



## New Member Candidate Testimonies

The following 11 people are candidates for Membership here at Forward Baptist Church. The vote to affirm them as members will be held during the budget meeting on December 5 at 9:30 am. Please prayerfully read their testimonies as you prepare for the meeting.



### Felix Chau

While I was raised by non-devout Buddhist parents, as a youth I was very prideful, Atheist and had difficulty controlling my anger.

When I was in Grade 12, my friend Gina invited a few friends and I to a Praise and Worship night at her church; I only agreed to go because I had a crush on her. At the end of the service, the Pastor asked us all to bow our heads, close our eyes and said 'if anyone does not currently know Jesus Christ as their Saviour but is curious to know more, please raise your hand so we can pray for you.' At that time, I felt such a strong, unknown urging to raise my hand that I did it, even though I didn't really connect to the service itself and there was no peer pressure at all since no one could see which individuals had raised their hands.

Fast forward to the end of the high school year, Gina and I started dating and she had tried to share the gospel with me throughout our time in university. I recall reading some Christian material she gave me and there was a section similar to the 'sinner's prayer'. I figured it couldn't hurt to try praying if there really even was a God, and so I prayed that if God was real, that he reveal himself to me.

Not long afterwards, I was coming home from university late at night and was taking an express bus that only stops at the university and the subway station. A man had got on this same bus as me but didn't realize this, so he was trying to get off at a regular bus stop. When the bus driver said no, he became irate and started yelling and cussing at her. She stayed calm throughout the whole bus ride, explaining the situation. Normally, I would have felt so annoyed at this man making a huge scene. Instead, I just saw myself in him: a sinner, with all the anger, swearing and pride. It made me really think about my own self identity and how disgusted I felt about myself. When the bus finally arrived at the station, he swore at her one last time but instead of retaliating, she just calmly spoke into the bus intercom and said "God bless you", so I could hear it too. It became a moment of realization for me that God was real and he set this situation up for me to understand and know him.

From that day on, I was fully convinced God exists and became a Christian by repenting of my sins and trusting fully in him. Because of God's love for us, he sent his son Jesus Christ, who was fully God and fully man, to bear our sins on the cross as a perfect, once-and-for-all sacrifice because without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Jesus was then raised from the grave 3 days later and rose back to heaven. I suddenly had this realization that he had perfectly orchestrated every single moment in my life, good or bad, for his glory. While I recognize I will always sin, I try to live by the Spirit and not the flesh and I see how God is working through me to be a light to others around me. I have turned from my pride and learned to be humble before God and submitting to him, knowing that there is nothing I can do to save myself.



## Gina Marcos

I grew up as an only child in a family where everyone went to church on Sundays. From a young age my parents would include me in devotional time, reading together and praying together before bed. My extended family often met every other week for Bible study as well. Growing up, we went to First Filipino Baptist Church. From the age of 8 I prayed the sinners prayer; I knew that Jesus died for my sins and that "believing" in Him would mean I would go to heaven. I could verbalize this, but I didn't fully understand what it meant until I was a teenager. In my formative years, I went to church twice a week. Friday for youth, and Sunday for church service. Church became a place where I could be with friends who I had known all my life. It was a very social place for me, but not

always a safe one. My friend group was very toxic, and some girls would stop talking to others or purposely exclude others. I did not realize how much this would affect me until our family left the church when I was 17. It felt like a part of my identity was falling apart.

The fall of that year I started university at McMaster. There, my parents encouraged me to join a Christian group on campus and I joined Campus for Christ (renamed P2C). I met other Christian friends and understood the value of discipleship and fellowship with others who didn't have ulterior motives. I realized that until then, I liked being in control of my life and I wasn't allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and transform me. I recommitted my life to Christ and went on to serve in praise and worship as well as going on a missions trip in Peru.

The gospel to me is that Jesus lived a perfect life, one that I never could. While I was dead in my sins, He died to save me. Believing that Jesus is the Son of God and knowing that His sacrifice was made to redeem me, is a constant reminder to live my life in a way that reflects His love for those around me.

I see God's provision in my life always. The past year has been difficult. Leaving a steady job for an uncertain career in occasional teaching was scary. God has blessed me every step of the way, providing me opportunities to work full time. I see His grace and strength in getting through every challenging day. I feel God has called me to teach and care for children. I love teaching, I love praying for my class at the start of the day and just being someone who they can trust and talk to. I feel God is giving me opportunities to care for those who may not be cared for at home.



## Anna Deinum

I grew up coming to church with my family. One of the lessons in Sunday school was on David, Solomon and Saul. David had a full heart for God, Solomon had half a heart for God and Saul had no heart for God. I wanted to have a full heart just like David. I knew that the only way to have a full heart for God was if I accepted him as my Saviour. So that night I accepted Jesus into my heart. I was eleven years old. Over the years I have continued to grow in my faith. Looking back at my baptism now, I realized that my faith was very much fear based. I said the prayer of salvation several times thinking it might not have worked or I might have done something wrong in the process. Now I truly understand what the gospel is. It is not what I have done but what God has done; having Jesus die on

the cross as a perfect sacrifice to take the punishment for the sins that we deserved. Currently I am trying to better understand God. I am encouraged by his patience and daily blessings in my life.



## John Henry

I was born in Toronto in 1945. My parents were not Christians but they were kind and loving parents. My father was a corporation lawyer and I had two older brothers. One night my brother came over to my apartment and told us he was in downtown Toronto and ran into some people on Yonge street and they told him about Jesus. He suggested we go down and see them as they had a coffee house on Queen Street, so one Friday night we went down to see them. It was a large room with music playing and people milling about and they had Bible quotes on the walls. They also had a Daniel chart on the wall showing how the Babylon empire fell to the Medo-Persians and how it then fell to Greece and Greece to Rome. We were witnessed to separately. I was shown from scripture

that all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God and we needed to repent and put our faith and trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross and that it was not of works lest any man should boast. We all separately said the sinners prayer.

The next day my wife and I went out and bought Bibles and started witnessing to our parents and friends and of course they all thought we were crazy. We went back to see the people who had introduced us to Jesus a couple of more times and one of them showed us Acts 2:44-45 "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." (KJV) The Great Commission is to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

They said they had places all over the world and they lived by faith and God provided all their needs. They said the churches had failed to do so. Anyway to make a long story a little shorter we decided to join. My brother joined and they told us if we wanted to join the closest place was Cincinnati as they had a nursery for our 2 small children. We were not rich and had a small two bedroom apartment and we got rid of our stuff and packed some bags and headed down to Cincinnati. Took a cab to the address given us and knocked on the door. We said Toronto sent us and they said come on in. They had a nice big house with a lovely nursery and we were in the group for over four years. During that time our children were always well looked after and properly fed and clothed. Our daily routine was to have prayer time and Bible study and then to go witnessing. The only trouble was it was a cult called "The Children of God."

While we were part of the group, we went back to Toronto and then to Peachland in the Okanagan Valley in BC and then back to Toronto and then to other places in Ontario. We then ended up going to Paris, France and then to Angers and finally to Düsseldorf, Germany. By this time my wife was pregnant with our 5th child. When we realized that the upper leadership of the group began falling into sexual sins and it was trickling down to the grassroots, we decided it was time to leave. My parents sent us airplane tickets to get back home.

I went back to school and became a Structural Steel Draftsman and we started attending Rexdale Alliance Church and I was baptised there. After getting out of the cult I had to rethink everything. I had memorised a lot of verses and would preach to myself every day and read my Bible. When we got a computer the internet was a big help in sorting things out. I was helped a lot by the ministry of John McArthur.

2 Corinthians 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (KJV)

As Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones said, "I am a Christian solely and entirely because of the grace of God and not because of anything that I have thought or said or done. He brought me to know that I was dead, "dead in trespasses and sins," a slave to the world, and the devil, that in me "dwelleth no good thing", and that I was under the wrath of God and heading for eternal punishment. He brought me to see that the real cause of my troubles and ills, and that of all men, was an evil and fallen nature which hated God and loved sin. My trouble was not only that I did things that were wrong, but I myself was wrong at the very centre of my being."





### **Amy Kirk**

I was lead to read the Bible after 20 plus years in the New Age and False religions. I put my faith in Jesus Christ November 13, 2020. The wages of a sinful life is death. Jesus paid the death penalty at the cross. All who believe in him will be saved.



### **Beth Lambert**

I said a prayer asking Jesus to forgive me when I was 3 with my sister. I understood that God was good and Satan was bad. When I was 9-10, I started to question whether my prayer had been sincere and wasn't sure if I was really saved. The first time I became aware of my sin was when I was 11, but because I was a Christian I didn't know what it meant that I still sinned. In my middle school years, I struggled to be as good as I could be. I got baptized at 13 and hoped that would help me be a better Christian. When I was in grade 9, I got tired of failing to be perfect and decided to live one way at school and another at home and church.

I did that on and off for the next few years, not feeling much better about my situation, I wanted to be a good Christian but also wanted to have fun and not worry about what others thought of me. When I was in grade 11, I had to start thinking about university and started questioning the purpose of my life, struggling to see how biology or French classes would mean anything at the end of my life. I talked to a friend about it and they suggested reading Ecclesiastes. I did only to make them stop suggesting it, but was struck by the truth and the openness in the book to question and struggle with life and faith. I realized my life's purpose was to live for myself and for others' approval which fades, but if I live for God, my life will have an eternal purpose. I realized a need to surrender and not depend on my own ability to live up to God's standard.

I continued to struggle with that concept and it wasn't until university that I realized I didn't believe God loved me. I thought it was forced, or reluctant. I had to learn again that my sin and inability to be perfect didn't keep me from experiencing God's true love and grace, he wasn't withholding it from me until I could figure it out. I often try to supplement my inability to not sin with Christian activity, being hyper-involved in things and trying to appear like a good Christian. This is something I continue to work on, letting go of my attempts to earn grace and accept that it has been given to me freely.



### **Victoria Lane**

I grew up in a Christian church/family, and attended a Christian school for elementary and highschool. I was first saved at 10 years old, when Becky Lambert who was my camp counsellor at Beacon Bible Camp shared the gospel with me. I remember looking up to Becky and enjoying the devotions she would lead our cabin in every morning and night. Beacon was a major factor in my faith as I attended as a camper from junior girls (age 9) to alpha (age 21). When I moved to Toronto, I began attending a large non-denominational church where I felt very stuck and that I wasn't growing in my faith, and felt very stagnant. I made some choices throughout my time as a master's student that I struggled with and felt very lost.

I began to read as much as I could about God's sovereignty and what that meant as a Christian. I grew up

going to camp with Anna Deinum and had been to Forward Baptist Church with her a few times, but decided to make the switch from my previous church to attend Forward. I had also known Steve and Becky, as Steve had been the director at Alpha (at Beacon) when I was a camper. To me, the gospel is the good news of Christ. The gospel is a way for us as Christians to be saved from our sin, and to spend eternity with Christ. Currently, I believe that God is working in my life to become involved in a local church within my city, and begin to connect/reconnect with local believers at my church. For me, I am excited to begin to attend Forward and get to know more members of the congregation and eventually find ways to serve my church!



### **Tony Quesada**

Growing up my parents followed Christianity before deciding to adopt Jehovah Witness' beliefs. Naturally, my siblings and I tagged along throughout our childhood. We attended services religiously, and even participated in bigger conference events. That was until my brother and I were in our teenage years and made the decision to part ways, as we felt our core beliefs didn't align with that specific religion. But all this to say, I have always believed in the existence of God. Even through the years of uncertainty, I've always felt His presence working in my life.

Fast forward to my early to mid-twenties, I often felt like I didn't fit into the more liberal and, at times, risqué culture in Costa Rica (where I lived). Then through work, I was able to travel to Canada a few times, where I met Katelyn, who gently and patiently nudged me toward Jesus. In 2018 I attended a few Christian churches, but ultimately chose Forward Baptist Church because of its strong sense of community, the warmth I felt from everyone I'd meet, and the emotional response I experienced during the services. The first couple of times at Forward, Steve spoke about a book: "The Case for Christ"; I was immediately interested and was able to borrow a copy. The spiritual journey that I went through reading this book is what helped lead me to put my faith in Jesus as my Saviour. Through a long and deeply emotional prayer on May 18th, 2020.

The gospel to me is defined as God's work, His grace, and His love for us. The gospel shows us that God is our creator and the creator of all. He made us out of love and kindness, to one day be with Him in total unity. The gospel also tells that we are all sinful people, starting with Adam and Eve being tempted by Satan. And no matter what we do, our sins cannot be undone or taken away. It is only by God's grace and his son, Jesus, through His ultimate and selfless sacrifice, that our sins are paid in full. Therefore, we must confess and repent from our sins every day. We must put our complete trust and faith in Jesus for God's gift to us of forgiveness and eternal life with Him.



### **Cat Ryckman**

I grew up in a non Christian home. My mom was raised Catholic, but we didn't go to mass or church. Faith wasn't really a conversation had in my house.

I put my faith in Christ when I was 7 years old. It was my first time going to overnight camp. Being away from home was amazing (at the time my parents fought a lot at home so the break was nice) I had made some pretty good friends that week (I was a very bullied kid at school so having friends like this meant the world to me.) On Thursday night that week of camp, we were sitting around the campfire and a counsellor went up to the front and shared her testimony with us. I was so moved by what I heard. After she was done another counsellor went up and said that we could "accept Jesus into our hearts" too. So my bunkmate

and I decided that's what we wanted to do. We talked to our cabin leader, she helped us say the prayer. Then she congratulated us on making such a life changing choice. I was then told by making that choice I was now a Christian and a member of God's family. Which meant my bunkmate was now my sister in Christ, that I was

part of a new family and I was soo excited!

Even after making this choice and coming home to tell my family about it, we still didn't go to church on Sundays. I asked my parents to take me but they wouldn't. I joined a kids choir through the Salvation Army 614 branch. I was also part of the squads program. which was a program dedicated to teaching kids about Jesus. By being part of choir I got to go to church when we performed in the service, which meant my parents would come to church to watch. So I got to go a handful of times. When I was 10, I asked my squad leader if I could go to church on my own (it was 2 blocks away from my building). They told me no, that I could only come if my parents brought me. I said I asked them and they said no, so I still couldn't go to church even though I really wanted to. I did have a Bible though and the program I was a part of, so I was still learning about the gospel, just not at church.

When I was in 9th grade, I found adjusting to high school was hard. Near the end of my 9th grade, my best friend at the time, Perrin, invited me to go to his youth group. He told me it was at a church not too far from our high school. So I went with him. When we got there I saw some people from my school that I didn't know were Christians. I enjoyed my time at Pape Youth ( Calvary's youth drop in). In my 11th grade, Audrey, a girl I had met at Pape Youth, transferred to my high school. At the youth retreat that year a huge life change happened. God helped me let go of some of the hurt in my life. I met back with Audrey and the rest of our group. We sat in a circle and prayed for all the things on our hearts. I was moved to tears. I had been carrying the burden for so long. But at this retreat I was able to finally let it go. After the prayer, I felt the weight lifted off of me, I felt free! At that moment, my faith was strong again. I felt the change instantly.

I see God working in my life by the way I feel called to take the next steps in my faith, by giving me the willingness and opportunity to serve and take on new ways to serve. He works in my life through the people around me. He gave me a strong community of young adults and also a new church family who encourage me to step out of my comfort zone, strengthen my faith and help me to be the person that I am.



## **Nathan Sutanto**

I became a Christian as a child. Growing up, my family was Catholic and then converted to christianity when I was 4. I don't know the exact date I became a Christian. I grew in faith during childhood and knew I wanted to get baptized to show my faith. Most people got baptized at 12 but I insisted I wanted to, so they let me get baptized at 11. I got baptized showing my repentance of sins and accepting Christ as my Lord and Saviour. The gospel is that Jesus saved our lives for those who put their faith in him when he died on the cross and rose again. When we accept this forgiveness we can know we will go to heaven someday. Our job is to live a life as He instructs and tell other people about Him. God has done so much in my life. Not only thorough the gospel by which he saved my life from sin, but there are more things that God has been doing in me.

For instance, I went thorough time when my faith was weak. There were some people praying for me when I was living out of bad choices. Praise the Lord that there are always people who pray for me until the miracle happens. Since then I came back to God with all of my heart and my soul and kept searching and waiting for the right community until I met Sandina and came to Forward.

As I am going forward, I want to keep my faith in God, no turning back and keep trying to live a righteous life by the Word of God.





## Ron Wilkie

I always thought that a Christian is somebody that believes that Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead. But it's not just believing with your mind. It's believing with your heart as well - because if you believe with your mind in your heart, the action is going to take place.

I knew that as a kid. I don't know the exact day when I became a Christian or the exact hour or anything. But my mom used to send us to Sunday school when I was a kid. We also went to camp at People's Ranch. It was a Christian camp run by the People's Church. I was the one that always wanted to go. I got caught up in the Bible. I love the Bible.

But when I went to high school I started to walk away from it all because of the people I grew up with who were against it. They didn't believe in the truth of who and what God is. I got into drinking and became an alcoholic. But I don't think I fully walked away, not 100%, because God was taking care of me all that time even though I didn't deserve it. If I was him I would have annihilated me a long time ago but he still was looking after me even though I was doing these despicable things and doing the wrong things and also getting mad at him and pointing the finger towards him. But, it wasn't him. It was me.

For years I would try to come back but then I would take off again. Once when I was living in a shelter, a church sent a bus to come pick us up and take us to get baptized. I got baptized but I didn't really understand what I was doing. It took me 27 years to get sober but I did because Jesus was in me and would never let me go. The fact that I know the truth about Jesus, and then would go out there and drink did not mix well together. Whatever high I'm looking for has been destroyed now, because now, I'm not going to enjoy it. Because I have the Holy Spirit.

I've been sober 7 years now and this church has helped make the difference. I feel at home here for some reason. I feel comfortable here. Everybody here they just they treat you like you're part of the family.

The whole thing centers on Jesus. That's what it's all about, it's all about him. All I know is I need to, I want to get closer to Jesus and I'm not going to do that by walking into sin. Because every time I walk in sin, I'm kind of pushing him away. He never walks away from me. It's me, that walks away from him. That's the reason why I'm getting baptized and becoming a member, because I want to get back on track.