

TROY WIESNER'S VISION FOR THE

# ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT

« *Creating Christ-centred, mission-focused and Spirit-empowered churches that are marked by a culture of prayer, authenticity, availability and generosity.* »

<sup>19</sup>For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. (Isaiah 43:19, NLT)

A fresh wind is beginning to blow across this Province—it is the wind of the Spirit—and because of it, we are beginning to see the first-fruits of renewal, perhaps even revival. Just like the people of Narnia who had been waiting so long for Aslan to come, we in Quebec have been waiting for a fresh move of God's Spirit—and just like in Narnia, we are seeing evidence that it is here. People are responding to the message of the gospel,

miracles are becoming more and more common, and there are signs that those in the church are beginning to wake up to what it means to be followers of Christ and to carry out the mission God gave to the church.

As the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Quebec, I believe God is inviting us to join Him in what He is doing and wants to do in Quebec. He is calling the church to respond to this invitation. Will we, the C&MA in Quebec, be among those who answer the call?

I believe that God has been positioning our C&MA family for this invitation over the last few years:

*“They say Aslan is on the move—perhaps he has already landed.”*

(Beaver, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*  
by C. S. Lewis)

- For many years, different movements inside and outside of Quebec, including people from the C&MA across Canada, have been praying for this Province, asking God to bring renewal and revival.
- President Hearn's vision to be *Christ-centred, mission-focused* and *Spirit-empowered*, is beginning to permeate local church vision across Canada, including the St-Lawrence District.
- God has been calling the C&MA back to its roots of the deeper Christian life—particularly the experiential work of the Holy Spirit—inviting us to experience God's presence fully, to learn to hear God's voice, to step into our identity in Christ, to walk in our authority in Christ, and much more.

- In Quebec, we are beginning to see miracles, both inside the church, but also outside of the church, particularly as believers take risks for God, looking to connect the lost to the Father's love. People have responded to this love, not because of a logical argument, but because they have experienced God's presence. Some have experienced physical healing, others have been liberated from spiritual bondages, and in a number of cases, we have seen radical transformation.
- There is an emerging generation that is embracing this new way of seeing and living as disciples of Christ, and they are open to joining God in what He wants to do in Quebec and around the world.
- There is a growing percentage of people in our churches who are dissatisfied with their spiritual experience and are looking for more—they are waiting to be invited into something greater and are open to following leaders into a missional vision—they are ready to be activated.
- There has been a spiritual shift with millennials and postmillennials. Many are genuinely looking for the truth, and are more open than ever to engage with a Christianity that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. They are responding to the Father's love that is being demonstrated by disciples of Christ who genuinely love them. They are also responding to moments where they experience God's tangible presence.
- In the last few years, there are a number of tools that have been developed in the context of the Alliance family, or endorsed by our leadership, that are available to help churches step into this vision of being Christ-centred, mission-focused and Spirit-empowered, including:
  - Holy Spirit Encounters
  - Church Renewal Weekends and mentoring (Southland Church, Steinbach, MB)
  - Kairos
  - Alliance Pray! teaching
  - Soul Care and Emotional Healthy Spirituality
  - Renversons les Forteresses (spiritual freedom and transformation)
  - A discernment process for making decisions
- Opportunities for millennials and postmillennials to enter discipleship "greenhouses" have been developed to help shape the emerging generation of leaders in our churches, including SOAR Montreal and Envision Canada (short-term trips, internships, leadership development, and other ministry resources).
- ETEQ continues to grow and develop into a solid tool for training the emerging generation of leaders.
- Tracks are being laid through New Ventures for church-planting and fresh church expressions. For example, the 180 Church has broken new ground in the St-Lawrence District in planting their church—and along the way, has helped to identify areas that need to be developed in order for other new works to begin across the District.

The question before us is: Will we respond to God's invitation? In order to truly respond, we need to be prepared to allow God to shape us, and in turn shape our local churches, so that we become instruments that He can use to transform Quebec. The status quo will not be enough. We, as a family of churches, need to abandon ourselves to God and His process, to invite Him to speak into the vision of our local churches, and to be willing to take risks like never before.

Stemming from the national vision of calling our family to be Christ-Centred, Mission-focussed and Spirit-empowered, national leadership has identified 3 key outcomes that, contextualized in our District, should serve as a framework for this transformation to occur. The following are what I see as priorities in each of these outcome categories. Obviously, there is overlap of these into one another, but overall, here is what I would suggest needs to happen in our District. By mentioning them here, I am in no way saying that some, if not many, are not already in motion. It remains to build on them and move forward.

## **CULTURE** (*Relational and spiritual vitality*)

- Make contextualizing the national vision of being **Christ-centred, mission-focused** and **Spirit-empowered**, a priority in all demographics in our churches, working with district-appointed leaders involved in the discipleship of men, women, youth and children.
- Develop a clear plan to help as many people from our churches as possible—particularly leaders—to attend a Holy Spirit Encounter, in order to broaden our corporate understanding of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit's work, how to hear God's voice and much more. Training leaders from our own Quebec context to be able to lead such retreats is essential to making this accessible in our churches.
- Develop a culture of prayer in our local churches that is based on things like hearing and discerning God's voice, crafted prayer, and much more. I strongly believe that success in other initiatives, such as church-planting, will be limited by our commitment to prayer. Teaching from the Alliance Pray! team could be invaluable in the development of this culture and training for intercession. Recognizing churches where strong commitment to prayer (for example l'Église Du Berger) is already in place and learning from their success and failures is also necessary. Developing prayer networks (example: the Sands prayer team) for new initiatives, and finding creative ways to invite our churches into interceding for our Province (example: set a daily alarm at 19:27 in order to pray for Quebec, the date that the Quebec Border was officially created) all need to be a part of this plan.
- Ensure a support system that offers "soul care" to the pastors of our churches. Ways that this can be accomplished include regular visits by District leadership, offering "soul care" related resources such as the book "Emotional Healthy Spirituality", encouraging peer networks, and taking advantage of District gatherings to care for the spiritual well-being of pastors and spouses. This goes beyond teaching on an

intellectual level but provides space to address matters of the heart through experiential learning.

- Develop an environment of integrity and confidentiality, creating space where pastors can share personal and ministry struggles. I am committed to modelling this myself as a leader, and extending the invitation to others to honestly and openly share areas of life needing healing and transformation. I am aware that this will require a healthy tension between transparency (vulnerability) and grace, and in cases where discipline or legal action is required, a spirit-lead response that provides a support system and seeks the restoration of all those involved.

Specifically, this type of environment is developed through a lifestyle of confession that invites the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives, where confession of sin is part of the normal rhythm of our walk with the Lord, and where people have the chance to live authentically with brother's and sister's in Christ in an environment of transparency and grace. This begins with leaders and extends to our churches.

- Cultivate an environment where the pursuit of relationship with God takes precedence over all else. We need to call our churches and ourselves as leaders, not to do more, but to pursue God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This includes, but is not limited to, transformational spirituality (Emotional Healthy Spirituality) and opportunity for inner healing and freedom in Christ.
- Place a high priority on communication, so that leaders and members of our churches alike, are aware of God's work across the province and around the world through the Christian and Missionary Alliance, developing a sense of belonging and expectation of how God might use each of us through the testimony of others.
- Develop a spirit of collaboration and cross-pollination. This means recognizing and using the various gifts, expertise and abilities of those in leadership across our churches, including pastors, district staff, as well as, across districts, particularly with those in the Eastern Canadian District.

## **NURTURE** (*Leader development*)

- Work closely with ETEQ to ensure that we are developing leaders that are **Christ-centred, mission-focused** and **Spirit-empowered**.
- Place a high priority on the ongoing development of pastors and leaders in our district, including investing financial resources into personal and professional development. An important first step is dialoguing together in regards to need, benefits and resources already available, and then being intentional by building on various experiences and training so that it moves beyond the "seminar or book" and becomes applied to daily life and ministry.
- Develop a culture in our churches where we are actively looking for emerging leaders, nurturing these leaders through mentorship, helping to identify opportunities that

would develop them as disciples of Christ and leaders in our churches (SOAR Montreal, Envision, ETEQ, etc.), and helping to financially support these opportunities.

- Ensure that we are prepared for the shift that is coming in the leadership of our churches. I am so grateful for the legacy of leaders that were a part of establishing the C&MA in Quebec. Many risked everything to bring the gospel to Quebec—working diligently, faithfully, and sacrificially. Today, the St-Lawrence District is composed of more than 30 churches, but the reality is that many of those who have worked so hard are getting ready to pass the baton to the next generation. We need to ensure that this passing of the torch is done well. It is essential that present leadership be a part of identifying, developing and releasing young emerging leaders, inviting them to contribute now. I believe that a cross-generational model where the generations work together to prepare for the future, transforming our local churches to engage with the culture and be relevant for years to come is vital to this transition.
- Intentionally engage with emerging leaders and youth in order to demonstrate the relevance of our family of churches regarding culture—i.e. in order to keep them in our family of churches. Areas of engagement that we need to address are: (1) church structure/form; (2) having a missional vision; (3) being involved in justice and compassion; (4) the deeper Christian life; and (5) having a quality social media presence that demonstrates our engagement with issues that are important to society.
- Seek to create a spirit of collaboration within our District, equipping and empowering people from across the District in their gifts and abilities, allowing others to lead and/or contribute to what God wants to do through our family of churches in Quebec.

## **VENTURE** (*Multiplication and mobilization*)

- Unite our churches under the vision of being **Christ-centred, mission-focused** and **Spirit-empowered**, allowing this vision to be contextualized in our local churches. This will lead to common vision, purpose, language and will lay the foundation necessary to partner together to reach Quebec for Christ.
- Mobilize the church by casting vision to be: ***“On mission. Everyone. Everywhere. All the time.”***
- Continue to work with New Ventures to identify workers, discern where to plant new churches and spiritual expressions, and to create a structure that would allow other Districts and local churches from across Canada (C&MA and other church families) to partner with these new churches and spiritual expressions in order to reach Canada’s least-reached in Quebec.
- Identify key regions in Quebec for church-planting, spiritual expressions, and spiritual outposts, inviting local churches to help to identify and support these new works (prayer, encouragement, financial support, etc.)

- Develop a culture of action that is concerned with what is going on outside the four walls of the church, seeking to join God in addressing things that break His heart, redeeming broken lives through justice and compassion initiatives. We need call our churches to action, to be active in our communities and to be salt and light where God has placed us. Other than local church initiatives, we need to discern how we can join with groups that are already doing justice and compassion in our communities. We also need to be active in supporting national C&MA initiatives such as Defend Dignity, Alliance Justice and Compassion, Alliance Disaster Response, and more.
- Help church leaders to see Kairos as a discipleship tool—taking advantage of it to broaden our understanding of the mission that God has given us, to clarify the difference between being on mission and being a missionary, and to open our “eyes” to the opportunities that exist locally and abroad to reach the least-reached and most neglected.
- Empower our churches for evangelism by changing paradigms. We need to demystify evangelism so that it is accessible and doable for everyone in our churches, not just those who have the “gift” of evangelism. I believe that we need to train our people to be able to hear God’s voice, how to walk in their authority in Christ, and equip them with tools that reflect a “simple gospel” that is motivated out of genuine love for the individual, instead of trying to argue someone into the kingdom. We need to take advantage of evangelism tools that have been developed particularly for our Quebec context (example: Je suis deuxième), as well as, invite people in our churches who are already active in evangelism, to help equip and mobilize others.
- Cast vision that will activate the generosity of the people in our churches. I believe that Quebecers have the potential to be some of the most generous people in the world—particularly when they connect with a cause. I choose to believe that as the people in our churches catch the vision for this new thing that God is doing in Quebec—as they catch a vision for God’s heart for the lost of this Province (and around the world)—that they will respond financially, joining God in efforts to reach the lost. As a District, we need to be prepared to demonstrate that we are good stewards of what those in our family contribute, showing how contributions are advancing the Kingdom. I also choose to believe that God will provide for every local church initiative that corresponds to His desire to reach the lost—honouring risks taken to bring others into relationship with the Father.

I believe that in implementing these priorities, that God will not only grow our C&MA church family in Quebec, but will use us to bring renewal and even revival to Quebec. I am also grateful for the present vision of the District’s Strategic Plan that has been developed over the years after much prayer and thought. My desire would be that this Strategic Plan be refined and built upon, bringing it into alignment with the National Vision.