

Faith Today



To Connect, Equip and Inform Evangelical Christians in Canada

Protecting Life Where It's Most Vulnerable

Finding Fellowship Online:
Christians Go Online With
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Faith and Sports Meet in
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Making Sense of Halloween
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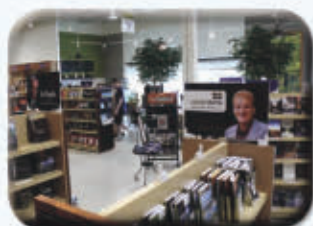


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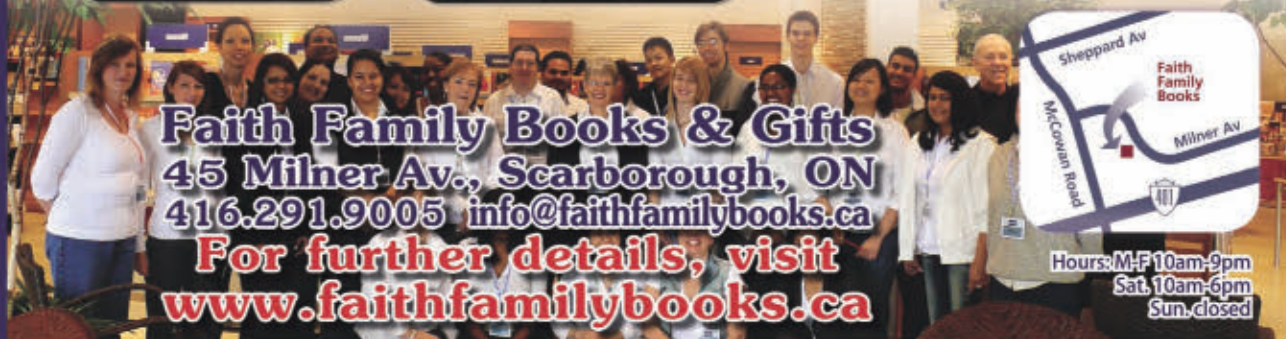
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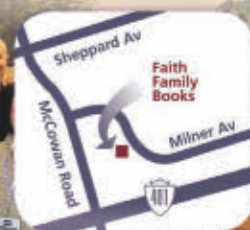
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Contents

Cover: Protecting Life

18



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18 Protecting Life Where It's Most Vulnerable by Stephanie Tombari Many Christians continue to tackle the issues of abortion and euthanasia in Canada, some by quietly caring for the vulnerable and others by speaking out.

Features

25 Finding Fellowship Online by Megan Venner Using websites like Facebook to keep in touch with friends and acquaintances has changed the world – and not only for Internet savvy people. Is it changing how we experience our faith?

28 Countdown to 2010: Faith and Sports Meet in Vancouver by Dwayne Buhler Christian groups are prayerfully working together to offer “radical hospitality” at the Olympic Games. Along with the hype, some are also calling attention to problems of poverty and prostitution.

32 To Trick or Treat? That Is the Question by Sheila Wray Gregoire Evangelicals have various opinions about Halloween. Should we avoid this occult-tinged holiday or seize it as an opportunity to reach out?

34 Talk to Teens About the Occult by Lisa Hall-Wilson A Christian who was involved in occult practices as a teen warns against ignorance.

In Each Issue

- 7 From the Editor:** Life Is Precious by Gail Reid
- 8 Letters:** Mission Brings Memories; Engage With Fairness
- 10 Kingdom Matters:** Ministry Reaches Remote Children; Volunteers Continue Four Years After Hurricane
- 14 The Gathering Place:** Presence, Perseverance and Persuasion by Bruce J. Clemenger
- 15 Global Village** Haiti: Among the Poorest by Karen Stiller
- 16 News from the EFC:** Success at Supreme Court; Climate Change
- 36 Spotlight on Lausanne:** The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ by John D. Wilson
- 38 ReligionWatch:** More Than One Way? by James Beverley
- 39 A Church You Should Know:** New Life Church, Duncan, B.C. by Charlene de Haan
- 41 God at Work in Denominations:** An Inviting Blend by Tim Dyck
- 42 Preparing Students For Life and Ministry:** Education Advertising Feature
- 51 The Network:** Classified Ads
- 54 Christ & Culture in Canada:** All or Nothing at All? by John G. Stackhouse Jr.

28



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32



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10



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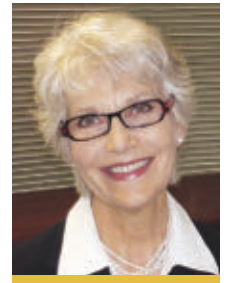
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Life Is Precious

By Gail Reid

Abortion and euthanasia devalue human life



Since our cover story is on pro-life issues, I did some quick research and Googled “abortion + Toronto.” Eight clinic websites showed up, each offering abortions to those with an unwanted pregnancy – at any stage. (There is no limit in Canada because there is no law. Theoretically, a woman could abort a baby a few weeks before natural birth should occur.)

Each website is unique but all are beautifully designed. Like the pages of *Real Simple* or *Martha Stewart* magazines, the colours are co-ordinated and the photos show friendly and attractive women of many cultures. Every fearful question is answered with simplicity and sympathy for the woman in crisis. And to clinch any financial concern, each mentions there is no cost – the procedure is covered by provincial health insurance.

Don't take my word for it – view them yourself. One shows a lobby that could match the beauty of any high-end hotel. It boldly proclaims: “Reproductive health care is a basic human right. Abortion services are an essential part of reproductive health care for women.” In case you are still nervous, their awards are also posted.

However, despite this open talk and bold marketing, the possible serious side effects of abortion for women are conveniently left out. It may be in small print on consent forms, but I gather it's rarely explained.

Women are not told they may have

difficulty getting pregnant in the future due to a six per cent drop in fertility. They may suffer from depression or other psychiatric problems. They at least triple the likelihood of committing suicide. They risk increased vulnerability to addictions. Their breast cancer risk increases by 30 per cent. An abortion is not a quick solution – it has long-term effects!

The side effects of abortion for women are conveniently left out

It's time for us to help women choose life. And it will take compassion for the mother and the unborn child. It will take ensuring women

are properly informed and cared for whatever they choose. It will take vigorous interventions in government and on the front lines. The more we hold up the sanctity of human life, the more we will all be valued.

I don't want to live in a future where I can Google “death with dignity + Tor-onto” and find websites where I can sign up for a “final sleep” – each site answering my questions and concerns, calling me a hero for taking the burden off my loved ones and leaving them a bigger inheritance and promising to remove my shame and indignity.

Life is precious from conception to death. As Christians we *know* this is true! Let's continue to uphold life as we care for the vulnerable. **ff**

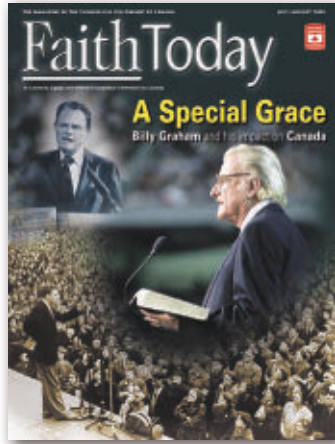
Gail Reid is managing editor of Faith Today and director of communications for The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

Mission Brings Memories

Re: Love on Toronto's Spadina Ave. (Jul/Aug 2009)

I appreciated seeing the front of the Scott Mission again, where my husband was a street evangelist when we met 20 years ago. The writer states that the mission was founded by a Polish immigrant – true – but did you know Morris Zeidman was a Jewish follower of our Messiah, Jesus?

The initial mission was started in a different location – in a storefront farther south in the garment district. The Zeidmans did a lot of excellent work in the Greater Toronto Area that would have taken tremendous effort and boldness to carry out. And that effort was



carried on by extended members of their family after he died.

May God continue to bless the folks at the Scott Mission and at *Faith Today*.

MEREDITH MACINNIS
Barrie, Ont.

Editor's note: The story of how Zeidman found the Messiah through a Presbyterian outreach

to Jewish people (the "Christian Synagogue" envisioned by Rev. J. MacPherson Scott) is online at www.scottmission.com.

Engage With Fairness

Re: Letter on The Shack (Jul/Aug 2009)
In Sue Wilder's letter, Romans 1:25 is used against an author who is a brother

in Christ and who, by his own words, based the concepts and ideas of his book on Scripture. Paul Young actually attempted to do exactly the opposite of what Wilder is accusing him. She doesn't agree with Young's interpretation of Scripture so she "spiritually slaps" him with Romans 1:25, tagging him with the "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" and "creating God in our own image" labels. It's an unhelpful, low-blow approach to discussing the truths of Scripture.

I wholeheartedly embrace the Scriptures as inspired by God, as I'm sure Sue Wilder does. I also wholeheartedly disagree with her statement that God's love comes with demands. It would be easy for me to take what I believe to be her faulty interpretation of Scripture and then say she has made God in her own image and traded the wonderful truth of God's free and unconditional love for a lie of performance and demands. That too would be wrong and unfair. Sue Wilder is clearly a sister in Christ and has the right to believe her own interpretations of Scripture without being labelled unbiblical, humanistic or worse.

I encourage Christians everywhere to engage each other intelligently, question each other, discuss and grapple with all aspects of Scripture and theology. It's the only way to truly experience "iron sharpening iron" – and it's actually fun! But please don't use Scripture as a means to discredit or dishonour a brother or sister who, like you, sincerely attempts to "rightly divide the word of truth."

Just my two cents.

BRAD MIX
Edmonton, Alta.

Thanks to Writers

Re: Letters (May/June 2009)
Your magazine had four letters that held my attention: Alan Lambert on tithing, Glenn Finch on evangelism, Elmer Thiessen on ethics and Ed Turner on the Emergent movement. It was re-



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Appointed: Peter Stockland as executive director of the Centre for Cultural Renewal based in Ottawa. He succeeds Iain Benson who departs for the law firm Miller Thomson LLP. Stockland, a former director on the centre's board, was most recently head of Readers' Digest Magazines Canada. He has worked as a journalist for 30 years and is a former editor at the *Gazette* in Montreal and the *Calgary Herald*.



Peter Stockland

Appointed: Mark Lukowski as CEO of Christian Children's Fund of Canada after serving as interim CEO for six months. Lukowski has an MBA and 20 years of experience as an executive at companies such as Motorola Cellular, Clarke Transport and Hewlett-Packard. The CCFC has, for almost 50 years, been a charity that helps children and families of all faiths break the cycle of extreme poverty around the world.



Mark Lukowski

Appointed: Paula Moriarity as Canada director of International Child Care Ministries, a child sponsorship organization associated with the Free Methodist Church based in Mississauga, Ont. She succeeds Vivian Hyndman who served the ministry for 27 years. It operates in 14 countries and sponsors about 2,500 children.

Appointed: Kevin Jenkins as president and CEO of World Vision International, one of the world's largest Christian relief and development agencies, based in Monrovia, Calif. It operates in 96 countries, employs 40,000 people and has an annual budget of \$2.6 billion. Jenkins, who is based in Calgary, has served as vice-chair of the board of World Vision Canada, president of Canadian Airlines International, CEO of the Westaim Corporation (a technology research company) and managing director at the equity firm TriWest Capital Partners. He also has experience in microfinance, HIV/AIDS and education projects.

Appointed: Ken Wiedrick as executive director of ministry services at the Church of God in Western Canada in Camrose, Alta. He succeeds the retiring John D. Campbell as overseer of 29 congregations in four western provinces. The group has ties to an international Wesleyan/Anabaptist denomination based in Anderson, Ind.

Appointed: George Durance as president of Teach Beyond (formerly Janz Team Ministries), a Winnipeg-based ministry sponsoring more than 100 Christian teachers to work and reach out in Europe and Brazil. Durance previously served as president of Ambrose University College in Calgary and as director of Black Forest Academy, a school in Germany founded and supported by Teach Beyond.

Appointed: Ken Gibbs as executive director of the Native Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Inc. Based in Winnipeg, it is a

group of native congregations that also supports indigenous missionaries.

Appointed: Don Collins as national director of the Canadian Sunday School Mission, an interdenominational ministry with 43 Bible camps and various programs for children and church planting. Collins took the helm in March and aims to provide stability after multiple leadership changes over the past five years. The ministry is based in Winnipeg with seven branch offices across Canada.

Appointed: Ryan Rempel as executive director of Canadian Lifelight Ministries, a Scripture distribution ministry based in Winnipeg, effective Nov. 2008. Besides partnering with various Canadian ministries, the organization is also the official Canadian distributor for Biblica, the translation sponsor of one of the most popular Bibles in English, the *New International Version (NIV)*. Biblica is the new name for the International Bible Society, which merged with the distribution company Send the Light in 2007.

Appointed: Claude Pratte as executive director of Family Life Network in Winnipeg, effective Nov. 2008. He previously served as interim director. A graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, he previously pastored for 20 years with Baptist churches and more recently with Mennonite Brethren churches in Winnipeg. The multicultural media ministry produces programs in various parts of the world in nine languages for radio, television, Internet and live events.

refreshing to read sound wisdom on those various subjects. Thank you for publishing them.

LILLIAN LAFRANCE
Longueuil, Que.

Strive Against Doubt

Re: *The Benefit of Doubt* (May/June 2009)

While it is true that many, if not most, Christians will struggle with doubt at some point, the Bible nevertheless does

not present doubt as a beneficial thing. Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). James 1:6 and 1 Timothy 2:8 also warn against doubting. Nor is it true that "God wants us to wrestle with Him" – Isaiah 45:9 says the exact opposite. Therefore, we should not be portraying doubt as normative and beneficial but as something against which we must strive.

JOHN TORS
Toronto, Ont.

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Manitoba Ministry Reaches Remote Children

This past summer more than 300 First Nations youth from remote communities across northern Manitoba were able to attend camp, thanks to Pathway Camp Ministries.

Founded in 2007 by Rick and Elizabeth Greer of Moosehorn, Man., Pathway Camp “isn’t about horseback riding and climbing walls; it’s about kids having relationships with people who want to invest in them.”

Formerly successful business owners from the Toronto area, the Greers sensed a call to ministry 10 years ago. “We knew we weren’t doing what we needed to be doing,” explains Rick.

Selling their business and their home, the couple attended Briercrest Bible College for one year prior to moving to Moosehorn in 2000. There they joined with a local camp ministry to First Nations children until the summer of 2007.

It was then they realized the need to bring camp to the children of Manitoba’s northern rural communities.

Under the umbrella of International Christian Mission Services (ICMS), the Greers formed Pathway Camp Ministries, a non-profit organization geared to serving children ages seven to 12 from Garden Hill, Berens River, Bloodvein, Poplar River, Grand Rapids and Little Saskatchewan First Nations.

“We don’t enter a community claiming to be saviours,” says Rick. “Instead, we come in and ask ‘Is there a place we can serve?’ ”

The Greers are joined by youth groups from across Canada who help with the ministry. This summer’s first camp was in Grand Rapids, a community 500 kilometres north of Winnipeg.



Celebrating the girls’ win over the boys after a tug-of-war match. Children at Garden Hill First Nations enjoy outdoor sports and games.

Their final camp was held in Berens River. Many of the more remote locations require staff to fly in on a small airplane. Each camp serves upwards

of 75 children and consists of day-long programs, including a hot lunch, snacks, chapel time, crafts, and outdoor sports and games.

“Aboriginal communities are the fastest growing demographic in Canada,” says Elizabeth. “In many places, 50 per cent of the population are under the age of 18. They’re young and vibrant with so much potential.”

It is this potential that drives the Greens to keep visiting the communities long after summer has gone to provide

clothing, sports days, gym nights and girls’ days year-round.

“In the kids we see potential as opposed to plight,” explains Rick. “We ask ourselves ‘How can we love this kid today? How can we show them that they count, that they’re important to the world and to God?’ ” ■

—EMILY WIERENGA

Church Benefits From American Connection

Two years ago, an idea launched the Church at the Falls in Niagara Falls, Ont.: present the gospel in the unorthodox setting of a movie theatre.

Starting with 15 attenders, the congregation aimed to be a “welcoming place” especially for people who had disconnected from church life, explains Pastor Brandon Duff. “When unchurched people think about church, they wonder ‘What’s expected of me? What’s it like beyond that front door?’ ”

The cinema’s familiarity proved an easy entry point and the Church at the Falls now has 100 regulars, ranging from tattooed 18-year-olds to more sedate folks in their 60s.

Duff credits a number of things for the growth – partly the culture’s “spiritual hunger” and partly the church’s diligence in finding better ways “to reach people and help them walk closer with God.”

But arguably the largest factor is a recent connection with Oklahoma-based Life Church.

Starting in 1996 from founder Craig Roeschel’s vision – and 40 congregants worshipping together in a two-car garage – Life Church now has more than 50 churches in its network and 15 campuses in North America and the United Kingdom.

Life Church supplies free materials for anything from children’s curriculum to downloadable sermons to any church that asks. There is no catch, says Duff. “Roeschel believes God has provided resources that should be shared.”

Sermons by Roeschel or a guest speaker, taped on Saturday nights, have “solidly evangelical, really topical messages that leave you looking inward,” Duff says.

This steady supply of resources has freed Duff to focus on other areas of his ministry such as relationship building. The result is growth. Apart from a slight dip at the outset in January 2009, they’ve seen an attendance increase of 20 per cent.

The Church at the Falls is happy with the materials, which Duff says are sensitive to cultural differences. “Great resources are available from the United States but too often they have that American feel. Life Church is working hard to be global in its communication.”

For churches interested in forging an alliance with Life Church, there are three “levels” of commitment, Duff explains. His church started off using the occasional video message or children’s material. Then they moved to the next “network” level, which means an official affiliation and promise to use Life Church teaching every Sunday morning. This level provides resources and a support network but still allows the congregation “to craft a church specifically for our region within a Canadian context.”

The final level is to become a fully planted “campus,” with the local pastor coming under Life Church leadership. “There is potential for us doing that,” Duff says. “We’d benefit from the network of staff and the financial resources but we’re happy where we are with this growth. I hope our story will encourage other parishes, especially small, struggling ones, to maximize their leadership by taking advantage of these great resources.” ■

—ALEX NEWMAN



Trash Can for a Cradle?

A trash can for a king is a crude cradle. But *2000 Candles*, a travelling music theatre performance, pulls it off by peeling back Christmas commercialism and bringing the birth of Jesus back to centre stage.

“We structured the show in such a way that we progressively strip away the trappings of Christmas and are left with the lighting of a single candle representing the birth of Jesus,” says Tom Carson, director of the play that celebrates two millennia of Christmases.

Carson says the production is a collective creation based on each cast member’s memories of a lifetime of Christmases. “We saw that our experiences of Christmas were multidimensional: a jumble of carols, presents, family dynamics, food, tradition, expectation and somewhere – perhaps buried deep inside the chaos – faith,” says Carson. “We also wondered what the birth of Jesus would look like today with young, unwed parents struggling to make sense of God’s impossible plan for their lives.”

Carson says the show, running since 2000, is distinctly absent of “Dickensian, rosy-cheeked carollers.” The set is a street corner, complete with a trash can that is eventually transformed into a makeshift manger.

Cast members Richard Peters, Ins Choi, Andrea Cross and Jeanine Noyes are each accomplished performers in their own right with dozens of credits in theatre, television and musical performance. The *2000 Candles* troupe funds its ministry through ticket sales, and churches across Canada can book the performance to help raise money for their own ministries.

The new season for *2000 Candles* starts on Nov. 19 and is available for booking through Christmas Eve. Tickets cost \$15. For more information about scheduled dates or to book a show, visit www.2000candles.com. ■

—STEPHANIE TOMBARI

Churches Engage Around Restorative Justice

Churches are invited to explore alternative models of justice and peacemaking in the third week of November each year, thanks to a program of the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC).

National Restorative Justice Week (Nov. 15-22, 2009) is a time to reflect on values like safety, healing, restoration, accountability, inclusion, love and respect – and how they are displayed in our relationships, particularly in situations involving crime.

The annual week is not organized only for Christians but the CCJC argues that the philosophy and values in restorative justice are deeply compatible with biblical truth. And so the ecumenical body develops and distributes worship and discussion resources for churches each year to help congregations better understand and apply restorative justice principles.


One of the more familiar types of restorative justice involves victims of crime interacting with the person or people who harmed them to build common ground and to repair the harm done wherever possible.

Graham and Luann Snyder of Elmira, Ont., lived out restorative justice principles as they forgave young hockey player Dany Heatley for accidentally killing their son Dan Snyder.

In Sept. 2003, Heatley was speeding and lost control of his car. His passenger, fellow NHL hockey player Dan Snyder, received head injuries when he was thrown from the vehicle. He died six days later.

Dan Snyder's parents, who have Christian roots, forgave Heatley. They insisted he not be sent to jail because they felt there was no value in punishing him that way. The Snyder family reached out to Heatley and has an ongoing relationship with him. They are comforted by Heatley's remorse and know he will live with the pain of what happened for the rest of his life.

Heatley was charged with vehicular manslaughter in 2005. Accountability for his crime includes three years of probation, tight driving restrictions and giving 150 speeches about the dangers of speeding. He could have faced 20 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

The CCJC resources for churches can be downloaded free at www.ccjc.ca/restorative_justice.html or call 613-563-1688 Ext. 4.  –SANDRA REIMER

Volunteers Continue Four Years After Hurricane



Groups such as the Christian Reformed Church World Relief Committee continue to assist with recovery projects in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas.

During the past four years, many Canadian Evangelicals have partnered with their churches to travel to the Gulf of Mexico to repair damage caused by Hurricane Katrina.

They not only supply desperately needed skill and materials, they also share a message of hope and renewal with people whose lives were permanently altered by the hurricane's devastation.

The Christian Channel Now Grace TV

Grace TV is the new name of The Christian Channel, a 24-hour digital channel that reaches more than 30 per cent of Canadian households. The channel was purchased by World Impact Ministries (WIM) earlier this year.

Offices for the channel (www.grace-television.net) have moved from Toronto to St. Catharines, Ont., home of World

Impact Ministries, a charity known for media and international work. All are headed by Peter Youngen.

"We are committed to programming that will entertain, educate and encourage spiritual dialogue and growth," says Youngen. "We also want to rekindle some of the initial sense of purpose that permeated Christian TV, to present the gospel in a way that causes Canadians



Christian Reformed Church World Relief Committee

winter to disaster relief work.

“We were [volunteering] in Texas one year after Katrina,” Denis recalls. “We went to New Orleans to check things out. It looked even worse than we had imagined. I don’t know what I would do if we faced what these people did.”

One home that was swept off its foundation during the 20-foot post-Katrina storm surge belonged to a couple named Lloyd and Sue. After paying homeowner’s insurance for four decades, Lloyd could collect only \$10,000 to cover the cost of repairs.

“Insurance companies said the damage wasn’t from the hurricane but from the water. They said they don’t cover water damage,” Lloyd explains. “There are hundreds more families like us.” Thanks to the efforts of volunteer workers, Lloyd and Sue’s hope was revived and today they are living in their new home.

Another example. Two and a half years after the hurricane, Ruby’s home still lay in ruins and she had not been able to return. Thanks to volunteers, Ruby’s house has been completed now, along with homes for six other families in the fishing village of Grand Bayou. In her front yard, a sign rescued after the hurricane proclaims what Ruby knows to be true: Jesus is Lord.

“You can’t begin to understand what your help means to us,” she said to volunteer workers. “If it weren’t for people like you, we wouldn’t be getting any help at all.”

Groups such as Mennonite Disaster Services, the Christian Reformed World

Relief Committee, Lutheran Disaster Response and the United Methodist Committee on Relief are only a few of the dozen or more faith-based organizations who are “standing in the gap” with volunteers and funds to help continue recovery projects in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas.

“Thousands of Christian Reformed volunteers have built new homes, gutted damaged houses, replaced roofs, ripped out and reinstalled drywall and painted homes that were damaged or destroyed by Katrina,” according to Bill Adams who directs that denomination’s Disaster Response Services. “In one recent project, hundreds of volunteers and groups [from the United States and Canada] participated in a Home-Building Blitz to build ten 900-square-foot homes in a year’s time for families displaced by Katrina.”

Denis Keating, the volunteer from Manitoba, has some advice for Canadians: “If you want to broaden your horizons, meet awesome people from all over, have a life-changing experience, and let go and see what God can do for you, then there is no question relief work is for you!” ■ —LOIS HELLAND

Denis and Wilma Keating from Heartland Community Church in Landmark, Man., worked at the Mennonite Disaster Services site in Diamond, Louisiana. The Keatings own their own business but they devote several weeks each



to rediscover Jesus Christ as meaningful in their lives.”

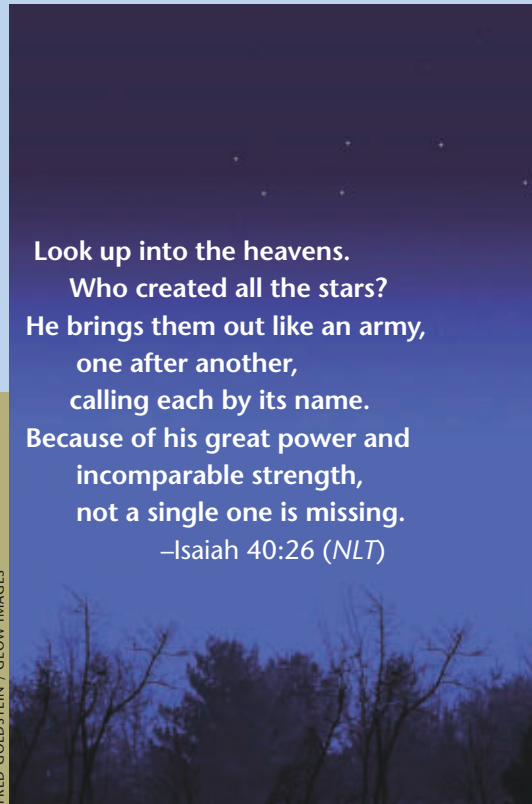
WIM is already producing some of its own programming. Its flagship program,

Peter Youngren hosts guest Anthony Greco, a Calgary pastor, on *Encounter*, Grace TV’s flagship program.

Encounter, is a Monday to Friday variety program.

The purchase of the channel from the S-VOX group of companies, which includes Vision TV and One: The Body, Mind & Spirit Channel, was approved by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). ■ —BILL FLEDDERUS

FRED GOLDSTEIN / GLOW IMAGES



Look up into the heavens.
Who created all the stars?
He brings them out like an army,
one after another,
calling each by its name.
Because of his great power and
incomparable strength,
not a single one is missing.
—Isaiah 40:26 (NLT)

Presence, Perseverance and Persuasion

By Bruce J. Clemenger



Let's ensure Canadians appreciate – and our laws reflect – the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death

The pro-life movement in Canada has momentum. New and younger people are engaging in creative and diverse expressions. I can't help wondering if the aggressiveness of those who oppose the pro-life movement is due to a fear that the momentum is shifting.

Polling certainly indicates that young people are less sympathetic to abortion than their parents. Perhaps they can see more clearly through the fog of an ignorance of convenience that an older generation finds comfort in. Perhaps they intuitively understand that the unborn child is a human being and all vulnerable human life, whether due to circumstance or age, deserves the opportunity to thrive. Their humanitarian concern crosses lines that ideologies have tried to maintain.

The illogic of the current legal vacuum around unborn children is not sustainable. It is producing moral, medical and legal hypocrisies. In some provinces, a child injured in the womb can sue for damages once born alive; however, for an injury causing death there is no consequence. A "wanted child" is called a baby while still in the womb but an unwanted child is dehumanized in language and treatment, with less protection and recognition than an animal. On any given day, unborn children are being delivered in hospitals on one side of town while unborn children on the other side are being "clinically removed" out of the womb. Commercials and the entire marketing industry celebrate pregnancy but we are told that the recognition of the personhood of the unborn child within doesn't matter.

It's important to recognize that the legal situation in Canada is not like the one in the United States. The U.S. Supreme Court has recognized that a woman has a right to an abortion. Not so in Canada. I recall being in Canada's Supreme Court as we were intervening in a case. One lawyer in her oral comments mentioned that a woman has a right to an abortion in Canada. The chief justice abruptly interrupted her and reminded her the Supreme Court has never so ruled.

The Supreme Court struck down Canada's laws governing

abortion in 1988 because the laws were being inconsistently *applied* across Canada. The court never acknowledged a right to abortion nor has it ever said that governments cannot regulate abortion. We live in a legal vacuum and no government since the Mulroney government has been willing or courageous enough to introduce new legislation.

In this context, influencing law and public policy takes presence, perseverance and persuasion. Influence must be ongoing, consistent and able to penetrate across time, ideologies and party lines. The EFC and other groups regularly and consistently provide sound resources for MPs and their staff, senators and before parliamentary committees and the courts.

And the consistent public advocacy of organizations like Campaign Life ensures a sustained presence through initiatives like the Life Chain held in October and the March for Life rally on Parliament Hill held each May. These initiatives and the activities of pro-life groups on university campuses, though some are controversial, keep the realities of abortion visible and literally show why the status quo is unacceptable.

Despite resistance, our efforts are persuasive. Before the courts or in parliamentary committees, several strong attempts to change Canada's laws on assisted suicide and euthanasia have been thwarted. Our contributions to the development of regulation for reproductive and genetic technologies resulted in a law that is by no means perfect but is stronger than most other western countries.

A necessary demonstration of our commitment to the sanctity of human life involves caring for the vulnerable people in our midst. Each of us can do something: help pregnant women or young moms in need, open our homes to adoption and fostering, care for people nearing the end of their lives.

To preserve and instil a commitment to the sanctity of human life, there must be those who live it out; otherwise our words are like clanging cymbals. The goal of the pro-life movement is to continue to instil in our society a deep commitment for the sanctity of all human life, from conception to natural death, and to ensure our laws reflect that commitment. This is not a cause; it is a calling to be present with others in need, affirming their value and dignity. We must practise it and encourage others in the doing. ☐

Bruce J. Clemenger is the president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.



EFC The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

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.

Haiti: Among the Poorest

By Karen Stiller

For many Canadians, Haiti is the poor country next door to favourite winter holiday destinations such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

Haiti and the Dominican actually share the island of Hispaniola, named by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Hispaniola means Little Spain, and that is what Haiti quickly became as the era of colonialism kicked off in the Western Hemisphere.

Haiti switched hands from Spain to France and then to an independence that was anything but free for most of Haiti's people – the majority of whom are descendants of Africans brought to the country as slaves by France.

Today, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, ranking 146th out of 177 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index. This index ranks countries by measuring and comparing three dimensions of human development: life expectancy, education and standard of living.

Haiti's problems and international reputation were made worse by the dictatorship of Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude, better known as Baby Doc. They ruled Haiti for 29 years beginning in

1956, and their brutal governments were responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands Haitians.

Papa Doc was known as a voodoo doctor, and voodoo is still (and has always been) a huge part of the spiritual climate of Haiti.

As of 2003, voodoo actually became an officially recognized religion with its own temples, ancient rituals and beliefs, including the worship of ancestral spirits that followers say enter the bodies

of believers during voodoo ceremonies. John Hoet, a Belgian missionary who lived in Haiti, is widely quoted as saying "Haitians may be 95 per cent Catholic but they are 100 per cent voodoo." Observers say voodoo provides a sense of empowerment and community that has deep roots in the lives of people who are among the poorest and most disenfranchised in the world.

Haiti has the lowest per capita income of any country in this part of the world. Eighty per cent of the population lives under the poverty line. More than half the country depends on agriculture to survive in a hand-to-mouth existence made even more difficult by the frequency of natural disasters like hurricanes and severe tropical storms.

Like all developing countries, Haiti has been hit hard by the recent global economic crisis. Haiti depends heavily on imported goods, and rising prices for things like food and fuel almost always hit the hardest those who are poor.

With all its struggles, Haiti is still a country that finds time for joy. Its vibrant, rich art is known around the world. Carnivals fill the streets with music that combines African, American jazz and Caribbean beats, and more adventurous tourists still vacation there. ■

Karen Stiller is associate editor of Faith Today.



Haiti at a Glance

Full name: Republic of Haiti
Population: 9.8 million (UN, 2008)
Religion: Roman Catholic 80%, Protestant 16% (mostly Baptist)
Capital: Port-au-Prince
Area: 27,750 sq km (10,714 sq miles)
Major languages: Creole, French
Life expectancy: 59 years (men), 63 years (women) (UN)
Monetary unit: 1 gourde = 100 centimes
Main exports: Light manufactures, coffee, oils, mangoes
GNI per capita: US\$560 (World Bank, 2007)
 (source: www.news.bbc.co.uk)

On Our Knees

- Pray for political stability in Haiti.
- Pray for a lessening of long-standing ethnic tensions between different groups in this country.
- Pray for a strengthening of infrastructure so Haiti can better withstand natural disasters and severe weather.
- Pray for the Christian agencies working in Haiti, that their work would be strong and effective.
- Pray for a strengthening of the Church's witness in Haiti, that it would provide the empowering that is so desperately needed by those who are poor.

Canadian Connections

- Compassion helps 4,113 Canadians sponsor 4,605 children in Haiti. Compassion, in Haiti since 1968, partners mainly with Haitian churches. Currently, more than 62,900 children participate in more than 225 child development centres. www.compassion.ca
- International Child Care (Canada) has 175 clinics, which provide primary health care to rural populations, and a 60-bed children's hospital in Port-au-Prince specializing in the treatment of tuberculosis. www.intlchildcare.org

See a more detailed version of this article at www.evangelicafellowship.ca/globalvillage

Success at Supreme Court

An EFC intervention in the Supreme Court last fall has resulted in a clear affirmation of the collective dimension to religious freedom. This will help in future cases that challenge the ability of churches and religious organizations (including schools) to self-define and maintain a distinctive Christian character and ethos – specifically in the Christian Horizons case scheduled to be heard this December.

The EFC was joined in its intervention in the Hutterian Brethren case by the Christian Legal Fellowship. The Hutterites wanted to avoid a photo licensing requirement because they believe it contravenes God's command in Exodus not to make images. They lost because four of the seven judges stated they had other options to overcome the difficulty of not having driver's licences – such as hiring drivers or taking cabs.

Network Addresses Climate Change

Members of the Micah Network, a group of more than 330 Christian (mostly evangelical) relief, development and justice organizations from 81 countries, met at Limuru, Kenya, in July.

EFC vice-president Don Hutchinson was among the participants from 38 countries who sought God's wisdom and guidance in response to global environmental

concerns such as changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, increases in hurricanes and floods and related diseases. Generally these have the greatest impact on the world's poorest people.

"The meetings expressed how different parts of the Body of Christ – from Asia, Africa and South America to Europe and North America – need each other, and vice versa," says Hutchinson, "for the good of not only ourselves or the current generation but also future generations and the health of our planet."

Participants released the Micah Network *Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change*, available at www.micahnetwork.org.

It states in part: "We repent of our self-serving theology of creation and our complicity in unjust local and global economic relationships. We repent of those aspects of our individual and corporate lifestyles that harm creation, and of our lack of political action. . . . We will strive to live sustainably, rejecting consumerism and the resulting exploitation. We will teach and model care of creation and integral mission. . . . We join with others to call on local, national and global leaders to meet their responsibility to address climate change and environmental degradation through the agreed intergovernmental mechanisms and conventions, and to provide the necessary resources to

ensure sustainable development."

Laurie Cook is CEO of World Relief Canada, an EFC affiliate. "Relief and development charities are increasingly faced with desperate calls for help that have a direct link to changes in our climate."

The gathering also produced the *Micah Network Statement to World Leaders: Our Expectations for Copenhagen*, and the network is collecting endorsement signatures in advance of a UN General Assembly high-level event on climate change on September 22.

The State of Evangelism: Survey

Equipping Evangelists, a national partnership that operates on the communications and administrative platform of the EFC, is conducting a brief survey (only seven questions) to investigate the state and understanding of evangelism within the local church. Please take a few minutes to participate by going to www.evangelicalfellowship.ca > Initiatives > Ministry Partnerships > Equipping Evangelists.

Trafficking Resource for Youth

An EFC intern in Ottawa has helped produce a great resource for youth leaders to motivate teens and young adults to live out their faith in a way that makes a difference. *Not So Ancient: Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery* is a 24-page resource, the first in a series to help readers influence social change and bring glory to God through their actions and lifestyle. Tired of the status quo and ready to live the abundant life? Consider God's call to "Do justice." Call 1-866-302-3362 ext. 234 (local 905-479-5885) or check www.evangelicalfellowship.ca

Ministries to Muslims Meet

The EFC's Canadian Network of Ministries to Muslims is hosting two consultations to mobilize local clusters of networks to accelerate the task of reaching Muslims with the gospel. First, Sept. 10, 2009, in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont. Second, Sept. 11, 2009, in Toronto. Functioning city

MORE COMING EVENTS

Details at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/events or call 1-866-302-3362

- **Weekend of Prayer for Victims of Sex Trafficking**, Sept. 25-27, 2009. A global prayer event. Prayer resources, ideas and information at www.salvationist.ca/trafficking. The Salvation Army is an EFC affiliate.
- **Ignite the Light**, Richmond Hill, Ont., Sept. 19, 2009. Learn new ways to explain the gospel today. Speakers include Ravi Zacharias, Will Graham and the EFC's own Rick Hiemstra. Presented by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Canada, an EFC affiliate.
- **International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church**, Nov. 8, 2009. Promoted by the World Evangelical Alliance and the EFC, along with EFC affiliates Open Doors with Brother Andrew, The Voice of the Martyrs (Canada) and Intercede International. Download free resources at www.idop.ca.
- **Canadian Church Planting Congress**, Nov. 17-20, 2009, in Calgary. The theme is "Renov8: Transforming Neighbourhoods." Speakers include Michael Frost, Stuart Murray, Wagdi Iskander and more. Visit www.thecongress.ca.

networks already exist in Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal. All aim to provide Muslims in Canada with the opportunity to understand and respond to the good news of Jesus Christ. These networks are open to ethnic leaders, missionary practitioners, pastors and church leaders with a love for Muslims. Find out more at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca > Initiatives > Ministry Partnerships.

Learn and Discuss at One-Day Seminars

What does it mean to be Evangelical in a complex world? An EFC Christian Leaders Connection is a one-day event giving Christian ministry and marketplace leaders an opportunity to learn together, network and strengthen each other as they understand church and faith trends, learn to engage in a secular

Canada, talk about church and mission and hear how Canadian public policy is impacting Christian ministry. Mark your calendar for: Victoria, B.C. (Oct. 14), Langley, B.C. (Oct. 16), Halifax, N.S. (Nov. 10), Moncton, N.B. (Nov. 12), Ancaster, Ont. (Dec. 1). Check dates and locations (or offer to host a CLC) at www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/clc.

Former Editor Dies

Lori (Mitchener) Gwynne, who helped to establish *Faith Today* and edit it from 1983 to 1986, died August 4 in Guelph, Ont. She was 59. Brian Stiller, a former director of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, recruited her from Trinity Western University to create a more attractive successor to EFC's previous publication, a quarterly called *Thrust*.

In Canada's Parliament

By Don Hutchinson, EFC vice-president

As the summer break comes to an end, Canada's Parliament prepares to resume for its next session. While there is much on the legislative agenda, the EFC has its eyes fixed in particular on three private member's bills, each for different reasons.

MP Joy Smith (Conservative) has placed Bill C-268, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum sentence for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of eighteen years)*, before the House of Commons. The EFC presented the report *Human Trafficking: A Report on Modern-Day Slavery in Canada* in April endorsing this bill and recommending additional initiatives to the government as a response to the inhumanity of trafficking and in preparation for the Vancouver Olympics, an international event that has historically seen an increase in the sex trafficking of women and children into the host nation. This bill has been returned to the House for third reading. Quick passage will provide the deterrent of a minimum five-year sentence for those caught engaged in the child slave trade, nearly triple the most recent sentence in Canada.

Libby Davies (New Democratic Party) introduced Bill C-304, *An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for all Canadians*, calling on the federal government to take the initiative of consultation with provincial and territorial governments in an effort to establish a comprehensive national housing strategy. The EFC has invited all-party support for this initiative. There are many evangelical ministries working with people who are poor and homeless but a comprehensive plan from government is long overdue. Let's start the discussion.

Francine Lalonde (Bloc Québécois) has, for the third time, proposed a bill promoting the legalization of euthanasia/assisted suicide to be performed by a medical practitioner. Bill C-384, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity)*, proposes to set Canada on the quick and slippery slope of legalized murder that has resulted in the recently coined term "involuntary suicide" being used to report medical interventions at the stage beyond euthanasia in countries that have laws similar to those proposed in this bill. The EFC strongly opposes this bill that devalues human life.

You are encouraged to phone, visit and write your MP to express your opinion on these matters before Parliament. For more information on these bills or how to contact your MP, visit www.evangelicalfellowship.ca. ■

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Protecting Life Where

Student groups that oppose abortion and euthanasia are finding it tough to operate freely at colleges and universities these days.

Last fall Life Choice, a group at the University of Guelph in Ontario, had its club status revoked by the university's Central Student Association, which deemed the club's Life Fair event to be "anti-choice" and in violation of the school's policies for women. The fair included speakers and exhibits from a variety of pro-life groups.

Over at the University of Calgary, students faced more severe problems. They were charged with trespassing on their own campus for displaying the Genocide Awareness Project, a controversial educational exhibit of graphic images of aborted fetuses.

"We want to shift the debate over choice – in the abstract sense – to what is being chosen by showing pictures of what abortion has done," says Stephanie Gray, director of the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform, the educational pro-life group that makes the Genocide Awareness Project available.

"Often people are critical of us and shoot the messenger. But we would say it's necessary to shift people's understanding of abortion from being a 'woman's right' to being a 'moral wrong.'"

Both the Calgary and Guelph student groups were eventually successful in getting their club status reinstated, thanks to help from groups such as the Christian Legal Fellowship and The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (CLF is an affiliate of the EFC). But the students' struggles suggest how contested the issue remains in Canadian society and how politics often trumps information.

The shape of the debate on campuses is crucial, says Albertos Polizogopoulos, the lawyer who represented Life Choice. All sides realize, if young adults at college or university are taught to accept that their stances on abortion and euthanasia are private matters, it will be less likely for them to get involved

Many Christians continue to tackle the thorny issues of **abortion** and **euthanasia** in Canada, some by quietly caring for the vulnerable and others, more controversially, by speaking out

By Stephanie Tombari

WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

in these debates once they leave school.

Polizogopoulos sees the pro-choice movement as having grown and benefited from free speech. He finds it ironic that some in the movement seem to want to deny pro-lifers that same freedom.

Debate has contributed to positive social change throughout history, but many pro-choice student leaders "only want to permit discussions that support their beliefs," observes Polizogopoulos.

Any truly comprehensive public debate on life issues must move well beyond the hot button topic of abortion to encompass euthanasia and assisted suicide. Some experts even say poverty must be part of the discussion.

Polls suggest euthanasia and assisted suicide will be the hottest of these topics in the coming year. For example, more than three-quarters of Quebecers now agree that euthanasia



It's Most Vulnerable

should be legalized, according to an Angus Reid-La Presse poll from August 2009. That poll was taken a month after the Quebec College of Physicians announced it will recommend the decriminalization of euthanasia under specific circumstances in order to pressure the federal government to amend the Criminal Code.

This is the social climate in which Canada's Parliament will debate Bill C-384 this fall, a Quebec MP's bill to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide for people who are physically or mentally suffering or terminally ill.

Clearly, promoting the sanctity of life in Canadian society today is challenging. But that challenge is nothing new to EFC president Bruce J. Clemenger and vice-president Don Hutchinson. The EFC has been active for two decades on issues such as abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia, and reproductive and genetic technologies.

The EFC is actively lobbying against Bill C-384 and supporting the rights of the university student groups.

"These students," says Hutchinson, "need to continue being wise in their decisions about pro-life promotion and fearless in their preparedness to stand against efforts to silence debate on an issue that remains unresolved in both the courts and governments of our nation."

While Canadians have seen no progress on abortion law for 20 years (see sidebar: No Law for 20 Years), Clemenger points out that Canada's laws governing assisted suicide and euthanasia have so far remained strong and have been upheld by our courts.

Furthermore, Canadian laws governing genetic and reproductive technologies, "though they are far from what we sought, are arguably the strongest in the western world," says Clemenger. The EFC gave input on those laws many

No Law for 20 Years

The abortion debate in Canada has focused almost entirely on rights for two decades: the right to choose, the right to life, the right to speak and the right to be heard. But the extensions and limits of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for the unborn human and his or her mother have been interpreted differently by both sides since 1969, when “medically necessary” abortion was first legalized.

Since the Morgentaler decision of 1988, when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Parliament is responsible to make laws about unborn children, there have been no laws – and no limits – on when, where and how an abortion is performed. Bill C-43, drafted by the Mulroney government to fill the void left after the Morgentaler ruling, was passed by the House of Commons but failed in the Senate on a tie vote at its third reading. No government has proposed abortion legislation since.

Why does Canada still have no law two decades after the Morgentaler trial? Lack of public pressure, some say, keeps abortion out of the House of Commons – and politicians safely in their jobs.

Opinion polls on the issue range widely. A 2007 Life Canada survey suggests 67 per cent of Canadians would prefer to have legislation protecting unborn children or fetuses at some stage of their development. But a Gallup Canada poll from 2005 suggests 52 per cent of Canadians want abortion laws to remain the same (while 20 per cent want “less strict” laws and 24 per cent want “more strict” laws).

Many pro-life leaders agree abortion legislation has little hope if Canadians remain generally uninformed about the abortion situation in Canada.

“It’s unfortunate that most people don’t know there’s no law regulating abortion in Canada,” says Alberto Polizogopoulos, a pro-life lawyer. “Most people in Canada don’t realize that even after eight and a half months you can abort your baby. If people start to realize those things and really understand what abortion is, we would see a big change in public opinion, which would facilitate the introduction of such legislation.”

About 100,000 abortions occur in Canada each year. ■ –ST

times before they were passed five years ago.

“Influencing law and public policy takes perseverance, presence and persuasion,” says Clemenger. “Protest is at times important but more so is an ongoing and constructive engagement in Parliament and before the courts.

New Research on Abortion

New research in women’s health links abortion to a wide range of concerns. Elizabeth Ring-Cassidy and Ian Gentles examined 500 research studies and published the comprehensive analysis *Women’s Health After Abortion* (deVeber Institute, 2003). It suggests clear links between abortion and depression, substance abuse, lowered fertility, increase in premature births in subsequent pregnancies and other health issues.

“More essential still is living our commitment to the sanctity of human life by caring for women in crisis pregnancies, opening our homes to adoption and fostering, caring for those near death and generally caring for the vulnerable among us.”

CARING FOR THE VULNERABLE

Lola French is CEO of the Canadian Association for Pregnancy Support Services (CAPSS), an EFC affiliate organization based in Red Deer, Alta. She helps link together a variety of Christian organizations that offer education and counselling to women who may be considering abortion.

“In many communities, pregnancy care centres are the go-to place for women who have no other means of support during pregnancy,” explains French. “Our goal is to empower these women to see that they do have more than one choice.”

Activists on all sides of the abortion debate agree that pregnant women need to be empowered to make choices but they part ways on how that counselling should be offered.

French worries that pregnant women miss many important facts that should inform their decision. And abortion clinics and pro-choice groups are not helping to bridge the gaps.

“Several credible medical studies have pointed to a correlation between abortion and breast cancer risk, but do you hear much about that in the media?” asks French. “No, because that’s bad PR for abortion clinics. And do you think the Canadian Cancer Society, which touts the American line on this issue, wants to be seen as anti-abortion? Of course it doesn’t.”

French cites a Canadian book, *Women’s Health After*

For example, the post-abortion suicide rate is 2.6 times higher in one American study and 3.25 times higher in one Welsh study. An Ontario study finds that post-abortion hospitalization rates for psychiatric reasons is 4.7 times higher. A British study suggests an 86 per cent increased risk of very premature birth after a first-trimester abortion (and triple that after a second-trimester abortion).

The deVeber Institute for Bioethics and Social Research, based in Toronto, is offering even more recent research at a conference





Bruce J. Clemenger, president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, led the opening prayer at the National March for Life 2009. The event began with this rally on Parliament Hill. It was organized by Campaign Life Coalition and its president Jim Hughes, who estimated more than 12,000 people in attendance. See the crowd photo at www.campaignlifecoalition.com.

Abortion: The Medical and Psychological Evidence by Elizabeth Ring Cassidy and Ian Gentles, published by the deVeber Institute of Bioethics and Social Research in Toronto. Cassidy and Gentles examine more than 500 studies from around the

world, including Canada, Europe and the United States.

Besides suggesting that the link between abortion and breast cancer is real, the book also looks at post-abortion suicide rates. One Scandinavian study showed the instance of

this fall: "Reproductive Decisions and Women's Well-Being: Current Research and Practical Solutions" (Oct. 2, St. Michael's College, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.). It's open to medical professionals, students, counsellors and anyone interested in learning more.

Besides the new research, Andrea Mrozek, founder of Pro-Woman Pro-Life, will also speak about what abortion means to women. Mrozek says that being pro-life is not being against women's rights.

"You don't have to be pro-choice to be a feminist. Abortion and access to abortion don't contribute to a woman's personhood."

Contact 416-256-0555 or bioethics@deveber.org for more details and registration.

Another Canadian group, called Silent No More Awareness, offers a post-abortion healing ministry. Details: www.silentnomoreawareness.org/rc/canada.aspx. ■ -ST



suicide to be as high as six times greater among women who have had an abortion.

“The real tragedy for women,” says French, “is that their health is subsumed under all the heated political rhetoric and very seldom do we see good, unbiased research being discussed.”

A CARING COUNTRY?

After more than 20 years, Christians of all ages – from veterans such as Clemenger, Hutchinson and French to younger activists such as Polizogopoulos and Gray – continue working in many ways to help provide care and shape public policy affecting vulnerable people at the beginning and end of the human lifespan.

Pro-Life in the 21st Century

By Faye Sonier

When Canadians hear the term “pro-life,” most think of advocating on behalf of the unborn. However, the definition is actually much wider for many pro-life activists and other Christians engaged with public policy.

Our concern is not only for the unborn children but also for the mothers- and fathers-to-be, whether they decide to give birth or to abort.

Ask most pro-lifers and they will tell you they believe in the sanctity of human life at all stages, from conception until a natural death.

Thus The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), one of the country’s leading associations of Christians, promotes the biblical belief of respect and dignity for all human life, including special concern for and protection of all vulnerable people – unborn children and people who are elderly, disabled or chronically ill.

As a faith community, we find our foundation for the principle of human dignity in the biblical teaching that human beings are created in God’s image with inherent value and worth. This is why all people are deserving of care and protection.

Yes, we are our brother’s keeper, our sister’s keeper and keepers of those who have not yet exercised their own voice.

These biblical guiding principles should inform all Christian interactions with parliamentarians, policy-makers and the courts.

The EFC’s record in protecting life where it is most vulnerable is a long and strong one, including three main areas: abortion and fetal rights, euthanasia and assisted suicide, and reproductive and genetic technologies. In fact we can celebrate that, by God’s grace, over the past 25 years there have been more successes than losses.

On the issue of fetal rights, the EFC intervened in two historic Supreme Court of Canada cases. In *Winnipeg Child & Family Services v. G.* (1997) the court had to determine whether to confine a woman with severe addictions to a treatment program in order to protect her unborn child. In *Dobson v. Dobson* (1999), the case concerned whether a child could sue for injuries suffered in the womb from a car accident in which his mother was driving.

In both cases, the EFC argued that women owe a duty of care to their unborn children and that it is legal fiction to consider a mother and her unborn child as a single person. We challenged the aging legal principle that a child needs to be “born alive” to have legal rights.

In both cases the majority refused to extend legal status to the unborn child. However, Justice Sopinka’s strong dissent in *Winnipeg Child & Family Services* provided solid arguments in favour of the unborn child that are morally sound, legally valid and may eventually impact the courts and the government.

EFC staff continually put forward briefing papers to parliamentary committees, resources for MPs and senators, articles, letters to the editor and webitorials on the topic of abortion and the need for legal recognition and protection of unborn persons.

◀ **Clockwise from top left:** **Lola French** is chief executive officer of the Canadian Association of Pregnancy Support Services, in Red Deer, Alta., a non-political Christian charity founded in 1997 that supports 64 pregnancy support centres in Canada and is presently assisting nine more new centres (www.capss.com); **Rod Bruinooge**, a Conservative member of Parliament from Winnipeg, is chair of the Parliamentary Pro-Life Caucus. Bruinooge, who is Métis, has met with the EFC's Aboriginal Ministries Council and has welcomed the council's participation in speaking out for life and against suicide and abortion among First Nations and beyond (www.aboriginallifecircle.ca); **Stephanie Gray**, director of the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform, the educational pro-life group that makes the Genocide Awareness Project available.

Clearly vigilance and fortitude will be required – and Clemenger asserts that the EFC continues to monitor and intervene.

Increased unity may also be required. Clemenger points out that one ongoing debate since Bill C-43, the abortion legislation that failed 20 years ago, has been about “how supportive the pro-life movement will be of an incremental approach to legislation; that is, supporting legislation that will limit abortions but not criminalize all abortions.”

Bill C-43 did affirm that human life begins at conception and would have limited but not prevented abortions.

“A related issue,” explains Clemenger, “is whether those who advocate for an incremental approach would accept legislation that uses the gestational age of the child as the determining fac-



Faye Sonier

The EFC strategically engages with other pro-life organizations, members of Parliament and policy-makers to ensure that biblical principles concerning pre-born human life are not ignored in the public square, particularly as medical knowledge catches up with biblical truth.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are returning to the pages of local newspapers but they have never left the EFC's agenda. We have long been at the forefront of the battle to protect Canada's elderly, unwell and developmentally disabled citizens. In addition to educational materials, published articles and briefing papers, our staff and affiliates

have appeared before government committees and the courts.

Robert Latimer (2001) argued he had no choice but to kill his disabled daughter. Sue Rodriguez (1993), a terminally ill woman, challenged whether Canada's law prohibiting assisted suicide was constitutional. In both cases, we intervened before the Supreme Court of Canada and argued for recognition of the inherent dignity of human life and noted how the practice of euthanasia or assisted suicide would undermine the existing life-affirming principles in Canadian law. In both instances, these arguments were heard and the sanctity of life was upheld.

In recent months, we have again promoted these principles

tor of when an abortion becomes illegal.”

This division can be seen in another poll commissioned by Life Canada (done by Environics in 2005). It asked “At what point in human development should the law protect human life?” Thirty per cent of respondents said “From conception on,” 19 per cent said “After three months of pregnancy,” 11 per cent said “After six months of pregnancy” and 33 per cent said “From the point of birth.”

For Gray, the young woman activist promoting the images of aborted fetuses, as well as for other Christians who may prefer less graphic methods, life at all stages is sacred and deserving protection. “The evidence I have seen for how each of us had a beginning point puts that beginning point at fertilization. I haven't seen anything to the contrary,” says Gray. “I need to be protected then as I am now. It's really that simple to me.”

It's a sad fact that unborn Canadians have no legal protection. At the same time our political leaders are seriously considering the legalization of euthanasia. But in the face of this devaluing of human life, Christians continue to offer care to the terminally ill and to women facing unplanned pregnancies. And many continue working for change in Canadian law and seeking to educate the Canadian people. ■

Stephanie Tombari is a contributing writer to Faith Today.

in response to a private member's bill introduced in Parliament in an effort to decriminalize euthanasia and assisted suicide. This is the third time in as many sessions of Parliament, and we are again prepared to face this debate head-on when Parliament resumes.

In April 2009 my colleague, Don Hutchinson, and I appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada in *Attorney General of Canada v. Attorney General of Quebec*, a case in which Quebec challenged the jurisdiction of the federal government to enact legislation regulating assisted human reproduction and related genetic research. The legislation is designed to protect the health, safety, human rights and human dignity of Canadians by either prohibiting or regulating certain activities such as human cloning, surrogacy, sex-selection and in vitro fertilization. This act is the envy of many in the western world for its comprehensive approach to the issue.

The EFC has been a leader on behalf of those seeking to ensure the sanctity of human life as new reproductive and genetic technologies have emerged, appearing before the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies and several times before parliamentary committees as this legislation was developed. So this most recent appearance in the Supreme Court was not new for us but it was valuable for the court to hear a presentation on the need for a single national standard that respects the uniqueness and dignity of human life.

Pro-life. It's as big a concept as life itself. ■

Faye Sonier is legal counsel for The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.



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Finding Fellowship Online

Using websites like **Facebook** to keep in touch with friends and acquaintances has changed the world – and not only for **Internet savvy people**. Is it **changing** how we **experience our faith**?

By Megan Venner

When Dawna White, then living in Kingston, Ont., first found Christ she was enveloped by a dynamic and loving church community. But life, as it does for so many, took her away from that church home too soon. A military wife with three young children, White says it's tough finding a new church with each posting and she has sometimes turned her spiritual journey online. She discovered blogs that help her explore faith questions and receives email daily devotionals. At times White seeks out sermon podcasts. Particularly when she is between church communities, White says she can find spiritual encouragement or faith-based answers to big questions in ways that sometimes she can't find face to face. "It filled up a space when I needed it, for sure."

More and more faithful are turning online as part of their faith journeys. Social networking websites such as

Facebook have become especially popular.

"The Internet and social media are embedded in people's daily lives, so engaging these for spiritual reasons seems like a logical step for many people," explains Heidi Campbell, one of the first scholars to study how Christians and churches use the Internet and social media. Campbell, an assistant professor at Texas A&M University, says society has become increasingly consumer-driven and the impact of that is being felt within the Church as well.

"The Internet allows us to be much more individual and control our relationships. I can go to this website to get good preaching and I can go there to get commentary on religious groups and I can get involved in this e-group to have prayer or Bible study," says Campbell. "You can pick and create your own kind of church or spiritual journey."

The possibilities for those spiritual options online are

Online Anonymity: Pitfall and Promise

One of the most controversial elements of the Internet is the anonymity that comes from sitting at home interacting with people all over the world. You can be anyone you choose to be. It's what spawns all the stories of cyberstalking and Internet affairs. It is also a very real pitfall when you consider the moral implications of living online.

"With anonymity you no longer have accountability," says pastor and author Shane Hipps. "This, by the way, is exactly the same thing drinking does to people."

While not everybody takes online anonymity to the extreme, the lowered inhibitions can have moral consequences, causing temptations to behaviours like mean-spirited comments or cyberbullying. "I think people of faith need to think about their faith when they're doing what they do, but I'm not sure they always do," worries theology professor Joanne Mercer.

It is an issue Shannon LaChance is grappling with as she develops her Net church. But at the same time, she says it is an issue all churches deal with, whether virtual or physical. "People are able to have that in a normal church setting too. They can be whoever they want on Sunday morning," says LaChance. "Hopefully we can get people trained enough to detect those things and help people walk into healthy types of identity processing. If people aren't being themselves it's because they're not happy with who they are."

There is an upside to the anonymity, says David Balzer, communications professor at the Canadian Mennonite University. Balzer believes the anonymity factor gives people enough of a shield to ask questions they aren't able to ask in person. "That's the piece that has allowed people to ask questions around doubt and maybe some deeper questions I don't think we've seen in the past."

Bernie Hogan, a Canadian social networking expert with the Oxford Internet Institute, says the move toward social networking is actually mitigating some of those anonymity pitfalls and making people more accountable for their online actions.

"By and large people are tending toward these social network sites where individuals have clear relationships with other people and away from these anonymous places," says Hogan. Accountability becomes a big issue when friends on a Facebook site include friends, family, co-workers, congregants, maybe even a spiritual leader. "The priest might not be invited to the party on Friday where you were being a bit excessive but he could see the photos on Facebook." Hogan said such wide networks can actually increase the awareness of the morality of behaviours outside the church building. ■ -MV

virtually limitless. There are blogs and online groups for every possible kind of faith experience or exploration. Churches are setting up virtual campuses in Second Life, a shared three-dimensional virtual world used by tens of thousands of people every day. Pastors and priests are offering sermon podcasts or emailing out the sermon as it is preached.

Christians are also finding their own particular uses for Twitter, the newest

social network phenomenon. A number of national churches, like the Presbyterians and Anglicans, are using Twitter to update members on things like national gatherings. Some more daring preachers in larger churches have opened themselves to receive input from their listeners as they preach – and answer questions on the spot.

The variety and popularity of networking sites leave everyone from marketers to church leaders trying to learn how to reach an online generation. A recent Ipsos-Reid poll shows 86 per cent of Canadians between 18 and 34 are aware of online social networks and have some kind of online profile. More than half (56 per cent) of online Canadians have some kind of profile on a social networking site. One-third of the average 19 hours a week Canadians spend online is focused on these sites.

Dr. Joanne Mercer, a theology professor at Newfoundland's Queen's College, worries many are setting up networks without fully understanding the impact.

"I think people jump on the latest bandwagon. They don't really think about how this media works or what this media does." The danger, according to Mercer, is the undermining of the actual physical community that is so vital to the Christian experience. "It's

very important to know what it is you want to do or you could spend all your time in an office in front of a computer and not really interact with people at a real people level."

That's also a major concern for Shane Hipps, the author of *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith* (Zondervan, 2009). Hipps, a pastor in Phoenix, Arizona, describes the social media phenomenon as a paradox. "They have two primary forces: one is drawing us together but the other is separating us."

While the technology does allow for a wider exchange of information and communication, Hipps believes it also diminishes human connection. "Paul tells us we are the Body of Christ so that, as the Church, we are not merely a collection of people who believe the same things but we are also to be, as an aggregate, the hands and feet of God embodied in the world," says Hipps.

"So when we participate in technologies that disembodify us, then we become a discarnate people rather than an incarnate people. Things like caring for the poor, tending to the sick, concern for the grieving – those things actually require physical presence and physical touch."

Hipps's church has chosen not to move into the world of social media despite the challenges of long distances separating church members. He compares the technology to cotton candy, saying it spoils the human hunger for real, physical community. "If you are not hungry you won't drive to get food. These media temporarily satiate the hunger without providing the nutrients."

In contrast, Shannon LaChance found social media has only increased her appetite for a church community. Living in Quebec, where some estimates put the population of Evangelicals at less than one per cent, LaChance had trouble connecting with a church community.

"The loneliness that one can experience in that search for finding answers or finding community can be very dif-

ficult,” says LaChance. She began to use the Internet to connect with both her local church and those farther afield.

Her spiritual journey eventually led her to move to British Columbia where she is now “Net pastor” for Northside Foursquare Church in Coquitlam. She is creating a “Net church,” an international congregation meant to exist solely online. LaChance is clearly a big believer in the power of social media and its ability to connect people. She understands there are drawbacks but says the Church needs to grasp the opportunity to reach those who are seeking a faith community they can’t find at home.

“We’re not trying to replace what happens in the local church because that is so vital,” says LaChance. Instead, she says Net church is about meeting the needs of an increasingly technological society. LaChance believes it will be of particular benefit to those in rural areas or who have other barriers, like disabilities, to attending church. “We want to give them an opportunity to interact with each other.”

LaChance concedes that finding ways to make a virtual community more like a real community is a challenge. David Lynch, a professor at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ont., says there are theologically murky waters to navigate here. Take communion for example: “The notion of communion is very strong within the Christian Church, right through to its connection to the Lord’s Supper (Eucharist),” explains Lynch. “It’s at those points you really have to question whether Internet media relationships can somehow substitute for, or be a means for, something like Eucharist. I mean, Jesus at the Last Supper touches people, breathes on people, shares food with people in a literal, orderly, material, face-to-face way.”

Dawna White admits it is easy to believe the online experience is a substitute for the real connection a church community can provide. “I relied on it a lot in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan,” she says. “We were there for probably a year and a half before I actually found a church because I was getting what I needed from sermons or other groups like Alpha. I didn’t feel the need to go to church at the time.”

Net church will be of particular benefit to those in **rural areas** or who have other barriers, such as **disabilities**, to attending church.

Now, having found a faith community in her new home of Kingston, N.S., White says she is rediscovering how important the supportive Sunday morning community really is. “It is about community. And you need to make those relationships in your real life.”

The challenge for spiritual leaders is finding a way to walk the fine line of using technology to enhance community,

not weaken it. “Churches need to do a better job of understanding the technology,” says Heidi Campbell. “I think the churches still play a vital role but they need to realize that a lot of the old structures and ways of doing things don’t work anymore.”

“A lot of churches are afraid people will plug in, log on and drop out. People are afraid the Internet is going to cause an exodus from the local church.” Campbell believes most people use what the Internet provides in the way of spiritual growth as a supplement rather than as a replacement for a faith community. But who knows what the future holds? “I think that, instead of being upset about what’s happening, churches should take the opportunity to be more reflective of what’s happening in society.” ■

Megan Venner is a freelance writer near Kingston, N.S.

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Countdown to 2010

Faith and Sports Meet in Vancouver

By Dwayne Buhler



Christian groups are prayerfully working together to offer “radical hospitality” at the Olympic Games. Along with the hype, some are also calling attention to problems of poverty and prostitution

The official 2010 Olympic countdown clock, located at the corner of Georgia and Hornby streets, marks less than six months until Vancouver and Whistler will host the XXI Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. World-class venues stand ready for competitions and the athletes village is nearing comple-

tion. The battle lines drawn either for or against the Games fade as the city braces for the influx of an estimated 300,000 visitors. But is the Church ready?

Various metaphors can be used to describe the countdown clock. Some look at it as a tourist attraction, a sentinel of promise and a launching pad for great opportunities. Others see it as an alarm clock

drawing attention to unresolved problems in the city. Both of these viewpoints reflect attitudes in local churches and faith-based organizations in Vancouver.

A Launching Pad for Opportunity

Many leaders of the faith community see the Olympic Games as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Church to come



and service projects. More Than Gold is also a voice and advocate for agencies that speak to the many social problems anticipated to heighten during the Games.

More Than Gold has an ambitious agenda. The official Vancouver Organizing Committee asked the network to give leadership to the interfaith chaplaincy program and to offer limited help in a number of other areas, including sustainability issues, home-stay for officials and transportation logistics. More Than Gold will co-ordinate hospitality needs for 3,000 individuals from visiting mission teams. These people will join local volunteers involved in the distribution of 28,000 visitors welcome kits, 500,000 hot drinks at warming stations and an estimated 500,000 pieces of literature. There will be 5,000 people trained to engage the public in spiritual conversations and critical response counselling. Christian artists from the creative arts community will present 400 hours of cultural performances on open stages.

This summer Bob Kraemer, director of operations for More Than Gold, was “firming up plans for venues for our creative and performing arts presentations, co-ordinating a number of sports initiatives and planning open air festivals.” He plans for September through November to be the time for “training for hospitality, evangelism and prayer.”

One of the venues co-operating with More Than Gold is Coastal Church, a congregation in downtown Vancouver that is designated as an “open door

church” promoting large-screen events for the opening and closing ceremonies and providing a directory to local businesses. The church will offer free Internet service and coffee to visitors, with concerts featuring rising Christian artists. It will also serve as a spiritual sanctuary for people needing a place to pray and reflect.

More Than Gold is also working with pre-existing groups such as Hope Vancouver, an interdenominational, pastor-driven network that originated in 2000 when The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) sponsored a think-tank on urban transformation. Pastor David Carson, who has been involved in Hope Vancouver since then, echoed a positive outlook of the Games: “The Olympics will bring people together, creating large networks, excitement and enthusiasm. Our hope is that there will be a platform of faith, unity and relationship that the Lord can use for the future of the Church in Vancouver in a remarkable way.”

Hope Vancouver has a three-fold vision of encouraging leaders to call on God in an unprecedented way through prayer and fasting, to call churches to do greater good deeds than ever before in serving both the visitors coming to Vancouver and those in need and then, after the Games are finished, to gather the Christian community for a time of unified celebration.

The excitement Carson mentions is evident in Canada Ablaze, a 106-day prayer relay that will follow the Olympic torch as it crosses Canada. The relay is supported by both More Than Gold and Hope Vancouver. A group of leaders from the Lower Mainland will start in Victoria on October 30, visit many communities across Canada and end back in Vancouver on February 12. The goal is to call churches across the nation to pray for Vancouver, their own community and the country. (Details at www.hopevancouver.org.)

Kevin Cavanaugh, a key leader of Hope Vancouver, prays for a spiritual

together for both witness and service.

More Than Gold is a network of local churches, denominations and agencies – as well as individuals – preparing for 2010. The network’s mission is to organize the Church to collaborate at this time, to create spaces to extend the radical hospitality of Christ and to express Christian unity in witness

WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

Party Cleanup

For 69 years the Union Gospel Mission has provided hope for hungry, hurting and homeless in Vancouver. Mission staff, led by UGM president Bill Mollard, are bracing for an increase of people in need – individuals who have lost their hope in life, in themselves and in God.

“People will be drawn to Vancouver in 2010 by the bright lights and promise of jobs,” says Mollard. “But many will come and find asphalt and paving stones instead.”

Mollard and the mission take a long-term approach to the problems of homelessness, addiction and poverty. They will be prepared for the days and weeks after the Games when the number of disappointed and disillusioned people is expected to climax.

“It’s like after the party. There is a bunch of trash, debris and brokenness. But that’s where we want to be.” (For more information see www.ugm.ca.) ■

–DB

Buying Sex Is Not a Sport

“We know that Vancouver is already a hot spot for trafficking and for sex tourism,” says Michelle Miller. “When you add thousands of visitors to the mix, the problem will be exacerbated.”

Miller is the executive director of REED (Resist Exploitation, Embrace Dignity), a faith-based organization that journeys with women exiting the sex industry. The More Than Gold network is partnering with REED’s campaign, “Buying Sex Is Not a Sport,” to address the systemic issues behind the demand for paid sex and human trafficking. They hope to heighten awareness and empower people to create change in their community.

Miller warns that a “pro-pimp lobby” is encouraging the federal government to strike down standing prostitution laws before 2010. “Decriminalization would be horrific for marginalized, prostituted women and children. It would lead to open information for sex tourists.” (For more information see www.embracedignity.org.) ■

–DB

legacy during the Games. “Our hope is that after all the dust is settled we will have raised the spiritual temperature across the entire region, and even the country, a degree or two – or more.”

Perhaps this optimism is best summed up by Giulio Gabeli, another local pastor, who says “The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized in the lifetime of the opportunity.”

A Ticking Alarm Clock

But not everything about the 2010 Olympics is sprinkled with golden glitter. Vancouver, like other Olympic host cities, will face tremendous social upheaval. This will all occur while under the scrutiny and spotlight of the world media.

Social activists and those who work closest with the residents of the Downtown Eastside have mostly been opposed to the 2010 Games. They argue that past local organizing committees glossed over social ills while millions of dollars were spent on venues and celebrations. They fear that “unwanted people” – those who are poor, addicted and mentally ill – will be moved out of the city. They can document other world-scale events that became magnets for the drug and sex trades, leading to increased human trafficking and crime. They predict that suffocating traffic, an outbreak of illegal activities and mounds of garbage will be the mark left upon Vancouver. Local churches and agencies working with people who are poor are caught in the middle of this tension.

Streams of Justice is a movement that actively pursues equitable, inclusive and compassionate expressions of society. Spokesperson Dave Diewert describes the position of Streams of Justice on 2010 as “a thoughtful and informed analysis of the Olympics, placed against the biblical prophetic trajectory of critique, dissent and non-compliance.

“When we consider carefully the movement of Jesus and the Olympic Movement, we become increasingly aware of their fundamental incom-

patibility,” says Diewert. (See www.streamsofjustice.org.)

David Bornman, pastor of a church located in Vancouver’s Eastside, echoes a similar caution. “Churches need to discern the difference between the leading of the Holy Spirit and event hype. Remember that the god of sports and fame has another agenda, which does not carry the same importance for a congregation’s time, energy and dedication.”

Tim Dickau is the pastor of a church located on the fringe of the Downtown Eastside and a member of the EFC Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness. Dickau spent 20 years leading his congregation on a journey from being disconnected with the surrounding community to becoming engaged and connected to it. He has heard mixed reviews about the Olympics.

“The world-class spectacle may lead to displacement of those who are poor and draw attention away from the struggles and suffering in our city. Some ask why there are so many people willing to open their homes to strangers when they resist and push away the people who are on the street.”

The Salvation Army is an example

Seize the Chance

David Wells, general superintendent for The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, has been involved with chaplaincy at Olympic Games since 1988. He serves as the vice-chair of the More Than Gold network and chairs the interfaith working group for the official Olympic Vancouver Organizing Committee.

“Those involved in the Calgary Olympics comment on the lasting impact, including an ongoing heart to pray for the city, confidence to engage in practical works and the discovery of new ways for the people of God to unite.

“In the Scriptures we are encouraged to make the most of every opportunity. You can choose to love sports or not, to agree with the Olympics or not. But here’s the fact: the torch run will go from sea to sea to sea and thousands will visit us. What should we do with such an opportunity?” ■

–DB

of a group that grapples with the social problems of hosting the Olympics while also considering the Games as an opportunity. Sharon Tidd, the Salvation Army's 2010 outreach co-ordinator, encourages local churches to engage in both witness and service.

"Our services to the community, especially to those struggling with homelessness, addiction and abuse, will continue through the Games period. This is our priority. But we also see the Games as a unique opportunity to serve and care for visitors as they come to our city."

Tidd is co-ordinating large-screen events, warming stations, sports camps and community festivals. Mission teams from the international Salvation Army community will come to serve hot drinks at their mobile canteens to both visitors and homeless people. They support the campaign against sex trafficking and will continue to work with vulnerable people after the Games.

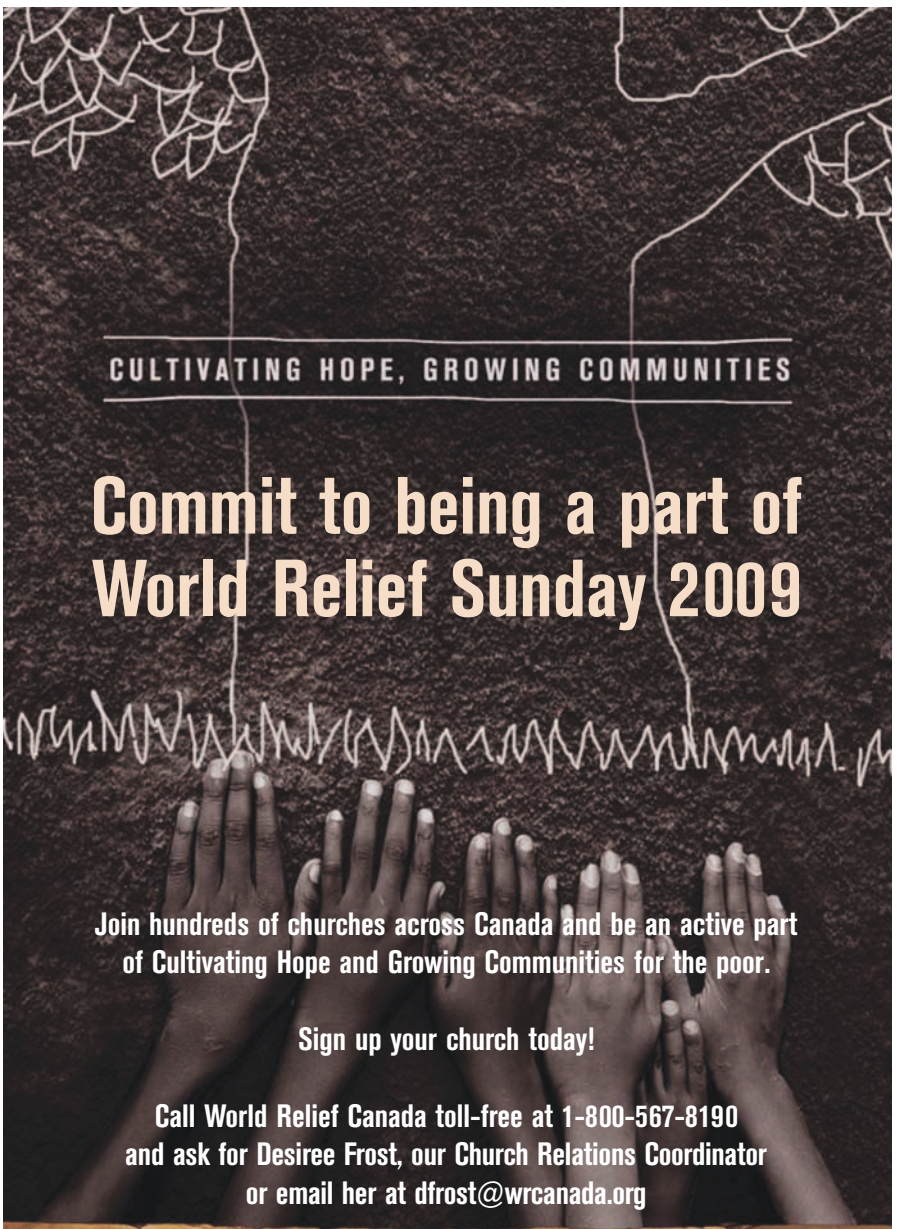
"Like Christ we are called both to embrace and to critique culture, and sport is a huge part of North American culture. The Olympics represents an amazing opportunity to touch our world with God's love and forgiveness.

We can't sit on the sidelines."

Each day the countdown clock ticks closer to February 12, 2010. The Olympic Games have brought churches, agencies and individuals to the same table as they co-ordinate events, prepare to meet needs and discuss the issues that affect the city. The Games have brought people and groups together who would other-

wise be isolated and working alone. Prayer for the city is growing and people are working toward common goals, getting out of their church buildings and into the community. ■

Dwayne Bubler is the director of Missions Fest Vancouver and a member of the More Than Gold network's prayer working group.




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Offering Radical Hospitality

Karen Reed, CEO of the More Than Gold network, has served as a pastor in Vancouver for more than 20 years. She sees the Games as a catalyst to help churches work together to find meaningful ways into the heart of our communities.

"We are encouraging Christians to engage in public spaces – either with venues we organize or that they initiate – to offer radical hospitality. We want to facilitate a movement of collaborative relationships and strategies that leads to city transformation."

By "radical hospitality" she means "more than entertaining friends; rather, a hospitality that includes strangers and those marginalized, which marked the Early Church." (For more information see www.morethangold.ca.) ■

—DB



That Is the Question

Evangelicals have various opinions about **Halloween**. Should we avoid this **occult-tinged holiday** or seize it as an opportunity to **reach out**?

By Sheila Wray Gregoire

Ever since I was laughed at mercilessly in Grade 3 for my Wonder Woman costume, I have never enjoyed Halloween. I didn't like the monumental decision of choosing a costume. I didn't like walking around in the cold and rain. And I didn't like being scared.

Many Christian families approach Halloween with a certain degree of trepidation. We know the evil roots of the celebration but all around us family and friends lure us to participate.

My children have participated in the past simply to appease extended family. The year our youngest daughter turned three, we plopped her in a princess costume and then rapidly hit a snag. Though we forbade anything scary, our neighbours had no such compunction. Down the road, creepy music was blasting while eerie lights lit up fake coffins. Katie wouldn't budge. Sometimes, even when we choose to be positive, we can't escape the negative influences around us.

And it's those negative influences that make Halloween so controversial. Our cultural traditions apparently were founded by Druid priests in ancient Britain who believed that evil spirits roamed every October 31. To "trick" them into not entering their homes, people laid out "treats" on their doorsteps. Hundreds of years later, Pope Gregory III designated November 1 as All Saints' Day, reciting a mass the evening before "hallowing" in the celebration. He wanted to redeem a pagan custom that was still largely practised by the Celtic converts.

Since then Halloween has been the

busiest day of the year for occultists. What, then, should a Christian family do? We don't want to alienate neighbours and friends, but we also don't want to participate in something that celebrates the demonic.

1. Ignore It

Build Family Memories

Many families decide Halloween's evil roots are too great to participate. Jan Rowe, a home-schooling mom, organizes a potluck dinner at Melvern Fellowship Baptist Church near Kingston, N.S., for any families who want to avoid Halloween festivities. Instead of inviting kids to dress up, she invites families to join together to watch movies, play games and enjoy being together – away from trick or treaters.

"We say no to costumes and too much candy," Rowe explains, "because we think emulating a satanic holiday in any shape or form is hypocritical."

Deb Elkink likes to retreat with her husband, Gerrit, and some friends to a cottage in the Alberta Rockies on October 31 to celebrate Reformation Day. It just so happens that, on October 31 back in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the Wittenburg door. The Elkinks think this is cause for a party! They gather around the fire debating Lutheran doctrine and sharing quotations from Luther, though none of the Elkinks is actually Lutheran. But it seems like a much more intellectually stimulating – and safer – way to commemorate the date.

Wander the hallways of any of the eight Koinonia Christian schools in Alberta on October 31 and you will see nary a costume in sight. Christian schools are often in a difficult position around October 31 because parents have such differing viewpoints. So many schools have decided it's best to ignore it.

This perspective is one that Vern Rand, Koinonia's superintendent and principal of the Red Deer campus, is personally comfortable with.

"We do not endorse it, we don't support it and we tell our parents why through a letter we send home every year," Rand says. The letter explains the school's perspective: the Evil One has "costumed" the real nature of the demonic holiday so people think evil is attractive. "Ah, look at the cute goblin! Here are some Hershey's Kisses!"

Rand notes that when they get complaints about Halloween it's more likely to be about the quantity of candy consumed on November 1 than about the fact they ignore the celebration.

2. Transform It

Invite Neighbours for an Alternative

At Delta Pentecostal Tabernacle in Delta, B.C., you'll find a big party on October 31 though you won't find any witches or goblins. In fact, you won't find many costumes at all. What you will find are dozens of neighbourhood and church children hopping from room to room playing games and winning prizes!

After an hour of festivities, every-



PHOTO © CATHY YEULET / GLOW IMAGES

one heads up to the sanctuary for some family friendly entertainment themed with the seasonal message “Don’t be scared because God is with you.” Debbie Newton, the office administrator, believes their Halloween alternative is a chance to “celebrate good and not evil. We celebrate God, not Satan. To us it’s a moral issue.”

And it also became a great opportunity for outreach. Many community parents also hated the hassle and potential danger of trick or treating. Inviting

these families seemed to be a positive alternative that could also raise the church’s profile.

Fourteen-year-old Joey Newton remembers these Halloween fests as the highlight of the fall. “We got to play fun games and we got candy and prizes we knew were safe to have.” But the highlight was the fireworks display at the end of the evening!

For organizations and individuals who want to reach out to their neighbours, Halloween does present a mar-

vellous opportunity because children are already in the mood for a party. It takes some effort but it’s something that Jeff and Donna Dawson felt was worth it. When their daughters were younger, they invited the girls’ friends for a harvest celebration at their rural Ontario home, complete with a scavenger hunt in the woods and a hayride. They declared it a non-costumed event that happened to coincide with Halloween. Their kids had safe fun and they had the opportunity to reach out to their community.

3. Engage It

Build Bridges With Neighbours

Many parents, however, find it difficult to ignore or repurpose Halloween because most public schools invite children to arrive at school donning a costume. Totally withdrawing from the celebration, then, is complicated. Instead, princesses and cowboys and ballerinas and puppy dogs abound.

Focus on the Family Canada representative Pat Foster thinks that’s OK. As long as parents keep adequate supervision and as long as the costumes aren’t occultist, “we see no reason to forbid the trick or treating tradition.” Besides, children like dressing up, and Focus on the Family thinks “some aspects of our modern observance of Halloween can be harmless and fun.”

Peter Kenniphaas, who pastors Ferndale Bible Church in Peterborough, Ont., and his wife, Barb, agree. “It’s all about having fun and connecting with people,” Peter explains. When he pastored in Duncan, B.C., one particular neighbour was surprised to see their four children trick or treating. She believed Christians shied away from anything that resembled fun.

Instead, Peter and Barb have tried to show what they are *for* rather than what they are *against*. Besides, Hal-

loween is a natural time to build bridges with neighbours. "Everybody's outside and happy and chatting," Peter says.

"It's a chance to have some light-hearted fun with the kids, just like I remember growing up," Barb adds.

They certainly talk to their children

about the dark side of Halloween but they say "We've chosen to use Halloween as an opportunity to love and serve our neighbours and to build relationships with them." You can build those relationships from your own doorstep too. We can get to know our neigh-

bours' names simply by passing out candy at the door, say Peter and Barb.

Laura Davis, who lives in London, Ont., makes it a point to hand hot chocolate to shivering parents walking door to door. It's not often we get an easy opening to talk to those who live near

Talk to Teens About the Occult

A Christian who was involved in occult practices as a teen **warns against ignorance**

By Lisa Hall-Wilson

Imagine visiting a shop when two intangible voices scream, "Get out! Get out!" A stiff blow to the gut, an unseen physical assault, hastens your exit.

For me, supernatural encounters like these began with my teenage involvement with the occult. I don't frequent psychic fairs or bars. These encounters have happened to me in innocuous places such as country fairs, craft shows and shopping malls.

Dr. Roy Matheson, a professor emeritus at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto, explains that such sensitivity is not uncommon among "those previously involved in the occult. This may be due to the fact that their experience has shown them the reality and power behind it."

Popular culture acknowledges and celebrates the supernatural realm, delivering alarming messages of control and power. Try a simple Internet search or examine your television listings. Yet many churches seem silent on this issue. Matheson, who has taught around the world, argues: "You do not have to convince people in the rest of the world about its reality [the supernatural and the occult] because it is part of their world view. Only in the West do many not take it seriously."

American pollster George Barna reports that 54 per cent of teens who attend evangelical youth groups are "moderately involved" in witchcraft and psychic activities. (The 2006 study, *Ministry to Mosaics*, involved 4,000 teens in the United States.) He defines "moderate" as five points of first-person contact, excluding television and daily horoscopes.

When I was a teen, adults warned me about strangers, unprotected sex, drugs and alcohol. I never partied or got high or drunk. I was an athlete, honour roll student and citizenship-award recipient. No cautioning words were said about the unseen dangers in the occult world.

Between the ages of 13 and 16, seeking power and control, I played Ouija, dabbled with dream interpretation and astrology, participated in séances, palm reading, tarot cards and auras. Premonitions were common to me, even telepathic communication.

A desire to learn more about "god" led me to a local Christian youth group. I attended weekend trips and sat on the youth leadership team. Living with a foot in two worlds – attending youth group Friday nights, honing my psychic powers on Saturday – opened me to spiritual attacks that

lasted almost a year.

What I was living with wasn't discussed or mentioned: nightmares, dark premonitions, awakening invisibly bound and then violated by the evil in my own bedroom. At 17 I didn't know any adult to talk to who would take this seriously.

Believing home to be the problem, I took a summer job at a Christian conference centre where I was insulated from these violent disturbances. One time, driving back after a visit home, I was given a vivid vision of my own suicide: a Mack truck's chrome grill through the windshield of my Chevette. Understanding that "god" wanted me to kill myself, I wandered the grounds after curfew feeling trapped and powerless. I was taken to the guest speaker. His low voice is clear in my memory.

"Satan wants you dead," he said.

My stomach was in knots, like wet laundry twisted too tightly. My hands were cold, the joints stiff, fingers curled into my palms to stop the shaking.

"But God is a God of love. There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear," he said. *What?* I wondered, my head throbbing. *The "god" that wanted me dead, that had me living in fear, was not the God of the Bible?*

I had been deceived about the very character of God. But after much prayer, I accepted Christ that night.

Are Canadian teens informed enough about the occult? Matheson doesn't think so. "I do not believe teens are adequately taught about the dangers of this area. Many church leaders seem to feel demonic activity is something that happens somewhere else but not here. Or they see the dabbling that youth do as basically harmless when it can open doors to the Enemy. We don't want to be paranoid but neither do we want to be uninformed."

The occult tempts teens by offering immediate results and the illusion of power and control. But I testify that encounters with God, with Jehovah, have surpassed all of my occult experiences.

We all need to share our God-experiences with teens. Had I been armed with the truth in Scripture, the lies I believed would have been exposed. Perhaps a good way to open the subject with teens is to ask about occult examples from popular culture and then listen openly to what they've seen and to the experiences of their friends. If someone like Dr. Matheson had been available to me, perhaps the consequences of my occult experiences would be less invasive today. ■

Lisa Hall-Wilson is a freelance writer in London, Ont.

us, and she chooses to take it.

Focus on the Family also offers *Adventures in Odyssey* CDs on special for their Trick or Treasure program. People can give these out as a way to “redeem the day,” says Pat Foster.

Whatever position Christian families take on Halloween, they will have to balance the demonic roots of the celebration with the opportunity for out-

reach and the desire of their kids to have fun. And in that process, there’s only one easy decision: whatever you do, include some chocolate. Surely no one can argue with that! ☐

Sheila Wray Gregoire of Belleville, Ont., is a speaker and columnist. Her most recent book is How Big Is Your Umbrella? Weathering the Storms of Life (Kregel, 2006).



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The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

By John D. Wilson



Evangelicals worldwide are looking ahead to the next Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa, the third such major gathering in the movement launched in 1974 by Billy Graham, John Stott and others. *Faith Today* has commissioned a series looking at seven of the major issues to be discussed.

Against a background of multiculturalism and pluralism, Christianity competes in the spiritual marketplace of Canadian society today as only one among several belief systems.

The situation is aggravated by the philosophical shift in the western world view toward the relativity and eclecticism of popular postmodernism. It is no longer acceptable to assert unequivocally that Christianity is the one true religion or, more specifically, that the only way to God is

through the person of Jesus Christ.

Try that and you are soon told you are arrogant, bigoted or intolerant.

Nonetheless, we can affirm that Jesus Christ *is* unique. First, He is unique in His person – that is, who He is as the Son of God. Second, He is unique in what He accomplished by becoming a human being in the midst of humanity and through His death, resurrection and ascension.

The main problem is not Christ's uniqueness but how we articulate this claim.

Of course, today our understanding of uniqueness is ambiguous. We often hear people saying something or someone is "very unique" as if there were degrees of uniqueness. This betrays our postmodern culture's reluctance to claim anything as absolute – that a particular person, idea or thing stands absolutely alone and different. We value diversity and "otherness" to a certain degree and yet we bend over backwards to assert sameness and coerce everyone into conformity and homogeneity.

Canadians generally tolerate all religions in terms of their *perceived* common values. We regularly hear people assert "All religions are the same." And people pick and choose an eclectic mix from different religions and philosophies in order to define their own "spirituality" – even when some of those ideas are inherently incompatible or even contradictory. However, these same people will quickly become irritated if you suggest that your religion is the one and only true faith.

For these reasons, we will not establish the uniqueness of Jesus with proof texts like "There is no other name ... by which we must be saved" or by quoting Jesus when He said "I am the way ... No one comes to the Father except through me." Nor is it likely we can convince people with logical arguments.

Rather, we need to be able to explain *why* we believe He is unique in terms of the wider nar-

Why These Seven Issues?

The Lausanne Congress expects 4,000 participants in Cape Town, with thousands more joining in over the Internet. In essence the event will be a global Church council on the pressing issues facing the advance of the gospel around the world.

As Christians seek to evangelize, they face challenges. Some are local or regional but others are international. Lausanne has a series of online videos introducing many of these issues, available at www.youtube.com/lausannemovement.

Faith Today has invited columns on seven of these issues: (1) the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, (2) seeking reconciliation in our broken world, (3) developing a redemptive, loving response to world faiths, (4) priorities for world evangelism, (5) living a Christlike lifestyle of servanthood, (6) the Trinity as a model for global partnership and community and (7) megacities and international diaspora.

Global issues like these require God's people to engage in global conversations in pursuit of global solutions. No one nation, region, denomination or ministry has all the answers.

Organizers are praying for three major results from the congress: a greater sense of unity in the Body of Christ (including hundreds of new organizational partnerships), of clarity of the gospel and of ordered priority in the tasks ahead.

"Together, we want to discern where the Church should put its energies so that we can most effectively respond to Christ's call to take the gospel into all the world and make disciples of people," according to www.lausanne.org.

Digging Deeper Into the Uniqueness of Christ

- *The Uniqueness of Christ in a Postmodern World and the Challenge of World Religions*, Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 31 (free online at www.lausanne.org)
- Richard D. Phillips (editor), *Only One Way? Reaffirming the Exclusive Truth Claims of Christianity*, Crossway, 2007
- Sung Wook Chung, *Christ the One and Only: A Global Affirmation of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ*, Baker Academic, 2005
- Stuart McAllister (audio series on CD), *Responding to a Postmodern World* (order at store.rzim.org)
- Ravi Zacharias (video on DVD), *The Uniqueness of Christ in History* (order at store.rzim.org)

It is not the uniqueness of "Christianity" as a system that we defend, but the uniqueness of Christ. He is unique in his incarnation (which is quite different from the ahistorical and plural "avatars" of Hinduism); in his atonement (dying once for all for our sins); in his resurrection (breaking the power of death); and in his gift of the Spirit (to indwell and transform us). So, because in no other person but Jesus of Nazareth did God first become human (in his birth), then bear our sins (in his death), then conquer death (in his resurrection) and then enter his people (by his Spirit), he is uniquely able to save sinners. Nobody else has his qualifications.

—John Stott
(in *Christianity Today*, Sept. 2003, p. 50)

native of Scripture. In other words, there is a compelling rationale for our belief that Jesus Christ is unique: there is a singular thread of logic that runs through the Bible, which originates in the grace of God and is centred in His Son Jesus Christ.

In an initial conversation – there will be more – you can outline God's strategy of grace in Christ from pre-Creation to the end of time. Though all human

beings are made in the image of God, our sin has alienated us from God and deprived us of the fullness of our humanity. But Jesus Christ who is fully God became fully human to represent us and stand in our place. He redeems us from the ravages of sin, heals our broken humanity and brings us back to God.

Not only that, but God is bringing everything into unity under Christ and there will be a grand redemption of all creation with a new heaven and earth. But until then, creation groans like a woman in labour awaiting the full redemption of the children of God.

This entire action of God in Christ sets Him and the gospel apart from anything else. Jesus is unequivocally unique. The only Son of God is one of a kind and what He has done for us in His incarnation, death and resurrection is incomparable.

Inevitably people will ask some tough questions: "What of the burka-swathed woman in the Swat Valley in Pakistan who has only ever heard the teachings of Islam?" Or "Do you think Christianity has the corner on the truth? Aren't the teachings of Buddha and Muhammad equally valid?"

Don't be tempted to give trite answers. If necessary, admit you cannot answer the question. But if it is sincere and not a red herring, be prepared to seek an answer or invite the person to explore the question with you by reading the Bible through and doing some research (see the sidebar for suggested reading).

And don't try to defend Christianity as a religious system. Keep the focus on who Jesus is and what God has done for us all in Him because this is what the world needs. This is who the world needs.

Politics, economics, science and all other vain and presumptive strivings of humanity have never succeeded in setting right the tragic human condition. They are all of a kind.

Jesus stands unique. ☒

John D. Wilson, coach and mentor for World Team Asia, is based in Acton, Ont.



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More Than One Way?

By James Beverley



Shouldn't Evangelicals get with the program and participate in the Parliament of the World's Religions? Is Jesus really the only way to God?

This coming December 8,000 religious leaders are expected to attend the Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne, Australia. This is only the fifth time for such a gathering. The first was held in Chicago in 1893, the second a century later in the same city, with Cape Town (1998) and Barcelona (2005) hosting the most recent gatherings. I missed the first one (a bit before my time) and the last one but hope to get "down under" to monitor the latest trends in interreligious dialogue.

I know from past experience there will be lots of Christians at the event but not many of the evangelical variety. This is not surprising since Evangelicals tend to (a) dislike ecumenical programs and (b) disagree with a pluralistic view of religions. A year ago, Rick Hiemstra of the Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism (an initiative of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada) noted high commitment to evangelism among Canadian Evangelicals across three national surveys (1996, 2003 and 2007). He also showed how this evangelistic emphasis is at growing variance with trends in the larger Canadian society toward pluralism.

Some pundits think all Evangelicals, Canadian and otherwise, should drop their narrow-minded ways and hit the road to Melbourne. How can there be only one way? Who are we to think we have the whole truth? Can't we learn from faithful people in other religions? What about those who have never heard the gospel? What about decent Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus who lead lives of goodness and live up to the light they have? What about the honest atheist who lives by high moral standards yet is unable to believe in God? Let me suggest four things by way of response.

(1) Note that the first three questions are actually rhetorical ploys. If there were only one cure for cancer, would we ignore it? Claiming Christ as "the Truth" is not saying "we" Evangelicals have the whole truth about everything. Who would ever say that? Likewise, Evangelicals do not claim to have the total market on wisdom, goodness and serenity. Sometimes we would rather have a Buddhist for a neighbour than a Bible-thumper.

(2) All Christian thinking on these matters must start and end with the proclamation of Christ as sole Lord and Saviour. If Evangelicals abandon Jesus as "the Way," we have given up the gospel. The only hope for sinful humanity lies in the Cross (as we read in John 3:16, Galatians 6:14 and Colossians 1:20). Every knee will bow to Jesus (Philippians 2:10), Christian and otherwise. Only Jesus opens the scroll and its seals (Revelation 5:5). "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

(3) To fully obey Christ we also need to watch our judgmental tone. Beware how quickly we assign people to hell. Beware how much we relish being "right" and "orthodox" and "true." Beware how we often lack the grace of Christ as we contemplate theological issues. Thankfully, Canada is home to evangelical scholars who write on the topic of other faiths with Christlike grace. I think, for example, of Clark Pinnock, emeritus professor at McMaster University, and his work *A Wideness in God's Mercy* (Zondervan, 1992). You will find a similar spirit, though a different theological perspective, in Terry Tiessen, emeritus professor at Providence College and Seminary and author of *Who Can Be Saved?* (InterVarsity, 2004).

(4) Sometimes troubling questions have to be left to God. It is better to trust than to pontificate. Forty years ago, in my teen years, I was disturbed about the issue of unevangelized people. Oswald J. Smith visited Moncton, N.B., at the time. I wrote him a letter and asked him about the fate of those who had never heard the gospel. This great missionary statesman, founder of The Peoples Church in Toronto, wrote me back. I thought he would provide all the details. Instead he said he did not know the answer but was content to live by Genesis 18:25. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" ■

What about
the honest atheist
who lives by high
moral standards
yet is unable to
believe in God?

James A. Beverley is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. He is at work on a new book in Christian apologetics.

New Life Church, Duncan, B.C.

By Charlene de Haan



Each fall community parents and children are offered free haircuts and a free 32-point automotive mechanical check and car wash.

“Winning the heart of the Cowichan Valley” is a pretty big hairy audacious goal but Mark Buchanan and New Life Community Baptist Church in Duncan, B.C., seem to be up for the challenge. The congregation, known generally as New Life Church, formally aims to “Do that, not which makes us *feel* good or *look* good – though it may do both – but by which we actually *do* good.”

A Look at the 'Hood

Pastor Buchanan reflects on the First Nations band office across the street and the First Nations reserve immediately left of the church. First Nations people are one-eighth of the parish community and one-twelfth of the congregation.

A church program that is especially helpful to First Nations people is called Jump Start. A single mom started it seven years ago in response to Buchanan asking the community “What would help you most?” Jump Start aims to help during seasons of high stress. It sees hundreds of neighbours show up just before school starts each fall. While vehicles get a 32-point mechanical check and car wash, parents and children receive haircuts, select gently used clothes and shoes, and pick up age-appropriate backpacks filled with new school gear.

Each Christmas Day, 600 people gather at the native gym in the centre of town for a Christmas dinner. Community businesses comment: “We’ve heard about your church. We want to help.” Together they provide dinner, age-appropriate gifts, winter jackets, toiletries, milk and eggs.

The principal of the local high school admits to “unofficial segregation” between economic and ethnic cultures. To address such issues, members of the congregation drop by at lunch hour to mentor youth, hang out or tutor a specific subject. Working with a nutritionist and partnering with a local business donating vegetables, volunteers cook a healthy soup while others ladle it out to 200 teens. Grades and behaviour have improved as a result. A Sikh employee from the local business now attends the church.

Core Vision: Up, In, Out

“Looking outward has always been part of the genetic code of the church,” says Buchanan, but about eight years ago the congregation became more intentional. Reaching “up, in, out” expresses their priorities: reaching *up* to God as God reaches down to us, abiding *in* Christ expressed through community, sharing the Good News *out* in the neighbourhood.

About 40 per cent of the 700 people attending New Life seriously live it out.

“Effective leaders always monitor vision leakage,” the motto of American megachurch pastor Bill Hybels, is important to Buchanan. New Life reinforces vision at several levels. *Pastor Mark’s Notes* provides an online epistle to the community on Fridays. The God Walk emphasizes basic discipleship: Bible reading and prayer. Leadership Jazz addresses character issues and cultivates spiritual gifts, and Carey Theological College comes alongside with credit courses at a deeper level. Kingdom world-view training equips a royal priesthood, a holy nation and as-you-go missionaries.

Creating a Climate of Dreams

The Council of Cowichan Christian Leaders instructs: “Walk the length and breadth of the community. Ask God to reveal His role for the church.” As a result, Prayer Walk, a weekly journey of 20 to 25 people, might begin at any one of 12 churches in town, taking God’s presence into the community – blessing and listening, asking where God’s heart is breaking, creating a climate of spiritual dreams.

Cop Care grew out of the dream of an RCMP chaplain who attends New Life. With all the criticism police receive, he suggested: “Tell them what they’re

doing right. Say thank you!” At the first banquet, a high-end event for 50 police officers and spouses, the story of Jesus and the centurion left these police officers with tears in their eyes. Now RCMP police officers flock out of the local detachment each month when the lunch grill arrives. Through serving and friendship-building, the cop population at New Life has grown to eight.

Celebrations and Challenges

God-stories from the congregation create celebrations. “While driving, I felt prompted to pick up a hitchhiker. This First Nations girl was going farther than I was but I felt compelled to take her to her destination. She shared her story – raised in a residential school, afraid of church. But this Sunday she said she’ll visit New Life!”

Challenges? Buchanan responds immediately. “Sometimes we’re over-extended. We have difficulty with dispersal of energy.” People beyond their own resources phone for help. A young unmarried couple, around 15 years of



Officers from the local RCMP detachment come out to a Cop Care barbecue. There are now eight police officers who are members at New Life.

age, were informed by Social Services they would lose their baby if they didn’t find a good home. They are now housed separately with church members and attend New Life, learning what it means to walk with Jesus.

Occasionally other churches criticize New Life for walking the in-between spaces. Sometimes people leave because lives get messy. “New Life welcomes a ton of recovery people,” says Buchanan. One woman addicted to cocaine decided at Alpha to follow Jesus and wanted to marry the common-law father of their two children. Some state they will be unequally yoked; others feel compassion for a family in need of unity. “It often puts relationships at risk,” sighs Buchanan. Is it easier to lead a church where people leave to worship elsewhere or where people return to lives of torment because they are not accepted in the Body of Christ?

Buchanan declares: “Jesus never left behind a book. He left behind a community.” ■

Charlene de Haan is a freelance writer in Toronto. She is also manager of educational services for The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Read all the profiles in this ongoing series at www.faithtoday.ca.

An Inviting Blend

By Tim Dyck



The Evangelical Mennonite Conference is a small but vibrant family of churches within Canada's evangelical movement

With a name that includes both “Evangelical” and “Mennonite,” the Evangelical Mennonite Conference is an heir to a rich theological heritage.

We are indebted to the Protestant Reformation's radical wing (as shown in “Mennonite”). We are equally indebted (as shown in “Evangelical”) to the broader Reformation and to the later evangelical movement. Most of all, we are indebted to the gospel of Christ that predates all Christian movements!

As an evangelical body, we emphasize our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church, personal faith in Christ and baptism upon that confession, discipleship, the Bible as God's Word and our final authority in faith and practice, and evangelistic missions (Matthew 28:18-20).

We also hold to a theology involving our hands and feet, life together and a commitment to engage wider society. We seek to carry out Christ's wider mission partly through charity work, social justice, the pursuit of peace and an opposition to war (Matthew 25:31-46).

Do we do this imperfectly? You bet! But for a denomination that will be 200 years old in 2012, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference is, by Christ's grace, striving to be faithful.

The EMC began in 1812 in Ukraine and moved in 1874 to Canada. From five isolated congregations in southern Manitoba, defined by both Anabaptist faith and Dutch-German-Russian culture, we have grown to 61 congregations from the central interior of British Columbia to southern Ontario's Golden Horseshoe region. Now, about 7,800 people worship weekly, coming from a wide range of cultural and church backgrounds. *Vive la difference!*

Yes, we're small, but we want to make a difference. A commitment to missions is in the DNA of the EMC.

Beyond our missions involvements in Canada, Paraguay, Nicaragua and Mexico, we have formal relationships with 20 mission agencies.

We have about 100 missionaries in more than 20 countries. Their ministries include church planting, Bible translation and literacy, radio work, caring for people with HIV/AIDS, community development, teaching, aviation and much more.

We try to make all members aware that we are all full-time workers for Christ.

Beyond our valued relationship with The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, we have connections with institutions

such as Steinbach Bible College and Canadian Mennonite University and organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite World Conference.

That's a lot of “Mennonite” in some of those names, which shows our historical link to the Reformation-era, courageous Dutch leader Menno Simons. But he wouldn't be impressed with anyone promoting his name; the name he wanted emphasized is that of Jesus.

“My writing and teaching is nothing other than Jesus Christ,” Simons wrote. “I seek and desire nothing . . . but that the most glorious name, the divine will, and the glory of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ may be acknowledged throughout the world.”

Only 22 EMC congregations retain “Mennonite” in their local church name. The dropping of the term is a practical decision by many congregations in order to reach out to people who might mistake being Mennonite for a particular culture. This practical decision, moreover, points out that our Evangelical Anabaptist identity, our understanding of scriptural teaching, is more than a label. As within any church or denomination, what we believe and do is more important than what label we use.

We remain followers of Jesus committed to Christ and to each other. Our conference slogan is “Christ Through Us to Others.” This means Christ is central, the Church is essential and others are welcome.

As Christ moves through His Spirit, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference is changing. We have grown to include Hispanic congregations within Canada and to serve unreached peoples far away.

Our lifestyles range from many forms of work found in the hustle and bustle of urban life, inner-city commitment and rural life. We've gone from “the other side of the river” to mainstream. You'll find us in the oil patch, factory, barnyard, board room and mission field.

Beyond labels and differences, all who truly confess Christ as Lord in life are part of one Christian family. We need each other. As the EMC name reflects, we are widely indebted and enriched as a result. ■

Tim Dyck is general secretary for the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, headquartered in Steinbach, Man. This column continues a series by affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. For a list, see www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/affiliates.

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Bethany College is a community of disciples of Jesus Christ committed to live and to serve to the glory of God. Within this community, there is an intense focus on God's Word, missions and learning to follow Jesus in all areas of life.

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For the full list of program options, see, www.bethany.sk.ca; or call toll free: 866-772-2175.

A learning community Briercrest College and Seminary

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We're not your typical Bible college. Though we're known for the quality of our ministry preparation, we've also come to value the study of the liberal arts. The combination of these disciplines is what makes us distinct – Bible and theology, ministry training, and arts and science are all essential components of our education. Several certificate programs and Associate and Bachelor of Arts



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Helping students achieve goals Christian College and University Fairs

Check out the Christian College and University Fairs. Representatives from more than 30 schools from Canada and the U.S. will be available to answer questions students may have as they begin their college/university search.

Christian institutions can help students achieve their goals. Graduates from our schools have gone on to pursue graduate programs at Harvard, Yale and other top universities. Others have gone directly into careers such as inter-

national development with Samaritan's Purse, Bible translation with Wycliffe Bible Translators, corporate accounting with Deloitte and Touche or space technology with the Canadian Space Agency.

But what students appreciate most about their education is the opportunity to grow in all areas of life. Chapel, discipleship programs and mentoring are some of the programs found at a Christian school. And there are co-curricular activities – varsity athletics, ministry outreaches, student leadership – that help develop skills and discover abilities. When students graduate, they're not only prepared academically to enter the work world, they're confident in who they are and how they can make a difference in the world.

Make it a priority to attend a Christian College and University Fair in your area. The event is free, and students, parents, pastors and guidance counsellors are encouraged to attend. Visit www.ccufairs.ca for details on upcoming fairs.

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tutions in developing and former communist countries, where they are able to provide students with an education that is rooted in a Christian worldview. Currently, openings exist in many countries and in a variety of disciplines.

CSI professors make a tremendous difference in the lives of hundreds of students overseas. Professors teaching with CSI must raise some of their own support for travel as well as partial salary. Often, the host university provides some salary, housing and other amenities. CSI will assist the professor in raising the necessary funds from churches, friends and supporters. Donations for this purpose are channelled through CSI, which provides tax receipts.

People with the appropriate academic qualifications who are interested in making use of this opportunity to bring the good news of the Gospel in places where this may seldom be heard should consult the CSI website at www.christianstudiesinternational.ca or contact CSI at csidesk@telus.net.



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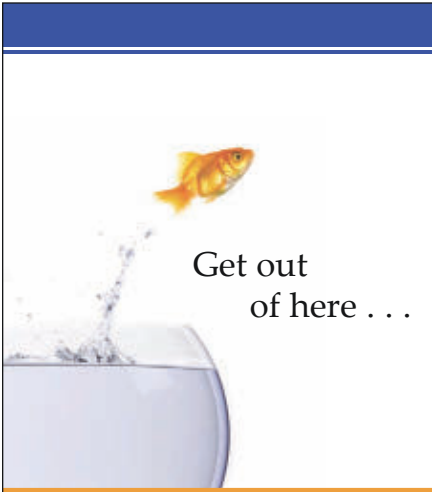
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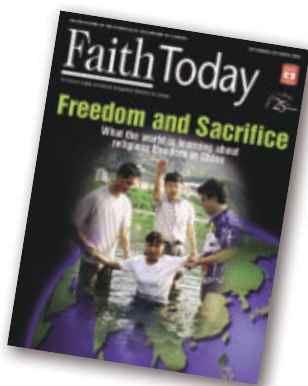
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Bethany College, Hepburn, SK, is a Bible College committed to nurturing disciples and training leaders to serve. Bethany is currently seeking applications for President. Full description at www.bethany.sk.ca

Continued on page 52

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Alpha

All or Nothing at All?

By John G. Stackhouse Jr.



Evangelicals need to be truly appreciative of what is both good and not good in any event, sermon or book

Controversy continues over Paul Young's book *The Shack*. I interacted publicly with Paul when he visited us at Regent College last year and I recorded my response to the novel on my weblog. Because I refused either to condemn or commend the book without qualification, I have been denounced as a heretic or a spoilsport, respectively. Many people want the book clearly labelled as either terrible or wonderful – full stop.

A friend of mine recently reported on his experience preaching as a guest in a large Canadian church. This friend is highly educated, well-spoken and literate. As he was attempting to connect with his widely varied audience, he used a common word to express what many of us feel when confronted with the frustrations of life after the Fall. The word was not swearing; it was an everyday word that was simply a bit unusual to hear from the pulpit. But several people in the congregation later complained to one of the associate pastors that the use of this single word was enough to turn them off from the rest of the sermon.

It is characteristic of the fundamentalist mindset to look at the world in binary terms. Everything is yes or no, white or black, good or bad, in or out, us or them, true or false, light or darkness, one or zero.

It is characteristic of the evangelical mindset, by contrast, to qualify this binary attitude in at least three ways. The first is to distinguish between matters of truly binary character (such as whether or not Jesus is Lord) and matters that are at least currently open to legitimate disagreement (such as gender roles or the use of various electronic technologies in church and outreach).

The second is to distinguish matters of primary and secondary importance (so that Baptists can co-operate with Presbyterians, say, on matters of mutual concern such as evangelism or Christian education).

And the third is to retain a robust doctrine of sin such that we *expect* imperfections in everything everyone says or does.

We therefore need to be *truly* critical. That doesn't mean

we cultivate a critical spirit in the sense of always looking for (and secretly delighting in) the faults of others. Instead, being truly critical means being truly appreciative of what is both good and not good in any event.

I disagree with the 20th-century theologian Paul Tillich

about a great many things but I do agree with his aphorism that one should be able to write at least one "yes" and at least one "no" in the margins of any book. We should listen to a sermon the same way.

We can simply expect – because of either our faults or the faults of others or even just our differences – that we will not agree with or approve of everything we see or hear. But if we stop reading or stop listening at the first sign of something objectionable, we will miss receiving the good in what follows. We will lock ourselves away in safe, reinforced and reinforcing bunkers of settled opinion.

Again, the key here is not to substitute a sentimental credulity for a judgmental

closed-mindedness. The key here is to become truly critical: truly appreciative of the elements of any book or sermon or other communication that are "true, honourable, right, pure and lovely" while discerning what is wrong – or ugly, perhaps, or simply trivial.

Such a truly critical spirit is also both hopeful and realistic. We hope God will continue to use the broken and sometimes perverse messengers all of us human beings are to convey helpful messages – indeed, to preach good news! – to each other. We also recognize that our messages will usually be tainted, sometimes garbled and occasionally flatly untrue.

So let's keep listening and reading to receive what is good thankfully and to regretfully but charitably set aside what isn't. Otherwise, we might as well talk to ourselves. And how flawless do you think that communication would be? ■

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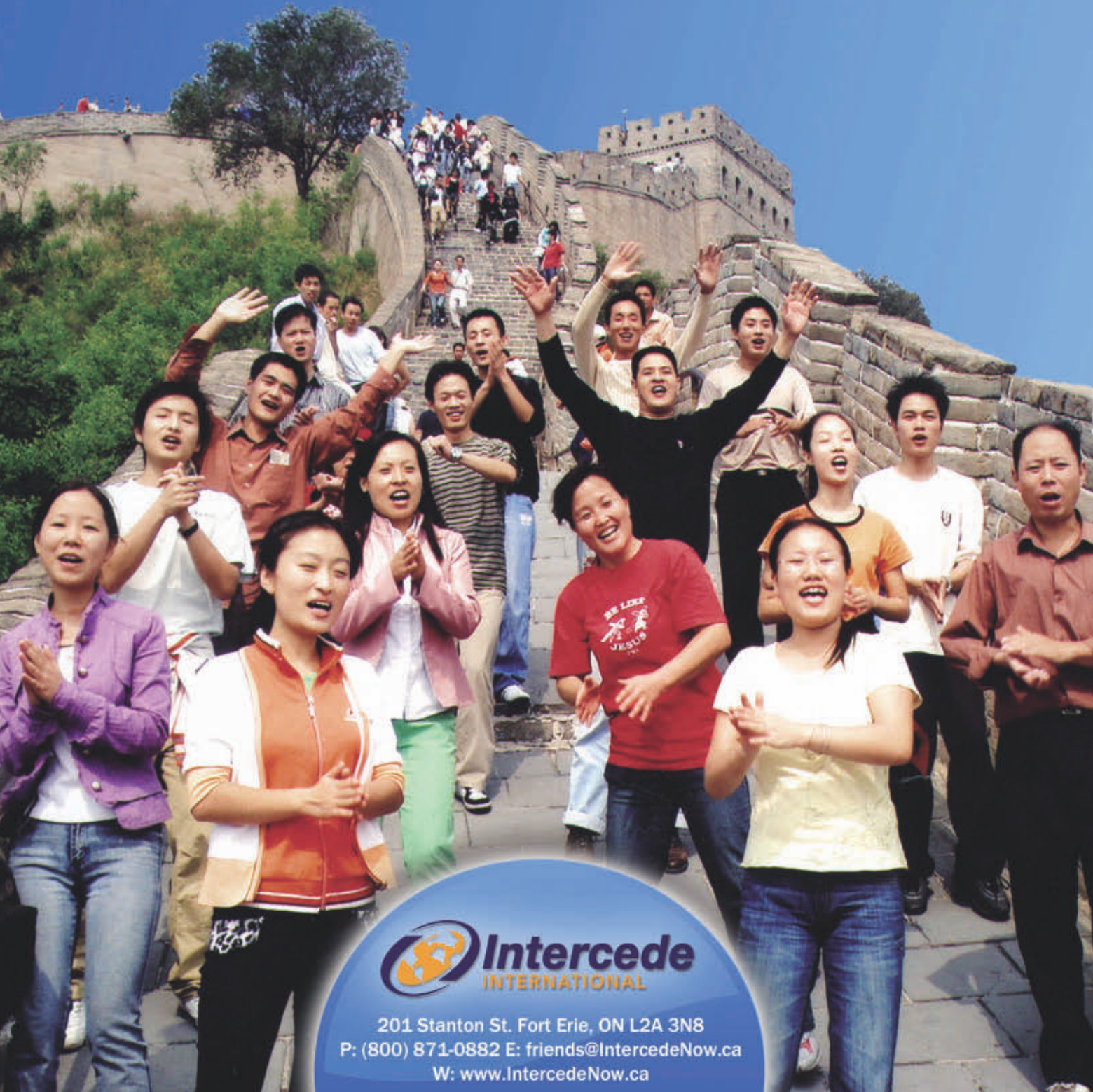
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