared His light right where God has placed us.

*Dylan Arndt, Youth & Outreach Director,
Josiah Dueck, Worship Leader
– Calvary Gospel Church, Beamsville, ON*



A Little Goes a Long Way

In my role as Kids' Director, there are many moments in ministry when I wonder if anything I am doing is even making an impact. When I start thinking this way, I tend to revert to the "Go big or go home" method. This is a phrase you are probably familiar with. People tend to think that bigger is better and I would propose that the same is true in the church at times.

I was feeling this way one week after having just taught the Bible Lesson in Kids' Church. I put a lot into it and wondered if any fruit would come from it. Later that week I received a text from a parent. It was a video of their daughter thanking me for the little Valentine's bag I gave her on Sunday. Each child received this gift, which cost approximately \$3. In it were chocolates, a heart-shaped lollipop, a Valentine's card, and a heart-shaped ring. I thought nothing of this small act. It was just a little something I did for the children for Valentine's Day.

This little light of mine I'm going to let it shine

While I was caught up in what I thought needed to be big, God was using the smallest of things to impact one of His children. This little girl was wearing the heart ring proudly and expressing her gratitude for the gift. My heart melted as I watched her teach me something about being salt and light in this world. You don't need a lot of salt to add flavour. Think of how much salt is called for in baking, just a pinch. You also don't need a lot of light to dispel darkness. The tiniest flashlight can light the way.

Are there times when we should "go big?" I think so. But do we also serve a God that can make a little go a long way? Absolutely!

Anna Bowman, Kids' & Media Director – Grace Church, Newmarket, ON

Town Light-Up

For the past twenty years, our church, *Gateway Bible Church in Diamond Valley, Alberta* has hosted a 'Live Nativity' at Christmas time. We re-enact the coming of Jesus as a babe, including animals, townspeople, and a choir.

Over this same time each year, our community has hosted an event called 'Town Light-Up' which takes place on the first Saturday of December. This is when the local businesses stay open late and have goodies, sleigh rides, and much more. This event is well attended by those within our community.

Several years ago, the town asked us to host our 'Live Nativity' on the evening of the 'Town Light-Up.' We have become the closing event for this special evening. Each year, hundreds of people invade our church parking lot to see and hear about the coming of our Saviour. We are very intentional in giving a clear Gospel presentation at the end of the production. We have involved our youth and children to include them in this gospel work and equip them to do the work of ministry.

We are so thankful that we have had the opportunity to "Stay Salty and Shine Brightly" and share the Gospel over these years. We pray that there will be lasting fruit in the days to come. Just like when the star which shone so brightly over Bethlehem led the shepherds and wise men to Jesus, so may our efforts in presenting the Gospel uniquely and compellingly, lead many to Jesus, the true Light of the world.

Rev. Matt Martens – Gateway Bible Church, Diamond Valley, AB

"What a Day!"

This past September, *King Bible Church* celebrated its 60th anniversary, and what better way to mark the occasion than to throw a party and invite all our neighbours! And so, the plans were made, including bouncy castles, games, a DJ, courtesy of Christian radio *LIFE 100.3*, as well as food, food, and more food. To cap off the celebration, our local fire department surprised us by bringing their ladder truck.

As our volunteers gathered in the moments before everything was set to begin, our prayer was simply that, beyond the fun, we might have the opportunity to make some meaningful connections. We wanted to be "salt and light" to those around us and let them know there was a church in their community that cared about them and their families. Jesus said, "We are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Matthew 5:14, 15).

What a day! Throughout our anniversary celebration, many of our neighbours joined us for some food, fun and fellowship. I sincerely hope and pray they capture a taste of the difference Jesus can make in people's lives. Please pray for us as we continue to build on these relationships as we seek to point our new friends to our Saviour.

*Rev. Mark Nowell
– King Bible Church,
King City, ON*



Light de Lachute

For years, many from our church family have been praying for ways to be salt and light to reach people for Christ in our community of Lachute, Quebec. Last Spring, one of the faithful prayer warriors in our church heard from her cousin in a nearby city about Claude Tremblay and the suicide prevention team (JASPE). This team was knocking at the door of every residence in that community, offering a copy of the Gospel of John along with other resources for those who were considering suicide or whose lives had been affected by suicide.

After much persuasion and prayer, Claude changed his schedule and came to share his ministry with us here in Lachute. Ten to fifteen people from our church along with other churches in the area joined together and over several three-day outreaches, we approached every home in our town. This outreach challenged us, and we grew in the Lord in many ways.

We spent the evenings of the outreaches sharing our experiences of the day and praying for those with whom we had interacted. The sharing at times was heart-breaking, the prayer intense, and yet the fellowship was so sweet. After offering the Good News and resources to every home in Lachute, several individuals decided to continue the ministry in neighbouring towns and are still going strong. Praise God for vision, prayers, and answers as we seek to shine the light of Christ even into the darkest places.

Laurie Barr – Église Évangélique de Lachute, QC

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone” (Isaiah 9:2).

Stay Salty ... Shine Brightly!

Jesus said these words in one of His most powerful teachings, **“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden”** (Matthew 5: 13, 14). We are to be both salty and bright!

The Apostle Paul refers to salt as he encourages Christians to use our words in such a way that they will be palatable to the listener. He wrote, **“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person”** (Colossians 4: 5,6). Salt enhances the flavour of our food. Too much salt added is repulsive and too little leaves food tasting bland. Similarly, how we present the Gospel message should have just the right balance, or more importantly the way we **“Behave the Gospel”** should be a pleasant seasoning falling on those with whom we interact. Salt can also act as a preserving agent, preventing food from decaying. Christians are to be salt

in the sense that we are preservers of all that is good, true, and holy. We should be an influence against the decay in our culture by filling this world with compassion and by living out the truth of the Gospel.

We have been gifted with the ministry of shining His light to reveal the Gospel truth to those who are lost. Let’s flavour this world with goodness and glow brightly with the love of Jesus. As the sun sinks beneath the horizon and the world becomes increasingly dark, we should be beacons of light, illuminating God’s truth while adding just the right flavour to enhance the message. May we **“Behave the Gospel”** so that the world may know Jesus.

Susan Page – AGC Church Relations Coordinator



“The Bible is not the light of the world; it is the light of the Church. But the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians! “You are the light of the world.” ~ Charles Spurgeon ~



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