

# Faith Today

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

JULY/AUGUST 2010  
www.faithtoday.ca

## GOD & COUNTRY

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and his faith p. 16**

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that far apart? p. 20

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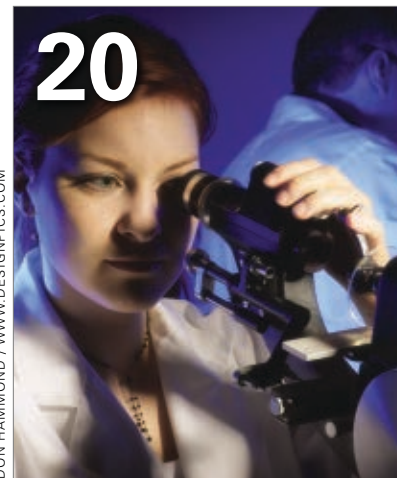
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## Sharing Our Faith

God works miracles using ordinary Christians when we surrender to His call.

**M**y grandfather could tell you the day and the hour he first believed – that moment when he got down on his knees, repented of his sins and accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. I'm sure the date was written in his Bible. In his era it seemed most Evangelicals anchored their faith on such a decisive moment – a before-and-after plumbline. They could share this moment and encourage others to follow the same steps to eternal salvation. They could gather their neighbours for evangelistic rallies and know that God would use this time to bring thousands into His Kingdom.

Such supernaturally pivotal moments are still crucial to faith, but there appears to be a growing consensus that Canadians today are not open to being challenged to decide about Christ unless the discussion occurs as part of a long-term friendship. In "God Uses Little Leaguers," writer Gary Cymbaluk encourages us to realize that we don't need to rent stadiums and hire professional evangelists. In fact, the most effective evangelism today, he says, may be when we walk alongside other people one-on-one, hear their questions and simply share our own trusting relationship with Jesus.

In Canada today, people are surrounded by a myriad of faith messages. It's encouraging to know that we can help make ours heard by simply inviting the Holy Spirit to work through neighbourly gestures and friendships.

Another witness to our neighbours is how we deal with our successes and challenges. Our cover story "The Man Under the Cowboy Hat" profiles the faith journey of award-winning country music singer Paul Brandt, who found himself challenged by God to break his once-in-a-lifetime recording contract with a top Nashville recording company and instead go on the road on his own. The results have been an outstanding example of faith and of God's miraculous power to thousands. When we are open about how we have surrendered to God's call, it can have the same effects on those around us.

It may be timely that God has been leading us into relational evangelism. The recent best-seller *The Armageddon Factor*, a book promoting a conspiracy theory about evangelical Christians, could make it harder for us to share our faith. However David Wells, chair of the board of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, calls us to deepen our relationships with one another and continue to work in unity. In his column "When Evangelical Leaders Meet," Wells outlines the commitments of denominational leaders not only for evangelism but also for the well-being of our country. "We are citizens who believe we are taught by Jesus to express light, salt and grace" – God's grace. Enjoy your reading! **FT**

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

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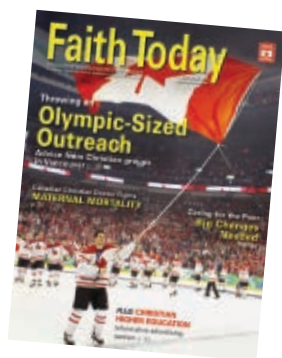
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## Empower Women

Re: *Faith Forum* (May/June 2010)

I'm sure letter writer Frances Camp is not alone in her thinking – clearly we have a masculine church with an emphasis on masculine terminology and thinking in Scripture. How many denominations like my Catholic church won't even allow women to serve as priests or ministers? And yet women continue to not only attend (far

outnumbering men) but serve their fellow parishioners with love, loyalty and dignity.

Ironically, a few pages after her letter is a list of the Millennium Development Goals. Number 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women. Does this not apply to the Christian Church?

PATRICK SHEAHAN  
Hamilton, Ont.

## Aboriginal Forgiveness

Re: *Thoughts on Forgiveness and the Aboriginal Residential Schools* (May/June 2010, online-only article at [www.faithtoday.ca/digital](http://www.faithtoday.ca/digital))

I agree that the Canadian people need to do more than simply say sorry, but should

the First Peoples wait until there is enough evidence to convince them that we are repentant before they express forgiveness? The father of the prodigal son did not withhold his forgiveness until there was more evidence of repentance.

Yes, it does seem too easy for the offender to simply say, "Will you forgive me?" and be granted it, but it opens the door for a deeper work of God's grace in both the heart of the offender and the offended. Granting forgiveness doesn't seem logical at times, but neither did the cross.

I am very thankful that our

prime minister and government took the initiative to publicly admit the injustices of the residential school system and ask the First Peoples for their forgiveness. This is a huge step. I am even more thankful that a significant number of First Nations people are making the effort to jointly grant that forgiveness.



"NATIVE IDENTITY RECONCILED" BY MICHAEL JACOBS.

## Milestones

**Appointed:** Mark Maxwell as president of Prairie Bible College in Three Hills, Alta. Maxwell has served on its board for the past 15 years, most recently as chair, and as interim president this spring after the departure of Jon Ohlhauser. Maxwell is CEO of Tower Asset Management near Toronto, a former Prairie student and actually the grandson of Prairie's co-founder L. E. Maxwell. Prairie is a "Christ-centred college preparing students for lifelong learning and service in ministry and missions." It has about 300 students.

**Appointed:** Justin Cooper as executive director of Christian Higher Education Canada Inc. He succeeds Al Hiebert as head of the association of 34 evangelical universities, colleges, graduate schools and seminaries. CHEC was formed in 2005 with the assistance of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, recently gained charitable status and exists to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of member institutions. Cooper was president of Redeemer University College from 1994-2010.

**Appointed:** Howard (Howie) Wall as president of Bethany College of Hepburn, Sask. He previously served as the director of operations and maintenance at the University of Saskatchewan. He has also served on Bethany's board of directors for 10 years, most recently working on the college's strategic plan. Bethany was founded by Mennonite Brethren churches in 1927 and currently enrolls about 110 students.

**Awarded:** Children's author Jean Little, 72, of Guelph, Ont., with the Leslie K. Tarr Award for outstanding career achievement. Already a member of the Order of Canada, she has authored 45 books, many of them unsentimental portrayals of children coping with abuse, abandonment, disabilities and other challenges. Little has been legally blind from birth and writes using a talking computer. The award is administered by The Word Guild, an association of writers and editors from across Canada's Christian community.

**Appointed:** Willard Metzger as general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, a denomination of 225 congregations. He succeeds Robert (Jack) Suderman, appointed in 2005 but now retiring. Metzger is the outgoing chair of the "witness council," the denomination's mission and outreach ministry; has pastored Mennonite congregations for 18 years; and most recently was director of church relations for World Vision Canada.

**Awarded:** Ryan Talsma of Orono, Ont., as male athlete of the year by the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association (OCAA). Talsma is a fourth-year volleyball player at Redeemer University College, a Christian university with 900 students in Ancaster, Ont. Ryan ends his undergraduate career as one of the most nationally recognized OCAA volleyball players ever.



Willard Metzger

May the Christian spirit of reconciliation spread throughout the world.

KEN ROTH  
Stittsville, Ont.



well written. I especially appreciated the context at the end – as to why

Dabbs was killed. Without that, it would have been just a nice little story, lacking the impact or the challenge to remember his courage and live up to it!

CARINA KWOK  
Calgary, Alta.

## Inspiring Biography

Re: *A Canadian Evangelical Martyr* (Jan/Feb 2010)

David Donaldson's article on Norman Dabbs was fabulous history: engaging and

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## Faith Today Awarded

Several *Faith Today* articles from 2009 won national awards this spring. "The Benefit of Doubt" by Carolyn Arends won two awards (best inspirational/devotional article, best single column) from The Word Guild, a national writers' and editors' association, and was also named among the top theological reflections of the year by the Canadian Church Press (CCP) association.

The Word Guild also gave top awards to "Human Trafficking: Tragedy and Hope" by Debra Fieguth (feature) and "Reach Out With Good Friday Drama" by Heather Kendall (news).

Other *Faith Today* articles awarded by the CCP (mostly seconds and thirds) include: "Evangelicals Contribute to Reconciliation Around the World" (A.C. Forrest Memorial Award for socially conscious journalism); "Countdown to 2010: Faith and Sports Meet in Vancouver" (news); "Christ & Culture in Canada" (column); and "Inspired by the Persecuted Church: *Faith Today* Interviews Glenn Penner" (interview).

Other highly awarded publications in the CCP contest included the *Presbyterian Record*, *Anglican Journal*, *United Church Observer*, *Catholic Register*, *B.C. Catholic*, *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, *Geez* and the *Western Catholic Reporter*. **FT**

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# Delivering Dignity Nationwide

The first step in rebuilding a life is to rebuild self respect and basic dignity: Robb Price, founder of DeliverGood.org (left) and Brent King, founder of GotGinch.

PHOTO: THE OTTAWA MISSION

**T**wo men in an RV are attempting to solve homelessness, one pair of underwear at a time.

This May Brent King and Robb Price of Calgary travelled 6,600 kilometres across Canada distributing 30,000 pairs of “ginch” to 10 city shelters.

“Underwear is one of those items that many of us take for granted,” says King, founder of GotGinch. “I suspect that it is one of the first luxuries given up on the

way to the street; perhaps it should be the first to be restored in recovery.”

The concept was conceived in 2008 when King discovered the most urgent need at the Mustard Seed, a Calgary mission, consisted of men’s underwear. “This was a problem that I could solve,” says the professional engineer. “I set out to purchase enough underwear to supply an entire year for this one agency.”

Quickly realizing no store would be able to supply the need, King connected

self-respect and basic dignity. I can’t think of many things more basic and dignifying than a pair of clean underwear.”

He recalls a gentleman in Winnipeg who, upon receiving a pair, shook his hand, looked him in the eye and said, “Thank you. You have no idea what this means to me.”

It’s such moments that motivate these men to continue loving the homeless.

“We got the ginch – what do you got to give?” asks Price. **FT** —EMILY WIERENGA

with an underwear manufacturer. He then sent an e-pledge stating he would personally deliver underwear to shelters across Canada if his friends helped to raise the money. Donations purchased 25,000 pairs with King’s “GotGinch?” logo, which he then delivered in 2009.

Following last year’s drive King sought a template which would allow others to give without having to travel.

“Brent and I met after being introduced by a mutual friend,” says Price, the 32-year-old founder of DeliverGood.org – a web utility designed to streamline the charitable process. “We realized we were both working to solve problems across the country.”

This year the duo drove 75 hours from Vancouver to Halifax, May 14 to 28, distributing underwear and launching the DeliverGood initiative in 10 major cities.

“Homelessness is a complex problem that people come in contact with every day,” says King, 42. “I realize that a pair of clean underwear does not solve the problem, but the experts tell me that the first step in rebuilding a life is to rebuild



## Church Dishes Out Soup and More

**W**ith greasy hair and a black trench coat, “he was downright scary to me at first,” recalls Nancy Buttar, co-founder of Soup and More in Clinton, Ont.

Today the young man who met Christ at the kitchen serves as Soup and More’s dishwasher.

The small-town mission serves upwards of 40 individuals, Mondays and Wednesdays, from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. “There is so much need,” remarks Buttar, who runs the kitchen on the “George Mueller principle,” never asking for anything. “The Lord has stressed to us to give them our very best.”

Buttar and her volunteers do this by serving food on fine china to those from trailer parks, meth houses and the streets.

One particular man arrives when the kitchen opens, only to return before it closes to eat again. “That is his food for the day,” says Buttar.

It’s people like these, adds the grandmother of 12, that she now lives for.

Yet she would never have met them if Clinton hadn’t caught on fire.

“January 12, I was at home when I heard the news on the radio,” says Buttar: the Salvation Army was aflame.

She didn’t stop to think. She knew she had to open up the church where she’s a member, Heartland Community Church, a large building in the heart of Clinton. “I was like a woman obsessed,” she laughs.

Buttar arrived with a flat of eggs, some vegetables and two cans of salmon. People were lined up at the door. “Some were in their pyjamas because they had to vacate their apartments where the fire was.”

As the day progressed, meals, clothes, money and volunteers were provided for. And Soup and More was born.

“We always knew we were here for more than church on Sundays,” says Buttar, who lives on a farm outside Lonsborough. “We were here for such a time as this.”

She serves food in the hopes of nourishing people spiritually as well. “We know they need the Lord,” she explains, “and that He loves them and wants a better life for them.”

In the future Buttar hopes to offer classes in both domestic and life skills. But for now, she continues to “just love them” by dishing out food on fine china.

“How do you not just fall on your face and say, ‘God, thank you – thank you for loving these people?’ It’s so incredible. We just stand in awe.” FT

–Emily Wierenga



Nancy Buttar (left) and church volunteers prepare and serve food for Soup and More in Clinton, Ont.

## Taking **Worship** to the **Screen**

**W**hen you enter the large sanctuary at Centre Street Church in Calgary, the three screens up front can seem large. But they’re also necessary.

“It’s simply practical. If you sit two-thirds toward the back or further, the pastor will seem quite small,” explains Dean Adams, the live video director.



Given that the building is large – 6,000 people pass through the doors every weekend – Adams’ work is crucial to maintaining a personal connection between the pastor and the congregation.

In addition to the main sanctuary, the video production team also broadcasts to two other Calgary locations for members who live further away.

Adams didn’t land his role at the church right away after studying media production and film studies at the University of Regina. First, after completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts there, he worked with various production companies as a production assistant and eventually in post-production and editing.

While gaining experience working on commercials, documentaries and television series, he found writing and directing the most rewarding. “Although the stories weren’t always what I was most interested in, what I enjoyed was creating something, taking it from start to finish.”

Adams could be earning more money working in the secular film industry, but he finds greater depth in the relationships he’s developed working with fellow Christ followers at Centre Street Church ([www.cschurch.ca](http://www.cschurch.ca)).

“The job isn’t all about money. What you gain – in the great relationships you have with the people you’re surrounded with, co-workers, volunteers and pastors, just getting down in prayer with people – far outweighs the money.” FT

–J. PAUL COOPER

**The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
but the word of our God stands forever."**

**You who bring good tidings to Zion,  
go up on a high mountain.**

**You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem,  
lift up your voice with a shout,  
lift it up, do not be afraid;  
say to the towns of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"**

– Isaiah 40:8-9 (TNIV)



**A** Calgary church has succeeded with a fresh way to reach people unlikely to enter a church building: It operates a coffee shop in Kensington, a trendy part of downtown Calgary where few attend church.

The Coffee House Sanctuary (or “The House”) began in 2001 as the brainchild of Ryan Graham, a youth pastor at First Alliance Church. Graham developed the idea as part of an assignment at Bible school, and his church board approved it.

Derrick Mitchell, a graduate of McMaster Divinity School, has been overseeing The House ministry since 2003. “Our reason for being is to build relationships and make disciples,” he says. Most staff members are modestly paid employees who “believe in the place.” Others are volunteers.

Clients include yuppies and church members alongside a mix of people from many marginalized groups – lesbians, drug addicts, street people, prostitutes and the occasional Wiccan. No one is required to make a purchase to stay. Mitchell estimates 2,000 enter the shop each week for coffee, “open mic” music nights, Bible study or just to hang out. Staff has been “building stronger relationships” with about 100 of the regulars, Mitchell says. In the last seven years around 20 have come to faith in Christ.

Many in the neighbourhood were suspicious when the shop first opened, he recalls. “I think a lot of our early days [were spent] winning people over, kind of



breaking the stereotypes and breaking the clichés. One of the things I still hear quite often is, ‘Typically I hate Christians, but this place is different.’”

Bill McAlpine of Ambrose Seminary in Calgary applauds the idea. He studied the shop as part of his doctoral thesis on “sacred space.” Many in today’s society “could care less about a church building,” he told *Faith Today*. “The House sees [itself] as the vis-

ible church – different format, no steeple, no altar, but they’re *being* the church week in, week out.” Staff at The House discovered that people coming into the shop, whether street people or professionals, were looking for a community – a “place where they feel comfortable.”

The House today has become a hub for a variety of unique ministries. Emmaus Fine Art Group regularly displays artwork on the

## Ex-Addict Inspires a Community

**M**ario Swampy holds a degree in sociology from the University of Alberta and is director for the Samson Youth & Sport Development Centre on the Samson Cree Nation in Hobbema, Alta. But he wasn’t always such an upstanding citizen.

Swampy grew up in Hobbema, a reserve north of Edmonton that was recently reported to have at least 13 gangs trafficking in drugs, guns and prostitution. At 16, he himself was already an alcoholic.

“Daddy was an alcoholic, lost a couple of brothers, numer-

ous cousins and friends to alcohol. I got really heavy into drugs and alcohol and almost lost my own life a couple of times,” he says. But at 19, he turned to Teen Challenge for help.

Teen Challenge is a 12-month, faith-based rehabilitation program from drugs and alcohol. Through spiritual, academic and vocational training, Teen Challenge aims to help addicts return to society as responsible citizens. The Teen Challenge story is told in the best-selling book *The Cross and the Switchblade*.

After Swampy completed the one-year program in 1995, he earned a degree and returned home. The change in his life eventually became a blessing to his entire community, as



walls. Other associated groupings gather for meals, worship, Bible studies or “Community Chili Nights.”

All such activity, McAlpine thinks, serves the Great Commission. “What The House is doing is an attempt to simply be there, to be a witness, and not [to] feel badly if I don’t get someone to sign the dotted line every time I have a conversation,” he said. “That’s the Spirit’s job.” **FT** —TED WILCOX

## Canadian Christians Win Writing Awards

**A**n ex-gang member, a Dead Sea scrolls expert, journalists, pastors, novelists, a philosophy professor and other Canadian writers from a wide range of churches were named among the best writers of 2009 by The Word Guild, a national writers’ association.

The Canadian Christian Writing Awards draw nearly 250 entries each year across 34 categories. Winners were presented with cash prizes at a public gala event in Mississauga on June 16.

Among the non-fiction book winners are Craig Evans of Acadia Divinity College for his book *Jesus, the Final Days*; Colin McCartney of UrbanPromiseToronto for *Red Letter Revolution: If We Did Revolution Jesus’ Way*; Eileen Stewart-Rhude of The World Evangelical Alliance for *The Leadership Edge: Seven Keys to Dynamic Christian Leadership for Women*; James K. A. Smith of Calvin College for *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation*; and journalist Thomas Froese for *Ninety-Nine Windows: Reflections of a Reporter from Arabia to Africa and Other Roads Less Travelled*.

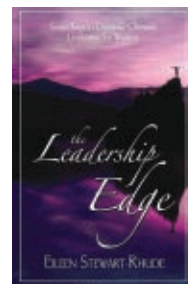
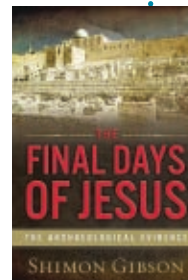
Ex-gang member Michael “Bull” Roberts of Mississauga, Ont., won for the best book aimed to include non-Christian readers. His autobiography, *The Tender Heart of a Beast*, tells how he went from being one of Canada’s wealthiest drug lords to become the sponsor of a Christian newsletter that reaches into more than 700 prisons in North America and Hong Kong.

Winning novelists include Bonnie Grove (*Talking to the Dead*), Mags Storey (*If Only You Knew*) and Eric E. Wright (*Captives of Minara*).

A complete list of winners is available at [www.thewordguild.com/media](http://www.thewordguild.com/media).

Following the awards gala 250 writers, editors, agents and publishers met in Guelph, Ont., for three days for Canada’s largest Christian writers’ conference ([www.writecanada.org](http://www.writecanada.org)), also sponsored by The Word Guild. **FT**

—BILL FLEDDERUS/THE WORD GUILD



**Mario Swampy**

became apparent in 2008.

That year, a two-year-old girl was struck in a botched drive-by shooting as she sat at her kitchen table. Swampy says the shooting was “a wake-up call to the community.” It also drew unusual media attention to the reserve of 12,000.

Swampy was able to join the community elders and leaders as they met to discuss the crisis. “One of the things we had talked about was a safe house for youth, and I shared about how Teen Challenge impacted my life.” The response:

“Why don’t we have a program like Teen Challenge here?”

“People are recognizing how Christ is moving and how God is moving through the Teen Challenge ministry. People who knew me then say it’s amazing to see where I’ve come from.”

In his ongoing work at the youth centre Swampy has many opportunities to share his message: “Quitting drugs is not easy, and it’s probably been the hardest thing I’ve done. My life got better – but not easier – having God, making sacrifices and taking responsibility. I try to get kids to be responsible for their choices and decisions – to live with the consequences.” **FT**

—LISA HALL-WILSON/TEEN CHALLENGE



## When Evangelical Leaders Meet

Rather than conspiring about Canada's government, we discuss how to build up the Church.

If you were to listen to certain media commentators to read the best-selling book *The Armageddon Factor*, you might think that gatherings of evangelical denominational leaders are spent conspiring to promote a theocratic government in Canada. Perhaps the best way to address that perception is to describe what happened recently at such a gathering.

My friends and I, leaders of denominations affiliated with The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, spent most of our time discussing how we can deepen the relationships between us and between the Christians we represent.

We committed to co-operate in creating and nourishing relational environments where visible, local expressions of interdenominational teamwork are encouraged and celebrated.

These expressions of unity should increase as we build relationships and networks of friendship, support, trust and mutual mentoring.

We do take seriously that Jesus calls us to "complete unity," and so it is no mystery that we would discuss building relationships and unified endeavours.

The principal area for shared endeavour is, as Jesus described, to go and make followers of Jesus (Matthew 28), who will be lovers of God and lovers of others.

As leaders we discussed our vision for healthy church communities that develop new initiatives appropriate to their context. We recognize the need for new types of vis-

ible disciple-making communities. One group refers to them as "experimental initiatives" because of how they're seeking to be open to the Spirit's creativity to fully respond to the way things are in today's culture.

Healthy church communities and creative initiatives require leaders. We recognize that a new wave of leaders must be identified, equipped and released. We aim to create transdenominational venues where we gather leaders of various levels of experience for training in spiritual formation, theological engagement, missional competencies and overall leadership development.

Foundational to these initiatives of relationship, unified

endeavour, missional expression and leadership development is a strong commitment to what links us at the core: the "evangel," the good news of Jesus. Together we affirmed our commitment to the salvation story and its Christ-centred, Trinitarian doctrinal implications – including personal conversion and the authoritative telling of the story in the Bible.

Arising from this redemptive core are clear

social justice implications that we continue to call our constituencies to respond to.

It's important to note that each of these leaders, myself included, do care passionately about the well-being of our country. We are citizens who believe we are taught by Jesus to express light, salt and grace – so our constituencies will be redemptively involved in education, community service, the justice system, media, politics, finance, the arts, sports and every other dimension of societal life.

We do want to see His mercy, righteousness and justice transform lives and communities throughout Canada.

This however does not lead us to seek a hostile takeover of Canadian society, for we also have a shared understanding of the distinction between the Kingdom of God and any human government. We are "in the world but not of it" (see John 17 or Ephesians 6).

We certainly look forward to the final day when He shall reign forever and ever. Meanwhile we are fully engaged by together being about the mission of God: building the Church and seeking peace and prosperity for our nation. **FT**

What links us at the core is the "evangel," the good news of Jesus.



### *Together for influence, impact and identity*

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

**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. EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger is on sabbatical.

# Uzbekistan: Concern Over Rights

This spring the world's attention turned briefly to the small nation of Uzbekistan – for all the wrong reasons. Refugees, desperate to escape ethnic clashes in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, poured across the border into ill-prepared Uzbekistan, sending both countries further into crisis. At one point, the United Nations estimated that 400,000 people, many of them Uzbek, were uprooted by the strife and several hundred were dead.

Red Cross officials called the situation “an immense crisis” in a part of the world where crisis is no stranger. The Republic of Uzbekistan, a landlocked country in central Asia, was part of the former Soviet Union until its independence in 1991, after a century of Russian rule. It is now bordered by Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Amnesty International and other watchdog groups have Uzbekistan on the top of their list of countries to watch with concern. A May 2010 Amnesty report to the United Nations cites a horrible incident in 2005 when hundreds of peaceful protesters, including women and children, were killed by government security forces. Hundreds more were reportedly detained and harassed, igniting what Amnesty calls “a serious deterioration in the human rights situation in Uzbekistan.”

The reputation of the country, one of the world's largest producers of cotton, is of a tightly controlled authoritarian state that made uneasy friends with the West following the 9/11 attacks. Its proximity to Afghanistan made it an attractive spot for the United States to launch troops from, unleashing an outcry from human rights groups who believed Washington was turning a blind eye to Uzbekistan's atrocities.

Those internal injustices have crossed into church territory repeatedly, making Uzbekistan a very hard place to be a Christian. The Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is on high alert about Uzbekistan, issuing official concern that religious rights are also weakening. According to WEA,



a church of 500 in the capital city of Tashkent was raided without a warrant by police, secret police, tax officials, fire inspectors and health services officials. They searched the premises for five hours, videotaped the worshippers and detained, fined and jailed eight members, including the assistant pastor.

Godfrey Yogarajah, executive director of WEA's Religious Liberty Commission, said he was “deeply concerned” about the recent raid and arrests of church members and the apparent deterioration of religious rights. “We call upon the government of Uzbekistan to ensure the rights of all Uzbek citizens and call upon the worldwide Christian community to stand in solidarity with the Uzbek church and pray for justice and equality” for the Church throughout Central Asia, said Yogarajah.

Humanitarian activists continue to monitor the situation in Uzbekistan, where the majority of the citizens are classified as poor, and economic development favours the few. Uzbekistan's energy resources – abundant oil and gas – and its geo-political significance bordering Afghanistan make it a difficult case for Western governments, who have sought closer ties with the repressive country, despite themselves. **FT**



## Uzbekistan at a Glance

**Full Name:** Republic of Uzbekistan  
**Population:** 27.5 million (UN, 2009)  
**Capital:** Tashkent  
**Area:** 447,400 km<sup>2</sup> (172,700 sq. mi.)  
**Major Languages:** Uzbek, Russian, Tajik  
**Major Religions:** Islam (88%); Christian (9%)  
**Life Expectancy:** 65 years (men), 71 years (women) (UN)  
**Monetary Unit:** 1 Uzbek som = 100 tiyins  
**Main Exports:** Cotton, gold, natural gas, mineral fertilizers, ferrous metals, textiles, motor vehicles  
**GNI per Capita:** US\$910 (World Bank, 2008)  
 (Sources: BBC, World Vision)

## On Our Knees

- Pray that religious freedom will be respected in Uzbekistan and neighbouring Kazakhstan.
- Pray for persecuted Christians throughout Central Asia.
- Pray for the work of Christian agencies within Uzbekistan.
- Pray that jailed Uzbek Christians will be released.
- Pray that harassment of Christians by officials in Uzbekistan will cease.

## Canadian Connection

- Back to God Ministries International reaches the people of Uzbekistan with Christian messages transmitted in the Russian language over two short-wave stations, FEBC and TWR. Every month a few hundred visitors, mostly from the capital city Tashkent, visit [www.kBogu.ru](http://www.kBogu.ru) to find biblical messages or correspond with staff about issues of faith and life. [www.backtogod.net](http://www.backtogod.net)
- Voice of the Martyrs (Canada) offers profiles about religious freedom in various countries at [www.persecution.net/countryreports.htm](http://www.persecution.net/countryreports.htm)

See a more detailed version of this article at [theEFC.ca/globalvillage](http://theEFC.ca/globalvillage)

## Evangelicals Active at Summits

**B**ruce J. Clemenger, president of the EFC, was scheduled to attend the International Interfaith Summit that took place in Winnipeg in June while international political leaders met in Ontario for their G8 and G20 summit meetings.

This is the fifth time for such a summit-related gathering of interfaith leaders, who again planned to issue a statement reflecting their shared concerns.

In the days leading up to the Toronto G8 summit, Micah Challenge Canada, an international anti-poverty network supported by the EFC, held a prayer meeting with local churches as well as a two-part workshop to explore related issues. The workshop was intended to encourage faith-based advocacy and meaningful public responses to global poverty.

Unite Canada 2010, a prayer initiative in which the EFC is a partner, also published a prayer guide to encourage prayer during the G8 and G20 summits. More details at theEFC.ca.

## Christian Horizons Decision Positive

Faith-based charities across Canada breathed a sigh of relief in May, when the Ontario Divisional Court reversed much of a controversial Ontario Human Rights Tribunal (OHRT) decision in the case of *Heintz v Christian Horizons*.

"While charities must clarify certain governing documents and review certain employment policies, they may largely continue to require employee compliance with both statements of faith and lifestyle and morality policies," says Don Hutchinson, the EFC's vice-president and general legal counsel. The EFC formally intervened in the

case along with other organizations.

Hutchinson published commentary on the case at [ActivateCFPL.theEFC.ca](http://ActivateCFPL.theEFC.ca) and in the *National Post*.

Christian Horizons employs over 2,500 people to provide housing, care and support to over 1,400 developmentally disabled individuals.

The OHRT had ruled that the work of the 40-year-old ministry belonged in the realm of social work and that faith-based ministries serving public needs could no longer require that employees share their religious beliefs and resulting service commitment.

However the appeal court agreed with the EFC's position that the section of Ontario's *Human Rights Code* that grants the right for religious organizations to be selective in hiring is to be considered from the perspective of the religious organization (the organization defines whether it is religious). The court also agreed that a religious organization can include its "statement of faith" and "lifestyle and morality statement" as part of its employment requirements.

## Fairness in Municipal Zoning?

The EFC recently released its report *Zoned Out: Religious Freedom in the Municipality*, an examination of municipal by-laws and how they affect religious freedom in Canada. Many religious groups across Canada struggle with zoning problems related to houses of worship. Check it out at theEFC.ca/resources.

## Controversial Book "Seriously Flawed"

Aileen Van Ginkel, vice-president of the EFC, was one of many voices raised in protest at the allegations made in *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian National-*

## Bills Currently in Parliament



The EFC is opposing the government's Bill C-18, *An Act to Amend the Canada Elections Act*, also known as the *Increasing Voter Participation Act*. The

bill would usher in Sunday voting by proposing that polls open on the day before Election Day Monday. "It seems clear to the EFC that the majority of Evangelicals — and probably Canadians — would prefer Sundays to be kept clear of such an initiative," said Don Hutchinson, vice-president of the EFC.



The EFC is offering its strong endorsement to Bill C-22, *The Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation Act*, as it also did to a previous version

known as Bill C-58. This bill requires internet service providers to give police the contact information of anyone using

their service who displays or provides pornographic images of children. See also *Innocence Preserved: Protecting Children from Child Pornography* at theEFC.ca/pornography.



The EFC also endorses Bill C-304, *An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians*, to be considered by the House of

Commons in the fall.



The EFC has been a long-time endorser of Bill C-268, *An act to amend the Criminal Code to increase the minimum sentences for persons who are involved in trafficking children under the age of 18 years old*, which was passed by the Senate June 17 and at press time awaits Royal Assent. The bill represents a concerted effort to fight human trafficking, both within and outside Canada. See also *Not So Ancient: Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery* at theEFC.ca/humantrafficking. **FT**

*ism in Canada*, a best-selling book by journalist Marci McDonald. The book has been widely criticized for its over-simplification and stereotyping of evangelical identity and purpose in Canada.

McDonald wrote that “theirs is a dark and dangerous vision, one that brooks no dissent and requires the dismantling of key democratic institutions.” Van Ginkel responded in a posting at [ActivateCFPL.theEFC.ca](http://ActivateCFPL.theEFC.ca) that “McDonald’s claims fly in the face of the EFC’s 30-year track record and its reputation for well-researched social policy and legal arguments, which are valued by legislators and the courts alike.”

Van Ginkel also expressed the EFC’s regret that McDonald failed to “acknowledge the possibility that Evangelicals can be motivated to participate in public life from a belief in God’s purposes for a just society that cares for the vulnerable and respects human dignity, while respecting the democratic principles that welcome difference of opinion.”

By imposing the “theo-con” label on Canadian Evangelicals and advising Canadians to shun Evangelicals and our contribution to Canadian society, said Van Ginkel, “McDonald undermines the same democratic values she claims to espouse.”

## Discussing International Witness

The EFC’s Geoff Tunnicliffe, who also leads the World Evangelical Alliance, spoke this spring at Edinburgh 2010, a major five-day conference looking at how Christians witness.

He invites Christians to read and respond to its closing document, “A Common Call.”

He is also inviting Christians worldwide to contribute this summer to an online discussion on key issues, hosted by the Lausanne Movement.

The online discussion leads up to the historic Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in Cape Town, South Africa, in October. Tunnicliffe will be joined there by a cohort of international Christian leaders, including some 50 Canadians. More details at [theEFC.ca/global](http://theEFC.ca/global).

## Future of Prostitution Laws

The EFC recently released a 20-page report on the link between prostitution laws and human trafficking rates, at [www.theEFC.ca/prostitution](http://www.theEFC.ca/prostitution).

The report *Selling Ourselves: Prostitution in Canada, Where Are We Headed?* is a comparative analysis of approaches to prostitution taken by Sweden and the Netherlands, explains the EFC’s Julia Beazley, co-ordinator of Street Level: The National Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness.

It also makes recommendations for legislative reform here in Canada.

Beazley launched the study because Canada’s existing

laws governing prostitution are currently being challenged in two court cases, one in Ontario and one in British Columbia.

“It has been demonstrated that people who become prostitutes have most often entered into prostitution as a last resort,” says Beazley. “We do not believe that prostitution can legitimately be considered safe, dignified work. It is a dangerous way to earn money due to the risk of violence at the hands of customers, pimps and organized crime – these latter two also making it difficult to leave prostitution once ensnared.”

The report recommends the government follow the Swedish model, “an approach that doesn’t criminalize those whose bodies are being sold but rather those who purchase them and the pimps and gangs who profit.”



**The EFC’s Don Hutchinson addressed more than 10,000 people who gathered on Parliament Hill in Ottawa in May for the annual National March for Life. That month also saw Hutchinson and other EFC staff attend the National Prayer Breakfast, a non-partisan annual gathering of government officials.**

## Meaningful Vacation

Purpose@Work, an EFC-supported network of marketplace ministries, invites individuals and entire families to a day or a week of special presentations at Muskoka Bible Centre, Huntsville, Ont., July 17-24.

“Why you go to work will change forever,” says network chair Gerry Organ, who will be speaking along with Richard Blackaby, David Macfarlane, John Hull, Michael Van Pelt and many others.

Details at [theEFC.ca/partnerships](http://theEFC.ca/partnerships). **FT**

# Paul Brandt, the Man Under the Cowboy Hat

**A country music superstar** from Alberta recently received an **honourary doctorate of divinity**. Why?

*By Amy Robertson*



**T**here is no sign of Paul Brandt, country music superstar, anywhere.

There are no TV cameras, no security partitions and no cowboy hats. A few journalists with cameras and notepads sit inconspicuously throughout the auditorium, which is nearly full. Perhaps 1,500 people have come to watch the graduands of Briercrest College and Seminary, a small Christian college in Caronport, Sask., receive their diplomas today.

You would never know Paul Brandt is one such graduand, poised to receive his second honorary doctorate in seven months – this one a Doctor of Divinity.

He sits between a vice-president and a chancellor,

wearing a velvet tam instead of a cowboy hat, and a black and red velvet cape instead of a denim shirt.

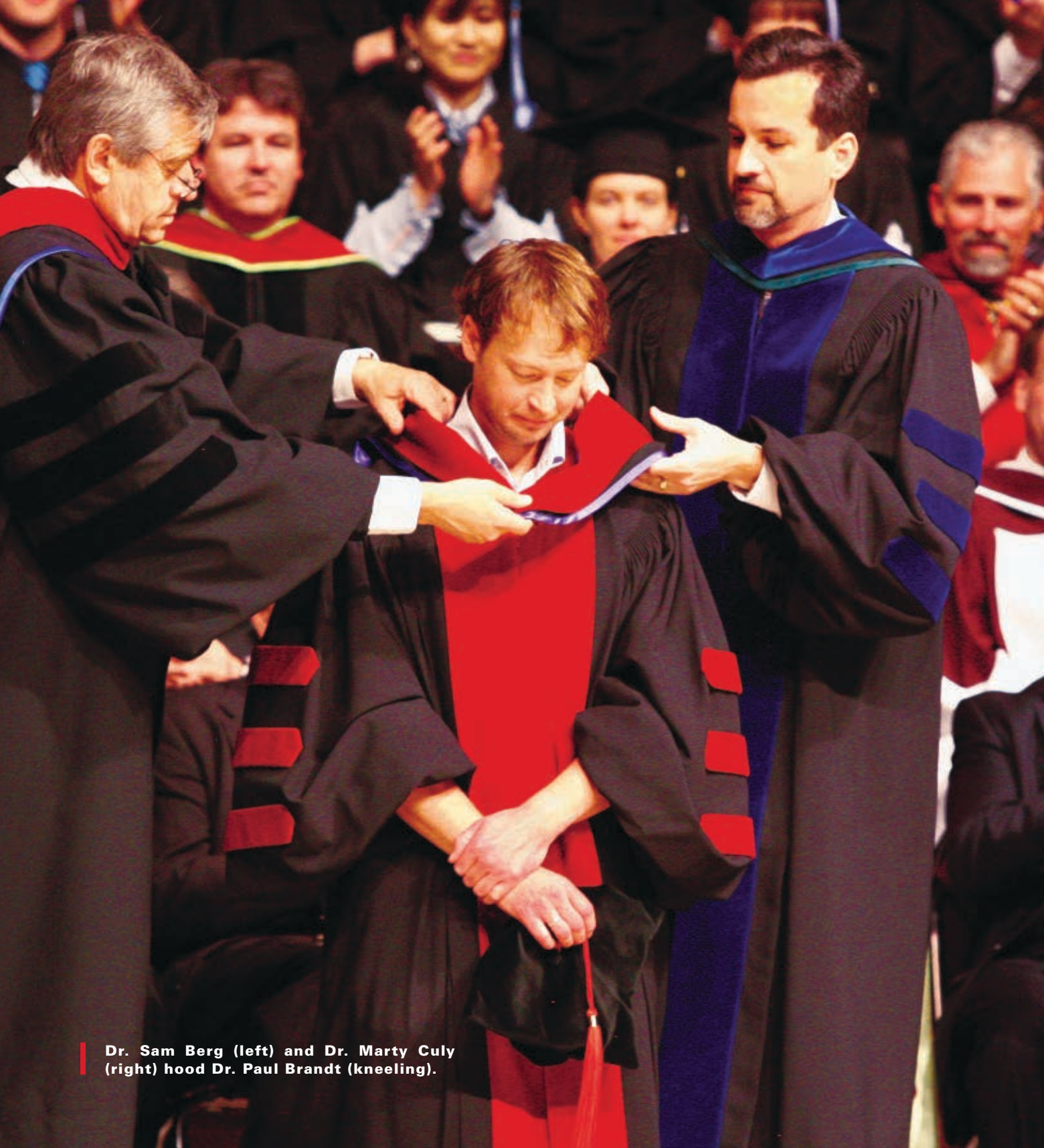
He blends right in with the academics sitting around him.

Today isn't about Paul Brandt the musician. It's about Paul Brandt the man.

"Briercrest College and Seminary is pleased to present Paul Brandt as a worthy candidate to receive the degree of Doctor of Divinity ... in recognition of his commitment to faithful service in building the Kingdom of God," says President Dwayne Uglem. Three professors place a doctoral hood around Brandt's neck as he kneels, smiling.







**Dr. Sam Berg (left) and Dr. Marty Culy (right) hood Dr. Paul Brandt (kneeling).**

PHOTO: VIKTOR KARKLINS

Building the Kingdom of God isn't exactly part of the typical country star's job description. But for Brandt, building the Kingdom is exactly what the last decade has been about.

In 1995 Brandt had been singing and playing the guitar for 10 years. He was a registered nurse at the Alberta

Children's Hospital, and he'd recently won a singing competition at the Calgary Stampede.

One day he came home to find a life-changing message on the answering machine. A representative from Reprise Records in Nashville, Tenn., wanted to meet with him. Within weeks he had signed a record deal,

and he began recording.

The newly hooded Dr. Brandt steps up to the microphone on stage and begins to speak.

"I had a career launch that most people in the music industry would dream of," he says: a top-five hit "right out of the box" followed by number-one hit song called "I Do," a New Male Artist of the Year award (1996) from *Billboard Magazine* and a world tour.

He and his wife, Elizabeth, moved to Nashville. By 2000 he'd recorded three CDs. Life was good.

But Brandt couldn't shake the feeling that something was wrong.

The executives at his label had begun to ask questions: What was more important, his marriage or his career? His beliefs or his music?

He had a dream about all the people he'd performed for. They were heading down a road as the gates of Hell were "smouldering in the distance."

Brandt's music was playing in the background.

There was nothing wrong with the three albums he'd produced. They were perfectly nice, perfectly moral – but they weren't pointing anyone to the good news of the gospel.

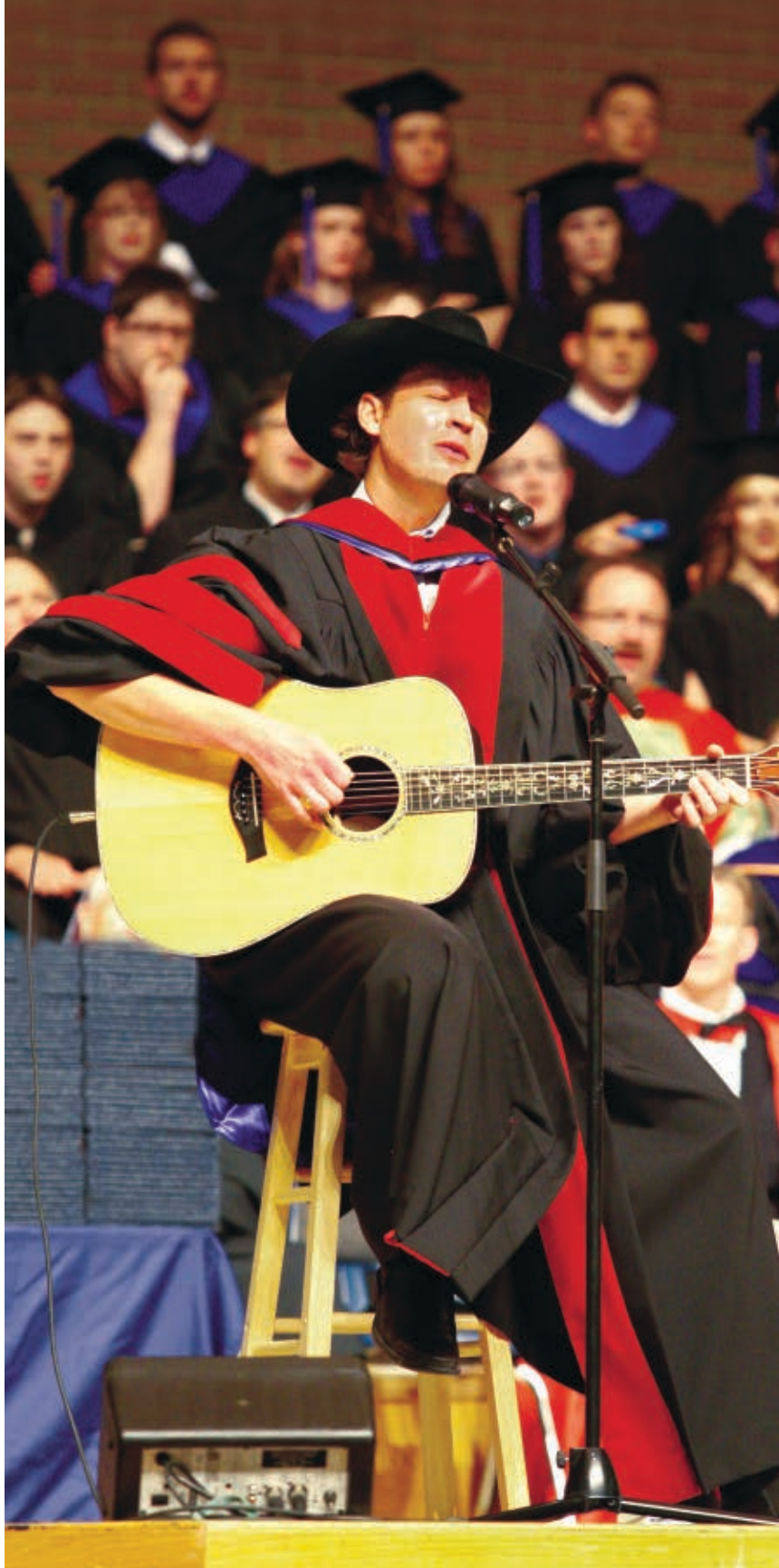
He and Elizabeth began to realize something needed to change.

"God was calling me to lay all my hopes and dreams on that altar," Brandt says, comparing his experience to the biblical story of Abraham.

So he did. He walked into the label executive's office one day for a one-minute meeting, during which he asked to be released from his recording contract.

After the papers were signed, Brandt, who didn't have a back-up plan, felt free – and terrified. All he could do was pray.

"I think You created me to do music," he told God that day. "You've given me the ability to sing and to write, and for some reason when I speak, people listen. So I'm going to do that. And You're going to have to take care of the rest."



**Paul Brandt performs "That's What I Love About Jesus" at the commencement at Briercreek College and Seminary on April 24.**

Brandt and Elizabeth moved back to Alberta where he began an independent, cross-country tour called Small Towns and Big Dreams. During the tour he recorded a



PHOTO: VIKTOR KARGLINS

live acoustic album. It sold only 1,000 copies – a failure by industry standards.

But then something strange happened. Country radio began to play his live independent album. “That never happens,” Brandt says.

Then people began to buy his CD – so many that he needed to do another tour. “That never happens,” Brandt says again.

Then he got a call from the organizers of Canadian Country Music Awards. They wanted him, an unsigned artist, to host. And at the end of the night, they called his name for Album of the Year.

That never, ever happens.

The night of the CCMA’s in as close to an audible voice that Brandt had ever heard, God spoke to him:

“I don’t need man’s ways to make things happen.”

Brandt’s independent album of the year went on to sell 40,000 copies. And he made more money on it than the number-one album he’d released years earlier, the one that had gone platinum (80,000 sales in Canada or one million in the United States).

Since then Brandt has left no doubt with his fans about where his allegiance lies.

In 2004 he released his second independent CD called *Risk*. Its 11th track is called “That’s What I Love About Jesus.”

In 2006 he told *Servant* magazine about an acoustic set he played one night: “A lady stopped the concert right in the middle of the show. There

are 2,000 people in the audience and she’s down front yelling at me. She said, ‘My son is sick, I have to take him to the hospital and you still haven’t played “Convoy.”’ I said, ‘We’d love to do that song for you ... Before we play, would you mind if we just prayed for your little boy?’ ”

Brandt and his wife continue to do humanitarian

work with the Alberta Children’s Hospital and with international aid organizations such as World Vision, Samaritan’s Purse, Place of Rescue (Cambodia), and the Ratanak Foundation. He’s also in the process of forming his own aid foundation, Priceles\$, which will care for orphans and widows around the world – specifically those enslaved by human trafficking.

Brandt has finished his Briercrest speech. He trades his velvet tam for a black cowboy hat, and the crowd laughs with him. He picks up his guitar and settles on a stool in front of a microphone. “I wanted to make sure that I had a song that was really clear about what I believed and what I think is the most important thing in life,” he says, tuning his guitar.

“That’s what this song is about.”

More than a few camera phones appear as he sings a simple acoustic version of “That’s What I Love About Jesus,” then transitions to “Amazing Grace.” Everyone in the room joins him.

“I was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Lethbridge [in October 2009], and that was for fine arts,” he says later. “That was exciting because it has something to do with my music and my ability to relate to people through my art. One of my main goals in my career has been to not only do that, but also allow my faith to shine through that. I think that receiving an honour like the one today signifies that’s happening.

“For me, that feels like a great accomplishment.”

“I hope that my music will be used ... like a billboard,” he continues. “Something that is used to challenge people and make them think about what they believe as well as entertain and enlighten. So to receive a recognition like this, it makes me feel like maybe some of those things are happening.”

There’s no denying that Paul Brandt, Canada’s most awarded male country artist, is worthy of honour, but the Canadian music industry has already taken care of that.

Today, Briercrest College and Seminary is honouring Paul Brandt, the man who is using his success to point people back to the God of the universe. The God who asked him to lay down his dreams, then gave them back again, plus more than he’d ever imagined. **FT**

“I hope that my music will be used ... like a billboard”

**AMY ROBERTSON** is a freelance writer in Saskatchewan who has worked as an editor and copywriter at Briercrest College and Seminary.



# Where We Came From

**Christians** who study **creation** and **evolution** arrive at a wide variety of conclusions. Here's an overview of ways that Canadian Christians approach these issues – and the more foundational question of how **faith** and **science** relate. *By Alex Newman*

In 2009, a Canadian Evangelical named Gary Goodyear was asked whether he believed in evolution. Goodyear, who happens to be a member of Parliament and the minister of state for science and technology, the federal department that funds science research, initially replied that his beliefs were irrelevant. The story made headlines. Later Goodyear said he did accept evolutionary theory.

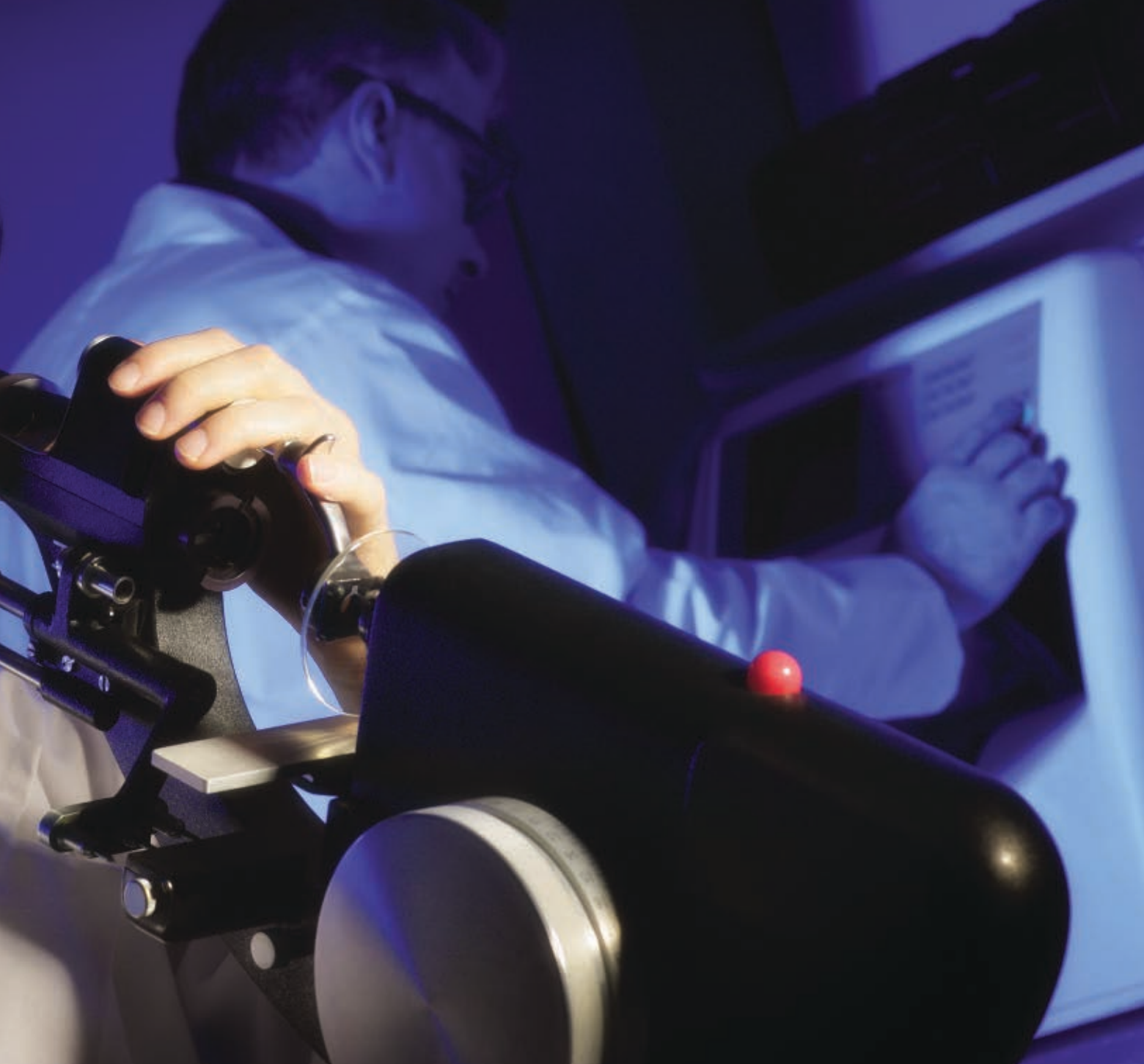
The affair prompted a number of commentaries on the relation of faith and science – and raised a lot of thought-provoking questions. The media implied that Goodyear was reluctant to publicly reveal his beliefs, but what if his concern was trying to explain to some of his fellow Evangelicals an acceptance of evolutionary theory? How many Canadians are aware of the great variety of Christian perspectives on how Scripture and science interact?



Many of us feel ill-equipped to discuss such issues, in part because of all the strongly expressed opinions out there. In the public square, we've recently seen some pretty vicious arguments between the so-called New Atheists and religious believers, and in the Christian media world, many of us have seen how clashing biblical interpretations can bring out uncharitable attitudes and behaviour between believers.

It's an issue that has some Evangelicals sitting on a "hair trigger," says Brian Alters, McGill University's science education chair and one of six experts in a recent American federal case about teaching intelligent design in public schools.

Though now agnostic, Alters was raised as an Evangelical, counts many Christians as friends, and understands the tide of emotions. He understands the natural human reaction of wanting



DON HAMMOND / WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

to avoid uncomfortable public debates, and he also knows the fears that some religious parents can have about classes in evolutionary science potentially leading their children to lose faith.

Evangelicals would have more “peace of mind,” he says, “if they could reconcile these two things” – namely, evolution and creation, or more generally science and faith.

And there’s the rub. The issue is not simply an either/or choice. Although that’s the way it’s often laid out in the media, in fact it is unrealistic to suggest that people either accept evolutionary theory together with atheism on the one hand, or believe in an Earth created 6,000 or 10,000 years ago on the other.

The reality is Evangelicals hold complex and wide-ranging beliefs from young earth creationism to evolutionary creation and everything in between. (See sidebars for definitions of terms and

news about how Regent College in Vancouver is tackling the need for greater understanding.)

Alters agrees that it’s a mistake to present faith and science as an either/or choice. “Science is a way to reveal the natural world, and in that scheme, evolution is considered factual. But saying that this proves there is no God leaves the realm of science and enters the realm of philosophy.”

That’s also why atheists get upset with Christians who maintain that creation ought to be also taught in schools – “a non-scientific thought proffered as science.”

### **Teaching Evolution in School**

David Herbert, a high school teacher in London, Ont., has heard those calls to ban teaching about creation from the class-



room, but he disagrees for more than simply religious reasons. He incorporates creationism into science class to help his students develop critical thinking skills, to consider the biases in various theoretical approaches.

“Even when you’re only teaching data in the schools, there’s always an underlying assumption with it, an interpretation,” says Herbert, who holds a PhD from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and has authored the biography *Charles Darwin’s Religious Views: From Creationist to Evolutionist* (Sola Scriptura, 2009).

It’s hard for Christians to avoid the conclusion, despite various levels of hesitation about evolutionary theory, that youth need to learn about it in school – at least to be better prepared to face what lies ahead in the broader world, if not at university.

Gary Chiang helps university students with just those issues in his job as adjunct professor of biology at Redeemer University College.

His approach is similar to Herbert’s: Chiang stresses the difference between the value-neutral aspects of scientific theories and the conclusions people draw from them, which are shaped by beliefs and assumptions. Absolutely everyone brings their “religious views” to the table, says Chiang, who authored *Rescuing Science from Preconceived Beliefs* (Doorway Publications, 2009).

“The evolutionist sees evolution in organisms reproducing, while the creationist believes that biological reproductive mechanisms prevent one species from evolving into another.”

By engaging in rhetoric, neither proponent develops an understanding for the foundation of their differences and “the facts are seen to support evolution or creationism once the mind has been trained to accept either worldview,” Chiang says.

### Avoidance Unwise

But those facts that seem to point to evolution have to be dealt with, says Dennis Venema, who teaches genetics at Trinity Western University. “The church is needlessly setting up students for a crisis of faith” by avoiding evolution or offering superficial dismissals of it, he says.

Most “anti-evolutionary arguments won’t last through one uni-

versity biology class,” he asserts. [Some Christian] students see the science and say ‘I’ve been lied to.’”

Fears about teaching evolution are misplaced and counter-productive, Venema asserts. Given Christianity’s venerable and robust history, Evangelicals should not be so worried that faith will be destroyed by claims that “observable natural processes, like heredity or evolution, are part of the providence of God.

**“The evidence for evolution is there and growing daily.”**

“Calling something natural does not somehow pit it against God or Christianity. God is the Author of nature and the supernatural,” Venema says. When Christian youth are introduced to the variety of ideas rightly and early on, their faith will not be shaken even by any radically new future scientific discoveries.

Venema, who considers himself an evolutionary creationist, accepts that “God has revealed Himself through nature as well as through Scripture. I have a personal experience of the Holy Spirit, and feel that what we find in nature is revelation of God. These ways of knowing are complementary.”

The terminology can be a challenge, he admits. “I prefer ‘evolutionary creationism’ to ‘theistic evolution’ because it puts the emphasis on God as Creator through a providential evolutionary process. We see His glory in the complexity of nature. Why is it so hard to accept that God used evolution as His creative method, which is ultimately and completely dependent on Him? Or that through an ordained natural process we are still fearfully and wonderfully made?”

Combating atheist claims is as simple as sticking with science: “Atheism is a philosophical position not mandated by any scientific theory,” says Venema. “Science deals only with the natural world. The existence of God is supernatural, or above nature. So evolution can’t disprove God in that sense.”

### A Challenge to Faith?

The intensity of the debate, and perhaps a lack of sophistication in understanding the relative roles of faith and science, has many Christian students living in a “cognitive dissonant state,” says Alberta biology professor Denis Lamoureux. If they’re raised with an evangelical faith but are unprepared about these issues, some can

## What Do You Call That?

### Evolutionary Creation or Theistic

**Evolution:** Theory that God worked with natural processes including evolution to create life. God’s activity is typically seen as progressive in time, and potentially understandable in terms of cause-and-effect sequences of physical or historical events.

**Old Earth Creationism, Day/Age Theory or Progressive Creation-**

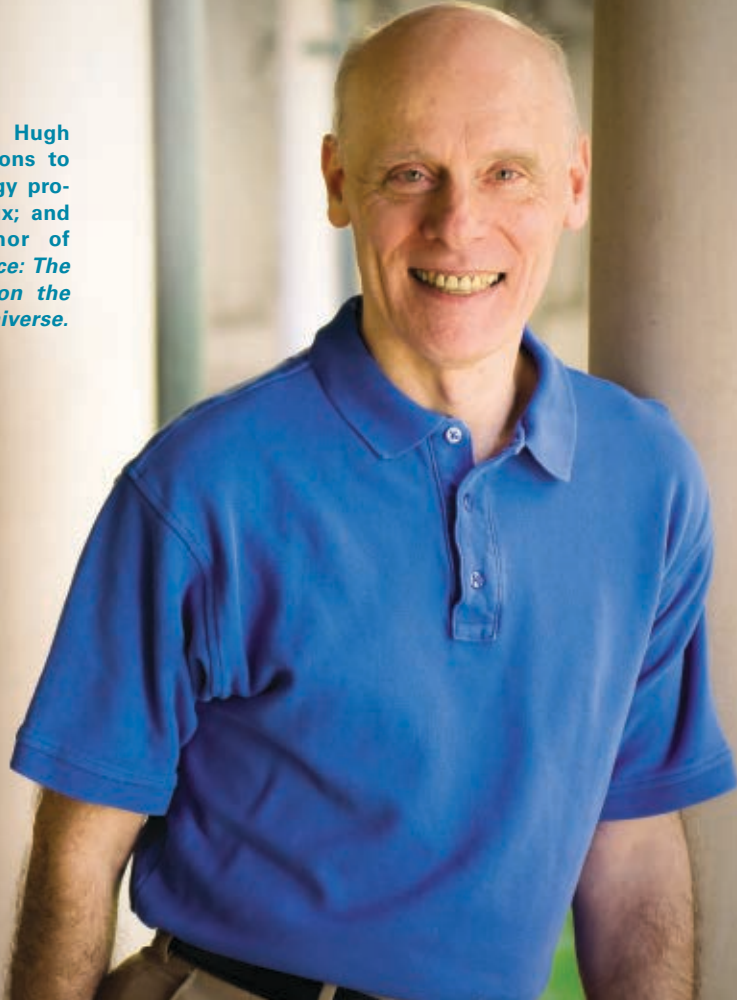
**ism:** Theory that God’s direct role in creation consisted of separate creative acts spread out over several billion years of time. The “six days” of creation explained in geological eras (vast time spans) as opposed to 24-hour instalments. Earth may be four billion years old. Living things were created over millions of years (or some say in much less time).

**Gap Theory of Creationism:** Proposes a significant gap of time between the be-

ginning of the cosmos and the Garden of Eden. Genesis 1:2 and Jeremiah 4:23 use a rare Aramaic phrase which can mean that the created Earth “became” (rather than “was”) “formless and empty” (NIV) before the Garden of Eden account unfolds, making space for other life to have pre-existed Adam and Eve.

**Darwinian or Naturalistic Evolution:** Most widely accepted scientific theory. Teaches that mutations occurred in

**Clockwise from left:** Hugh Ross, founder of Reasons to Believe Institute; biology professor Denis Lamoureux; and Denyse O’Leary, author of *By Design or by Chance: The Growing Controversy on the Origins of Life in the Universe*.



indeed lose that faith in a tough university science class, he says.

Lamoureux describes himself as a “born-again Pentecostal” who was intent on disproving evolution during PhD studies. Instead he became convinced by fossil records demonstrating an evolutionary pattern, and then by the explosion in biology that started in the 1980s and culminated in the 2003 human genome project.

His advice for Evangelicals is that today’s students, who have “cut their teeth on *Jurassic Park*, need leadership,” not avoidance tactics. “The evidence for evolution is there and growing daily.”

But Lamoureux agrees with Venema: that evidence doesn’t have to lead to atheism. “I would be in complete agreement [with well-known atheist Richard Dawkins] on the science, but not on philosophy. I believe in the Bible as a sacred text revealed by the Holy Spirit. When I look at beauty, complexity and functionality of the natural world, I see a creative mind. This aligns perfectly

with Psalm 19. What’s more, I believe in a God in communication with us, who gives us life after death. And 40 per cent of scientists agree with me.”

### Convincing Evidence

Although there are certainly some scientists known to challenge aspects of evolutionary theory, most of those scientists who agree with Lamoureux about God’s existence also agree with him that the evidence in creation really does point to evolutionary processes.

Ross Hastings of Regent College, an evangelical graduate school in Vancouver, B.C., explains: “To be scientifically recognized, a theory must account for empirical evidence and be able to predict and test the relationships it predicts. The empirical and predictive evidence for evolution is now overwhelming.

“This includes not just transitional fossils – we have complete

species due to natural selection. Survival of the fittest allows the strongest genes to dominate. Assumes natural causes effect change very gradually over long periods of time.

**Intelligent Design:** An approach that accepts some evolutionary theory but focuses on evidence of a supernatural Designer in the complexity of nature. Rejects the theory that humans evolved from lower life forms.

**Creationism Before Darwin:** Prior to the

19th century many people believed the world was created in six days and was 6,000 years old.

**Young Earth Creationism:** Belief that God directly created the world and all in it in six days, as in Genesis. Earth is 10,000 years old. Explains that much purported evidence for evolution is actually the result of Noah’s flood. Rejects macroevolution (evolving from one species into another), accepts microevolution

(adaptation within species).

### For Further Reading on Evolution:

*The Evolution Controversy: A Survey of Competing Theories* by Thomas Fowler and Daniel Kuebler (Baker Academic, 2007). The American Scientific Affiliation offers a concise introduction at [www.asa3.org/ASA/topics/Evolution/index.html](http://www.asa3.org/ASA/topics/Evolution/index.html). Canadian Steve Martin moderates an interesting blog discussion at [evanevdialogue.blogspot.com](http://evanevdialogue.blogspot.com). **FT**



sets of dinosaur-to-bird transitional fossils and especially reptile-to-mammal intermediates – but also evidence from comparative anatomy and embryology, vestigial organs, homologous structures and molecular evolution which indicates that we are the products of the genes of our ancestors.”

Hastings, who holds a PhD in chemistry and a PhD in theology, warns the Church against ignoring evolution. “No good can come from” avoidance, he says, pointing to the historical example of how the church asked Galileo not to introduce illiterate people to his (then) radical conclusion that the Earth orbits the sun. Hastings sees it also as a missional issue. Many thinking people have been asked to make a choice between faith and science, which is not necessary.

“That God seems to have created, first *ex nihilo* [out of nothing] to set the big bang going, and then by a slow process of evolution over millions of years, does not in any way contradict Genesis 1 and 2 properly interpreted. That passage is meant to answer questions of a theological and not a chronological nature.”

### Skeptical Minority

Hastings’ conclusions may be held by a majority of Christian scientists, but there are others who object to much of evolutionary theory.

David DeWitt, for example, professor of cell biology and biochemistry at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, disputes

the claim that the earth is five billion years old. He cites several reasons for his belief in young earth creationism: some biblical, some scientific.

For example he points to the genealogies of Genesis 11, which give specific ages: “So I have to believe that is God’s way of saying, ‘Here’s how you can know, I’m telling you.’”

How can Christians who accept evolution “account for millions of years of dying before humans appeared, if God saw it was good at the end of the sixth day?” DeWitt asks. “I have a hard time believing that good includes cancer, and cheetahs running down gazelles.”

DeWitt’s scientific objections start with the reliability of carbon dating, which scientists use to measure the age of fossils and other materials. “Radioactive carbon shouldn’t be detectable after 90,000 years because that is the detection limit of the instrument. Yet radioactive carbon is found in diamonds and coal that are supposed to be 300 million years old.” If carbon dating might not be accurate after certain lengths of time, DeWitt suggests, isn’t it possible that other techniques that offer measurements across thousands of centuries might also be questionable?

Even the much-touted human genome project doesn’t necessarily support an old Earth in DeWitt’s opinion, because “genes are about the sequence, not a measure of the length of time. Most individuals in Europe have a common ancestor back to one individual about 700 years ago, and most of the lines go extinct.”

## Wonder and Devotion

By Prof. Ross Hastings of Regent College, Vancouver

**R**egent College, an evangelical graduate school in Vancouver, wants to help facilitate evangelical Protestant pastors and leaders to better engage with the world of science. The goal is that they will be able to integrate sound theology with sound science, and so reconcile the two main sources of information we have about God: the Bible and God’s other “book,” creation. (Many psalms point to this idea that believers can see God’s character evident in creation.)

The project, called “Cosmos: Re-Faithing Science” (online at [cosmos.regent-college.edu](http://cosmos.regent-college.edu)), is supported by a grant from the Templeton Foundation.

Our primary aim is to form and communicate a creational meta-narrative within which Christian faith and the scientific endeavour can be seen as mutually co-inherent rather than in conflict (the mistaken view that prevailed in the modern era). This will enable us to help pastors and other Christian leaders do five things:

1. Develop a way of seeing all of creational and revelational reality as important for the formation of their worship, theology and teaching.
2. Develop a way of seeing the scientific pursuit as loving

participation in God’s cultural or co-creational mandate and in His cosmic redemption, thus enabling them to act and speak in ways that nurture and equip the whole people of God to similarly reflect the divine image.

3. Help scientists in their congregations to see their endeavours as an essential aspect of humanity “imaging God,” that is, following our Creator’s commission to us to rule creation lovingly as His vice-regents. We reflect our Creator when we responsibly and creatively discover and care for His creation.
4. Help all the people of God understand that to be a follower of Jesus entails loving and stewarding creation as an expression of love of God and neighbour.
5. Develop awareness of and resources to assist in interaction with young people encountering science and struggling with apparent conflicts with their faith.

This year, Regent’s “pastoral science” project included a conference called Wonder and Devotion: Bringing Science and Faith Together for the Church. It addressed a wide range of issues from bioethics and global warming to how pastors and scientists can dialogue profitably for the Church to preaching and worship in light of the story of the cosmos.

Many were influenced towards developing a more encyclopaedic theology, and encouraging fledgling and practising scientists towards fearless study of science, and above all, a sense of wonder and worship in the whole people of God. **FT**



## Humans and Chimps?

Proposed timeframes for mutation and evolution are extremely problematic, argues DeWitt. He points to a study of DNA of 100-year-old mice bodies in a Chicago museum. The study suggests that mutation “happens much faster than what’s inferred by human common ancestry.”

That theory of common ancestry – that life forms mutated and developed from a single organism – is particularly unpleasant for some Christians because it suggests replacing the scriptural Adam and Eve with monkeys and other lower forms of life.

Yet many Evangelicals who accept evolution seem content to trust that God created humanity and provided the Genesis accounts as ways to assure us of His role.

Venema insists that “evolution is the biological theory with the broadest explanatory power. Obviously some details have changed in 150 years – Darwin didn’t have the whole picture – but his thesis of modern species being derived from ancestral species through natural selection remains strongly supported by even the latest genetic evidence.”

Venema points to the human genome project (led by Christian geneticist and physician Francis Collins) and the more recent chimpanzee genome project that allowed a full comparison of the human and chimp genetic codes.

“What we see is overwhelming evidence for common ancestry between our species and chimps,” Venema says. “We see many features in common between the two codes that make no sense at all if our species are not related. We see defective genes with identical mutations in both species. We see the same genes arranged in the same order. It would have been simple for God to design these two codes to look very different, but what we see are exactly the features predicted by evolution.” But does similarity in genes necessarily mean common ancestry?

## A Line in the Sand?

Another Canadian dissenting voice that has spoken loudly against this view is that of Hugh Ross, the astronomer who founded California’s Reasons to Believe Institute. He accepts that “Earth and the universe are billions of years old,” but he disagrees with common ancestry theory.

As Ross sees it, there’s adaptation (micro-evolution) which “accounts for today’s humans being taller with better eyesight.” But when it comes to species’ changing into other species (macro-evolution), “we believe that God supernaturally intervened to form different life-forms. Our creation model argues that God is intimately involved in all of life on planet Earth, that He devoted over three billion years of life history to shaping the environment and chemically converting crustal minerals for the benefit of human existence.”

Ross and the institute’s stand is that “there is an actual chronology in Genesis starting with the creation of the universe (matter, energy, space and time), and then focusing in on Earth – appearance of light on Earth’s surface, establishment of a stable water cycle, formation of landmasses, production of plants on the landmasses, visibility of the sun, moon and stars to creatures on Earth’s surface, proliferation of complex creatures (Cambrian explosion), creation of birds and sea mammals, introduction of three kinds of advanced land animals, and creation of humans.”

Many people feel that’s reading too much science into Genesis and find it easier to understand the text literarily rather than literally, Ross acknowledges. But when they take the time to examine his position with an open mind, many find it makes sense, he says.

Iain Provan, professor of biblical studies at Regent College, does not find Ross’ interpretation of Genesis convincing. It’s inconsistent to understand the “days” of creation as vast ages while rejecting an “evolutionary understanding of the process by which God created.”

“Why is it that God can be ‘intimately involved’ in using natural and long-lasting processes to shape the environment for life, but not

in using such processes to shape life itself?” Provan asks.

Understanding the book of Genesis “literally” is important to Christians, says Provan, but the issue is what we mean by “literally.” He argues Christians should be reading it “as ancient Near Eastern literature – that is, literally! – in accordance with what its author likely meant, in his own time and culture.”

## Room for Mystery

Lamoureux takes a similar view. “When you came to Christ, did the Lord not come down and meet you where you were at? So too with biblical revelation. The Holy Spirit came to the level of ancient Hebrews.

“Let’s assume the big bang theory is correct. The Holy Spirit could have put an ancient Hebrew writer into a trance and dictated the big bang theory, but would his audience at that time have had a clue what he was talking about? We’re the most scientifically literate culture in history, and we still don’t really understand it.”

Despite what we don’t understand, there is much evidence in creation for its Designer – details that are so exact as to be beyond the realm of chance, asserts Denyse O’Leary of Toronto.

O’Leary is author of *By Design or by Chance: The Growing Controversy on the Origins of Life in the Universe* (Augsburg, 2004) and is now working on a book with William Dembski about why they believe theistic evolution fails as science and theology. O’Leary’s approach, common in the intelligent design movement, focuses on the intricacy and complexity of creation and concludes that, rather than using the chancy processes of

**“The creationist believes that biological reproductive mechanisms prevent one species from evolving into another.”**



## Science and Faith, Policy and Parenting

By Bruce J. Clemenger and Tracy Clemenger

**S**cience and faith may seem like polar opposites, but they're not. Western science is rooted in the theological affirmations that God exists, His creation displays order, is predictable, is full of wonder and does include the miraculous. Newton could say his lab expressed his "worship" of God. Einstein could say of physics that "God doesn't play dice." Darwin could say that primary laws are impressed on matter "by a Creator, a view of life full of grandeur." Past or present, no one approaches the study of creation in a vacuum.

As Christians we need to model humility in discussions of science and faith. The prophet Micah tells us of the benefit of humility before God and with others. Humility is evident in an openness to learn from others and to be considerate of their views. How many of us meet people who reject an author's thoughts without having taken the time to read their writings, be it Charles Darwin or the Apostle Paul? Humility considers the possibility of finding some common ground. Perhaps the most obvious examples of this need occur when science and faith intersect with public policy.

An example of this intersection occurred in the House of Commons when its members were developing laws governing genetic and reproductive technologies. The issues were cloning, animal-human hybrids and experimentation

on human embryos, to name a few. The initial consensus was not centred on trying to convince one another to accept either evolution or the Creator's design to proceed. Across party lines and religious beliefs, all recognized the potential these technologies had to tamper with either the evolutionary process or the divine image. Humility nourished a framework for discussion. The resulting legislation, albeit far from perfect, is among the strongest in affirming human life among Western democracies and provides a foundation for future legislation.

Another example where science and faith intersect occurs in parenting and education. Age-appropriate and informed discussions about culture and Christianity, alongside theology, science and religion, can lay a foundation that nourishes healthy patterns of inquiry.

Both of us are a part of the first cohort of Regent College's project of equipping pastors (and parents) in the journey of knowing God and His creation. All Christians can benefit from such help in walking humbly before our Creator in the wonder and devotion of what He has made. **FT**

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**BRUCE J. CLEMENGER** is president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. His wife, **TRACY CLEMENGER**, wrote an M.A. thesis on the intersection of genetics and religion in U.S. policy. Both contributed to the development of Canada's Assisted Reproductive Technologies Act (2004).

evolution, God must have intervened more directly, miraculously and supernaturally.

She offers an example on the grandest scale: "Earth is situated in precisely the right location in the galaxy to support life. It's in the darkest part of the galaxy, best for observing the heavens. The solar system holds a special position in the Milky Way. Earth is not exactly at the co-rotation distance, which would give it repeated gravitational kicks exerted by the galactic arm structure, sending it flying out of the habitable zone. Earth's solar system is located safely just inside the co-rotation distance. Revolving around the galactic centre only slightly faster than the galactic arm structure, our solar system crosses the spiral arms only once about every billion years. The last spiral arm crossing occurred 560 to 600 million years ago (just before the Cambrian explosion, when complex animals first came on the scene), so Earth currently resides in the safest possible location."

Her unspoken question: Could all this really be the result of "natural" processes?

Scripture supports her point. "God reiterates in Genesis and the Psalms that the world is His handiwork," O'Leary says. "God never tried to conceal His work. He does tweak and never had any problems interfering with His creation – He answered Moses and the people's call."

### Where Did I Come From?

For many, what's really at the heart of the debate is the question our children ask us at an early age: "Where did I come from?"

Lamoureux proposes this answer: "As Billy Graham said, the Bible is not a book of science, but of redemption meant to restore our relationship with the God who created the universe and humanity. Whether it came by evolutionary process, God still took this person and made him a living soul."

Admittedly, intelligent Christians have doubts and questions about how to read Genesis and the historical evidence found in creation as well as about how to read the science, but certainly our common Christian beliefs are strong enough to encompass some diversity and ongoing discussion on these intriguing issues.

Hastings agrees. "How God created the world is not a creedal issue, whereas the fact that God created is. While this issue of origins is interesting, and all evangelical parties are concerned to preserve important issues of theology within their viewpoint, this issue should not be a cause for division among us as the already too-fractured people of God."

The conversation among Canadian Christians will, no doubt, continue. **FT**

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**ALEX NEWMAN** of Toronto is a senior writer at *Faith Today*.

# God Uses Little Leaguers

When Christians hear the word “**evangelism,**” some of us turn away because we feel we don’t have the talent or the time. But a fresh understanding can dispel those obstacles.

*By Gary Cymbaluk*

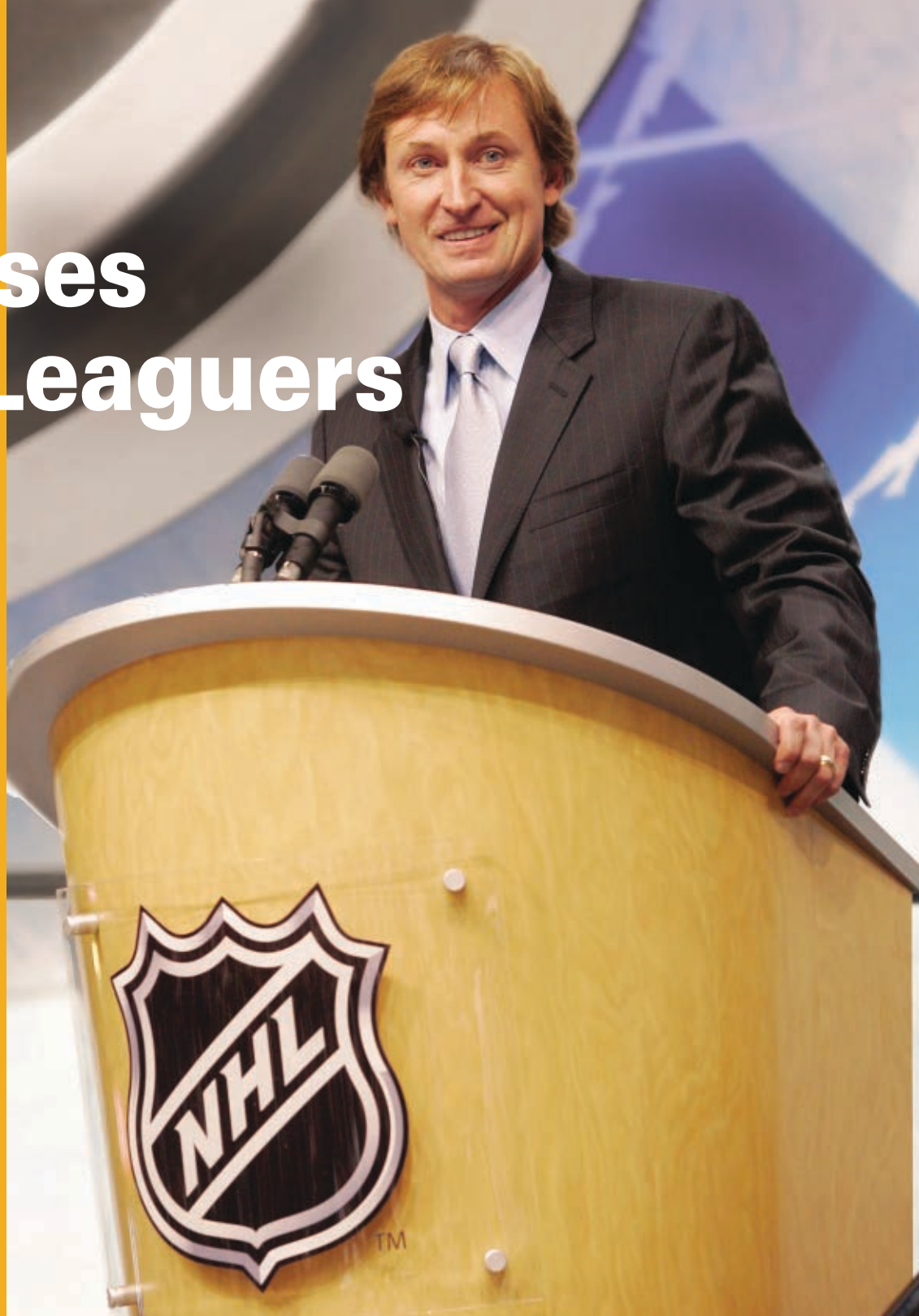


PHOTO: THE CANADIAN PRESS / CHUCK STOODY

## Imagine for a moment

that **Wayne Gretzky**, instead of being the all-time leading goal scorer in the NHL, is the world’s greatest evangelist. Replacing trophies on his shelf at home are photos of the many souls he helped lead to Jesus. In lieu of personal stats on assists and goals are oodles of stories of transformed lives. What if Gretzky was the most effective

mass-evangelist who ever lived?

When most of us think of evangelists, isn’t that the sort of person we think of? The professionals, the Wayne Gretzkys of the Christian world. We think evangelism is a waste when it’s attempted by amateurs, by those who merely play in pick-up leagues at the local rink.

Statistics suggest Canadian Evangelic-

als are mixed in their feelings about evangelism. About 59 per cent agree that “it is very important to encourage non-Christians to become Christian,” compared to 26 per cent in the overall Canadian population, according to a 2007 poll by Ipsos Reid for The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).

The same poll asked, “Would you be



**Clockwise from left: Merv Budd, director of Equipping Evangelists; Eric Stolte, president of Navigators Canada; Kervin Raugust, executive pastor of Centre Street Church in Calgary.**

to follow Jesus.

“We should make it more difficult for people to become Christians, not easier,” says Bill Fietje, president of the Associated Gospel Churches of Canada. “We don’t have to push people to a decision, because it isn’t our eloquence or persistence that opens hearts – only God does that.”

“Having conversations” that God can work through certainly seems less forbidding than “doing evangelism.” Could such a shift in our thinking encourage more Christians to participate?

We can all benefit from the reminder that evangelism “is for the average, ordinary person

willing to invite a friend or acquaintance to a Christian church?” and 73 per cent of Evangelicals were “very willing,” compared to 50 per cent for all Canadians.

Despite our good intentions, other polls suggest the majority of North Americans have never been invited to church.

Something isn’t right here, but before we feel pressured to evangelize more or buy some new evangelism program-in-a-box, let’s think a bit more broadly about evangelism. Do we need to consider it in a fresh way?

### CHANGING VIEW OF EVANGELISM

Eric Stolte is president of Navigators Canada, an evangelism and discipleship ministry. He agrees that a new way of thinking about evangelism is necessary and is already becoming common.

“We have moved from a transactional model of evangelism to a transformational model.” A transactional model is more about us and our ability to convince some-

one of something, while a transformational model is about inviting others to enter into a trusting relationship with Jesus.

“Today we are less interested in getting the individual to do business with us over a napkin and more interested in journeying with them, allowing them to set the agenda, ask questions and control how fast the process goes,” Stolte says.

For some of us this mental shift is difficult because it makes it harder to keep score. We can no longer simply count and stress the number of conversions or baptisms. One might say the “evangelism economy” has changed, and conversations are key to the new scorecard.

That may mean a little less emphasis on the moment of conversion – we don’t want asking Jesus to forgive sins to become the start line *and* the finish line – and a little more emphasis on the process of discipleship. Curious outsiders, in relationship with a community, are asked to count the cost before they make a commitment

who has experienced the extraordinary Jesus,” to use the words of Geri Rodman, president of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship Canada. Rodman says indeed that everyone can be involved in ordinary conversations without worrying about having all of the answers.

George Hunter, an evangelism expert at Asbury Seminary in Kentucky, affirms conversation in his book *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*. In a pluralistic society, Hunter says, the possibility of conversion is opened up through conversations with people who live with a contrasting view of reality.

This is not to say that bringing people to a point of decision regarding Jesus Christ is not a primary concern. Rather, it is to say that this is only the starting point of a much richer, broader and longer conversational process.

It can be helpful for churches to compare the energies they focus on the process of discipleship with those they spend on one-time conversion events.

"If you embrace Christ as Lord, the bonus is you get him as Saviour. But, if you just want him as your Saviour, you will find he may be neither," warns Tim Day, executive pastor of The Meeting House, a multi-site Brethren church in Ontario.

The Meeting House encourages attendees to prioritize Home Church attendance where people can turn their chairs inward and face one another. Day is convinced that as people gather in homes and work out what it means to be a follower of Christ, they'll wrestle through questions like, "What shall I do, Lord?" instead of asking themselves, "Am I forgiven?"

### BEING THE CHURCH, NOT "DOING CHURCH"

Other churches are dealing with philosophical shifts stemming from deflated ministry models. In other words, the culture has changed and the church needs to respond to this change.

"In the past we faithfully pursued an evangelism model that was attractational," says Kervin Raugust, executive pastor of Centre Street Church in Calgary, a large congregation in The Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada. "This model worked for us because our people were building relational bridges and inviting people to church.

"Now, however, there is a turning toward a missional lifestyle and building on people's networks." Out of the strength of these ordinary relationships people find Christ, get connected to a small group and only then become part of the larger church experience, Raugust adds.

Evangelism must move from trying to do church to being the church, says Merv Budd, director of Equipping Evangelists, a national network supported by the EFC (see sidebar, page 26).

In the past, Budd says, evangelism has been positioned as something that one person did to another person. "But it shouldn't be seen as something you do by yourself in isolation apart from a community." He thinks the more churches work at

being the church and giving themselves away, the more people will be drawn.

Not all churches are at the point where they feel they can turn their focus outside their walls. In today's economy pastors who have let staff go and retracted budgets feel pressure to turn inward. Yet, the irony is that thriving churches – of all shapes and sizes – are continuing to align their people towards local and global mission: more money, more involvement and more prayer.

Leonard Buhler is president of Power to Change, an evangelism ministry formerly known as Campus Crusade. He says, "The whole shift taking place with evangelism in Canada is massive." Buhler's organization trained thousands of Christians to share their faith at the Olympic Games.

"We need to rethink our approach to people," Buhler states. "People don't want to be simply injected with information – they want to interact, question and process what they hear." He believes those who are outside the church don't care what we believe, but they watch us to discover what Jesus can do with a person's life when it is given to Him.

### ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER

*The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community* is a recent book about missional living by American authors

Hugh Halter and Matt Smay (Jossey-Bass, 2008). They ask, "Why did pagan onlookers hold the early church in such high re-

## Being Ourselves, Outside the Church

It's easy to start assuming that our most fulfilling spiritual experiences will happen in church, in the building where we worship on Sunday. So we can all use a reminder that God doesn't live in temples built by human hands. We can read a few examples of Jesus conversing with people in synagogues or in the temple, but it's clear that he had hundreds with ordinary people in their neighbourhoods.

If Christians want to influence society, we'll have to be comfortable with just being ourselves around the people that God has placed in our lives. Some suggestions:

- **Pay attention and pray.** In our culture, it's rare for people to pay attention to other people. Either we're moving too fast or we've been warned about talking to strangers. Canadians are known for being polite, but we're not engaged. What if we decided to intentionally pay attention to the people around us? What if, based on what we noticed, we prayed for other people? It's even okay to be covert about it and pray behind people's backs. Unauthorized prayer is fun, it counts and God hears it.
- **Listen to others.** Maybe you've been praying for a few months for someone you've noticed. Maybe it's someone you recently met. You simply ask, "How are you?" Then, lean in and look them in the eye and listen. Don't say a word. People love to be listened to. This is evangelism with your ears. We have a tendency to want to correct, talk over or add our two cents. In today's culture, when we really listen to (not just hear) others, it's as if we've given them a cup of cold water.
- **Let people in.** Some of us may be called to let people into our homes. Let's agree that it counts towards evangelism if we share a meal with our neighbours, even if the subject of faith is not spoken of. Some of us may be called to let people live with us in our homes. Let's remind each other that God honours it when we purposefully give up space, time and comfort for others. Some of us may merely be called to let people into our lives by talking with them and listening even when we really don't feel like it. FT –GC

# Nurturing Evangelism in Your Church

By Merv Budd

**Y**es, evangelism is more than a solo activity for gifted individuals, it's a team activity – and the church is the team. Yes, evangelism is more than the proclamation of the gospel, it's the communication of the gospel by a community that embodies the message in everything its members do and not just in what they say.

We're living in an age when the communication of the gospel is failing not because it's falling on deaf ears but because the message being preached is contradicted by the body language of the church.

An evangelistic church is not merely one that engages in evangelistic activity, but one where evangelism is a natural and attractive by-product of everything the church does.

If all these ideas are true, then it's crucial that church leaders help nurture an evangelistic nature in their churches. That's where the Equipping Evangelists (E2) Network comes in.

We're a national network (supported by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada) committed to training and enabling churches to help you nurture an evangelistic ethos in your church.

We do this through regional training networks that teach church leaders and laypeople how to equip their congregations. We can help you to establish an evangelistic DNA in everything you do.

Through monthly meetings we teach people how to stimulate an evangelistic mindset. The meetings also provide accountability as participants commit to applying what they learn.

For more details visit [www.equippingevangelists.com](http://www.equippingevangelists.com). FT



**Clockwise from top: Tim Day, executive pastor of The Meeting House, a multi-site Brethren church in Ontario; Geri Rodman, president of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship Canada; Bill Fietje, president of the Associated Gospel Churches of Canada.**

spect, but today's non-Christians view the modern-day church with such disdain?"

In response they say one of the main culprits has been our paradigm of evangelism. They suggest we reprioritize the nonverbals over the verbals, the medium over the message and the posture over the proclamation to reach this generation.

Canada's biannual church-planting event ([www.thecongress.ca](http://www.thecongress.ca)) took place in Calgary a few months ago. The theme

was Renovate: Transforming Neighbourhoods. Adrian Van Giessen, pastor of a Christian Reformed church plant in Kitchener, Ont., hasn't missed a single congress. He reports on one of the key themes: "The future of evangelism requires a new paradigm because it is no longer enough to simply speak – we must do the hard work and get involved."

This view matches the one put forward by a Street Level statement on evangelism

earlier this year. (Street Level is an EFC-supported ministry roundtable on poverty and homelessness.) The Street Level statement includes these lines: "Verbalizing the good news is only a part of the larger whole of bearing witness to the compassionate embrace God extends to His world. We also believe our actions and lifestyle bear witness to the gospel."

Dion Oxford, director of the Salvation Army's Gateway shelter in Toronto, elaborates on the Street Level statement: "We believe mercy and evangelism exist in an interdependent relationship and cannot be separated from each other."

Some churches across Canada are beginning to move beyond the safety of their buildings and the familiarity of programs to get more involved in their neighbourhoods, regions and world. In these places, average, ordinary followers of Christ are being encouraged to notice more, ask great questions and pay attention to the answers. The world is watching.

This means we don't love people and spend time with them in order to evangelize them. We evangelize them as we love them.

A recent example comes from a couple in a church that wanted to reach out to their neighbours. This couple loved their Muslim neighbours by bringing them food during a crisis and serving them in practical ways – even so far as providing them with a car. After several months, this Muslim family converted to Christianity. It was not on account of great preaching or a novel program but simply because of the extraordinary love of ordinary people. (The person who shared this story is David Macfarlane, director of national initiatives for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Canada.)

### WORDS STILL NEEDED

Some observers caution that current trends can risk underemphasizing proclamation in favour of living a Christian lifestyle that contributes to the good of our neighbours. (Proclamation can include public preaching and one-to-one

witnessing that explain Christian belief and challenge others to believe.)

"The new emphasis on living the gospel is good," says Rick Hiemstra, director of the EFC's Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism, "but if we strip it of proclamation, we'll still have an anaemic evangelism and we'll be pushing to swing the pendulum back in 20 years."

Hiemstra suggests that if evangelism efforts are currently weak, there may be a different reason for it: "We Canadian Christians have been too influenced by our culture's emphasis on personal choice. We've accepted our culture's idea that challenging another person's choice or opinion is essentially an attack on someone's personhood, rather than an attempt to advance a proposition. Choice and identity have become fused, and we don't know how to penetrate it. That is why we're fundamentally uncom-

fortable with evangelism."

And that's one more reason for emphasizing discipleship and ongoing relationships – at least there you have a chance to discuss choices openly without evoking defensiveness.

Such relationships depend not on superstars of Wayne Gretzky's stature, but on ordinary Christians willing to get involved. Those ordinary Christians don't need more strategies to memorize. They don't need to manipulate their friends. They just have to love Jesus and share that love with others.

Instead of making evangelism seem like a professional sport, let's change the way we think about it and make it a normal part of everyday Christian life. **FT**

**GARY CYMBALUK** of Waterloo, Ont. is the director of church relations for International Teams ([www.iteams.ca](http://www.iteams.ca)).

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# Cyber-Seminaries

Some students and seminaries are pushing to have church leadership training delivered entirely online, which is challenging all those involved to rethink the role of seminaries in helping students reach spiritual maturity. *By Richelle Wiseman*

**R**uss Nelson dashes home from a church board meeting to ease into the chair in front of his computer. It is 11:00 p.m., but he has to finish an assignment for an online theology course. While he works on his Master of Divinity degree, which will qualify him to lead a church, Nelson also serves as a youth pastor, the father of a two-year-old, and the husband of a wife pregnant with their second child. Financially and logistically, Nelson would not be able to pursue his M.Div. without the opportunity to do much of his course work online.

Nelson is one of hundreds of online seminarians, most of them Evangelicals, across Canada and the United States.

"At Fuller Seminary, we used to say it is the three Ms which are driving this push for online education: marriage, ministry and mortgage," says Howard Wilson, now president of Ambrose Theological Seminary in Calgary.

Evangelical seminaries have been leading the charge even before the Internet arrived to respond to those market demands for more flexibility in M.Div. and other degree programs.

Many now offer modular programs, for example, which deliver

teaching in condensed segments so working people can squeeze them in a week at a time instead of having to attend throughout a semester or a year.

Online courses have grown even more explosively. Almost every evangelical seminary in Canada now offers some course options online. Some courses aim to deliver 80 per cent or more of their content online. Others, called hybrid courses, blend online and face-to-face delivery. Many traditional classroom-based courses now offer supplemental Web-facilitated instruction.

Online courses often include chat rooms where seminarians can interact with each other and professors across various time zones in a "synchronous" environment. Other online work can be "asynchronous," meaning students are free to access course material at their own convenience without interacting with fellow students.

Programs in which students spend several years on a campus, living in residence, to earn an M.Div., are still common in Roman Catholic circles, but those days seem to be gone for Protestant evangelicals. Students who work in a ministry position and simultaneously study seem to be becoming the norm.

That new normal has created tension at the Association of





# and Spiritual Formation

Theological Schools (ATS), where most of Canada's evangelical seminaries are accredited. ATS still requires accredited seminaries to ensure seminarians spend a third of their M.Div. degree program on campus, or roughly one year of the three-year degree.

Some ATS members are pushing to change that requirement and invigorating a debate over whether schools can deliver key aspects of the seminary experience – spiritual formation, worship, community and mentorship – through online options.

## Formation Versus Information

Seminaries agree that an M.Div. program should help students in their personal faith development, spiritual maturity and self-discipline – grouped together in academic circles under the term "spiritual formation". Seminaries are asking each other how well these can be facilitated online. Can connectivity bring with it a rich enough form of community?

"Education is fundamentally a personal, relational and transformational activity," says Paul Williams, academic dean of Regent College in Vancouver. "We are concerned

about the trend of online education when it replaces face-to-face and community learning. We do see a role for it, but we get concerned when we see significant portions of the program being delivered online."

Although many other seminaries seem to have concluded that online interaction can contribute to spiritual formation, Williams has his doubts. He cautions against letting "technology drive the educational agenda."

Spiritual formation is such a crucial part of that agenda at seminaries today in part because it is "happening less and less in the Church, and seminaries have to do remedial spiritual formation," says Williams.

Seminaries are struggling to meet the needs for spiritual formation and flexible course delivery by seeking new partnerships with the congregations students belong to.

"Spiritual formation takes place inside a person's own life context," says Paul Bramer of Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. "A requirement I had in my courses was that everyone needed to cultivate a spiritual friendship in their own church."

Bramer is professor of Christian Formation and Leadership

(and director of the D.Min. program) at Tyndale. He has taught courses in spiritual practices and spiritual direction online.

"We can have some level of community online, but I try to reinforce the community the students are already in with their church or small group," says Bramer. "Is it necessary for them to develop another community at seminary?"

## Church-Seminary Co-operation

"Churches and seminaries have to work together to develop leaders," agrees Rob Blackaby, president of Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary in Cochrane, Alta. The people in both churches and seminaries will have to change their thinking to make that partnership effective, he says. Both groups need to recognize that a seminary can't develop ministry leaders on its own.

"Many of our students are coming only one or two years after coming to faith. Mentorship needs to occur in churches," says Blackaby. Neither churches nor seminaries are "doing a good job" at that yet, he says.

As seminaries move to more and more online training options, Blackaby and other seminary leaders agree on the need for a corresponding uptake in developing internships, apprenticeships, mentorships, and spiritual formation for students in the churches where they serve while they are taking their degrees.

But examples of this level of co-operation are hard to find.

On the church side, many congregations are familiar with internships, but few are familiar with formal efforts to provide real mentorship and deep spiritual formation for seminary interns. In many denominations, churches expect seminaries to look after those things, while seminaries may be expecting churches to do them.

Al Hiebert agrees that "apprenticeship and mentorship are significant issues" for seminaries and churches. "There are some things you just cannot learn online. Medical doctors have to do internships and residency in a hospital. There is no other way."

Hiebert is outgoing executive director of Christian Higher Education Canada (CHEC), a group of 34 post-secondary schools affiliated with The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Thirteen have seminaries.

## Virtual Formation

Yet there are ways to facilitate spiritual formation in distance education, says Greg Bourgond, formerly of Bethel Seminary in Minnesota. He led an ATS-sponsored webinar in May 2009 titled "Virtual Formation: Fact or Fiction."

In the webinar he points to networking support, on-campus intensives, discussion forums, student-centred support, 24-hour responses, posted personal profiles, new student orientation

and programmed socials.

He even argues that the sense of community online can actually be greater than in a traditional classroom setting if there is effective use of written prayer, perhaps a web prayer room where students and professors share personal spiritual experiences, allowing self-disclosure, reflection and interaction.

Bourgond also reflected on 1 Corinthians 3:6, where the Apostle Paul wrote: "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." Paul's "students" required further nurturing at the local level through local leaders, even though his instructive letters travelled on the "Internet" of their day – Roman roads – to provide a form of distance education.

"Students need both a sage on the stage and a guide by the side. Online is not enough," says Bourgond.

He also points out that the whole idea of spiritual formation varies from school to school and within different Christian traditions.

"Spiritual formation has been the weak side of Protestant theological education, and it still is," writes Ward Gasque in a classic 1996 article in *Studies in Canadian Evangelical Renewal*. He argues for a "balanced emphasis on the head, heart and hand." By "heart" he means "spiritual formation."

Seminaries were initially founded in the fourth century to train clergy for church ministry. The English word "seminary" comes from a Latin word meaning "seed-bed." The idea is of a bed of soil prepared for planting seeds and nurturing small seedlings until they become mature enough to transplant.

The model of seminaries, generally associated with monasteries, gradually changed as some became attached to universities. During the Protestant Reformation John Calvin saw theological training as a necessity for clergy, but also as an extremely valuable gift for laypeople. An educated laity would provide the church with greater effectiveness and reach in its ministry capacity. As early Protestant seminaries adopted a more academic approach, spiritual formation became marginal.

Early Evangelicals opted to start their own Bible colleges, which often focused on practical aspects of ministry. Later, evangelical seminaries adopted a research model which left both the spiritual formation and the practice of ministry to the church.

Catholic seminaries today continue to pursue a residence-based model of preparation for clergy, complete with a focus on worship, community, mentorship, spiritual formation and practical ministry.

## Accredited Seminaries

According to Daniel Ayleshire of Pittsburgh, executive director of the ATS, there are 36 ATS-accredited seminaries in Canada. The 13 which are evangelical (see sidebar) include all of the largest seminaries in Canada. The total enrolment of

Canadian evangelical seminarians is approximately 2,800.

In the ATS across the United States and Canada, there are 250 seminaries. About 95 of them are evangelical, 95 are mainline Protestant and 60 are Roman Catholic or Orthodox.

However, by population, 60 per cent of the seminary students in ATS schools are in evangelical seminaries, 30 per cent are in mainline Protestant seminaries, and 10 per cent are in Roman Catholic or Orthodox seminaries.

Clearly, Evangelicals and their greater affinity for online courses and possibly weaker

emphasis on spiritual formation are driving the conversation about the ATS residency requirement.

The current ATS accreditation standards for seminary education state:

M.Div. education has a complex goal: the personal, vocational, spiritual, and academic formation of the student. Because of the importance of a comprehensive community of learning, the M.Div. cannot be viewed simply as an accumulation of courses or of individual independent work. In order to ensure an appropriate educational community, at least one year of full-time academic study or its equivalent shall be completed at the main campus of the school awarding the degree or at an extension site of the institution that has been approved for M.Div. degree-granting status.

The program shall provide opportunities through which students grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness.

The ATS held its bi-annual conference in Montreal in June.

At the end of that conference, steps were taken to pursue a serious look at accreditation for a fully online M.Div. degree.

"There are two tensions," says Ayleshire. "We want to make theological education available to more people, because we believe that any theological education is better than no theological education." Second is the issue of teaching methods. "How do students learn the materials which need to be learned?" This involves asking broader questions, such as who they are, their own spiritual lives and their own relational capacities for ministry.

"These are questions best answered in community," says Ayleshire. "Pastors don't get into trouble for not knowing Greek. It is almost always relational issues which cause problems."

Yet many evangelical seminaries seem to have concluded that the challenges around community and spiritual formation are not much greater in online programs than in traditional ones. They want the ATS to move more quickly to enable fully online programs.

"We need to encourage the ATS to catch up with the times," says Steve Parsons, director of online education at Canadian Baptist Seminary. "We are limited by them. Most schools want to go full-time online."

## Financial Implications

Going "full-time online" also has financial implications. As most seminaries feel a cash crunch thanks to the economic down-

## The three Ms pushing online education are marriage, ministry and mortgage.

## Evangelical Seminaries in Canada

- Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, N.S. (Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches)
- Ambrose Seminary, Calgary, Alta. (Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of the Nazarene)
- Associated Canadian Theological Schools, Langley, B.C. (Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches, Associated Gospel Churches, Evangelical Free Church, Baptist General Conference, Mennonite Brethren, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada)
- Briercrest College and Seminary, Caronport, Sask. (Multidenominational)
- Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary, Cochrane, Alta. (Canadian National Baptist Convention)
- Carey Theological College, Vancouver, B.C. (Canadian Baptists of Western Canada)
- Heritage Theological Seminary, Cambridge, Ont. (Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches)
- Horizon Seminary, Saskatoon, Sask. (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada)
- Masters Seminary, Toronto, Ont. (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada)
- McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ont. (Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec)
- Providence Theological Seminary, Otterburne, Man. (Multidenominational)
- Regent College, Vancouver, B.C. (Multidenominational)
- Taylor Seminary, Edmonton, Alta. (North American Baptist Conference)
- Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, Ont. (Multidenominational)
- Wycliffe College, Toronto, Ont. (Anglican/Evangelical)

**Note:** Horizon and Masters are not ATS-accredited, but they partner with Providence and with Tyndale, which are. Acadia and Wycliffe are not members of CHEC. For additional Christian post-secondary options, visit [checusout.ca](http://checusout.ca), [christiancollegesincanada.com](http://christiancollegesincanada.com) and [religiousandtheologicalstudiesincanada.com](http://religiousandtheologicalstudiesincanada.com). **FT**

—RW

turn, some may be tempted to look at online degree programs as a way to increase seminary revenues. One might imagine that once the initial hard costs for technology and IT personnel have been undertaken, online students could provide a much-needed boost to seminary bottom lines.

Such thinking would be mistaken, says Blackaby, the president at Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary. "For us, there has been no financial upside."

He cites the loss of rent and business on campus when students are online instead of on-site. Tuition fees are the same in most cases for online courses, but the technology is expensive to buy and maintain, plus there is a need to provide technical support to students online.

Aylshire at the ATS agrees. "Our early experience is that good online education is not quite as expensive as on campus. But it's not going to be the silver bullet that will bring in revenues to shore up weaker seminaries. There are no cash cows in theological education. Online is not less expensive to deliver. Schools who think

this will discover that there isn't a scale of economy to this."

Another "downside of online education is that for professors, it can take a lot of time to post, monitor and interact with students on the Web," adds Paul Bramer of Tyndale Seminary. "The time of interaction between professors and students is actually higher with the Internet, as introverted students are more empowered to engage in questions. In the classroom, a professor could ask a question and one student might respond. Online, if there are 20 people in the classroom, there could be 20 responses."

## The Church of the Future

Stepping back from the specific downsides and upsides of online education, it does seem to be a development that may have a variety of affects on the future of the Church. It's not hard to imagine that more people around the globe will have access to a North American model of seminary education via the Internet. This could improve the opportunities to develop trained leaders for the Church in countries where there are no seminaries (provided that courses can be made available in the appropriate language, and students have access to broadband Internet).

It also means that more people who are currently already in ministry can gain additional theological training.

Furthermore, there are all those laypeople who might be interested in Christian courses. Many, perhaps most, might have no interest in academic credit. But if online courses get effective enough and affordable enough, there would be no shortage of work for the seminary and Bible college professors who would be willing to teach them.

Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary has already investigated what it would take to set up a campus in Second Life, the Internet's largest user-created, 3D virtual world community.

"We considered buying an island to create a virtual campus," said Parsons. However, the costs and complexities of the technologies are still out of reach for CSBS.

As such possibilities loom, valid questions must continue to be worked over by churches, denominations, seminaries and accrediting bodies: "What is the best way to train a minister to face the challenges of 21st century ministry?"

Some would eagerly answer: In front of a computer monitor. Others would say: Face-to-face, supplemented by computer. Still others would say: Nothing can replace living in community while being spiritually formed and gaining a theological education.

As the debate continues, the urgency for seminaries and churches to be engaged in this discussion together and not separately has never been more crucial. Indeed, the task before the seminaries, their accrediting bodies and the churches they seek to serve is to go far beyond discussion and move to a drastically improved model of co-operation to train leaders for the future Church. **FT**

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## Adding One Small Word

Helping emerging leaders is an important way of growing God's Church

**T**he North American Baptist Conference has 430 churches spread across Canada and the United States. Being one conference in two countries has been a blessing on both sides of the border as we purpose to maintain our international unity and rich evangelistic heritage. Leadership development and ministry multiplication are our global ministry priorities. It looks good on paper, but does it make a difference in the pew?

If you visit our website, you'll see our tagline right away: "Focus Your Leadership. Multiply God's Church." We are intentional about developing leaders and expanding the community-impacting outreach of the local church. But recently we discovered that the addition of one two-letter word to our tagline makes a big difference. The word is "on": "Focus your leadership **on** multiplying God's Church."

That one small word refocuses our efforts and renews our passion. We are serious about the outreach of the Church, especially when it coincides with the enrichment of emerging leaders. With the Internet generation looking, thinking and acting differently than their ecclesiastical predecessors, church leadership development has become the albatross of today's congregation.

But there is hope.

A recent report of 15 North American Baptist Conference churches who provided younger leaders opportunities to lead ministry initiatives showed that in those churches, the existing leaders truly wanted to see others emerge and succeed as leaders. Churches that are intentional about creating environments to encourage new leaders accomplish significant success in developing others.

Many churches, however, struggle to provide opportunity for new leaders to cut their teeth. The report clearly identified "possessive leadership" as the primary obstacle to raising up emerging leaders within congregations. Sadly, when established leaders aren't intentional about equipping others, many potential leaders bang their heads against the impenetrable ecclesial leadership ceiling. Eventually the head hurts and the banging stops.

In contrast something about the environment of one of our Alberta churches has enabled many people to join in

the leadership over the years. The youth pastor, the worship director, several elders and many other significant leaders were actually raised up from within the congregation. Many of these significant shapers are veterans of the children's and youth ministries in that same church. At the same time others have also been able to enter into the church community and quickly find opportunities for leadership. How has this been possible? Perhaps the attitude of the lead pastor reflects the reason why: "My greatest joy is to see others do well," he says.

A church leader from a congregation in British Columbia suggested that the benefit of this kind of intentional integration is the magic that happens when the existing leader and the emerging leader are both determined to grow and learn. A church leader from Ontario has encouraged key older individuals of the congregation to develop intentional relationships with younger leaders – to start pouring into those younger leaders, creating a strategic context for leadership transference to happen.

It seems that successful churches are first and foremost looking for leaders of godly character and environments within which godly characters can be developed. No amount of charisma can overcome the detrimental community impact of a leader's moral failure. If the younger members in our church don't qualify for leadership development, that's an indictment of us. Let's take them where they are right now and adopt the needed development process. We must create a culture conducive to intentional leadership development.

Our call is to develop leaders. Not just leaders for Sunday school or the fellowship committee, but leaders for eternity. With this in mind, we will not develop generic leaders, but will focus "**on**" developing Church leaders who will then go on to love and develop others. From this viewpoint character formation is superior to filling vacant ministry positions, and community outreach trumps excessive internal church activities. Look around. The next Barnabas, Peter or Priscilla might be sitting in a pew nearby – with a very sore head. **FT**

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**ROB MCCLELAND** is executive director of the North American Baptist Conference, headquartered in Oakbrook Terrace, Ill. **KEN CASTOR** was recently a pastor to young adults in Calgary, Alta., and now teaches youth ministry at Crown College in Minnesota. This column continues a series by affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. For a list, see theEFC.ca/affiliates.



# Partnerships Should Mimic the Trinity

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

Partnership has always been an important aspect of Christian ministry – and it has always been difficult and challenging. As we seek to work co-operatively today, we can be encouraged by reductions in some of the barriers of denominationalism and interagency rivalry, and discouraged by new barriers that emerge.

Churches and ministries will always be tempted to focus on our own goals and our own people, with little to no regard for other Christian groups, unless we increasingly share God’s heart and allow it to permeate and empower our every thought, plan and ministry action.

One of the best ways to align our co-operative efforts with God’s heart is to emulate the Trinity. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are a perfect model and corrective for ministerial partnership, whether local or global.

Think of how the co-operation of the Trinity is evident in salvation, for example (the Father sent the Son...), or in redemption and sanctification (the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit...), or even in creation.

How might these divine realities influence our human practice of ministerial partnership? Well, first let’s define ministerial partnership. It refers to serving God and others by working with the Triune God and the Body of Christ to accomplish the *missio Dei* under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.

## Seven Principles

Given this definition, let’s move on to some principles for the practice of ministerial partnership, derived from what the Bible teaches us about the Trinity.

The first four principles in the chart below are structural or constitutive, and the last three are operational: they become evident in practice.

## Relationship, Unity, Diversity and Interdependence

The relational reality of the Triune God figures prominently in both the Old and New Testament scriptures. God reveals Himself as essentially one but existentially three in relationship. The theologian William Shedd helpfully listed out 12 ways that the Trinity relates together: one person loves another, indwells another, suffers for another, knows another, addresses another, is the way to another, speaks of another, glorifies another, confers with another, makes plans with another, sends another, and rewards another (*Dogmatic Theology, 2nd ed.*, Thomas Nelson, 1980, p. 279). These 12 items are very informative and instructive for Christians to practically apply them in ministerial partnership.

The Three Persons of the Trinity share in perfection and glory. Thus there is unity among them. In John 17 Jesus clearly states the unity between the Father and the Son in His prayer while also focusing repeatedly on the “unity” of believers (17:20-23). This same unity is expressed in Ephesians 4:3 as being the unity of the Spirit. This characteristic of unity is not only central to who God is, but it is vital for witness and especially ministerial partnership.

Yet the Triune God exists in three distinct persons who are different from one another. Their roles in all of the work within the Trinity (e.g., creation, salvation, revelation, etc.) led to the accomplishment of their common plan. In similar fashion, ministerial partnership brings together those who have different gifts, complementing one another. The distinct tasks and activities are to be undertaken by partners, yet co-operatively accomplishing the shared goals with God-honouring outcomes.

The interdependence of the three Persons of the Trinity was especially evident as Jesus in His ministry was filled by the Holy Spirit and led and empowered by the Holy Spirit when fulfilling the will of the Father. More gen-

PRINCIPLES OF THE TRINITY	PRACTICE OF MINISTERIAL PARTNERSHIP
1. Relationship	Know, confer, plan with one another
2. Unity	Spiritual unity leading to unity of goal
3. Diversity	Difference in gifting and distinct roles
4. Interdependence	Not self-sufficient
5. Love	Self-sacrificial love within the Trinity and beyond
6. Peace	Harmony; freedom from anxiety and inner turmoil
7. Joy	Christians are to be joyful when serving God and others

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erally we can say that the interdependence of the Godhead is shown in how the different Persons contribute to different aspects of the overall purpose of God and to the creation and salvation of humanity.

Each individual Christian is part of the Body of Christ. We (individuals, churches, denominations, mission agencies, etc.) need to see ourselves as interdependent and interconnected parts of the One Body. It is not all about individual ministries; it's all about God: His plans and directions through the Holy Spirit. Ministerial partnership is necessitated by our interdependence.

### Love, Peace and Joy

Love, peace and joy are the manifested quality of the Triune God in operation.

God is love, which includes being self-giving and sacrificial. These characteristics permeate in His relationship

within the Trinity and in creation and salvation. Christians are to apply this kind of love when interacting with one another, including in ministerial partnership.

The same is true with peace and joy. As we emulate God, we must therefore avoid the strife, self-serving and sorrowful state of worldly fashion.

As each of us considers God's call on our lives as individuals and as Christian groups, let's remind ourselves that ministerial partnership is necessary – and that we have a structural and operational model for such partnerships in the Trinity. **FT**

**ENOCH WAN** directs the D.Miss program at Western Seminary (in Oregon and California) and also serves as president of the Evangelical Missiological Society of USA & Canada. Read more about the Trinity and ministerial partnership at [www.globalmissiology.org](http://www.globalmissiology.org). Join the global conversation leading up to Cape Town 2010 at [www.lausanne.org/conversation](http://www.lausanne.org/conversation).

The advertisement for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) features a header with a photograph of a diverse group of people smiling. Below the photo, the EFC logo is displayed, consisting of a stylized cross and the text "EFC The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada". To the right, the phrase "Together FOR IMPACT" is written in a large, elegant, cursive font. The main body of the ad contains the heading "Your Congregation's Affiliation with The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has its Benefits!" followed by a bulleted list of four benefits. At the bottom, contact information is provided: "For more information, call the EFC at 1-866-302-3362 or email [affiliate@evangelicalfellowship.ca](mailto:affiliate@evangelicalfellowship.ca)".

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# Kingsfield Churches, Zurich, Ont.

Kingsfield youth and adults help unload food for the Huron County Food Bank Distribution Centre.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ANNEKA ZEHR

In 2006 Zurich Mennonite Church ([www.kingsfieldcommon.ca](http://www.kingsfieldcommon.ca)) went on sabbatical. All programs were placed on hold for an entire year to refocus on God's mission. The congregation had been feeling stuck; people were burning out.

The sabbath year turned out to be a crucial moment in the life of this congregation. Life Transformation Groups were born during that year. Three households of intergenerational members including children, seniors and singles met each week to meditate on the Word, pray, eat, play and do mission together. Exploring their common passion, groups were encouraged to identify a need in the community to share the love of Christ. One group picked apples for the food bank. Another initiated a Christmas meal for people on the margins.

Life Transformation Groups multiplied as the vision grew. Today groups nurture and disciple baptismal candidates to live 24/7 for God. Groups ebb and flow with about half the congregation participating weekly at any given time. New groups form as numbers grow; the average continues to be three multigenerational households per group.

The structure of the church itself changed after that important year. Kingsfield is now a multiplying movement of churches made up of individuals and households who have rooted themselves in the truth, hope and transforming reality of Jesus Christ. Kingsfield includes the original – but restructured – congregation of Zurich Mennonite Church and a new sister church in Clinton, Ont.

Phil Wagler is the lead pastor and explains the church's missional identity: "No one gets left behind; every disciple knows that he/she is a disciple of Jesus Christ and every disciple contributes to His Kingdom." He admits it's challenging to relieve people

from serving on church committees to release them into the community to coach sports or cook meals. "It's an ongoing process to encourage people to see the vision beyond their building. Zurich Mennonite has been a landmark for 102 years," he says.

## Pockets of People – In Relationships

Today neighbours eagerly send their children to daily vacation Bible school, a co-operative venture with four other churches. A food bank and thrift store, initiated by the Zurich group in a storefront in town, now receives direction from a community board. Summer soccer teams relocated from the church yard to the school playground.

When Zurich Life Transformation Groups hosted a Christmas meal for those on social assistance, only four people came. Transporting the next meal to the apartment building where people lived significantly increased their impact. Now 60-80 people fill the town hall. Felt needs are being met and relationships are growing.

## Persons of Peace – Where They Live

Some people were driving 40 kilometres to Zurich when the vision to plant a ministry in nearby Clinton emerged. As an intentionally multiplying movement of churches who attempt to bring the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to reality where they live, it seemed natural to reach out to neighbours in Clinton.

Each congregation is denominationally, and in small but growing numbers, ethnically diverse. Though connected under the Mennonite banner, fewer than half of Clinton's congregation share Mennonite roots. About half of Zurich's members have no

church or other-church backgrounds, yet God is unifying them in spirit and in truth.

The emerging congregation in Clinton is growing from the missional DNA that the Kingsfield banner nurtures. They've helped renovate two transitional houses that help troubled youth and people with mental illness. The congregation regularly delivers meals to the transition houses to build relationships with residents. Wagler keeps his eyes open for people who have a heart for the community and for potential leaders who can co-ordinate new neighbourhood ministries.

### It Comes With Challenges

Over the last seven years Wagler has observed a variety of challenges. The Zurich congregation was excited and supportive through the 2006 sabbath. But when "vision wakes us up to this-is-who-we-are-now in Christ, it challenges our identity," says Wagler, and some people get cold feet. The fear factor impacts the

budget. People fear losing control when things are "given over to God."

Transitioning the relationship from mother to sister congregations is another journey of faith. Clinton's meeting house is more than full, so new challenges are on the horizon. Zurich's current transition is one of identity – not seeing everything from the focus of a building; a challenge for a church that has existed for more than 100 years.

"We're a people on-mission with God. It's less about huddle and cuddle. We're sent into our community," says Tim Doherty, pastor of coaching and multiplication.

### People of Purpose

"When the landscape changes, what is demanded of the church?" asks Wagler. "We're taking baby steps. Our DNA is different now." Driving to church or going to church isn't the way this church sees it anymore.

"We see the church as a multiplying organism whose influence and presence is

moving into multiple places in order to be close to and engaged in the lives of people in many different ways," explains Wagler.

Today Kingsfield's people are involved in the multiplication of God's vision beyond their two existing congregations and into the surrounding counties. The root question for all ministry decisions remains: "How are we impacting our community?" Wagler feels his pastoral role has shifted from being a chaplain to an equipper – less doing and more encouraging of the saints. "This is the people we're becoming," he says. **FT**

**Editor's note:** Wagler has written a book, *Kingdom Culture: Growing the Missional Church*, which is reviewed on page 40 in this issue of *Faith Today*.


**CHARLENE DE HAAN** is a freelance writer in Toronto, executive director of CAM International of Canada and founder of stepUPtransitions.ca. Read all the profiles in this ongoing series at [www.faithtoday.ca](http://www.faithtoday.ca).

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## Keeping the Night Watch

What's the best medicine to take when we have trouble falling asleep? Well, prayer doesn't hurt. But it does come with some questions.

If there's one thing for sure about the Zoomer population, those of us born in the 1950s or thereabouts, it's that they burn midnight oil. No, they're not up late studying for courses taken with their newly acquired senior's discount – they're wandering around the house, looking desperately for something that will help them sleep. In fact seniors aren't alone. Stats Canada reports that one in seven of all Canadians over age 15 has some form of insomnia.

How essential is the sleep we miss? What can we do when night watch replaces night's rest?

A good answer for Christians is that since the Church needs pray-ers and since we all need to participate in the building up of the body of Christ, our nighttime waking can be considered providential. But this match made in heaven does come with some questions.

How was it possible for the author of Psalm 63 to be joyful as he was meditating instead of sleeping? How did he keep his mind from wandering?

Our Lord Jesus often prayed in the night. What was His prayer posture? What did He say? Or was He listening?

Benedictines at Weston Priory in Vermont begin prayers at 5:00 a.m. Byzantine monks in the Eastern orthodox tradition begin at 2:30 a.m. Fifty percent of Korean ministers engage in overnight prayer once a week. How do their bodies cope with schedules like that? What's their motivation?

Katherine Hamm of Didsbury, Alta., who is now with the Lord, used to pray for people around the world, from west to east, during her nighttime waking hours. Her daughter, Virginia, still marvels at the number of people her mother prayed for and the length of time she kept people on her prayer lists. How did she manage all of that?

How did she avoid becoming overwhelmed by global needs?

When sleep eludes me, I usually begin by thanking God for His gifts. I have life, breath, a place to sleep (when I can), food to eat, people to love and so much more. Sometimes this journey of thankfulness branches into petition or intercession or repentance. Then my challenge is to gently, but firmly, avoid the pitfall of worry, returning instead to focus on the goodness and mercies of God.

At other times, instead of thinking about the gifts of God, I think on the person of God. My starting place may be Scripture, often in the King James Version because that's how I first learned it. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Psalm 25:1). I silently repeat these words, inhaling as I pray "Unto thee, O Lord" and exhaling "Do I lift up my soul," inviting the Spirit of the living God to enter my offering of prayer.

After a while I may meditate on each word or short phrase. I picture myself being lifted up to God. I remember other offerings in Scripture, in the Church and in my own experience. I think about God as worthy of being offered everything. I yearn to fully offer myself and be consumed by Him.

I invite Him into my thoughts and feelings as I meditate this way. And so my night vigils become visits with God, companionship as enjoyable as having tea with a neighbour or playing with my grandson.

Loss of sleep is hard on the body. Pain is sharper, aches are more nagging during wakeful hours. Our frame of mind may suffer even more. Anxieties held at bay during the activities of day loom large and dark at night.

As we know, Scripture does not promise the absence of difficulties. Paul had a thorn in the flesh; some say Daniel was made a eunuch by his captors. Facing black, bleak nights and mornings of grey fatigue is hard. But if we believe, as Paul did, that all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28), we can ask Him to redeem those difficult hours of our night watch. We can trust Him to hold us and love us. We can know a rest more complete than the sleep we are missing. **FT**

Since the Church needs pray-ers and since we all need to participate in the building up of the body of Christ, our nighttime waking can be considered providential

**BONNIE BELDAN-THOMSON** of Pickering, Ont., is a newly retired teacher from the Durham District School Board.



## Kingdom Culture: Growing the Missional Church

By Phil M. Wagler  
Word Alive Press, 2009  
172 pages, \$15.99 (paper)



## Blue

By Manic Drive  
Whiplash Records, 2009  
\$14.99 CD (\$9.99 download  
at [manicdrive.codm/store](http://manicdrive.codm/store))

### Kingdom Culture: Growing the Missional Church

Phil Wagler is lead pastor of churches in the towns of Zurich and Clinton, Ont., a vibrant ministry collectively known as Kingsfield.

Wagler writes to reflect on four slogans or declarations that arose through the reflection of the Kingsfield community in relation to Scripture and the lived experience of ministry. Each declaration is illustrated through parables drawn from history and Wagler's own life, and then fleshed out with attention to biblical themes

and the story of the Kingsfield community.

The first declaration, "No one gets left behind," provides an entry into the orientation of the church to people in need of the gospel, rather than merely preserving the programmatic status quo.

Next, the slogan "Our leaders lead" describes Wagler's perspective that leadership ought to be freed to emerge in surprising ways, rather than be shackled to traditional structures whose rationale has long been forgotten.

By the third slogan, "I am a disciple of Jesus and I contribute to his kingdom," Wagler

articulates an understanding of ministry that centres on the notion of the God-given identity of Christian disciples and how this identity issues in a life of service.

Finally, the declaration "We exist for the world our Lord came to save" expresses a view of Christian existence in order that it might embody a countercultural alternative.

Readers from a broad range of Christian perspectives will be challenged by Wagler's passionate devotion to spreading Christ's name. However, some may wish for more clarity and depth to his understanding

of the relationship between church authority, order and the freedom of the Spirit.

While *Kingdom Culture* is not really a book of theology or cultural analysis, it includes elements of both. It is the ecclesial reflections of a diligent labourer in the vineyard. As such, its value is felt primarily in provoking questions about the way in which we're involved in God's work in the world. Such questions are always welcome.

Readers may also find more of Wagler's writing in *Canadian Mennonite* and *Seven*, the magazine of Promise Keepers Canada. —DUSTIN RESCH

## Blue

In an age of personal playlists and eclectic tastes, it pays for artists to be versatile. Manic Drive aims for just that with *Blue*, a reworking of their award-winning second album *Reset and Rewind*. Led by brothers Shawn (lyrics, keyboards) and Michael Cavillo (guitar), along with Anthony Moreino (drums), the Toronto band projects a heavy rock sound, but throws a few curves along the way.

The song "Music" opens the album with a violin that echoes Coldplay's "Viva La Vida" in how it rides up the scales. Heavy guitar, thrashing drum and a repeating whoop quickly interrupt, though, and let the listener know where the album is headed – to a hard dance-rock sound. "Music" talks tough, promising that while "the words...the music...the melody" can be taken away, "nothing takes the soul out of me."

"Walls" takes the dance-rock sound further, with lyrics

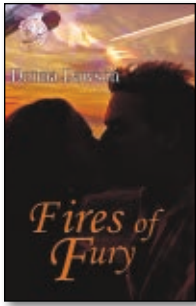
that sound a battle cry against a hardened heart.

The track "Blue," featuring vocals from former DCTalk singer Kevin Max, was a hit as a radio single, helping the band gain international exposure.

"Closer" takes a sudden turn by slowing down to boy-band territory. Earnest lyrics speak of disappointments, but recognize the best way to deal with these is to ask God to "take all I am, start again... 'cause I need you closer."

The rest of the songs continue to vary in style, from the fun "Dancefloor" (vocals by female rap artist M.O.C.) to the radio-friendly rock of "Eleven Regrets" to the ballad "Rain."

*Blue's* album cover shows the three members dressed suavely in front of an urban skyline: this is urban rock with an emotional edge à la Switchfoot, Maroon 5 or even heavier sounding artists. It has already earned them awards and critical respect in the contemporary Christian music scene, and taken them touring to Europe and throughout North America. —HENRY VANDERSPEK



## Fires of Fury

By Donna Dawson  
New Scroll Books, 2009  
166 pages, \$15.00 (paper)  
at [www.newscrollbooks.com](http://www.newscrollbooks.com)

### Fires of Fury

**D**onna Dawson, an Ontario author of suspense novels, adds romance into her latest book. The main character, Katherine Matheson, has lost her husband in an apparent suicide. In her grief, she inadvertently becomes involved with Jason Wolfe, a police officer investigating the death.

The romantic interest is quickly complicated by Bev Jarvis, a temptress. She had been involved with Katherine's late husband, which had compromised the marriage before his death, and now she tries the same with Jason.

Police officer/romancer Jason Wolfe has a belief in God, although we are never sure how deep it is. His belief encourages Katherine to retrieve her faith in God, which she had put aside because of the unfaithfulness of her husband. Near the end of the book, she escapes from a flame-engulfed cabin with an appeal to God that has an unfortunate foxhole feel to it. Yet her prayer and ensuing peace do leave echoes of the thief on the cross appealing to Jesus' mercy.

The setting, a fictitious Ontario town close to known cities and highways, may give a "homey" familiarity to Ontario readers. All of the familiar ele-

ments of genre fiction can also be found in the novel: the development of the love triangle, the villain and his devious designs, the suspense and (perhaps less favourably) the minimal development of the secondary characters.

Inquisitive readers may also be left disappointed by some unanswered questions: How does a very small town have a police force? How is that force able to get DNA so quickly? Where is the police chief?

But such quibbles aside, the happy ending should leave the reader with a satisfied sigh.

—KINGSLEY ARCHER

### The Halcyon Dislocation

**T**he American novelist John Gardner once said there are only two kinds of stories: either the hero goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town. In his first novel, Toronto author Peter Kazmaier invents a third plot: a town goes on a journey.

The "town" (actually an island-based university) is actually sent into another dimension thanks to an experiment gone awry. As students and faculty attempt to survive in a wild, seemingly untouched new world, politics and dissent begin to pull the colony apart. From the



## The Halcyon Dislocation

By Peter Kazmaier  
Wolfsburg Imprints, 2009  
416 pages, \$23.95 (paper) at [wolfsburgimprints.com](http://wolfsburgimprints.com)

outside, strange threats begin to emerge, and nothing is quite as idyllic as it seems.

University student Dave Schuster does his best to adapt and help his fellow students survive. His friend Al steers him, slowly, to a new faith that helps him conquer his fears about his new surroundings and reconciles him to own tragic past.

For his first novel, Kazmaier does well at quickly getting the plot in motion and describing the new world. The science makes for good reading, too – perhaps no surprise, since Kazmaier is a working and teaching scientist. He makes dimension and time travel seem plausible and comprehensible. (No mean feat – the writers of the TV show *Lost*

could've used his help.)

The main character is well drawn, but the novel falls short with the supporting characters, which are roughly sketched in or merely act as vehicles for ideas or philosophical positions. For example, one professor launches into an unmotivated and random anti-family tirade and then isn't heard from again. And what motivates the novel's antagonist, Dr. Hoffstetter, is never compellingly or believably revealed.

A good writer once gave me a tip: "Just remember that every bad guy had a mom. If you start there, they write themselves." That kind of attention to character development would make Kazmaier's next novel much stronger. —LLOYD RANG

### Who Won That Award?

**M**att Brouwer's recording *Where's Our Revolution* won the 2010 Juno award for Contemporary Christian/Gospel Album of the Year earlier this spring. It's the third album by Brouwer, who was born in Nova Scotia, studied at Prairie Bible College in Alberta, and now lives in Texas. He writes or co-writes all his own songs, which mix pop music with a variety of other styles. He operates his own record label (Black Shoe/Fontana North) and his own humanitarian relief organization.

The other nominees for the award were FM Static's *Dear Diary*, Janelle's *What I Gotta Say*, Steve Bell's *Devotion* and Thousand Foot Krutch's *Welcome to the Masquerade*.



—BILL FLEDDERUS

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## The Shadow Effect

What are the limits to religious leaders speaking out in public?

**Y**ou've probably heard about the "halo effect": it happens when someone declaims about something not quite related to his or her field, but we accept the pronouncement as authoritative because of the genuine expertise that person has demonstrated in another field.

Richard Dawkins and the late Carl Sagan, for example, parlayed their scientific achievements into platforms for attacking religious faith and Christianity in particular. The late Bertrand Russell and the not-yet-late Noam Chomsky attempted to transmute philosophical and linguistic authority, respectively, into political influence.

Various leaders have done the same in North American evangelical ranks. James Dobson, a child psychologist, has for decades pronounced upon the particulars of complicated pieces of American legislation as if he were a political expert. Pat Robertson, trained as a lawyer and later working as a television preacher and university president, has confidently prophesied why various natural disasters have happened according to the will of God, to which he claims to be particularly privy. Franklin Graham, founder of a reputable relief-work charity and latterly an evangelist, repeatedly criticizes a major world religion, Islam, as if he's in a knowledgeable position to do so.

Only a kind of halo effect can explain why anyone listens to these people on such subjects. It's not that these folks are untrustworthy. Rather, we should think of trust as something earned and limited to particular fields of expertise.

It is possible that such a person may research a subject outside his or her core expertise and, after consulting a variety of experts, put forward a wise and challenging message based mainly on the work of others, in effect promoting their work more widely. But even that's a risky enterprise, as we'll see.

To avoid falling victim to the halo effect, we need to distinguish between a public pronouncement based solidly on expertise and one that's not.

In daily life most of us know that one friend gives good advice on relationships but bad advice about money, or vice versa. But we don't seem to pick and choose as carefully with religious leaders.

If that's true, I see two ways of improving our practices.

First, let's be more intentional about trying to discern

when leaders really know what they're talking about and when they don't. Let's squint a bit, peer through the halo, and appreciate the limited, but also talented, human being within the nimbus who has something good to offer – while we politely refuse to accept just any idea that person wants to press upon us.

Second, especially if we are religious public speakers of any kind, let's beware the corollary of the halo effect, what I call the "shadow effect."

The shadow effect occurs when I opine about something I don't know much about – and then a knowledgeable person in the audience catches me in a serious error. Perhaps that person may not know what I know about the Bible or theology or Church history, but certainly does know more about economics or politics or ecology.

Such a person would say to herself, "Well, if he's clearly wrong on what I do know about, how can I trust him on what I don't?"

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It's not that  
these folks are  
untrustworthy.

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The shadow effect works backwards on what I really do know to rob it of its legitimate authority.

So we pastors, other preachers, devotional communicators, bloggers and religious public speakers of all sorts should stick to what we do really know. If we decide to address a particular topic of public concern, we must either speak out of a genuine second field of expertise (some religious professionals are, after all, knowledgeable about natural science, or history, or music, or whatnot) or hand over the discussion to an authentic Christian specialist in that field.

That doesn't prevent us from addressing concerns beyond our ken. Church leaders wanting to address a new topic can arrange for an adult Sunday school course, perhaps a weekend conference, perhaps a book study – and join with our brothers and sisters in exploring an expert's teachings for everyone's edification.


Our society is desperate to find public figures to trust, public messages to believe, stories to follow, and principles to live by. It requires humility and considerable self-control to curb our opinions on subjects about which we know no more than the next person, especially if we enjoy a job in which we are paid to offer opinions! But this discipline is not only spiritually vital – it is also rhetorically crucial.

Beware, then, friends, of the lure of leaning out into our own halo, only to meet an oncoming shadow instead. **FT**

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**JOHN STACKHOUSE** is the Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology and Culture at Regent College, Vancouver.

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## Clarity of Scripture

Although parts of Scripture may be difficult, overall it speaks with remarkable clarity after thousands of years.

**W**hen church leaders depart from Scripture's clear teaching, there is no end in sight. Take Sun Myung Moon, the famous Korean leader. Raised in a Christian setting, he has gone from denying the Trinity, to saying that Jesus was illegitimate, to saying that His death at Calvary was a failure – and now in later years he is claiming that God himself needs to be liberated by Rev. Moon. Moon is the supreme example of the price that religions pay when leadership is narcissistic and immune to criticism.

Sometimes scholars lose their bearings in interpreting the text. This happened to William Barclay, the famous Bible commentator. Usually his Daily Study Bible series is very illuminating. However, his analysis of the miracles of Jesus often suffers from decidedly naturalist presuppositions. For example, he argued that the raising of Lazarus was really about his spiritual conversion. He also opined that Jesus' walking on water could mean walking *by* the water.

Both views are refuted by simple (and scholarly) reading of the text. To my mind, Barclay would do better to admit denial of the truth of Scripture rather than distort its plain meaning.

On what basis can we talk about clarity of Scripture in an age of suspicion? Consider these four short Bible passages:

Psalms 19:7 reads: "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."

Psalms 119:105 reads: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Deuteronomy 30:11 reads: "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off."

2 Timothy 3:14 reads: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

The clarity of Scripture was important for both Martin Lu-

ther and John Calvin during the Reformation. Luther wrote: "Let, therefore, wretched men cease to impute, with blasphemous perverseness, the darkness and obscurity of their own heart to the all-clear scriptures of God."

Further, both John Wycliffe and William Tyndale were committed to translating the Bible into English in part because of their belief in the power and clarity of Scripture. Tyndale paid for his endeavour with his life. He died at the stake in 1536.

The clarity of Scripture can be pointed out by way of contrast with other famous texts. For example, I flip open at random a classic work of philosophy, Immanuel Kant's *Critique*

*of Pure Reason*, where at page 267 we read: "The understanding, when it entitles an object in a relation mere phenomenon, at the same time forms, apart from that relation, a representation of an object in itself."

Imagine teaching that in Sunday school! Yes, of course, parts of the Bible are difficult, but we must not lose sight of its overall lucidity.

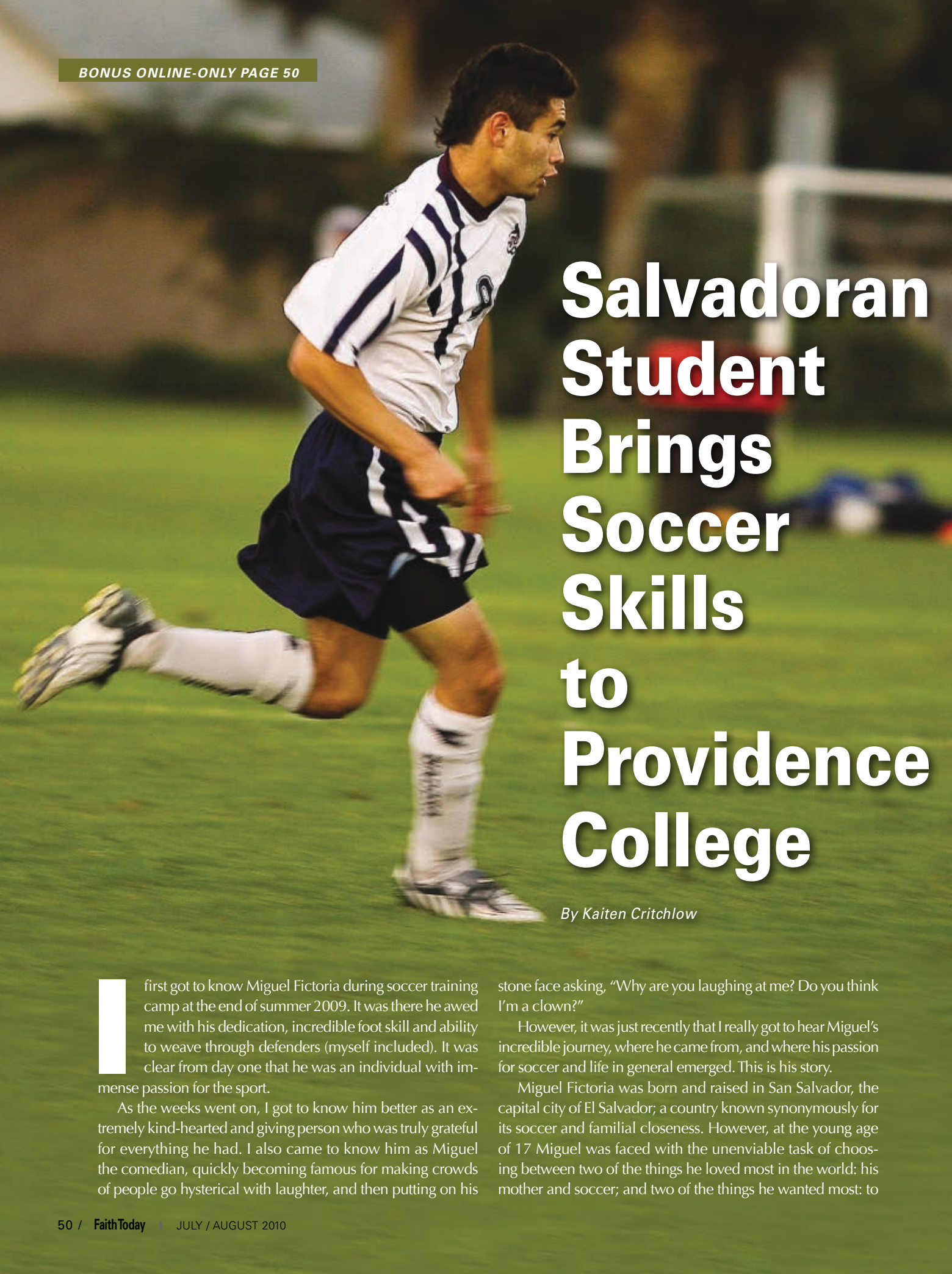
The Bible's clarity can also be discussed in terms of defining moral and spiritual error. Contrary to post-modern opinion, not every belief is up for grabs. Mormons are in fact wrong to teach that God the Father is not eternal and used to be a man (1 Timothy 1:17). Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong in denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:39). Likewise, liberal theology is wrong to deny the Virgin birth (Matthew 1:18) and that Jesus is the only Saviour (Acts 4:12). On these central matters, the teaching of Scripture is transparent.

The Bible's clarity is also central in mapping daily life. This is not about cultic religion or errors in hermeneutics. I think here of crystal-clear guidance about peace, forgiveness, gentleness and so forth. The main and plain things of Scripture involve prayer, faith, giving, holiness, meekness, mission and worship. The obvious negatives of the Bible frame a society: do not steal, do not lie, do not commit adultery. We obey the command to be filled with the Spirit. We pay our taxes, honour the government, care for the poor. We look at the big picture in order to "love God" and "love our neighbour."

It's no wonder that Christians respond to the reading of the Word with: "Thanks be to God." **FT**

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# Salvadoran Student Brings Soccer Skills to Providence College

By Kaiten Critchlow

I first got to know Miguel Fictoria during soccer training camp at the end of summer 2009. It was there he awed me with his dedication, incredible foot skill and ability to weave through defenders (myself included). It was clear from day one that he was an individual with immense passion for the sport.

As the weeks went on, I got to know him better as an extremely kind-hearted and giving person who was truly grateful for everything he had. I also came to know him as Miguel the comedian, quickly becoming famous for making crowds of people go hysterical with laughter, and then putting on his

stone face asking, "Why are you laughing at me? Do you think I'm a clown?"

However, it was just recently that I really got to hear Miguel's incredible journey, where he came from, and where his passion for soccer and life in general emerged. This is his story.

Miguel Fictoria was born and raised in San Salvador, the capital city of El Salvador; a country known synonymously for its soccer and familial closeness. However, at the young age of 17 Miguel was faced with the unenviable task of choosing between two of the things he loved most in the world: his mother and soccer; and two of the things he wanted most: to

reunite with his father and move to a safer environment.

Miguel grew up with soccer in his blood. "Every day after school we [he and his friends] would meet up for a soccer match," Fictoria recollected. "It's similar to hockey here. We would meet up on roads and back alleys and just start playing."

The same crew would gather around the TV together on the weekends to watch professional games, paying close attention to their favourite players, and then try to emulate them when they ran back out to the pitch to play another game of pick-up soccer.

However, as the group of close-knit friends continued to grow up together, Miguel's soccer skills made him a conspicuous player, and he began to make a name for himself in the soccer community. He quickly became a standout on his local high school squad and started to gain the attention of the city's professional club, San Salvador F.C. By the time he was 17 Miguel was in university (El Salvador requires one less year of high school education) and was playing with the U17 club of the San Salvador F.C. Academy. Playing for this team meant that Miguel was being considered for the club's professional squads in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd divisions.

"I remember about a month before I came to Canada there was a tryout for the reserve team," Miguel commented. "I was one of the five (from the U17 club) selected. I knew professional players in Salvador don't get paid that much, but it's what I always wanted to do. I had a chance to make the reserves, and it would have been amazing."

Flash back to the age of 14: Miguel's father had just been laid off from his job, and so he and his wife had gathered their funds together to start their own business. The venture was slowly gaining success

and supplying the family with the income they required. However, one morning Miguel's father went to open his store and discovered that their inventory had been stolen. The incident was reported to the police, but neither the thief nor the inventory were ever found in an investigation that seemed wrought with corruption.

"He was robbed and the police did little to help him," Miguel remembered. "That's when he heard about Maple Leaf."

Maple Leaf, a hog processing and packaging plant located in Brandon, Man., was making a push for labour from foreign countries at the time. The company offered potential employees a strong wage (compared to El Salvadorian standards), Canadian residency, the possibility for eventual citizenship and familial residency, and most importantly, a safe and opportunity-filled country to live in.

Given his family's current situation, Maple Leaf sounded like the best solution, and Miguel's father made the biggest sacrifice of his, and any father's life, by deciding to move to Canada to supplement the recent loss. Miguel was 15 by the time his father left, and spent the next two years in San Salvador with his mother, two sisters and brother, which proved to be a difficult and stressful time.

By the time he was 17 Miguel had not seen his father for two years, and was working his way up the soccer ranks in El Salvador. It was then that he was given an option from his dad that pegged him between choosing his dreams or a more secure future.

"My parents told me that it was my choice whether or not to move to Canada," Miguel said. "It was hard to decide what to do. I was just selected for the tryout to the reserve team, I had friends and family there, and I also knew that my mother wouldn't be able to immigrate with us for at least another few years. Choosing between staying in El Salvador and moving to Canada was the hardest decision of my life."

"In the end," Miguel said, "I decided to come to Canada because there were more opportunities here; better education, it's safer, and it's easier to find a job."

Miguel and his two sisters, Culeyma and Marcela, all decided to move to Canada with his father, while his mother and older brother remained in San Salvador.

Upon arriving in Canada Miguel wasn't exactly sure what to expect. The only things he felt certain of were that he would get a better education but not the chance to play the sport he loved.

"When I left El Salvador, I didn't think I would be playing

**Miguel  
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with soccer  
in his blood.**



soccer again," Miguel recollected. "I thought I would only be studying and working in Canada. I loved soccer, but I thought my playing days were over."

The transition to Canada was also a struggle for Miguel, as he had to take a step back in every aspect of his life.

"In El Salvador I was in university, was playing soccer at a high level, and had lots of family and friends," Miguel said. "When I came to Canada, I had to restart my life, learn a new language, go back to high school and make new friends."

However, while it would have been a daunting task for many 17-year-olds, Miguel's maturity, dedication and zest for life shone through early and he reaped the benefits. He learned English at an astounding rate. His caring and positive attitude earned him quick friendships while achieving great marks in all his classes.

The only thing Miguel hadn't been able to accomplish was making it back onto the soccer pitch. However, as could be expected from someone with such a passion for the sport, he was soon to find his way back.

"I was at school and some of the students started talking to me about playing for the high school team," Miguel said of his return to the sport. "I joined the team, played well, and then I was told about the tryouts for the Cougars."

The Brandon Cougars are a youth squad based out of the city that competes in the Winnipeg Youth Soccer Association Premier Division. At the time it was the best youth squad in Brandon, and at one point won the MSA Cup, proving to be the best youth squad in the province. Miguel fit in well on the squad and even became one of its most skilled players. However, the transition to Canadian soccer played host to multiple challenges.

"The way soccer is played here is different," Miguel said, "It is more physical and faster-paced, and playing with the Cougars really helped me to adapt to the new style. In El Salvador you are taught to hold onto the ball, to look around, be patient, and dangle to keep possession. In Canada you need to be able to pass and move quickly."

Despite the overwhelming difference, Miguel's passion for soccer once again shone through as he quickly found a way to combine his previous style with his newly required one. This unique approach once again made him a standout player, making key offensive contributions to an already powerful Cougars squad.

The following summer Miguel joined Brandon United of the Brandon Men's Senior Soccer League (BSSL). In his rookie season Miguel tallied 32 goals and led the league in scoring. It was a feat that didn't go unnoticed and his talent caught the attention of Providence Freeman head coach Martin Ward.

"He's an exciting player who is unpredictable, and is very difficult to defend [against] because of his dribbling skills," coach Ward commented. "He's a very determined player who

wants to win, he has great vision on the field, and he is capable of scoring goals. Miguel has also added some good humour to our team and is pleasant to be around. He has been a good addition to our team."

While playing with the Freeman, Miguel once again showed his resilience as he was asked to learn a new position while also adapting to a more English-influenced approach to soccer. In the end he once again rose to success, quickly becoming a starter and fan favourite on a squad that won MCAC and NCCAA Div. II regional tournaments, and placed 4th at the NCCAA National Tournament.

"I didn't know what to expect when I first came to Providence College & Seminary, Miguel said. "But I quickly found out that the players here take soccer very seriously. They have discipline and motivations, they aren't just half-hearted. They are here because they want to represent themselves, God, and their school, and they continually want to improve. That's why I am here as well."

"It's been a good experience here. Before this I never really expected I would be able to make it up to a high level again in Canada. It's like my dreams have been answered again."

Whether it was an answer to his dream or a testament to his work ethic, Miguel's story has also garnered the attention of a self-empowering organization called *Discover You*. The organization's clients "need to want to see more, be more and get more from their life and with that drive take a 'no excuse' approach to creating their future." After hearing Miguel's story, they believe that few people have encapsulated those values in a way that Miguel has. They have since featured him in their *Everyday People, Living Extraordinary Lives* motivational stories section in an article titled "Never Let Go of a Dream – Miguel Victoria's Story." The article can be found online at [www.discoveryou.me/never-let-go-of-a-dream](http://www.discoveryou.me/never-let-go-of-a-dream).

As for what the future holds in store for Miguel, he hopes to spend one more semester playing soccer at Providence before transferring to the University of Manitoba to become a physiotherapist and possibly play soccer in the Manitoba Major Soccer League (Winnipeg men's premier division). Miguel also has high hopes that his mother's residency application will soon be processed so that she will be able to reunite with his father and family.

As with any individual it's always tough to know what to expect next, but in Miguel's case, you can be assured that his dedication, perseverance and positive attitude towards life will see success follow him down whatever path he follows. **FT**

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