

Faith Today

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF CANADA
To Connect, Equip and Inform Evangelical Christians in Canada

MAY/JUNE 2010
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Throwing an Olympic-Sized Outreach

Advice from Christian groups
in Vancouver p. 18

Canadian Christian Doctor Fights
MATERNAL MORTALITY
p. 24

Caring for the Poor
**Big Changes
Needed**
p. 30

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God Is at Work

It's inspiring to hear fresh stories of how God is using His people.

Christian unity has transformed thousands and blessed hundreds of thousands at the Vancouver Olympics. Our cover story by Karen Stiller captures the excitement and joy of the 4,000 volunteers (from 15 denominations, 40 organizations and hundreds of churches) who participated in More Than Gold, one of the largest Christian outreaches ever attempted during an Olympics. Christians in British Columbia were encouraged to show "radical hospitality" – and they did! Stiller highlights the important principles and strategies of this successful initiative which you, too, can use to plan your own community outreach event.

David Wells, the chair of the board of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, was the Olympic chaplaincy co-ordinator and vice-chair of More Than Gold. He admits there were huge challenges. But he believes they saw a miracle. In "Unity Is Hard Work," he writes how the Olympic initiative was a great opportunity for God's Kingdom to be expressed locally and globally. "We believed together that we would see 'God command His blessing' in unprecedented manner on our service, witness and social actions before, during and after the Games." Using Jeremiah 29:7 as their promise, they prayed for the peace and prosperity of the whole community, and God blessed it.

Christians are learning that working together can be more effective than doing it alone – also in terms of addressing global poverty, as Debra Fieguth shows in "Caring for the Poor: Big Changes Needed." She highlights Micah Challenge workshops which are now in place to train and encourage people in effective advocacy. Robyn Bright, national co-ordinator for Micah Challenge Canada, says letters to the editor, letters to Members of Parliament and meetings with MPs are all direct ways of getting the message through. She also encourages prayer for the upcoming G8/G20 meetings and the World Religions Summit, all taking place in Canada this June.

Sometimes we make a difference one person at a time

Sometimes we make a difference one person at a time. In "Women Sharing Jesus With Canadian Muslims," Karen Stiller interviews Joy Loewen, who has spent 30 years in Muslim ministry and has recently written about it in *Woman to Woman: Sharing Jesus with a Muslim Friend*. Her insights will enable you to reach out to your Muslim neighbours with a comfort that may surprise you. Her story reminds us that often we are too nervous about sharing our beliefs with people of another faith. She is convinced they would be welcomed. **FT**

GAIL REID is managing editor of *Faith Today* and director of communications for The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

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Managing Editor: Gail Reid

Senior Editor: Bill Fledderus

Associate Editor: Karen Stiller

Production Manager: Rob Robotham

Marketing Manager: Gina Waugh

Distribution Manager: Anita Kwan

Advertising Manager: Brian Shephard

Senior Writers: Jeff Dewsbury, Drew Dyck, Debra Fieguth, Doris Fleck, Alex Newman, Patricia Paddey, Karen Stiller, Stephanie Tombari, Ben Volman

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Masculine and Feminine Also in Bible

Re: *Mars & Venus Go to Church* (Mar/Apr 2010)

This article emotionally and spiritually abuses me as a female.

If you are trying to bring more men to Church by trying to eliminate Scripture-based songs that are supposedly too “feminine” (e.g., “More precious than Silver” rated F8 or “extremely feminine”) then you will have to eliminate passages in the Bible that are too masculine, since many females have difficulty in coming to church because God is portrayed as masculine, as Father.

If Christian men would not allow their male egos to get in the way of showing the fem-

inine side of God, the Church would be a much safer place for women both here and around the world.

God protects women, not

abuses them. (Note: even though I have trouble relating to God as Father, I do not want it changed.)

FRANCES CAMP
Toronto, Ont.

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Milestones



Tim McCoy

Appointed: Tim McCoy as the executive minister of Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, after serving four years as director of youth ministries for its 360 churches. McCoy, based in Toronto, also volunteers with the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable facilitated by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). Previously he pastored in Charlotte, North Carolina, for 12 years. He succeeds Ken Bellous, who retired in June 2009, and John Torrance, who served in the interim. Ted Searle remains as president.



Matthew Gibbins

Appointed: Matthew Gibbins as executive director of the Global Mission Roundtable, a partnership operating on the communications and administrative platform of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. In this new role he will focus on emerging missions leadership, strategic mission partnerships, and the development of missions resources and research. He previously served with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, working with their Urbana Student Missions Conference for almost 12 years. He has been a co-chair of the Roundtable since 2008.

Appointed: Floyd Perras as CEO of Siloam Mission, a Winnipeg organization serving homeless people. He previously directed the Salvation Army's Harbour Light Ministries in Toronto. He succeeds John Mohan.

Appointed: Charlene de Haan as executive director of CAM International of Canada, based in Burlington, Ont., an evangelism and discipleship ministry to Spanish speakers. She has previously worked for the EFC, Pioneer Clubs Canada and Interserve Canada.

Reorganized: Crossroads Television System Inc. (CTS-TV) and Crossroads Christian Communications Inc., both in Burlington, Ont., known for TV shows such as *100 Huntley Street* founded by David Mainse and for overseas relief and development work. A new nine-member board includes Bruce Fawcett of Acadia University, Mel Finlay of Nation at Prayer and Carson Pue of Arrow Leadership. Don Simmonds, an entrepreneur known for his work establishing Clearnet (now Telus) was appointed last year as CEO. Among other key staff, Ron Mainse continues as executive producer of *100 Huntley Street* and Bruce Stacey as chief content officer.

Renamed: The Church Army in Canada, based in Saint John, N.B., has now become Threshold Ministries. The ministry, which includes evangelism and evangelism training, social service, chaplaincy and youth work, dates itself back to Anglican roots in 1929 in Toronto and to London, England in 1882.

Appointed: Chris Cowie as executive director of Community Justice Initiatives in Kitchener, Ont., an organization that helped launch the restorative justice movement in North America. He was previously director of regional development at SIM Canada.

Awarded: Dr. Cal Stiller, a physician, professor, entrepreneur and pioneer in human organ transplants, with a Canada Gairdner Award, an international medical honour. Stiller, 69, was also recently inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. He helped found the Robarts Research Institute in London, Ont., the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research and the MaRS Discovery District in Toronto, a not-for-profit institute promoting technological innovation in health care. Dr. Stiller is part of a well-known family of evangelical leaders including former EFC/Tyndale president Brian Stiller, former World Relief/Horizon College head Doug Stiller, and Anglican pastor Brent Stiller (husband of *Faith Today* associate editor Karen Stiller – whew!).



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“Five for 5”

Aims to Save Lives



This fishing village in Aceh, Indonesia, was relocated and rebuilt by World Vision after the 2004 tsunami. Local mothers and babies attend a weekly health clinic.

PHOTO: JOHN STEWART/WORLD VISION

Globally, more than 24,000 children under the age of five die every day, most of them from preventable causes. Labelling that fact an “unacceptable reality,” World Vision Canada recently launched its Five for 5 campaign, calling on Canadians to “Take five minutes. Do five things. Help save a child’s life.”

Through the campaign, World Vision is asking Canadians to learn more about the issue of child health around the world, send a message to their MP, join the campaign, spread the word and give to the cause.

One of the campaign goals – to call on Canadians to urge the government to make child and maternal health a top priority at the June 2010 G8 Summit in Muskoka – has already succeeded. Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared in January that child and maternal health – a cause *The Globe and Mail* editorialized as “vital yet long-neglected and unglamorous” – would indeed be the

focus for the June meetings. The other goal, to significantly increase Canada’s funding support for programs focused on saving the lives of women and children, has yet to be reached.

“That’s the part that we need to work on between now and the G8,” says Sharon Marshall, a campaign advisor for World Vision. “We need to make sure that the funding is there.”

“The government is really looking for support from Canadians on this initiative,” she says, adding it’s important that people send messages to the government and do activities in their churches and communities to back the cause.

“All of us who are working on the campaign are thrilled to see it named as a priority” for the G8, says Marshall. “We’re taking it on as a responsibility as well.”

Five for 5 (www.fivefor5.ca) is the first phase of a five-year campaign, designed to improve child health globally and reduce child mortality by two-thirds by 2015. **FT** –PATRICIA PADDEY

Recycling Rubber and Resolve

For Shane Olson, founder of Saskatoon's Shercom Industries, recycling is more than a good habit – it's a form of worship. "God has granted me the opportunity to not only be environmentally responsible, but to clean up tire piles from the past," says Olson, who believes that loving his Creator means caring for creation.

This spring, Olson is celebrating 17 years of manufacturing products from recycled rubber. (He previously worked buying grain and arranging its transportation.)

Since founding Shercom with his cousin in 1993, Olson has combined rubber buffing – a by-product of tire shops – with crumb rubber and created paving stones, parking curbs and speed bumps.

"We're looking to make value-added products from recycled materials," explains

the member of College Park Covenant Church. "Most people find this encouraging."

By utilizing shredded tires Olson is not only empty-

ing Saskatchewan's landfills, but allowing consumers the reward of improving their environment.

"I often receive the credit for recycling, but the credit belongs to the consumer," Olson explains. "All we're doing is changing the shape of a tire. It becomes recycling when someone else buys the product."

While Shercom is currently expanding to meet mushrooming demands, it's taken years for the company to make a profit.

Following its inception, the recycling venture seemed fraught with failure. Olson's cousin left the business in 1996 to work the family farm; a new tire shredder failed to work; then, upon the purchase of another shredder, Saskatchewan's tire recycling program faltered, effectively bankrupting Shercom.

After a friend offered to partner with Olson, they moved into a 32,000 square-

CMU Students Envision a Better World

For the world's estimated 1.3 billion people who cannot afford or access prescription glasses, Global Vision 2020 – an organization which produces self-corrective lenses – is literally a sight for sore eyes.

This spring, students from the Outtatown Discipleship Program at Winnipeg's Canadian Mennonite University are partnering with GV2020 to bring special glasses to Guatemala.

Outtatown has already been working in Guatemala for more than 10 years, says director Paul Kroeker. "I saw the value of this project for our program and knew that it would address a real need." Helping to distribute special eyewear to people in need fits with Outtatown's mandate to provide recent high school graduates with a unique, two-semester travel and learning experience. Youth have the opportunity to serve and learn about God, and experience a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

They will find that and more with GV2020, an American organization founded by Kevin White, a former Marine who linked up with a physicist from Oxford University to help correct vision problems in the developing world. Physicist Josh Silver invented the self-corrective lenses the youth will be helping to distribute. They are called Adspecs.

Not only are they less expensive than ordinary glasses, but non-optometrists can dispense them, making them perfect for people with vision problems who live in poverty in the developing world.

"I never really thought about what people in the developing world did without this basic necessity," White explains. "As soon as I found out there was something I could do, I couldn't assume others were going to do it for me." White hopes to provide Adspecs for 100 million individuals each year, for the next 10 years (www.gv2020.org).

"I outsource distribution to other aid organizations," he explains, "and they outsource supply of glasses and training to me. It's a symbiotic relationship" – one that now includes enthusiastic students from Canadian Mennonite University.

"The Outtatown students are motivated, intelligent and hardworking," says White, who trained them prior to their January departure. "They were already headed to Guatemala to do great work; the addition of a vision outreach is just another arrow for their quiver." **FT**

—EMILY WIERENGA

foot facility north of Saskatoon and worked 20-hour days for three months, preparing the plant.

Two days before completion, the plant burned down, with no explanation as to how the fire started.

By spring of 2004, Olson had a third partner – Lavern Arndt – and a new facility. Today, Shercom employs 25 to 30

full-time staff and is developing new products including interlock paving tile and coloured mulch.

"It's about saying, 'God, this is your business, and for whatever reason, you've called me to lead it,'" says Olson. "So please, grant me wisdom today to manage it and look for ways to glorify you." **FT**

—EMILY WIERENGA



Some of Shercom's speed bumps made from recycled tires.



PHOTO COURTESY: OUTTATOWN DISCIPLESHIP SCHOOL

Students from Winnipeg's Canadian Mennonite University are partnering with GV2020 to bring special glasses to Guatemala.

Loving Our Neighbour's Land

Are Christians truly loving their neighbour if they stand by and do nothing while creation is being trashed?

Dave Toycoen, president and chief executive officer of World Vision Canada, posited that question at a recent panel discussion on the environment.

The dialogue was one of several events that gathered academics, theologians, scientists and climate change experts for a Toronto conference by the University of Calgary's Oikos Centre for the Environment.

"Dwindling access to safe water all over the world, the soaring cost of food commodities as well as increased violence as farm land becomes more and more marginalized – all of these things that are connected to creation, to the land, are connected to issues around children and the poor," said Toycoen.

The conference discussed the impact of climate change on the world's poorest people and ways of engaging churches and society in environmental issues.

Don Hutchinson, vice president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, said Christians have a sacred trust which obliges them to care for all creation.

"We have the great commandments, which call us to love God and to love our neighbours as well as ourselves," said Hutchinson. "As we dig deeper into our understanding of loving our neighbours, we need to respond to what harms them. But also, as we dig deeper into the Scriptures, we find that our love for God is reflected in our heart toward all He has made."

Another speaker, Rev. David MacDonald, a former Member of Parliament and a United Church of Canada minister, observed that the landscape for environmental activism has changed since faith groups and others become more engaged.

"One of the things that pleases me most when I look around this room is it's a different group than the one I talked to 20 years ago when I was talking about climate change," said MacDonald, who attended the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen last December. "Then, it was mostly just 'tree huggers'! There are tree huggers here, but there are others, too: people who are interested in development issues." **FT** —LEANNE LARMONDIN



Church Offers Freedom from Addiction

Kim was baptized in April 2008 by Tim Fletcher, founder of Finding Freedom. "Every week, we hear stories of how people's lives are being changed."

Kim was pregnant, addicted to crack and a prostitute when she received healing through the faith-based recovery program Finding Freedom (FF). In April 2008 she was one of four individuals baptized by FF founder Tim Fletcher. Today, the young mother leads her own small group for female addicts.

"Every week, we hear stories of how people's lives are being changed," says Fletcher, former pastor of Assiniboia-

Charleswood Community Church (ACC) and addictions counsellor at Tamarack Rehab in Winnipeg, Man.

Founded in March 2007, FF complements the traditional 12-step program by incorporating a Christian message and dealing with underlying issues.

"We teach about the very deep – and often painful – issues that result in broken people becoming addicts or having other major problems," says Fletcher, who meets with anywhere between 50 and 75

individuals every Friday night in a room at Winnipeg's ACC.

While 60 per cent of those attending FF battle addictions, the rest are usually married couples and young adults seeking wholeness.

"As the ministry grew, it became apparent that we were reaching several facets of people. All people are broken in some way, and thus need healing," explains Chuck Fritsch, a member of ACC who, with his wife, Janet, has partnered with Fletcher in the leading of FF.

"Understanding our brokenness leads us to healing," says Fletcher. The father of three developed the FF-vision through his work at Tamarack Rehab. "Finding Freedom is non-denominational; we make no apologies that our higher power is Jesus, but that is never forced on anyone."

Since its inception, FF has expanded into five locations across Winnipeg. Fletcher's teachings are currently being distributed via DVD in six different countries. This spring, FF is developing its own website, making its message accessible worldwide.

"We don't really have an agenda," says Fletcher. "Our desire is that FF continues to provide the tools for churches and organizations to minister to addicts and broken people more effectively." **FT**

—EMILY WIERENGA

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

— 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NRSV)



PHOTO: ALAN MARSH / WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM



Jenni Weir interacts with children in Zimbabwe.

Life Transformation in 11 Months

The concept is reminiscent of the popular CBS television series *The Amazing Race*, but the World Race isn't really about racing at all.

More of a pilgrimage than a mission trip, the World Race (www.theworldrace.org) promises participants an 11-month, 11-country journey requiring, "a commitment to a transformational discovery process."

Manitoban Jenni Weir, 27, is one of more than 20 young Canadian adults who have participated in the experience. She completed her global odyssey of personal transformation in November 2009.

"I'm a completely different person coming home. I was a big control freak, and God just humbled me and took my pride," Weir says.

Conceived in 2006, the World Race is a program of Adventures in Missions (www.adventures.org), an interdenominational agency based in Gainesville, Georgia, about 100 km northeast of Atlanta.

The program is designed to remove "young people from their comfortable life-styles for a year – to see the developing world and be transformed" by their experiences, according to an organizational news release.

Transformational discovery doesn't come cheaply: Weir estimates she had to raise almost \$20,000 – a process that took close to a year – to cover expenses for a trip that saw her teach English in Ukraine, lead a Bible study in the Dominican Republic and help at a medical clinic in Zimbabwe.

"There's a generation of young people who deserve a higher calling than the risk-averse life of compromise that the Church has given them," according to World Race executive director Seth Barnes.

Weir believes she's heard that calling. "As for what's next, it is a question I cannot answer," she wrote on her blog. "I know I have a calling on my life and I need to be obedient to the One who directs my steps!"

In the weeks following Haiti's earthquake, that calling led Weir to visit the devastated nation for 10 days. "We went and prayed over the land and for people, and were basically there to encourage them," she says. Home from Haiti, she was in fundraising mode again with plans to visit Zimbabwe, to "reconnect with the local church" there, do street ministry and work in orphanages. **FT**

—PATRICIA PADDEY



Unity Is Hard Work

The recent Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver showed how Christian unity is more than just getting along

I serve as chair of the board of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada not out of duty but out of a strong conviction that Jesus was serious when He prayed the prayer recorded in John 17:20-23: "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Many of us in the family of God have a highly romanticized view of unity. "We're all Christians forgiven by our heavenly Father, we are all following Jesus with the help of the Spirit, we all want others to love Jesus" – and so "Shouldn't we all just get along?"

Sorry, the reality is it just isn't that easy. Unity is hard work. It takes blood, sweat and tears and a strong sense of covenant. I am coming to some conclusions about what it takes for Christians to genuinely be unified.

Foremost of all it takes a passion for Jesus' glory. A commitment to deep relationship with one another is not first of all about what's best for us and making sure we are "looked after" – rather, it is rooted in hearing the passionate call of Jesus that we, God's people, would be brought to complete unity so the world would see Jesus for who He is.

To work towards the unity of the body of Christ takes

a clear sense of what is essential and what is negotiable. Essentially, what does it take to be a Christian? There have been many historic answers to that in church creeds and councils, but the core understandings of Christian truth regarding God, His Word, salvation through Christ and our need for His transformation in our lives are what unite us with hundreds of millions around the planet. We may not all attend the same type of church or form into one massive denomination, but we will find ways to link together so that God's Kingdom is expressed locally and globally.

The Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver-Whistler presented the Church on the West Coast an opportunity to see if we would hold these convictions and feel responsible praying and working for genuine Christian unity in the region.

Unity takes blood, sweat and tears and a strong sense of covenant

We believed together that we would see "God command His blessing" in an unprecedented manner on our service, witness and social actions before, during and after the Games. I believe sincerely we have seen that miracle occur, and the foundation is laid for a greater day for the Church in Greater Vancouver. Heartfelt

kudos to my brothers and sisters in Christ who have paid the price to see that happen.

The passion we had all the way along was that found in Jeremiah 29:7 to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

In similar ways many Christians in the region have recognized that where they live does not just consist of streets, restaurants, events and nameless faces. It is made up of individuals loved by God, communities that yearn for redemptive influences – and influencers who will seek their peace and well-being. I am confident today, as never before, that God will work through people who pray and seek the peace and wholeness of their communities.

You can try to accomplish that alone or within a single church. Personally I'd encourage you to do it Jesus' way, in complete unity with the people of God in your city or region. **FT**



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DAVID R. WELLS is chair of the board of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and general superintendent of its largest affiliate denomination, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. He has worked in chaplaincy at several Olympic and Commonwealth Games. EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger is on sabbatical.

Colombia: Praying for Peace

Many moons, moves, kids and contracts ago, I was 19 and living in Colombia for three and a half months with a group called Canada World Youth (CWY). CWY took handfuls of Canadian youth and connected us with counterparts from the developing world.

For 10 weeks I lived, worked and made pork sausage to sell at the mountaintop market with the family of Don Pedro. Our host family were “campesinos,” part of the rural many who struggle to get by in this beautiful but troubled country.

I remember the rides in colourful buses that clung to and careened around the mountain highways. I remember the lush green hills and fields of flowers destined for the exotic bouquets and crystal vases of foreign ladies. I remember that Colombians can dance for hours. I can still smell the smoke in the tiny, dark, unventilated mud kitchen where our “mother” cooked the daily potatoes over an open fire. The next year, CWY crossed Colombia off its list of partner countries. It had become just too dangerous.

Colombia, bordered by Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru and Ecuador, sits where North and South America meet. Its reputation is of drug lords, kidnappers, rebels and civil war – and of course really fantastic coffee. Who can forget the astounding images of Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt Pulecio and 14 other hostages being rescued in 2008, after more than six years of captivity by the FARC, the infamous Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia? FARC, the oldest and largest guerrilla group in Colombia, has warred with the government for 40 years. Much of the inner struggle is drug-related – and it seems far from over.

Colombia is “one of the world’s most violent mission fields,” according to a recent *Christianity Today* article by Russ Stendal.

He quotes the watchdog group Christian Solidarity Worldwide, which reports that in the last three years more than 200 churches have been forced to shut down and 35 pas-



tors have been assassinated. Its website offers reports of pastors who are among the disappeared – a poetic way of saying killed or kidnapped in Latin America – and families displaced because they live and worship too close to the coca fields, where FARC and other rebel groups know that astronomical amounts of money can be made by those who can control them.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre reports that more than four million ordinary Colombians have been displaced in the past 40 years, poor pawns in the conflict, fleeing from rural to urban centres and sometimes back again, with little official support.

The World Bank estimates that if Colombia had not been besieged by conflict, the income of the average Colombian would be 50 per cent higher. As it is, 65 per cent of the population live in poverty – even 80 per cent in rural areas that also typically lack safe water, proper sanitation and, for too many children, access to education.

Colombia, like so many others, is a country of staggering contrasts. The rich are very rich. The poor are very poor. Battle lines criss-cross a terrain that is achingly beautiful even as it struggles to disentangle itself from the claws of the violent status quo. And then, everywhere you turn, there are families like Don Pedro’s, ordinary mothers and fathers with children who yearn to make a better life – and dance whenever they can. **FT**



Colombia at a Glance

Full Name: Republic of Colombia
Population: 45.7 million (UN, 2009)
Capital: Bogotá
Area: 1.14 million km² (440,000 sq. mi.)
Major Language: Spanish
Major Religions: Christianity, primarily Roman Catholic
Life Expectancy: 69 years (men), 77 years (women) (UN)
Main Exports: Petroleum, coffee, coal, gold, bananas, cut flowers, chemicals, emeralds, cotton products, sugar, livestock
Annual Income Per Person: \$2,740 USD
 (Sources: BBC News, World Vision)

On Our Knees

- Pray for the release of captives who are held for many reasons, sometimes religious.
- Pray for the success of the document “A Prophetic Call” issued by Protestant leaders in 2009, suggesting a 13-step process for resolving the conflict.
- Pray for the protection of the Church and its strengthening as a truly prophetic voice in Colombia.
- Pray for a weakening of the North American drug market which feeds the violence in Colombia.
- Pray for the missionaries called into what is often life-threatening danger.

Canadian Connections

- Opportunity International Canada provides microfinance services and training to more than 6,000 entrepreneurs in Colombia, including in guerrilla-controlled areas, enabling them to expand their businesses and work their way out of poverty. www.opportunityinternational.ca
 - Compassion Canada has partnered with Colombian churches since 1974 to help children in poverty. Currently, more than 49,300 children are registered in more than 180 child development centres. www.compassion.ca
- See a more detailed version of this article at the EFC.ca/globalvillage

Move Into the Neighbourhood

How are Canadian congregations doing at reaching their neighbourhoods? Ministry and marketplace leaders discussed this theme at EFC Christian Leaders Connection events held from Victoria to Moncton between September 2009 and April 2010. The Talking About Church and Mission seminars built on previous input from almost 500 churches that responded to an EFC survey in 2008.

Almost all respondents to the survey (86 per cent) placed importance on joining God's mission at work in the world internationally. Slightly less (80 per cent) indicated equal value on highly involving the congregation in ministry to the local neighbourhood.

Seminar participants reported a strategic international focus on unreached people groups, bi-vocational (tent-making) ministries, involvement in international justice issues and fair trade. Locally focused outreach included church-hosted food banks, shelter for the needy and employment programs for immigrants.

All agreed that the Church benefits from increased credibility when it serves outside its own walls.

Church leaders do value congregational members building long-term relationships in the neighbourhood, according to three-quarters of survey respondents. However, far fewer actually reported organized co-operative initiatives between the church and community.

Seminar attendees had many ideas how this might be improved: Develop partnerships with community events and services such as the Polar Bear Plunge, the police and fire departments. Increase ministerial involvement at community events. Invite input from neighbours about possible church expansions. Set the church calendar after first considering the community calendar. Demonstrate to the community

that the church is a resource for information and services. Offer a "Wills and Power of Attorney" seminar to the community, not just to congregants. Fund a local playground. Encourage members to build relationships with neighbours by participating in "Meals on Wheels" programs.

Educating church members to be more sensitive to the community in which they live and worship is a challenge. Consider this sobering question: "If my church was taken out of our community, would our neighbours miss it?"

For more tips from seminar participants, visit theEFC.ca/missional and click "Talking About Church & Mission."

—CHARLENE DE HAAN

How Well Do You Know the Faith Movement?

The Faith Movement, sometimes called the "Prosperity Gospel Movement," has garnered attention, much of it critical, in the Canadian media. The diversity of the movement has often been distorted when American narratives are applied to the Canadian context.

Catherine Bowler offers a short, well-documented introduction to the movement in the most recent issue of *Church & Faith Trends*, published by the EFC's Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism. She recalls how the movement established one of its first Canadian educational institutions in Quebec and shows how its influences are truly global.

Read "From Far and Wide: The Canadian Faith Movement" at www.churchandfaithtrends.ca.

Religious Persecution of Christians in Iraq

The EFC's Religious Liberty Commission released a report in March entitled *A History of Faith – A New Century of Suffering*. This report draws on verified sources and documented attacks to detail the nature and intensity of persecution suffered daily by Iraqi believers for their faith in Jesus Christ. The March 7 election in Iraq has the potential to significantly affect religious liberty in the country. For details, see theEFC.ca/alerts.

EFC's Wells Responded to Olympic Tragedy

Chaplains, including the EFC's chair of the board David Wells, had an important role to play during the Vancouver Winter Games in February.

The role became especially evident after the tragic death of Nodar Kumaritashvili, a 21-year-old luger from the country of Georgia, who died in a training accident on the opening day of the Games.

Wells co-ordinated multi-faith chaplaincy work at the Games, and so it fell to him to help locate Eastern Orthodox clergy who could support the Georgian Olympic team and

MORE COMING EVENTS

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

- **Christians Loving Muslims Together Conference:** A morning event sponsored by the Canadian Network of Ministries to Muslims, a network operating on the EFC's administrative and communications platform. Ottawa, May 14.
- **National March for Life:** Sponsored by Campaign Life Coalition. Ottawa, May 13.
- **Celebration 2010:** Partner together for local Christian outreach in the two weeks after Pentecost, May 23. The EFC offers a free DVD of practical outreach ideas.
- **Refugee Sunday:** Sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance and the Refugee Highway Network. June 20. Details and ideas at www.refugeehighway.net.
- **ACT:FAST** days of prayer, fasting and activism against global poverty, co-ordinated by Micah Challenge Canada, a network supported by the EFC. June 25 (in conjunction with the G8 Summit)

the athlete's loved ones. He also helped provide remembrance books that people could sign within the athletes' villages in Vancouver and Whistler.

During the Games, other chaplains continued the normal practice of offering daily worship services and spiritual counselling within the athletes' villages.

Wells, who is now offering extra oversight at the EFC during a sabbatical by President Bruce J. Clemenger, also heads The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.

Top International Christian Leaders Meet

The EFC's Geoff Tunnicliffe, currently international director of the World Evangelical Alliance, met with Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, in March to discuss common concerns around Christian unity.

"This important meeting was helpful in building bridges of understanding in regards to evangelism, religious liberty and caring for the vulnerable," says Tunnicliffe, who had previously met Tveit once in 2007. Tveit, a Lutheran from Norway, began his tenure as WCC general secretary in January 2010.

The two leaders affirmed their continued support for

the Global Christian Forum, a network facilitating dialogue among Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and the African Instituted Churches.

The two met at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, Switzerland, and intend to meet again in future.

Pray for Nigeria

The Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP), an international collaboration of Christian organizations focused on religious liberty, is calling on the worldwide church "to stand with our brothers and sisters in Nigeria in prayer, and to provide long-term practical humanitarian support, pastoral care and trauma counselling" after several hundred people were killed in riots in January and March.

The RLP released its "Cyprus Statement" March 31, also calling Christians worldwide "to engage with Nigerian diplomatic missions, challenging them to ensure the Nigerian government takes timely and effective action to tackle abuses of human rights and religious freedom."

The RLP statement, available online at www.world-evangelicals.org, is signed by the World Evangelical Alliance's Religious Liberty Commission and by many other groups including The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, an EFC affiliate. **FT**

Climate Change and Environmental Decline as Moral Issues

By Don Hutchinson

"Climate change" is a loaded statement in today's world. It's easy to see the weather change around us hourly and daily, and if we stretch our memories some of us can compare it with the weather of several years ago. But it takes careful record keeping and analysis to see if climate, which can be defined as average weather over longer periods such as decades, is changing.

So the words "climate change" generate a fair amount of discussion about whether or not global warming is real or whether there is any scientific foundation to assertions of the need to take action personally, corporately or by government to reduce human impact, if there is a human impact, on the environment.

Do we have to understand or accept the science to recognize that we have

a pollution problem? Or that there are significant environmental problems in parts of the Earth that are resulting in droughts, floods and even the extinction of some species?

Yes, God is in control and we are called to worship only Him. He also calls us to obey Him. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15, emphasis added). From Genesis on throughout Scripture, human beings are called to appreciate and care for all creation. Theologian John Stott has written, "It would be ludicrous to suppose that God first created the earth and then handed it over to us to be destroyed."

This April I was privileged to engage in the conversation about care of creation with Christians, people of other faiths, atheists and self-described Earth worshippers. (This included two

evening public roundtables and two full days of discussion in a retreat setting.) We considered that science may be compelling but is not exact, that "Mother Earth" is not God and never can be for the Christian, that the world is in "environmental" trouble – whether caused by human contribution or not – and that the Bible has something to say about human responsibility to care for all of creation.

While roundtable presentations came from every perspective, all keynote addresses were delivered by Evangelicals, reflecting on the biblical foundations that call Christians not to ignore this concern and call others to consider responsibility to God in their approach. A helpful dialogue has begun.

To help think about and discuss such issues, the EFC offers a great free resource, *God's Earthkeepers: Biblical Action and Reflection on the Environment*. The 20-page booklet, developed in 1995 and updated in 2007, is available free at theEFC.ca/issues. **FT**

Throwing an Olympic- Sized Outreach

Tips from Vancouver 2010 that
all Christians can use

By Karen Stiller

On the afternoon that Sidney Crosby snuck his splendid goal into the net, securing Canada's 14th Olympic gold medal and his own hero status forever, Karen Reed was making her way through the downtown core of Vancouver past all the ecstatic Canadian fans who had watched the game in the General Motors Place plus another 150,000 revellers or so. Imagine the thrill, excitement, energy – the gratitude even – as thousands of people tipsy with joy celebrated together.

"I had 150 high-fives from strangers," says Reed, executive director of More Than Gold, the Christian outreach at the Olympics that brought together 15 denominations, hundreds of churches and close to 40 organizations. The outreach mobilized nearly 4,000 volunteers, making it one of the largest Christian programs ever attempted at a winter Olympics.

During Sidney Crosby's finest hour so far, "they closed down bridges, buses couldn't move because everyone wanted to come and celebrate together," says Reed.

"People tasted what it means to belong, and what it's like to celebrate. I think that people can taste aspects of the Kingdom, without knowing it's the Kingdom."

Thanks to More than Gold and its theme of radical hospitality, many of the 300,000 visitors to Vancouver, along with regular residents of the city, tasted a little bit of the Kingdom during the 17 days of the 2010 Olympics.

Most of us scattered in towns and cities across Canada will never have the Olympics come to town. But we might have the opportunity to offer a taste of the Kingdom to our own communities during special outreach events that can draw the larger Christian community together for a common goal, as More Than Gold did so successfully.

Faith Today spoke to some of the movers and shapers of the More Than Gold outreach to discover some of their best advice for putting on an Olympic-sized outreach.

Start With Prayer

"What we said all along was that if this thing was going to happen, it wasn't going to be because we had

Visitors enjoyed the final hockey game on Coastal Church's large screen. Coastal was an "open door church," a place where Olympic visitors could pop in for rest, refreshment and free Internet access and share the excitement of the games.



MINISTERS HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME



a great team, although we did have one," says Bob Kramer, director of operations for More Than Gold. "It was going to be because God was going to show up and do exceedingly more than we could ask or think.

"We wanted to lift up the Lord Jesus so he could

I'm convinced that there is a maturity that doesn't happen until diversity learns to collaborate for the common good. You begin to learn how to bend in love." Bending in love can mean freeing people to do what they do best, under the agreed parameters of the outreach.

Part of More Than Gold's genius, according to Bob Kraemer, was providing participants with a "smorgasbord of opportunity. It's turning the handles in people's directions so it's easy for them to grab onto opportunities. Recognizing what fits for people was a very important aspect."

The outreach was diversified enough that, according to Dave Wells, "if an organization wanted to be part of the proclamation side, for example, they were certainly free to take up that side of the shared endeavour. Your structure needs to lend itself to be more a networking of these groups that allows for diversity. That's pretty much the way you have to go now, more than ever."

For a city-wide outreach pulling in different churches, that could mean an honest discussion about who does what best, and then supporting each other in that area. That goes for individual volunteers as well.

Plugging the right people into the right positions was key in Vancouver. Not everybody is equipped to carry a 20-kilo backpack full of coffee around on a six-hour shift, which a lot of volunteers did in Vancouver. Whatever position they filled, More than Gold tried to train volunteers so they could be ready for just about anything, thanking them profusely, giving them a free t-shirt, and letting them know how valued they were at every possible opportunity.

Plan Ahead

Sharon Tidd acted as the Vancouver Olympic 2010 outreach co-ordinator. She came on board in February of 2008, but she says the planning for More Than Gold really started about seven years ago. (Vancouver was awarded the Olympics on July 2, 2003.) Tidd is with The Salvation Army British Columbia Division. But the "intense planning began about two years ago," says Tidd.

If possible, start planning early enough in advance to get key players, including as many church leaders as you can, on board. Giving yourself ample time to plan properly allows time to research and build bridges.

"Know who your partners are" or could be, says Dwayne Buhler, director of MissionsFest Vancouver, a More Than Gold partner. "One of the wise things that happened with More Than Gold was quickly identifying

PHOTO: COURTESY COASTAL CHURCH



Pastor Dave Koop was interviewed by the CTV: Having church doors open and hospitality at the ready is something that most churches could easily offer during large community events. "We made sure we did it right."

draw others up," explains Kramer. "This is what God did. He did it as an answer to prayer." Kramer repeats that old adage to pray like everything depends on God, and work like everything depends on us.

David Wells agrees. Wells, national superintendent for The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and chairman of the board of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, also served as vice-chair of More Than Gold. Sports chaplaincy, which he also led in Vancouver, is his passion. So is prayer.

"Start with first things first. Prayer networking is the absolute first thing to do," says Wells. "Ask God to give you a vision of what could be possible, and to draw in partners from far and wide."

Build a Wide Platform

"Any effective city- or region-wide endeavour needs to have a clear platform that people can operate on," says Wells. People and partners who signed on with More Than Gold agreed to the Apostles' Creed. That "doctrinal platform," says Wells, gave groups a certain level of agreement. "There were those groups that didn't align with More Than Gold for that reason, and you have to let them go."

Karen Reed agrees: "Collaboration is hard work. But

Pray like everything depends on God, and work like everything depends on us



Clockwise from top: Volunteers served up to 600,000 cups of hot chocolate to tired Olympic visitors; other people were drawn to "Shred Fest," a youth event at North Shore Alliance Church, co-sponsored by Youth For Christ; and "Prayer networking is the absolute first thing to do" and was essential throughout the planning process as well as during the Olympics.

the ministries that work in social issues, and going to them and asking how they could be helped.

"What they didn't want was scores of ministry groups going into the Downtown Eastside and not understanding the situation and undoing years of good work," says Buhler. Having the attitude of joining in, or at the very least not hurting already existing outreach activities in your town or city, is essential. Enough preparation time helps negate against those types of sloppy and avoidable mistakes.

The other benefit of plenty of planning time is that

you are more likely to do your outreach well. "Excellence takes work," says Dave Koop, head pastor of downtown Vancouver's Coastal Church. Coastal was an "open door church," a place where Olympic visitors could pop in for rest, refreshment, free Internet access, or no-holds-barred excitement when the church aired premier big-screen Olympic events, like, yes, the women's and men's go-for-gold hockey games.

Having church doors open and hospitality at the ready is something that most churches could easily offer during large community events. "We made sure

we did it right," says Koop. "Otherwise people write it off as another half-hearted church event. Save up, put your money and energy into it. Buy the best coffee, the best hot chocolate. When we did a video, we shot the best video. We were representing Christ. We can't match Coca-Cola, but we can give the best level of excellence we can."

The Value of Hospitality

More Than Gold settled on the theme of radical hospitality that guided every outreach activity it held. A theme or an overarching vision, however broad, can help planners both open up to possibilities and narrow in on the ones they can best leverage to impact their community.

"We asked ourselves: How could we extend the radical hospitality of Christ, where Jesus is guest and host?" explains Karen Reed. "The Early Church had a city gate to welcome strangers. How do we call the Church out of its buildings to engage purposefully in public space?"

How about by serving up 600,000 cups of free hot chocolate and coffee to weary Olympic visitors? More Than Gold volunteers hit the streets with backpacks of coffee and hot chocolate. They set up – with proper permission of course

(another reason to plan ahead) – at transit hubs and venues around Vancouver, pouring hot drinks to people continually surprised and touched by the simple act of generosity.

Volunteers had been carefully trained to engage in gentle spiritual discussion if asked, as they were repeatedly, why they were standing in the drizzle giving out hot drinks for free. "We saw these conversations take place," says Sharon Tidd, who helped run the hot drink program, "and we were amazed. We can't count the number of people we touched, but I bet it was close to 250,000."

They clearly touched the Premier, the transit officials and the police who were among the many to commend More Than Gold for the calming role it played comforting commuters packed into transportation hubs and other spots congested with Olympic crowds.

Tidd says that the backpacks and supplies were a significant investment (purchased through www.thirstenders.com) but worth every penny, and will be used again for other events, like Canada Day parades, an event that happens in many Canadian communities. "There are so many events where they'd be easy to go out with, as long as you get the okay from the people who are organizing the event," says Tidd.

Golden Ideas

Part of the genius – and the challenge – of More Than Gold was the myriad of outreach initiatives, all under the banner of radical hospitality. Here are some ideas that you could use for your own town or city.

- Hospitality teams offered free beverages, welcome packs and care kits to the public.
- More Than Gold tapped into pin-trading fever by creating its own collectible pins and giving them away to a public eager for souvenirs. The pin was decorated with the More Than Gold symbol with colours that could be used to tell the gospel story.
- Open Door Churches posted signs on doors telling the public they were welcome inside, to rest, to have a snack, to use the washroom, to watch an Olympic event on a big screen, to sit in on an Alpha course, to look at a map or ask questions. The possibilities for Open Door Church hospitality are endless.
- Already existing resources designed for outreach were used, like KidsGames, a free sports program that



PHOTO: COURTESY COASTAL CHURCH

Some churches invited visitors to sit in on Alpha courses.

- complements large sporting events (www.kidsgames.com).
- A home-stay program called Home for the Games linked visitors with households willing to host them, while donating at least half of the revenue to initiatives to fight homelessness in Vancouver.
- Free concerts, art displays, dinners and dramas occurred all over the city, offering visitors alternative activities that were fun and easily accessible. **FT** –KS

Other freebies given out included care kits for the homeless, with things like toothbrushes, shampoo, soap and a Gospel of Mark provided by the Canadian Bible Society (another partner) and even scarves hand-knit by donors from Jamaica and around the world. The scarves were in the More Than Gold rainbow of colours, selected to lend themselves to a gospel presentation (deep purple for sin, white for God getting your act together, etc.).

Visitors received welcome kits containing rain ponchos, lip balm, maps, sunscreen and a Canada souvenir. The bags were cloth, reusable and gratefully received "in the spirit of More Than Gold," as was emblazoned on their sides.

What If?

Part of planning a large, collaborative outreach always involves asking "What if?" says David Wells. The "what-ifs" help you plan for the unexpected, the things that will inevitably go wrong.

For Bob Kramer, the what-ifs were actually about dreaming big, and then dreaming even bigger. "That is a different kind of what-if," says Kramer, "that's about vision. What if we could get 300 Christian artists performing? What if we could have people praying 24/7?"

Legacy is another important what-if question for More Than Gold. The team has discussed all along what kind of legacy it wants to leave in Vancouver, and across the country. "It's been my dream," says Karen Reed, "that we could spark a movement of radical hospitality."

More Than Gold might do just that. The most important question other Canadian Christians might ask right now is "What if we could get all the churches in town together to impact our own city – like never before?" **FT**

KAREN STILLER of Port Perry, Ont., is associate editor of *Faith Today*.



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Canadian Christian Doctor Fights Maternal Mortality

By Patricia Paddey

As the world's attention turns – finally – to the heart-wrenching issue of maternal mortality, it finds Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese, a Christian from Hamilton, Ont., at the forefront of the issue.



When Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced his intention to make maternal and child health the focus of the G8 Summit in June, the ramifications of that decision echoed in the heart of a Canadian doctor living thousands of miles away, in Uganda.

"I can barely share the news with people here without choking up, thinking of how important this decision is," says obstetrician-gynecologist Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese. "I've slugged through the field of maternal mortality for the past 14 years and, honestly, this is the first time any kind of significant Canadian attention has been showered on this modern day tragedy."

"Significant Canadian attention" turned out to be an understatement; in the weeks following the Prime Minister's announcement, something of a political and ideological firestorm erupted, and Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff insisted any foreign aid funding for maternal and child assistance should include funding for abortion. (That Liberal motion, which was put to a vote in Parliament March 24, was defeated.)

Politics aside, the attention is long overdue. In spite of the fact that the United Nations included improving maternal health and reducing child mortality among the eight Millennium Development Goals it established in 2000, it seemed little to no progress was being achieved in combating high maternal mortality rates in the developing world. But a brand new study published in *The Lancet* indicates positive change is occurring.

The news must be heartening to those who work in protecting and promoting child and maternal health. They insist that, rather than abortion, the main issues are clean drinking water, access to safe and healthy food, shelter, medicines

and quality health care (pre- and post-natal as well as pediatric care). Such practical measures are clearly paying off. According to *The Lancet*, maternal deaths dropped to 342,900 in 2008 from 526,300 in 1980.

Still, Chamberlain Froese and her international Christian ministry promoting the health and dignity of mothers in developing countries (www.savethemothers.org) will take all the political attention this issue can

get. She has worked in international women and children's health in some of the poorest – and often most ignored – nations on earth, including Yemen and Uganda, with short stints in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Pakistan.

By contrast, the annual G8 or "Group of Eight" Summit, to be held in Ontario's Muskoka region this year, brings together the leaders of some of the world's richest nations: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Chamberlain Froese knows from experience that without political will, little real change occurs. "I am learning more and more that maternal and child health is very related to politics in developing countries," she says. "One must convince policymakers of its essential role." Getting the attention of economically powerful leaders is part of that process.

Convincing policymakers of the importance of safe motherhood is just one of the herculean tasks Chamberlain Froese has established for Save the Mothers. Such tasks demand a huge commitment, which explains why she and her



ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA

Jean Chamberlain Froese's program aims to change East Africa and beyond.



Dr Jean Chamberlain Froese (above right) speaks to school children about safe motherhood in Katoogo, Uganda. In some areas of Uganda, one third of girls will have been pregnant before completing their adolescence. Girls who are found to be pregnant in school are immediately expelled with little hope of ever finishing their education.

PHOTO: ASHLEY WALLACE

family spend only four months of each year in Hamilton, Ont. (where they attend an Associated Gospel congregation). They live and work in Uganda the rest of the year, where Save the Mothers attempts to engage local leadership and to equip them with tools to improve women's health care.

It's desperately needed change. "From the time you had your morning coffee today until the same time tomorrow, 1,600 women will have died from complications of pregnancy and childbirth," Chamberlain Froese writes in her book, *Where Have All the Mothers Gone? Stories of Courage and Hope During Childbirth Among the World's Poorest Women* (Essence/Epic, 2004). Most of these women (90 per cent) lived in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. "Put another way, a woman in Africa has a lifetime risk of one in 16 of dying from pregnancy-related complications. In the industrialized world, it is one in 4,000."

Chamberlain Froese says that, incredibly, more women and babies have died of pregnancy- or childbirth-related complications in the developing world over the past 25 years than have died of AIDS.

"As we look worldwide, far too many mothers die every year from pregnancy-related complications," she explains. "And here in North America, we just can't imagine that that

happens. In Canada we lose 10 mothers a year, but in a country like Uganda where I work, and which has the same population as Canada, every year 6,000 mothers die from pregnancy-related complications. Six thousand!"

Chamberlain Froese's book is filled with heart-wrenching stories of real women who've faced tragic outcomes to pregnancy or childbirth. She tells of teenagers who labour for days, only to deliver stillborn babies or die of labouring; desperate women driven on the backs of motorcycles over rutted roads to hospitals lacking in staff or facilities; and barren women despised and scorned for being so.

She began writing those stories in 1999, when after difficult days of clinical work, fighting a losing battle trying to improve maternal care for women in the developing world, she'd come home late at night and purge her emotions at the keyboard.

"When you have experiences like that, face-to-face, you never forget them," she says. "And you think, 'That should never happen again.' I think it really motivates me to not lose the forest for the trees. Even if there are a lot of obstacles to be overcome."

The obstacles, she insists, are not merely medical ones, for maternal mortality is not just a medical issue – it's a social issue.



PHOTO: JEAN CHAMBERLAIN FROESE



PHOTO: JEAN CHAMBERLAIN FROESE



PHOTO: PADDEY BUYONDO

[Clockwise:] School children in Mukono, Uganda, sing about safe motherhood. Journalist Catherine Kizza, an editor at the daily newspaper *The New Vision*, took the STM program and has now developed a course to train journalists to write about safe motherhood. The average Ugandan woman has nearly seven children; a third of Ugandan women want access to family planning but cannot obtain it.

“The hindrances to maternal care are many, yet none are impossible to overcome,” she writes in her book. “They include distance from health services, finances (cost of treatment, transportation), lack of drugs and supplies, excessive demands on women’s time, and women’s lack of decision-making power within their families. In certain situations, the treatment provided by the healthcare team is substandard, and so it is shunned by pregnant mothers.”

That Chamberlain Froese would consider such obstacles and call them surmountable testifies to her gift as a passionate visionary. That she would develop and implement a plan of action to overcome such obstacles testifies to her intelligence, perseverance and determination. And that the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada would award her the prestigious Teasdale-Corti Humanitarian Award in 2009 testifies to the recognition, by her peers, of her altruism and courage.

Working in conjunction with Uganda Christian University since 2005, Save the Mothers offers a Master’s-degree-level program in public health leadership designed to address the root social causes of maternal mortality. Chamberlain Froese administers the program while in Uganda from October to May each year and hopes to take it into other nations. This innovative modular program aims specifically at working professionals: journalists, politicians, teachers, community activists, people from the faith community and others.

Ask the doctor how things are going, and her enthusiasm bubbles. “It’s just wonderful to see the impact that these Ugandan leaders are having in their own communities.”

She reports that journalists who have graduated from the program are writing culture-changing articles and producing society-shaping broadcasts. Alumni who are teachers and clergy are writing thought-informing curricula. Politician graduates are also doing their part.

“One of our former students is a member of Uganda’s par-

liament, the Honorable Sylvia Ssinabulya,” says Chamberlain Froese, “and she introduced legislation that called on the government to five action plans around safe motherhood. The bill passed unanimously, and it was added to the budget. She’s also recruited three other MPs into our class and organized another 37 members of parliament who are congregating and working around this issue.

“We’re just so excited to see that kind of top level support for safe motherhood.”

She has other reasons to be excited. The Uganda program now has its first international students – from Kenya – and has plans to grow into a training centre that attracts students from across East Africa, the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent.

Uganda’s First Lady, MP Janet Museveni, recently visited and heaped praises on the program. Two days later her husband, Uganda’s president, spoke at an International Women’s Day celebration, and he focused his comments on safe motherhood and the need for Uganda to do more to save its mothers.

“The message is getting through,” says Chamberlain Froese.

Ask her what it’s like to birth a ministry, watch it grow and see it flourish, and Chamberlain Froese responds with humility. “I just feel God’s wind behind it,” she says. “Now, don’t get me wrong. I could talk to you for a day about the challenges. But it’s just that real sense that God’s behind it, that reminds me of the importance of continuing to seek His wisdom.”

Knowing that the G8 will soon turn its attention to the cause she’s worked so long and hard for adds to her conviction. “Not that Harper, or any one person can work miracles,” she wrote recently in an op-ed piece for the *National Post*. “But maybe for the first time this issue will get the political backing from rich Western powers that it so desperately needs.” **FT**

PATRICIA PADDEY of Mississauga, Ont., is one of *Faith Today’s* senior writers.

Women Sharing Jesus

With Canadian Muslims



Joy Loewen of Winnipeg has spent 30 years in Muslim ministry and is now following God's call to reach out to Muslim women here in Canada. She spoke with *Faith Today's* Karen Stiller (KS) about the surprising lessons she has learned about Muslims – and about Christians.

KS: Joy, sharing the gospel with Muslim women in Canada is hard to picture. What does that actually look like?

JL: Most people wouldn't understand. In Canada, when we think of evangelism we often think about bringing a person to church or an event. When it comes to Muslims, they're usually not going to come into a church. We have to meet them on their turf. The Christian has to take the initiative. The Muslim isn't going to come up to the Christian and ask questions or take the initiative to make friends.

KS: Why wouldn't they do that?

JL: They feel like the guest in the country, especially the women. Women don't normally come up to anybody. Culturally that would not be acceptable. They come across as quite shy.

KS: Are Muslim women shy?

JL: Their eyes are always looking down, and we think they're not interested in us. It's not that at all. They are feeling shy. They think that we don't like them.

KS: Is that sense of not being liked a post-9/11 phenomenon?

JL: Yes, that is a post-9/11 thing. They know what the media is saying, and they feel embarrassed. They feel no one wants them.

KS: Do Muslim women have a reciprocal call to evangelize?

JL: Yes, they are a missionary type of religion, but most of it comes from paid missionaries. They have their own paid people.

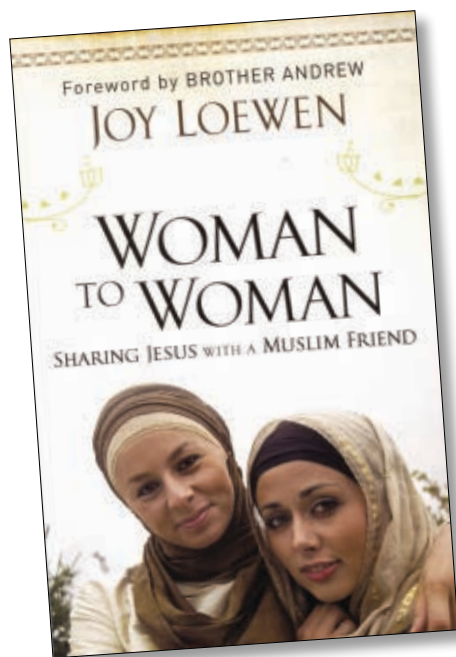
KS: So, a typical Muslim women would not look at you as a Christian and want to convert you?

JL: They are all very proud of Islam, and they think it is the best and the last religion. They are not ashamed of their religion.

KS: Walk me through how you go about your work of reaching Muslim women.

JL: I spend a lot of time in prayer. I want God to send me to exactly the women He has selected. I could go up to any Muslim woman – I feel very comfortable with them – but I could be spinning my wheels. I ask God to put me in the place of a Muslim woman of His choosing. It could be anywhere, on the streets, in an office, in an airport. I sense the Lord is telling me to talk to that particular woman, and I start a normal conversation.

I ask what their name means, because names are terribly important to them. If she's opening up, I ask if I can visit them in their homes. They love it. It's different from our culture. In our culture, we don't walk up to strangers, and we don't



invite ourselves into other's homes. We wait to be invited. It's a bit like Zacchaeus, when Jesus says, "I'm coming to your house for tea." It's an honour for them. I will get their phone number and call them.

KS: Joy, I would think you were crazy if you did that to me.

JL: I don't say it in the first five minutes. I would have concluded the conversation and I can tell if she would want to get together more. If she's drawing back I can tell. But so many Muslim women are

so happy if someone will come and visit them. In their culture, visiting in each other's homes is the norm. And when I express a desire to do it, it means that someone in the country they have come to really cares for them. That's the drawing feature.

KS: But, aren't they suspicious that you are doing what you are doing, essentially trying to convert them?

JL: If they know you are a real Christian, they are even more open to it. They consider the West immoral, and many women they see are lined up with the woman on television, which they call a Hollywood woman. But if they see you coming to them and you are dressed modestly – and I am never trying to draw attention to my sexuality – you can get a hearing from them. I'm very intentional. I love them and I go to them. They sense that. I am caring about them. I take the initiative all the time: we visit often and have many cups of tea.

She'll invite me for a meal, and she'll ask me to bring my husband and children. Then you reciprocate. Then you are on home turf, and they will want to make many observations. They will study everything. They sense that you care about them and you are living a clean life. They are drawn really powerfully to the love of Jesus. They don't always know what that is, but they are drawn to it.

It doesn't take long. They open up very easily. They are more transparent and open than other Canadians. Soon they will start sharing their innermost struggles, their fears, and then you can offer to pray with them. That is the biggest part of my ministry, praying for Muslim women.

I always ask if I can pray for them and tell them that I pray in the name of Jesus. In all my years I've only had one woman turn it down. They really appreciate prayer, even in the name of Jesus, who they do believe in, but he's not the same one as in the Gospels. They believe he is a prophet.

I ask them if I can pray right there, right then, with them. That is not familiar to them. I hold out my hands like a Muslim does, they hold out their hands, then I pray in the name of Jesus. I call her by name, which is very powerful, she means something to God. It is very powerful and very much appreciated.

KS: Okay, I understand that you are modestly dressed, not wearing makeup or jewellery, and are showing a genuine interest in the women's life, but your goal is still to evangelize them. Doesn't the husband mind this going on?

JL: I talk about it freely so they know that I am going to church. He relaxes immediately. He wants to know if I am a religious woman and not someone who is going to take his wife down a path towards Western living. It's all up front. They are happy that this is a religious woman visiting who goes to church and is a real Christian.

KS: Does the husband not realize there is a risk that his wife will become a Christian?

JL: That's not really entering his mind. It's very important to show respect for the husband, and this is an area where a lot of Christian women would struggle with – they have unconscious bad attitudes toward Muslim men. If that is felt, and the husband feels that you are going to talk badly about Muslim men, he will get nervous. I always try to show respect to the man, that is terribly important. I do nothing behind his back. I wouldn't take the woman to church or anything behind his back.

KS: What happens if she does become a Christian, and he hasn't yet?

JL: There is the understanding that as an adult, even as a woman, she is free to choose here in the West. If she wants to go to church and believe in Jesus, the average Muslim man here in the West is not going to beat her up. But they are nervous if you are trying to take their children. I've had numerous men say that their wife wants to study the Bible. I ask the husband if she can go to church with me. They know when you love them. There's a big difference between proselytizing and just loving them and sharing Jesus with them.

KS: When I hear media stories of Muslim wives or daughters being pretty seriously controlled or punished if they step over the line, it feeds into my idea that women aren't free in Islam.

JL: It depends on what you mean by free. There is a wrong perception here in the West that Muslim women are all oppressed. It has a lot to do with education. There are some women who have more power in the household. The more education a woman has, the freer she is – she knows her rights and operates in the world. A woman who comes from a refugee camp and the husband is lost and without work and doesn't know where he belongs – he might take it out on his wife. I wouldn't say the majority are oppressed. They are very beautiful people, so warm and hospitable, and so drawn to the love of Jesus.

KS: Do Muslim women in Canada pay a price if they do become a Christian?

JL: Islam is the glue that holds them together. For them to survive without that, it is just like a fish out of water. The community that is offered in church is not the same as the community offered in the Islamic world. Our community is based on programs, you would plug into this and plug into that. It's not like you are just all part of each other. We offer a Saviour, and He is worth more than any community.

But their sense of community is really beautiful, as long as you toe the line. But as soon as you start to think independently, if you shake things up a bit, the community can isolate you. When these women come to Jesus, they have to find another community. It is really tough. We are all so busy in church, and we have our own lives and friends. The church really needs to be aware of welcoming these people and understand that leaving the Muslim community is like an amputation.

KS: That's sad.

JL: It is sad. But most of them are really drawn to older women. Here is a mother figure, an older woman, someone who isn't necessarily taking care of little kids. They are grasping for someone who will be their community.

KS: Can that happen?

JL: I haven't seen that. What will happen is they will find a particular family in the church who takes some interest in them, but not necessarily the church community per se, because it is very program-centred. But the important thing is they are drawn to the Saviour and the Saviour will always be there for them.

KS: Tell me about Western-raised women who marry a Muslim man and convert?

JL: This often happens at the university age, and it's most common for a young Christian girl who's not terribly grounded in doctrine. She's wooed by this guy who is good looking, charming and he talks about God and about praying. When these girls convert to Islam, they have no idea what is going to happen to their children. Sometimes they are told they can be Christian, but they don't realize the children have to become Muslim. Sometimes, when women do convert to Islam, they can become the strongest adherents. Then Islamic associations use them, on TV and so on, to be advocates. She becomes a hero, and of course, that feels good.

KS: I'm struck by the irony that modesty, plain dressing and no makeup goes a long way to start a meaningful conversation with Muslim women, when some of our most vocal Christian TV evangelists, and even just ordinary Christian women, are the exact opposite. Sometimes we have really big hair.

JL: For the Muslim that would give very mixed messages. When they see our kind of televangelist with big hair and makeup, they don't get it at all. But in Western culture, we don't want [a Christian TV personality] to look like a prude.

We want them to be "with it."

I remember the day when I was about 40, I took my jewellery and makeup, and threw them in the garbage. I sacrificed them so I could get a better hearing with Muslim women. It wasn't easy for me. I was fairly self-conscious. Right away, it made a huge difference. Muslim women knew what I was set aside for.

Now, I'm 57, and the older you get for Muslims, the more respect you will have and the greater hearing you will have. I don't dye my hair. It identifies my age, and that is in my favour. In Western culture we honour the person who is younger, but I feel very free.

KS: What can we learn from Muslim women, from the Islamic community?

JL: It's a good question. The cultures are so different. They are intensely interested in people. They gather at the mosque and there will be no program, they are just there with their food. We go to a program, sip tea, listen to a speaker, exchange a few

words and then go home. We are really into programs. They are intensely interested in every marriage, death, sickness. They feel responsible to each other. Hospitality is a given.

KS: What can the ordinary Christian learn from you, someone who has been doing this work for so many years?

JL: It has increased my faith level. When you pray for these people, they often have very big needs – it stretches you in faith. You witness miracles. You hear wonderful stories. I have the most un-boring life, it's pure adventure. It has thrown me upon God. Jesus means much more to me than ever before. The Bible is much more powerful to me. I know it's the power of God, and not just a book. My work has made me a little bit of a misfit. But it's worth it.

The biggest thing I can say is that we have to take the initiative, without that nothing will happen. It's the one thing the Christian woman doesn't want to do, and it all hinges on that. Just like Jesus came to us. And then not to try to invite them to church right away: we Canadians invite people to church fairly soon, and that would be the last thing to do. Christian women will be very surprised, if they take initiative. They will have an incredible opportunity. They will find that it is entirely possible to love her and have a good friendship. Our life will be the richer for it.

KS: Thank you, Joy. **FT**

JOY LOEWEN of Winnipeg is the author of *Woman to Woman:*

Sharing Jesus With a Muslim Friend (Chosen, 2010). The daughter of missionary parents, she has lived in Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan and the United States.

She works with Arab World Ministries and writes online at joyloewen.blogspot.com.

KAREN STILLER of Port Perry, Ont., is associate editor at *Faith Today*.

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Caring for the Poor

If Christians want to take action on God's call to care for the poor, experts urge, more of us need to go beyond generosity and charity and also begin calling governments to make systemic changes. *By Debra Fieguth*

Big Changes Needed

When Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced in January that the G8 and G20 meetings Canada is hosting in June will focus on maternal health and child mortality, his statement showed he has been listening to his constituents.

World Vision and other organizations had been pushing the Prime Minister's Office for several months before the announcement. "We've really been trying to work with them to make sure they're championing that," says Caroline Riseboro, World Vision Canada's vice-president for public affairs.

The announcement "was a huge win for children living in poverty," she says, pointing out that 8.8 million children under the age of five die each year due to poverty-related causes, most of them easily preventable.

People of faith, including Christians, have always been leaders in caring for the poor, building hospitals, starting schools, initiating food programs, providing clean water, supporting micro-enterprise projects and helping in a myriad of other compassionate ministries.

But all the compassion in the world isn't going to adequately address what Geoff Tunnicliffe observes as a dramatically growing imbalance between the poor and the rich. As director of the World Evangelical Alliance, Tunnicliffe has travelled the globe, meeting with government officials and others, urging them to take action on the disparity that has plunged a billion people into chronic hunger.

What is needed now is change at the policy and structural lev-

els of governments, he says. Until recently, evangelical Christians have been reluctant to engage politically to address policy issues and unfair structures. That has to change, "and it's beginning to change," says Tunnicliffe.

A major agent of change is Micah Challenge, an international movement dedicated to equipping Christians to be engaged in "high-impact advocacy," particularly in relationship to the Millennium Development Goals (see sidebar below).

"What if the whole Christian community in Canada says poverty is an important issue, even a voting issue?" asks Robyn Bright, national co-ordinator for Micah Challenge Canada. To that end, Micah Challenge holds workshops to train and encourage people in effective advocacy.

To people whose idea of lobbying the government elicits images of angry marches or swarming Parliament Hill with placards, advocacy can be an intimidating idea. But it's much more than that, says Bright. Letters to the editor, letters to Members of Parliament, and meetings with MPs are all direct ways of getting messages through.

"Micah Challenge is pretty overtly trying to name the complexity of poverty issues," comments Roy Berkenbosch, a theologian at The King's University College in Edmonton and a member of the Micah Challenge board. Poverty is "often the result of systemic injustice," he notes. "People are often caught in multiple kinds of broken systems." More compassion and generosity aren't enough without systemic change.

What are the Millennium Development Goals?

All 192 member states of the United Nations and about two dozen international organizations agreed at a Millennium Summit in 2000 to reach a set of eight goals by the year 2015.

These are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, reducing poverty by half.
2. Achieve universal primary education.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Establish a global partnership for development.

This summer's G8 meetings will high-

light goals 4 and 5.

Many of the measures needed to reach those goals are simple and inexpensive, says World Vision Canada's Caroline Riseboro. "Two-thirds of the children [who are dying] could be saved by interventions that cost pennies," she says, including inoculations and bed nets to prevent malaria. Birth spacing, proper nutrition and trained birth attendants will also help. "Those are the things that are truly life-saving." **FT**

LIFE AND DEATH

Karen Hamilton speaks with a sense of urgency when she talks about world poverty and the complex web of issues surrounding it. "This is life and death. It's not abstract, nor is it theoretical. It's life and death."

To the general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, the call to act on behalf of the world's poor is obvious, both in the Old Testament scriptures and in Jesus' "crystal clear" statement in Matthew 25 that when you care for "the least of these," you are doing it to the King. "When we are called to account at the throne of God, we're going to be called to account for this."

Hamilton will chair the sixth annual World Religions Summit when it meets in Winnipeg June 21-23, just prior to the G8 meeting in Toronto. Leaders of all major Christian groups in Canada will join senior leaders of other faiths, from Canada and the G8 nations, to formulate statements to give to the government heads. The faith leaders already agree on the need to address extreme poverty, to care for creation and to invest in peace. Those points "are fundamental to all of our faith traditions," Hamilton notes.

Tunncliffe will also be at the summit. "I see it as a place where we can find some common ground with people of good will," he says.

The religious leaders have a huge job ahead of them if they are to convince the G8 nations to ramp up their work on the MDGs. By the G8 countries' own reckoning, they have only met 51 per cent of their promises. "This is a shocking number," says Hamilton, who suggests no parent would be satisfied if a teenager came home with a 51 per cent average. "What we're talking about here is people's lives. People's lives are being lost at an alarming rate because the G8 has not fulfilled its own promises. Every three seconds a child dies unnecessarily of a poverty-related cause. Every 30 seconds a child dies of malaria."

GOD CARES

"Christians should care deeply about the poor because God cares deeply about the poor," Berkenbosch adds. He suggests Christians often have a "faulty anthropology" that separates body and soul, with the body considered less important than the soul. "The Bible puts a lie to the faultiness of that thinking," he says. Seeing Christ's death solely as a way of "securing our place in heaven" is a narrow reading of what happens on the cross, he says. "On the cross,

Jesus fulfils God's justice." And God's justice "seeks to reconcile all things to God."

Liz John-West works with women who have addiction issues and live on the streets of Edmonton. Through them, "I see the complexity of poverty," she says, "the marginalizing that happens, especially with women and children. I see the disempowerment that happens." The women on Edmonton's streets have become a microcosm, for her, of the poverty and injustice that haunt the world.



WORLD VISION CANADA/JOHN A. STEWART

Christian ministries are reducing child poverty by emphasizing healthy food choices and better nutrition: Chronic hunger affects a billion people globally.

What is the G8?

"G8" refers to a group of eight developed nations, begun in 1975, including the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Canada, and Russia, which joined in 1997.

"G20" includes the G8 countries as well as a balance of economically important nations representing different parts of the world.

Canada is hosting and chairing the annual G8 summit in Huntsville, Ontario from June 25 to 27. Canada is hosting and co-chairing (with Korea) the G20 meeting which follows in Toronto. **FT** —DF

Let's Hand It to Them

ACT:FAST is a national mobilization campaign aimed at getting churches to take time to pray and to fast on three key days in the coming months: June 25, the first day of the G8 meeting; September 17, the day before the United Nations Millennium Development Goals summit; and October 10, the Micah Challenge global day of action.

"We are encouraging churches to take time to pray on those days for world leaders as they meet," says Robyn Bright, "and to fast together for those meetings and also in solidarity with those one billion people who experience hunger."

As a visual representation of their commitment, Micah Challenge is asking people to put their handprints on papers and banners, on Facebook pages and other visible places and forward them to Micah Challenge by October 10, 2010.

A handprint says several things, notes Bright. You raise your hand to say "count me in." And five fingers represent the five years left in the MDG timeline.

Micah Challenge campaigns all over the world are participating in the handprint project. "We're hoping to send handprints to governments around the world, and say Christians globally are involved." **FT** —DF

That has compelled her to expand her view of meeting the needs of the poor. "Every time I open the Bible, all I see is God's heart for the marginalized, God's heart for the poor, God's heart for the voiceless," she says. "I see God wanting us to be there."

Now chair of the Micah Challenge Canada board, John-West is venturing beyond her own comfort zone to meet with politicians and encourage others to do the same. "It's okay not to know

all the answers and all the issues," she points out. "We can still meet with politicians and say 'I care about this, about the fact that we're not meeting the' " Millennium Development Goals.

LIMITING AID

The federal budget introduced by Finance minister Jim Flaherty in March is yet another reminder that concerned Canadians have their work cut out for them. While foreign aid is increased by eight per cent, bringing the amount (\$5 billion) to double the level of 2001 when the Liberals were in power, the amount will then be capped. Canada's current contribution to foreign aid is about 0.33 per cent of the annual budget, less than half the 0.7 per cent target set by the United Nations.

Karen Hamilton is adamant that believers can and must speak out. "Have we flooded the Prime Minister's office with letters since then? Probably not."

In a democracy, she points out, the population is obligated to participate in decision-making and policy. "We just condemned people to death. And death will happen because we said nothing."

World Vision's Caroline Riseboro urges Canadians to write to their MPs asking them to continue to make child and maternal health a priority, without cutting other foreign aid commitments. "The message needs to be new money overall."

Robyn Bright agrees that Canadian Christians and others can be agents of change. Politicians "are tracking who they're hearing from," she points out. "If they start hearing from thousands of people, that can have an impact."

Hamilton is hopeful that the voices of millions of people of faith will make a difference. One need only look at World Vision's apparent influence on Harper's decision to focus on child maternal health. And remember the Jubilee 2000 campaign, the successful worldwide movement, initiated by Christians, to get rich countries to cancel the debts of the world's poorest nations?

"This is the next Jubilee campaign." **FT**

DEBRA FIEGUTH of Kingston, Ont., is a senior writer at *Faith Today*.

What You Can Do

When it comes to engaging the government, John McKay has one main piece of advice. "I think personal relationship is the beginning and the end," says the Liberal Member of Parliament for the Toronto riding of Scarborough-Guildwood.

MPs are open to hearing from their constituents, he says. Even if a personal meeting isn't possible, letters and phone calls can get a message through.

When McKay sponsored a private member's bill (C-293) on better aid last year, representations from World Vision, Micah Challenge, Mennonite Central Committee, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and others boosted support for the bill. "Without

them it wouldn't have happened," he says, calling the bill's passage a "classic example" of how the public can see something move "from ground zero to royal assent."

In the lead up to the World Religions Summit in Winnipeg, Karen Hamilton suggests communities get together to host interfaith dinners, inviting their MPs as guests. (For more on how to do this, see www.faithchallengeg8.com.)

World Vision has an online petition posted on a special website, www.fivefor5.ca, which is aimed at getting 8.8 million people to call for a reduction in child poverty.

For more on what Micah Challenge is doing, visit www.micahchallenge.ca (or www.micahchallenge.org for the international site). Canada is just one of 40 countries with such anti-poverty campaigns. **FT** —DF

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CHAKAM is affiliated with Open Bible Faith Fellowship of Canada (OBFF.com) and Life Builders Network in Regina.

More information can be obtained at our web site: www.worldoutreach.ca.

OPPORTUNITIES OVERSEAS

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Christian Studies International (CSI) provides opportunities for Christian academics to teach overseas in public universities and colleges. CSI is the Canadian affiliate of the International Institute for Christian Studies (IICS), based in Overland Park, Kansas. Together, these two organizations have placed dozens of Christian faculty members



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Theological Studies (TS) is a two-year graduate program that focuses on the study of Christianity from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective within an ecumenical and inter-religious context. The program reflects the college's distinctive teaching and research in the humanities and social sciences, especially biblical studies, history, music, peace and conflict studies, religious studies and theology.

The program is designed for students

who are studying for personal enrichment, involved in church ministry or other religious vocations, or preparing for further graduate studies. The three program options are coursework, applied studies or thesis.

Christina Edmiston, an applied studies student, appreciates that the TS program brings students from various academic disciplines and professions together to explore theology and theological vocations. Christina is also grateful that she is able to study full-time thanks to "the college's generous scholarships for full-time students."

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Providence Theological Seminary is an evangelical, interdenominational school that trains people for church, parachurch and humanitarian ministries in the areas of counselling, education, global studies, Bible and theology, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and pastoral ministry. It offers ATS-accredited graduate degrees at master's and doctoral levels.

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At Redeemer, you will find a Christian academic community that encourages you to integrate your faith into every aspect of your life. You can choose from more than 70 majors and minors as you earn a Bachelor of Arts, Science or Education. Along the way, you will find professors who are committed to helping you discover who God created you to be.

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Regent is a great choice for an academic, business or ministry sabbatical, a place in which to grow and learn more about your life and vocation under God, a place to form transformational relationships, a place to stretch your mind and refresh your spirit. Consider beginning your Regent experience by taking a summer course this year. Join us as, together, faculty students and staff of Regent College commit to pursuing the integration of heart, mind and hands that makes for a dynamic and winsome Christian witness.

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Tyndale University College and Seminary

The Bissell family has studied to-

gether at Tyndale University College and Seminary over the past 10 years. It started with Scott, the father, who began a Master of Divinity program after returning from the mission field. He once took along his son Joshua, who realized for the first time that a healthy Christian community could be found outside the church. So, when Joshua wanted to study philosophy, he chose a Bachelor of Arts at Tyndale, following his mother Melodie's advice to study with

professors of the same faith.

When Scott graduated in 2005, Melodie decided she would start an MDiv In-Ministry program.

Joshua's sister, Courtney, had her heart set on another school; she was not going to be seen as part of a weird family studying together, and she constantly clashed with her brother. God intervened and put on her heart to study at Tyndale University to grow her faith, so she obeyed and started a BA. in Human Services – Early Childhood Education.

At Tyndale, God healed Courtney's relationship with her brother. This year Joshua and Melodie are graduating, and Joshua will begin Tyndale's Bachelor of Education in the next year.

Visit www.tyndale.ca/seminary.

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With so many factors to consider in choosing a school – price, programs, accreditation, housing – we sometimes forget to investigate for ourselves the school's atmosphere. Do you know what the spiritual life of the school is like? What part does chapel play in the life of the student body? What is the style of worship? How about the students themselves – are they friendly? How do current students feel about the school? These questions are not easily answered by brochures and web sites; it's something you have to experience for yourself.

We are convinced that with just one visit to our campus, you will feel it for yourself: God moving in chapels and class times, worship that is modern and free, and a body of students that will welcome you as part of a family. Offering degrees, diplomas and certificates, Vanguard College is dedicated to developing innovative spirit-filled leaders. Whether your passion is children or youth, missions or pastoral ministry, TESOL or worship studies, we have a program to prepare you for ministry in an accredited, affordable and Spirit-filled environment.

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The People Are Coming: Migrants and the Gospel

Part five in a *Faith Today* series looking ahead to the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization this October in Cape Town, South Africa.

As I wait to fly out to Oxford, England from Toronto's Pearson International Airport this afternoon, I am assured that we will take off just as the world's largest passenger aircraft approaches the runway to land. It's an Airbus A380 coming from Dubai (Emirates Flight 241) carrying up to 853 passengers. I may be leaving, but more people are coming!

That's entirely appropriate, since I am going to attend the launch of an initiative at the Oxford Centre

for Mission Studies, focused on people on the move – specifically, international mass migration or “diasporas.”

You are probably already aware there are people coming from every part of the world to the city nearest you. There are thousands in Canada, and they keep on coming. Some may be studying in a school near you, drinking coffee at a café, serving meals at a neighbourhood restaurant, playing with their

kids in a playground or jogging around a local park. They may even be living next door to you.

People on the Move

This unprecedented movement of people has clearly set a global trend for the 21st century. Caused by multiple factors both voluntary and involuntary, diaspora is a complex issue that is changing world demography, economies, cultures and societies. (Voluntary factors can include education, employment, financial advancement and family reunification. Involuntary factors include natural disasters, war and human trafficking.)

According to the United Nations Development Pro-

gram, there are now 214 million international migrants – people living outside their country of birth.

Canada's Face in the 21st Century

Though Canadian history recalls a mass migration of European immigrants in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was not until the 20th and 21st centuries that Canada widely opened its doors to diasporas from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Migration trends for Canada indicate a continued acceleration of immigration. Case in point, by December 2008 Citizenship and Immigration Canada estimated that our country had

- brought in a total of 302,303 foreign workers as temporary migrant workers;
- granted initial entry to 233,971 foreign students;
- welcomed 27,956 refugees; and
- granted 236,758 people permission to make Canada their home as permanent immigrants. For these, the top source countries were China, India, Philippines, United States, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Iran and South Korea.

Evidently, a multitude of people representing all colours, languages, states and cultures are coming to Canada. Canada's multi-ethnic and multicultural society can boggle the imagination. Immigrants are literally changing our idea of what a Canadian looks like. According to Statistics Canada, within three decades about a third of Canada's population – that would be 14.4 million people – will be a visible minority (a non-European).

Furthermore, StatCan predicts that by 2017 about half of the population of Toronto and Vancouver will be visible minorities. Imagine in 10 years what a “Canadian” and a Canadian city will look like.

The Global Missions Agenda


Economist Kenichi Ohmae coined the term “borderless world” in 1990 to describe how institutions that operate globally are no longer fixed to a specific place. For Christians interested in sharing their faith, the term “borderless world” also illustrates the fluidity of migration at a time when advanced technology is facilitating travel and communication at mind-boggling speed. Christian scholars and church planters are monitoring and analyzing the international migration patterns and their implications for the Church's mission.

A growing number are realizing the importance of migration. As the late Ralph Winter wrote in 2003 (in

More on Diaspora:

- Lausanne Diasporas website: <http://gatheredscattered.com/press>
- Film (at public libraries): *Walk a Mile* by the National Film Board of Canada
- Book: *Calculated Kindness: Global Restructuring, Immigration and Settlement in Canada*. Rose Baaba Folsom, ed. (Fernwood, 2009).

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"Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge": "As history unfolds and global migration increases, more and more people groups are being dispersed throughout the entire globe." However, he went on to write, "Not many agencies take note of the strategic value of reaching the more accessible fragments of these 'global peoples.' "

Thankfully, church planters and other church leaders and scholars are beginning to appreciate the diaspora-led transformations taking place in metropolitan cities. Scholar and former missionary Andrew Walls seems prophetic in his description of the new reality (in a presentation he made in January 2010 entitled "The Future of Missiology: Missiology as Vocation"). In recent decades, he writes,

another people movement began, as thousands upon thousands from Africa and Asia and Latin America came to Europe and North America. All the evidence suggests that this process will continue for the foreseeable future.... It has brought Latin America to North America with immense force. It has made Hinduism and Sikhism and Islam into Western religions, and it has brought vast numbers of Christians of non-Western origin, to Europe and North America, often bringing with them expressions of Christian faith and practice new to the host societies in the West.

Could it be that as Christians – both "moving" and "receiving" – partner to reach diasporas, a ripple effect is created? Could it be that diaspora missions are a new way to bring the whole gospel to the whole world? This potential diaspora missions force will be further explored at the upcoming Lausanne Congress III in Cape Town, South Africa from October 16 to 25, 2010.

Diasporas and the Ripple Effect

In December 2008, my wife and I gave our apartment complex neighbours a copy of *The Jesus Film* for Christmas. It was a pleasant experience with most of

our neighbours politely taking our gift, but relatively uneventful. Then in April 2009, we responded to a knock on our door to find Alyonna – an elderly neighbour who had emigrated from Ukraine. She was asking for more information about Jesus Christ, so we complied. Then she requested more DVDs to give to her loved ones during a trip back to her homeland. Alyonna wanted to share Jesus Christ with her relatives back home!

This scene is being replicated throughout Canada's cities as diaspora people reach diaspora people. Now, more than ever, migrants can hear the Good News in a "receiving" city such as Toronto, then communicate this same Good News across borders – not fixed to a specific place! We rejoice that as we share our testimonies with new Canadians, the Good News of Jesus Christ travels to loved ones across the seas, even by decimals on a phone and pixels in a box.


From Over There to Over Here

Now back to that giant Airbus A380. Just imagine this: Pearson International Airport receives three packed Emirates 241 flights per week. Simple math indicates: 853 passengers x 3 flights per week x 52 weeks per year = 133,068 passengers per year on Emirates 241 alone! Most of the passengers are coming from the Gulf region. Do we have a strategy to reach these people coming into our cities who are tourists, workers, international students and new immigrants? These are the very people our missions agencies are trying to reach "over there."

We have to get ready. The people are coming! **FT**

SADIRI JOY TIRA of Toronto is the senior associate for diasporas for the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, the global ministries diaspora specialist for the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, and the international co-ordinator for the Filipino International Network. Join the global conversation leading up to Cape Town 2010 at www.lausanne.org/conversation.

Bridletown Park Church, Scarborough, Ont.



Youth teaching child, one on one, during children's outreach ministries.

PHOTO: IAN ARIENDA-JOSE

When you pursue God in your neighbourhood, “the lines blur between neighbourhood and church ministry,” explains pastor Trevor Seath. He encourages congregants to stand out in a world of casual associations and apathy, to live out a radical commitment to Jesus and to help one another apply biblical principles to everyday life.

Trevor Seath is now lead pastor at Bridletowne Park (Associated Gospel) Church in northeast Toronto. When he started attending Bridletowne in 1992, he saw it as an aging building servicing a commuter congregation. While attending nearby Tyndale Seminary in the late 1990s, Seath interned at Bridletowne and learned more about the congregation and the growing ethnic diversity in its neighbourhood.

Just as the congregation affirmed that its building was an “important plank” in its history, Seath graduated with his MDiv in counselling and accepted full-time pastoral responsibilities. He encouraged the congregation to maximize the potential for community impact by focusing on contacts within one kilometre of the building, many of them mainland Chinese and Tamil Sri Lankan.

Then in 2004 Guy Freeman came on board as community pastor through a partnership with Toronto City Mission,

making Bridletowne’s presence more visible and therefore credible in the neighbourhood.

The Friend We Haven’t Met Yet

Seath agrees that it’s tempting for churchgoers to enjoy only established relationships. However, his driving energy and enthusiasm encourages the congregation to look for new friends in the neighbourhood and, no matter what the starting point, invite them on a lifelong journey with Jesus.

“By His grace, God comes close to us so that we can bless others,” says Seath.

Freeman has been chair of the local school parent council since 2005. An afternoon recreation program started first in the school gym. Soon one-on-one tutoring developed, with the school screening “kids in the gap” and referring them to the church. One-third of the volunteer tutors come from the church; one-third are other Christians in the neighbourhood;

and one-third are others from the community.

"Volunteering can be an evangelistic invitation," says Seath.

Loving God and Our Neighbours

In the summer, Bridletowne Park Church (www.bridletowne.com) offers a seven-week day-camp. The local school helps advertise the camp, which maxes out around 60 kids per week. Registration fees are low thanks to government subsidies plus a child sponsorship program that draws donations from churchgoers. Ninety per cent of the kids come from the community; 30 per cent attend the full summer program. The Leaders-in-Training program now intentionally disciples young leaders.

"It's a key opportunity to touch the whole family," explains Freeman.

This spring, the church began to offer an after-school Music Experience, the brainchild of a woman within the congregation. Community children can take lessons in guitar, cello, saxophone, clarinet and recorder in addition to singing in Mandarin and English choirs. Costs are minimal in order to fulfill the primary goal of building relationships with families.

The church also hosts an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, which recently added an employment mentoring program. This initiative accepts two cohorts a year for 12 weeks each, counselling about 11 people per class. All discover the program by referral; most are highly qualified professionals in their home country. Toronto City Mission helped broker a part-

nership with a nearby HSBC bank, providing opportunities for mock interviews with personal evaluation before the real thing.

Bridletowne's emphasis on building relationships is uniquely different from government programs. Listening reveals the deep stories of participants' lives, and peer learning is encouraged. Mentors are assigned one-on-one as encouragers and evangelists, asking questions like "What do you put your faith in?" Many clients integrate into Bridletowne's small groups.

God's Light in the Community

Freeman reflects on an incredible journey for one family from mainland China. He met Josephine through the school council when she volunteered at the school Family Fun Fair. Josephine began attending a small group, and Bridletowne sponsored her daughter, Katlyn, to day camp. Josephine joined the employment mentoring program and started attending church while her husband, Tim, attended the ESL Café.

Eventually, Josephine asked to be baptized, and some of Tim's family came to faith over the phone in China! Clearly, when God is on a mission, He wants us to join Him, to share in the celebration of connecting with people whose hearts are tender to God's love.

Freeman feels living in the neighbourhood is important to making the church accessible. He saw a sign of success in this area when, after a school stabbing, a school staff member walked directly to his home for prayer.

"The more incarnational the church

is, the more vulnerable we are," adds Freeman.

Remaining accessible requires difficult decisions about limiting program commitments. "We need to be careful not to outsource our ministry," says Freeman. This year Bridletowne stepped back from a tax clinic program it had been offering jointly with another church, letting the other church continue alone. "We encouraged our volunteers to stay involved," says Seath, "because it is still an open door to relationship-building."

Life-Long Transformation

The secret of incarnational living, say pastors Seath and Freeman, is creating many touch-points, encouraging the congregation to build relationships within the community. Over the last 10 years, the approach has led to church growth and increased participation: 76 per cent of the congregation now volunteer in various roles.

The challenge is managing follow-up and knowing when to test for – and how to respond to – levels of spiritual curiosity.

The pastors recall a Bible study on Paul, when one participant interrupted, "I thought the Bible was about Jesus – who is Paul?" The church now offers a Beginnings ministry for those without a biblical background to ask questions and receive answers.

The church also encourages inter-generational small groups that mix believers and seekers from a diversity of cultures. Because the Chinese culture honours and respects elders, seniors now have special opportunities to love young families to Christ.

All Christians know of Jesus' call to love God and neighbour, but intentionally living that out in an outwardly focused, diverse community is an ongoing challenge. Seath summarizes, "We're not a holy huddle; it's a lot messier than that." **FT**

CHARLENE DE HAAN, a freelance writer and consultant in Toronto, recently became the executive director of CAM International of Canada, an evangelism and discipleship ministry to Spanish-speakers. Read all the profiles in this ongoing series at www.faithtoday.ca.

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Stronger Together

The executive minister of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches introduces his family of 500 congregations with a bit of history

Baptists have been a vibrant witness for the Lord Jesus Christ for well over 200 years in Atlantic Canada. The movement was born out of prayer, itinerant preachers and evangelistic fervour.

The early Maritime Baptists were influenced indirectly by Jonathan Edwards and “the Great Awakening” in New England. Congregationalist and Baptist “planters” (farmers) moved to the Maritimes, and many of these Loyalists brought their passion for Christ with them.

Among them was a charismatic young man by the name of Henry Alline, known today as the father of the Baptist movement in the Maritime Provinces. He began an itinerant ministry in 1776 that sparked such an awakening he is remembered as the “Whitefield” of Nova Scotia – an amazing fact since his ministry lasted less than eight years (he died at the age of 35). Alline never became a Baptist, but almost all of the congregations he started became Baptist churches. The first continuing Baptist Church in Canada was organized at Horton (Wolfville) in 1778.

The Atlantic Baptist Mission Board, founded in 1814, impelled aggressive evangelism and church planting throughout the 19th century and into the 20th.

That legacy consolidated in 1905 and 1906, when the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces was formed through the union of the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces with two provincial Free Baptist groups.

The driving motivation for these bodies to unite was the desire to strengthen their witness for Christ. Baptists knew that if they banded together they could be more effective in higher education, in overseas mission and in many other ways. The Mission Board also continued after the unions and between 1914 and 1941 planted an average of one new church a year.

In 1949 the Convention established what is now Crandall University (formerly Atlantic Baptist University) in Moncton, N.B., to provide undergraduate education in the context of a Christian worldview.

In 1969 we reconstituted a department of theology at Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S., as Acadia Divin-

ity College. Today over 80 per cent of our pastors have received their training at that seminary.

In 1970 we established Atlantic Baptist Senior Citizens’ Homes Inc., which now runs more than a dozen facilities. And in 2001, the Convention launched an effective youth and family ministries department.

Globally we continue to partner with Canadian Baptist Ministries, headquartered in Mississauga, Ont., to support the ongoing development of national churches in 13 strategic regions around the world.

Today there are about 500 churches and 60,000 people in the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, organized in 21 associations (regional groups). The African United Baptist Association is the only Association that is not based on geography, but on the unique culture of the African Baptists of Nova Scotia. Its churches were formed in response to racial discrimination. A formal reconciliation service, in which African-Canadian Baptists and others mutually asked for forgiveness and granted forgiveness for negative and hurtful attitudes and actions in the past, was held at a special assembly in 2007.

The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches is part of a wider family that stretches across Canada – you will read about the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec and l’Union d’Églises Baptistes Françaises au Canada in other issues of *Faith Today* – totalling more than 1,000 Baptist congregations and 250,000 people.

Beyond Canada we are members of the Baptist World Alliance, a fellowship of more than 37 million baptized believers and a community of 105 million people worldwide.

As one of the older denominations in Canada, we face the challenge of trying to be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ in a post-Christian, postmodern culture. We have a mixture of churches: some vibrant, alive and growing, others struggling to survive and just keep the doors open. Our goal is to convince people in our churches to live out the gospel in incarnational ways, creating opportunities for the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. We continue to be a diverse group of warmly evangelical Christians committed to Christ and to one another. **FT**

DR. PETER L. REID is executive minister of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, headquartered in Saint John, N.B. This column continues a series by affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. For a list, see the EFC.ca/affiliates.



Turning Point for the Vatican?

The current sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church is creating worldwide debate

In the summer of 1983 a caring, devoted father prayed: "Dear God, with You I stopped drinking. I don't know what to do. I've never killed anybody. Help me, Lord. Help me." The dad had just found out that his son had been sexually abused by Gilbert Gauthier, a Catholic priest in Abbotsville, Louisiana. Sadly, the abuse did not stop with that child or that location.

Many Canadians remember the 1989 revelation of the abuses that took place at the Mount Cashel orphanage in Newfoundland. In 2002 we heard reports out of the archdiocese of Boston. Now, there are documented cases of abuse in Ireland, Germany and other parts of the world.

By every account Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, is in the midst of a most difficult season.

In March *The New York Times* targeted the Pope and Vatican officials for failure to defrock a Wisconsin priest who reportedly abused boys over decades. Then in April *Der Spiegel* launched a major broadside under the title "The Failed Papacy of Benedict XVI." Soon after, well-known theologian Hans Küng issued an open letter to all Catholic bishops stating that the Catholic Church "finds itself in the worst credibility crisis since the Reformation."

Pope Benedict has met with groups of abuse victims in the United States, Australia and most recently Malta and promised "strong action" on the issue.

What are we to make of the controversy?

First, the reality of systemic abuse is no longer in doubt. In addition to convictions of various priest and bishops, books by Jason Berry (*Lead Us Not into Temptation* and *Vows of Silence*), Leon Podles (*Sacrilege*), Mary Gail Frawley-O'Dea (*Perversion of Power*) and the investigative staff at the *Boston Globe* (*Betrayal*) portray a horrific history.

Second, we all need to be very cautious in analyzing and drawing conclusions about this controversy because it is so intense and involves many complex issues in theology, ethics and criminal justice. It's not simply about the progressive/traditional divide since Vatican II or about opposing views on homosexuality. Likewise, media reports are sometimes flawed and lack rudimentary knowledge of Catholic history and canon law. Some reporters, for

example, have overplayed the conspiracy angle.

Third, authentic Christian faith must honestly recognize the depth, subtlety and power of evil. On this, biblical teaching about human folly and depravity provides a necessary bulwark against naive readings of the human condition. The sex abuse of children makes it impossible to adopt the New Age theory that evil is just "live" spelled backwards. Ironically, the abuse of children by "Christian" priests and pastors proves the accuracy of the Christian view of humanity.

A realistic Christian view also allows for, and even demands, a measure of suspicion about systemic faults and not just individual sin. In this regard, both Thomas P. Doyle and Richard Sipe, two Catholic experts on the scandal, warned for decades about aspects of the Catholic system of doctrine and practice that contributed to the rise of abuses now featured prominently in the media.

Again, that's not to overlook that Protestant Christians struggle with disorder in our own houses. For example, some Protestant groups lack organizational procedures to deal with abuse because of preoccupation with local church autonomy. Christa Brown covers this in her gripping memoir *This Little Light*. Likewise, charismatic Christians need to be cautious of leaders who might employ "Holy Spirit" lingo to disrobe the flock (see Mike Echols, *Brother Tony's Boys*).

Fourth, the current scandal creates enormous difficulty for Christian witness. There are, of course, philosophical questions about evil itself. When my computer technician found out the topic for my column, he commented that God could not possibly exist or He would have stopped the abuse. If we are honest to such atheists, we will admit that we don't comprehend fully why God allows such abuses. That can feel very awkward. But at least we do know that He wants today's Church to engage in the processes of justice and healing.

The deep personal and emotional issues are immense. Imagine, for example, what it must be like for a victim of clerical abuse (Catholic or Protestant) to return to a church building where the assaults took place, to consider attending a service there or touching the hand of the pastor/priest on the way out.

Remarkably, and thankfully, one miraculous element in this sordid story is that many victims still retain their trust in God as the sole source of light in the midst of darkness. And these survivors still look to a great High Priest who teaches "Blessed are the children." **FT**

JAMES A. BEVERLEY is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. Visit www.jimbeverley.com for resources for further study.

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Who Is on the Lord's Side? It Depends

Let's beware of oversimplifying by labelling people as either religious or secular

It's easy for Christians to believe that we face a rising tide of secularism. The New Atheists (Dawkins, Hitchens, Dennett and the rest) continue to enjoy a vogue in the popular media. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) questions whether an evangelical university is a "real" university if it insists on its professors professing Christianity. An Ontario Human Rights Commissioner questions whether a Christian charity can continue to employ only Christian staff.

So the call goes out: People of faith have got to band together against secularists, against those who would evacuate public life and public institutions of religious content and who would drastically curtail the liberty and ministry of religious institutions. The great divide of our time, we are told, is not between Christians and Muslims, but between religious believers and anti-religious secularists.

Well, actually there isn't a "great divide" of our time. There are lots and lots of divides. And the lines of division run variously through the political and ideological landscape of contemporary Canada.

Take monogamy, for example. On this issue, people of faith line up against people of (other) faith: Christians, Jews and others support monogamy against proponents of polygamy among Muslims and some Mormons. And on the monogamy side of the divide are lots of secularists who see, correctly, that polygamy hurts women and children – and men, too – as well as society at large.

Take respect for each other's sacred symbols, for a quite different example. A local controversy here a decade ago over whether the Pacific National Exhibition should exploit Christian apocalyptic symbols (Hell, the Last Judgment, the Antichrist) to promote its thrill rides saw both Jews and secularists publicly support Christian sensitivities in the name of multiculturalism.

Take intramural religious struggles, for a third example. As Christian denominations are riven over gay marriage (the Anglican and Lutheran churches are currently fracturing, but they won't be the only ones), secular mediators and judges are becoming the safest and fairest available referees before whom these painful, complicated and

important disagreements can be resolved.

On almost any such issue, if you draw a circle around Christian convictions, another circle around the convictions of secularists and still more circles around the convictions of people of other religions, there will be places where those circles overlap.

Some may be quick to point out that a single circle for the many kinds of people who call themselves Christian is too simple. Similarly, secularists come in a wide range of types – from sheer hedonists to principled liberals to existentialists of various sorts to ex-believers who retain most of their religious ethics.

But even if you make your Venn diagram more complex, with multiple circles for different kinds of Christians and secularists, there will still be overlaps.

For despite the ravages of sin, the image of God is borne by all human beings, and human ideologies always contain some quotient of good concerns with which, sometimes, we can and should make common cause.

The Bible never blesses "faith" in general or "religion" in general. In fact, much of the Bible warns God's people against the errors and temptations of alternative religions, not just against the folly of the atheist declaration "There is no God."


The Bible doesn't even bless Israelite religion or Christian profession in general. The prophets in both Testaments rail against mere claims of religious identity ("We're sons of Abraham" or "I am of Christ!"). No, being "a person of faith" (in the modern phrase) doesn't count for much with God. The Scripture blesses *faithfulness*, defined as obedience to the will of God.

So on any given issue, we must discern carefully who in Canada today is actually doing the will of God – whether they say they are doing it or not! Yes, they perhaps aren't doing it quite the way we Christians would want it done (although maybe they're doing it better). And we must not downplay the call of the gospel: Doing the right thing on this or that issue is not nearly enough to reconcile us sinners with God.

But once we have determined as best we can who is engaged in the best work on this or that particular issue, regardless of whether they are "people of faith," then let's put our support – our votes, our dollars, our hours, our skills and our prayers – where they belong: on the Lord's side. **FT**

JOHN STACKHOUSE teaches apologetics at Regent College, Vancouver, and blogs occasionally for *The National Post*. His own weblog is at <http://stackblog.wordpress.com>.

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“Native Identity Reconciled” by Michael Jacobs.

Thoughts on Forgiveness and Aboriginal Residential Schools

By Ray Aldred,
Terry LeBlanc and
Adrian Jacobs

How can we avoid making healing solely the responsibility of the victims of aboriginal residential schools? What might societal repentance and not assimilating First Nations people look like?

A forgiveness summit bringing First Peoples and others together in Ottawa is being planned for June 11–13, 2010. Responding to the Prime Minister’s apology of June 11, 2008, the literature and web announcements for “Forgiven” at www.i4give.ca indicate the intention to “release forgiveness to the federal government.” Let’s step back and reflect on this whole idea.

Each of us is on our own journey on the circle of the earth, and so we write from our own hearts – for us, it is from who we are as aboriginal people, as we try to think through the idea of forgiveness, the processes this might entail and the outcomes it might give birth to.

It’s probably important to say at the outset that we believe in forgiveness – both the need for and the healing value of forgiving those who have wronged us. The Bible and our own consciences call out to us to be forgiving people. We have all seen how unforgiveness can lead people to bitterness and self-absorption with pain. There are, however, concepts about the way forgiveness is given and received, proceeding from both experience and biblical teaching, which need to be centred in the process.

This is not the first time efforts at reconciliation have been undertaken, led by First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. In 1995 Elijah Harper, following a serious illness during which he was given a vision of the problem engulfing Canada,

convened a hugely significant Sacred Assembly of political and spiritual leaders – First Nations and others. He believed the issues over which we fought are spiritually rooted. His deepest desire was that we might see the different people groups who share this piece of land we now call Canada move toward better relationships, that the conflict between various groups might be set aside, that relational healing might come as we were spiritually healed. This is, after all, where our Creator has placed all of us – in a land where even its contemporary anthem pleads “God keep our land glorious and free.”

It therefore amazes us that once again it is First Nations people taking the initiative to seek a spiritual solution to the problem of broken relationships. Reflecting on the rootedness of this phenomenon in the Canadian narrative, John Ralston Saul makes this poignant observation in his book *A Fair Country* (2008): “As always in our history, the elegance and generosity when it is a matter of reconciliation comes largely from the indigenous side, from those who have been wronged.”

Many of the troubles shadowing our lands today may have originated, may have brewed long in other places, been initiated by other people, but they are here among us all now. And while on the one hand it is right that we the First Peoples should take responsibility for this discord that has been brought to this place – after all, we do have a special and deeply historic relationship to this land – it is not proper that we shoulder other people’s responsibilities in this time as well. It is therefore right that we try to seek some mutually owned spiritual solution to move toward our shared destiny, toward harmony.

We must have a care, however, for here is the thing about spiritual experiences: sometimes they can be offered as hope that is not hope. Dr. Dan Allender points out (in his 1990 book *The Wounded Heart*) that the Church, especially in regard to people who have suffered abuse, frequently offers “hope that is not hope.” Church people do this when they say that abused persons just need to have a deeper spiritual experience and it will be okay; to partake in this event or that event, and then they will be cured; to forgive and forget. This is hope that is not hope. Working through the abuse can be a long and difficult journey. The real and full hope is that Christ is with us on the journey, and even if we do not get there, even if we live halfway in our mourning, Christ the creator is with us, and He likes us.

The First Peoples involved in the forgiveness summit are attempting to help people experience forgiveness. But forgiveness is not to be seen as a simple key. Luke’s Gospel

makes clear that there is a relationship between repentance and forgiveness. In fact, it is called the gospel of repentance and forgiveness – not apology and forgiveness but repentance and forgiveness. So for Canada and those who are part of her political, maternal care, the question is not about the survivors of abuse forgiving; it is about abusers asking, “What does repentance look like for us?” Or, even more pointedly, “What does ‘not assimilating’ First Nations people look like for us?”

When we do not make time and a way for people to cry and mourn, then we can make a scandal the sole responsibility of the victims to solve



In all of this, what causes us the most consternation is that the Canadian government does not appear, after all this time, to do more than just say some words in the House of Parliament. The government and wider Canadian society need to actually repent and change how they treat aboriginal people. Canadians need to keep their word, they need to honour the treaty relationship, they need to be the kind of people that someone could make a full peace with.

We are concerned that current talk about forgiveness without repentance may help place on aboriginal people the responsibility of opening the blessing of heaven. If this is so, it seems the victim will be victimized once again. When we do not make time and a way for people to feel and to cry and mourn – indeed, to mourn with them as Scripture admonishes us to do – then we make the scandal and the problem of residential schools the sole responsibility of the victims to solve. They forgive, and government and society sit back cloaked in civility, not even blushing as broken people try to work toward proper relatedness.

To the extent the forgiveness summit makes room for people to feel pain and gives opportunity for people to talk about what really happened, it will be successful. Our concern, though, is that it might do just the opposite and lead to a loss of dialogue; that some people and institutions might take the extending of forgiveness as an excuse to stop listening to the pain that people have incurred as a result of residential school abuse. It might also close down the emotions of the victims, leaving them not wanting to talk about what happened because they sense again there is no room for the honest pain of the wounded.

Finally, we are concerned that the Church could once more be complicit with the abuser: the lies of the residential schools can be inadvertently reinforced by the spiritual zeal that once again does not make room for the pain and reality of what has happened in people’s lives. This is not what is coming from First Nations, but it is what is present in others who want to receive forgiveness and just forget what happened. Perhaps it would be great if



It amazes us that once again it is First Nations people taking the initiative to seek a spiritual solution to the problem of broken relationships. Clockwise from top: Ray Aldred, Terry LeBlanc and Adrian Jacobs.

forgiving and forgetting could happen, but these things may take much longer.

And so there are some questions that are raised for us. Even as we desire to see a repentance and forgiveness experience which truly transforms the Canadian psyche and spirit, we cannot help but ask: Can people wait and walk it out with us? Can they take our frustrations and pain and love us through it? Do we need to be, one more time, the one who absorbs hurt and betrayal in order that the rest of society can feel okay about itself? Or, is it even simpler – people are simply saying to us, this time in the words of Dr. Phil, “Get over it and get on with it!”

Were we pessimistic, we might ask, “Are we inadvertently being ‘used’ to deal with a church-perceived problem, to get over the past so that church renewal and revival can occur?”

Help us. What is your understanding of forgiveness? **FT**

RAY ALDRED, TERRY LEBLANC AND ADRIAN JACOBS

are members of the Aboriginal Ministries Council, a group that operates on the administrative and communications platform of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. To contact them or read more, visit the EFC.ca/partnerships.