



THE PARK BENCH

The magazine of Oak Park Church of Christ | December 2025



**OAK PARK'S
80TH ANNIVERSARY
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JOURNEY OF FAITH: BRIE LEWIS.



Growing up in a Christian home, I came into young adulthood with it being all that I knew. Being the rebellious teenager that I was, I decided that I was going to abandon my faith because it seemed like the “cooler” thing to do.

Over time, I noticed that my decision to ignore my faith felt more unnatural to me than just accepting what I already knew to be true.

On my new quest to find Jesus, I decided to go looking for one of those “the heavens parted” moments that so many other Christians I knew seemed to have. I travelled to places like Swaziland, South Africa, The Solomon Islands, and Belize, but despite all my searching, that moment never came. After almost a year, I decided that I was no longer going to go looking for Christ. I wasn’t giving up on my faith; I was just ready to come home.

Shortly after returning and sharing my travel experiences with the Young Adults group at my church, my stories caught the attention of a man who would later go on to become my husband. We started to build our life together. First, we got a dog, then a house, and later, we would welcome our two kids.

As time went on, I began to realize that the “aha” moment I had been looking for was in the everyday details – like being woken up in the middle of the night by my son informing me that his sock had come off, or having long debates with my daughter about whether or not to have junk food for dinner. All of this to say, it wasn’t until I stopped searching that I realized God had always been by my side, and that His plan for me was already at play. All I had to do was be still and know.

I was baptized at Oak Park on October 5, 2025. After years of back and forth and thinking everything through, I had decided to take the plunge! I originally planned on being baptized when I was 22, but as the time approached, I grew anxious... “Am I ready for this? What is it I’m actually committing to? Why am I doing it?” As a person who overanalyzes every single detail, I decided that I wasn’t ready and put it on hold. Twelve years later, I felt that I was finally ready and had given it enough thought to understand what I was committing to. So, what is baptism to me? It’s accepting the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross, and the willingness to pick up and carry your own.

NEW ELDER, DOUG MOORE.

My wife Deb and I have been a members of Oak Park Church of Christ since October of 2021. I was born in Calgary in 1955 and have lived here most of my life. The family I grew up in had no Christian background, but by God's grace and mercy I became a Christian in February of 1974.

In 1975, Deb and I met at Alberta Bible College, and we were married in 1978. I graduated from Alberta Bible College in 1980 with a Bachelor of Religious Education. My career has been in the field of heating and ventilation, working with a few heating companies including having my own HVAC business and finishing my career as a building inspector with the City of Calgary. Deb and I have three children who are all married and we are blessed with 11 grandchildren.

In our retirement we felt led by God to join and serve this community of believers here at Oak Park. We continue to be very excited and pleased to see the direction this church is going in terms of its outreach in mission and ministry in the community and beyond. Oak Park's mission statement says it all: "Living Out God's Transforming Love." Since becoming a member here, I have been involved with the Building Committee, spiritual formation classes, men's breakfasts, men's prayer group and, of course, regular attendance on Sundays.

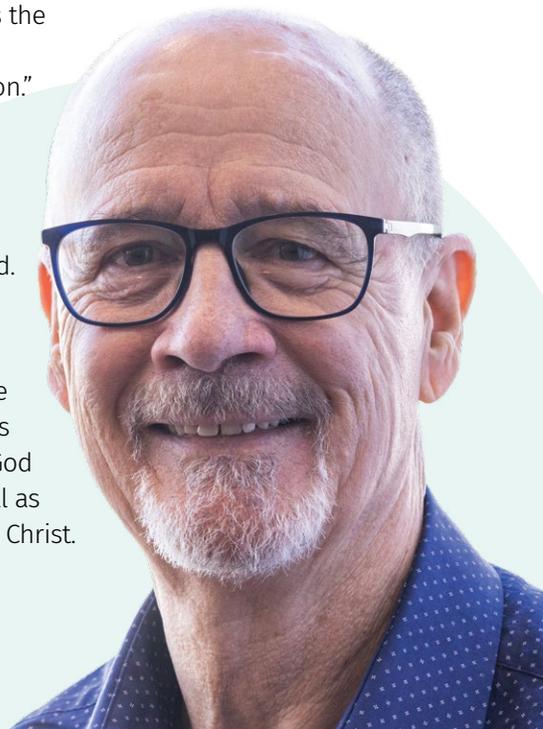
I desire to continue being involved and serving in the church using the gifts and talents that God has given me. I served as an elder at Bow Valley Christian Church for approximately ten years. I believe that through God's grace He often leads



me to 'come alongside' people to encourage them in their growth in Christ within the community of the church. I also desire to work and serve alongside others in ways that I am able. I believe that involvement in God's work is key in community and leadership. My heart goes out to people who have difficult challenges in their lives in whatever form that takes, and have a desire for them to draw close to God and seek His peace, comfort and strength. The Apostle Paul encourages us in 2 Corinthians 5:18, "Now all things are from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

My heart's desire is to see Christ honoured and glorified.

I look forward to the privilege of serving as elder. May God bless you all as you honour Christ.



Eighty Years of His Story.



By Jonathan Chapman
(son of George & Eileen Chapman –
George was Oak Park's first pastor)

On November 1st, our sanctuary and foyer came alive with warm conversation, familiar faces, and heartfelt gratitude as we gathered to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of Oak Park Church of Christ (formerly Park Hill Church of Christ). The milestone welcomed long-time members, newcomers, and several who were present in the church's earliest days. What began eight decades ago as a Sunday School in a tent has grown into a flourishing ministry whose influence continues to extend far beyond the church walls.

The evening opened with a meaningful time of reflection, as current and former members and staff shared memories from across the years.

Their stories—of transformed lives, enduring friendships, and moments when faith and fellowship brought strength in hardship—painted a beautiful picture of God's faithfulness through the generations. Guests enjoyed lively quizzes, hymns of gratitude, and a touching display of commemorative slideshows and memorabilia. These glimpses into the early days served as reminders of the steady, faithful work that has shaped Oak Park's identity.

Through every moment of celebration, one truth remained clear: Oak Park's greatest accomplishment is not its longevity (although of course that is something to celebrate!), but its unwavering commitment to proclaiming the Gospel— here in our community, and around the world. Eighty years later, we continue to share the same message of love, redemption, and grace that has not changed.

With grateful hearts, we thank God for His abundant blessings and look ahead with hope, ready to continue the mission and vision that began 80 years ago and still guides us today.





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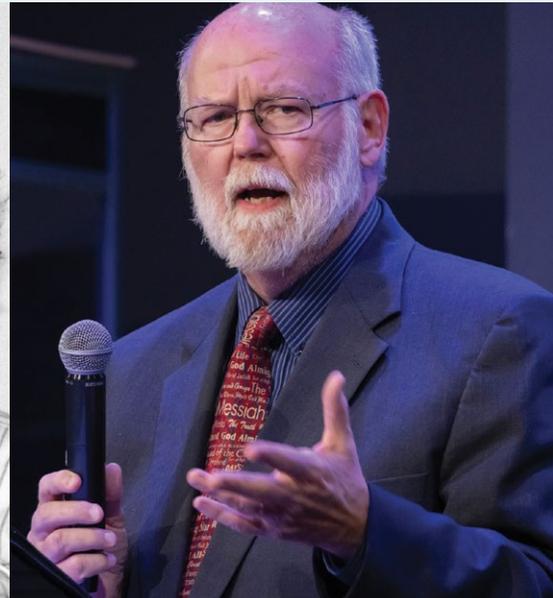


Eighty Years of His Story.



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**SO WE, THOUGH MANY,
ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST,
AND INDIVIDUALLY MEMBERS
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ROMANS 12:5





VISION MINISTRIES: A MISSION TO YOUNG LEADERS.

Vision Ministries is committed to calling churches and Christians to kingdom mission, and to supporting that call via church planting and church health initiatives.

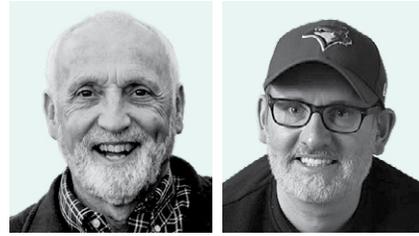
“God isn’t preparing you for leadership, he is using leadership to prepare you for himself.”

These were some of the opening words from a young leaders’ gathering on November 1st, here in Calgary. They reminded us that, as we step into leadership roles, it’s ultimately God’s heart for us to know Him more and be transformed by His love. Vision Ministries Canada (VMC) is deeply convicted to help support, equip and encourage young leaders within the churches in our network. How do we see the Spirit at work empowering young people in their gifts, yet also transforming and shaping their inner lives?

For the last few years in Hamilton, Ontario, we’ve hosted a young leaders’ cohort. It runs weekly from October to May covering topics such as the gospel, discipleship, mission, the church, understanding culture, a leader’s inner life, and gifting. We have teaching, discussion, practice-based learning, and we invite older leaders from different contexts to share their stories and answer questions. The cohort is comprised of leaders from different churches and organizations; our hope is to gather cohorts like this in different places across Canada.

We’ve also been hosting half-day leadership learning times, like the one in Calgary, that will run alongside the cohorts and perhaps lead to formation of new local cohorts. Young leaders may be in church or parachurch ministry or ministering in the community where they work and live; VMC appreciates and supports the broader intersection of careers and calling.

On November 1st at Oak Park, ten young leaders from several different churches and backgrounds



By Doug Pippus & Matt Pamplin

gathered for worship, learning, discussion and food. Participants ranged in age from early 20's to late 30's. They brought questions:

- 1 How do we establish boundaries in ministry and our lives?**
- 2 How do we lead people who don't want to be led or who are older than we are?**
- 3 How do I know when to transition out of a ministry without feeling I have failed?**
- 4 What's the right way to lead in this context?**
- 5 How do I lead in a workplace that isn't specifically Christian? What is different?**
- 6 How do I balance God's calling versus people's expectations?**
- 7 What happens when or if I fail?**

These eager young leaders and three older leaders engaged with some of these questions, to begin to build relationships and to learn more about God and following Jesus. Two different participants said, "If I'd have known it was going to be like this, I'd have invited others."

The time flew by. The atmosphere in the room was alive with interest and participation. The conversation after we finished was just as lively. We look forward to future events like this one.



At its core, youth ministry is about spiritual formation: the slow, beautiful process of being shaped into the likeness of Christ.

GROWING FAITH: A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY.

It's hard to believe it's already been a couple of months since I joined the staff here at Oak Park Church of Christ. I feel incredibly blessed to serve and work alongside such a wonderful team of staff, students, and volunteers, and to experience the support and generosity of this amazing church community.



by Trevor Zimmerman

This season marks my third opportunity to serve as a youth pastor, following previous roles at Refinery Church (formerly Christ's Church of the Meadows) and Bow Valley Christian Church, and my twelfth year in youth ministry overall. Over the years, I've also had the privilege of working with youth and young adults in a variety of settings: youth shelters, camp ministry, high school classrooms, sports teams, mission trips, and leadership development programs. In each of these spaces, I've seen God's hand guiding and shaping my calling to invest in the lives of students.

Simply put, I have a deep passion for helping youth feel known, find a genuine place to belong, and experience the life-changing love that God has for each and every one of them.

In a world where young people are bombarded by noise, pressure, and confusion about who they are and what really matters, where students are pulled in every direction by social media, endless activities, and competing voices, I believe the church offers a critical invitation for young people to be known, belong and discover what it means to be a follower of Christ. I firmly believe youth ministry is not simply another program; rather, it is the heartbeat of the church's calling to nurture faith, raise good men and women, seek character formation, and shape disciples who know and love God.

At its core, youth ministry is about spiritual formation: the slow, beautiful process of being shaped into the likeness of Christ. This happens best in a community where young people see their peers and adults attempting to live out authentic faith. When adults are willing to engage, play, guide, and pray for our young people, they are being formed in ways that only God can orchestrate. Our consistent presence, encouragement, and example help cultivate a faith that endures far beyond teenage years.

This call doesn't just extend to the youth leaders who have volunteered to meet with our teens on Friday nights! We as a church community are called



to do so much more. We are reminded during moments such as the dedication of a new child or the baptism of a young person that raising children, deeply-rooted in Jesus, is not the sole responsibility of parents; it is the shared calling of the entire faith community. In these milestone moments, we commit as a church family to walk alongside parents and caregivers, to help raise, support, and nurture their children as they grow in faith. These are not empty words! They mean that pastors, parents, grandparents, mentors, aunts and uncles, caring adults, pseudo-parents and grandparents, and peers alike must see youth ministry as their ministry. The way we live out our faith together becomes the living curriculum our young people learn from every week. When our church truly lives out its promise from those milestone moments of dedication and baptism, we embody the love of Christ to a generation hungry for connection and meaning.

What might it look like for each of us to take a next step in becoming a part of this kind of intentional community? A student might decide to show up to a youth event, not necessarily out of their own deep need or desire to attend, but because they know that another peer needs them to be there. Maybe you as a family need to make youth a priority on Friday nights. You might feel a tug on your heart to sign up to volunteer with youth or children's ministry in the coming months. Perhaps you have a gift, resource, and or talent to offer our community moving forward. Or maybe your next step is to build a new relationship with a family that is desperate for our community to come alongside them this year – you could start by inviting them over for a meal in your home.

I live in anticipation of our continued strides to be a community that is growing in faith this year.

WHY I SERVE.

by Jennifer

For as long as I can remember, I've always been a "helper." I'm not sure I can fully explain the drive behind it – it's simply always been part of who I am. So, it wasn't a huge surprise when I chose nursing as my career. When I walked across the stage at the University of Calgary in 2007 to receive my Bachelor of Nursing, it felt as though all the pieces of my life had come together. I was hired for the one position I had applied for (a heavy surgical unit) and jumped in with both feet. People would tell me I had a "gift," and that nursing was my "calling." I came to believe that nursing was God's purpose for me – a way to use my skills and knowledge to heal, while showing love, compassion, and empathy to those in vulnerable conditions. I adored my patients and my work; I looked forward to a long career serving others.

But life doesn't always unfold the way we plan, does it? A few years in I began experiencing significant health issues but fought hard to continue working. After several surgeries, countless procedures, and finally receiving official diagnoses, my body ultimately

collapsed. My doctors later told me they were shocked I had continued working as long as I did. They didn't have the heart to tell me that the very thing keeping me motivated to fight would ultimately be lost. Illness brings many losses, but for me, the greatest of all was nursing. I went from caring for others all day long to barely being able to care for my own basic needs. I was confused – why would God give me a purpose that I could no longer fulfill? Had I failed God? The grieving process has been long and difficult and will never fully disappear. I'm still on this journey. I've been blessed, though, in so many ways. A significant turning point for me was something one of my doctors, who had known me for many, many years said to me: "Jennifer, the qualities that make you such a good nurse aren't gone... they are a part of who you are. You may not be able to use those qualities through nursing, but they will be there with everything you do."

I had been attending Oak Park Church for a number of years when I was asked to volunteer with the Finance Team as a

Counter. My role is to accurately log donations made to the church with a partner, ensuring that all policies and procedures are adhered to. It's a small but vital behind-the-scenes role at OPCC, and reminds me that I'm part of something bigger. It lets me use the gifts God has given me – no matter what limits I face. I'm learning that God has still made me to help others; while it looks different now, I'm trying to be open to how my life can be a blessing to others. Over time, I've started accepting that helping doesn't always have to look the same. I may not be able to work long shifts on a busy hospital floor, but God still has plans for me.

I share my story with the hopes that you would know you have something to offer. Your situation may be different, but I encourage you to discover the gifts God has given you and lean into them. There's always a way to serve, to give, and to make an impact. "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10).



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