

One hundred years ago a handful of Christians in Edmonton seeking a first century New Testament experience gathered in a first century context.

In 1917, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Taylor invited interested friends to their home (11816 79<sup>th</sup> Street, Edmonton) to pray for revival. The Taylors had been a part of the Methodist Church and were looking to experience more of God. A nucleus of six couples expectantly gathered to discover what God would say to them about the infilling of the Holy Spirit – an experience that was anything but favored by Methodists and mainline churches.

“Be filled with the Holy Spirit” was the rallying cry for the fledgling Pentecostal movement birthed in 1906 at Azusa Street, Los Angeles, borne to Eastern Canada and now blazing its way west through the prairies.

Each one in this faithful band of seekers experienced the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. They asked Rev. John McAlister, a member of the group, to be their pastor. Soon they outgrew the house.

An interesting decision in 1919, saw Rev. Hugh Cadwalder, a Texan holding “tent meetings” in Red Deer invited to be the next pastor of the church. From April 1<sup>st</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup> 1922 “revival services” were held at the Empire Theatre attracting sizeable crowds and resulting in miraculous healings, conversions and water baptisms.

Dr. Charles Price’s “healing services” in the Edmonton Arena in 1925, drew huge crowds and saw notable miracles. People would arrive by streetcar with a lunch and leave late into the night singing hymns on the way home. John McLeod, for example, was healed and converted. His daughter Sadie became an influential missionary to Hong Kong initiating innovative outreaches to children through rooftop Sunday Schools.

Between 1917 and 1932, Bethel Pentecostal Assembly, as it was known, was led by seven different pastors and worshipped in five different locations. They met in the Powell Block on 95<sup>th</sup> Street and 114 Avenue; in the Holiness Church at 93<sup>rd</sup> Street and 114 Avenue; in McDougal Court across from the MacDonald Hotel and above the Army/Navy store on 101<sup>st</sup> Street.

In the late 1920’s and early 30’s young volunteers from Bethel started up a Sunday School near Jasper Place. In 1941 Sadie McLeod gave leadership to what would become the West End Mission in 1942 and now, Gospel Centre. Compassion and grace was the hallmark of ministry. Jeannie Boyle started a prison ministry in 1933 that carried on for fifty years. In 1964, Edmonton Police Chief Robert Lunney praised Mrs Boyle in stating, “She has inspired respect from the officers in charge at the city cells and the men inside the cells.”

In 1932 the faith-filled congregation launched a building program. Property was purchased on 108<sup>th</sup> Street for \$5,000. The building permit was the largest issued for that Depression Era year. Volunteers led by John McLeod dug the basement using simple

equipment and borrowed horses. The doors of the new facility, now named Edmonton Pentecostal Tabernacle, opened in 1933 with the internationally acclaimed Rev. Donald Gee from Scotland as the dedication speaker. Out-of-town guests pitched tents outside the facility to be near for the dedication. A summer Daily Vacation Bible School was launched to accompany the year round ministry of the Sunday School. The first youth group formed in 1929. The congregation rapidly filled up with young families.

Our church has a long history of a vibrant music ministry. In 1930 Maidie Shedden started the first all-female choir at Bethel. Musicians from Bethel were kept busy during the summer at various “tent meetings.” In 1933 a weekly program called “The Evening Evangels” was launched on CJCA radio.

Rev. Tom Johnstone, Rev. A. Mallory and Rev. Willard Pierce served as pastors at “The Tabernacle” during the war years of 1940-45. Many young men and women served in the Canadian forces and some made the ultimate sacrifice. William “Bill” Mack enlisted in the Infantry and saw action in Holland. At the end of the war Bill returned to Edmonton, married his sweetheart, Jeanne and went on to serve as an MLA for Edmonton, a Board member and elder until his passing in 2009. His son-in-law served as a Board member during Relocation and his grandson presently serves on the Board.

In 1945 D.N. Buntain became the senior pastor. His conviction was “God will look after any church that puts Missions first. The supreme task of the Church is the evangelization of the World.” In 1950 an addition was required by the church, bringing seating capacity to 750. Canadian Northwest Bible Institute was started by Pastor Buntain in 1946 with an initial class of fifty devoted students – including Robert Taitinger – who served on the pastoral staff and became the senior pastor in 1955 when DN Buntain passed away.

In 1956, Sunday afternoon services were held in the Club Mocombo in St Albert by Pastor Taitinger giving rise to the Elim Pentecostal Chapel – now Cornerstone Church. In 1963 the Opheim family from Central approached Pastor Taitinger about starting a church in south Edmonton. The Board blessed them with their approval and \$1,000 to get started on what became Highway Christian Centre.

Under Pastor Taitinger’s leadership the growing church was renamed “Edmonton Central Pentecostal Tabernacle” – affectionately know as “Central” – and in 1963 the congregation purchased property on 116 Street and 107 Avenue for \$70,000. The “Square Building,” seating 1,000 people and designed by Ernest Hemingway was dedicated on October 4, 1964. In 1968 Pastor Taitinger was elected General Superintendent – the sixth of Central’s pastors to fill this illustrious role - after a total of twenty-two years of ministry at Central. Rev. George Smith, a previous associate of Pastor Taitinger, accepted the congregation’s invitation to be their next Pastor.

The 60’s and 70’s were a time of entrepreneurial expansion. Birch Bay Ranch – a camping ministry was started near Sherwood Park. Central Village, which provided housing for Seniors was opened across the street from Central. A radio program and a television program, “60 Minutes With Central” was produced in-house and aired weekly

on CFRN. In 1967, “Wee College,” a bible-based ministry that teaches pre-schoolers the fundamentals of the faith gained national recognition and is still used by Canadian churches fifty years later. The “Sub-Arctic Mission Association” was founded by Rev. Ken Gaetz, from Central, in Hay River, NWT in 1953. Gaetz started a nursing station that in 1965 became the H.H. Williams Memorial Hospital, providing the only medical care available in the area.

The ministry of music continued to expand through groups like The Harvestime Trio, The Ambassadors, The Advocates Quartet and the Kingsmen who made an impression across Western Canada. In 1967, “The Singing Christmas Tree” featuring real spruce branches and lighted candles had its debut. Hundreds of thousands of people, including guests from around the world have attended “The Tree” over its fifty year history. Today, under the leadership of John Cameron, a former music director at Central, the Tree is hosted at the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium and known as Canada’s favorite Christmas celebration. In 1979 Central’s “Festival Choir” was invited to sing at the World Pentecostal Congress in Vancouver. Youth and Children’s choirs, including a Cheurb Choir and The King’s Kids involved singers of every age from four to eighty-four.

The growing congregation under Pastor Smith acquired additional property for expansion. In 1972 the “Pyramid” building, seating 1800 and designed for the Singing Christmas Tree was completed. In 1974 a church plant in Sherwood Park – now “The Park” - got on its feet with the help of dedicated families from Central living in Sherwood Park.

In 1978 Rev. Smith moved to Washington state and was followed by Rev. James MacKnight who served as senior pastor from 1978 to 1982 when he was elected as General Superintendent of the PAOC. (Six of the senior pastors from Central were elected as General Superintendent of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.) Rev. Bob Johnson arrived in 1982 and his passion for reaching out led the congregation into hosting two Sunday morning services in 1984. Attendance peaked at an average of 1249 in 1985, making Central the largest PAOC church in Canada.

For seven decades the Lord used both men and women to make Central a strong and active part of His Kingdom. In 1988 the congregation experienced internal conflict and a catastrophic split, starting a decline that lasted nearly fifteen years.

Rev. Johnson was followed by Rev. Gordon Upton in 1988, Rev. Bruce Fisher in 1990 and Rev. Bob Jones - who served as a staff pastor from 1990 until 1994 - when he was elected senior pastor.

By 1999 the congregation was facing a watershed moment. Edmonton was changing. Central’s suburban-based families were being attracted to newly built churches in their neighbourhoods. Would Central change as well? In May of 2000 the congregation took a leap of faith by deciding to relocate from downtown to the least churched area on the frontier of Edmonton. Thirty-eight acres of property near the Anthony Henday ring road were purchased for \$1.3 million in April 2003. In May 2006, Central was renamed

“North Pointe Community Church” and opened its doors on 167 Avenue and 142 Street on Sunday July 16, 2006.

In 2017 the ministry now offers three morning services and an onsite south campus. The church family of over thirty-three hundred people represent eighty-five nationalities. North Pointe is known as “the come as you are church” on 167 Ave. where people are real, relationships are valued, faith is authentic and purpose can be discovered. Our family friendly community Carnivals, multi-generational ethos, Bible-based communication, Spirit-filled leadership and family support ministries have built a respected reputation in Edmonton, St Albert and the nearby regions.

Our passion over one hundred years has been seeing a personal relationship with Jesus grow in everyone, everyday. David Wells, present Superintendent of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, was an unchurched, “red-headed kid” of eight years when he was first sent on a bus to a branch Sunday School of Central in 1963. He accepted Jesus into his life. His parents decided to stop sending him and started going with him to Central and following Jesus. The rest is history. Our history.

We are one hundred years young and growing stronger. Our best days are ahead of us.

To God be the glory.