

Testimonies

March, 2020

See what great love
the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called
children of God!
And that is what we are!

1 John 3:1a

Membership

The First Baptist Church of Vancouver



Testimony - Fabiano Ferreira

My name is Fabiano Ferreira, I am 36 years old and I am from Brazil. My family (wife and daughter) and I arrived in Canada in September 2019.

My mother used to take me to the church when I was a child, which is where I learned about Jesus but I had never been committed to Him. When I became 18 years old, I went to England to live with my aunty. Unfortunately, over there, I started using drugs. After almost four years living in England, I came back to Brazil and met my wife Caroline. I noticed that there was something different on her. The Holy Spirit was with her and because of her and my mother's prayers, I stopped using drugs. Even though we were not in the presence of God, because of our mother prayers, we realized that He was taking care of us.

After some time, we both felt that was the time to look for a church. We went to the Baptist church in Brazil, where I accepted Jesus and got baptized. There we have served for 11 years in different areas. With a group of members from the church, we created a social project for the children in the community. Through sport (soccer, jiu-jitsu, ballet, and theater), we taught children and parents about Jesus. In March this project will celebrate its 5th anniversary.

Before coming to Canada, we prayed and asked Jesus for directions where He would like us to serve Him. FBC was the first church that we visited and here we are learning a lot about Jesus. We are happy to be here and this is the place where we want our daughter to be raised.

We believe that God is the beginning and the end, that Jesus is our saviour, who sacrificed Himself to pay for our sins. We want our daughter to learn, love and live on Jesus' path.

Testimony - Caroline Ferreira

My name is Caroline Ferreira, I'm 33 years old and I'm from Brazil, I arrived in Canada with my husband and daughter in September 2019.

I was born into a Christian family. My father was a pastor and my mother is a missionary. I met Jesus through them, but unfortunately, my father left the presence of God. He separated from my mother when I was 7 years old and he had a very complicated life. He passed away in 2017. He was hospitalized for a while and I hope he was reconciled to God there.

My mother is my inspiration, even with all the difficulties and bad moments, she never abandoned God. She remained steadfast, praising His Name and serving him all the time. She showed me that loving God is not dependent on the situation, whether in good times or bad. He never forsakes us and remains faithful to us.

I was baptized when I was 11 years old, I knew it was the right time and I never regretted it.

I left the church in my adolescence. I lost hope in God due to so many things that I had been through, but God is wonderful that He always took care of me. He didn't allow me to sink into the wrong things, his Holy Spirit would always bother me about it.

My mother-in-law is also a Christian, and because of her and my mother's prayers, my husband and I went back to God. We went to the Baptist church in Brazil, where we served for 11 years. There, my husband accepted Jesus and I reconciled with Him. We participated in many areas there, and our last activity before coming to Canada was a project that together with other members of the church we created for needy children in the community. With classes in Jiu-Jitsu, Football, Ballet, and theatre, we taught about the love of God and helped the children and their families. This year the social project will complete its 5th anniversary.

In my life trajectory, I was left with many marks, sadness, and hopelessness, I had panic syndrome and a slight depression. I

always asked God for help, to heal me and to help me. I felt alone, without strength, a personal struggle internally. In July 2018 God healed me, set me free and showed me that He was listening to me and that I was not alone.

This is a bit of my life story and I believe that without God, we are nothing. He is so good that He sent his son to die on a cross and give us eternal life.

Before coming to Canada, we prayed and asked God for direction, a church where people really worshiped Him in spirit and in truth; a place where my husband, my daughter and I could serve together; and here is where we believe that God wants us to be.

God is good all the time!!!

Testimony - Sung Wong

I was born into a Christian household that had been Christian for several generations. At some point, I realized that to be a true Christian was more than just going to church every Sunday, though that was very important too. When I was about 16, an elderly sister came from the church that I was attending at the time, and fellowshiped with me as to the true meaning of being a Christian. She led me into prayer in which I welcomed Jesus into my heart as my personal Saviour. It was during this period that I was baptized. Even though at the time I did not know precisely what was meant by Jesus coming into my heart, but by the mercy of my God, it was the beginning of a wonderful and unforgettable spiritual journey that I would not trade for anybody else's. During these decades, God has led me slowly and gradually, but surely into a personal relationship with Christ my Lord.

It was during this long progress of time that I learned of God's love for humanity, His sacrifice and Salvation for all of mankind and His eternal Will concerning His ultimate Plan to be united with His Elect. He caused me to see that despite our outward material, worldly and even family successes, all of it was meaningless without the presence and validation of Jesus in our lives. Each reborn member was to be built up into His Church and Body, to be His

living testimony while here on Earth, and to become His corporate Bride in the world to come, to be eternally with Him. This is the purpose of our existence.

Testimony - Margaret Wong

I started to know Jesus when I was 8 years old, in a small village of Sarawak, Malaysia. A female Chinese school teacher gathered all the little kids at her house every Sunday afternoon. I always loved to hear Bible stories, to sing children songs and to pray to Jesus. These were the sweetest memories of my childhood.

When I was 12 years old, I left my parents and village and stayed at a school boarding house in town. That same year, I was baptized into The Body of Christ. From that time on, I promised myself that I would keep the Lord's Table. During the last 40 years, I have continued to pursue Him, know Him and gain Him more each day.

As I have kept Christ as my central vision, my spirit, soul and body loves this precious Person in me. Peace and joy surround me everywhere, in all kinds of situations. Because I have seen His preciousness, His worth and His reality in my family members and myself, now I must confess that my heart wants to find a place to serve Jesus Christ in this beautiful city and neighbourhood.

May glory be to our Lord and Abba Father!

Testimony - Samuel Wong

I had the opportunity of being born into a Christian household, one where my parents were devout Christians and encouraged me to actively be a part of the church. Due to this, I always took my faith in God as granted or just an accepted way of life since I had always been a "Christian."

It wasn't until I was travelling on my own and came to the Lord on my own accord, did I fully begin to appreciate what believing in God and accepting Christ as our saviour really meant. Along my solo journey across Asia, I encountered many difficult challenges and tribulations. However, I always seemed to have a second family

there to catch me when I fell. And that second family was the Church and the fellow Christians that supported me through my journey, took me into their homes and offered me prayers and encouragement to continue.

I decided to commit my life to Jesus because there is a deep longing inside the spirits of all people to be a part of something greater than themselves and this longing is a person's desire to find Jesus. Faith in Jesus provides Christians with a unique sense of being fulfilled and a community that loves and cares for them as family. I take Jesus to be my Lord and saviour.

Testimony - Melea Burns

"...there are only two lasting bequests
we can hope to give our children.
One of these... is roots, the other, wings."
- Hodding Carter

I have the privilege and responsibility of being born into a Christian home. Privilege because belief in Jesus came quite without question for me as a four-year-old, at which time I asked Jesus to live in my heart and save me from my sins (because I really wanted to go to heaven). Responsibility because what came without question as a four-year-old did not remain without question as I grew up and found out that living for Jesus is not just waiting for heaven, but being a living sacrifice (Rm. 12:1).

When in my late teen years, I had the opportunity to be a camp counsellor I grew in my relationship with Jesus and desired to live my whole life for the Lord; nevertheless, five years later in a secular university I found myself unsure how to maintain a Christian faith in the midst of the pluralistic worldview being taught to me. I became uncertain if living for Jesus would really be of benefit to me and embraced a more unencumbered (I thought) lifestyle. For approximately 12 years the church and Jesus had little to do with my life as an RN, spouse, and mother to three kids.

When life as a mom and spouse became increasingly complex I realized that my "escape from the confines" of Christianity had

negative side effects, such as the loss of a community in which to raise my children and a loss of meaning through which to sustain hope. I experienced some personal challenges within my family and within my marriage and began to look back to the support of a church community in about 2014. Since that time, I've also been able to be involved at Regent College, through some courses and a job (for two years) which gave me a place to be making my faith, no longer just the faith of my parents, but my own.

I have been learning to pay attention to the questions; that my asking questions does not make my faith weaker rather it makes my faith, by grace, to grow into all that God intends for who he is molding me to become.

I was baptized in my little Community Church as a 16-year-old, but had a re-affirmation of my baptism in the Jordan River in Israel in the fall of 2018.

I am seeking church membership as a way to:

Obey Christ's calling,

To keep my roots in a sure and steady place (Jer. 17:8),

To seek the "wings like eagles" that Jesus would have for me as I follow wherever He leads (Is. 40:31).

Testimony - Fay Duong

Some would say that my spiritual journey is an easy one. Growing up in the Philippines where 80-90% of the population is Christian/Catholic, there was never really a question of whether religion or faith was part of my life. My siblings and I attended a Christian school and attending chapel and church was a weekly routine. I was baptized at Union Church when I was 16 and never questioned God or what He meant to me. It was always just an accepted fact, but my relationship with Him wasn't exactly a deep one.

When I moved to Vancouver, First Baptist Church became my new home church and has always been a constant presence in my adult life here in Canada. I started attending when I was 17, serving in the childhood ministry with Pastor Jo-Anne Matiachuk. This church has been instrumental in developing me to be the person I am today.

While in University, met my husband Trung and my faith was challenged as I tried to bring him into Christianity. After some time of being unsuccessful in converting him, God spoke to me through my mother (as well as Trung himself) reminding me that it's not through MY work but through HIS that Trung can come to faith. I let go of that control and watched God do His work in Trung's life. It was through Trung that I came to understand how my own spiritual journey, while easy, was lacking. Through Trung's growth and love for Christ, I understood the spiritual awakening that occurs when a mature individual finds the love and grace that only Jesus can provide. I started to reflect on my own faith and worked on deepening my relationship with Christ.

As a young married couple, we benefitted from the influence and guidance on some key people at FBC: Ben and Almira Chow, Josh and Charity Hayashi, Peter and Teresa Findlay, Kurtis and Katie Findlay, and Darrell and Sharon Johnson. I know that Jesus has been in my life all along, but now I understand how much He has carried me through and held my hand throughout all the highs and lows of my life. Becoming a member at FBC is my public proclamation that I am part of His body; that my life is His and He is my head. Two verses that speak to me today:

1 Corinthians 12:12 | For just as the body is one and has many members, all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Acts 20:28 | Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Testimony - Noelle Wang

My earliest memories of church involved wearing uncomfortable “itchy” dresses, fancy shoes, and multicoloured plastic cups filled with juice in Sunday school. We were born and raised in a Christian home, went to an Evangelical school, and attended church regularly, so I never really knew anything different. When I look back on it now, I realize that there really wasn’t much depth in my faith early on, and God was just someone you prayed to because that’s what you were taught.

Around my senior year of high school, I joined the worship team from our school church. It was around this time that I started to see how faith played a role in people’s lives. We were raised to keep things in our lives fairly private, so I never really shared much about my struggles or fears or worries. After worship practice we would pray for each other and that’s when I got to see how much people trusted God, how He was moving in their lives, and how I could also trust in Him. I knew then that I wanted to live a life serving God but I didn’t know how.

When I moved to Vancouver for university, my sister Fay was already attending First Baptist, volunteering with the Children’s ministry program, so being the little sister, I jumped in and did the same (we’re also becoming members together, which is awesome!). Serving with the Children, Preteens, and Family ministries has been one of the most rewarding things I’ve done. The kids and their families have blessed me and have touched my life way more than I could ever hope to impact theirs.

One of the people who always inspired me was Bob Swann. Hearing about his work with shelter, his time in Kenya, and seeing how much he cared for this broken world around us - it always resonated with me. In 2009, I finally got the opportunity to go to Kenya with Bob and a team of volunteers from FBC. I was determined to save up and make it on my own, without “bothering” others by fundraising. Of course, my pride was broken down when one of the Sunday school kids - Claire Bosma, started fundraising on her own so she could support me in this trip. Not only was I

humbled and deeply moved by her actions, but I realized that God doesn't want us to journey alone, and we are not only called to give help, but also to receive it.

I was riding pretty high spiritually, but my personal life was a mess. A series of poor choices found me in an abusive relationship that changed me as a person. I often found myself thinking "Is this really what God wants for me?" I knew the answer was no and yet I could never find the courage to change because I was afraid. It took me 4.5 years to break out of that relationship. I know I would never have survived without the support and prayer of my family and friends, but most importantly, God was with me the entire time, I just had to trust Him.

Through all of life's peaks and valleys, God's has been working tirelessly behind the scenes. He has blessed me deeply with so much; my hope is that in turn, I might be able to bless those around me with even a fraction of what I've been given.

Testimony - Mia Kyriacou

My name is Mia Kyriacou, I am 16 years old and my parents are Lisa and Panos Kyriacou. I have grown up in this church as my mom has been attending since the 1980's and my dad since 1998. Being at First Baptist has been a huge part of my life and I have developed so many relationships here including friends, mentors and God.

I have previously been baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church when I was less than a year old as my dad's side of the family is Greek Orthodox. As I got older, my relationship has grown with God and with that I wanted to make my own decision to get baptized. After returning from the Youth mission's trip to Mexico last March, it was apparent to me that this was the next step in my faith. I have always been someone who self-doubts and has a hard time making long term decisions, but I came home and without hesitation I knew this was what was right for me.

Being in this church for my whole life and growing up with some of the youth and their families has had a huge impact on my life. They have really shown me the extraordinary things God does in our

lives and I don't know what I would do without their constant support and teachings. We have been able to grow in our faith together and share the incredible experiences God has given us in our lives. The way that I view my faith has very much been shaped through them as well as the community at FBC and all the people in the children and youth ministry.

In the past several months my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer, which she has now successfully overcome. I cannot even begin to describe how much FBC and God has helped myself and my family on this very difficult journey. Everyone experiences trials in life, and we knew that God had a plan for us and would help us see the other side of the dark tunnel. Knowing that I had a large support system around me always made it easier for us and I felt that after stepping into the fresh air now, I am ready to devote my life to God. To quote the mission's trip, God has truly shown me what "love is..."

Testimony - Alessandra Reddekopp

I was born on the 24th of November 2002 to my two wonderful parents in the Women's Hospital of Vancouver. I was the first-born child of my family, so my parents went to every measure to give me the most enjoyable and memorable childhood they could. I pursued an active and involved childhood life filled with violin classes, skating practices, Sunday school, Chinese lessons and after-school playdates. I am extremely blessed to have gotten these opportunities as every experience that I've overcome, every extra-curricular activity I've delved into and every person I've encountered have built me into the person I am today.

Although I have always attended Sunday school and grew up in a nurturing and loving Christian household, I had always found it hard to find my place in the church. Growing up, I didn't see myself as part of the church; I didn't believe that I could have an active role simply because I was not old enough. It wasn't until I was invited to play the violin with the Kids Prayer and Praise group that I believed that I had started developing my connection with the church and a way to serve the Lord. It hadn't hit me that God had

given me such a precious gift with my music and that I could use it to honor him, among many other ways. I continued to serve not only with the children's worship, but also with the worship team for the congregation and was truly happy that I had found a place in the church.

As I continued to discover what I could do in the church, I began to expand my horizon. I started to volunteer with the VBS camps during the summer, volunteering and in 2019, I was even given the opportunity to go on the mission trip to Ensenada. Over the first few days of the trip, my heart was so full. Surrounded by the amazing leaders and members of the youth group, my sense of family in the church and my faith grew. I truly witnessed the love of God on this trip. Whether it was meeting the family for whom we were building the house, playing with the kids of the community, enduring the sickness and trouble during the building process, spending the nights inside the dorms with my close friends or simply handing over the keys to the house to the family, God had lead me through all of it.

Throughout my life, although I am still young, I have received so many blessings from the Lord. Now, I have the amazing ability to share this love to others through the Preteens Group, a group of kids whom I love so dearly. My family, friends and leaders continue to inspire me to grow in my faith with the Lord, my friend and my Saviour.

Membership Welcome Liturgy

Having witnessed *Mia and Alessandra's* profession of faith in baptism, we now have the opportunity to welcome them, together with *Fabiano, Caroline, Sung, Margaret, Samuel, Melea, Fay and Noelle* into membership.

Together we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. As new members of this church do you promise to share your life and your journey of faith with these people in this place?

We do.

We are the body of Christ, and the Spirit shares the gifts of grace for service and witness. Will you use your gifts and talents to serve God and to further the witness of Jesus Christ as members of this church?

With God's help, we will.

Will you, as a church family, promise to share your lives and journey of faith with them walking together in ways that are known and yet to be made known?

We will.

Will you pray for them and do all you can to help them bear witness to Jesus Christ?

We will.

**In our life together we celebrate
the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.**

We welcome you among us as members of First Baptist Church Vancouver.