

Journey Through The Alliance Vision Prayer

A seven-week prayer curriculum for intercessors



Vision Prayer

**O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, transform us to be Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.**

Jasper, AB

Week 1

O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.

**Come, transform us to be Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.**

Vancouver Island, BC

“O God, with all our hearts we long for you.”

MAY 16-21

This heart cry has echoed throughout the centuries—this deep, heartfelt, God-yearning prayer is found throughout Scripture, especially in the Psalms. It can be seen most profoundly in the first verse of Psalm 63...

O God, you are my God: I shall seek You earnestly;
My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,
In a dry and weary land where there is no water.
Ps. 63:1 NASB

The oppressive, crushing heat in the Middle East can easily reach 40-50° C (104-122° F), even in the early morning. Some parts of Israel are ranked among the hottest areas on earth. To be thirsty there and describe the land as “dry and thirsty” was to be thirsty indeed. Towns would form around wells, and small cities would grow near streams and rivers to ensure that families (and livestock) could receive the water needed even to live.

The Psalmist speaks of a deep yearning for God—comparing it to a thirsty, desert wanderer. In this kind of extreme heat, thirst is far more than a hope for momentary satisfaction. Desert wanderers needed water, or they would die. This kind of deep desire is described in the Psalms again and again.

As the deer pants for the water brooks, my soul pants for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?
Ps. 42:1,2 NASB

Jesus used the same metaphor, a thirst that will be satisfied, in the Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
Matthew 5:6 NASB

This kind of aching desire seizes hold of the thirsty and hungry, forcing them to order their lives around its satisfaction. Spiritual thirst is real, and it too must be satisfied, or the believer will flounder, or even perish, in their faith.

The first line of our Vision Prayer reflects the passion of the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Albert Benjamin Simpson. A.B. Simpson spent his early days seeking the Lord while walking along the waters of the River Thames in Chatham, Ontario. His early seeking led to his profound conversion, and his subsequent devotion led to his call to ministry. His desire to see God’s work unfold through his life led him to search the Scriptures as one with a deep soul thirst. He never lost his yearning for more of God and ever-deepening encounters with Him—leading to the founding and development of the early Alliance.

The Alliance was born not only of spiritual longing within our own movement but also in tandem with an international desire for the depths of God. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw astonishing developments across the Christian world. The Moody revivals saw millions brought to saving faith. George Mueller fed and housed 10,000+ orphans by faithfully trusting in God to supply, even as he mentored Hudson Taylor and Charles Spurgeon in prayer. From 1904 to 1905, the fervent praying of Evan Roberts and the fiery preaching of Seth Joshua expanded out until the Welsh revival swept across that nation—with more than 100,000

“O God, with all our hearts we long for you.”

souls converted in a single year. The sway of that one event alone spread throughout the world, impacting not only the English-speaking world (including Canada and the US) but also much of Europe and even parts of Africa. Unusual experiences of the Spirit, conjoined to profound seasons of prayer, were reported among students in the Nyack training center even before the events of the Azusa Street revival, which birthed the Pentecostal movement. It was a season of worldwide expectation and thirst for the depths of God’s Presence across the globe, not only in The Alliance but across the spectrum of Christian faith. A.B. Simpson spent his entire life searching out the depths of God, desiring to satisfy a profound soul-ache for more and more of the God he loved and served.

In 1907, a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit fell upon those in the training center in Nyack, New York, leading up to the General Council of 1907. There are verified accounts of physical healings, extended “groaning prayer meetings,” prophetic utterances, all-night prayer sessions, spontaneous gifts of tongues (one of a known tongue interpreted by those who studied Congolese dialects)¹, and an expectation that God Himself (and not human endeavour) would transport the movement forward. Students and delegates alike sought the Lord together, before, during, and after the Council met.

¹ In Simpson’s Editorial, CMAW 27, (June 8, 1907) Simpson reported that in the after-meetings, a young lady received a gift of tongues, and “spoke in the language which some of the missionaries recognized as one of the dialects of the Congo. It was accompanied by every evidence of the mighty working of the Holy Spirit in the subject of this experience. The case was the more remarkable as she has been looking forward herself to mission work on the Congo...” Cited in Charles Neinkirchen, *A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement*, (Wipf & Stock: Eugene, Oregon, 1992), p. 154. Paul King, in subsequent research,

At that time, most didn’t know that Simpson set apart an extended season of prayer and fasting *before* that event. As he prepared for the annual business meeting, he spent a week praying and fasting. This turned into two weeks, and finally three, leading up to and during the annual meeting.

For Simpson, General Council (we call it General Assembly) wasn’t merely time to make important decisions for the movement. Instead, it was time to call for deep intercession, for deeper consecration, and for the fullness of the Spirit’s power to fall—both upon him personally as well as the entire movement—so that the Gospel could go to the least-reached regions of the earth to “hasten the Lord’s return.” He said:

While preaching on Daniel, like him, it came to me to set apart a time for prayer and fasting that God would especially bless the work entrusted to me and give me a special anointing of the Holy Ghost. I was the more led to do this in view of the approaching Council... and the special moment of the Holy Spirit abroad today, that God would show His will about it, and give to me all He has for me—and also for the work...

identified her as C&MA Missionary Sally Botham (who served in Congo for 40 years after this event), and the two IWs who recognized the dialect as Lucy Villars and Mary Mullen—who recognized the language as Kefonti—a tribal dialect spoken in Congo. Their translation of the tongue was that Botham was “telling the people to get ready for Jesus is coming soon...” and “the fountain of blood is flowing from Calvary, sufficient for all our sins and sufficient for a world of sinners.” See Paul L. King, *Genuine Gold*, (Word and Spirit Press: Tulsa OK, 2006) pp. 29-80.

“O God, with all our hearts we long for you.”

After one week of waiting on God, I could not stop but continued two, three and up to the Council and indeed with slight interruptions ever since...²

The goal of this seven-week journey to Assembly, like A.B. Simpson, is to lead up to Assembly united in prayer, intent on one purpose—to see the Gospel expand to the least-reached regions of the earth, while we fix our eyes on Jesus, asking Him for “*a special anointing of the Holy Ghost*” that our God would give us and our movement “*all He has for me—and also for the work.*”

REFLECTING AND RECORDING:

- 1) The whole vision prayer is an important help to refocus our prayers for both The Alliance Canada and ourselves.
 - a. Take a moment to read it aloud, to become familiar with its intention:

“O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, transform us to be
Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered,
Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.”
 - b. Reread it slowly and pray, taking a breath between each line. Do that for five minutes.

- c. Record what came to you as you prayed that prayer.

² A.B. Simpson Diary, cited in Charles Nienkirchen, “*A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement*,” (Wipf & Stock: Eugene, Oregon, 1992), pp. 141

“O God, with all our hearts we long for you.”

- 2) Have you ever experienced a painful thirst? Remember what that felt like.
 - a. Did you search fervently for something to drink? Record that here.

 - b. Now compare that to a time when you yearned after God. How does a thirsting after Him reveal itself in you?


DURING THE WEEK:

Pray the vision prayer as you intercede for Assembly this week. Pray it not only for yourself, your local church, and for the entire movement together. Expand your prayer to include those international workers who need empowerment for their ministries. Pray also for the election of our new president, that our new leader would embody the values found in the vision prayer.

Week 2

O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, transform us to be Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.

Montréal, QC

An aerial photograph of the Montreal skyline at sunset. The sky is a clear, pale blue, transitioning to a warm orange glow near the horizon. The city is densely packed with buildings of various heights and architectural styles. The foreground shows a mix of older, lower-rise buildings and modern high-rises. The overall scene is bathed in the soft, golden light of the setting sun, creating a serene and urban atmosphere.

“Come...”

MAY 23-29

Religious teachers in Hebrew culture during Jesus’ time prayed together a minimum of three times a day—morning, noon, and evening. They prayed four times on Shabbat (the Sabbath) and five times on festival days. However, Jesus carved out time *beyond* the traditional three times a day to pray. His prayer life was vibrant and distinct from his peers—even masters of prayer like John the Baptist (who had sent some of his followers to Christ). Those who had followed John, already schooled in prayer by the Baptist himself, asked Jesus to teach them how he did it!

There was something remarkable about the prayer life of Jesus. In one of the first moments of Jesus’ public ministry, we see him praying and suddenly receiving the Holy Spirit. He submitted himself to John’s baptism, the heavens opened, and the Spirit descended upon Him. Luke’s Gospel tells us about a connection between the prayers of Jesus and the reception of the Spirit:

Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove...
Luke 3:21-22a NASB

Note the connection between these events:

1. While he was praying
2. Heaven was opened
3. The Holy Spirit descended

Jesus would often rise before his peers, find a solitary place to search out the depths of God, and receive guidance concerning his calling (see Mark 1:35-39). He did that alone and, sometimes, with others.

As Jesus was praying on the Mount of Transfiguration, something astonishing happened to him (witnessed by his three companions). While he was praying, the appearance of his face became different, and his clothing became white and gleaming. (Luke 9:29 NASB). As he prayed, his countenance was altered—and he shone. Don’t you find it amazing that God the Son, empowered by God the Spirit’s baptism, sought out God the Father’s will in deep, focused, yearning prayer—again and again?

It begs the question—why should God Himself, revealed in Jesus, even need to do this?

We find Jesus steeped in private prayer throughout the Gospels when the miraculous broke out—healing and the casting out of demons. In Luke 5:12-14, Jesus healed a leper, and he was becoming a sensation; the crowds grew as he healed more and more of the sick. Rather than pander to the crowd—he withdrew to seek God in the private, solitary places to feed upon God’s Presence. (Luke 5:15b-16 NASB).

The prayer life of Jesus reflects the next movement of our vision prayer: “Come...”

Continuing in Luke 5, we see that the next miracle happened because Jesus perceived the movement of God’s Spirit. Notice the specific language (in large caps) of what happened in the very next verse:

“Come...”

And it came about that one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; AND THE POWER OF THE LORD WAS PRESENT FOR HIM TO PERFORM HEALING.

Luke 5:17 NASB

In writing his Gospel, Luke gathered eyewitnesses and written accounts of Christ (See Luke 1:1-4). Someone was there, in the room, when this miracle of Christ happened and told Luke the details.

There was a revelation of power in that room. Miraculous power suddenly became present for Jesus to accomplish miraculous healing. Jesus *accessed* this power; He cooperated with the Presence, forgave the paralyzed man’s sins, and healed his physical body.

It is imperative to notice that Jesus didn’t do the miracle *because* He was God the Son. He did it because the power of the Holy Spirit was present, and he flowed with that power. The Lord says in John’s Gospel:

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner

John 5:19 NASB

Jesus could do nothing of his own initiative. If that is true of God the Son, it is even more profoundly true for the rest of us! And so, we ask for the power of God to fall upon us, for his Presence to come down from heaven and fill us so that we can be transformed and become the agents of

transformation for others too. We can do nothing of ourselves. God initiates, and we respond.

“Fall upon us” would be a better way to pray. The only way we can pray is to cry out, “Lead us,” or we will not be led. “Feed us,” or we will not be fed. “Direct us,” or we will have no direction worthy of your name.

So, the next word in this vision prayer is “Come...” Come, Holy Spirit, and pray through us.

When Paul describes how God’s very Spirit identifies with the intercessor, he declares that God the Spirit prays to God the Father with and for us, those who abide in Christ the Lord, even when our minds are muddled and our words run out (Romans 8:26).

The Christian tradition holds that the Spirit of God is an intrinsic part of the Godhead. God humbles himself as the Spirit prays alongside and through humans with groanings beyond words.

Come, Holy Spirit, and pray with us and for us. Help us to pray into the desires of the Father’s heart, even as we submit ours and yearn for more of you.

Let us make our prayer posture, as those who receive the Spirit, identical to the prayer posture of Jesus. Like Him, we can do nothing on our own initiative—Come, Holy Spirit, come. We need you.

“Come...”

REFLECTING AND RECORDING:

- 1) In Romans 8:26, the apostle demonstrates that God believes in prayer so very much that God the Spirit prays. Look at this text again:

The Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words...

Romans 8:26 NASB

Here it is clear that *God believes in prayer* so much that God the Spirit prays Himself. *God* prays with and for people like us to see His work done. What does this thought do for you as you ponder this text? Record your thoughts here.

- 2) In Romans 8, we see that the risen Lord is also praying. When Christ the King is seated on his throne, he is ruling by interceding for us. *He rules by praying!* What does this thought do for you?

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

Romans 8:33-35a NASB

DURING THE WEEK:

Simpson, the founder of the C&MA, understood that God births things through prayer. He gave himself over to extended times of prayer, asking God's Spirit to flow through him and to fill and overflow the hearts and minds of those who laboured with him. Take some time now to do the very same—ask God the Spirit to pray through you each day this week as we begin to intercede for the Lord to transform our movement into his image. Ask him: how can I prepare the way for your presence?



Week 3

O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, **transform us** to be Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.

Regina, SK

“Transform us ...”

MAY 30-JUNE 4

As we prepare to gather for General Assembly, we remember that God in Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. God initiates, and we respond. We don't merely ask the Spirit to come upon us. Instead, we recognize that we cannot ever be the same when God's Spirit falls upon us and permeates our inner being.

Upon encountering God's Holy Spirit, we are transformed.

While this is true for us, it was also true for Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry. Jesus our Saviour is also our role model. In his earthly ministry, He had a *before* and *after* the Holy Spirit.

There was a decided difference between Jesus *before* being baptized and empowered and Jesus *after* those events. He was always God the Son, before and after His incarnation—yet His ministry of transformation only began after He was filled with the Holy Spirit. There were no great teachings, miraculous acts, healings—or anything of the sort, until *after* the Spirit of God landed on Him.

Jesus will always be the Son of God at every stage of his life. He was already “born of God”—like no one else in human history. Yet he needed the Spirit's power to transform Him to begin His ministry.

After Jesus received the Holy Spirit, he immediately saw into the S/spirit realm, entered a holy fast, confronted and defeated the devil in three temptations, and began his ministry. His entire ministry—teaching, acts of power, the embarrassment of demonic power, compassionate love, and shocking acceptance of even the most unlovely of people—came from his Spirit empowerment.

In Acts, Simon Peter preached to the household of Cornelius:

You yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Acts 10:37-38 NASB

Did you notice? Peter doesn't say that Jesus was already anointed through the miraculous birth. Instead, he says that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power after John's baptism.

Now, if Jesus of Nazareth needed empowerment, it would be an extreme understatement to say we need it too!

The language of the vision prayer is “*Come, transform us...*”

We need to be transformed from the inside out.

Before Peter arrived on the scene in that Roman home, they were Gentile God-fearers—because they already loved the God of Israel. They already had cared for the poor. They were already living lives of repentance and righteousness. And yet, an angel appeared and told Cornelius to send for Simon Peter because they were missing the rest of the package—Jesus! Their walk changed after hearing about Jesus, and—to Peter's surprise—Cornelius and his household received an anointing of the Holy Spirit.

“Transform us ...”

We already know our weaknesses and our sin. Unlike Jesus, we are at a decided disadvantage: we are born bent, broken, and prone to sin. Jesus was perfect. But if the perfect one needed the Holy Spirit’s infilling, how much more do we need it? Beyond that, we need a much more complete transformation—from enemies of God to friends of the Saviour. Paul teaches in Romans: while we were enemies...while we were yet sinners...Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6-8).

Paul also describes what it feels like to be justified through the agency of the Holy Spirit’s interaction with our deepest hearts:

Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God... and hope does not disappoint; because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5:1-2,5 NASB

Did you notice all the language about what salvation feels like? We *feel* peace. We *exult* in hope. Hope keeps us from *despair*. After an encounter with the Holy Spirit in our inner beings, we suddenly *feel* God’s love saturating our lives. You get filled—and you feel your faith!

A.W. Tozer said it this way: “There is no one who has received the Holy Spirit who does not know it!”

God transforms us from the inside out—and Paul doesn’t stop with language about merely choosing God and getting clean. He declares that getting clean turns immediately into us getting filled. According to Paul, one thing is painfully clear: justification includes an experiential encounter with God the Holy Spirit.

We are infilled with God’s very Spirit, whose presence within us is the transforming agent. In 1897, Simpson explained that Holy Spirit empowerment was essential for lives as believers:

Jesus Christ was baptized by the Holy Spirit. He derived His person and His incarnate life from the Holy Spirit, but at thirty years of age, He consecrated Himself to His ministry of life and suffering and service. Jesus went down into the waters of the Jordan... The heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit, by whom he had been born, now came down and personally possessed His being and henceforth dwelt within Him...

Up to this time there had been one personality, henceforth there were two; for the Holy Spirit was added to the Christ, and in the strength of this indwelling Spirit, henceforth he wrought His works, spoke His words and accomplished His ministry on earth...

But this has a parallel in the experience of the disciple of Christ. It is not enough for us to be born of the Holy Spirit; we must also be baptized with the Holy Spirit...

Oh, if the Son of God did not presume to begin His public work until he had received this power from on high, what

“Transform us ...”

presumption it is that we should attempt in our own strength to fulfil the ministry committed to us...³

Our movement is based on a transformative encounter, a divine encounter! So—God, transform us! Fill us. Let us be filled with you and not with ourselves.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING:

- 1) Re-read this passage from Acts 10—when Peter preached to Cornelius’ household.

You yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.

Acts 10:37-38 NASB

- a. What (who) was Jesus “anointed” with?
- b. What happened after Jesus was “anointed?”
- c. What does this mean about the purpose of being anointed?

³ A.B. Simpson, *Power from On High* (Christian Publications: Camp Hill, Penn, 1994) pp. 308-310. Emphasis added.

- d. Are we to ask to be anointed?
- e. What does this mean for us in our praying for General Assembly, our national, and international work?

- 2) Many churches focus on decisions for Christ. Of course, decisions to follow Jesus are important. Yet the apostle Peter went beyond a decision to follow Jesus and emphasized a fully transformed life marked by the Spirit. Have you sensed the presence? What was it like?
- 3) It seems that people in the early Church had repeated infillings—one experience with the Holy Spirit was never enough. Even in the ministry of Jesus, there are moments in which he seemed to sense more of the Holy Spirit. (See Luke 10:21. Jesus suddenly felt joy imparted to Him from the Holy Spirit). This means we should ask for repeated infillings of God’s power. What does this mean for our ministries in The Alliance Canada here and around the world? How then are we to pray?

“Transform us ...”

DURING THE WEEK:

As we journey toward Assembly, start your prayer times by asking God to transform us from the inside out. Begin praying this for yourself, and then expand your prayer to include your local elders and pastor. Pray for our workers in least-reached countries around the world. Ask God to transform them too so that they can continue proclaiming the transformative power of the Gospel.



Week 4

O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, **transform us to be Christ-centred,**
Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.

Northern Ontario

“Transform us to be Christ-centred ...”

JUNE 6-11

Transformed! But transformed for what purpose?

We have all hit the wall at one time or another, stopped short by our faults, failures, or circumstances. Almost everyone longs to be better than they are—the reason the bookstore’s self-help section has a lot of traffic. Most want to be healthy, be fit, eat well, efficiently manage finances, and relate better with coworkers. The list of “transforms” is infinite.

Our vision prayer is not focused on helping us become better people (as helpful as that may be).

Our prayer is to wholly focus on making Jesus, and God’s plan found in him, to be the dynamic centre of our lives forever! God wants to empower us to become centred in Jesus—rooted in his love, his compassion, his salvation, his mission to seek and save the lost, his praying, his sacrifice, and his power to transform and to empower the powerless.

Did you notice that the list above did not include transforming us to make us the centre; the goal is to make our lives centre on Jesus.

The gospel is not a self-improvement plan; it transforms us to be like Jesus—selfless and God-focused. The difference in how transformation is understood shows in the *before* and *after* of Saul of Tarsus.

The two kinds of power-to-change are contrasted in the conversion of Saul. Remember how he met the Lord? He took part in an enraged mob that murdered Stephen (Acts 7). Saul garnered support among his peers to imprison and execute those following Jesus of Nazareth. His “transform-prayer” was something like this: “God, help me kill these heretics.”

Jesus appeared to him in glorious, blinding light. What is most striking about this encounter is that Jesus did not say to Paul anything like this statement: “Well, since you killed my servants, I am taking you out.” Instead, Jesus, the Risen Lord, (in three different retellings)⁴ says these kinds of statements:

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. And oh, this is hard for you, Saul. Get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

- Saul used his power to pursue and transform so-called “heretics” by force, arresting and executing them.
- Jesus uses His power to transform “heretics” by invitation, inviting anyone opposed to who he is to become like him.

After his conversion, Paul’s prayer life was transformed by years of mentorship from Barnabas, solitude, and suffering. Paul had suffered profound loss—his Jewish identity, influence, likely his family and friends, and his freedom. Yet, despite his circumstances, the letter to

⁴ See Acts 9:1-19, 22:3-16, and 26:1-23 for Paul’s testimony, tailored to differing audiences.

“Transform us to be Christ-centred ...”

the Philippians is full of joy. Here is how he prayed to be transformed:

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith...

THAT I MAY KNOW HIM AND
THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION AND
THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS,
BEING CONFORMED TO HIS DEATH,
IN ORDER THAT I MAY ATTAIN TO THE
RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.

Philippians 3:7-11 NASB (emphasis added)

Saul’s praying went from “I am going to kill those who become Christ-followers” to “I am praying to join Jesus’ suffering and death so that I might become like Christ.”

Our vision prayer does not ask God to make us better people. It asks God to transform us to be utterly Christ-centred—or to quote Colossians 3:3, “you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” As Assembly approaches, let us pray that we would become more like Christ—for ourselves, our churches, our outreach ministries, and our movement.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING:

- 1) Have you ever decided that it was time to make a change for the better and then organized your life around that change? Write some thoughts down on your decision and the actions you took to make those changes possible.
- 2) Have you ever become angry when someone close to you would not change for the better? Have you wanted to make them drop a destructive habit? Describe that moment and record how you prayed for them.
- 3) Re-read Philippians 3:7-11. Remember, Saul (who became Paul) lost everything to embrace the Gospel and complete the calling on his life. What do you sense as you read this prayer?
- 4) Here is the centre of his praying. Can you pray this way? Paraphrase it into your own words in the space below:
THAT I MAY KNOW HIM AND
THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION AND
THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS,
BEING CONFORMED TO HIS DEATH,
IN ORDER THAT I MAY ATTAIN TO THE
RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.
Philippians 3:10-11 NASB

“Transform us to be Christ-centred ...”

DURING THE WEEK:

Apart from Jesus’ prayer in John 17, this is one of the most profound prayers in the Bible. It is “holy ground.” Our praying for transformation is for much more than moral improvement—it is to conform to the sufferings and death of Jesus in order to participate in the resurrection from the dead.

Graham Kendrick turned this section of Philippians into a hymn.

You can find it on YouTube at this link:

<https://youtu.be/pTlSx6zXio>.

As you pray this week into our movement, you may wish to sing with Kendrick as he commits afresh to be transformed to be Christ-centred.

Week 5

O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, transform us to be **Christ-centred,**
Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.

Yukon Territory

“Transform us to be Spirit-empowered...”

JUNE 13-18

O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, transform us to be
Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered,

As we journey toward our General Assembly, we need to remember that being Spirit-empowered means being filled with God’s very being to become like Christ.

A small experiment speaks to the shift in the Bible concerning the Spirit from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

Take a printed Bible and take hold of the first ¾ of the book (Genesis to Malachi). Now, hazard a guess—how many times does the phrase “Holy Spirit” appear in all that material (900-1300 pages in most Bibles)?

Likely, you will scratch your head and ponder. You might remember hundreds of references to the Spirit of the Lord, to the breath of God’s Spirit, but strain to find a single reference to the Spirit described as “holy.”

The phrase “Holy Spirit” does not appear from Genesis 1 to Psalm 50 (about 60% of the Old Testament)—from God’s creation of the cosmos to Israel’s second king. It does not appear until Psalm 51—

the lament of David after his premeditated murder of Uriah, following his adultery with Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba. David masked his sin with the appearance of kindness (offering shelter to a pregnant widow) to hide his egregious, lust-based murder.

After he shattered everything holy in God’s chosen nation, Nathan, the prophet, exposed him. His cry that God not “remove the Holy Spirit” from him is the first recorded use of that phrase in Biblical history.

Israel’s first king (Saul) did not become the king until he was “empowered by the Spirit.”⁵ After failing to regard the Lord’s commands, God removed the Spirit from Saul and placed the Spirit upon David (1 Samuel 16:13-14). After Saul lost the Spirit’s anointing, David watched Saul’s rapid descent into madness after the Spirit “departed from him.”

So, after David got caught sinning horribly, he feared the very same fate would happen to him.

Empowerment from the Spirit was given to enhance godliness—not to bless adultery, murder, and lying. David feared that God’s holiness was so severely desecrated that he must lose the Spirit’s anointing, even as former king Saul did, and that he would lose the kingship too.

⁵ See 1 Samuel 10: especially verses 6 & 10, and 1 Samuel 11:6—in which the Spirit fills Saul to carry out his first assignment to save the people of Jabesh-Gilead.

“Transform us to be Spirit-empowered...”

Keep reading, and you will not find another reference to the Holy Spirit until you get to Isaiah 63:10-11. There, the prophet laments the utter and complete rejection of God’s holy movement by the wilderness generation, ten consecutive times.

Both contexts were examples of the utter and complete rejection of God’s goodness.

Now, go into the New Testament and take hold of just the first three chapters of the gospel of Luke. How often do we see the phrase “Holy Spirit” in those three chapters? The phrase occurs eight times there. Five people were “filled with the Holy Spirit” in these three chapters alone:

- Zechariah, the priest
- Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah (mother of John the Baptist)
- Mary, the mother of our Lord
- Simeon the prophet in the temple, and then
- Jesus of Nazareth Himself, at his baptism in water

Five people were filled with the Holy Spirit in three chapters instead of three verses in Hebrew Scripture! Examine the rest of the New Testament, and there are 86 references to “the Holy Spirit”—about one reference every three pages or so. That is a significant shift between the two testaments. Here is what it means: The signature of Jesus on the doctrine of the Spirit is the word “holy.”

To ask for our movement to be empowered by the Spirit is for us to ask to be saturated with the very character of God himself and to be filled with God’s holiness! One way to translate the phrase “fill us with the Holy Spirit” is to say, “fill us with the Spirit who brings holiness.”

The New Testament is a collection of books that teach—in unity—empowerment from the Spirit is for every believer. Receiving Jesus’ Spirit empowers us for total participation in the divine nature—holiness. God’s Spirit is the “Sanctifier.”

The Spirit of Jesus will fill you with vital energy to complete whatever assignment the Lord sends—and in the process, each time that the Spirit of the Lord lands on you, the effect is that you will become more like him. Holiness described in a nutshell is that each action, each thought, each prayer, will point toward making us more like Jesus.

A powerful thing to pray is, “Spirit, make us more like Jesus as you empower us to complete our calling.”

REFLECTING AND RECORDING:

- 1) Read Psalm 51:10-12 reproduced here in the NASB and write a paraphrase of that text to capture what David the king was praying:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your Presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation—
and sustain me with a willing spirit.

“Transform us to be Spirit-empowered...”

- 2) Take some time to read the first three chapters of Luke. What was the effect of each person receiving the “empowering of the Holy Spirit?”
 - a. See Luke 1:26-38, esp. 35. Mary

 - b. Luke 1:39-45, esp. 41-45. Elizabeth

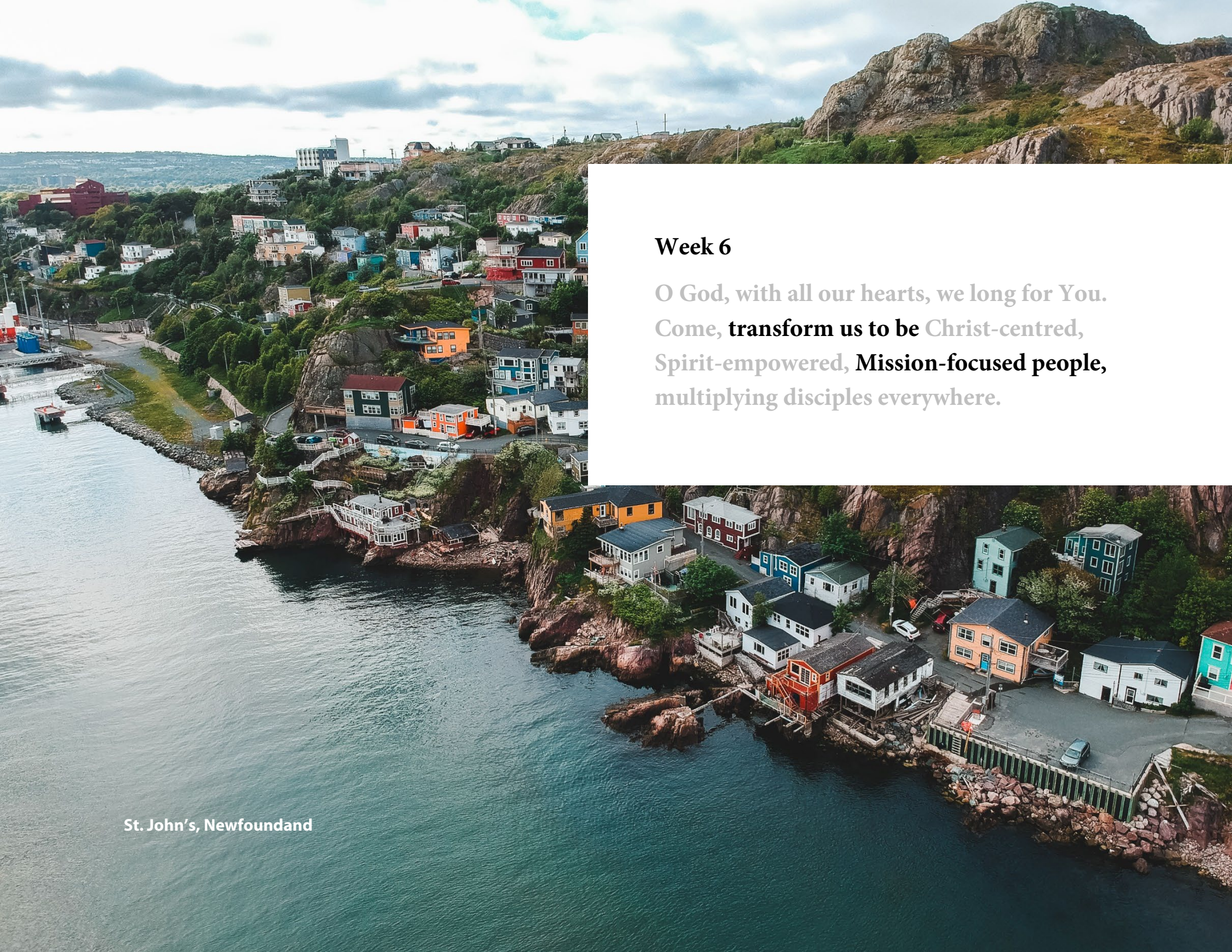
 - c. Luke 1:67 Zechariah

 - d. Luke 2: 22-38, esp. 25-27 Simeon

 - e. Luke 3: 21-22 Jesus

DURING THE WEEK:

Ask the Lord to empower you with his Spirit. Remember that the center of receiving that empowerment is to become like Him, even as tasks that require divine empowerment are carried out. We receive needed gifts and needed power. When those gifts and power cease, we are left forever with participation in the divine nature—forever and ever.



Week 6

O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, **transform us to be Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people,**
multiplying disciples everywhere.

St. John's, Newfoundland

“Transform us to be Mission-focused...”

JUNE 20-25

“O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.

Come, transform us to be
Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered,
Mission-focused people...

Throughout the early history of our movement, The Alliance held two major, annual events:

- 1) A deeper life conference, focusing on our need to be Christ-centred and Spirit-empowered, and
- 2) A missions conference, focusing on our need to send the Gospel to the least-reached regions of the earth to “hasten the return of the Lord.”

Our movement has regularly linked these two core values—deeper life and missions. Whenever the C&MA thrives, deeper life and the call to missions are always intertwined. Empowerment comes from the Spirit-led believers to make disciples. Those who decide to follow Jesus receive the Spirit and, in turn, might make more disciples. Both emphases are needed and work together. Missions without Spirit-empowered prayer often leads to burnout. Prayer without mission leads to an unhealthy inward focus on receiving blessings. Spirit-empowered prayer, focused on missions, leads the intercessor and the evangelist into partnership. As a result of this partnership, the gospel spreads across the globe.

This rhythm of Spirit-empowered missions arose out of the early movement’s reading of the New Testament because it was the pattern of our Lord. The purpose of his prayer times was not merely to

delight in God (a significant part of what it means to pray), but also to hear the voice of God and obey him.

Jesus was “led by the Spirit” to accomplish each ministry task. Sometimes obedience was delightful (seeing miraculous healings). Sometimes God’s leading was challenging (as when the Spirit led him into a 40 day fast). Regardless of the outcome, the pattern was the same—Jesus would pray, the Spirit would lead, and he would enter into the tasks sent to him by God the Father.

Soon after Jesus began his ministry, there were about 70 followers who had begun to travel with him. Somewhere between six months and a year into his itinerant ministry, Jesus spent a whole night in prayer on a mountainside (see Luke 6:12). After seeking God all night, he called 12 of the 70. Mark’s account of the purpose of the call makes clear that Jesus balanced prayer and outreach:

And He went up on a mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that he might send them out to preach, and have authority to cast out the demons. Mark 3:13-15 NASB

Jesus’ calling of the 12 started with Him spending the night in prayer. He experienced a discernment—who were the 12 to be—and called them. They were appointed for two reasons:

- 1) To be with him as constant companions, learning from another and sharing life together (deeper life) and
- 2) To preach, teach, and cast out demons (mission).

“Transform us to be Mission-focused...”

The sending of the 12 in Matthew’s Gospel demonstrates a fascinating intertwining of deeper life and mission. In Matthew 9:35-38, Jesus travelled with the disciples, taught, preached the good news of the Kingdom, and healed the sick. The crowds and their needs became too large, and he brimmed over with compassion. At that point, Jesus told his disciples how to pray:

And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

Matthew 9:35-38 NASB

Right after Jesus instructs the disciples to pray this way, in the very next verse, Jesus *answers His own prayer request* by empowering and equipping them. He gave them the authority to cast out unclean spirits and heal every kind of disease and sickness.

“...go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give.”

Matthew 10:1, 6-8 NASB

Jesus commanded them to pray for workers for the mission (deeper life), then he sent the twelve out to do *exactly* what He had been

doing before he told them to pray! Jesus was focused on his mission. His mission was fully integrated with his prayer life, his experience of the Spirit, and his receiving prompting from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus taught the 12 to do as he did—to pray and be on mission.

Fast forward to his death and resurrection.

At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus commissioned the early disciples to gather to pray—for about ten days—so that they could receive the Spirit and carry out the mission. Jesus intertwined their reception of the Spirit with their call to make disciples in every people group on earth.

The key verses for our understanding this week are Acts 1:4,5 and 8:

And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ...but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Acts 1:4-5,8 NASB

The disciples entered a time of seeking after the deeper life to accomplish the mission to make disciples in every corner of the globe.

“Transform us to be Mission-focused...”

Notice when the risen Lord mentioned the Holy Spirit’s empowerment, the focus was on the mission that would arise from the encounter. We do not receive the Spirit merely to experience ecstatic union with God (though emotion-laden encounters are real). Instead, we receive the Spirit empowerment to be mission-focused and declare the Kingdom of God and make disciples everywhere on the earth.

And so, the C&MA exists, not merely to experience the presence of the Spirit (as necessary as that is) but also to receive that Holy Spirit’s empowerment toward accomplishing the mission—to make disciples.

REFLECTION AND RECORDING:

- 1) Re-read what Jesus was doing in Matthew 9:35 NASB:

And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

- a) What was Jesus doing as His mission?

- 2) Re-read the following three verses vv. 36-38):

And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the

workers are few. Therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

- a) What happened in Jesus’ heart?

- b) Did he feel he could carry out his mission?

- c) What did he command them to pray?

- 3) Reread the following section:

And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness... “Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as you go, preach, saying ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give.” Matthew 10:1, 6-8 NASB

- a) What were the disciples commanded to do?

- b) Did Jesus do those actions as well?

- 4) What does this mean for the C&MA as we gather for General Assembly?

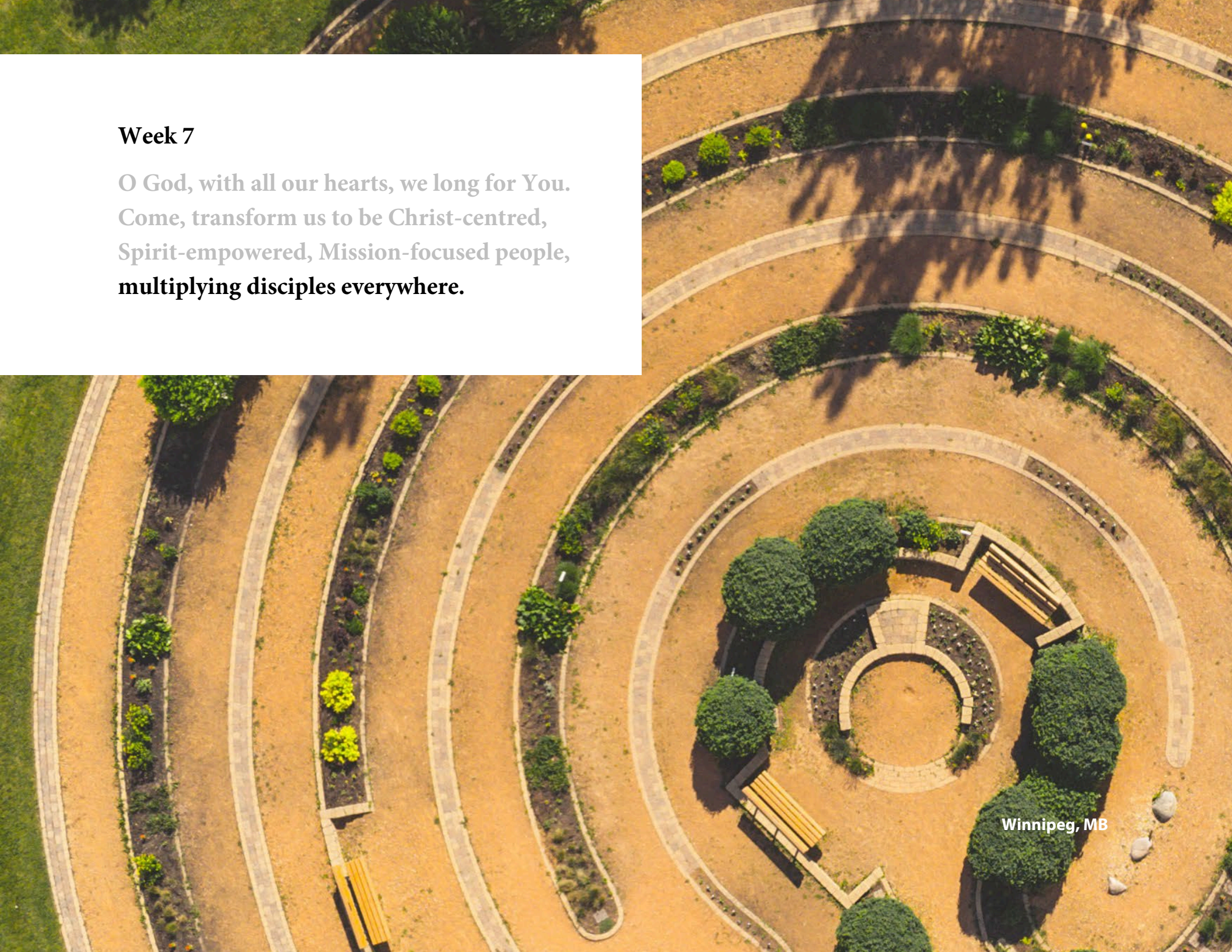
“Transform us to be Mission-focused...”

DURING THE WEEK:

As we get closer to Assembly, it is important to remember that Jesus told the disciples to do two things: Wait for the empowering of the Spirit and declare the Kingdom of God across the earth. Pray that the Holy Spirit will fall on our delegates so that the Good News of the Kingdom can reach out to the uttermost parts of the planet.

Week 7

O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, transform us to be Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.



Winnipeg, MB

“Multiplying Disciples Everywhere.”

JUNE 27-JULY 2

“O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, transform us to be
Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered,
Mission-focused people,
Multiplying disciples everywhere.”

What The Alliance calls the deeper life is intertwined with missions. The two should always be integrated because Jesus’ ministry overflowed from his life in the Spirit. His goal was to cause the Gospel to impact every part of what it was to be human. He would pray and then be led to the people he would call to be disciples. He called 12 disciples to a disciplined life with Him and taught them to be responsive to the Holy Spirit’s leading so that they could enter into whatever mission the Lord placed before them.

Authentic discipleship is a lifestyle that includes reproducing the ability and desire to disciple others in others. In Acts, after experiencing the empowerment of the Spirit, the disciples immediately organized around discipleship—to maintain and deepen their own discipleship and invite others into doing the very thing.

The first picture of how they organized is found at the end of Acts 2. Remember, the disciples had just:

- Lived through the death and resurrection of the Lord,
- Experienced 40 consecutive days of encountering the risen Lord who told them of an impending experience of the

Spirit, attached to a command to share this with the entire world (See Acts 1:4-8).

- Taken part in a ten-day prayer meeting, waiting, as Christ commanded, for God’s Spirit to fall.
- Shared a corporate infilling in which the Spirit appeared like flames and granted gifts of power. They experienced the ability to speak in 15 known languages and saw unusual manifestations of power which caused their bodies to quake,
- Heard a sermon from Simon Peter, declaring that the gift of the Spirit was given as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
- Watched 3000 people embrace the gospel and get baptized on the same day.

Following their Holy Spirit experience, they organized to multiply disciples everywhere:

- 1) They gathered at the temple to hear the 12 teach, and
- 2) They met in houses to practice the disciplines they were learning.

Multiplying disciples happened through large group teaching *and* small group interaction. Consider this account from Acts:

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone had

“Multiplying Disciples Everywhere.”

need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47 NASB

Notice that they didn’t merely make a commitment to accept the claims of Christ. Instead, they practiced a lifestyle of learning, sharing, praying, and growing together—just as the disciples experienced in living life alongside Jesus. Discipleship in the early Church grew as they developed in four distinct ways:

- 1) ***They grew up*** in devotion to Christ
- 2) ***They grew together*** by sharing life
- 3) ***They grew outward*** through acts of compassion and sharing with those in need
- 4) ***They grew more*** disciples by sharing their faith and inviting others into the growing community of deeper life and mission.

Multiplying disciples everywhere includes inviting others, not only to the claims of Christ but to a community of believers with whom we share life. Let’s pray into this becoming the way we live.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING:

- 1) Reread Acts 2:42-47. What speaks to you most profoundly about the first Christian church?
- 2) What practices are you developing to help you grow in each of the four directions found in this passage:
 - a. Up
 - b. Together
 - c. Outward
 - d. More
- 3) Is it possible for us to embrace this pattern to multiply disciples everywhere? What would we need to do as a movement to see this happen?

“Multiplying Disciples Everywhere.”

DURING THE WEEK:

General Assembly begins next week. We have been praying that the Lord would reshape us to live out our vision prayer. Pray for our Assembly delegates to be transformed, even as we pray for the entire movement to experience a fresh anointing of the Spirit. We will have chosen a new president by the end of General Assembly. Pray for those involved in the choosing. Pray also for those who have put their names forward to be considered, that God is the one who does the choosing, even as our Assembly prays and casts votes. Pray also that God is glorified through this process.

Pray the vision prayer one last time and consider how God asks you to live it out.

Listen and worship with this YouTube version of Dan Schutte’s “Here I Am” arranged by Mark Hayes:

<https://youtu.be/CSODPhE-0ng>

THE ALLIANCE VISION PRAYER

The hand-lettering is the first half of the prayer and the illustration represents the second half of the prayer: that our hearts would be transformed and multiply life.

This guide was produced based on material from Rev. Dr. David Chotka.





**The Alliance
Canada**

cmaacn.org

