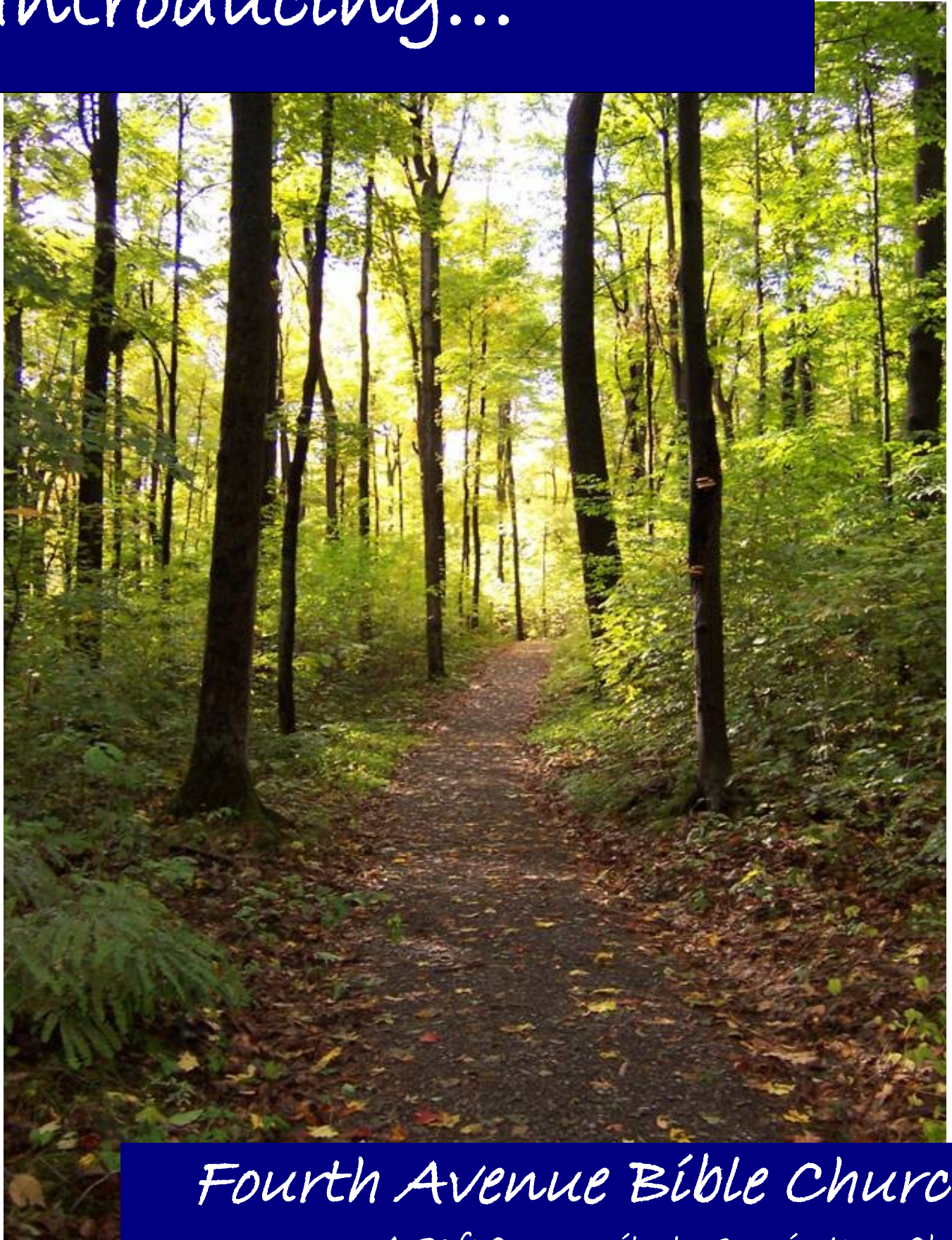


Introducing...



*Fourth Avenue Bible Church*

*A safe community to grow in Jesus Christ*

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## How This Document Came to Be

In 2009 our Interim Leadership Team felt that we needed to have a clear sense of what God wanted us to be and do as a church family. Without this we would not be able to move forward and could easily fall into debating and even arguing about program and ministry direction. It was felt that we needed a process in which we could discover, as an entire church family, God's call for us and surrender to it afresh. With our past trials, this realization became a conviction. We knew that without a clear sense of direction, not only would it be increasingly difficult to work together for God, it would also be difficult to agree on the kind of pastoral leadership we needed to pursue. It was felt that we required a process in which we could discover, as an entire church family, the future that God had for us.

So, how did we create a process where the whole church really had a chance to give input? Answer: By doing it in stages. Three big events marked our journey – Three Congregational Summits. These were times of solid discussion, sharing and discovery. At each summit we endeavoured to answer one question.

- **Summit One: “Where have we been?”** - We remembered and reflected on the past so that we could see what God was saying to us about our future.
- **Summit Two: “Where are we going?”** - We developed a clear sense of direction that we collectively agreed was God's direction for us.
- **Summit Three: “How will we get there?”** - We discerned a basic ministry model and identified our next steps.

After each Summit, a digest was written and circulated widely. Opportunities were given for people to give feedback in “pulse groups”. The information gathered has been included in this final document. In order to complete the process, our leadership met with our facilitator, Dave Jackson, to finalize our Ministry Direction and put in place “next steps” which would provide the church with its basic direction for the next few years.

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## Our Biblical Purpose

*Why do we exist as a church?*

The purpose of Fourth Avenue Bible Church is:

“To bring people to a saving knowledge of God through faith in Jesus Christ and to disciple believers, encouraging them toward Christ-likeness. And then to equip them to introduce their acquaintances to Jesus and encourage others in the Faith.”

***“To exalt Jesus; to encourage and equip His people; to evangelize the world.”***

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## **Our Ministry Milestones**

*How has God shaped us in our past?*

After a thorough reflection on our past, we felt God would affirm us for our generosity, hospitality, perseverance and faithfulness. He would be pleased with our concern for others and our engagement in missions.

We felt that God would challenge us on our pride. Our image has been important to us. He would also be concerned that we have wanted things our own way. At times we have forgotten our first love. As a result, we have found it very difficult to resolve problem issues. We have experienced grave differences with our leaders and with each other. Tensions with our pastors have been significant as well. A number left under duress.

We felt that if God was to have His way with us in the future, we would need to surrender the following:

- Our image
- Our personal agendas – our own way
- Our need to be in control
- Our lack of trust in leaders and others
- The dream of people returning

It was further recognized that instead of endeavouring to solve church problems on our own, we would need to seek God in prayer with surrendered hearts. We will need to make a lifestyle of forgiveness. We acknowledge that sometimes it has been easier to look unified rather than to forgive and pursue resolution in relationships.

In summary, we have a very real sense that God continues to be with us. We have been through difficulties but God has been shaping us. If we let Him have His way and move forward in our brokenness rather than our pride, the future presents hope and opportunity. However, we will need to take seriously the things that we have learned.

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## **Our Mission Focus**

*Whom has God called us to reach?*

**We identified our Mission Focus through the lens of Acts 1:8.** *“And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* Based on this passage, we believe that God has given us the following groups of people to love and reach:

### **Our Jerusalem – People we are already reaching**

*Primarily churching believers like us:*

- People our age
  - People with our interests
  - People who think like us
  - People who have similar vocations
- 

### **Our Judea – People we could reach if we became intentional**

*Primarily unbelievers with whom we already have relationships and connections:*

- Recreational friends
  - Unsaved relatives
  - Neighbours
  - Coworkers
  - Moms and their families from MOPS
  - Youth
  - People who are “broken” like we are
- 

### **Our Samaria – People we will not find it easy to reach**

*People who are unwilling or find it uncomfortable to connect with us:*

- New people to town
  - Lone parents
  - People angry with the church
  - People tired of the church
- 

### **The Ends of the Earth – People geographically removed from us**

*These are people we reach by sending missionaries and financially supporting them.*

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## **Our Values**

*Who has God shaped us to be?*

- **Bible-Based Teaching** – We value teaching the Word of God because it is the guiding truth for the journey of life. Without His direction and grace we are truly lost.
- **Dependence on God** – We depend on God for ourselves and others. Without Him we can do nothing. We express our dependency through prayer, trust, worship and Spirit-filled living. Our dependency affirms that Jesus is at work in our world and we are committed to living out His purposes in surrender and obedience.
- **Christ as Centre** – We value Christ as centre. Without a loving relationship with Him as our Saviour, Friend and King, our lives are empty and our actions are forced expressions that lack compassion and are simply to reduce guilt.
- **Healthy Relationships** – We value loving and enjoying people just as Jesus did. Life transformation takes place through encouraging, accepting, compassionate, forgiving relationships. Such relationships are a clear sign that we are following Christ and will draw others to Him. Therefore, everything we do will be from a relational, grace-filled centre.
- **Authenticity (Being Real)** – We need connection with God and with each other. We cannot experience this if we wear masks. Therefore, transparent honesty and integrity marked by vulnerability characterizes all our relationships; be they with God, our community, or each other.
- **Sacrificial Service** – We value service out of “brokenness” (we are not superior) in which we show our love by faithfully giving of ourselves and our resources for God and others. We surrender personal convenience and make ourselves available for the care of people and the advancement of His Kingdom.
- **Open Humility** – We value the humility of Jesus that made Him a safe leader and friend. It enables us to walk with people as fellow pilgrims, keeps us from taking ourselves too seriously, allows us to laugh at ourselves, encourage each other, and receive a little more grace on the journey.
- **Faithful Obedience** – We value faithful obedience to our Lord and Savior in which we show our love by surrendering our independence, personal preferences and convenience for the advancement of His Kingdom.

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The following behaviour shifts will take place as we live out these values:

- Instead of catering to our personal comfort, we will be available.
- Instead of worrying about those who left, we will make new friends in our community.
- Instead of avoiding conflict, we will acknowledge it, identify the root and deal with it.
- Instead of competing with other churches, we will collaborate with them.
- Instead of concern for our image, we will be vulnerable.

- Instead of sitting with the same people, we will sit with others.
- Instead of defending the truth, we will live it.
- Instead of changing our “outer” selves, we will let Jesus change us inside.
- Instead of being too busy to pray, we will take time alone with God.
- Instead of making assumptions about people, we will get to know them.

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## **Our Vision**

*Where is God leading us in the future?*

**We see a growing church community of caring, authentic people who are deepening in their love for Christ while passionately sharing Him with their friends and neighbours so that lives are transformed by His grace, hope and strength.**

**Specifically, we see...**

- Christ-centered people who are forgiven by God, living out their lives transparently dependent on Him. We are literally the “hands and feet of Jesus”.
- Personal and corporate prayer where we listen to God and discern His leadings.
- Inspirational worship services that are pleasing to God, communicating His forgiveness, relevant to life and sensitive to all who are seeking Him.
- Making friends in our community. These friendships are lived out through the week as we engage in acts of “carrot cake” hospitality and kindness, using our gifts and abilities to show our love.
- Community involvement where we join with others in making our town a better place to live (e.g. coaching sports, community agencies, etc.) and, where services are missing, provide them ourselves (e.g. daycare, after-school programming, etc.).
- Small groups of various kinds passionately ministering and caring for others. These groups are safe places where no one stands alone but rather experiences intimate community in the stresses of daily life. We see each of these groups bridging to the community and serving God in their unique settings.
- Reaching and engaging people through relational events such as BBQ’s, Dinners, Marriage Enrichment, Artistic productions in the community, etc. some of which are designed to invite people to Christ.
- Partnering with other agencies, missions and churches in order to reach the people we can’t.

**We see Fourth Avenue Bible Church as a warm, guiding light in our region marking a safe and sending place of hope and strength for the journey of life.**

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# **Our Ministry Model**

*A model that facilitates our vision and values.*

## **Model Description:**

Our Ministry Model suggests that we will have the mindset that all ministry will be done through loving relationships. Jesus called us to love our neighbour. We value people and are committed to loving others as Jesus did. We will think of people before programs.

We see ourselves as a Worshipping Community (Romans 12). Within this Worshipping Community are relevant, inspirational worship services that are for believers yet explained to the unbeliever who may attend. People begin to belong with intentional hospitality (sponsorship) that welcomes them and helps them find their “way in”. Discipleship and Care happen in small groups, age level classes, or “one-on-one”. Any who wish assistance in identifying their gifts or a place to serve will find it in “Ministry Orientation”. The Ministry Community provides ongoing support and encouragement for all who are serving. Evangelism happens through personal relationships, outreach events, age-level programs, and felt-need ministries.

## **Definitions:**

Felt-Need Ministries: Personal work and Programs that address the felt-needs (e.g. relational, financial, physical, etc.) of people in our community.

Age Level/Gender Programs: Ministries that reach out and disciple a specific age or gender (e.g. Youth Ministry, MOPS, etc.).

Personal Relationships: One-on-one relationships with friends and colleagues with whom we share what Jesus means to us.

Intentional Hospitality: Friendship with newcomers whereby we introduce them to our friends and sponsor them into our church.

Exploring Faith: A basic course or small group that engages people relationally in exploring the Christian faith with opportunities to make a personal decision for Christ.

Discipleship Basics: Classes or small groups or “one-on-one” relationships that assist people in taking their “next step” with Jesus. Such steps may include exploring what it means to be baptized, to be a part of the church, to have a daily relationship with Jesus, and to follow Him with time, treasure and talents.

Ministry Orientation: Basic processes in gift and ministry identification that enable people to know themselves (e.g. their call, gifts and abilities) as well as a place of ministry in the church or community.

Ministry Community: The community of people and leaders that serve Jesus in the church and community. Led by the pastors and lead team, they gather as necessary for encouragement, affirmation, and vision casting. It is a safe place to test ideas, listen and seek God’s mind on challenging matters.

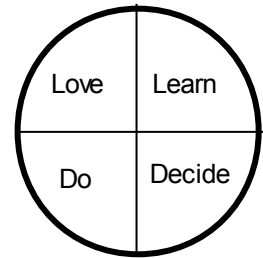
Small Groups: At the heart of our ministry will be small groups. These small groups have four components.

**Love:** Each group cares for each other and practices the “one another’s” of scripture. Love one another, encourage one another, serve one another, pray for one another, etc.

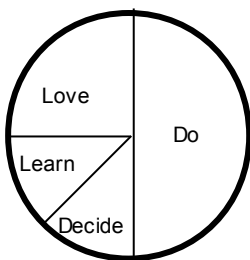
**Learn:** Each group spends time in the Word where together they discover what God is saying to them. This can be taught or facilitated.

**Do:** Each group has activities and ministries they do together and invite others to in the community.

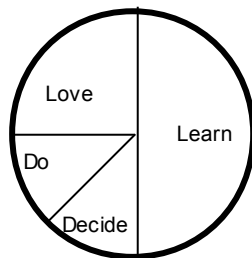
**Decide:** Each group needs to plan its community life.



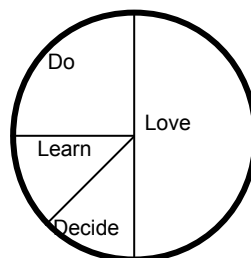
The amount of time and effort given to each of the components determines the kind of small group it is. For instance...



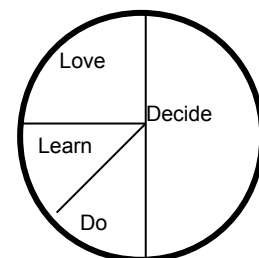
Youth Min. Team,  
Choir, Worship Band



Discipleship Class,  
Life Course,  
Alpha

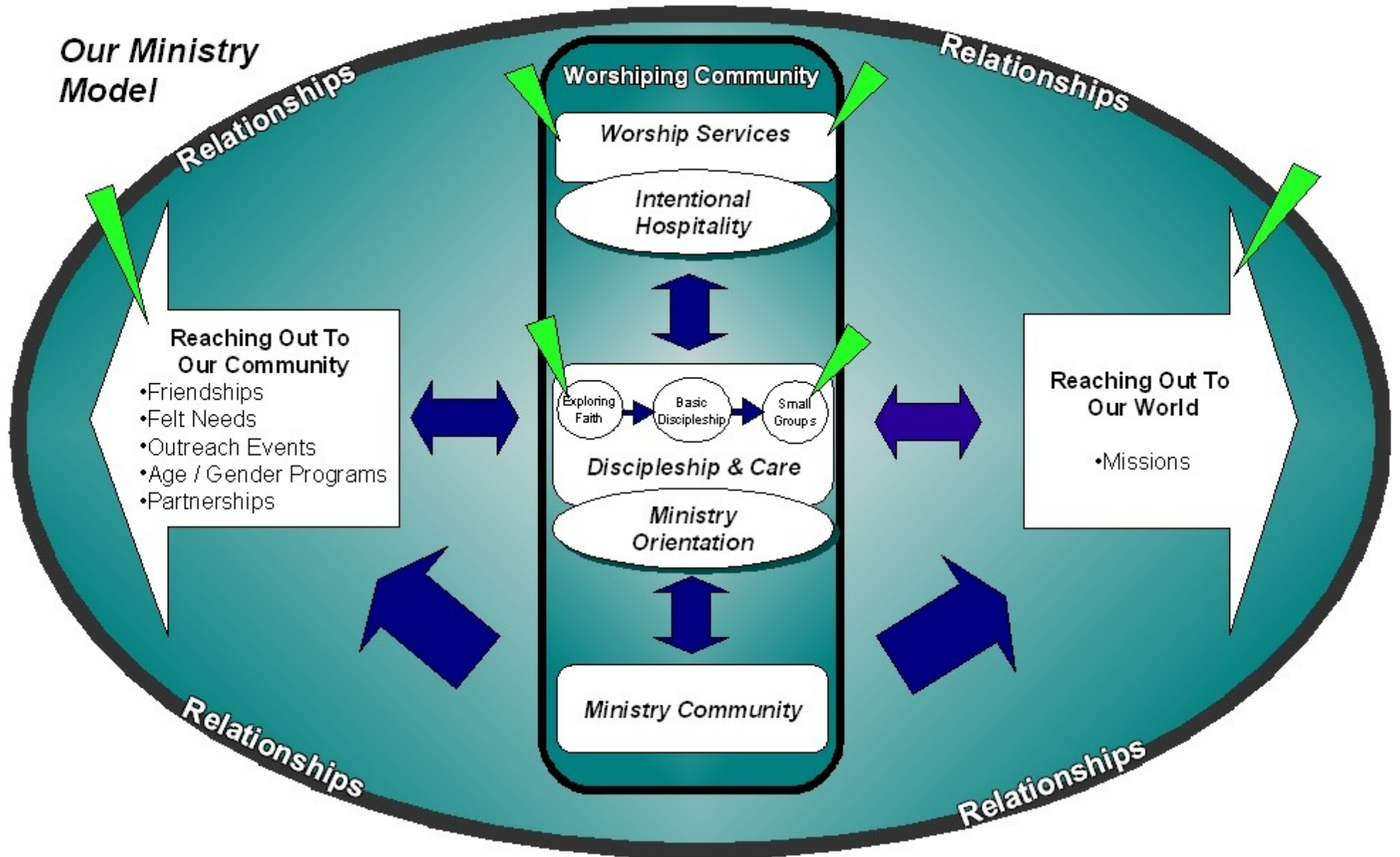


Care Group,  
Recovery Group





Leadership Team

**Our Ministry Model**



**Legend**

-  Where / How people get introduced to our church
-  How people flow through various aspects of FABC

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# Our Steps of Obedience

*How will we accomplish our vision?*

## **Definition:**

Steps of Obedience are major ministry developments that become the shared priority of the entire church if we are to get serious about carrying out the vision God has given us. The steps we identified are as follows and are not in order of importance.

- Prayerfully identify and secure a **lead pastor** whose calling matches ours.
- Prayerfully develop and implement a plan for **intentional hospitality** so that all are welcomed into meaningful community and ministry and feel they belong.
- Prayerfully develop and implement a philosophy and strategy for **small groups** (as described in our Ministry Model) that results in a majority of our congregation involved in care and ministry.
- Prayerfully **define leadership roles, responsibilities and processes** that allow for transparency and trust as we pursue our vision together.
- Prayerfully develop **an approach that gives rise to increasing corporate prayer** focusing on renewed spirituality, dependence on God and the salvation of specific individuals.
- Prayerfully think through and support **an approach to evangelism** that includes building relationships, sharing our faith, “bridging” events and “harvest” events.
- Prayerfully develop a process to **move on from the hurts** of the past.
- Prayerfully develop a process to **develop people in their gifts and abilities** (especially leaders) for the expansion of God’s Kingdom.

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## Our Congregation

### *Our History:*

In the mid-1920's, people of the Mennonite Brethren faith (Fourth Avenue Bible Church began as the Niverville Mennonite Brethren Church, and changed its name to FABC in 2001) settled on farms around Niverville. They had emigrated from the various Mennonite Colonies in Russia. Church services were originally held in the Niverville United Church. Since their farms were scattered over such a large area, transportation presented a serious problem. Some of the Mennonite Brethren families began meeting in homes to fellowship around God's Word. After a short time they discovered that a small Lutheran church, which was centrally located, was being used only one Sunday a month. This congregation was willing to share its facilities for the other three Sundays a month. The Niverville Mennonite Brethren Church was established in this Lutheran Church on May 29, 1929. The group consisted of eighteen members.

These early members were a collection of immigrants whose lives had been disrupted by revolution. Their families, their churches, their farms, their businesses and their occupations had been decimated. Many came to the Niverville area with nothing more than the travel expenses they had incurred and their faith in God. Because of the Bible teaching and the emphasis on the importance of fellowship that they had received since early childhood, they were able to establish a church very quickly. The early growth of this small congregation was prolific. In 1930 membership increased to 27. With the baptism of 23 believers in 1931, membership grew to 50.

The time came when the Lutheran Church was no longer large enough to meet the needs of a growing congregation and consideration was given to constructing their own building. Where to build? Should they build in a grain field or in the village? A country church would be more central to a majority of the members but in the village lived a widow and her children and others that had no means of transportation. In 1937 the issue of where to build was determined when one of the members sold his car, bought the present site, and donated the land to the church.

The early members of the Niverville Mennonite Brethren Church shared many of the same distinctive emphases as the Mennonite Brethren Church did when it formed in 1860 in the villages of the Molotschna Colony in the Ukraine. They believed:

1. In the need for a personal faith in Jesus Christ.
2. In the need for a systematic teaching of the Bible.
3. That leadership is entrusted to members with integrity and spiritual balance.
4. That while strong and wise leaders are needed, dictatorship is suspect and should be rejected.
5. That a strong ethical emphasis is needed.
6. That meaningful church worship is essential.

The rapid growth in the early years could be attributed to conversion and baptism of ethnic Mennonites from the community. Later, growth was from within the church (e.g. growth of families, marriages, and believers moving into the surrounding community).

The organizational structure of the church evolved as the congregation grew and its needs changed. Beginning with one leader who was responsible for organizing the time and place of the Sunday worship service to the structure that we have today. Leadership was given by both ordained ministers and lay people called from within the church. One of our local businessmen was ordained to the ministry and was a minister and the church leader for 25 years during which time he also farmed and developed several businesses. The church had the wisdom to seek and welcome into its fellowship some of the local public school teachers to assist in the pulpit ministry. In 1974 the church called its first full-time pastor. It was the first time that one person could focus his full attention to the work of the church. The church, in its wisdom, continued to blend its leadership and pulpit ministry with professional ministers and lay people.

Music has always been an integral part of Fourth Avenue Bible Church. The many choirs and music groups that have existed throughout the years have been an avenue for people to express their faith and relate to each other. There have been a number of people in the history of this church who have been gifted by God in the area of music and have gone on to use it for the glory of God.

There has always been an emphasis on missions. People from our congregation have been involved in many facets of missions. They have been involved in church planting, Christian education, evangelism, Bible translation, Christian broadcasting, and relief work in Canada and many countries around the world.

Today, we are a group of approximately 90 people ranging in age from new-born to people in their nineties. We are people coming from a greater variety of walks of life and cultural backgrounds than would have been the case for much of our church's history.

***Statistics:***

Date started – 1929

Membership – 134

Adherents – 40 (including children)

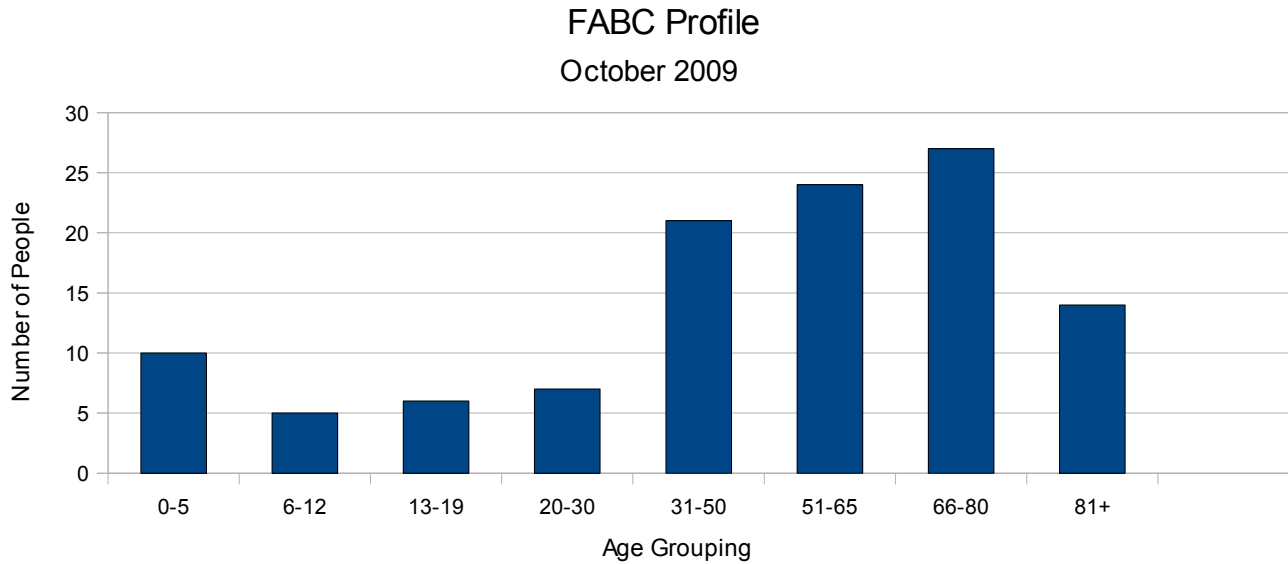
Inactive Members – 61

Average Sunday attendance – 88 (Last year – 108)

Average Small Group attendance – 27 (Last year – 32)

Average Sunday School attendance – 18 (Ages 2 – Grade 12); 12 (Adult)

**Demographics:**



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## **Our Staff**

In addition to an interim pastor, we have a part-time (approximately 25 hours/week) administrative assistant, a paid youth coordinator, and a paid custodian. Lay leaders and volunteers fill the balance of the organizational structure and duties.

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## Our Community

Conveniently located 35 km south of Winnipeg, Niverville offers the opportunity to live in a rural town while being close to all the amenities of a major city.

Founded on the agricultural bounty of the 1850's and beyond, Niverville has kept pace with marketplace demands, creating a business climate of diversification and forward thinking. Existing businesses have flourished while new ventures have deemed Niverville the preferred location to conduct business operations.

As one of the youngest and fastest growing communities in Manitoba, Niverville is a thriving community with services and schools for all residents, from young families to retirees. An active spirit of community is evidenced by our local sports clubs, churches, the Heritage Centre and medical and support facilities. Our schools, located in Hanover School Division ([www.hsd.ca](http://www.hsd.ca)), educate children from Kindergarten through to Grade 12.

**Community websites:** [www.wheretheybelong.ca](http://www.wheretheybelong.ca) and [www.niverville.com](http://www.niverville.com).

### Community Demographics (2006 Census):

