

F3C: Our Story (so far...)



Lessons, Waypoints & Milestones

We could tell you about all the great things our church has done but instead we'll tell you about our struggles and the lessons we've learned from them about who God is and who we are becoming as we follow him. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches us and leads us. Our only desire is to be attentive and obedient to his voice.

Continuing a Legacy

F3C was born from the leading of the Holy Spirit in two areas. The first was to create a place that would allow next generation Chinese Canadian Christians to grow spiritually and engage missionally with people beyond their own ethnicity and culture beyond ethnocentrism (Matthew 28:18-20). The uniqueness of F3C is that from the very start it sought engagement with ethnic diversity while appreciating a particular Chinese Canadian Christian cultural history.



The second leading was to balance what it meant to challenge the existing ways of thinking about being the church while remaining within the historical trajectory of theology and practice throughout Christian history. A practice of *semper reformanda* (always reforming) in light of understanding how our current culture (in contrast to the church of Acts 2:42-47) can distort church life and practice keeps us sharp. We also wish to be marked by love itself as the primary Christian characteristic (1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 4:7-12).

Beginnings

In October of 2007, F3C held its first worship service in a living room. It was attended by about 30 people, a third of which were children under the age of 10. It was an independent church plant based upon faith and a calling by the Holy Spirit. The planting pastors were Ted Ng and Ed Ng. Ed began as an intern while in his final year at Regent College and eventually joined the church as a full time pastor in 2008.



From Living Room to Community Centre

In July of 2008, F3C outgrew the living room and we found space at the Dunbar Community Centre and we have been there since. We have been asked if we would ever consider a building of our own and while it is not out of the question, we value even more the ability to be in and among the community we live in.

The Lesson of Mercy: Giving Beyond our Own Walls

One of the most significant lessons we learned early was about giving. In March of 2009, member of our church was living missionally and through her work knew a young woman with in need of a new electric wheelchair due to her physical challenges due to *osteogenesis imperfecta* or brittle bones syndrome. The member approached our leadership and we had a meaningful conversation over what it meant to be generous and to care for others. So although this young woman was not a part of our community and not a Christian, we made the decision to help provide the portion of remaining funds needed for her to buy the chair. It was a wonderful day when she came to visit us in her new wheelchair! We were learning what it means to be a blessing to others outside our own church.





The Lesson of the Open Door: Handling Conflict & Departures Well

As is common in church planting, the ethos of our church surrounding the values of missional discipleship, authenticity, empowerment and diversity needed to be established and communicated. We had to understand our differences as people and test whether or not the church's vision and direction was for everyone. It isn't. So over time, there were folks who felt they did not align with our local expression of the kingdom. It is always painful to say goodbye but we also trust God's direction in the lives of one another and bless each

person as they go on their way. We committed to handling conflicts the best we could in transparent and vulnerable ways without creating more acrimony. We accept the differences in one another. Sometime we are but a waypoint in a person's journey, a place to rest and recuperate before they go along on their way. We simply seek to bless each and every single person who has been with us. Our church is but one local expression of the Kingdom among many. We have learned to pray, "Lord, in your wisdom and mercy, bring to us those who need to be among us and take from us those who need to be elsewhere."

The Lesson of Sanctuary:

Where it is Okay to be Not Okay

Another significant challenge came when one of our key leaders had a bout of depression. Pastor Ted had experienced such challenges himself in the past and was able to provide some support and guidance to both the individual and the church. It was not an easy time and some questioned whether or not someone who was struggling with mental health concerns was a suitable leader since depression can interfere with aspects of competency. Despite this, the church continued to be supportive of the leader by being patient, understanding and caring. It can be difficult to be in a community where we do not put on airs or pretend to be fine when we are not. But it is in the authenticity, honesty and patience that we learn to be like Christ in his love. We learned that love is indeed greatest of all gifts and that people are to be valued for who they are.





The Lesson of Loving Struggling & Broken Families

There were folks who have come to faith in our community who have broken marriages. In some cases, divorced husbands and wives have both attended our small church at the same time. While we uphold the sanctity of marriage as a lifelong vow, we are willing to accept and walk with those who live with the struggle of marriages that have ended. For those who have difficult marriages, we advocate for counseling and reconciliation while standing up against situations of abuse. We learn to love those who do not love each other and walk alongside them

without gossiping and in cases where there is no evidence of wrongdoing, we do not take sides. All the while we hold out the invitation and hope of reconciliation and restoration. We learn to walk with those who are conflicted and hurting.



The Lesson of Change: Pastoral Transitions

While Pastor Ted continued as lead pastor, Pastor Ed felt called to pursue further studies in psychology in 2011. He enrolled in a Doctor of Psychology program at Fuller Theological Seminary where he has since graduated and is now returned to Vancouver as a fully practicing and licensed psychologist serving as the clinical director of Soma Counselling and Family Resources. Diana Gee, who had been attending our church for several years while attending Regent College, joined our team as a pastoral apprentice in 2009 and stepped into the role of associate pastor in October of 2011. Since then we have also had Pastors Chris Chu (2012-2013) and Ron Chan (2015-2018) as interns. Chris is now the Young adult pastor at the Evangelical Chinese Bible Church in Burnaby. Ron will be graduating in April of 2018. We love, value and honour our pastors who are called to serve us.





**The Lesson of Acceptance:
Wrestling with Sexual Identity**

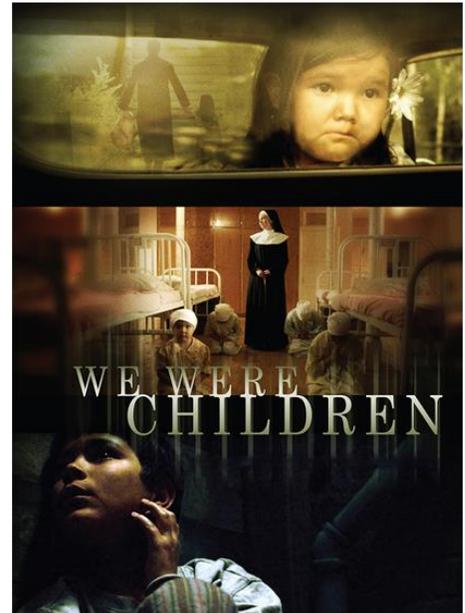
One of the most challenging chapters in our church was when a member of our congregation revealed that they had gender dysphoria in 2013. This was slowly disclosed over a period of time during which the pastoral team walked alongside this person to encourage understanding, support and fellowship. Every person in the church was consulted. In 2014 our church developed and released a policy in which the person with gender dysphoria was welcomed and affirmed as a believer. Members of the church were allowed to have variance in their opinions

regarding gender transition but were to act with love, grace and acceptance. We became comfortable with living in tension.

The Lesson of Justice:

Walking with First Nations Peoples

In 2014, our church participated in an event called "Journey Together, Heal Together," in which the movie, "We Were Children," dramatizing the injustices of the residential school system was screened. In 2016, our church began to officially recognize that our services are held on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Musqueam people every week. We wish to understand, listen to and walk alongside our First Nations friends as we see this as a significant issue of justice in Canada. This led to a further attendance of the "Our Stories Define Us" conference at Regent College in 2017. We are still learning in this area and believe this will be an ongoing endeavour for the future.



**The Lesson of Understanding:
Autism Awareness for Everyone**

As we have a family in our congregation with an autistic child, we spent time educating our congregation in September of 2015, particularly teachers and children with the help of this family who connected us with experts and practitioners who came to share with us what it means to value, include and care for people who are different but special in their own way - a lesson that can never grow old!



**The Lesson of Welcome:
Friends from Around the World**

In 2015, our church decided to respond to the Syrian refugee crises by connected with the Mennonite Central Committee to learn how we could participate in sponsoring refugees. It was a long wait and continues to be a great learning process but in 2016 we welcomed an Armenian Syrian family to Canada. We also had the joy and privilege of welcoming a Honduran refugee claimant family who has since received refugee status in Canada. Both families joined us as a part of our church community. It was a joy to celebrate

Christmas in Korean, French, Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, Armenian, German, Cantonese and English!

The Lesson of Power: Equality & Ordination

Our church has made the decision to ordain a woman into pastoral ministry in 2018. This is the result of a rigorous Biblical and theological reflection and study. Understanding that for some this is an issue of contention and may affect how other communities perceive us, we nonetheless believe in empowerment and justice in our practices. We simply ask, "What would Jesus have us do?" and we do that.



The Road Ahead

Our plans for the future are very simple, perhaps laughably so. We have learned to pray this prayer, "Lord, may we become the church you want us to be." Our way forward is built on what we have learned. It is God who leads us and our primary job is to listen, discern and act. Whatever Jesus wants, Jesus gets in our church. We have no grand schemes, no ambitions to become something we are not called to be. In doing so we have discovered we are exactly who we need to be in this moment. We aren't done learning and don't plan to be anytime soon.

Lord, be to us who you truly are, not who we want, imagine or are told you are. Be yourself to us and help us to be our true selves in order that we might be transformed into your likeness.