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PHOTO: DORIS FLECK

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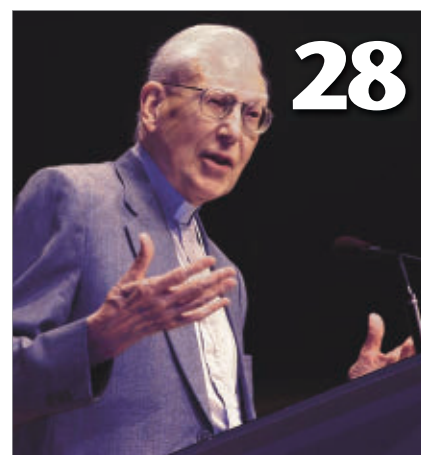


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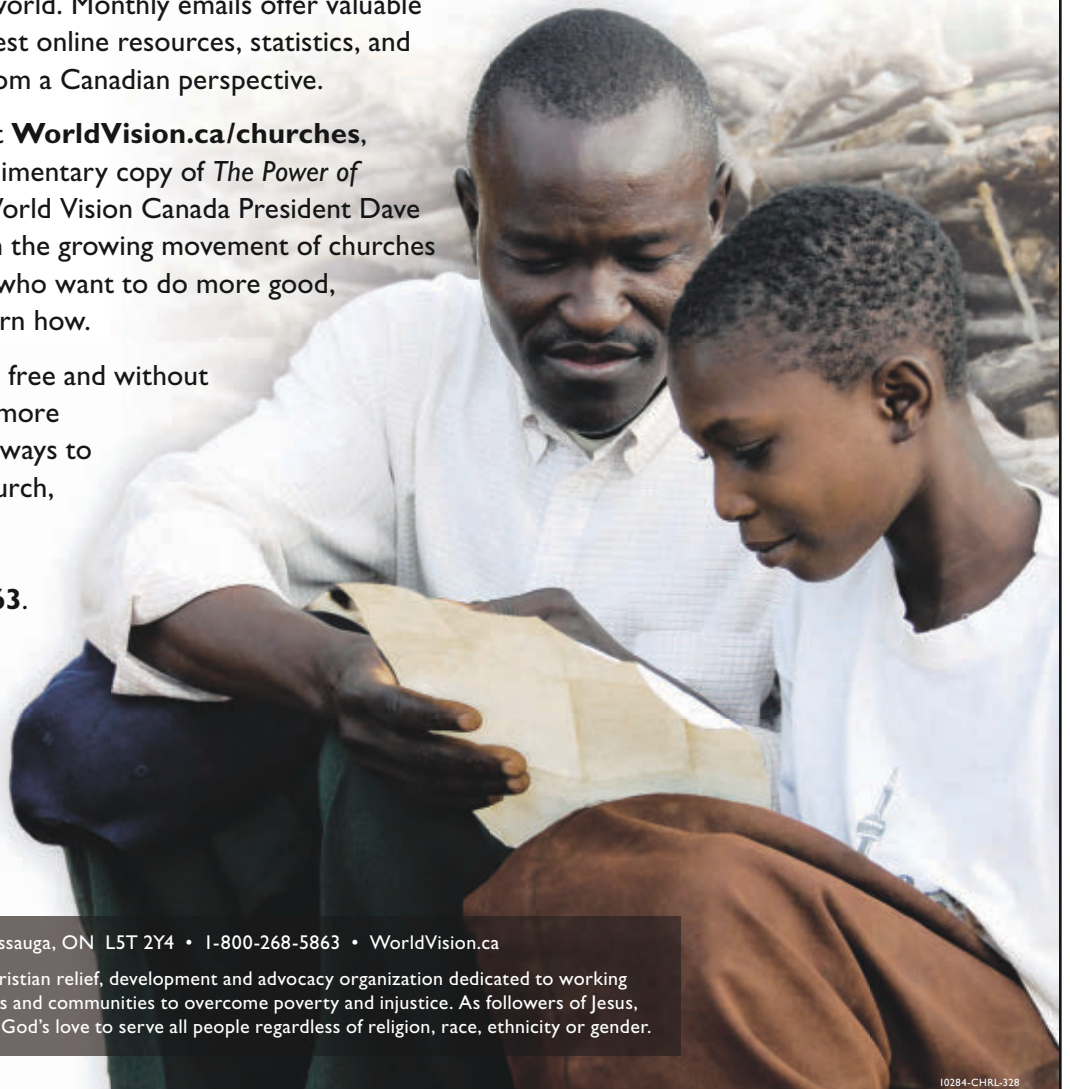
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Going Deeper

By Gail Reid

Seeking personal and congregational grounding

There was no overhead screen with words superimposed on beautiful photos, no comfortable seats, no smiling ushers, no hymn books and no worship band or musical accompaniment. We sat in hard-back wooden chairs in a room sparsely furnished with no rug on the wooden floor. Two or three of the men present periodically read something that moved them from their well-worn Bibles; others began a chorus or hymn, drawing the gathering into four-part harmony.

I sat silent, absorbing their words, trying to clear the lump in my throat. In this stark place, what made me want to know more and know it deeply? It was the authenticity of those believers.

Decades later I often wonder what strangers think when they come into our churches. Whatever the worship expression, those who are unfamiliar with the presence of Christ in their lives may find themselves feeling out of place. No matter how hard we try to “get it right” there will be a dissonance – between their hunger within and what we appear to offer. However, what can bridge this gap is the authenticity of the believers present.

Faith Today's cover story, “Hungry for God” by Dayna Mazzuca, tracks an important movement towards enriching this authenticity. Evangelicals are seeking more intimacy and depth in their relationship with God by developing spiritual disciplines. While the importance of doctrine is still foundational, a new hunger for structured ways to draw closer to God is drawing them into practices such as *lectio divina*, retreats,

meditation and solitude – all meant to nurture one's inner spiritual life.

Another movement is occurring among evangelical congregations. After decades of embracing the “seeker-sensitive” model for drawing newcomers into church, originator Willow Creek Church admits it may not enable spiritual growth. In “Ideas Prompt Shift in Church Methods,” Doris Fleck covers ways that Evangelicals are adjusting to

Evangelicals are seeking increased intimacy with God

this challenge by developing effective strategies to encourage true discipleship through spiritual growth and a new commitment to “missional” faith.

Others suggest congregations consider both age and gender issues. In “Risking Significance,” Ben Chandler raises the contrasting spiritual needs of young and old, male and female.

Someone who has lived through all of these shifts is evangelical theologian J.I. Packer, author of the classic *Knowing God*. In an exclusive interview with *Faith Today*, Packer candidly outlines the present struggles faced by Evangelicals within The Anglican Church of Canada. Because of his stand for the historic and biblical definition of marriage, Packer has gone from respect within his denomination to being charged with the “presumption of abandonment of the exercise of ministry.” His comments challenge us to go deeper into our own faith and to seek out the spiritual discipline needed to strengthen it. ■

Gail Reid is managing editor of Faith Today and director of communications for The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.



Islam in Canada

Re: *Getting to Know Our Muslim Neighbours* (Mar/Apr 2008)

Much as I agree with Alan Guenther that we need to reach out to Muslims, we should not ignore the following points.

We can no more separate Muslims from Islam than we can separate Christians from the teachings of Jesus.

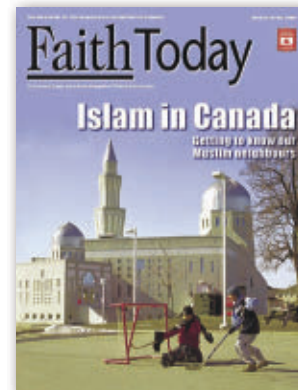
Islam is not merely a religion; it is also a political system. There is no separation of “Church and State” in the vast majority of Islamic countries.

Guenther’s statement “Muslims believe God sent revelations to Muhammad” implies that God and Allah are the same person. Not so – Allah is not the God of the Bible and not the God Christians wor-

ship. God has a Son while, according to the Qur’an, Allah can have no son.

To quote Robert Spencer, an American expert on jihad: “[T]he Qur’an, the Hadiths . . . bear witness that Islam has a developed doctrine, theology and law that mandate violence against unbelievers.”

H. J. (HERMAN) DOST
Ignace, Ont.



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No Seeker Apology

Re: *Religion Watch* (Mar/Apr 2008)

I applaud James Beverley for writing a more balanced article than others I have read about Bill Hybels’ “confession.” But I question lines like these: “Hybels discovered that key practices of the seeker-sensitive paradigm had not worked” and “One of North America’s major churches now admits flaws in its seeker-sensitive model.” This is not true.

I heard Hybels speak last summer and it seems to me the Christian media have ended up missing the message altogether. Those who read the book *Reveal* will realize that what Willow Creek Church has discovered primarily is that it failed to train believers to feed themselves spiritually.

This has nothing to do with being seeker sensitive and everything to do with missing a key ingredient of discipleship – a mistake *any* church could make, seeker sensitive or seeker repulsive.

Hybels never once apologized for being seeker sensitive yet that is exactly what Christian writers are telling us he did. This is gravely unfortunate as now it will add fuel to the fire of those churches who believe the world should adapt their language, their musical style, their “culture” in order to be Christian.

I appreciate that Beverley did extend Willow some grace but he could have been more accurate.

TRACY OTTENBREIT
Slave Lake, Alta.

Baptism

Re: Ask a Theologian (Mar/Apr 2008)

I appreciated Stan Fowler's article in which he suggests baptism does relate to the question of a person receiving salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Many Evangelicals presume that a person is saved "by faith alone" and yet many New Testament passages are not so simple.

For example, can we have saving faith without repentance? Can a person claim salvation without open confession of Christ as Lord? What about remaining faithful to God until we leave this world (Revelation 2:10, 1 Corinthians 15:2)? And to a similar degree, can there be saving faith without baptism? As Fowler pointed out, 1 Peter 3:21 associates baptism with salvation and the resurrection power of Christ in us.

Of course we can take any one of these elements and stress it without due regard to others. This would be twisting Scripture to agree with our own particular understanding of how one is saved.

I believe we should accept each of these as parts of a whole that defines conversion to Jesus Christ. Receiving salvation is more than simply raising a hand, going forward for prayer or reciting the "sinner's prayer."

GEORGE REPETSKI
Toronto, Ont.

Climate Change

Re: A Primer on Climate Change (Jan/Feb 2008)

I am deeply disappointed in the position taken on climate change. This issue is being badly handled by non-scientific people egged on by the media and people like Al Gore who have personal and financial gain from it.

Clearly the world is warming and has been for centuries as the melting of the ice cap over North America testifies. The Earth has heated and cooled many times since its creation and this is just another natural cycle.

Kyoto and other world agreements

will do nothing to change the climate but could well improve the urban air pollution problem on which big cities are choking. This however is a localized issue and does not need to be dealt with on a world-wide scale.

The dictators and powerful people in poor countries will profit from money transfers. Their people will continue to suffer from lack of industrial progress. And rich countries will suffer under the load of the financial transfer of funds.

God is still and always will be in control of the climate of the world. Let's not be messing in His affairs!

BRYAN ST GEORGE
Kelowna, B.C.

I'm glad Christians care about climate change but, although it's a very important issue and very worthy of debate and inspection, there is a greater crisis looming: global poverty.

A global carbon credit emissions program (if embraced) could lift many yet impoverished countries out of their gloom and the debt with which we have saddled them.

Though it's true the obstacles are immense, this is really the true benefit of addressing the global warming issue.

For the first time in history, thanks to technology, impoverished countries are quickly becoming aware of the true disparity that exists between the rich and themselves. If we don't solve this crisis first, we needn't worry about the climate issue as there may be little left to save by then.

JASON HENN
Airdrie, Alta.

Big Pharma

Re: Faith in Health Care (Jan/Feb 2008)

This article dealt with some ethical issues facing medical caregivers but did not deal with the elephant in the living room: the conflict of interest between the pharmaceutical industry and the purveyors of their goods, medical doctors. The enormous problems caused by the industry's influence have been documented by all top-

Awarded: Dr. Peter Mahaffy, a chemistry professor at the King's University College in Edmonton, with a 3M Canada Teaching Fellowship. The Fellowship, regarded as Canada's top teaching award, honours educational leadership and excellence in undergraduate teaching. This is the first time a teacher from a faith-based institution has received the 3M award. King's is also the smallest university to have a 3M award winner on its faculty. www.kingsu.ca

drawer, peer-reviewed medical journals as being incongruent with evidence-based medicine and good care.

Christian physicians should be the first to confront this problem. Medicine's dirty little secret is that standard business practices include the giving and receiving of gifts, meals, trips south and cold hard cash to doctors in order to maintain Big Pharma's position and profits. This is influence peddling of the highest order, which in other industries is referred to as bribery and corruption.

I am puzzled by the lack of discernment of those involved who are blind to these principalities and powers. While I am not surprised at the industry continuing to conduct its business affairs this way, it is sad that believers would compromise their personal and professional integrity for a free meal and a few trinkets. It would be timely for those in the Christian medical community to deal with the real ethical issue affecting health care today.

STUART KINSINGER
Thornhill, Ont.

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Canadian Sculptor's Art Grows Popular

When sculptor Timothy P. Schmalz of Waterloo, Ont., came up with a fresh idea for symbolizing the resurrected Jesus, he never imagined the idea would catch on in 1,000 churches in a single year.

The idea is simple: a footprint pierced by a wound from the cross.

Schmalz is a Roman Catholic artist who creates bronze and wood-resin sculptures commissioned by Christian groups. He has produced work for several evangelical Protestant groups, including an Anglican church in Toronto and a Salvation Army centre in London, Ont.

Schmalz has now produced a variety of items with the wounded footprint image, many of them captioned by John

10: 27: "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me."

"Symbols become worn down through the passage of time," Schmalz explains, "and gradually lose their edge and sharpness. It is the role of the artist to create new and bold images that clearly direct new generations to the old eternal truths."

Schmalz and business partner Tony Frey (www.followme.ca) started promoting the idea with a brochure mailed to 30,000 churches and youth group leaders. They offer the image on T-shirts, hats, wristbands, magnets, necklaces, stepping stones and the like.

Demand grew exponentially so that last year more than 1,000 churches have used the Follow Me items as fundraisers. Many are Baptist, Pentecostal and Assemblies of God.

More than 100 bookstores sell the products. So far the business has also shipped more than half a million wristbands, tens of thousands of car magnets, and countless T-shirts and hats. ■

—MELISSA MARTZ



Ministry Reaches Skaters

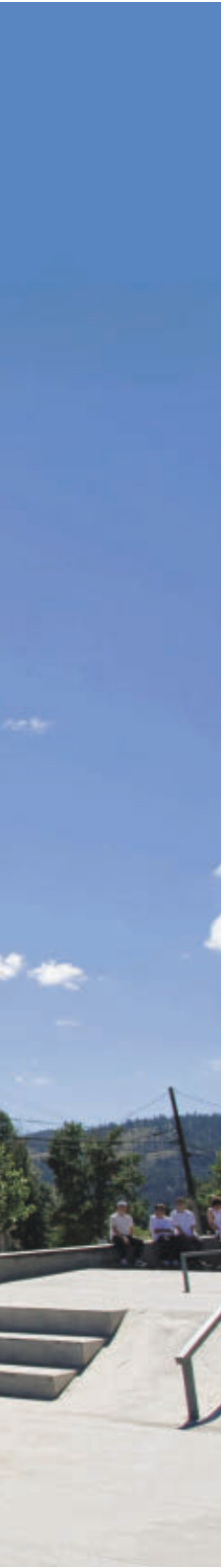


PHOTO © CURTIS HILDEBRAND

Derek Epp blasts off at Skatelite's skate camp.

When Dean Dahl began his work with Young Life of Canada's programs for teenagers, he tried to get the group of skateboarders he hung out with interested in the organization. He quickly discov-

ered that skateboarding was their primary passion. Dahl concluded Young Life would have to cater the ministry to skaters or lose them. "We realized God was placing us skateboarding leaders in the middle of the skate scene," Dahl



says. “Our skate ministry started from there.”

Skatelite, a division of Young Life’s ministry to young people, launched 15 years ago. Today, Skatelite builds community in Canada’s skateboarding scene through weekly skate clubs, skate contests, summer and winter skate camps and service trips to help skaters in low-income communities in Canada and around the world. They currently have three staff and ministries in Victoria, Vancouver, Abbotsford, Kelowna and Prince George in British Columbia and in Edmonton.

Dahl has seen a lack of positive male role models in the lives of many of the skaters he works with, and so Young Life’s work tends to focus on young men and boys, many of whom have no father figures. “[Skaters] need to learn that God wants to be a Father to them,” says Dahl, who has been a skater for 18 years. “We can be a witness to that as older guys sharing and living the gospel in front of them. Young guys today are lost in many ways. This can literally save their lives as well as bring hope in a world of despair.”

The ministry has seen many positive success stories of youth developing as skaters and sharing their faith in Christ as pro skaters, and skate shop and company owners. “One amazing blessing is to reach out to kids, see them begin a relationship with Jesus and grow into men of God,” says Dahl. (Visit www.skatelite.ca.) ☒ —NIPA MUKERJI

Canadian Romance Writer Shares Her Heart

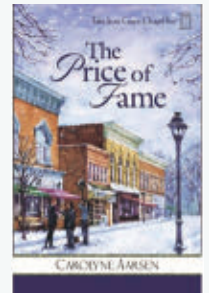
One of the most prolific writers of Christian romance lives tucked away in the back roads of Neerlandia, Alta. Carlyne Aarsen will soon have 24 books to her name.

Aarsen’s latest release *The Price of Fame* came out in February of this year. Her next book *Finally a Family*, in the Harlequin series for Christians called Love Inspired, is due in June. Aarsen will also be keynote speaker at the Word Guild’s annual Write! Canada conference in Guelph, Ont., in June.

“My devotional time is vital to my writing career and my life,” Aarsen says. “I am still reaching for the ultimate relationship with Christ, still trying to make Him King over all areas of my life.”

Working on her own, as many writers do, is a challenge for Aarsen: “This has the potential to create a crazy lady who talks to herself while vacuuming around the piles of books dominating every empty space in the house.” And despite the countless books she has authored, Aarsen says it took some time to get the initial one published. “My writing career started with a correspondence writing course.” It was through a subsequent course that she wrote her first book, which was purchased five years later by the Love Inspired line. Aarsen says her main writing goal is to “take people on an honest journey that might make them laugh or cry but will challenge them to enjoy the fearsome power of faith and the people God puts in their lives.”

It is a journey Aarsen is on herself as she finds hope in God’s forgiving love: “He loves me in spite of not only the darkness of my soul but also the foolishness of it. That gives me great comfort.” ☒ —EMILY WIERENGA



I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

– 3 John 1:4 TNIV

PHOTO: ROB ROBOTHAM

Sisters Use Art to Raise Awareness



Art is more than a hobby – it’s a way to change the world: Marcie Rice (far left), Julie Rohr (far right) and two orphan children.

For Edmonton’s Julie Rohr, 25, and her 21-year-old sister, Marcie Rice, who attend Edmonton’s City Centre Church, art is a way to change the world.

Last August they put this philosophy into action by spending a month in Peru teaching orphans how to photograph and paint. Then they compiled the pictures into a book and launched it at an art show in December. The book is entitled *Mirada*, which means “Look!” in Spanish. So far the sisters have raised more than \$2,500 for Casa de Paz, the orphanage for abused children and pregnant teens where they

spent their time. “I constantly find myself amazed at the children’s pictures,” says Rohr. “They photograph whatever they find important or beautiful without overthinking lighting, space or proportion of the picture.”

“A highlight for me,” Rohr says, “was working with a little boy named Danilo, four years old, who was severely abused before coming to Casa de Paz. I spent a few mornings with him to see what kind of images he would capture. The first morning he took 80 pictures of his finger covering the lens! Some of the photos he took were really beautiful.”

Peru was just the beginning of what

Rohr and Rice hope will be a lifelong project of using art to raise awareness of global issues.

The two have formed a non-profit organization called Papercastle with the intention of doing just that. The name Papercastle, says Rice, “reminds us how fragile life is and how one day everything we work so hard to accomplish and create is going to fade away. The only way to change the world is by helping one person at a time and doing all we can to raise awareness and become conscious global citizens.” (Copies of *Mirada* can be purchased online at www.papercastle.ca.) ■ —EMILY WIERENGA

Some Canadian Christian Farmers Grow Organic

Organic vegetables are more than just a passing health fad; they’re a means to fulfilling God’s vision for the Earth, says the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO).

Since 1954 the CFFO has, according to its website, attempted to enable farmers to work out their Christian faith in their vocation as citizens and to develop policy applications of

the Christian faith to agriculture. “God has given farmers the primary responsibility to lead, develop and conserve agricultural resources and to do so in partnership with consumers,” says John Clement, CFFO’s general manager.

These days this translates into organic farming and “other means of environmental stewardship within agriculture.” In rare cases where the use of chemicals is necessary, Clement says, the

Filmmaker Focuses on Evolving Canadian Churches

Joe Manafó is a man on a mission and lugging a camera across Canada. Based in Sarnia, Ont., Manafó is lead pastor of a church plant called The Story. His experience planting a church with a website that describes



Joe Manafó (left) speaks to Nick Brotherwood from Emerge, an Anglican church plant and one of the subjects in his film.

“life as a spiritual journey ... a road trip of sorts” has led him on his own ongoing road trip, documenting what he views as new church forms evolving across Canada.

The end result, Manafó hopes, will be a unique documentary ready for release in the fall of 2008 called *One Size Fits All? Exploring New and Evolving Forms of Church in Canada*. The question mark in the title is intentional. “With these communities, it is contextual based on their neighbourhood, the leadership and the vision. There is this stream that connects these churches together, but it is a mom and pop shop, a one-off,” explains Manafó. The churches are all doing different things in unique ways that fit the needs and culture of their very distinct locales.

The idea for the film began when Manafó “called some church planters across the country and realized that God is doing a lot of very cool things across Canada. We grabbed our camera and our gear and hopscotched across the country and gathered these stories on what God is doing.” Manafó de-

scribes the churches filmed so far in his independent production as “churches that are doing things, not necessarily

in earth-shattering ways but grabbing from the best of Christian traditions and slamming it into the present, balancing this ancient stuff with modern. They are churches that are very very contextual.” Manafó and his team have 19 churches on tape so far, ranging from Salvation Army, Pentecostal, Anglican, Vineyard and everything in-between. “We’re trying to capture a broad range,” explains Manafó. “You couldn’t put these churches side by side and say they are the same. It’s not one size fits all.” (For information about Manafó’s film or how your church might fit in it, visit www.onesizefitsall.ca.) ■

—KAREN STILLER

Souls Harbour Rescue Mission LifeChange Program Alumni of 2007



The adults pictured above committed one year of their lives to Regina-based Souls Harbour Rescue Mission’s LifeChange Discipleship Program, designed for people suffering from life controlling problems such as drug or alcohol abuse, joblessness, homelessness, mental illness, emotional breakdown, gambling, etc. The program helps participants gradually work their way back into society and emphasizes a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Michelle Porter, executive director of Souls Harbour, says that from this graduating class, “some are already working, others are going to school and some are now on the staff of the mission!” Over 1,200 people attended the graduation banquet. Juno Award-winning Christian musician Steve Bell performed and presented graduates with their certificates. ■ —FT STAFF

CFFO believes there is “a responsible use of them according to precautionary principles.”

Karen and Wayne Taylor of Auburn, Ont., farm with their parents under the CFFO umbrella. They believe organic farming is intrinsic to nature’s wholeness.

“We don’t see bombing the land with harsh chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides or accelerating beef growth with steroid implants and high-protein grain supplements as in keeping with the natural harmony of life,” says Wayne Taylor.

Not only do they sell free-range eggs year-round, but they offer fresh organic produce from their garden every summer.

“God said we have dominion over all the beasts of the field. That word ‘dominion’ does not mean to dominate or lord over; it means we ‘keep’ the garden well. We nurture it as God would see it nurtured ... with care, respect and patience,” says Taylor.

Clement agrees: “It’s really a blend of being good students of both God’s word and God’s world.” ■ —EMILY WIERENGA

How Churches Shape Culture

By Bruce J. Clemenger



Churches must play both pastoral and prophetic roles

To what extent are churches active participants in society, helping to shape our culture? Many Canadians say the Church is – or should be – on the margins of culture where it may address matters of the soul but not matters of the heart and mind. By “culture” I mean the “ideas, images and institutions that shape what is thinkable and doable at any given moment,” to use the words of David John Seel.

In Canadian history the Church has played three main societal roles: priestly, prophetic and pastoral roles, according to George Egerton, a Canadian history professor at the University of British Columbia.

The priestly function – such as offering public prayers and sanctioning or blessing state activity – is less common and less welcome in secular societies. In Canada this priestly role was often played by Roman Catholics or Anglicans. Today the state is increasingly reluctant to request the participation of a priest, and most churches prefer to keep a critical distance. In the end, the priestly role is not one that can be demanded by churches; it is one that a significant population must request from political leaders.

The other two roles are more common today and more relevant to the question of shaping culture.

In their cultural prophetic function, churches promote and advocate for societal norms or principles taught in the Bible and for policies that are consistent with these norms. Churches appeal to the population to adhere to principles and affirm attitudes that contribute to the betterment of individuals and communities: the sanctity of human life, care for vulnerable people and religious freedom, to name a few.

In the pastoral function, churches and their members care for the needs of marginalized people: the alien, the widow, the orphan, the poor. We care for broken people out of our own brokenness and failure, knowing the forgiveness and grace we have found in Christ.

The pastoral role is expressed in culture when churches

cross the street and engage their neighbours in word and deed, seeking to minister in the lives of individuals and communities. It is affirmed when neighbours seek out pastors and laypeople for counsel and spiritual guidance.

Often it is this expression of love that attracts people to the message of a church, which is the gospel. Pastoral engagement gives the church cultural authority in the eyes of others.

For the prophetic role to be effective, churches must have authority to speak. Pastors have authority if they are faithful interpreters of the text and tenets accepted by their congregations. Within groups who share no common text or religious affirmation, the basis of cultural authority is different – it is earned through service. A classic example is the authority Mother Teresa earned by her years of service – audiences gave her deference that no one else, whatever their position or status, could expect.

In a post-Christian and secular society, being effective in the prophetic role requires respect of others that is found in presence, persistence and a form of engagement that has the possibility of resonating across ideological, institutional and ethnic lines.

Effectiveness in the prophetic role means using language that is constructive, empowering and participatory, opening up conversation and imagination rather than closing them down. The prophetic voice must be persuasive, a voice that proposes and does not seek to impose, one that is respected both within and without the religious group. It must be a voice empowered by the Spirit of God.

We do not engage in the pastoral role simply to enable the prophetic, for that would be to misunderstand the nature of both roles. But if our cultural authority is lacking, we need to scrutinize not only the prophetic voice, our tone and timbre, but also our commitment to the pastoral role.

Churches can be culture shapers but not through the exercise of power – this has always failed. Rather, our cultural influence is a consequence of God’s love and grace expressed in and through us. ☒



Together for influence, impact and identity

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is the national association of Evangelicals, gathered together for influence, impact and identity in ministry and public witness. Since 1964 the EFC has provided a national forum for Evangelicals and a constructive voice for biblical principles in life and society. Visit us at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca.

Bruce J. Clemenger is the president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Read the relevant presentation by George Egerton at www.culturalrenewal.ca/downloads/sb_cultural_renewal/georgeegertoncalgary.pdf. Listen to David John Seel at www.wrf.ca/thINK. More of Clemenger’s columns are online at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/clemenger.

Join the Celebration

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is encouraging churches to hold local outreach and public celebrations of Jesus during the three weeks after Pentecost (May 17-June 1). This initiative, held annually since 2005, is a catalyst to draw people together in new ways to demonstrate God's love in local communities.

It's a great opportunity to try new ideas, develop new partnerships and strengthen existing networks. By participating with other churches locally and nationally, congregations can enjoy a greater and more lasting positive impact from their outreach. More details at www.celebration2008.ca.

Missional Church Project

The EFC launched a new project in March. The Missional Church Initiative exists to facilitate dialogue around what God is doing in and through His people across Canada.

Initiating conversations and building relationships between missionally focused churches, denominations, ministry/mission agencies and educational institutions will cultivate insight and understanding of God's great commission and commandment. More details at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/empowerment.

Success: Age of Consent

The EFC thanks the Canadian government for raising Canada's age of protection. New legislation that took effect February 28 raises the age of consent to sexual activity with an adult to 16 years from the previous 14.

The EFC has appeared numerous times before Parliament on this and related child protection issues, believing that children are among society's most vulnerable members.

"This brings Canada's law into alignment with much of the world. This will help protect our children from adult pedophiles and predators of pubescent youth," said EFC general legal counsel Don Hutchinson. More details at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/issues.

Former EFC President Dies

Mariano DiGangi, who served as president of the EFC from 1969 to 1971, died on March 18. A retired Presbyterian minister, DiGangi was also chair of the Canadian Lausanne Committee and a former professor of pastoral studies at Tyndale University College and Seminary.

DiGangi grew up in New York City, pastored in Hamilton, Ont., in the 1950s and '60s, and then in Philadelphia. For 20 years he travelled the world as general secretary of Interserve (then called the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship).

His work with the EFC provided the stability and direction the five-year-old organization needed.

From 1975 to 1985 he influenced hundreds of preachers as professor of pastoral studies at Tyndale (then Ontario Theological Seminary). In his retirement he ministered at Knox Church, Toronto. He authored many books and pamphlets and was a gifted artist. He moved to Ottawa in 1999 to be near family.

Leading Women Awards

An awards program co-sponsored by the EFC and a dozen other groups recognizes the achievements of Canadian women every other year. Among the latest winners: Doris Olafsen of Opportunity International Canada (business), Lorna Dueck of ListenUp TV (media), Barbara Pell of Trinity Western University (education), Brenda Pue of Arrow Leadership (ministry), Del Bannerman of The Mustard Seed Street Ministry (public service) and Jean Chamberlain Froese of Save the Mothers (science). More details at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/empowerment.

Vietnam Report Released

The EFC Religious Liberty Commission released a report Feb. 27 entitled *Religious Liberty for Protestants in Vietnam: A Summary of 2007 Progress*. It reviews the ongoing challenges of church registration, the situation in the northwest mountainous region of Vietnam and the positive impact of peaceful protests on policy changes. Download for free at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/alerts.

Who's in Your Church's Neighbourhood?

Detailed statistics about individual neighbourhoods, based on the 2006 Canadian census, are now available online from Statistics Canada. It's as simple as entering a postal code. Just follow the links compiled by the EFC's Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism: www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/evangelicalism (click Statistics Canada Resources). ■

COMING EVENTS

Details at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/EFCEvents or call 905-479-5885

- **Christian Leaders Connection** – This year's travelling EFC seminar for ministry leaders is called Shifts: Changing Gears to Handle Issues Facing the Church in Canada Today. EFC staff including President Bruce J. Clemenger will discuss law, religious freedom, public witness and spiritual trends. In May: Abbotsford, Surrey and Maple Ridge, B.C. In June: Toronto and Etobicoke, Ont.
- **Forty-Day Prayer Ramp: Evangelism** – More than 65 Canadian prayer networks plus hundreds of individual believers have already committed themselves to pray for 40 days for the success of evangelistic efforts in Canada. April 23-June 1. ■

Responding to Muslim Clerics

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) has joined a growing list of Christian groups responding to last October's public "declaration of the common ground between Christianity and Islam" by 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals.

The Muslim statement, *A Common Word Between Us and You*, is available at www.acommonword.com. More than 50 Christian public responses are listed at the Muslim group's website.

The WEA response, published in April, is titled *We Too Want to Live in Love, Peace, Freedom and Justice* (www.worldevangelicals.org/news/view.htm?id=1707). It is signed by Geoff Tunnicliffe, who is both director of global initiatives for The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and also international director of the WEA. It was composed by various WEA lead-

ers including Drs. Thomas and Christine Schirrmacher of Germany.

Among other points, the WEA response highlights Bible passages calling believers to be peacemakers, outlines a Christian view of love (Jesus' death on the cross is the greatest evidence for God's love for us; God's love and forgiveness enables our love for our neighbour), calls for Christians in Muslim countries to be allowed freedom of religion, and asks Muslims to distinguish between Christianity and western culture, noting that most western cultures increasingly reject Christianity and most Christians live in non-western countries.

The WEA has also been invited by The Yale Center for Faith and Culture to participate in a dialogue in July between 100 major Muslim leaders and 100 major Christian leaders.

Back in November the Yale Center

published a response entitled *Loving God and Neighbour Together*, available at www.acommonword.com. It was endorsed by more than 300 Christian leaders, including Canadian Evangelicals such as Geoff Tunnicliffe, James A. Beverley and John G. Stackhouse Jr.

—BILL FLEDDERUS

Preparing for Truth Commission

Aboriginal and church leaders visited Ottawa, Vancouver, Saskatoon and Winnipeg in March.

Their brief tour (www.rememberingthechildren.ca) sought to draw public and media attention to the upcoming work of Canada's Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The commission is a federal government body to be established later this year and operate for five years as a safe place for native people to share their stories.

Eventually the commission will report to the Canadian public on what happened in Indian residential schools attended by First Nations, Inuit and Métis children between 1920 and 1996 and the controversial legacy of these institutions.

The federal government co-operated with Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United churches in the schools. Together with native groups and other stakeholders, these bodies agreed to an out-of-court Indian Residential Schools settlement in 2005 that mandated the establishment of the commission, among other activities.

The tour included Phil Fontaine, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, and leaders from Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United churches.

Members of the Aboriginal Ministries Council, a group facilitated by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, attended the tour's stop in Winnipeg, and EFC staff attended the Ottawa stop. They have also met with Canada's minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Chuck Strahl, to discuss matters

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Christians Win Juno Awards

Canada's mainstream music awards were announced in April. Among the winners: Measha Brueggergosman of New Brunswick (classical vocal album), Christos Hatzis of Ontario (classical composition), Brian Doerksen of British Columbia (contemporary Christian/gospel album) and Paul Brandt of Alberta (country recording). Details at www.junoawards.ca. —BF



Measha Brueggergosman

Christian Workplace Winners

An annual program to highlight the Best Christian Places to Work in Canada recently announced the best of the 38 organizations that participated this year. This list includes those that scored higher than 4.0 out of a possible 5.0.

Six are based in Ontario: Bill Prankard Evangelistic Association, Compassion Canada, Emmanuel Bible College, Leprosy Mission Canada, Medeba Adventure Learning Centre and Teen Challenge.

From British Columbia: Alpha Ministries Canada, Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Focus on the Family Canada and Power to Change Ministries (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ).

From Central Canada: Calgary's Centre Street Church, Winnipeg's Church of the Rock, Mennonite Central Committee Alberta, Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba and Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan.

The Canadian Council of Christian Charities "sponsors this employee survey because we want all Christian ministries to become exemplary workplaces that model our faith in action," says John Pellowe, CEO of the council. Details at www.cccc.org/releases?2008-04-03. —BF / CCCC

pertaining to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

A popular-level educational resource on the topic sponsored by the federal government and native groups is available at www.wherethechildren.ca.

—BF

Marriage Counselling Ministry Grows

Caring for the Heart Ministries, a pastoral marriage counselling ministry headed by John Regier of Colorado Springs, Colo., is expanding in Canada. Two offices in Montreal and a third in Edmonton opened in January.

Regier, a former Lutheran pastor, developed a way of applying biblical principles to counselling and has used it for the past 12 years. It's his vision to see counsellors trained across North America to prevent divorce.

His strategy emphasizes identifying and resolving emotional and spiritual issues that keep couples from intimacy in marriage. Prayer and depending on God for healing are key components.

Regier's ministry (www.caringfortheheart.org) expanded into Canada in 2003 under the direction of Bob Bramhill who pastors a church in Gorrie, Ont.

"John's method of counselling is very scriptural and really gets to the heart and root of the problems, which didn't seem to be happening in traditional methods of counselling that we were trying to use," says Bramhill.

Quebec's Karen Savignac and her husband, Daniel, a former Baptist pastor, received counselling from Regier in 2005. "For us, it was a real turning point in our relationship. We had a lot of things to confess, a lot of hurts that

needed to be healed. I saw my husband's heart for the first time."

Merve and Marion Tuplin of Edmonton are also branching out as full-time counsellors in 2008. Regier helped "show us the hot spots in our marriage that we needed prayer for," they say.

Regier summed it up at an Ontario seminar in November: "Everyone wants to be loved. I invite Christians to stand out by caring about others."

—EMILY WIERENGA

Medical Organizations Diverge

Two Christian associations in the medical world that have shared staff and facilities for 20 years have decided to move apart.

From 1987 to 2007, the Christian Medical and Dental Society (CMDS) and the Evangelical Medical Aid Society (EMAS) shared many things, including one executive director for both societies and a joint publication called *Focus* magazine.

Nonetheless, they have maintained separate boards and separate newsletters. CMDS is an organization of Christian physicians, dentists and students. EMAS helps Canadians, especially medical professionals, with healthcare initiatives overseas.

The sister organizations reviewed their goals and needs over the past two years as they searched unsuccessfully for a new executive director. In the end they agreed that each should obtain their own staff and office space.

Dr. Roger Gingerich, MD, of Steinbach, Man., began as a half-time executive director of CMDS (www.cmdscanada.org) in March 2007.

EMAS (www.emascanada.org) is now based in Stouffville, Ont., where longtime joint employee Ellen Watson has become director of administration. Rounding out the leadership team there is Dr. Walter Woo, director of China projects, and a currently vacant two-day per week position of director of development (and communications).

—BF / CMDS / EMAS

Hung



After serving 32 years as a lay leader in an Evangelical Missionary church, Fred Clark began to feel a need to grow closer to God. Regular worship services were not enough. Although he appeared mature in the externals of faith, on the inside “I wanted and needed to grow,” he says.

At first he wasn’t sure what to do. “I had no real idea what that growth would look like or what was possible.”

So he went to his pastor who recommended the book *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. This well-known book (more than one million copies sold since its debut in 1978 and named one of the top 10 books of the century by *Christianity Today*) is by Richard Foster, a Quaker from Colorado.

The book includes chapters on meditation, prayer, fasting and study (“inward disciplines”); simplicity, solitude, submission and service (“outward disciplines”); and confession, worship, guidance and celebration (“corporate disciplines”).

Clark’s pastor also recommended Edmonton’s newly opened Centre for Evangelical Spiritual Formation (CESF, also known as Urban Sanctuary). Intrigued, Clark joined one of the centre’s spiritual formation groups in 2006.

At CESF Clark found a place to connect with other Christians concerned about maturing in faith. Clark had already accepted the lordship of Christ but at CESF he says he learned much better how to hear the voice and discern the leading of the One to whom he had pledged his life.

“I’m not who I was,” says Clark. “The process of spiritual formation is one of the most wonderful things that has happened to me since salvation itself.”

Some observers think Clark’s story has become a common one, part of a heart cry among Evangelicals today for a deeper experience of God.

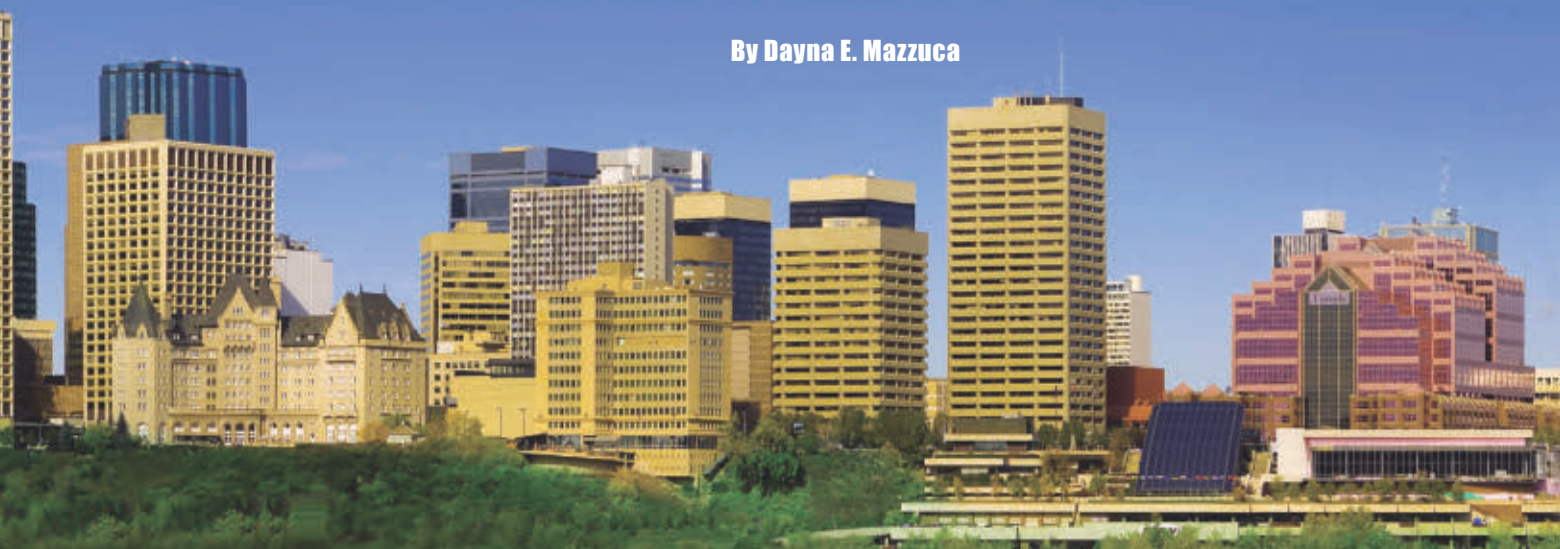
An Evangelical Rediscovery?

“Spiritual formation is certainly not new but it’s being newly discovered by some elements of Protestantism,”

ry For God

Spiritual formation movement attracts Evangelicals

By Dayna E. Mazzuca



WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

explains Victor Shepherd, professor of systematic and historical theology at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto.

Tyndale has offered a master's level spiritual formation program for six years. Today it is the fastest growing program at the university college and seminary, and its second most popular.

David Sherbino chairs the program and also pastors a Presbyterian church. "We have a really significant program that seeks to embrace the whole person" rather than strictly the intellect, says Sherbino.

Shepherd echoes that point: "Doctrine is a matter of the head, and this is an attempt to balance the head with the heart." Such balance, of course, never means engaging any teaching that detracts from the lordship of Jesus Christ or runs counter to the logic of Scripture, Shepherd is quick to add.

CESF founder Len Thompson agrees: "Bad theology should be rejected." But not all theology outside our own

denominational tradition is bad. As the Richard Foster book exemplifies, Evangelicals concerned about spiritual growth are "willing to consider any perspective supported by Scripture," says Thompson.

In some cases that leads evangelical Protestants to reconsider elements of clerical and pastoral practice rejected as part of the 16th century Reformation that split Protestantism from Roman Catholicism.

But at its core the current movement toward spiritual formation is simply a way to go beyond a surface reading of the word, beyond casual relationships with others – and beyond a passing knowledge of God. It is about intimacy and depth. Discipline is its method.

Changing Spiritual Practices?

As a result of more people turning to practices such as silence, self-examination, battling the flesh and walking in

Doctrine is a matter of the head, and this is an attempt to balance the head with the heart"

obedience, Sherbino predicts “a major shift in the practice of spirituality” among Evangelicals.

For instance, while Evangelicals are strong on Bible study and personal devotions, a more transformative approach is an ancient Christian practice called *lectio divina* (Latin for “divine reading”). This involves an approach to Scripture that involves preparation, meditating on the passage and actively responding.

While Evangelicals often have mentors in the faith, the spiritual formation movement suggests a formal relationship with a spiritual director can be most productive.

While Evangelicals are well-read in culture-current material, the movement recommends a close study of the founders, mystics and early defenders of Christianity.

Ultimately, becoming intentional about spiritual growth leads to a surrendered life affirmed by a godly community. It demands authenticity. What it does *not* offer are shortcuts. It precludes, for instance, isolation and quick spiritual fixes.

The disciplined approach of spiritual formation ap-



David Sherbino

peals to those still hungry after a set of worship songs and a three-point sermon on Sunday morning – hungry for “something deeper” as Lawrence Jansen, another CESF participant, puts it.

“There are a lot of people who are [spiritually] hungry,” says CESF founder Len Thompson, a former pastor of congregational care and a former counsellor.

Today, Thompson provides spiritual direction for eight pastors in Edmonton, meeting one-on-one, asking good questions, pinpointing

It seems to be working. “We’ve seen transformation in people’s lives,” says Thompson.

A Blessing Not for Everybody

One of the pastors meeting one-on-one with Thompson, Rick Heavenor with Millwoods Evangelical Missionary Church, thinks spiritual formation programs “could be of huge benefit to the Church as a whole.”

Professor Shepherd agrees: “The movement will be a blessing to the Church ... [and] do much to soften denominational rigidities.”

However, the practice of meeting one-on-one for spiritual direction, which stems from the Jesuits, is “very new” to Evangelicals. “It’s not necessarily for everybody,” says Shepherd, noting the Puritans, Methodists and Lutherans have historically cultivated the “inner life” through various means but with an emphasis

on the larger community.

To some Evangelicals, the term “spiritual direction” conjures up unpleasant images of putting oneself at the feet of a self-appointed spiritual expert – the kind of thing Protestants rejected in favour of everyone reading the Bible for themselves.

In all fairness, however, it should be noted that some practitioners prefer the term “spiritual companion” or “spiritual friend” and instead of “direction” offer simple accountability and a confidential, objective point of view on self-directed personal spiritual development.

Heather Hayashi is a spiritual director who works from a sunny second-storey office at CESF (in northeast Edmonton). Besides touting the benefits of spiritual direction, she points out how great it is to have a retreat centre within city limits where you can find “solitude and silence within the busy pace of regular life.” She attends a Christian and Missionary Alliance church.

Visitors to CESF can experience that solitude and silence as part of attending a retreat on the four aspects of intimacy (with self, others, God and your calling in the world). Or visitors might find it in the CESF library stocked with classic Christian books or in one of the small rooms for prayer.

CESF also reaches out to the larger Christian community through lectures on giants of the faith as wide-ranging as Evelyn Underhill, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, William Wilberforce and Augustine. And it has just started to publish a journal entitled *Centered: Thoughts on Evangelical Spiritual Formation* (details at www.urbansanctuary.ca or 780-477-5731).

Institutional Development

Michelle Schurek, a spiritual director in training, says that at CESF, “Spiritually, I have a place to come and be known,

Recommended Reading

- *Satisfy Your Soul: Restoring the Heart of Christian Spirituality* by Bruce Demarest (NavPress, 1999)
- *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* by Ruth Haley Barton (InterVarsity, 2006)
- *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (InterVarsity Press, 2005)
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* by Dallas Willard (HarperCollins, 1991)
- *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* by Michael Haykin (Evangelical Press, 2007)

Note: Most of these books themselves recommend Christian “classics” such as *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis, *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross and many others. ■

spiritually salient points for exploration, encouraging leaders “not [to] conform to the pattern of this world, but [to] be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” (Romans 12:2).



Clockwise from top: Len Thompson, Fred Clark and Heather Hayashi. It's great to have a retreat centre where you can find "solitude and silence within the busy pace of regular life," says Hayashi.

to ask hard questions and to be taken seriously."

Schurek, who attends an Anglican church, is also working on her master's degree through Edmonton's Taylor University College and Seminary, which plans to partner this year with CESF's newly opened Urban Institute of Spiritual Formation.

"We want to expose some of our students to the discipline and practice of spiritual formation," says Allan L. Effa, professor of intercultural studies at Taylor.

According to the course outline for Taylor's spiritual formation track, students at CESF will learn "concepts of repentance, surrender, soul rest and deep joy."

Such ideals resonate in a culture overwhelmed by workplace stress. A spirituality rooted in Christian discipline may be a perfect antidote for what psychologist Shannon Wagner called "techno-stress and the 24/7 workday" – something that hits pastors particularly hard.

Besides Taylor, in recent years almost a dozen other Canadian evangelical seminaries have begun offering new courses in spiritual disciplines (with titles such as Christian spirituality or biblical spirituality) as well as electives on prayer and retreats.

The change is significant. A generation ago many pastors did not receive training at seminary in the area of nurturing the "inner life." The common assumption seemed to be that right teaching leads to right thinking, which leads to right action – and that spiritual growth is a natural by-product of religious activity.

Proponents of spiritual formation argue this Enlightenment model places too much trust in human reason and leaves little room for mystery, and that God should not be reduced to one or the other. Many also see in spiritual formation an approach that is relevant to today's culture, which in some ways values relationships and is suspicious of purely intellectual approaches to life.

Besides all those signing up for spirituality courses at evangelical seminaries, other Evangelicals are looking farther afield. Eric Jensen, a Jesuit brother with Guelph's Loyola House, finds "more people from other [non-Catholic] Christian denominations" attending their retreats on silence, solitude and various forms of prayer.

"Traditional spirituality seems gradually to be attracting Evangelicals today," says Jensen.

As if to prove his point, Women Alive, a national evangelical organization, recently sent out a survey with questions such as: Do you meet with a spiritual director? Do you go on monthly personal retreats? Would the topic of spiritual formation attract you to an event?

These are not questions that would have appeared a few years ago.

Thompson, the founder of CESF, brings it back to the simple fact that when you're in relationship with someone you spend time together. If people can find quiet time and learn how to seek God during that time, they are transformed. They begin to live countercultural lives that are both inwardly fulfilling and outwardly effective. It's an idea that has taken hold – and has the potential of taking root. ■

Dayna E. Mazzuca is a freelance writer in Edmonton.



Ideas

Prompt Shift

in Church Methods

Many churches that aimed to be “**seeker sensitive**” 20 years ago are now aiming to be “**missional.**” What effect might these trends have in your congregation?

By Doris Fleck

A rock song by the band U2 blasts from the speakers as people pour into Creekside Church in Waterloo, Ont., on Sunday morning. A few stragglers are still being served their morning coffee when an energetic band begins a set of worship songs. The fast-paced hour of worship also includes dramatic sketches, video clips and a biblical message. It attracts more than 1,100 people each weekend.

The style of service is intentionally cutting edge and contemporary, with Bible-based teaching offered in a way that is relevant to people from outside the church.

Creekside is “seeker sensitive,” to use jargon first popularized about 20 years ago by Willow Creek Church in South Barrington, Illinois.

Back then the idea of taking a fresh look at all aspects of church from the perspective of visitors and newcomers was controversial in some Christian circles. But today it’s accepted as normal in many evangelical churches.

“Not to be seeker sensitive is to violate Scripture,” says Creekside teaching pastor Ken Taylor. “If you are going to bring lost people into contact with you in any way, shape or form, you have to be sensitive to them. Now it may be that you don’t do that on Sunday mornings, but then I would close the doors and not put a sign out.”

Growth Through Seekers

In a sense, Christians have tried to be friendly and inviting to their neighbours since the early Apostles. But fresh articulations of age-old values can be helpful



reminders. Centre Street Church in Calgary took such reminders to heart 20 years ago and the Church has grown so much it almost doesn’t need a sign anymore. On a Sunday morning you can’t miss all the cars lined up for a space in the parking lot.

Henry Schorr, senior pastor for the past 22 years, has seen the congregation grow from 300 to more than 6,000 in weekend attendance (at four services).



PHOTO: DORIS FLECK

Former Juno nominee Raylene Scarrott leads worship at Calgary's Centre Street Church during the Easter choir and orchestra concert.

With 2,500 new believers in the past five years, Schorr says "We've spent 25 years praying for what we are seeing God do now."

Schorr credits Willow Creek with helping Centre Street "become more sensitive to people who are far from God." But he explains this is different from being "seeker targeted," where

the needs of the seeker determine the service.

"Following God's call defines what we do," Schorr says. "We don't look to the seeker and orient everything around him. We go to God and say 'God, what is your direction?'"

Creekside and Centre Street are two of close to 1,200 Canadian churches af-

iliated with Willow Creek in the United States. Over the past two decades, Bill Hybels, the senior pastor of this megachurch, has been one of the most recognized proponents of the seeker-sensitive movement. His success in helping Willow Creek grow to be one of the largest churches in North America has changed the way thousands of congre-



gations worldwide “do church.”

Evangelicals by definition have always placed a high value on sharing their faith with non-churchgoers but the seeker-sensitive movement led many to try reshaping long-standing church practices – in the process often frustrating those who valued them.

For example, those who love worship liturgies and hymns dating back centuries have been frustrated by attempts to restrict music and language to material that feels comfortable for today’s infrequent churchgoers. Others have felt frustrated by a shift in sermon style toward contemporary pop culture references and away from close examination of difficult Bible passages.

Many congregations have struggled to find a blend of old and new that is attractive to visitors but also enriches the faith of mature believers.

Taking Church to the Seeker

Another innovation often attributed to the seeker-sensitive movement is the multi-site church structure. Take The Meeting House, a Brethren in Christ congregation in Oakville, Ont., for example.

In the late 1990s the church was outgrowing its rented facility. People were driving long distances to watch teaching pastor Bruxy Cavey on a screen in the overflow room. Then congregation members from Hamilton suggested a satellite site in their area.

“We said ‘That’s a crazy idea. No-

body goes to church to watch it on a screen,” Cavey remembers. But the group from Hamilton said “We do.”

SilverCity Theatres has now provided rental for satellite sites in Hamilton, Brampton, uptown and downtown Toronto and the Kitchener-Waterloo region. This fall the Hamilton location will be birthing a daughter site and the first long-distance facility will be set up in Ottawa.



It’s great for seekers to hear discipleship teaching so they know the kind of commitment it would take to live the Christian walk: Bruxy Cavey.

“If it works we will be able to plant a site in whatever city wants us,” Cavey says.

The Meeting House is a house-church movement that numbers more than 4,000, with the Sunday service being optional, Cavey explains. Rapid growth has caused very few problems since “everything a church does happens in our house church. That’s why we can grow to whatever size we want and it

doesn’t change our experience of fellowship and accountability.”

Cavey intends that his preaching, while relevant to seekers, will not become watered down. His 45-minute, Bible-based messages are geared to challenge everyone, wherever they are in their spiritual life. (In Calgary, Schorr does much the same.) Cavey argues it’s great for seekers to hear discipleship teaching so they know the kind of commitment it would take to live the Christian walk.

Discipleship: The Big Issue

Cavey’s emphasis on discipleship has become a common one in many churches this year. The latest push comes from Willow Creek itself. Last

year Hybels admitted he got “the wake-up call” of his adult life when the results of a comprehensive congregational survey clearly faulted the church in the area of discipleship and spiritual growth.

Willow Creek’s mission statement has always been to “turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.” They did this by building a program-driven church, assuming spiritual growth would increase with participation in church activities.

This assumption proved to be wrong where mature believers were concerned. Although the survey proved Willow Creek was making a big impact on people early in their spiritual journey, participation in the church’s programs did not help increase spiritual growth in the more seasoned believer.

“That survey just rocked my world,” Hybels says. “It was one of the hardest things I ever had to digest as a leader.”

Willow Creek’s executive pastor, Greg Hawkins, expanded the survey to include more than 500 congregations, including Creekside. The results published last year in the book *Reveal: Where Are You?* conclude that many churches are having difficulty making disciples.

“This is the big battle that all churches have had throughout history,” Taylor says. “First of all, how do we evangelize people and, secondly, how do we get them to grow?”

Hybels is adamant Willow Creek will make changes to encourage more mature Christians to become “self-feeders” by providing them with instruction on how to study the Bible and engage in spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.

Taylor has already made a step in this direction by eliminating Scripture passages on PowerPoint during the teaching at Creekside. The church now provides plenty of Bibles so people can look up the verses themselves.



PHOTO: COURTESY THE MEETING HOUSE

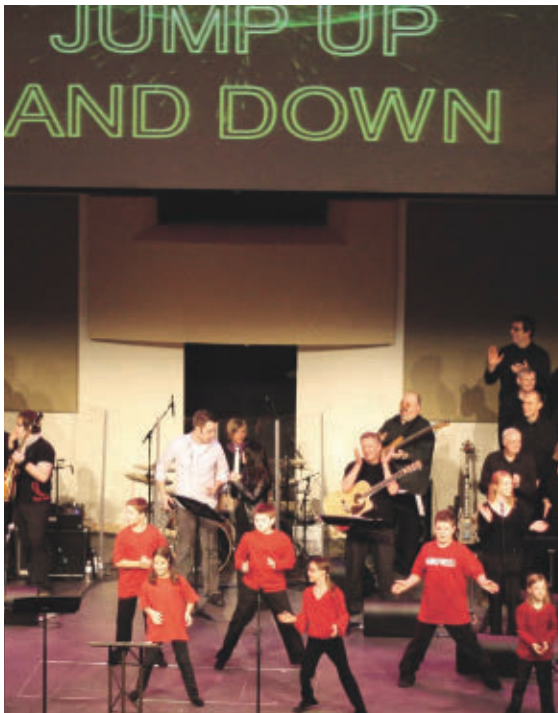


PHOTO: COURTESY MONCTON WESLEYAN CHURCH



PHOTO: DORIS FLECK

Clockwise from top: A band leads worship at The Meeting House in Oakville, Ont.; Calgary's Centre Street Church often uses drama and skits; music and dance feature prominently at Moncton Wesleyan Church in New Brunswick.

Taylor, Schorr and many other evangelical leaders in Canada have thrown their support behind Hybels for his willingness to expose his church to public scrutiny and look at effective strategies for true discipleship to occur.

Even Heinz Dschankilic, the dir-

ector of Sola Scriptura Ministries (a Reformed parachurch ministry) in Guelph, Ont., who criticizes the seeker-sensitive movement for “downplaying the true cost of discipleship,” still admires Hybels “for having the courage and the honesty to have a critical evaluation of

where they’ve come from.”

Willow Creek’s research will not be finalized until the end of April, explains John Baergen of Kelowna, B.C., director of The Leadership Centre Willow Creek Canada. The findings will be made public this August, followed by a Reveal Con-



ference at Willow Creek in October to unpack the results and provide practical applications for church leaders.

From Seeker Sensitive to Missional

In the past five years, Baergen has seen Canadian congregations, including

those associated with Willow Creek, shift from the aging seeker-sensitive idea to embrace the idea of “missional” church.

Cam Roxburgh of Surrey, B.C., director of the Missional Training Network, agrees that many congregations have transitioned from being seeker

sensitive or “getting them to come” to trying to be missional or “getting us to go.”

This is a necessary shift, Roxburgh explains, since the current generation is largely unfamiliar with Christianity and “they’re not seeking the story we have.”

But Roxburgh quips “There are 700,000 definitions of ‘missional’” since it has become the next generation buzzword of the church. “When many people are talking about being missional, all they are saying is ‘Here’s another evangelism program.’”

“But being the missional church is not a new program, not a new model. God is on a mission and He has asked us to join Him. The gospel is much bigger than the saving of personal souls. It’s the redemption of all things.”

When Roxburgh started Southside Church in Surrey 15 years ago, he was heavily influenced by the seeker-sensitive model for the first five years and then progressively helped the congregation develop small mission groups to be involved in their own neighbourhoods.

One mission group befriended local tenants in a low-income apartment complex, helping fix the playground and spruce up the place. When they discovered many of these people couldn’t afford to go out for a meal, they rented some catering trucks and set up a candlelit dinner for 120 people in the apartment’s outdoor courtyard.

“In the end some did start coming to our church,” Roxburgh says. “But the goal was to go and be Christ in the midst of the neighbourhood.”

Now Southside has developed five campuses – two in Surrey, two in Burnaby and one in Langley – to reach these communities more effectively.

The Alpha Program for New Believers

Aubrey Kirkpatrick’s experience of fellowship brought him to Christ.

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And even though he has never heard the term “missional” before, the young believer is already actively on-mission.

Kirkpatrick begrudgingly began attending Moncton Wesleyan Church in New Brunswick seven years ago for the sake of his wife and kids. He loved the (seeker-sensitive) contemporary music, video and drama but it was the genuine care that kept him coming back.

He told his wife, “I’ll continue to go but don’t ever expect me to be one of those happy smiling faces in the congregation.” Today Kirkpatrick laughs wryly. “It wasn’t much longer after that I became one of those faces.”

He credits senior pastor Laurel Buckingham with leading him to the Lord and quickly getting him involved in community outreach through the Alpha program, a basic introduction to the Christian faith.

Kirkpatrick, who was soon leading the Alpha course, says “Everything became deeper and more meaningful when I started to use my faith in a manner that was helping others.”

In February Moncton Wesleyan met for the first time in its new 2,000-

seat auditorium – the largest in Atlantic Canada. Buckingham sees this building as a bridge to the greater Moncton community as he is opening it up for secular events and concerts.

He is also delighted his church will be one of 20 satellite host sites across Canada for Willow Creek’s Leadership Summit this August.

Pastoring the congregation since 1969, Buckingham had to fight a long battle to see the 69-member church move from a traditional format, where all the readings and hymns were printed in the bulletin, to a contemporary seeker-sensitive service.

At one point he experienced so much opposition he says “There was a petition to vote me out and I signed it.”

But ultimately he stayed. “Somebody had to stay with it and break the barriers and not give up,” he says.

Now the thriving congregation

with the motto “You belong!” has 1,200 members. Buckingham says “I am believing God to see more things happen in the next five years than we’ve seen in the past 35.”

Looking back over the past 20 years, many observers seem to agree that an increasing focus on being intentionally seeker sensitive has brought more good than ill. Congregations that arrived at an acceptable place on the continuum between traditional and contemporary approaches have found the seeker-sensitive emphasis to be a tonic to

their faith and the health of their congregations.

All also seem to agree that the time is now to tackle the problem of how to encourage seekers, once they have been found by God, to grow in faith and spiritual maturity. ■

Doris Fleck of Calgary regularly writes feature articles for Faith Today.

“This is the big battle that all churches have had throughout history . . . First of all, how do we evangelize people and, secondly, how do we get them to grow?”

For Further Reading

- On Willow Creek’s survey research: www.revealnow.com. The book *Reveal: Where Are You?* by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson can be ordered through www.amazon.com (not .ca) or www.willowcreek.com.
- The Leadership Centre Willow Creek Canada: www.growingleadership.com.
- The Missional Training Network: www.mtnetwork.ca.
- For a look at generational change and an argument that the seeker sensitive moment has passed, check out *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* by Robert Webber (Baker Books, 2002).
- Hawaii’s Wayne Cordeiro will be anchoring the Reveal Conference with Bill Hybels and Greg Hawkins. His book *The Divine Mentor* (Bethany House, 2007) outlines how to become a spiritual self-feeder.
- *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* by Darrell Guder (Eerdmans, 1998) looks at the relationship between church life and missional practice.
- *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* by Australia’s Alan Hirsch (Baker, 2006) looks to examples from the Early Church for today.
- The Gospel and Our Culture Network, www.gocn.org, is a network of Christian leaders who are exploring fresh encounters of the gospel within North American culture.
- Neil Cole’s book *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* explores the missional idea of going to the places and people who need Christ the most and creating a church wherever they gather. ■

Standing On Solid Ground

Faith Today Interviews J.I. Packer

J.I. Packer has been described as one of the most important evangelical theologians of the late 20th century. In 2005 *Time* magazine dubbed him the “doctrinal Solomon” of Christian thinkers and named him one of the 25 most influential Evangelicals in North America.



Dr. Packer is the Board of Governors Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, a school he has served for 28 years. Considered a Christian classic, Packer’s *Knowing God* (one of his more than 40 books), was released in 1973 and has sold over a million copies.

Today, J.I. Packer, 81, is embroiled in the same-sex blessing controversy rocking The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC). Packer is honorary assistant in the largest congregation in the ACC, a church that voted to leave the ACC and realign with a more orthodox branch of the Anglican Communion based in South America.

In response, New Westminster Bishop Michael Ingham sent Packer and other clergy a “notice of presumption of

abandonment of the exercise of ministry.” Packer (JP) talked to *Faith Today*’s Karen Stiller (KS) a little about his life so far and what is to come.

KS: Was your original decision to leave England and move to Regent College, Vancouver, a tough one?

JP: Not really. I weighed the pros and cons and took advice. The reason it wasn’t hard was that, having visited Vancouver, my wife and I liked it very much. Second, knowing the story



PHOTO: SUE CARELESS

of Regent from the beginning helped. James Houston and I have been friends since 1945. I knew I was on the same wavelength as Regent. Thirdly, the job I was being asked to do was comparable to identical with what I was doing already, teaching Christian theology. And I knew that at Regent I should not have to do administration as a regular stated responsibility. Though I can handle it, I had a load of it that was heavier than I wished it were. Then, finally, I had become a sort of speckled bird in the English evangelical scene. The prospect of leaving intrachurch squabbles behind me was a very alluring prospect. This is, of course, ironical as I am now deeper in that kind of mud than I ever have been before.

KS: I was going to ask you about that after we had warmed up a bit, but let's jump right in.

JP: I've been sent a copy of Canon 19, stating the process that is followed for people who have abandoned The Anglican Church of Canada. That means they have either stopped ministering or they have moved out of Anglicanism to another denomination. Neither of those categories fits me.

KS: You're not really thought of as a rabble-rouser. Is this a sad time for you?

JP: I feel it's simply grotesque because Canon 19 doesn't apply to my situation and for the bishop to act as if it did ... I said grotesque. I think I'll say it again. I could have said ridiculous. I could have said fantastic. I could have used other adjectives but I'll stick with grotesque. I do not think a bishop who has not convicted me of grave moral or heretical practices is in a position to revoke my spiritual authority in Word

and Sacrament. The most he can do is withdraw my permission to minister in The Anglican Church of Canada. Since the thing that has occasioned this is the decision St. John's and other churches have taken to leave The Anglican Church of Canada, revoking my authority to minister in the ACC changes absolutely nothing.

So I'm not losing sleep over it. Though over age, I am still a professor at Regent College and director of the Anglican studies program at Regent. No action on Michael Ingham's part can change either of those things.

KS: When one is entrenched in this kind of struggle, it can be hard to love your enemies. How do you take care of

yourself spiritually through this kind of tension?

JP: I can only speak for myself. I don't have strong feelings of any sort. It's so completely irrelevant to the ongoing of the ministry God has given me. I feel no responsibility to do something for a diocese that has made the affirmation of gay partnerships a form of holiness. It doesn't make me angry. It's a matter of principle. I cannot budge.

KS: You have spoken before in regard to this issue, about points of doctrine that are essential and upon which there is no compromise, and others where people can disagree. Which are central?

JP: What is central is the gospel and the authority of Scripture, which teaches the gospel, and a number of specific beliefs that together make up the gospel message according to the Apostles. One central belief is repentance of sins. In 1 Corinthians 6 we are given a vice list of sins. The gay life is one of the things on the list. The spirit of the thing is to live chaste. You are living a new life now in the power of God. All I'm asking for is to get back to that.

KS: What about other things that Paul says are wrong, like envy, greed and gossip?

JP: I would simply say that, to the extent to which you give your heart to envy and greed, to that extent you are putting your soul in danger. What I can do is stand with my feet on secure ground and call to those wandering around with unsure footing. And I will call to them and say: "Don't risk your spiritual welfare. Don't risk your soul. Come and stand on the solid ground."

KS: So repentance is always key.

JP: Repentance is the halt, right-about turn, and you travel in the opposite direction of whatever sin it was that you were allowing to rule you before.

KS: You've been called one of the most important evangelical theologians of the 20th century. How do you process those types of accolades?

JP: When I discovered that was what they were saying about me, I thanked God for keeping me faithful and asked Him to continue to do so. I'm not a publicity person. I don't seek it and I don't think much about it. People can say whatever they think. One of the spinoffs I suppose, of people saying these things about me in the past, is there has been terrific interest worldwide that I'm under notice for abandoning the doctrine of The Anglican Church of Canada. I've had expressions of sympathy from around the world, the farthest being South Africa and every station in between. It encourages me. I am thankful for it.

KS: Probably the book that a lot of people know you for the best is *Knowing God*. Do you know God better now than when you first wrote that book?

JP: I think so. Although it's a qualitative knowledge rather than quantitative. That is to say, it isn't so much that I have

new discernment I didn't have before. It was written in the middle '60s – a long time ago now. Living with the truth as I think I know it, I believe I have a measure of depth and peace in relation to it that I'm not sure I had before. And, well, let me say it this way: it's for the Good Lord and not for me to say whether I know Him more than I used to. Getting older affects one's thinking inevitably. I shan't be around for very much longer. I'm in my ninth decade. The question "Am I ready to move on?" becomes a more existential, "thrustful" question than it used to be.

KS: When you ask yourself that question, what is your answer?

JP: I think so. And I hope so. But here I would much rather talk about the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, my Saviour, my Lord. And the faithfulness of the Father and the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit.

KS: Presumably you have practised

spiritual disciplines through the years. If you were to offer guidance to a young Christian on how to practise them, what would you say?

JP: I think I would say that it's a number of things together rather than one particular thing. It's God who calls the shots, not me. There are some Christians who would say "The big thing for me was prayer, Bible study." And my response would be "Well, that's where God led you and God bless you today and tomorrow." It's not that any one particular thing stands out as having particular significance in my life.

When I speak in public, I always have the sense that the Lord Jesus in particular does and must fill my horizon. He must increase; I perhaps must decrease. That sense of things is pretty constant with me. If there is a particular focus, I think that is it. I want Him to increase through me. And that is my privilege, a sense He has done that. I hope when the curtains are drawn, people will look back at Packer and say "Well at least he tried to practise faithfulness."

KS: What is your hope for the Church in Canada?

JP: I hope Evangelicals will practise unity more and more. We need to stand together as a solid block as the country gets more and more secular.

KS: What would you say to someone starting out in ministry? What guidance would you offer?

JP: I would say that, when you are in the ministry, you must take charge of your own time, your own program. You must discipline yourself. You should make yourself a timetable for the working week and try to stick to it. There are two reasons for that. First, nobody is going to supervise you very carefully. If you allow yourself to be lazy and undisciplined, no one might notice. And

the second is that undiscipline, laziness and disorder are, from Satan's point of view, virtues he values.

After 20 years of not achieving very much, the minister will have a nervous breakdown, burn out and so on and have to be laid off work. It's inner disorder that produces these burnouts and breakdowns most of the time.

People who work very hard but have taken charge of their own lives – and their lives are orderly – don't have burn-

outs. When you are making the best use of the time God gives you, things are orderly. You are living realistically within the plan you have made for yourself and you don't have the inner frustrations that bring burnout.

KS: But you might have a lot of other frustrations.

JP: You may have other frustrations. Being a pastor of a congregation is always a demanding and difficult business. If you're going to take pastoral care seriously, you are constantly thinking and praying how you can get the parish to move forward, this way or that way, people converted or straight with the Lord – that won't give you burnout. That will exercise your pastor's heart.

I would tell the young minister that this is the way it will be in ministry and to get his life in order. You have to find your own way with God devotionally. I can only say you ought, as a regular thing, to be getting words and thoughts of encouragement and visions of glorious things from the Lord. If you're not getting those, you are in a rut. If you are in a rut, for goodness sake get help. Become a partner with someone you are accountable to. Walk together.

KS: Dr. Packer, it has been my honour to speak with you. Thank you.

JP: Well, thank you, Karen. ☐

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Surprised by Cancer

By Andy Atkins



A Canadian ministry leader finds unexpected surprises and life lessons in a battle against cancer

One August afternoon, another perfect day in paradise ends. At my desk – precisely at 4:17 p.m. – something chafes my collar. It’s immediately off to the office washroom to check it out. Just above my right collarbone, a peanut-size lump stares back at me from the mirror.

My next move is to phone home. Should we keep our big city dinner appointment with a long-lost friend or go straight to a walk-in clinic? Three months later, dinner appointments were the least of our worries. Life and ministry routine was cancelled in favour of chemotherapy and blood transfusions.

Quietly and without warning, chronic lymphocytic leukemia showed up on our doorstep for a parasitic home invasion. The ensuing journey uncorked a keg of surprises and life lessons.

Surprise #1: Under the surface of family, friends and community lurks secret pain and suffering. Even Sunday morning’s scrubbed, shaved, made-up and smiley-face veneer covers a fragile mirage. Outing my cancer opened a floodgate of stories from this silent community of sufferers.

I was now privy to gory details only insiders usually get – like blow-by-blow descriptions of breast cancer lesions and the consistency and colour of post-knee-surgery fluid. I began to wonder what motivates us to keep so quiet about our suffering.

Could it be ego? After all, my name suddenly popped up on the church prayer list. My reputation, if not my identity, seemed at stake. I’m Mr. Iron Stomach – wandering into 14,000-foot Andes villages, munching half-cooked guinea pigs, sipping coco tea and returning home fit as a fiddle. Becoming Mr. Cancer made me feel weak and uncomfortable.

Still, ego-bruising was a small price to pay for going public. As missionaries we’re used to visibility and public sharing of what is sometimes private. Yet the response to my cancer news surprised even us. Locally, both small and large acts of kindness overwhelmed us. Globally, a fine mist of prayers rose heavenward from every corner of the world, each droplet focused on our family.

We vouch for sharing the secret – such vulnerability was well worthwhile. Far from going silent in our suffering, God shouted His love via His children.

Surprise #2: Pain and suffering is unfamiliar theological territory in our affluent Christianity. Take God’s sovereignty for example. My niece was the first to say it: “Oh Uncle Andy, God just can’t let this be happening to you! You’ve given your life to serving others and to serving Him.”

She wasn’t alone in expressing that. There’s a subtle assumption out there: giving it up for God is supposed to gain freedom from pain and suffering. However, our missionary experience is woven with both painful and pleasant threads.

An exemption from pain and suffering is not in our ministry benefits package.

Sharing our experiences and perspective led to an ironic role reversal. As the sufferer I became the comforter and the faith upholder. I was even asked to teach a Sunday school class on suffering at our local church. As the series progressed I was surprised by the nerve we touched. Clearly there is a profound thirst for a deep working theology

on pain and suffering. That kind of practical theology helps to arm you before a major storm like leukemia hits. That sure carried my wife and me – actually being immersed in the journey only confirmed our touchstone verses and passages.

Surprise #3: Cancer’s appearance has a strange throttling effect on relationships. Many felt awkward, even overwhelmed, and a handful of acquaintances stayed silent for months. Upon checking in, their apologies were consistent: they were afraid of saying the wrong thing.

This fear is valid. Awkward people descend into clichés, some definitely jarring. In contrast, one of my most touching memories is of silence. A gruff, tough, hard-nosed tradesman in our congregation grabbed my hand and shoulder. His moist eyes looked straight into mine. Twice he tried to say something only to shake his head. Finally he gave up, almost suffocated me with an embrace and walked away.

Such silence communicated TLC as effectively as anything verbal I have heard before or since. Awkward maybe, but 100 per cent love, deeply spoken. We vouch that awkward words or awkward silences do not make things worse. Reacting to these three surprises morphed into actual analysis. Here are my top-five lessons:

5. Comforting words don’t always comfort. Out of heartfelt goodness, we were told things like “at least leukemia is a good kind of cancer.” In contrast, the e-mail that

Outing my cancer opened a floodgate of stories from this silent community of sufferers

said “Cancer sure sucks!” oddly touched my heart. We were going through a death of sorts – death of life as we knew it of hopes, dreams, aspirations. We needed time, space and permission to grieve this scary, traumatic and downright awful house guest called leukemia.

4. The right time for just showing up is called “anytime.” Immediate family members weren’t even aware of each and every time I needed another’s presence. I probably wasn’t either. Four or five times I curled up in a fetal position, dropping into depression. Each time God sent friends – unannounced and unpromised – to pull me out of that pit. They responded to that still, small voice in their hearts, phoned ahead and dropped by. What a life-saver for me!

3. Information overload works against recovery. I jammed a four-inch binder full of Internet information. Our ears perked up every time leukemia was mentioned on TV, in obituaries or in conversations. Many times I couldn’t avoid giving into the scary stats or news of another leukemia death. We finally shut down our research, choosing to stick to one source – our oncologist.

2. There’s value in just doing stuff without waiting. What a blessing to hear “Call me if there’s anything I can do to help.” However, initially we were so distraught that making a phone call required a will and commitment beyond us. The friends

and family who brought a casserole, mowed the lawn, gave a ride, cleaned the house top to bottom or put up Christmas lights probably still don’t realize the tension they removed.

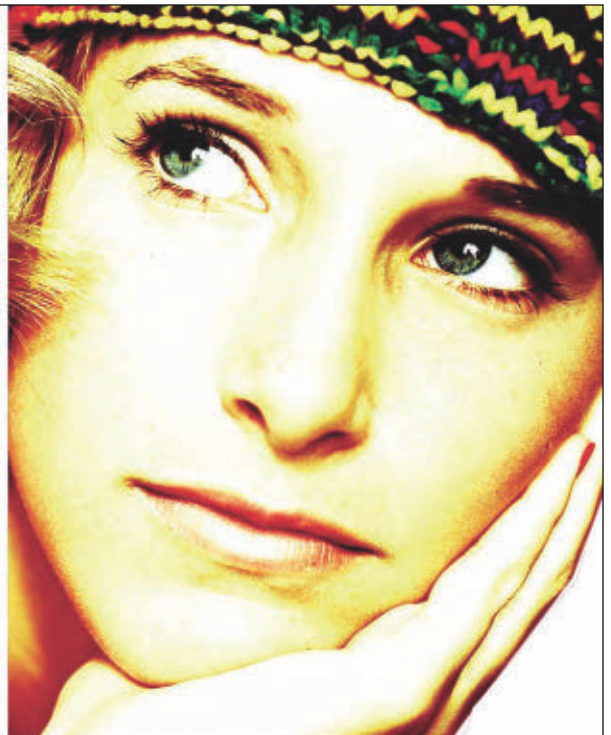
1. Scripture doesn’t automatically comfort or restore or rescue. It actually felt counterproductive. I needed time to process these biblical foundations at a later date in order to rediscover their truth within my new reality. In the season of diagnosis and discovery, my fear overtook my faith, at least for a time.

Now for my final surprise. Before getting cancer myself, I would have been Exhibit A for the very things that were painful to me during my illness. Probably I still am. I guard my privacy, especially in life’s aches and pains. When not in a theological mood, I expect God to be more Santa than Sovereign. With the exception of close friends and family, I awkwardly skirt around those in pain and suffering. I’m still not sure if I live out all the lessons I learned.

At least one thing has changed during the last year-plus while walking the CLL journey. I’m now comfortable and at home being Mr. Cancer. It’s a place where there’s strength in weakness. Not at all a bad place to hang out. ■

Andy Atkins is general director of Emmanuel International. He lives in Port Perry, Ont.

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Harvest Bible Chapel, Oakville, Ont.

By Stephanie Tombari



PHOTO COURTESY HARVEST BIBLE CHAPEL

The congregation worships at Harvest Bible Chapel, Oakville, Ont.

Go deep, and let God go long. That’s the lesson to be learned from Harvest Bible Chapel, a vibrant church community in Oakville, Ont., the second Canadian church planted by Harvest Bible Fellowship out of Illinois (known for its radio program *Walk in the Word* with James MacDonald)

Harvest Bible Chapel began as a small Bible study early in 2003. The young congregation soon united with an existing church, Calvary Baptist, and relaunched in April 2004. Today 1,300 attend the church each week, some coming to worship from as far away as Port Dover – almost 100 kilometres away.

Church members at Harvest dig deep in God’s word believing that no outreach committee, project or program will ever pour out God’s grace if not firmly planted in biblical truth. The church’s leaders trust that, when people love God enough to go deep with their faith, God makes a point

to pour out His grace far beyond human imagination. Sound easy? Not at all. But the congregation is committed to taking the difficult road – even if that means upsetting some people along the way.

Why Neighbours Know About This Church

“We’re not making it [Christianity] popular,” says Robbie Symons, senior pastor. “It’s not easy growth. Whenever you’re going to stand up and open up the Bible you’re going to offend as Jesus did. I have people walk out on my sermons frequently. People leave, but then there are people coming too. They are starving for grace and truth.

“So many ministries are good at grace *or* truth. Why not try to be good at both grace *and* truth?”

“One of our greatest goals is that people would encounter God – not experience God,” Symons continues. “If you encounter God, you’re going to change. Something will change. When you encounter God, He will speak to you.”

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When that happens, “people will leave and, when they come back, they bring their friends. The reason is that there is nothing that compares to encountering God.”

The Mission Statement That Moves Them

“The number one thing that we’re trying to do is to glorify God,” explains Symons. “We keep things really simple here.”

Harvest prizes being biblical despite the human tendency to set the bar much lower than the Bible prescribes. “Our flesh wants to do that,” says Symons. “We have to die to the self more than we’d like. But it’s biblical.”

“I don’t say the word ‘missional’ often because I don’t care [for the term] to be honest,” he continues. “First things first: the Great Commission. Don’t let what’s good become the enemy of what is best. If all you’re thinking about is ‘missional,’ it could be something that gets in the way of what is best. What is best? Loving God first, then loving others.”

The Breadth and Depth of an Outreach Mindset

Harvest has several successful outreach programs including a seniors luncheon and a radio ministry in addition to providing lunch for 125 high school students each week while seeking to teach them about Jesus. But Symons insists the church focuses first on deepening faith before reaching out to others through community projects and programs.

“If you focus on the depth of your church God takes care of the breadth,” Symons explains. “There has been so much focus on the breadth but a lack of focus on the depth. We are called to grow in Christ.”

“God is jealous for His own glory,” he continues. “When people are alive in Christ, it is so powerful. We’re not going to go out and establish all these [program] initiatives until we’ve established the depth. It’s easy to become

so ‘missional’ that your people aren’t changing. And if you’re not changing you’re not in the will of God. The will of God is your sanctification. That’s pretty clear.”

Seeking to Mirror Neighbourhood Diversity

If you’re going to have an authentic ministry in the Greater Toronto Area you have to mirror diversity, explains Symons. “Oakville is predominantly white but we get people from Toronto, Brampton and Mississauga. We have a strong Colombian [immigrant] contingent as well.”

Despite Harvest’s recognition of the diversity represented in its pews, Symons calls on the church to be reflective of Christ first. “I’m not so big into holding up multiculturalism as a sign of godliness,” says Symons. “Don’t build your church on that. Build your church as disciples of Christ.”

One Challenge for the Congregation

Symons hopes to see members of the congregation become better at overcoming their fear to share the gospel openly with others. “We’re good at saying ‘Come to church with me’ but we need to increase our ability to share the gospel on the spot. We’ve got a series coming up focusing on teaching people about evangelism. We’re going to do evangelism training. Over five weeks, you pray and ask God to help you share the gospel with one person.”

For Harvest Bible Chapel, deep faith in God’s truth should go along with any genuine expression of God’s grace. “An authentic ministry will offend at times,” says Symons. “Truth itself is offensive. I think we have swung so far to the grace side; it’s time to call back some truth.” ■

Stephanie Tombari is a freelance writer in Burlington, Ont. Read all the profiles in this ongoing series at www.faithtoday.ca.

Risking Significance

By Ben Chandler



A challenge for churches to put significance ahead of security. We need to take risks for the health of the church and the sake of the gospel

Security and significance are the two basic motivations at play in people's lives, and they often govern the preoccupations and decision-making in the Church.

Both are rooted in human nature, but people choose which will trump. It is clearly seen in the response of those Jesus called to follow Him: security-minded men held onto their material goods and wanted to "first go bury my father." Others left their nets or tax tables intrigued with the prospects of being part of an endeavour of eternal consequence. Catching fish provided security but fishing for people bespoke significance.

The entire life of Christ from His temptations to the cross was dominated by a mission. The pulse of the Early Church was its captivity with that transformative enterprise. They were motivated by the significance of what God was up to. The early Christians were able to limit their inclination to safety so that they might experience something much more meaningful and satisfying. Even martyrdom made sense.

Current analysis of church life cycles (at multiplying church.net) unveils how such motivations determine where a congregation is on the bell curve of incline, recline or decline. Churches on the incline are characterized by risk-taking, evangelism and life-transforming ministries. Churches in recline are focused on facilities, programs and adequate finances to maintain a respectable, viable congregation. Churches in decline, prompted by a questionable future, become obsessed with survival and preservation, desperate for the tenuous security of hanging on to what they have.

At all points on the curve, the vitality of the church is determined by the compelling motivation for being and doing.

The age profile of a congregation can often reveal the dominant motivation of its members. Typically, older people tend to be more security-conscious than youth. Young people are attracted to a setting where something of God-present significance is happening. Just doing church well isn't enough to challenge them to risk and sacrifice, let alone to make a life commitment.

Will the inclination to security of the aged dominate

the church's culture or will the hunger for significance, characteristic of the young, drive the agenda?

David Murrow, author of *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Thomas Nelson Pub., 2005) points out how gender often dictates the driving factors that shape the culture of a congregation. He suggests that females tend to be more naturally security-conscious than males – thus the environment of established churches is often more conducive to the comfort level of females than males.

Why should we wonder that the resultant gender imbalance is so noticeable? Males generally are more inclined to risk, adventure and big-picture significance. Men are more apt to respond and hang around where they are challenged on these levels. One only has to recall how George W. Bush, in 2004, garnered more than expected women's votes by promising a priority of national security. Men, on the other hand, were attracted to the idea that "warriors" would sacrifice and

make a difference in the world.

Regardless of age or gender factors, church leaders are responsible to rise above personal inclinations and appeal to the motivations that, objectively, pull people to Kingdom goals, the significance of which must trump lesser aspirations. The security-obsessed invite boredom, whereas exhilaration awaits those who encourage risk for significant reasons. The zest of our walk with God and the vitality of our churches will betray what motivates us and our local body of believers. ■

Churches
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ministries

Ben Chandler serves the 29 congregations affiliated with the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) in Western Canada as team leader of the division of co-operative outreach. This column continues a series by leaders of affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada listed at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/affiliates.

Are Paid Ministers or Volunteers Better for the Church?

By Bernie Van De Walle



Even a few years ago, this question wouldn't have had the same relevance it has now. However, we live in a culture of growing affluence, growing professionalism and growing litigation. Each of these, in its own way, has led to a trend among churches, especially larger metropolitan churches, to replace volunteers with paid staff who carry with them some level of professional experience and credential. The question rightly arises, "Is this necessarily a sound and healthy trend?"

Undoubtedly there is value in having professionals undertake many of the ministries of a church. Paid professionals may provide a level of excellence, efficiency and creativity beyond the capacity of lay volunteers. Certainly the church wants its ministries to be of the highest calibre. Even more certainly, if ministry is to be done in the name of Jesus, there is no room for shoddiness.

Yet despite the practical advantages the hiring of professionals may seem to have, this question has deep theological implications. The Church is called to and has a responsibility to minister in this world. The ministry to which it is called, however, is a particular one. It is not simply called to minister. It is called to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, to be true to its calling, a church's ministry must follow in the mould of the ministry of Jesus. The goal of the ministry of Jesus Christ is to seek and to save those who are lost, to redeem humanity from the effects of the Fall. Therefore, the ministries of the church, like the ministries of Christ, must be as far-reaching as these effects.

Yet a church must consider more than the goal of Christ's ministry. It must also consider the means. Foundational to Christ's ministry and, therefore, at the heart of Christian ministry today is incarnation.

The eternal Son's taking upon Himself the human condition was not ancillary to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Rather, incarnation is the God-ordained means for solving the human tragedy.

It is through the Incarnation that the Son, in the person of Jesus, lived among the people (John 1), identifying with them in their weakness (Hebrews 5:2) and serving as an example for them (John 13:15, 1 Corinthians 11:1).

Without the Incarnation, the ministry of the Cross and the Resurrection is impossible.

If a church and its members are to be involved in truly "Christian" ministry, they too must be involved in an incarnational ministry. Like Christ, the church must be present and near to its world, engaging it, not keeping its distance. The church's ministry, like Christ's, must be self-giving and personally involved (John 15:13, John 10:11). While it is not to be "of" the world, it must be "in" it.

The responsibility of this ministry, however, is not merely corporate. It is not merely the responsibility of the church but the responsibility of each Christian. The gifts, talents and opportunities for ministry will vary from person to person but, like Christ, each Christian must be personally involved in meeting the needs of a lost world.

If to be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ, certainly one cannot divert from following Christ in this most fundamental of ways. If the Incarnation lies at the base of Jesus' ministry, if personal presence and personal self-giving form the heart of His ministry, how can it be any different for those who claim to be His followers? To follow Christ means to be involved personally in ministry.

Thus the current trend to professionalism must be sure neither to dissuade nor to deprive individual Christians from being personally involved in the responsibility and privilege of ministry. Yes, the hiring of professionals has clear and compelling advantages. But for the good of the church, the Christian and the world, it must never be allowed to replace incarnational ministry.

The professional must be the equipper and encourager of individual ministry. God did not send another, nor did He simply provide the resources for ministry. In the person of the Son, God was incarnate, ministering to the needs of people. How can the Christian who professes to follow Him do any different or any less? ■

Bernie Van De Walle is an associate professor of theology at Ambrose University College and Seminary in Calgary. Representatives of 10 seminaries affiliated with The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada take turns writing for this column. Please send your questions to: FTeditor@efc-canada.com or Faith Today, Ask a Theologian, M.I.P. Box 3745, Markham, ON L3R 0Y4.

Incarnation
is the
God-ordained
means for
solving the
human tragedy

A New Earth

By James Beverley



Vancouver spiritual writer Eckhart Tolle, promoted to millions by Oprah, has a good understanding of sin but not of Jesus Christ

Oprah Winfrey is probably the most influential female spiritual leader in the world today. When she chose Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth* for her book club, the publisher had to do a new print run of four million copies. Oprah then decided to do a Monday night series of Internet broadcasts with Tolle. That led up to a million viewers per night. A year ago Oprah was pushing *The Secret* but she now calls her promotion of Tolle the most exciting and important thing she has ever done. Her original endorsement for Tolle's first book *The Power of Now* turned it into a bestseller and this new round of promotion has made him the biggest name in the current spiritual marketplace.

Eckhart Tolle lives in Vancouver but is a native of Germany. Before moving to Canada he did some academic study at the University of London and at Cambridge University. He went through years of depression, even contemplating suicide, and then experienced a spiritual awakening in the midst of all the emotional turmoil.

And what is the form of his enlightenment? Did he discover Jesus who is the light of the world? Well, not quite, although he writes highly of Jesus. His discovery, he says, is that the path to peace is found within us.

Yes, Tolle is offering a New Age spirituality with the usual emphasis on a new consciousness, the unity of religions and the identification of humans as divine.

Oprah's endorsement of Tolle and his New Age mysticism has already created a firestorm in some Christian circles. You can watch a host of pastors on YouTube denouncing Oprah, for example. She is even being referred to as the Antichrist.

(One Christian writer, Carrington Steele, has created enormous Internet traffic by indicting Oprah, Tolle and, believe it or not, Barack Obama all together. Steele's perspective is pretty clear from the title of her video and printed material: *Don't Drink the Kool-Aid*. Her video clip on YouTube has been seen by hundreds of thousands of people. Steele herself has now been a target of Christian critique. Some cult watchers claim her book plagiarizes material

from other Christian writers and that her work suffers from an unnecessary foray into American politics.)

Nonetheless, there are some positive factors in Tolle's New Age teachings.

Unlike many New Age teachers, he has a profound awareness of the reality of human sin. He writes of the need to realize that "the 'normal' state of mind of most human beings contains a strong element of what we might call dysfunction or even madness. We only need to watch the daily news on television to realize that the madness has not abated, that it is continuing into the twenty-first century." *A New Earth* has some very profound descriptions of human folly and evil, both at the individual and collective level.

Tolle is also very good at seeing that the popular routes to peace don't work. Salvation does not come at the end of a better job, good looks, more money, fame, power or sex. He is great at warning against the allures of advertising and pop culture. On these matters, Christians must appreciate Tolle's awareness that the material world is not sufficient to meet humanity's deepest needs.

Christian readers will be saddened, however, to note where Tolle has gone astray. Though he speaks with enthusiasm for Jesus, he distorts the person, teaching and work of Jesus to suit a New Age ideology. Rather than offering the gospel in its simple (not simplistic) focus on Jesus as the only Lord and Saviour, Tolle offers a very confusing, numbing proposal. Basically he asserts that our problems will be solved as we awaken to our status as Being itself.

In promoting Tolle, Oprah continues to leave behind her Christian roots in search of a spirituality that owes less and less to the Jesus Christ revealed by Scripture. ■

Tolle is offering a New Age spirituality, with the usual emphases on a new consciousness, the unity of religions and the identification of humans as divine

James A. Beverley is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale University College and Seminary.

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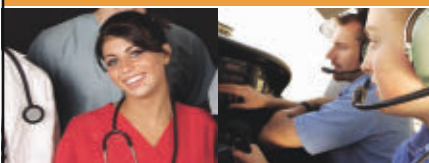


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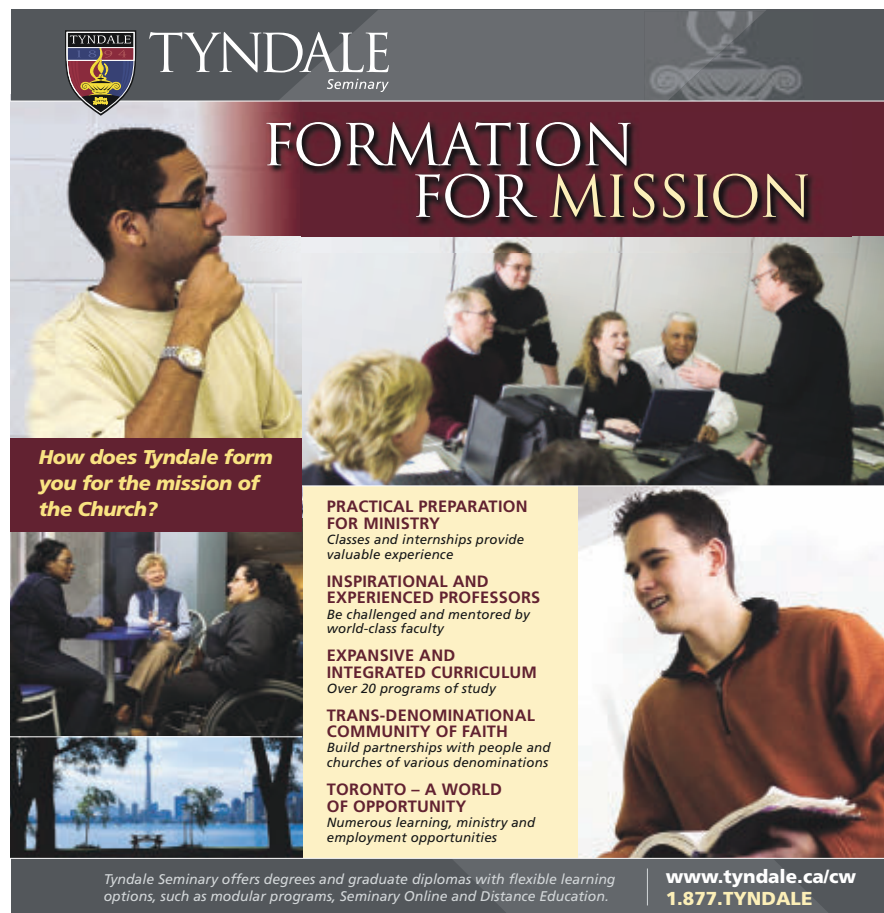
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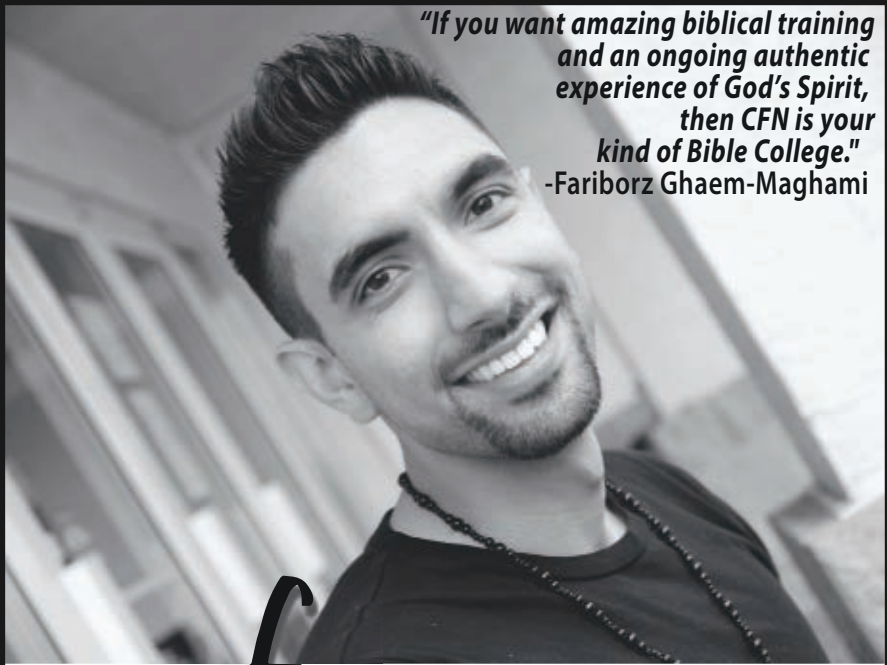
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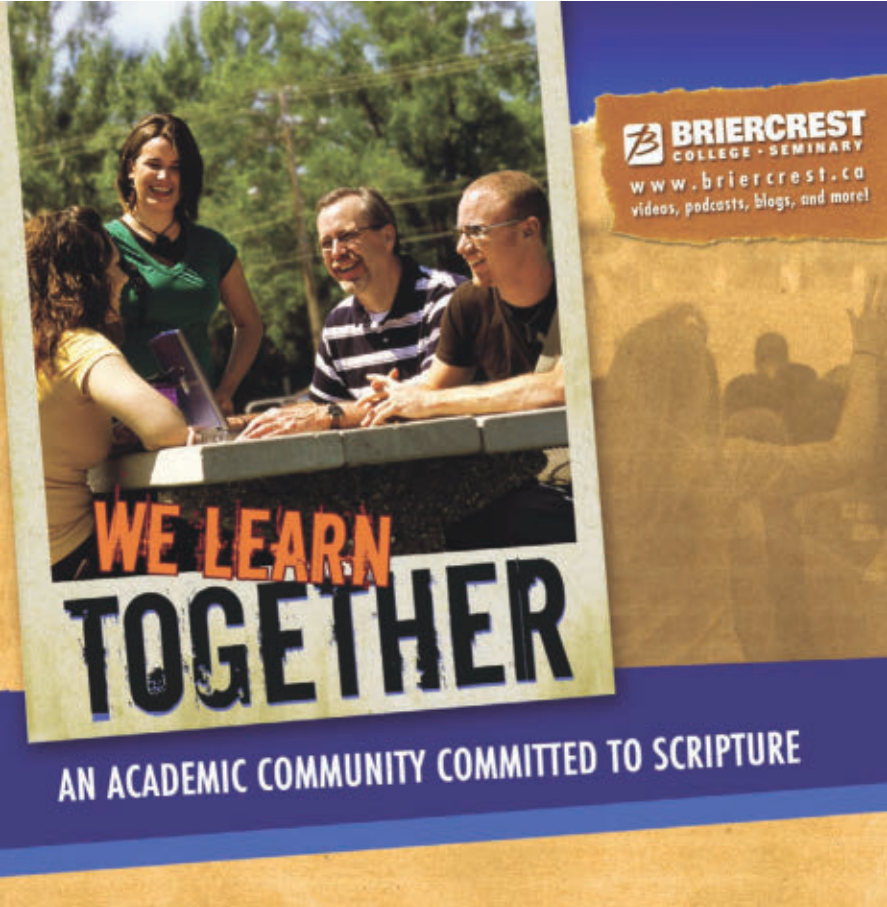
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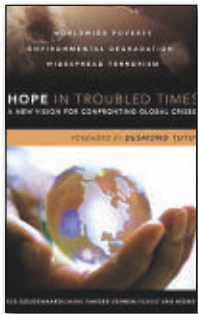
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HOPE IN TROUBLED TIMES: A NEW VISION FOR CONFRONTING GLOBAL CRISES

Authors: Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Venmen and David Van Heemst

The ominous shadows cast by threats of global crises have left much of western civilization, and not a few Christians, in a state of moral paralysis. This book seeks to move readers beyond cynicism.



Baker Academic, 2007. 254 pages. \$21.99 (paper)

It presents the hopeful vision of three Reformed Christian intellectuals: two are professors (economics and political science) and the third directs an Ontario social services agency.

With unflinching realism they examine worldwide poverty, environmental degradation and widespread terrorism. Using the biblical notion of idolatry, the authors chart how genuine needs can take on an ultimate status within a culture. These ultimate ends – and the designated means to fulfil them – take on a life of their own as the people involved relinquish control. Legitimate needs become tyrannical gods with their own twisted versions of justice and truth.

After tracing such dynamics in history (the French Revolution, for example) the authors turn to today's global scene. Their results are unsettling.

They suggest that otherwise noble desires for the preservation of identity, material prosperity and national security bear the marks of false gods. False gods justify all manner of economic, military and technological systems that perpetuate the problems the systems were authorized to solve.

The authors do not propose a new policy alternative for this grim situation. Such a solution would easily become co-opted by the false gods.

Instead, they call readers to unmask false gods by retrieving the meaning of truth and the practice of justice as conceived in the Hebrew Scriptures. The truth about creation clears the way for human action free from slavery to false gods and opens the way for the practice of peace.

This account stands out for the attention the authors pay to the spiritual dimension of “material” problems.

While their analysis clearly has Christian roots, they go to great lengths to invite different perspectives into the conversation. It remains to be seen if the leaders of various religious and political communities will be able to agree with their diagnosis and, more importantly, come to a common understanding of truth and justice. Certainly the stakes are high enough to merit consideration.

–DUSTIN RESCH



InPop Records, 2008. \$12.99. www.newworldson.com

MUSIC REVIEWS

SALVATION STATION

Artist: Newworldson

Salvation Station is an energetic, rootsy release from Newworldson, a lively foursome from Niagara Falls with an infectious sound and an inspirational message. Drawing from traditional influences of old-school rock, '60s R&B, '70s funk, gospel, jazz and reggae, they cleverly uncover the lost truth of how soul music got its name.

Newworldson won a pair of 2007 Covenant Awards (from the Gospel Music Association of Canada) and their independent debut CD/DVD *Roots Revolution* has been nominated for a 2008 Juno Award. The band recently signed with Nashville's Inpop Records, releasing *Salvation Station* as their major label debut.

This CD is a throwback to the roots of modern music but is delivered with pristine recording quality and a fresh, current flavour. The disc was self-produced with Ontario's Justin Koop and has a “live-off-the-floor” vibe showcasing the band's skilful musicianship and squeaky-tight performance. Lead singer/songwriter/keyboardist Joel Parisien is brilliant, with a rich, soulful voice à la Lyle Lovett, Harry Connick Jr. or Bob Marley. Yet he remains contemporary, even adding hip-hop flare with human beat-boxing on a few tracks. The bandmates all shine as stylistic groove-masters, moving effortlessly through diverse genres.

Poised to reach listeners with the gospel message and move believers toward unity and revival, they are truly “new world” evangelists – bold and unapologetic about their faith and comfortable whether their audience sits in church pews or on bar stools.

Lyrical, the songs are uncomplicated. “Working Man” is contagious, highly danceable and sounds like a theme song from a James Bond flick. “I am a working man / oh yes I am / I am a special agent of the Lamb.” The funky “Borderline” calls for commitment: “There's a line in the sand / have you chosen where you stand?” The delightful “City Bus Lovesong” is about the joy of walking daily with God. “Sweet Holy Spirit” is a slow, bluesy prayer of surrender, reminiscent of Percy Sledge's “When a Man Loves a Woman.”

Salvation Station is a fun-filled ride on a lively gospel train visit-

GLITTER OF DIAMONDS

Author: N. J. Lindquist

Canadian writer N. J. Lindquist has written a fast-paced “whodunit” set in the world of Major League Baseball. This is the second in a series of novels featuring methodical Inspector Paul Manziuk of the Metro Toronto police force and his new partner, Jacquie Ryan, an ambitious young cop who lives with her all-female, three-generational family.

The novel revolves around Rico Velasquez, a top-notch, new Cuban pitcher with a monstrous ego and an uncontrolled temper. Stasey Simon, an acid-tongued sports talk radio host, suggests on-air that he be taught a lesson. He is later found murdered and she becomes the second victim.

The cast of characters includes people from the various sports media, the team's members, management and owners, Velasquez's Cuban wife, Alita, and his Canadian mistress, Eva a poor little rich girl with a Marilyn Monroe fetish.

ing the roots of North American music. But don't expect to find any deadening veneration of history here. This is fresh music-making, drawing from the Motown sounds of Detroit to Memphis gospel/blues and New Orleans zydeco. The resulting journey is a joyful celebration with a heavenly destination. All aboard! —ALI MATTHEWS



SURROUND

Artist: Jon Bauer

Crossway Records, 2007. \$19.99. www.jon-bauer.com

For a CD that's billed as a worship album, *Surround*, Jon Bauer's second album, certainly rocks hard enough! "Awaken," the first song, opens with a power-pop barrage of slashing guitars and pounding drums that doesn't let up much for the next two songs. Luckily, this only helps to drive Bauer's infectious, radio-friendly

melodies. It also reinforces his lyrical message of encouragement to the Church to live out its worship to God.

That power-pop approach lessens somewhat in "Holy Lord," the first of five softer, quieter, more acoustic guitar-driven pieces that could be thought of as "typical" of worship music. This softer touch carries on through them all, even though that driving beat and those hypnotic, layered guitars creep into the choruses of "Giver of Life," "A Love to Die For" and "Glorious to Me."

That strong guitar work returns to usher in the beginning of "It Was Your Love," which quickly becomes an almost acoustic tune with a charged electric chorus.

The last song, the traditional "Holy Holy Holy (You are Holy Lord)" is one of the artist's favourites. His treatment of it is quite different from that of the other nine songs. "Holy Holy Holy" begins with a simple piano under the familiar refrain and builds slowly into a full-blown rocker. Hmm, maybe not quite so different after all.

Overall, Bauer takes a fairly straightforward approach to production. His instrumentation ranges from those wall-of-sound guitars to a simple acoustic backing with some keyboards here and there. Both tactics support his light voice well. The sound mix is very hot and absolutely crackles with life. Just like the artist.

An itinerant worship associate with the St. Albert Alliance Church, just outside of Edmonton, Bauer released his debut album, *Life of Worship*, in 2005. He won the 2007 Shai Award for new artist

of the year. He has travelled extensively to sing, speak and minister to multigenerational churches and events.

His passion shows in this album through the fire of the music and the conviction of the lyrics. —TERRY BURMAN

FAITH INSIDE

Artist: Allen Froese



Faith Inside launches with a thumping trio of drums, electric and acoustic guitars. The song "Praise You" reaches to a God who is "far above the heavens" and invites listeners to give Him the "highest praise." From the outset Allen Froese's intentions are clear: to lead people of faith closer to God through worship.

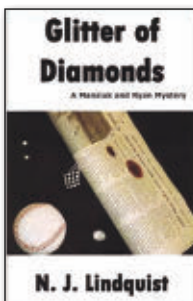
Renown Records, 2008. \$16.99. www.allenfroese.com

While Allen Froese has been leading worship and writing songs in Ontario for over a decade, *Faith Inside* is his first CD. Recorded at Emmanuel Studios in Toronto by Juno Award-winning producer Carmon Barry and mastered by George Graves (whose past clients include U2 and Bryan Adams), *Faith Inside* has a very polished feel. Froese's passion for biblical expression of praise comes through clearly as a result, and has drawn strong affirmation from other worship leaders such as Jody Cross and Noel Richards.

The energy of the opening track continues well into the CD with "Who Is This King?" and "Let Our Worship Rise," which calls for "our worship to rise up" to God "as a fragrant sweet aroma."

A more reflective pace is blended well throughout the CD with songs such as "The Name of the Lord Is Great" and "We Bow at Your Feet." The final song, "Let Revival Fall," brings back the high energy, calling for revival to "sweep this land" and inviting the Holy Spirit to "be forever near."

A challenge for contemporary worship music is bringing fresh lyrical imagery and style to what can be a familiar format. *Faith Inside's* upbeat songs are strong and will move many to praise, but it is the slower songs where even greater creative strength at expressing adoration is revealed. Allen Froese is clearly someone with a passion for worshipping God and a gift for helping others do the same. Those looking to deepen their Faith Inside through worship will find this CD a helpful boost. —HENRY VANDERSPEK



MurderWillOut Mysteries, 2007. 384 pages. \$16.95 (paper)

The story moves well and keeps the reader guessing to the end. Amid all the interesting characters, some of whom do their own investigating, Manziuk and Ryan seem almost remote, plodding away at finding the killer.

Lindquist has authored books in a variety of genres and co-founded a Canada-wide association for Christian writers and editors called The Word Guild. She

makes a few attempts to insert her faith into the personal stories of the characters but the pace of the book makes this effort feel a bit odd. It is not an easy balance to maintain page-

turning suspense and yet get to grips with the big questions of life and faith. However, if you enjoy murder mysteries with colourful characters or baseball or both, this book will provide a satisfying read. —CHERYL BRISTOW

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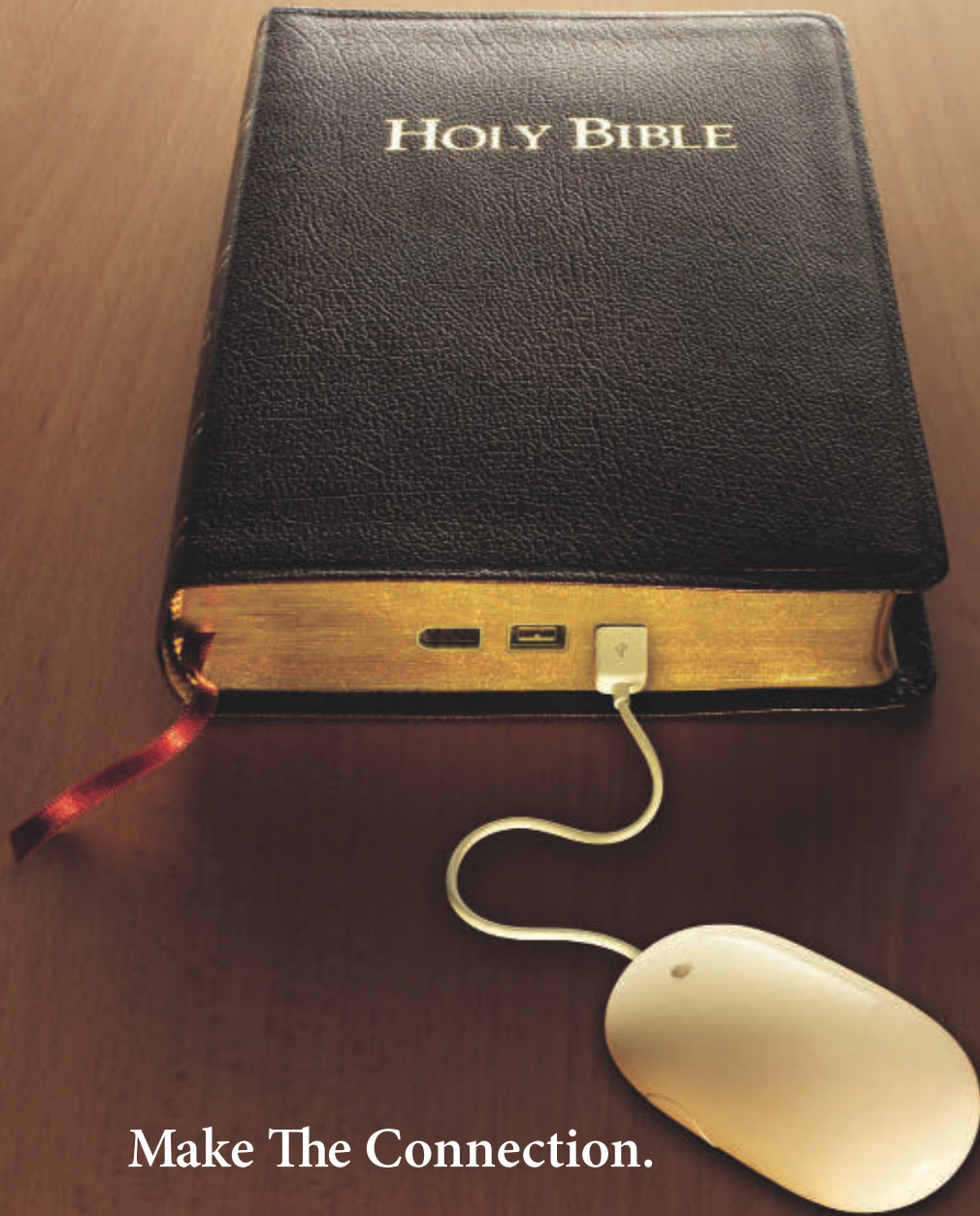
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Princess Zulu, a speaker at MissionFest Toronto 2008, worships with other participants.

Photo courtesy MissionFest Toronto



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AS YOU EXPLORE WHAT YOUR NEXT CHAPTER HOLDS, we would like to journey with you. We invite you to talk with us about the passion for ministry growing in your heart and mind. Call, email or explore www.acts.twu.ca to find out more about the Master of Divinity or other programs!

"I left my job as a chemist to study at ACTS. The challenging assignments and hands-on internship helped me to become a deeper thinker, an articulate communicator and a church leader who longs to speak into vibrant, culture-impacting Christian communities in creative ways. Caring professors have cheered me on as I pursue God's dreams for my life."

STEPHANIE HALL, FORMER CHEMIST
ACTS GRADUATE, MASTER OF DIVINITY

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