

Former Medical Professional Leads Charismatic Church in Toronto

Jamaica-born Pat Francis started a Bible study in 1989 that has grown to become a congregation of 3,500

Pat Francis, founder and head of one of Toronto's largest charismatic churches, doesn't consider her Jamaican roots or the fact that she's a woman as hindrances to the explosive growth of Deeper Life Christian Ministries, a 3,500-member congregation with strong ties to the community, schools and juvenile courts.

"God will have His way no matter what it looks like. It's wise to never put God in a box," said the tall, dignified Francis, who knows from experience the benefit of letting God have His way in one's life. "I had to die to myself and to my career in the medical field once the call became overpowering. I didn't choose this calling and did nothing to bring it forth but simply followed the Spirit's promptings."

Francis' ministry, which started off as a casual Friday night Bible study in her home in 1989, has grown into a church that is steadily on the move. Deeper Life holds three services each weekend; broadcasts a TV show; runs a Christian academy with 60 full-time students; and supports 75 community programs and outreaches, including an AIDS hospice, hospital visitation, and homeless and women's shelters. The ministry also intervenes in the juvenile courts on behalf of troubled youth and oversees several ministries abroad.

A new 600-seat conference facility, family life center and

sanctuary located on 20 acres of property close to the current church building was set to break ground in the spring. Although Francis is quick to give God all the credit, she is a determined individual who doesn't flinch in the face of adversity or opposition.

"Having studied the enemy and how he works, I saw how he keeps people from their destinies through lies and obstacles," said Francis, who holds doctorates in divinity and pastoral counseling, and is a certified psychotherapist and radiographer.

"When I started Deeper Life in 1993, all hell broke loose. The traditional church attacked me and the ministry with all kinds of false accusations," she told Charisma. "I stood strong in Jesus, and He allowed all heaven to break loose. Over 700 people turned up for the first service, and we've been catapulting ever since."

Growing up in Jamaica, Francis recalls being taken to a variety of denominations by well-meaning relatives and friends, few of whom knew about a true relationship with Christ or the power His name holds. At 8 years old, after having a vivid dream in which Jesus was going in and out of her bedroom, Francis committed her life to Christ.

"I knew God in a real way because He spoke to me, but I had no influences around to help in my Christian walk, so I backslid until I was 18 when I gave my life to Him again in a Brethren church," she said.

Francis describes her spiritual life as dry until her mid-20s when she saw the Holy Spirit moving powerfully at a Women

Aglow meeting in Toronto. After receiving a baptism in the Holy Spirit, Francis soon started an unofficial deliverance ministry in the Pentecostal church she then attended and sang and spoke at Women Aglow meetings.

“My name got around, and soon I was on the road as a missionary, going to Africa, India, Asia and the Caribbean. It’s where I got my real training for ministry,” said Francis, who also was working full time as a radiographer.

After starting a Friday night Bible study in 1989, which grew to 70 people within one year, Francis said God told her, “The seed has been planted, and the child has been born.”

“A couple of years before that, I had a dream I was giving birth to a baby, and I realized it was a spiritual baby,” said Francis, who is married but has no children.

Soon after that, Deeper Life Christian Centre was launched, designed and built by a former atheist who has since given his life to Christ. Almost from the beginning, Francis had a heart for troubled youth.

“I’d walk through the shopping malls and see the upset and anger in many of the young people’s eyes, and I knew they needed love,” she said. “Our youth ministry started off when I took 120 youth to a retreat for a weekend.”

Many of them came from broken homes, were in trouble with the law or had drug addictions. Francis and her staff mentored and monitored the behavior of the youth, and several have gone on to college, some for medicine or law.

Josie Newman in Toronto