

KGF Church: Then and Now

2019-04-16

Beginnings

What we today call Kelowna Gospel Fellowship Church (KGF) began in 1960, when a group of 60 men, women and children people met in the Kelowna Women's Institute Hall for worship. A catalyst for forming KGF was the desire to share the transforming power of Jesus Christ with the surrounding community, in English.

First in rented, and later in owned facilities, these dreams took shape. Our current building, at the corner of Gordon and Casorso, was completed in 1979.

Seasons and Times

At the end of the 20th century and into the 21st century, the church was increasingly multi-generational, with youth and worship ministry as leading emphases. Most people were in Life Groups. KGF was primarily a blue-collar congregation. It was during this time that the church aligned with the Mennonite Brethren conference.

A season of turmoil occurred in 2007, during which a near majority left the church. In the sobering aftermath, the church regrouped, refocused, and rehired staff. The platform, effective communication, and popular programming became leading catalysts, and over time the church grew numerically, meeting in three services and on livestream. During this time a dichotomy emerged; people were being drawn to the church by the sense of 'home' - a place where all belonged and contributed. Simultaneously, a growing tension and breakdown of "behind the scenes" relationships on staff was happening. In 2017 staff leadership chose to lean into and address the issues around the tension. This was a difficult process that resulted in clarity and the beginning of healing. In early 2018 our much-loved senior pastor decided to leave KGF for a different position, triggering both a reset of focus and a near majority leaving the church in the year that followed. Remarkably the 50%+ who remain have leaned in with a patient sense of God's hand in the reset.

Insights

2018 was a refining year. Saying goodbye to KGFers, as well as pastors and church staff, was hard. Where possible, renewal and restoration was sought and occurred. A spirit of pride was named and confessed. As the year progressed, a growing awareness emerged of God disciplining and pruning and shaping us to become a truer reflection of biblical discipleship. Numeric success became a less important measurement. The desire deepened for discipleship to define KGF community, ministry, and programming.

Pain instructs. KGF's hard year brought about the conditions in which renewal flourishes. As the Body journeyed through low points, we experienced Jesus inviting us to cast our cares on Him, to look to Him for leadership, to live under the authority of the scripture, to deepen community, and to stand on His Grace.

Clarity and Calling

A committed core of ~450 men, women and children remain, moored to KGF's longstanding mission of "knowing Jesus and making Him known." The Holy Spirit is percolating new vision, even as the Body continues to look outward, bless, worship, pray, love unconditionally, care, serve, give. The desire for a pervasive and resilient unity is being met in reality.

The last year has been marked by community conversations and preaching that have renewed clarity about who we are as we faithfully came together to listen to God and each other. A commonly heard refrain is the desire for every member ministry. Out of a posture of listening, other aspirations are emerging. Though we naturally age, getting younger as a church is important, as is a more integrated intergenerational lived experience of church. Not lost is a resurgence of earliest aspirations to be an "English" church—that is, a church facing outward into the places where Jesus is not yet Lord.

Clarity has also emerged, regarding the core qualities we seek in our next lead pastor. In this new season we seek one who will be a spiritual exemplar and marked by biblical depth; one who will equip believers to be disciples in order to do ministry; one who is relational. Interested applicants are invited to submit a Letter of Interest and Resume to searchchair@kgfchurch.com. The closing date for receiving applications is May 6, 2019.