



Amherst Wesleyan Church

**Annual Local Church Conference
Business Meeting
2022**

Agenda

- **Call to Order**
- **Opening Prayer**
- **Roll Call**
- **Reading of the Minutes**
 - + Minutes from LBA: Annual Meeting 2021
- **Leadership Positions**
 - + Leadership & LBA Terms
- **Reports**
 - + Department Reports
 - + Financial Report for 2021-2022 & 2022-2023 Budget
 - + Pastor's Report
- **Business from the Floor...**

Membership List

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Darren Allen | 30. Dianna Lawless |
| 2. Debbie Allen | 31. Kyle Legere* |
| 3. Heather Allen* | 32. Marilyn MacPherson |
| 4. Peter Baxter | 33. John Martin |
| 5. Tammy Baxter | 34. Barbara McCabe |
| 6. Pat Bishop | 35. Carmen Merrill |
| 7. Linda Borne | 36. James Merrill |
| 8. Carvel Burke | 37. Sharon Merrill |
| 9. Joan Burke | 38. Melanie Morey* |
| 10. Flora Caissie | 39. Owen Morey* |
| 11. Becky Chitty | 40. Annette O'Keefe |
| 12. Richard Donelle* | 41. Mark O'Keefe |
| 13. Joey Dunsmore | 42. Evan Oxner |
| 14. Linda Fillmore | 43. Heidi Oxner |
| 15. Sterling Fillmore | 44. Laura Paugh |
| 16. Garth Frizzle | 45. Susan Rafuse |
| 17. Tena Frizzle | 46. Adam Richards |
| 18. Bernie Hicks | 47. Erin Richards |
| 19. Deborah Hicks | 48. Marilyn Smith |
| 20. Bradley Hiemstra* | 49. Joyce Stevenson |
| 21. Milcah Hiemstra* | 50. Allison Taylor |
| 22. Gordon Hunsley | 51. Sharon Taylor |
| 23. Tonia Hyslop | 52. Angela Theriault |
| 24. Bradford Jordan | 53. Paul Theriault |
| 25. Olivia Jordan | 54. Carolyn Thompson |
| 26. Donna Keirstead | 55. Sarah Ward* |
| 27. Brian Kierstead | 56. Dwayne York |
| 28. Ivy Kierstead | 57. Elisha York |
| 29. Jocelyn Laurette | 58. Sheryl York |

By the Numbers

58 Members Total

- 48 Members Renewed
- 8 New Members (* New Members)
- 0 Transferred Memberships from other Denominational Churches
- 2 Transferred Memberships from other Wesleyan Churches
- 0 Transferred Memberships to other Wesleyan Churches
- 7 Members Declined Reaffirmation

Annual Meeting Minutes

23 June 2021

Call to Order: Evan

Opening Prayer: Evan welcomed those attending and opened with prayer. He stated he would be reading the reports and doing roll call so that the microphone would not need to be shared during the meeting.

Roll Call: 21 members answered roll call.

Reading of the Minutes

Minutes for LBA: Annual Meeting 2020 Accepted as Presented

Leadership Positions

- Staff Updates: See annual report.
- Leadership & LBA Terms: See report. Paul Theriault & Peter Baxter will join the LBA filling the positions previously held by Debbie Allen & Susan Rafuse.
- Accepted.

Reports

Department Reports (read by Evan with time for discussion after each)

1. Outreach: 21 couples attend the marriage course (in person & virtually)
2. Kids
3. Small Groups: 9 groups expected for fall sign-up
4. First Impressions
5. Missions
6. Youth Ministry
7. Community Care: In fall, it is hoped there will be positive changes made to donation rules for this program.
8. Worship Team: Add Naomi's name to the list of four individuals in under the Victories heading.
9. Building Committee
10. Seniors

Reports accepted as read.



2022 Annual Report

18 May 2022

Financial Reports for 2020-2021 & 2021-2022 Budget

Presented by Evan: Approximately \$15,000 in expenses over income.

1. \$8000 extra mortgage payment,
 2. Photocopier—bought out contract \$6000,
 3. Missions Trip money repaid to those who would not be participating.
- Discussion followed.

2021-2022 Budget

- Income needed is \$175,956.83
- Westchester is to contribute 20% of their income.
- expected \$10,000 bill for bathroom & plumbing
- Pastor & full-time assistant pastor salaries
- No photocopier contract
- Website costs lower & should continue to decrease as web provider is new
- Ministries take a reduction in light of the new full-time staff position and the growth possible with this new position
- \$176,000 (approximate) budget will need the commitment of the people and lead AWC in the right direction.
- Discussion included:
 - Worship costs includes equipment needed
 - Payroll deductions for assistant pastor: Michael was paid and he rented his own housing- Brad will receive housing (BRH) as part of his re-numeration
 - Ministry Honorariums were cut back because giving did not match the amount voted for in a previous budget
 - Loose offering is counted as regular giving and added to the operating account.
- Members voted to accept the budget as presented.

Pastor's Report

Evan read his pastor's report. Accepted as read.

Business from the Floor...

None raised.

Evan thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Dianna Lawless
Secretary

Leadership Positions

Staff

Lead Pastor: Evan Oxner

Assistant Pastor: Brad Jordan

Community Care Pastor: Sheryl York

LBA

Vice-Chairman

Mark O'Keefe (7)

Secretary

Dianna Lawless (6)

Treasurer

Darren Allen (5)

Members at Large

Tonia Hyslop (3)

Brian Kierstead (3)

Paul Theriault (2)

Sterling Fillmore (1)

District Conference Delegates

Debbie Allen

Department Heads

Youth Ministry

Brad Jordan

Seniors

Sharon Taylor

Small Groups

Evan Oxner

Outreach

Erin Richards

Missions

Evan Oxner (temporary leader)

Kids Ministry

Debbie Allen

Community Care

Sheryl York

First Impressions

Annette O'Keefe

Building Committee

Dwayne York

Worship Team

Kyle Legere

Department Reports

KIDS

Our KONNECT Kids team know that when kids enjoy learning about God, they will become adults who worship not just on Sunday morning but all week long. Following God will not be just a tradition, or pastime, but they will learn to use every part of their lives to worship fully. They will become down-to-earth people following Jesus in down-to-earth ways!

Accomplishments

- Adapted KONNECT Camp held with 8 kids asking Jesus to be their leader!
- KONNECT Play, midweek program launched at West Highland's school with connections made with several families.
- Families from KONNECT Play attended Sunday morning services
- Partnered with Outreach for Trunk or Treat and saw our largest turnout to date
- Shoebox packing party held in November
- Christmas presentation
- Shared kids object lesson for Good Friday service
- Resurrection Easter Egg Hunt held with 9 leaders submitting videos to tell the Easter Story of Jesus

Challenges

- The back and forth of lockdowns
- Maintaining relationships with kids and families
- Engaging a large group of younger children and preteens together

Goals & Plans

- Full KONNECT CAMP August 2022
- KONNECT @ the Park August 2022
- Re-KONNECT Sunday September 2022
- VIP Sunday
- 3-4 additional small group leaders
- Additional large group leader

During each event or Sunday morning our team prepares to give their all for God's kids regardless if there is one or one hundred! It continues to amaze me that God allows us this opportunity to invest in His kids. Thank you to all our leaders who give of their time and talents unselfishly and to our congregation for their prayers and support.

- Debbie Allen

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First Impressions exists to welcome people and help them connect honestly with God and others.

Accomplishments

- Enthusiastic, Dedicated Greeters
- Great First Connections Made
- Flexible With Challenges Created by Covid

Challenges

- Registration and Changing Covid Rules
- Lost some greeters due to Covid challenges
- Not being able to see faces during Mask phase

Goals & Plans

- Add 4 new greeters and 3 spare greeters to our team
- Partner with Outreach during coffee houses, games nights and community events
- Add 2-4 people to our coffee team and 2 people to our decorating team
- Have 4 Potluck meetings for our whole team
- Add a sink and counter to the coffee area

I transitioned into this position mid-pandemic and although Covid continued to create challenges our team has graciously rolled with them. With smiling eyes our greeters have welcomed many, have had encouraging conversions and connected many new people to our church family. Our decorators have continued to make our church feel warm and welcoming. And at the end of March we enthusiastically reopened our coffee station Sunday mornings. I hope to connect more with our team, encouraging them as we partner together to make great first connections. Thank you to all our greeters, decorators, and coffee makers. You have served to help make people feel connected and welcome!

- Annette O'Keefe

BUILDING TEAM

We are here to make our building a friendly place to enter and to worship God. We need your help to be able to accomplish this.

Accomplishments

I was very encouraged with the completion of various projects this year:

1. Big Red House received a little touch-up; some painting, lots of new flooring, updated shower (thank you to those who put in the hard work of completing those projects on short notice, and those who gave sacrificially to cover the cost!)
2. Converted the second bathroom in the Big Red House to a closet and got a working vent in the main bathroom.
3. We got the front yard of the Church house resodded
4. We had a couple of brave souls go up on the roof and sealed up the flashing, where we are sure water was coming in.
5. A new circulating pump has been installed in the church heating system, thanks to Kenny Walker! We have heat!
6. A new fire panel and several sensors have been replaced. The sensors were old, and they had lived a good life.
7. Had incredible volunteers and leaders step up this year!

Goals & Plans

Some projects we are working on:

- Redesigning the front foyer
- Repair and paint the windows on the outside
- Patch the flashing for the garage
- Save up to replace the church roof in 4 years (estimated cost of \$25 000)

Anyone interested in helping improve the appearance of the building, please let me know. We will supply the equipment and materials.

Once again, I would like to thank everyone who has participated in completing our projects!

- Dwayne York

COMMUNITY CARE

Community Care exists to: love others in down to earth ways; meeting practical, emotional & spiritual needs.

Accomplishments

Three Stephen Ministers continued to walk alongside hurting people

- Four more people are being trained as well to be Stephen Ministers and a Stephen Leader.
- The Frozen Meals Ministry Team made 34 meals for people in crisis/need.
- This year a total of 31 sets of Grief booklets were sent to grieving individuals (13 of those were receiving them prior to the beginning of the 2021/22 ministry year).
- 4 Teen Grief Kits and 5 Children's Grief Kits have been distributed.
- 2 Grieving Hearts Peer Support Groups were held and work has begun. The peer support grief group for families (parents, teens and children) is still in the works.
- Christmas is the Worst had 2 attendees and 15 additional bereaved individuals received support materials.
- We provided funeral reception support for 2 families.
- Celebrate Recovery is still operating
- Benevolent Food Cupboard was paused during COVID and we are praying and thinking about its return. (This is a small pantry of food purchased when items are on sale to meet crisis needs when the foodbank is not open.)
- Connections with individuals and community agencies are increasing again after another COVID decline.
- We continued to support After the Bell School program with food donations.

Goals & Plans

- Increased connections with community agencies and schools
- Finish Preparing the Family Grief Group Materials and Training Facilitators for Grieving Hearts Peer Support Groups
- Expand the reach of Children & Teen Grief Toolkits to Cumberland County Schools

Prayer Requests

- Celebrate Recovery: Increased awareness, changed lives and training new leaders
- Bereavement – Family Support Group & Selection and training of facilitators for all groups.
- What God wants us to do next!

God has used the care team in incredible ways to meet physical, emotional and spiritual needs. COVID-19 kept us on our toes with constant change. But God gave the team courage and creativity as they continued to deliver care and support to our AWC family, the people of Amherst and Cumberland County. Thank you for serving others, even when it was hard. You displayed the deep love of God in such practical and beautiful ways! Thank you for the privilege of serving with you and I am excited to see what God asks us to do next!

- Sheryl York



2022 Annual Report

18 May 2022

OUTREACH

Outreach exist to provide opportunities for the Gospel to be shared with people who are lost and do not yet know Jesus.

Accomplishments

- We supported the largest number of families yet during The Christmas Wrap Up (4 families)
- We blessed our First Responders with a small baked gift in days leading up to the Holidays
- We hosted 2 successful Coffee Houses
- We launched our first Board Game Night
- Our team grew
- Members are using our bi-monthly events to invite their friends and family
- By hosting Bi-monthly events we have generated a lot of excitement and anticipation for future events
- Partnered with Kid Min. for Trunk or Treat and saw our largest turnout to date

Challenges

- Navigating COVID-19 restrictions and vaccine passports
- Canceling scheduled events due to shutdowns

Goals & Plans

- Host one bigger event a month
- Continue bi-monthly Coffee Houses and Board Game Nights
- Offer at least 2 new unique events (September Road Rally, Ladies/Men's events)
- Increase the number of families supported by The Christmas Wrap Up
- Present more opportunities to bless our community during The Christmas Wrap Up

I have truly been blessed to lead and serve with a wonderful team (Diana Lawless, Dylan Corkum, Laura Paugh and Paul Theriault). I thank each of you, for your obedience and having the heart to serve. AWC'S Outreach Team is excited to see where The Lord will lead our Outreach Ministry in 2022-2023 and looking forward to seeing how we can be apart of it.

- Erin Richards



2022 Annual Report

18 May 2022

SENIOR MINISTRY

We at the Senior Ministry do senior lunch, senior games and a Guest Speaker once a month for each one.

Accomplishments

- We had 21 people in November for our lunch, December was 29 people, March was 35 people and April was 39 people at our senior lunch.
- We have people that were coming to our church 4 years ago and stop coming but now they are coming back to the lunch.
- Our First games afternoon was March 21 and we had 6 people.

Plans & Goals

- For the new year 2022-2023 we are planning to start to have a guest speaker to talk with the senior about Dementia, Red Cross, Phone Scams etc.

- Sharon Taylor

WORSHIP TEAM

The worship team exists to make people aware of God's presence, and to direct their focus and adoration to Him through song, scripture and prayer.

Accomplishments

- Several members stepping up into roles with more input and responsibility
- Volunteer engagement has stayed strong
- Leaders are being challenged and personal growth is happening!

Challenges

- Pandemic restraints
- New leadership learning curve
- Some volunteers have moved away, still looking to fill those positions

Goals & Plans

- A time to celebrate as a team (pizza party perhaps)
- A time to reflect on this past year with the team
- Fix (or replace) the piano
- Come up with a solution to the drum kit volume
- Storage unit below projector screen?
- Recruit 2 tech volunteers

The frustration as a leader trying to navigate the many restrictions, unpredictability, and changes this past year was overshadowed by the resilience of our team. Their ability to roll with things was remarkable. This year brought a change in leadership. The addition of Pastor Brad coming in with worship leading and department head experience was a major asset as he mentored myself, to become a worship leader and the worship department head as of January 1st 2022. A large focus has been on growing our leaders' confidence, and also mentoring up and coming leaders. This will continue as we are seeing great promise! This coming year I would like to focus on fellowship with the team, to find ways to establish or strengthen our relationships with one another to build solid unity. The use of scripture will become a more consistent practice along with our song service as a means to draw people nearer to God and His Word. I would like to thank the entire team and their families for their sacrifice, willingness to serve, and their desire to not only worship God, but the boldness it takes to lead others in worship.

- Kyle Legere



YOUTH

Edge Youth exists to help teens connect honestly with each other and adult volunteers to search boldly the Truth found in Scripture, and to worship fully; leading to spiritual transformation by becoming down to earth teens following Jesus in down to earth ways.

Accomplishments

- Launched new youth ministry (Edge Youth) in Fall 2021
- 7 new teens visited Edge Youth, many still retained
- Baptized one student
- Built healthy relationships with our teens

Challenges

- Inconsistent gatherings due to Covid Restrictions
- Being the "New Guy" and learning to adjust

Goals and Plans

- Increase average attendance to 20 students by June 2023
- 3 Baptisms/New Salvations
- Increase volunteer team to compensate for growing number of teens
- Witness deep spiritual transformation in our teens
- Create Hangout Space in Basement
- Build connections with the community (schools, youth development center, etc.)

When I began my time at AWC as the incoming Assistant Pastor I came with excitement to begin serving as the department head for youth ministry. Our Fall launch was successful and we gained great momentum throughout the Fall. Our teens sacrificed their Halloween evening to collect candy to instead collect non-perishables for our local food bank. That was our last evening together in person until March 2022 as everything was brought to a screeching halt by the reintroduction of restrictions. We maintained things by meeting over zoom during the winter months but lost our momentum and relationships were no longer being fostered as strongly. While I personally wrestled with many mixed emotions during these straining and uncertain months, I thank God for bringing us through and allowing us to begin meeting in person again. We started by first meeting in homes (first at the York's home then my apartment) before returning to the church. I felt this was the best way to repair relationships and reignite the spark that was lost. I look forward to the coming year with greater excitement and hopefulness feeling confident we will have a year free of interference from covid restrictions and that our youth ministry will grow.

- Bradford Jordan



SMALL GROUPS

Small Groups exist to help people connect honestly with God and others.

Accomplishments

- 7 Small Groups met on a regular basis
- Many served as anchor points during the season of lock-downs
- New leaders were recruited, some mid-year
- Groups saw members grow and get better engaged

Challenges

- Not meeting in person limited connections
- POV made things awkward and difficult to navigate how to gather and where
- Lingering stress of the pandemic often sapped people's motivation to dig deep

Goals & Plans

- Have 9 groups meeting on a regular basis
- Have at least half of our Sunday attendance attending a small group
- Better connection and investment in small group leaders

Thank you to all of the small group leaders who served and sacrificed over the past year to navigate the pandemic restrictions, awkwardness, and all the challenges that accompanied POV and restrictions and working to honour the law of the land while also serving everyone. Thank you for being the touch-point that kept many of us grounded and connected. Thank you for serving even when you didn't feel like you have anything left to give.

- Evan Oxner



2022 Annual Report

18 May 2022

MISSIONS

Missions exists to create opportunities to serve and support those who serve humbly around the world.

Missionary Support Commitments:

NUNE PEOPLE - d'Entremont family - \$750

BOSNIA – Moss family - \$750

ALBANIA - Stevens family - \$750

JAPAN - White family - \$750

WORLD HOPE - Various Projects - \$500

YOUTH FOR CHRIST - Gregory family - \$500

KINGSWOOD UNIVERSITY – Haitian Student - \$2000

Accomplishments

- We paid all our mission commitments
- Video updates from our missionaries have been great connection points
- We completed 3 of our 4-year commitment to give \$2000/year for a student from Haiti to attend Kingswood University! And that student just recently went on an international missions trip!

Goals & Plans

- Find a Missions Department Head
- Begin preparations for an international missions trip
- Begin fundraising for a special World Hope project

Now that things are beginning to open up internationally, we can begin dreaming and planning for more in-person global mission involvement. We also hope that we can begin working toward financially supporting various World Hope projects that bring disaster relief and clean water to people around the world. We really need a person to head up this effort though, and who can build a team that develops this ministry further.

- Evan Oxner

Budget 2022-2023

INCOME 21-22				NEEDED INCOME 22-23						
	Regular	\$	153,382.55		Regular	\$	174,146.94			
	Westchester	\$	2,376.00		Westchester	\$	3,000.00			
	Missions Offering	\$	8,473.90		Missions Offering	\$	6,000.00			
	Missions Trip	\$	300.00		Missions Trip	\$	-			
	Building Fund Offering	\$	7,389.00		Building Fund Offering	\$	11,000.00			
	Other Offerings	\$	4,324.00		Other Offerings	\$	2,000.00			
	TOTAL INCOME	\$	176,245.45		TOTAL INCOME	\$	196,146.94			
Administration	EXPENSES	BUDGET 21-22			ACTUAL 21-22		BUDGET 22-23			
	Bank Fees	\$	1,400.00		\$	481.00	\$	500.00		
	Conference/Ministerial	\$	1,000.00		\$	55.35	\$	1,500.00		
	Leadership	\$	1,000.00		\$	828.99	\$	1,000.00		
	Office	\$	2,500.00		\$	2,466.45	\$	2,500.00		
	Tithe.ly Fees	\$	-		\$	1,128.90	\$	1,200.00		
	USF	\$	15,671.00		\$	15,671.00	\$	16,625.00		
	Website	\$	500.00		\$	530.87	\$	320.00		
	WIF Mortgage	\$	7,824.00		\$	9,707.00	\$	7,824.00		
		\$	29,895.00	17%	\$	30,869.56	17%	\$	31,469.00	16%
Buildings	Alarm	\$	855.00		\$	855.18		\$	855.18	
	Electricirty Church bldg	\$	5,500.00		\$	2,942.11		\$	3,500.00	
	Electricirty BRH	\$	-		\$	1,303.26		\$	1,400.00	
	Insurance	\$	5,300.00		\$	5,606.00		\$	5,600.00	
	Lift Service	\$	500.00		\$	1,597.50		\$	500.00	
	Maintenance/Repair	\$	11,600.00		\$	9,683.89		\$	6,000.00	
	Natural Gas	\$	13,000.00		\$	17,138.34		\$	17,000.00	
	Phone & Internet	\$	1,800.00		\$	1,915.69		\$	1,915.00	
	Snow Removal	\$	1,200.00		\$	1,265.00		\$	1,200.00	
	Water/Sewer	\$	700.00		\$	719.85		\$	725.00	
		\$	40,455.00	23%	\$	43,026.82	24%	\$	38,695.18	20%
Ministries	Benevolence	\$	2,000.00		\$	1,289.32		\$	2,000.00	
	Community Care	\$	1,400.00		\$	1,435.43		\$	2,600.00	
	First Impressions	\$	550.00		\$	492.48		\$	500.00	
	Kids Ministry	\$	2,250.00		\$	1,713.14		\$	4,800.00	
	Missions exp	\$	6,000.00		\$	10,520.00		\$	6,000.00	
	Missions Trip		NA		\$	-		\$	-	
	Outreach	\$	1,500.00		\$	31.01		\$	2,500.00	
	Seniors	\$	900.00		\$	711.89		\$	900.00	
	Small Group	\$	100.00		\$	-		\$	100.00	
	Worship Team	\$	650.00		\$	299.24		\$	2,000.00	
	Westchester	\$	6,000.00		\$	857.28		\$	3,000.00	
	Youth	\$	2,250.00		\$	2,298.84		\$	3,000.00	
		\$	23,600.00	13%	\$	19,648.63	11%	\$	27,400.00	14%
	Miscellaneous	\$	2,000.00	1%	\$	2,583.05	1%	\$	2,500.00	1%
Payroll	Pastor	\$	39,003.34		\$	40,452.03		\$	41,741.70	
	Assist. Pastor	\$	16,786.76		\$	17,521.70		\$	21,807.50	
	CPP & EI	\$	3,294.32		\$	4,004.37		\$	4,066.32	
	Ministry Honorarium	\$	2,600.00		\$	2,950.00		\$	5,000.00	
	Blue Cross	\$	8,000.00		\$	7,560.00		\$	8,640.00	
	Pension	\$	6,474.41		\$	6,402.25		\$	6,967.24	
	Janitor	\$	2,600.00		\$	2,450.00		\$	2,860.00	
	Youth Director	\$	1,248.00		\$	2,496.00			NA	
		\$	80,006.83	45%	\$	83,836.35	47%	\$	91,082.76	48%
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$	175,956.83	100%	\$	179,964.41	100%	\$	191,146.94	100%
		01-May-21	30-Apr-22							
		Opening	Closing			Break down				
	Regular	\$	20,412.63	\$	13,729.50	►	Savings	\$	4,201.33	
							Operating acct	\$	9,528.17	
	Missions	\$	5,711.23	\$	6,384.41	►	Benevolence	\$	2,488.76	
	Building Fund	\$	571.86	\$	4,410.68		Missions	\$	-	
	TOTAL	\$	26,695.72	\$	24,524.59		Missions Trips	\$	3,895.65	

Pastor's Report

Rev. Evan Oxner

Year Seven

Let me get some of the nasty stuff out of the way right at the start. The ongoing pandemic, restrictions, division, fear and proof of vaccination policy really were terrible. I hated the idea of turning people away. I sat in Sheryl's office during one service and cried because I knew the rules we needed to follow were going to push some people away. Doing everything we could to accommodate everyone and not jeopardize our doors being open due to fines or massive bad press was incredibly confusing and stressful. It felt like every time we picked up momentum, we got slapped back to a stall. We didn't see a lot of fighting in our church, but the diverse and intense opinions that were fostered through the media and our government always held our unity on the edge of a cliff.

Yet, we survived. We're still here. And I think God has set us up to do incredible things. As hard as the pandemic has been, it actually feels like we weren't trying to push a rock up a hill, we were trying to get it over the crest of the hill. Momentum wants to happen. The pandemic just kept us from going over that crest. I think right now it might actually be harder to stop what God is doing here than to get it going again!

What do I mean by all that? Our expenses were higher than expected, and higher than our income last year, but we brought in more than we expected too. We took a step of faith and hired Pastor Brad full-time, during the pandemic, and God provided! We needed to do renovations to their apartment, and the costs were covered. We thought we needed to replace the roof this year, and it looks like we actually have 4-5 years to save up for that. Our mortgage is barely over \$50 000 now. Brad is building the youth ministry almost from the ground up, Sheryl is actively training more leaders and Stephen Ministers, and our attendance lately has been very close to what it was pre-pandemic.

We recruited a group of mentors and apprentices to see at least 20 people grow in their leadership capacity, confidence and skills, and they are blowing me away. My men's small group, even though they complained constantly about the idea of it, each developed their own lesson and led that lesson during our small group time. AND THESE GUYS DID MASSIVELY INCREDIBLE JOBS! Every one of them nailed it! Pastor Linda had to step back from leading small group, so Linda Borne took over, and I have seen God stir inside her a confidence I have never seen in her before! Our ministry department leaders are blowing me away too!

Our ministry leaders are getting better and better and better at recruiting, investing, casting vision, delegating, putting on effective and creative ministries and the synergy between them in our meetings is electric! To sit in the room with all of our ministry leaders you can immediately sense their unity, focus, and drive to advance the kingdom of God. This is a unity and energy I have been dreaming about for the past 7 years!

In March I was asked if I would leave AWC to pastor a different church. Obviously, I decided to stay here. Heidi and I made that decision because we didn't feel we were done here, there is something more to do. For 7 years we have worked to develop leaders and to get ministry into your hands. We have worked to create purpose and alignment around why we exist. We have worked to create a reputation as a place people can come and feel like they belong. We have made great progress with these things, but there is something more we need to face.

For 7 years we have felt a deep spiritual opposition to the work that is happening here. God has obviously blessed and confirmed the direction this church is taking, but the enemy is fighting hard to keep this town and this community in his control. I believe we need to break through that wall. We need to tear down the wall the enemy has built and has been guarding so fiercely. We need to reach the people who are lost here.

I need to step up my game, I need to become a better pastor, a better leader, a better speaker, a better dad, a better husband, a better man. We as a church need to step up our game, and we need to be pushed. We have done the bulk of the work needed to get us to the place of health, but now it is time to push ourselves to be athletes that win the race.

There is a passage in Jeremiah chapter 12 where God speaks to the prophet after he has just complained to God about something. God's response to Jeremiah is basically, "how do you expect to race against horses when you can't even keep up with other men?" Paul echoes a similar challenge in 1 Corinthians 9. We are in a race. We are in a war. It is a war for the souls of our families, our neighbours, our community. We're not going to win it haphazardly. We're not going to win it by accident. We're not going to win by holding onto sin, our comfort, or our fears. God has what we need to get better and better. He wants to give it to us, to change us, to fill us with His purpose, His power, His authority, His claim to this area. But it means giving up our way for His, our dreams for His, our ideas for His.

Our budget is big. The number of lost souls in our area of mission is massive. The stronghold of the enemy on this area through pride, drugs, sexual promiscuity, desperation, confusion and greed is like iron. We need to run faster, fight harder, last longer, and dig deeper to race against these horses. Giving, serving, sacrificing, confessing, submitting, repenting, praying, and being boldly obedient without hesitation. It's through the power and victory of Jesus that we will win this, if we are willing to follow Him there.

Be down-to-earth people and follow Jesus in down-to-earth ways.

Search Boldly, Connect Honestly, Serve Humbly and Worship Fully.

Let's get to it.

Evan Oxner - Lead Pastor