



Fondly remembering the life-changing impact Assemblies of God has had in his own life, new National Leadership Team member **Andrew Smith** emphasises that 'it's time!'

I this movement!

CORE POINTS

You may be asking, 'What does a healthy and connected church in AoG look like?'

Well, this is not exhaustive but at the heart of such a church the following core characteristics are firmly in place:

- Numerical and spiritual growth
- Clearly identified vision
- Godly leadership
- Good generational mix
- Atmosphere of expectancy
- Missional in outlook
- Culturally relevant yet naturally supernatural
- Kingdom minded

I vividly remember my first ever General Council as a young 26-year-old pastor. The venue was the Grand Hotel, Scarborough. The prospect of spending three or four days with hundreds of pastors and leaders excited me so much I could hardly sleep the night before.

What nobody had told me was that it was primarily a business conference. I went there looking to be stretched, motivated and inspired to go deeper in God and in ministry... I came away feeling totally flat and dejected, having observed days and days of people immersed in constitutional matters. I came away thinking is this what it's all about?

Back in the Scottish region it was much the same. The old district council meetings held quarterly on a Saturday in the upper room of one of our churches in Dundee followed a similar pattern.

Around this time I connected with a pastor called John Glass who was pioneering a church in Livingston and was Superintendent of the Elim Churches north of the Border. John's passion to see God move in Scotland and encouraging words to me as a young pastor made a big impact on me. I started attending some Elim regional days... they were completely different, focusing on relationship and bringing in cutting-edge speakers from around the country. I left these days encouraged, motivated and inspired to go further in ministry.

And then things began to change in Assemblies of God. Men like Warwick Shenton and Paul Weaver – to name but two – began to paint the picture of a brighter tomorrow. Regionalisation was in-

troduced in Scotland, under the visionary leadership of Peter Cochrane, and things moved in a different direction. The talk was now about relationship – working together, ministering together and believing together that we could make a difference in Assemblies of God TOGETHER. Business was still done but it was no longer the dominant theme of our gatherings. We came together because we wanted to come together – to hear from God and to go back to our respective churches and areas energised to make a difference in the kingdom of God.

I remember meetings when the presence of God came. As a 30-year-old pastor going through some extremely difficult and challenging times, I remember lying on the floor of a regional council meeting in Dundee and being prayed and ministered to. Hearing my fellow pastors praying over me and crying out that God would fill me again with his Spirit meant the world to me when all hell was breaking loose behind the scenes.

I remember the meeting when David Shearman was ministering and halfway through his message he stopped and prophesied from Psalm 66, 'You've gone through fire and water, but you will be brought to a place of abundance.' It was as if heaven opened and I heard the still, small voice of God declaring this Scripture



NLT member
Andrew Smith

over me... letting me know that in one of my darkest ministry times he was there with me and promising great things for the future. Seventeen years later it is a foundational Scripture that I have stood upon and confessed down through the years and I am now watching it come to pass. I honestly believe I wouldn't be in ministry today if I had not heard from God that day!

I remember the visiting speaker who prophesied over my late father-in-law, Pastor John Strachan of Aberdeen. What he didn't know was that John had just left the largest AoG church in Scotland to go to one of the smallest in Aberdeen at the age of 60. The word came clearly that God was going to make his latter years in ministry the most fruitful yet. Having being used by God greatly on the mission field in Afghanistan and then growing a large church in Fraserburgh, it was no small prophecy. But God is faithful! Six people grew to 150 people over a ten-year period – the church was transitioned successfully to younger leadership and today has just broken through the 500 barrier. God is good!

Looking back over the past 20 years in this Fellowship called Assemblies of God – I thank God for it. I love doing life in this Movement. The fellowship and friendship with so many godly people has enriched my life. I love the laughter and banter of being with the guys! I cannot imagine being in any other denomination. No, it's not perfect, but show me what is.

I'm committed to the ongoing journey of seeing Assemblies of God prosper and grow in the years to come. To me this has

to be a relational and purposeful journey. The heart of what we're trying to achieve comes out of genuine, authentic relationship – doing life together to achieve a common purpose. And the purpose statement of AoG excites me: 'To give every man, woman and child the opportunity of understanding the gospel and to provide a church where they can grow and develop in ministry for the glory of God.'

At a recent meeting in the Scottish region I challenged the pastors to spend the next few years building healthy and connected churches around this purpose statement. The churches in themselves will all look different, have different emphases and do things differently, but the end result will be the same... the reaching of every man, woman and child for Jesus.

I love the variety that doing life and ministry in AoG brings. We can journey together, build life-long friendships and support each other in the great purpose of reaching a nation.

The journey I'm on is to spend the next years of my life building a stronger, relational framework in AoG. I truly believe the best days of AoG are before us and not behind us. IT IS TIME to build like never before – a strong, vibrant, relational movement to touch like never before the masses of ordinary people in our nation who don't know this incredible God who is still in the business of transforming lives today.

IT'S CLEARLY TIME! Come on the journey with us! Life will never be the same again!