

Faith Today



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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010
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SEX EDUCATION

What Parents Need to Know

p. 18

Christian Life Coaching

Finding Direction Through Life's Decisions

p. 26

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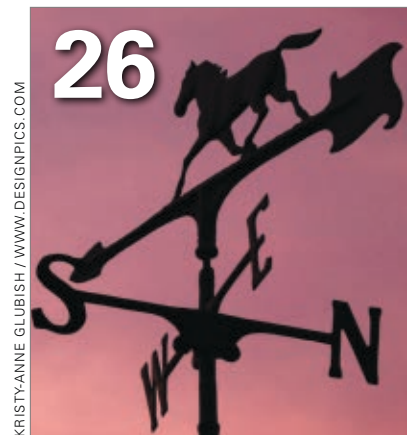
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Adjusting to Change

Knowing our shared values and communicating them requires ongoing discussion

Talking to your children about sex is a challenge – no matter what age they are! Even if you are well prepared, you may find yourself stumbling because of baggage from your own childhood or awkwardness relating to the values promoted today in movies, over the Internet and even at school.

Our cover story, “Sex Ed 101” by Alex Newman, emphasizes the need to communicate your own hopes, values and expectations to your children in order to combat what they are learning in the culture. But will they listen? Research reportedly shows that 45 per cent of teens admitted that their parents had the biggest influence on their sexual activity – and the greater the attachment to parents, the more important those parental values are.

Unlike the past, your child may not lack information, but may lack an understanding of the right context for sexual behaviour and the long-term emotional, physical and spiritual implications. Newman explains that these may often be left out of current school programs – so your input becomes very important.

Fortunately, there are Christian resources available to help, including examples of congregations who are providing support for parents and profiles of families who are finding ways to involve their children in creating community change. You can also read about a new EFC resource on Ontario’s sex education curriculum which

aims to assist parents and students.

Another interesting feature story in this issue covers the Christian coaching movement. “Changing Direction With a Christian Coach” by Alison Van Ginkel profiles and explains the rising success of this growing form of professional guidance. Christian coaching is different than coaching in sports: It offers a one-to-one experience with someone who is trained to help you see yourself and your present situation clearly, in order to come to a decision and to take action.

Whereas a mentor may help by sharing personal experiences and lessons learned, a coach helps ask the right questions instead of providing answers. Those questions can help you look more closely at your own insights and gifts and then eventually choose solutions act upon.

Also take time to read about the missional church in “Fad or Foundation?” by Ross Hastings. You may have heard the term “missional church” bantered about during the past few years, but Hastings emphasizes the need for us to pay attention. In brief he says “a missional church is focused on joining God in His mission of reconciling the world to Himself.” Find out what is new here, and what is rooted squarely in the gospel message – and our response. Sounds like a set of ideas worth talking about together. **FT**

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

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Truth, Brethren

Re: *God Uses Little Leaguers* (Jul/Aug 2010)

Gary Cymbaluk's article does an excellent job of emphasizing the truth that it is not only the professionals who should be involved in the work of evangelism. God has called all Christians to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with someone.

By the way, The Meeting House, mentioned in the article, is a Brethren in Christ church, not a Brethren church. Our denomination stresses that we, as believers, are members together of God's family (brothers and sisters), only because of our oneness in Christ. Our denominational name is definitely

incomplete when only the first word of the name is used.

LOIS JEAN SIDER
Wellandport, Ont.

Six Days

Re: *Where We Came From* (Jul/Aug 2010)

There were lots of interesting opinions in this article but I think everyone would have to agree the Bible plainly states that God spoke the universe into existence supernaturally over a six-day period a few thousand years ago. Much can be said, but I think God would ask those who depart from a plain rendering of Genesis, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:2-4).

MIKE WILBUR
Moncton, N.B.

The article is basically an appeal for people to toss out the young Earth view held by most Evangelicals for the hybrid ap-



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proach. I think there are many in Canada who would have liked to see a more balanced article. Let me make a few points in defence of a young earth.

Would God, knowing the future, inspire the book of Genesis so that for 6,000 years His people would wrongly understand His Word to teach that this universe was created in six literal 24-hour days?

If so, does that not make God a flawed communicator? He could have used the Hebrew term for "eons" or "ages" or simply said "a long period of time." If we cannot trust God's ability to communicate, we

must toss the whole book out.

Without Adam and Eve it seems necessary to invent a whole new account of how sin and death entered the perfect world. You have to throw out the literal views held by Jesus Christ Himself and the Apostles.

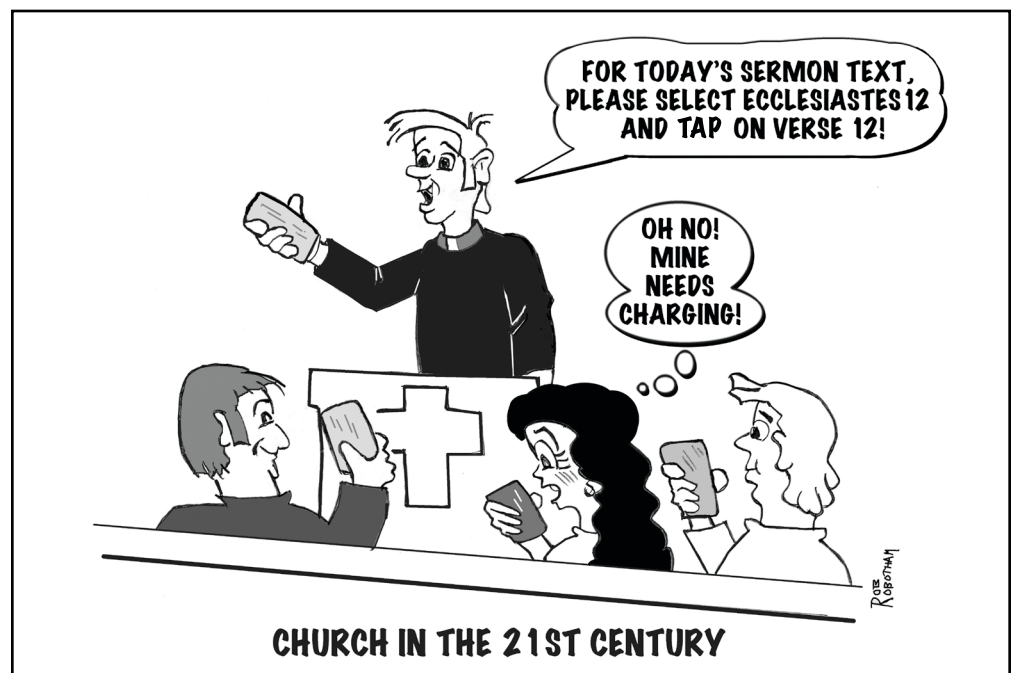
Evolution requires billions of years of death. How did death enter the perfect world? When? At what point did some developing apes end up with a soul and conscience? If we must re-interpret to this extent, we are rewriting and dare not call the result God's Word.

WILLIAM OOSTERMAN
Dominican Republic

Letters to the editor

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Merged: The Centre for Cultural Renewal, based in Ottawa, and Cardus, based in Hamilton, Ont. Both are think tanks that focus on the intersection of religion with secular institutions. The new Cardus Centre for Cultural Renewal is based in Hamilton, Ont., and directed by Peter Stockland.

Merged: Arab World Ministries Canada is merging with Pioneers Canada. Founded in 1881, Arab World Ministries is an evangelical mission with 400 workers making disciples and establishing churches among Muslims of the Arab world wherever they reside. Pioneers is a similar but broader ministry co-founded in 1979, now with 2,000 members in 92 countries. AWM's office in Cambridge, Ont., headed by Amal Gendi, will be merged with Pioneers' office in Dorchester, Ont., headed by Donnie Searce. Both groups have operations in the United States, United Kingdom, Europe and elsewhere that are also merging.

Merged: Two renewal groups within the United Church of Canada. The National Alliance of Covenanting Congregations moved to dissolve its incorporation in May and to hand over

most of its functions and activities to Fellowship Publications, a sister group that advocates the maintenance of traditional Christianity within the denomination. The NACC has operated for nearly 20 years and was chaired by Geoff Wilkins of North Vancouver, B.C. Supporters are planning a gathering in 2011 to invite a new generation of evangelical leadership to organize new ways to celebrate Christ in the United Church.



Karen Bjerland

Appointed: Karen Bjerland as CEO of FaithLife Financial, succeeding Dieter Kays, who is retiring after leading the not-for-profit for six years. FaithLife Financial provides life insurance, income protection and investment products with offices in six provinces and headquarters in Waterloo, Ont.

Awarded: Mags Storey of Newmarket, Ont., author of the novel *If Only You Knew* (Kregel Publishing), with the inaugural Grace Irwin Award, a \$5,000 prize administered by The Word Guild, a national association of writers and editors who are Christian.



Mags Storey

Appointed: Karl McLean as the Canadian Forces chaplain general, a two-year position managing chaplains and advising top military leaders about the spiritual well-being of military personnel and their families. Padre McLean, an Anglican, succeeds Brig.-Gen. David Kettle, who will retire.

Promoted: Military chaplain Pierre R. Bergeron to the rank of Lt.-Col., the first chaplain classified as "Evangelical" since the Second World War to obtain the rank. There are now 24 such chaplains in the regular force and five in the reserves.

Appointed: Blaine Donaldson as the first full-time president of the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches, a bi-national group with 22 churches in Canada and 19 in the United States and offices in Omaha, Neb. Donaldson has pastored in Nova Scotia and Michigan and worked with Friendship Ministries in Calgary, Alta.

Appointed: Jurgen F. Rausch of Lindsay, Ont., as the first full-time executive director of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews of Canada, an organization encouraging interfaith dialogue and humanitarian aid for Jews in need worldwide. He succeeds Mark Climie-Elliott. Rausch formerly directed development for The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and for Shepherd Village, a retirement community in Toronto. He also pastored in Ontario for more than 20 years.

Appointed: Keith Knight as executive director of the Canadian Christian Business Federation. He succeeds Hans Vander Stoep, who has retired after leading it for 23 years. The federation, which Knight hopes to grow beyond its current base in southern Ontario, seeks to network Christian business leaders, helping them to share concerns and best practices and to mentor each other. Knight, who has moved CCBF's office to Guelph, Ont., has been involved in communication for 40 years, working as an editor in both secular and Christian daily and weekly newspapers, and as communication director of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for nine years.

Resigned: John Kaiser as president of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches, a denomination headquartered in Guelph, Ont., including 500 congregations. Ernest Kennedy is serving as interim president.

Launched: The Anglican Relief and Development Fund Canada, a registered charity associated with the Anglican Network in Canada. Both serve churches that left the Anglican Church of Canada to join the more conservative Anglican Church in North America. The fund's initial projects are working with dioceses in Kenya on malaria prevention and in Chile on rebuilding after a major earthquake.

Opened: The Christian Reformed Church in North America has opened an advocacy office in Ottawa near Parliament Hill, at 140 Laurier Avenue West. The denomination had previously operated its Committee for Contact with Government from its Canadian headquarters in Burlington, Ont.

Appointed: Hugo Marcus as executive director of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. Marcus has more than 30 years experience as a principal. The Alliance, which offers support including curriculum for independent elementary and high schools, is based in Ancaster, Ont. It serves 79 schools and 14,000 students.

New App For Worship Leaders



SongSuggest helps worship leaders select songs for their music sets and services from a list of 650 titles.

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Apps for cooks, for work, for travelling, for managing money. The list of apps (applications) for the Apple iPhone and iPod Touch is almost endless. And of

course there are apps for Christians.

One authored by Canadian Evangelicals, called SongSuggest, is specifically designed to help worship leaders.

SongSuggest is the brainchild of Luis

Felipe Vargas and Batsirai Chada (www.worshipapps.com). Their app helps worship leaders select songs for their music sets and services from a list of 650 titles enjoyed by congregations from around the world.

Offering a one-click search for on-line lyrics, chords, video and audio, SongSuggest allows worship leaders to search quickly by theme, key and/or tempo, and to even save favourite songs to a virtual binder for future reference.

The app was developed as a result of a "driveway conversation" by Vargas and Chada after a rehearsal for a worship service at The Embassy of the Kingdom of God, a church in Oshawa, Ont. They talked about how useful it would be to be able to access a database quickly when a new song was spontaneously needed during the service, instead of relying on memory.

Using their own knowledge plus additional research, the two worship leaders developed the list of titles for SongSuggest. "One of our core beliefs," says Batsirai, "is that the best worship services are comprised of great songs." However, he is quick to point out that while technology can be an amazing resource for worship leaders, the app is not meant to be a replacement for prayerful worship planning. "The Church is still a living organism," says Batsirai, "drawing its support from God, not from technology. We're not trying to digitize the Spirit."

iPhone Apps for Christians

Bible study app, free from Logos Bible Software: www.logos.com/iphone. Lets you read, search, cross-reference, compare 30 versions and even set up reading plans to keep your daily Bible reading on schedule. Sign up for a free account to get an additional 31 Bible study resources. The app's first four months saw 100,000 downloads and over 25,000 users weekly. Peak usage is at 8:00 a.m. PST on Sundays.

Faith Today app (in development): www.faithtoday.ca. A new way to engage with the content of *Faith Today*, the magazine of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Watch for it in the year ahead.

Prayer Warriors: <http://beachmaker.web.officelive.com>. \$1.99 from the iTunes App Store. Helps you to follow a "Prayer Work-

out" using Bible verses and selected or custom prayers (including a "Quick Prayers" section when you only have a few minutes) and compiles, edits and tracks your own custom prayer request list, incorporating reminders for prayer requests into your daily prayer time.

NRT Mobile: www.newreleasetuesday.com. Free from the iTunes App Store. A huge database of Christian music and entertainment, allowing you to browse artist and album info, search lyrics, read reviews, discover new and upcoming releases, listen to Christian music podcasts with artist interviews – and more.

Bible Dictionary Collections: www.ikingneed.com. \$0.99 from the iTunes App Store. Helps you to find detailed definitions of difficult or interesting biblical words while browsing verses. Search or browse seven comprehensive Bible dictionaries. Also features a Daily Bible Word list. **FT**

The reaction to SongSuggest since its launch in December of 2009 has been outstanding, with over 12,000 downloads as of mid-July 2010. It sells for \$2.99 at the Apple Apps Store and is occasionally available for free as part of a special promotion.

Vargas is delighted with the public's reaction to date. "I think people are loving it," he says, and glowing online

reviews seem to concur.

Future versions of SongSuggest may include the ability for users to add their own favourite song titles and perhaps also an opportunity for sharing information in a common database online. "We'd like to find a way to use the global knowledge of worship leaders for the benefit of local worship leaders," says Batsirai. **FT**

—MARY LOU HARRISON

Ministry Gets to the Heart of Marriage

After ten years of marriage, divorce seemed inevitable for David and Wende Butcher of Milton, Ont. Today, the grandparents of seven are still happily married and helping to save marriages across the country through Heart to Heart Family Ministries (HTH), a faith-based organization devoted to maximizing and restoring lifelong relationships.



David and Wende Butcher in 2009 (www.hthfamilyministries.org).

"Our vision is to see the Church become the source for marriage and family education, no matter [what] a person's faith or belief," says David, who credits an encounter with God, and subsequent conversion to Christ, as what ultimately saved his marriage to Wende.

Originally founded by Lorne Shepherd of Crossroads Christian Communications in the early 1990s, HTH seeks to reduce the rising rates of family disintegration through training and equipping Christian believers. "Our mission is to put the people and resources in place to assist the Church in becoming the leader in reconciliation, restoration and strengthening of marriages and family," says Wende. She and her husband assumed ownership of HTH

In line with this mission, HTH is currently developing a team of specialists to address areas of family and marriage education, and provide facilitator training to clergy, counsellors, lay marriage educators and therapists.

Most recently, HTH has established a new membership-based program for churches called the H2H Community. It will include one-day mentor training, weekly newsletters, monthly training webinars, and podcasts using varied professionally recognized marriage and family educators.

According to the Vanier Institute, 38 per cent of Canadian marriages end in divorce. The Butchers stress the urgency of equipping the Church to become a source for marriage and family education. "We believe there is tremendous opportunity for mentors to be used as an outreach tool for the local church body," says David. **FT**

—EMILY WIERENGA

Fresh Words for the Church

The Book of Revelation includes seven letters written by John to early Christian churches struggling for survival in the Roman Empire. If you were writing an eighth letter, a letter for the Church of today, what would you say?

This question is the basis for an intriguing, upcoming conference called "Eighth Letter" presented by Epiphaneia, a ministry that works to cultivate a sense of community in which Jesus' followers can be challenged mentally, spiritually and relationally.

At "Eighth Letter" (Oct. 1-2 at St. Paul's Bloor Street in Toronto) 11 presenters will each share a letter with their most pressing message to the Church in North America.

Members of the public were invited to submit letters, and a number of these letter writers will participate in the conference as well. Different kinds of letters will be woven throughout the event, including some in the form of music, dance and song. The only caveat? None is to be longer than 15 minutes.

"How many chances do you have to dream publicly about what the Church could be?" asks Chris Lewis of Epiphaneia. "We're trusting the Spirit to speak through our presenters" and other participants. The event will also include "ample opportunity to reflect on what God might be saying to their community."

Presenters include Andy Crouch, senior editor at *Christianity Today*, and Mako Fujimura, an artist who founded the International Arts Movement. More details at www.eighthletter.com.

Although the deadline to submit letters for the conference has passed, letters with a message to the Church in North America can be submitted for publication in a book until Oct. 1 (to info@epiphaneia.ca with the subject line "Eighth Letter"). **FT**

—MARY LOU HARRISON

The Internet Overtakes Television

Internet usage has surged past television watching to become Canada's most popular weekly media-related activity, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll (fielded in 2009). This marks the first time in Ipsos' research that the average Canadian's time spent online exceeds their time watching television, though both activities have shown a significant increase in hours devoted per week. Time spent listening to the radio has decreased slightly, while reading newspapers and magazines has remained stable.

Hours spent per week:

Actively accessing the Internet:

18.1 hrs (2009); 14.9 hrs (2008)

Watching television:

16.9 hrs (2009); 15.8 hrs (2008)

Listening to the Radio:

8.9 hrs (2009); 10 hrs (2008)

Reading newspapers:

2.9 hrs (2009); 3.3 hrs (2008)

Reading magazines:

1.4 hrs (2009); 1.6 hrs (2008)

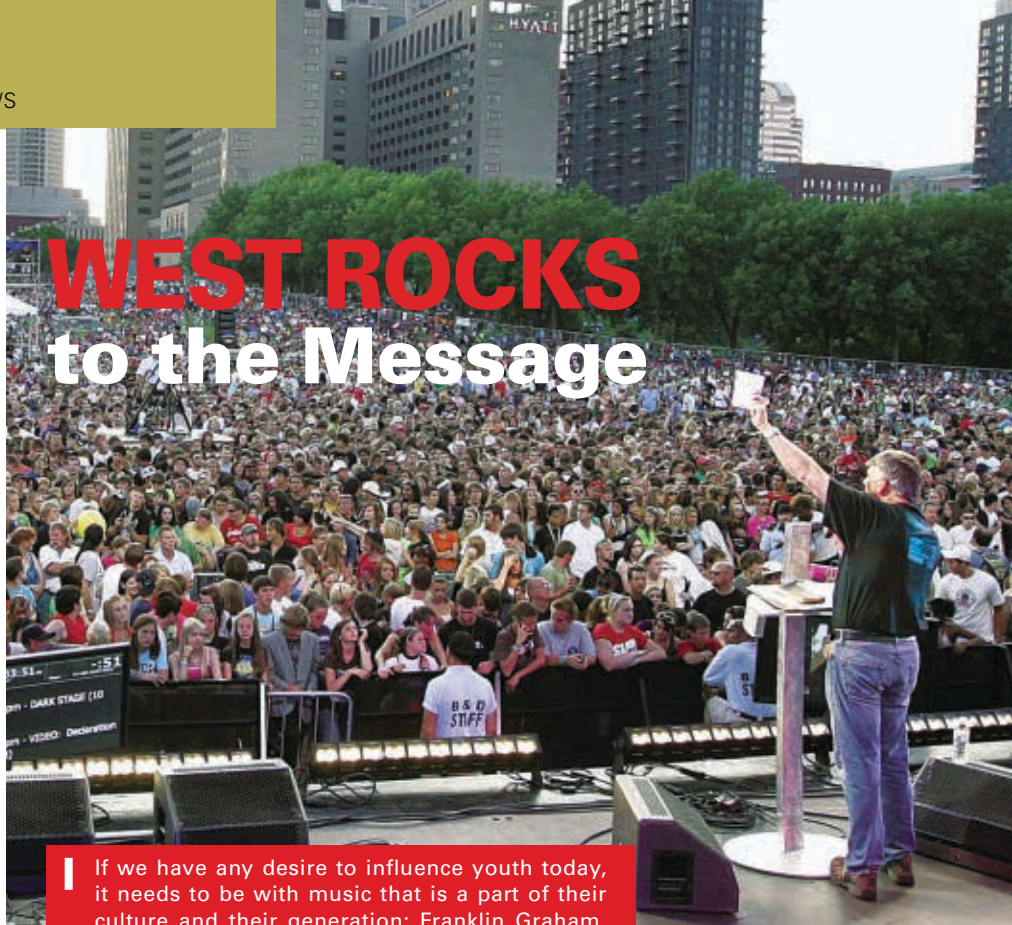
More stats of interest:

On average, males are spending more time online (20 hours) compared to females (16 hours).

Age is not a major factor when it comes to Internet usage, with 18-34 year olds spending 20 hours online weekly and those over 35 years old devoting 18 hours.

Not so when it comes to television. Canadians over the age of 55 watch, on average, 20 hours a week; 33-54 year olds watch 15; and 18-35 year olds watch 13 hours.

Education plays a role. Those with university educations devote about 15 hours to watching TV, compared to 17.5 hours by those without university educations. **FT**



WEST ROCKS to the Message

If we have any desire to influence youth today, it needs to be with music that is a part of their culture and their generation: Franklin Graham.

As Franklin Graham drove his motorcycle across Western Canada, he felt God calling him to bring his Rock the River youth outreach to this part of the country.

Although the once rebellious son of world-famous evangelist Billy Graham preaches the same gospel message his daddy did, he does it with a different kick.

By galvanizing popular Christian rock groups around the idea of a day-long evangelistic concert experience, Graham

kicked up the volume with Rock the River events that saw more than 100,000 spectators fill four venues in the United States last summer.

In an interview with the *Calgary Herald*, Graham describes the event as "headbanging, ear-splitting, heavy rock and roll music. If we have any desire to influence youth today, it needs to be with music that is a part of their culture and their generation."

Featuring cutting-edge bands like Flyleaf, Starfield, Skillet, Downhere and Hawk

YWAM Celebrations Hit Canada This Fall

The founders of one of the world's largest mission organizations, Youth With a Mission (YWAM), are leaving no continent unvisited in a global 50th anniversary celebration, including celebrations in Alberta and Quebec this September.

Founders Loren and Darlene Cunningham are on a 34-nation trek, visiting YWAM bases and sharing stories with current missionaries, organization alumni and those touched by the mission movement, including three days of festivities in Cremona, Alta.,

Sept. 12-14, and Dunham, Que., Sept. 15-17. Event co-ordinators are hoping that YWAM alumni, staff, family and friends will attend and hear the Cunninghams' unique perspective on global missions work.

The celebrations in Quebec will have a "bilingual twist," says liaison Randy Parizeau from Vancouver, who is overseeing the celebrations in Canada. YWAM has been in Canada since 1967 with its first official base in Alberta. With approximately 45 operating locations across the country and



PHOTO: BILLY GRAHAM EVANGELISTIC ASSOCIATION

Nelson, seven-hour concert experiences give the musicians an opportunity to share their own spiritual journey with teenagers, with Graham presenting short evangelistic messages between performances.

After thousands of young people accepted Christ at the four inaugural events in the U.S., Canadian churches in Western Canada opened their doors this August for such events in Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. Frank King, communications manager for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in Canada (BGEA), says 560 churches “from just about every denomination” have signed up as Rock the River supporters. “They promoted the event in their churches, sent people for training and encouraged their young people to attend.”

The training provided by the BGEA is geared to strengthen the faith of Christian youth and equip them to present the gospel message. These young people were encouraged to bring their non-Christian friends for a day of entertainment and a chance to accept Christ.

King hopes to see hundreds of fledgling Christian teenagers converging on Canadian churches this fall. “This is a win-win situation for those churches that are trained to deal with all these new kids coming in,” he says. Discussions are currently underway with churches in Eastern Canada for future Rock the River events. **FT** —DORIS FLECK



PHOTO COURTESY: YWAM KONA OFFICE

350 full-time missionaries serving in Canada, Parizeau says the impact of YWAM on the nation is unquantifiable. “There are a number of people who have YWAM experience,” he

says. “[The number] could be in the thousands.” **FT** —ALISON POTSTRA

WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

New Scripture in Saskatchewan Cree

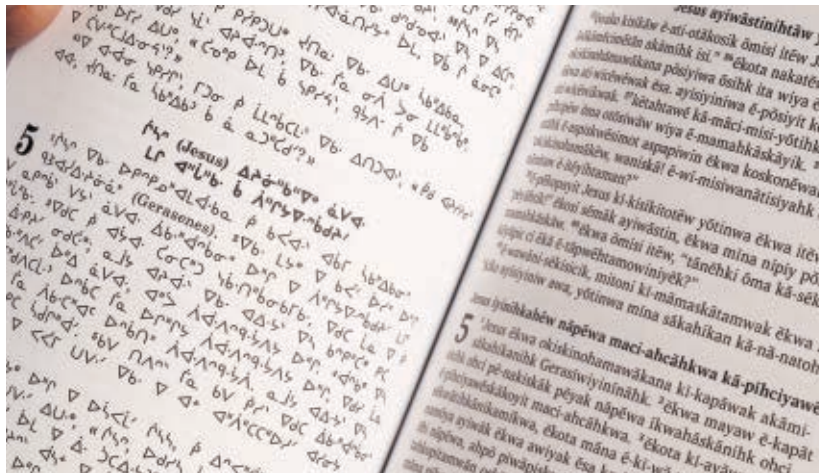


PHOTO: CANADIAN BIBLE SOCIETY

The new Cree version is more up-to-date and accessible than ever.

A recent translation of the Book of Mark into Plains Cree is the latest in a series of projects by the Canadian Bible Society (CBS) to make the Bible available in the modern, everyday tongue of Saskatchewan’s Cree people.

While the Cree have had access to a now-outdated translation of Scripture since 1862, this is the first version to include text printed in both syllabics and standard Roman orthography, as well as an audio reading of the content on three CDs. It is more up-to-date and accessible than ever.

“Having the Gospel of Mark in their language makes it possible for the message of the Bible to speak to their hearts more profoundly than it would in English,” says Ruth Heeg, translation co-ordinator for the CBS (www.biblesociety.ca).

CBS intends this project to inspire the Cree people to continue working toward a completed translation of Scripture – a project catalyzed 20 years ago by Stan Cuthand, a Cree elder, Anglican minister and lead translator for the project. Cuthand, recipient of the 2009 National Aboriginal Lifetime Achievement Award, was also the keynote speaker at the launch of the book in Saskatoon last May.

“Their dedication to their faith and to having the Scripture available in their language has been inspiring to me,” says Heeg.

Meanwhile, CBS staff are looking for ways to improve the translation review so it might proceed more quickly. “As with every translation of Scripture, it needs to be checked and tested before it can be published,” says translations director Hart Wiens. “This is painstaking work.”

Eventually, the goal is to publish the entire New Testament and half the Old Testament in syllabic and Roman script, accompanied by audio recordings.

“We could not accomplish this without the dedicated partnership of our Cree brothers and sisters,” says Wiens. “We celebrate their dedication, faithfulness and servant hearts.” **FT**

—EMILY WIERENGA



The land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us.

—Psalm 67:6 (NIV)



Harvest Principles

We are co-labourers with the Lord of the Harvest, and what we do matters.

I spent most summers during my youth at my aunt and uncle's farm near Withrow, Alta. You'll probably need to Google that one! Nowadays the work I did would probably break some child labour laws, but back then it was simply considered pitching in. My aunt testifies she knew I was going to end up as a minister from the time I held a funeral service for a gopher I had shot with a .22 rifle just a few minutes earlier.

If I know anything about harvest, it comes from those summers. I noticed the co-operative nature of what my uncle, aunt and cousins did – and what they were dependent on God through Creation to care for.

Ploughing and seeding were followed by a season of allowing the soil and the seed to do their work. Fertilizing and spraying were accompanied by trusting for the right mix of sun and rain. If everything worked together for good, then mowers, balers, tractors, combines and trucks would all begin their good work, guided by the skilled hands of my hard-working family. Most autumns they were rewarded with massive haystacks and overflowing grain bins.

In 2010 it is critical that Evangelicals give serious consideration to harvest principles. Many of us would like to see more Canadians entering the family of God through faith in Jesus. The question is: Will we do the co-operative work with the Lord of the Harvest that's necessary? Here are some principles (not an exhaustive list) to consider along with that question.

1. We must continually acknowledge that we are dependent on the Lord of the Harvest to do what only He can do.

My uncle was dependent on the rain, the sun and the life in the seed and soil to create a harvest. In the spiritual harvest we must humbly acknowledge our desperate need for God to do what only He can do. I cannot hope to convince others of their sin and need for transformation – His

Spirit that does that. My winsome personality and demonstrations of intelligence will not in the end change a life. In the Canadian harvest we demonstrate our dependency on God by lives, churches and movements of prayer, and by our reliance on the Spirit's guidance in our relationships.

2. We must trust that the life in the seed is trustworthy.

My uncle purchased his seed from reputable companies and then spread it freely. I do not recall a year where the seed didn't co-operate. As long as the soil was prepared and the conditions were suitable, growth occurred and a harvest came. In 2010 I believe the Lord of the Harvest is trying to remind the Canadian church that the gospel is the power of God and the wisdom of God. It is the living seed that must be graciously invested in people's lives. Jesus envisioned disciplined followers, lovers of God and of others. If we substitute the power and truth of His Word for anything else, we should not expect a harvest like Jesus envisioned. Only His Word is the power of God for the salvation of everyone (Romans 1:16).

3. We are co-labourers with God, and what we do matters.

There was not a spring in the last half century that my aunt and uncle's family has not rolled out into the fields to cultivate, seed and nurture. Year after year, they have been rewarded with a productive harvest.

There is a lot of cultivating work to be done by the Canadian church in 2010. Many Canadians have no clue who Jesus is. Many others are hardened to any effort by the Church to share Good News because of all the things Jesus described regarding hardened, rocky or weed infested soils. Sometimes we have been the source of that hardness – for which we repent.

So together we are called back to the fields. Cultivation needs to be done through genuine relationship and costly intercession. Seed needs to be spread through proclamation and everyday conversations and example. The harvest that is "whitened" and ready needs diligent workers who will overcome their own self-absorption. God will do what He must do, but He does call for harvesters. Let's get out in the fields and be about our Father's business. A harvest waits.

By the way, an opportunity to improve our "farming techniques" is coming to west Toronto Nov. 16-18. Read details about this EFC church and mission conference at theEFC.ca/hinge. **FT**



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.

Sri Lanka: Seeking Healing

In the early months of 2009, the term “caught in the middle” took on a horrifying reality for an estimated 250,000 civilians trapped in a conflict zone in what seemed like Sri Lanka’s endless civil war.

The world watched and protested as families struggled to survive the last gasps of 25 years of violence between the majority Sinhalese and the Tamil minority on the tropical, beautiful and troubled island of Sri Lanka, just 53 km off India’s southern tip.

The standoff came to a close as government forces eventually seized the last stronghold of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a name familiar to Canadians from the public debate about – and subsequent outlawing of – the group in 2006 under Canada’s Anti-Terrorism Act.

The LTTE’s fight for an independent state has been at the heart of Sri Lanka’s long fragmentation and obstructed development. Internal violence has taken an estimated 70,000 lives and might have taken many more during those long days in 2009 when innocent civilians were literally caught in the middle of the conflict.

The worldwide Christian community has been responding, for example with “The Toronto Statement” of 2009, a global call to prayer for the crisis and for the protection of religious rights in Sri Lanka – rights that have remained precarious in the primarily Buddhist nation.

Much of the global evangelical activism related to Sri Lanka has focused on its anti-conversion legislation, which has been in legal limbo for several years, enabling majority groups to act out their hostility toward Christians. Religious watchdog organizations are often on high alert



on behalf of Sri Lanka’s Christian minority, estimated from one to six per cent of the population and too often victims of violent persecution. Instead of protecting religious freedoms, critics say the legislation actually hinders them.

On May 19, 2009, the civil war officially ended in Sri Lanka, along with the lives of many of the senior leadership of the LTTE. The long, slow process of healing a nation, along with the re-integration of more than 200,000 displaced civilians, began.

Sri Lanka has also had to deal with the lingering aftermath of the 2004 tsunami that killed 38,000 people and damaged homes, businesses and other property, rocketing the unemployment and poverty rates even higher.

The Sri Lanka that remains – after war, tsunami and of course the global economic downturn of recent years – is a country where one quarter of the population live below the poverty line, child malnutrition is a deadly reality, and 40 per cent of the population survives on less than \$2 a day.

It is also a nation full of potential, a producer and exporter of tea, coffee, rubber, coconuts, cinnamon and Eastern lure and appeal. It is home to some of the most beautiful forests and beaches in the world, and a people whose resilience has shone through again, and again, and again. **FT**



Sri Lanka at a Glance

Full Name: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Population: 20.2 million (UN, 2009)

Capital: Colombo (commercial), Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte (administrative)

Area: 65,610 km² (25,332 sq. mi.)

Major Languages: Sinhala, Tamil, English

Major Religions: Buddhism (69%), Hinduism (7%), Islam (7%), Christianity (6%)

Life Expectancy: 70 years (men), 78 years (women) (UN)

Main Exports: Tea, coffee, rubber, coconuts, cinnamon, textiles/clothing, gems, fish

Average Annual Income: US \$1,300

(Sources: BBC, World Vision)

On Our Knees

- Pray for the rebuilding of Sri Lanka, that fragile peace will only grow stronger.
- Pray for the aid groups who are instrumental in helping with the resettlement of Sri Lankans displaced by years of civil war.
- Pray for Christians in Sri Lanka who are victims of religious persecution, that they would be safe, strong and feel the support of the international community.
- Pray for the members of Sri Lanka’s parliament, that they will respect internationally accepted religious freedom standards as they grapple with the ongoing proposal of anti-conversion legislation.

Canadian Connections

- The Free Methodist Church in Canada has a number of congregations that partner with churches in Sri Lanka, helping fund small projects and an annual youth camp and family camp. Relief resources have also been distributed through this network in 2004, 2009 and 2010. www.fmcic.ca
- The Church of the Nazarene is building a ministry centre and health clinic in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It also has 50 churches, 100 church plants, and 20 child development centres that serve some 1,500-2,000 children in various tea estates. www.ncmc.ca

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

Hinge Moment? Let's Talk

The many social and technological changes going on around us are challenging the ways Evangelicals in Canada conduct ministry and mission. At such hinge moments, we need to ask ourselves, "What was God's best in the past? What might be God's best for the future? What do we rid ourselves of? What do we take with us as we move forward?"

Such thinking has led EFC leaders to plan a National Church and Mission Dialogue Conference for Nov. 16-18, 2010 near Pearson International Airport in Toronto.

This conference, called "Hinge" for short, will feature keynote speakers Glenn Smith, Bruce Clemenger and Alan Hirsch (author of *The Forgotten Ways*, a key reference for missional thinking). But the majority of the program will be devoted to conversation among various affinity groupings, which will include tracks for denominational leaders and other leaders groups, and plenary sessions to harvest and share the learning from the smaller groups.

Please visit theEFC.ca/hinge for more information. EFC affiliate pastors/leaders save \$70 off the registration fee. Special room rates for all attendees are also noted on this website.

Participants can expect insights and conversations to help discern their ongoing joint callings from God and the practices needed to fulfill them.

Speak Out on Global Poverty

On Oct. 10, 2010, millions of Christians around the world will be praying for the world's poor and making a collective promise to act on global poverty. Many of those praying have experienced poverty first-hand and have experienced how the Church can play a powerful role in alleviating it.

Are you interested in joining this global movement of active and committed Christians? Visit the international site www.micah2010.org for more "10.10.10" information and church resources.

The sponsor Micah Challenge Canada (www.micah-challenge.ca) is a ministry partner of the EFC.

Major New Study of Evangelical Congregations

The Canadian Evangelical Churches Study, the first of its kind in Canada, paints a portrait of contemporary evangelical congregations drawn from 478 interviews with pastors. Read about it in the latest issue of the free EFC online journal at ChurchAndFaithTrends.ca.

Lausanne 2010

Can't make it to South Africa for the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in October? You can join

the ongoing online discussion on key issues right now at www.lausanne.org/conversation, and/or you can attend live video feeds of the sessions hosted at many major Christian institutions. For example, one Toronto Global Link site will be at Rexdale Alliance Church (Oct. 20, 23 and 26 – to register contact tim@tyndale.ca). Get a complete list of Global Link sites by submitting your email address at www.lausanne.org/cape-town-2010/globalink.html.

Census Changes a Hot Topic

The EFC's Rick Hiemstra responded to the government's plan to discontinue the long-form census by writing several blogs and recording a video interview. The EFC was also quoted in a number of media stories. All these items are available at theEFC.ca/inthenews2010.

Hiemstra warns that the long form census allows marginalized groups to be visible to governments who might otherwise ignore them. Evangelicals have been there – and some still are.

Cross the Street Conference

Are you looking for practical tools to help put the Church back into the heart of the community? Consider attending this event, in which the EFC is a partner organization, in Burlington, Ont., on Oct. 16. Details at www.billygraham.ca/ministries/training/cross-the-street.aspx.

Outreach to Muslims

The Canadian Network for Ministries to Muslims is holding its first national conference, *Loving Muslims Together*, in Calgary Nov. 11-13. Any Christian layperson or ministry leader who wants to learn to love Muslims more effectively is welcome to come. Muslim Background Believers are also welcome.

Featured speakers include Joy Loewen, author of *Woman to Woman: Sharing Jesus With a Muslim Friend*, and Carl Medearis, co-author of *Tea With Hezbollah* and author of *Muslims, Christians and Jesus*.

The CNMM network operates on the EFC's administrative and communications platform. More details and registration are now available at www.cnmm.ca. Save money by registering before Oct. 11.

Resources for Young Adult Ministry

The Youth & Young Adult Ministry Roundtable, a group established in 2001 on the EFC's administrative and communications platform, is now developing a national youth/young adult ministries and resource directory. It also, plans to produce profiles of best practices, success stories and new initiatives from youth/young adult ministry practitioners across the country.

To do the work, the roundtable recently contracted All About Youth, a consulting group including experts Marv and Lois Penner, formerly with Briercrest College and Seminary.

The roundtable is aiming for “a higher communications profile” so as “to serve youth and young adult ministry at the local church and community level across the country,” says roundtable chair John Wilkinson, who also works as executive director of Youth Unlimited (formerly Youth for Christ Toronto).

EFC Attends National Forgiveness Summit

Don Hutchinson, an EFC vice-president and director of the EFC’s Centre for Faith and Public Life, attended the National Forgiveness Summit held in Ottawa, June 11-13. The summit is one response to the prime minister’s request for forgiveness issued in the official apology to Indian residential school survivors on June 11. Hutchinson writes about the experience in “A Heart for Forgiveness” at ActivateCFPL.theEFC.ca.

Changes at the EFC

The EFC is looking for a new vice-president of development and communications after the departure of Linda Milke. She has taken on a new position with The

Bible League of Canada.

Milke, who served most recently as director of ministry advancement, had been with the EFC since 1997. (See ad on p.30 or visit theEFC.ca for a job description.)

Another change: the EFC’s Centre for Faith and Public Life, based in Ottawa, has moved to suite 1810 from suite 1410 in the building at 130 Albert Street where it has been located since 1996. All other contact information remains the same. Please update your records accordingly.

Ten Dollar Training for Ministry Staff

Two years of the EFC’s Christian Leaders Connection seminars for ministry and business leaders are now available on DVD. These seminars, presented in venues across the country, feature EFC staff including President Bruce J. Clemenger. Improve your understanding of how to engage in a secular Canada using stats, facts, and trends from the EFC’s Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism and the EFC’s Centre for Faith and Public Life. The set from 2008 is titled *Shifts: Changing Gears to Advance Issues Facing the Church in Canada Today*, and the set from 2009-2010 is *Being Evangelical in a Complex World*. Each set is thought-provoking and practical, and costs only \$10 including shipping (only \$5 for EFC affiliates). **FT**

What is Education Worth?

By Rick Hiemstra

Churches educate and train their people in all kinds of ways, from seminars to Bible college courses to book allowances. While some kinds of education don’t have dollar values attached to them, a new study from the EFC’s Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism looks at those that do.

Only about half of evangelical congregations are financially investing in education for their staff and volunteers. For those that did invest, the median investment was \$1,500 per year, or 1.2 per cent of income. Congregations tended to be consistent – either they invested in education each year or else not at all.

Congregational income is the most important factor influencing whether a congregation will invest in education or not. Those congregations with incomes under \$150,000 are far less likely to invest

in education than those with incomes over \$150,000.

Less than half of evangelical congregational staff work for a congregation that invests in education, and there is evidence that education dollars are following those full-time employees with the largest salaries. However, it is our part-time work force that is growing. Between 2003 and 2008 urban congregations added a combined 15 part-time staff for every additional full-time staff person. Part-time staff often represent a cash savings to congregations because they do not receive the same level of benefits as full-time staff, but there is no part-time discount when it comes to education. In 2008 the average evangelical congregation had 2.6 full-time and 3.5 part-time staff. The median \$1,500 education investment is likely not sufficient to provide meaningful education for all of them, much less for a congregation’s staff and their volunteers.

For the full report see “Canadian Evangelical Congregational Investment in Education, 2003-2008” in the free EFC online journal at ChurchAndFaithTrends.ca. **FT**

Sex Ed 101

What Parents Need to Know

Leaving sex education to the discretion of public schools is not a wise option for many Christian parents. Our writer explores the dangers, and what Christian parents can do about them.

By Alex Newman

The day I handed my son, then in Grade 4, a Christian book about sex, he took one look at it, said “Ewww!” and handed it back. Lamely suggesting he ask questions when he felt like it, I beat a hasty retreat. And in doing so, made the same mistake as countless parents, Christian and otherwise.

“Parents who wait until kids ask will never get the opportunity to talk,” says Paul Robertson, youth culture specialist for Youth Unlimited (formerly Toronto Youth for Christ), “because the world’s pop culture has already answered their questions – through media, peers and even schools.”

Youth Unlimited worker Marianne Deeks, who works at a high school in Stouffville, Ont., says teens in the town of 8,000 just outside the Greater Toronto Area tell her sex is “no big deal” and virginity is something to shed as quickly as possible. She recently heard about two Grade 10 students getting caught in a school washroom having sex. At another school a group of older girls pimped some of the younger girls out on a school field – for \$5 for oral sex.

Pointing to the buffet of sexual imagery that children are fed daily via TV, films, books, the Internet and advertising, most public educators argue in favour of an increasingly graphic sex education curriculum geared to increasingly younger grades. They want to give kids the right information.

But for some the current school curriculum, in province after province, is simply too much information. When sex

ed was first introduced in schools in 1966 in Grade 9, it covered body parts and the broad brushstrokes of intercourse – with line drawings. Today’s curriculum, as recently proposed in Ontario, covers sexual orientation in Grade 3, masturbation in Grade 6 and oral and anal sex in Grades 7 and 8. And it’s caused some groups to react strongly to what they perceive as the “normalization of certain behaviours,” says Faye Sonier, legal counsel at The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).

Not only do parents have a responsibility to talk, but research shows kids actually listen

British Columbia public health nurse Meg Hickling – an author, sex educator and a Christian – argues that for schools to avoid discussing all kinds of sex until kids become teenagers is “downright dangerous.” There’s so much bad information out there via porn, the media and peers, she says, that children desperately need the “right information. Teenagers engage in oral or anal sex to prevent pregnancy. But they have no clue about the dangers. HPV is a virus you can carry for life, and [is] the leading cause of throat cancer and mouth cancer.”

Even schools that discuss “everything” don’t necessarily





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haviour. “Teenagers aren’t told that every time a person is sexually active, the chemicals in their brain attach [them] to the person they’re with.”

Hickling is in favour of telling teens all there is to know about sex, but she couples it with her definition of sexual readiness – when you’re an adult, and not just the legal age of 19, but living on your own and paying your own way. Hickling says that the best-informed youth tend to delay sexual activity.

Paul Robertson’s concern, even though he understands the good information argument, is that some parts of the curriculum are “seed sowing, and not in a good way. The child’s mind is a fertile one, and [the] curriculum often takes children to issues they do not really understand and oftentimes are very uncomfortable with. Problem is, nobody wants to talk right and wrong, or about healthy sexual perspectives, especially if it’s Christian.”

The alternative – teaching abstinence only – doesn’t sit well even with some Christian educators. Though research suggests that kids taking abstinence pledges delay sex, when they break the pledge – which 88 per cent of them reportedly do – they do so

outline the dangers, says Deeks, the Stouffville youth worker. “Consequences are not part of the curriculum, though many teachers would like them to be.” Deeks isn’t just referring to the physical dangers, but the emotional ones as well. In a Sex Without Rules seminar she offers to teens, Deeks discusses how the brain is impacted by sexual be-

without preparation. Teaching that “You are best to not have sex, but if you do, use a condom,” is not a confusing message to teenagers, argues Sabrina Weill, former editor of *Seventeen Magazine*, who interviewed thousands of teens for her book *The Real Truth about Teens & Sex* (Penguin, 2005). In fact, most teens wish they got more information

How Churches Can Help

Youth workers often report getting “flak” from parents for introducing the idea of sex talks, but maybe there’s a role for churches to teach *parents* to do the talking.

Bendale Bible Chapel in Scarborough, Ont., started a workshop in 2006, inviting parents and their children in Grades 5 to 8. They start with a humorous video clip, like Tim Allen of *Home Improvement* trying to talk to his son Brad about sex using a car analogy. They engage parents and children in discussion starters to promote a comfortable atmosphere.

Afterward, youth minister Cindy Westacott takes the girls and moms, and her husband, Pastor Dean Westacott, takes the dads and boys (and occasionally women who have to take on dad’s role for whatever reason). Cindy talks body changes and babies, and Dean covers body changes and plumbing. Then they gather back together to discuss relationships and purity from a biblical perspective.

At that point they dispel myths, such as the untruth that “all teens are having sex.” And they lay out the truth about emotions in a physical relationship. “Marriage is something to be respected, and sex is meant to be fun within the context of marriage.” FT

about both abstinence and contraception.

So, what’s a parent to do? Faye Sonier, legal counsel with the EFC, says “parents have been forced to really dig to find out what’s [being taught in school]. The process itself is inconsistent with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (to which Canada is a party) which states that parents have a prior right over the education of their

children. If parents can’t figure out what’s in the curriculum, it limits the action they can take.”

It’s not just Christian parents who are concerned. Ninety per cent of parents who were polled in British Columbia said they were not comfortable with someone from Planned Parenthood teaching their children about oral and anal sex in Grades 7 and 8; and 85 per cent were uncomfortable with children in kindergarten to Grade 3 learning the technical aspects of intercourse.

Many parents have joined groups to lobby government, with some success, such as the recent postponement of Ontario’s proposed extra-explicit curriculum after a parental outcry.

But there are plenty of others who believe that a parent’s energy is better spent communicating their own hopes, values, and expectations to their children in order to combat what the kids are learning in the culture.

“The school is going to teach a lot of things that aren’t from a Christian worldview. Welcome to the real world,” says Cindy Westacott, youth minister for Bendale Bible Chapel in Scarborough, Ont.

“When families are connected, it’s easier to safeguard kids by telling them why our holy God wants them to be pure, why it’s good for them,” she adds. “But a teen with no moral compass and looking for love ends up in the wrong places,” with little to prevent sexual experimentation.

Although Westacott is completely aware of the temptations that await our children and youth, she does believe that abstinence is possible. She and her husband Dean, Bendale’s pastor, hold a workshop for parents and teens to discuss sex and purity. Their own three sons (two of whom married their first and only girlfriends) were taught about

New Resources on Education

A new resource about parental rights in Canadian education systems, and another about Ontario’s sex education curriculum, are the leading edge of a series being released this fall by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).

The series aims to assist parents and students. It responds to the most frequent and important inquiries received on this topic by the EFC’s Centre for Faith and Public Life, based in Ottawa. The documents are freely available at theEFC.ca/education.

The first published item in this EFC Back to School Blitz is titled *Questions and (Some) Answers in Regard to Ontario’s Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Sex Ed Component)*. The curriculum in question, which was both introduced and pulled last spring surrounded

by a media firestorm, left many parents upset, worried and confused.

Although the issue is no longer headline news, the curriculum in use for this fall is only an interim edition and will probably be revised. This Q & A sheet answers eight of the most frequently asked questions, in order to inform parents and enable them to engage proactively on this issue.

In September the EFC also released an open letter to the Ontario Minister of Education on the topic. It is accompanied by a general version of the letter that Ontario parents can modify and send under their own signature to the minister, the deputy minister, their member of provincial parliament and the official education critic.

God's holiness and His expectations for marriage from a very early age. But, as Westcott says, the talking has to be ongoing and encouraging.

The research bears this out – not only that parents have a responsibility to talk, but that kids actually listen. Sabrina Weill's survey revealed that 45 per cent of teens admitted their parents had the biggest influence on their sexual activity, with a mere 5 per cent influenced by sex educators. What's more, the greater the attachment to parents, the more important those values are.

Weill adds that parents needn't go into a big song and dance about their views – in fact, "a few-sentence exchange can have more impact. The point is to talk – they're getting hundreds of messages a day about sex, and if it's not talked about at home, those are the only messages they're getting."

Parents being silent about sex "is as good as a permission slip," claims Paul Robertson. Even when the talk elicits eye rolling – and it usually does, he says – "kids never close their ears. And if you don't speak into their lives, [popular culture] will."

For Catherine and John Byl of Ancaster, Ont., talking to their four children as they grew up wasn't just about ensuring they received a healthy Christian understanding of human sexuality. It was also about fostering closeness as a family. Being very open and communicating well builds strong family bonds, Catherine says.

If children know your familial love, modelled after Christ's love, she says, then they understand that "sexuality is a gift from God, and that His plan is to enjoy that gift of sex – within marriage."

One caveat the Byls add is to gauge your child's age

Recommended Reading

- *The New Speaking of Sex: What Your Children Need to Know and When They Need to Know It* by Meg Hickling (Northstone, 2005).
- *Boys, Girls & Body Science: A First Book About Facts of Life* by Meg Hickling and Kim La Fave (Harbour, 2002). FT

and emotional readiness. "We don't want to rob children of their childhood," says John, a professor at Redeemer University College who teaches student teachers. "They need to learn about life and its challenges, and how they can live in a responsible, joyful, God-fearing way; but they are children and should be given lots of mental and physical space to freely play without being burdened by adult concerns."

The Byls started by talking about God's plans for life by looking at plants growing from seeds in Grade 1. "As they get older, make it more specific."

Cindy Westcott adds that parents having dinner regularly with their children has a positive effect on all kinds of behaviour, including the delay of sexual activity. And when it came time for more serious and frank conversation about sex, the Westcotts made it special. When each of their three boys graduated from Grade 5, Dean took him out for dinner and a baseball game, they stayed at a hotel, had breakfast out, and he talked with him about sex, purity, holiness and marriage from a Christian perspective.

As for my son who said "Ewwwww," he is now 17 and has a girlfriend. Thankfully, we are working at talking about emotions, sex, responsibility for others' needs, and especially for God's desires for holiness. FT

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

The guide about parental rights and religious freedom in the classroom is titled *Hands Up! Identifying Parents' Rights in the Educational System*. It is a thorough but concise introductory guide to the rights and responsibilities of parents, children and government in the educational context.

Hands Up! addresses contested issues such as the parental right to educate, religion in public schools, the role of tolerance in the decisions of school boards, and the rights of religious schools and organizations. It includes a brief primer on religious freedom generally and education law in Canada.

The EFC has not forgotten the young adults at universities and colleges who are taking a pro-life stand or speaking out on other beliefs. At press time it was preparing a handbook for pro-life students and clubs.

Over the last several decades there have been at-

tempts to limit the rights of speech, association, and religion of pro-life students. The handbook examines that history and current trends. It also introduces, in layman's terms, the legal implications of various courses of action that such students may consider, and offers recommendations to help them avoid unnecessary difficulties and challenges.

"These resources," explains the EFC's Faye Sonier, "should further equip parents and students as they face challenges, and give them the confidence to break new ground and take strategic, proactive action." Sonier, who works as legal counsel at the EFC's Centre for Faith and Public Life, encourages parents who may be facing a challenge or difficulty in their school to contact legal staff at the EFC.

To view and download these free-of-charge resources, visit theEFC.ca/education. FT –BILL FLEDDERUS

Making a Difference as a Family

Resources are available to help Christian families respond to God's prompting to make their world a better place

By Faye Sonier and Alex Newman

When families face community challenges, such as a proposed sexual education curriculum that parents disapprove of or a college that tries to prevent young adults from offering pro-life information to their peers, engagement is not only important, it's necessary. And it doesn't have to take a lot of time or resources.

Johanna Van Dyk is an Ottawa, Ont., mom of five children under eight. She remembers recently shedding a few tears while watching a documentary about the dolphin kill in Japan. When her children noticed, they discussed it and eventually wrote to the Japanese embassy together.

Children are profoundly influenced by such activities, says Van Dyk. "Part of our family homeschooling is world issues. So we scan the papers, national and local, and we pray for where the community is hurting or we write letters."

Parents also benefit from discussing issues of interest to their children and acting on them together, whether cleaning up a neighbourhood playground or responding to the plight of persecuted children in a foreign country.

Social worker Liz John-West and her family live in inner-city Edmonton. When she and her husband Geoff graduated from university and wanted to buy a house, they chose something there that was "very cheap and very old," partly because they didn't want to pay a mortgage.

After their three daughters were born, friends told them they were crazy to raise children in such a gritty area. The John-Wests decided otherwise, and have had many opportunities to put their faith into action by responding together to local needs. Once they ran an extension cord from their home to another when the other family had their electricity cut off. Another time, they took on the local park – not letting gang activities, needles or condoms deter them in "making a beautiful face

in the midst of chaos." John-West and neighbours created a committee, got the children involved, and lobbied local government for support. The committee raised half a million dollars, and five years later the park is a destination for seniors and young families.

Thankfully many Canadian organizations have created resources to help families that want to take even small steps to improve their neighbourhoods and their world. Here are some to start with. (Those groups with an * are affiliated with The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.)

Power of Prayer

The *National House of Prayer offers a daily parliamentary prayer post at <http://prayparliament.wordpress.com>. Each day, the profile of a Member of Parliament is posted so that families can pray together for our nation's leaders and get to know them individually.

Nation at Prayer offers a prayer guide at www.nationatprayer.ca/resources which provides a list of specific points of prayer for elected leaders and for the nation.

The *Voice of the Martyrs offers profiles and country-specific prayer points at www.persecution.net.

Family prayers may lead some who have the financial means to sponsor a child through organizations such as *World Vision Canada (www.worldvision.ca) or *Compassion Canada (www.compassion.ca). What a great opportunity for a child to be involved in making a difference with someone his or her age in another country.

Talking With Decision Makers

Thinking about writing a letter? Visit theEFC.ca/TakeAction for tips on making it an effective one. Letters and emails sent to parliamentarians' offices are read and noted. Many offices track statistically the number of letters they've received on vari-

ous issues. Children can write a note or even simply draw a picture. One child's picture may be seen to represent the concerns of many other voters.

That webpage (theEFC.ca/TakeAction) also explains how to draft a strategic petition and determine the guidelines as required by the House of Commons. To submit a petition to some other regulatory body, call their offices and find out the best or acceptable way to submit one. Many bodies don't yet officially recognize electronic petitions and only acknowledge those that include an original signature.

Going in Person

Don't be shy about visiting elected officials, whether they are Members of Parliament, city councillors or school board members. Call and request an appointment time and be prepared to be flexible. Bring along a child if the child is old enough and it seems appropriate. Elected officials represent the interests of all citizens. (Find more tips on visiting at theEFC.ca/TakeAction.)

What about a rally or a demonstration? Packing a snack and attending one is often a great way to meet similarly-minded families, collect great information at resource tables, and listen to leading experts speak.

Learning More about the Issues

*Crossroads Christian Communications offers a full range of educational programming on important issues of interest at <http://crossroads.ca>.

*Focus on the Family Canada provides a full range of child- and family-friendly resources at FocusOnTheFamily.ca.

The Evangelical Fellowship also offers a wide range of information and resources at theEFC.ca. **FT**

FAYE SONIER is legal counsel at The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. **ALEX NEWMAN** is a senior writer at *Faith Today*.

Fad or FOUNDATION?

Six reasons why this current buzzword can actually help the Church to focus on what God intended it to be.

By Ross Hastings

You may have encountered what seems like the latest buzzword in church life these days: the term “missional church.” Is this the latest fad? Ten years from now, will it merely be a historical curiosity? Or does it point us back to a set of old and trustworthy realities that the Church in Canada needs desperately as it struggles to have any kind of impact in a culture that is now post-Christian?

The concept of the missional church has been popularized by a movement known as the Gospel and Our Culture Network, associated with authors such as Lesslie Newbigin, David Bosch, Darrell Guder, Michael Frost, Alan Hirsch and Alan Roxburgh. If the concept is new to you or your church, try reading *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Darrell Guder and Lois Barrett, eds., Eerdmans, 1998) especially because it has important Canadian content.

In brief, a missional church is focused on joining God in His mission of reconciling the world to Himself.

On first blush, some conclude this is a new version of the “seeker sensitive” concept. They imagine it can lead to neglect of the inner life and gatherings of the Church in order to be fully engaged in the lives of our neighbours. This caricature is unfair – one of the key emphases of David Bosch, for example, was that the Church needs to be “bipolar,” that is it must not neglect its inner life (formation through Word and sacrament in community) at the expense of its outer life (engaging the community and creation).

Others, when their pastor first brings up the term, fear being guilted into unnatural forms of evangelism. This re-

action is also unfair (although admittedly Christians have often isolated the Great Commission to share the gospel from the Great Commandment to love our neighbour, or the Cultural Mandate to exercise stewardship of the earth in our families and communities and in our vocations). If we understand correctly that the Holy Spirit is drawing people into God’s Kingdom through us, then the call to engage with our neighbour and so to participate in the mission of God as His co-workers is not actually unnatural or onerous.

Perhaps the phrase “mission-shaped church,” more commonly used in the United Kingdom, would be a better one. Some British authors who support the basic ideas have proposed yet another name, “deep church,” in a book worth reading entitled *Remembering Our Future: Explorations in Deep Church* (Andrew Walker and Luke Bretherton, eds., Paternoster, 2007).

Whatever the term, the call to be missional is basically a call for the Church to be the Church, and so Evangelicals should seriously consider it. Let me highlight six reasons why.

IT’S GOD’S MISSION

The concept of missional church is grounded in God Himself. The resurgence of awareness that the Church is missional has been a consequence of a movement within Christian theology to recover the Trinity as the centre of Christian theology. The very nature of God is revealed by the two missions or sendings of the Father, or what Augustine called the *missio* of the Son and the *missio* of the Spirit.

NEW AND MISSIONAL IN CANADA

A November conference planned by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and a new book co-authored by the associate editor of the EFC magazine *Faith Today* are just two examples of current discussions about missional ideas happening in the Canadian Church today.

The conference, called Hinge, is a “national church and mission dialogue conference,” an opportunity for Evangelicals to reconsider together what God is calling the Canadian Church to be and do.

“What was God’s best in the past and what might be God’s best for the future? What do we rid ourselves of and what do we take with us as we move forward?” asks the conference website, theEFC.ca/hinge.

Registration is now open for the event, held from 3 p.m. Nov. 16 at the Holiday Inn – Toronto International Airport to 3:30 p.m. Nov. 18.

The new book by Karen Stiller and Willard Metzger is titled *Going Missional: Conversations With 13 Canadian Churches Who Have Embraced Missional Life* (Word Alive, 2010).

It shares the challenges, successes, setbacks, and victories of Canadian congregations trying to more fully serve their communities locally and globally.

Metzger at the time of writing was director of church relations for World Vision Canada. Key support for the book also came from Scott Cochrane and The Leadership Centre, Willow Creek Canada. **FT**

—BILL FLEDDERUS

Surprisingly it took until the 16th century for the Jesuits to be the first Christians to call evangelistic, compassionate, and social justice activities of the Church the mission work of the Church. If the missional church is a fad, it’s certainly a very old one.

GOD SENDS US

The Church, because it is in union with God in Christ, and because it represents this triune God in the world, must therefore be missional as He is. Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

The classic Christian understanding of God the Father sending the Son, and both of them sending the Spirit, needs to include yet another sending movement, namely “Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the Church into the world,” as David Bosch points out in his book *Transforming Mission* (Orbis, 1991).

If the missional church is a fad, it is as old as the personal revelation of God Himself.

Recent biblical studies by Richard Bauckham and Christopher Wright support this view by highlighting how mission is not incidental in the Bible, but that a missional hermeneutic is crucial to understanding the whole scriptural revelation. Thus the missional nature of the people of God is as old as the written revelation of God.

MISSION ISN'T UNBALANCED

When churches rediscover their missional identity in the missional God, and when they do so in a fully Trinitarian way, the following traits may be found to co-inhere, rather than collide: missional width *and* spiritual depth; openness to the world *and* the integrity of church (as characterized by Word, sacrament and community, or even more basically as one, holy catholic, apostolic church); cultural relevance *and* confessional rootedness in the grand narrative of the Christian tradition and historic orthodoxy; openness to the surprising new works of the Spirit *and* a catholicity that reflects the depth of a liturgical and sacramental tradition. Whew!

SENDING AND GATHERING

Specifically, this means that as God is open for human relations through Christ, the Church does not exist for itself, but must be “for the world” and open for human relations. However, this will involve sending and gathering.

God has moved outward to humanity through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus (the incarnation was a kind of sending), but He has done so with a view to drawing us in to His life and love as the Church (the ascension, which took humanity into the Godhead, is a gathering point).

Similarly, the Spirit who draws and regenerates people through our witness also unites people with the Body of Christ.

Thus truly missional churches don’t conceive of salvation as a merely individual experience but an incorporation into the community of Christ.

And we are called “to stand on the cusp or the breaking point of both the Christian tradition and the emerging culture, deeply rooted in the former while fully engaged in the latter,” as Andrew Walker states in *Remembering Our Future*.

If the missional church is a fad, its foundations are as old as the church itself.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

This also means that just as Christ came as the Word of God into the culture in which He was born, Christians will see the need for appropriate contextualization of the gospel in every generation and every geographical location. They will seek to truly inhabit these places, including the abandoned places, and fully engage in communities,

seeking ways to minister to the whole person, bringing compassion, seeking justice and adding beauty to their communities.

They will seek to bring the shalom of the Kingdom first by being the Church, which is the sign, servant and messenger of the Kingdom. They will not just seek to see “souls” saved, they will seek to see persons become fully human. Evangelism and social concern will go hand in hand.

This too is a missional emphasis that is neither new nor transitory.

DISCIPLESHIP

If God is the missional God and we participate in His mission, this requires that we need the scope of His heart for mission locally and globally. This requires a depth of intimacy with that missional God. Missional churches will therefore be concerned as much for the making of disciples as converts.

Walker notes: “What a deep church most needs today . . . is for a theology of Christian basics. In short: catechesis for all beginners in the Christian life whether they be infants or adults. Catechesis should be the prolegomenon to a life-long educational process . . . to a deeper understanding of

the Trinity. . . . It is through the mediation of the revealed Lord Jesus that we have direct access to the Father in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.”

More could be said, but let’s stop with these six.

There are many forms of the missional church today, from new monastic communities to emergent and traditional churches. But form is secondary to function. The real challenge for our time beyond forms (and we should be open for changing these where they hinder the Church from fulfilling its true identity) is the need to revisit who the Christian God really is, and then what His Church is meant to be. As John Stott has said: If “our structure has become an end in itself, not a means of saving the world,” it is “a heretical structure.”

A final word of warning, however: Let’s avoid using the missional church concept as a new way of assessing who “has it” and who doesn’t, or even priding ourselves in the fact that we “have it” and others don’t. This would be a radical departure from the humility of the missional God, as evident in the incarnation. **FT**

ROSS HASTINGS is associate professor of mission studies at Regent College, Vancouver.

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Changing Di With a Christian Coach

With so many options for guidance, navigating the help industries can, ironically, leave you a little lost. What is Christian life coaching today, and who is it for?

By Alison Van Ginkel

Before Mark Petersen took the career leap ten years ago to become the executive director of Bridge-way Foundation, a Cambridge, Ontario-based organization committed to strengthening the capacities of Christian ministries, he, like many of us at one point or another, felt stuck.

He needed someone to help him articulate a vision for his life, to identify obstacles, and who was impartial, trustworthy and experienced enough to know the delicate balance between asking questions and providing answers. What he needed, Petersen found out, was a professional coach.

With this decision, Petersen became part of a growing movement of Canadians working with coaches in a unique collaborative approach to planning, problem-solving, and sometimes just dreaming about what life and ministry could be. "It helped me identify, okay, what's my passion, what's my vision, what is God leading me toward?" says Petersen.

Coaching has been a recognized form

of professional guidance since the early 1990s. Not to be confused with mentoring, counselling, or even chatting with a wise friend, coaching is concerned with helping a person define their personal and professional goals and giving them tools to achieve them. Though there are areas of overlap between coaching and other methods of guidance, the industry is moving out of its adolescent stage and there are established voices that seek to assert and distinguish a lucid identity.

Gary Wood, president of the Gravenhurst-based Christian Coaches Network, describes some of the professional differences. "Consulting is about making recommendations, do this, this, this. Coaches explore. They allow clients to explore options and choose those options for themselves," explains Wood, "[Counselling is] having a pattern of looking back, having a pathology that needs to be addressed. Coaching is very much

about reaching forward."

John McAuley is a practising coach trained by Adler International, a leading global organization in the coaching

field, with its head offices in Toronto. McAuley describes a way to distinguish coaching from mentoring and spiritual direction. "Mentoring is hey, walk with me, see how I would do it, learn

from my experience and expertise," he says. "Coaching is where I walk with you and I accompany you on your journey and it's a relationship of equals. Spiritual direction is really helping a person walk with God."

There are also distinctions to be made between spheres within the coaching profession itself. "We have coaches who specialize in almost every area that you can think of," says Wood. But the Christian Coaches Network divides them into three categories: Personal/Life, Professional/Career, and Business/Ministry/Leadership.

"Coaching is about someone walking alongside [you] and asking the right questions"

reaction



KRISTY-ANNE GLUBISH / WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

The situations and focuses vary, but there is usually common ground in terms of general principles and practices. The typical “coachee” is perhaps the most difficult to define, as, according to Wood, they come from “absolutely every walk of life you can imagine.”

Today, coaching sessions are sometimes still done in person, but most often occur over a scheduled phone call, or even on Skype (a program allowing you to make free voice/video calls online). They typically last half an hour to an hour, and take place on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis. Expense varies from \$50 to \$400 and up per session, depending

on the expertise and credentials of the coach.

Wood describes a typical phone session: “The point of that call is to listen very closely, to ask questions. Coaching, really, is assisting the client to see themselves and their situation clearly. Then, you’ll make a decision: Okay, this is what I need to do next. At the end of a call we want to review: What are your action steps? Because coaching is about taking action. It’s about getting from where you are to where you want to be. You’re really committing to yourself: Here are the steps I’ve decided to take. And then, part of my job, as a coach, is to provide a level

of accountability to make sure you take those steps.”

In coaching, it’s not about having answers, it’s about asking the right questions. “When the change comes from within the person themselves,” says McAuley, “when they come to discovering what needs to happen for themselves, the more likely they are to follow through with that change.” Rich, focused questions have the potential to help clients uncover hidden patterns that can shift perspectives and open doors. The coaching profession is built upon a belief in the empowering possibilities introduced by an effective question. But some coachees appreciate



Clockwise from left: Mark Petersen, executive director of Bridgeway Foundation; Wendy Gritter executive director of the Toronto-based New Direction Ministries; Gary Wood, president of the Gravenhurst-based Christian Coaches Network.

a good synergy between the individual taking the initiative and the coach having the discernment to know when to step in to give their point of view." As a sort of "teammate," Gritter's coach helped her to "take the bull by the horns [and] really unfold what the next decision ought to be. Coaching," says Gritter, "puts you to work."

Often, that work involves a type of personal assessment, or "homework," designed, says Gary Wood, to help your coach "understand a little about you and to help you understand a little about yourself." Part of Mark Petersen's homework, when he transitioned to the Bridgeway Foundation, was an assessment tool called Clean Sweep

when coaching methodology is flexible enough to allow sessions to evolve organically.

When Wendy Gritter, executive director of Toronto-based New Direction Ministries, was first starting out in her

ministry to help guide people within their broken sexuality, she decided she wanted a coach who would help her develop as a leader. Gritter describes the coaching relationship that ensued as a dance. "I think the dance is optimized when there's

that was as good as its name. Petersen had to complete a checklist of 100 items grouped into four categories: physical environment, well-being, money and relationships. "I'm a firm believer that external clutter is a reflection of inner lack

Finding the Right Coach

The coaching industry as a whole is still unregulated by a strict governing body, though many professional coaches belong to regulating organizations, the largest being the International Coach Federation (ICF), which has a credentialing program and a code of standards and ethics. The ICF was founded in 1995 and today represents over 14,000 professional personal and business coaches from over 90 countries.

Organizations like the Christian Coaches Network (CCN) are a part of the ICF, but bestow additional certification to their accepted members. It has its own set of professional standards and ethics applied specifically to the

Christian coaching community. The CCN, and other coaching organizations like it, offer referral services to help find a coach who is the right fit for a client's purposes.

Check out the following websites for more information on the coaching industry, its regulating bodies, and training organizations.

- The International Coach Federation (www.coachfederation.org)
- Christian Coaches Network (www.christiancoaches.com)
- CoachNet International Ministries (www.coachnet.org)
- Adler International Learning (www.adlercoach.com)
- The Christian Coaching Bookstore (coach22.com) **FT**

Sample "Homework" Questions From the Clean Sweep Assessment

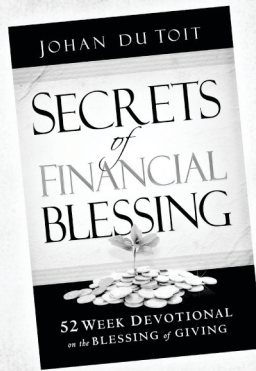
betterme.org/cleansweep.html

If true, check the box (goal is to get each of the 100 items checked off):

- I have nothing around the house or in storage that I do not need.
- I have a rewarding life beyond my work or profession.
- I live on a weekly budget which allows me to save and not suffer.
- There is no one whom I would dread or feel uncomfortable "bumping into." (In the street, at an airport or party).
- I quickly correct miscommunications and misunderstandings when they do occur. **FT**

of focus and purpose," Petersen wrote of the experience on his blog. "So really, decluttering paved the way for me to be where I am today."

Of course, for Christians, wholeness is not often easily measured by a checklist, but requires a spiritual understanding and relationship. Because of this, having a coach who is a Christian is, for many, an essential aspect of the experience. Besides potentially introducing certain elements like collaborative prayer into a session, "a Christian coach is able to understand the inside life of a client [and] they are able to empathize on a spiritual level," says Wood. And Wendy Gritter suggests that "where a coach is able to be centred in [an] individual's identity in Christ and be centred in the confidence and security of God's good plan for that individual, it brings a dynamic of confidence and shalom [peace] into the coaching experience that a non-Christian coaching relationship would lack." Some other coaches insist that there is much insightful learning that can take place between a Christian client and a non-Christian coach (or vice versa), and that if a person is involved deeply



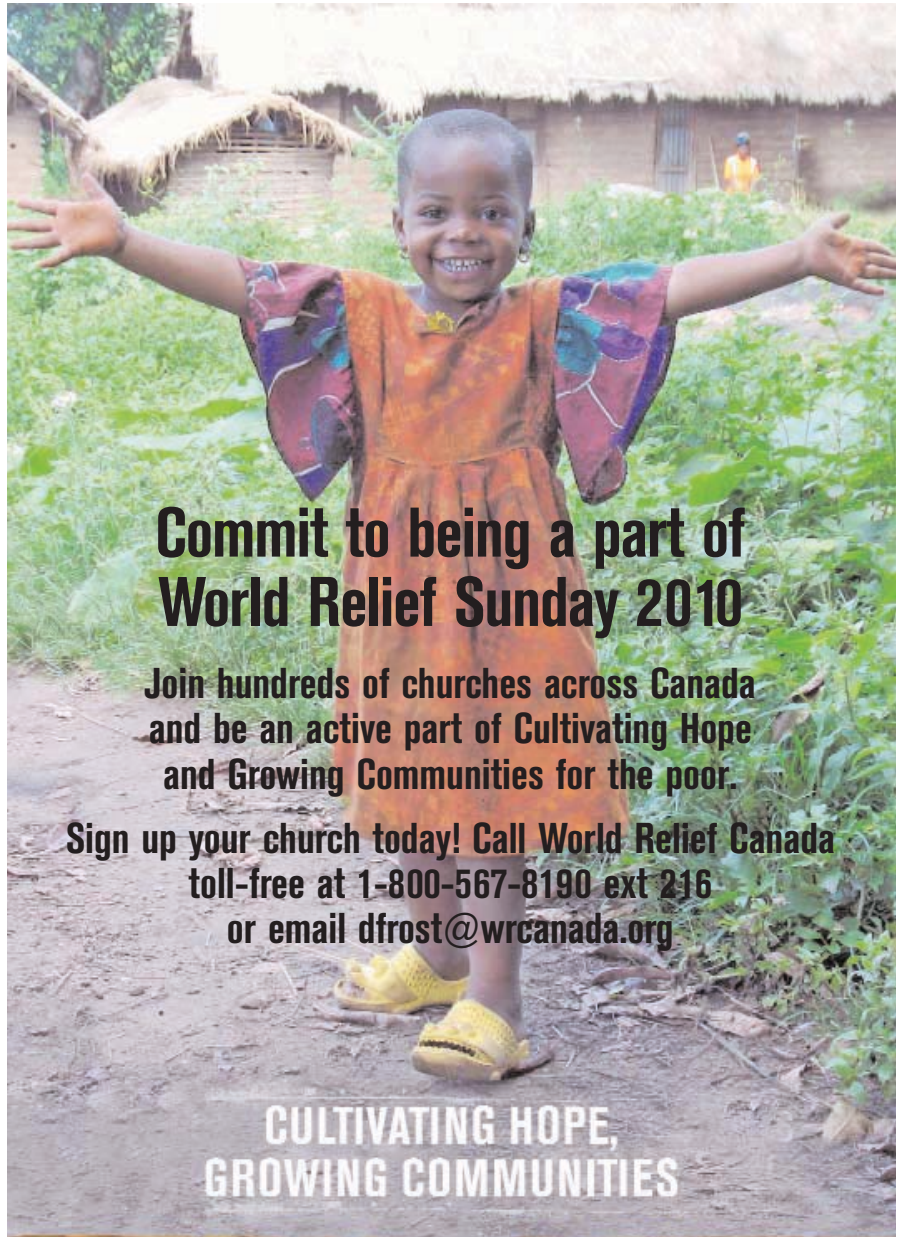
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with ministry or their church, their faith can't help but be a part of the conversation and focus.

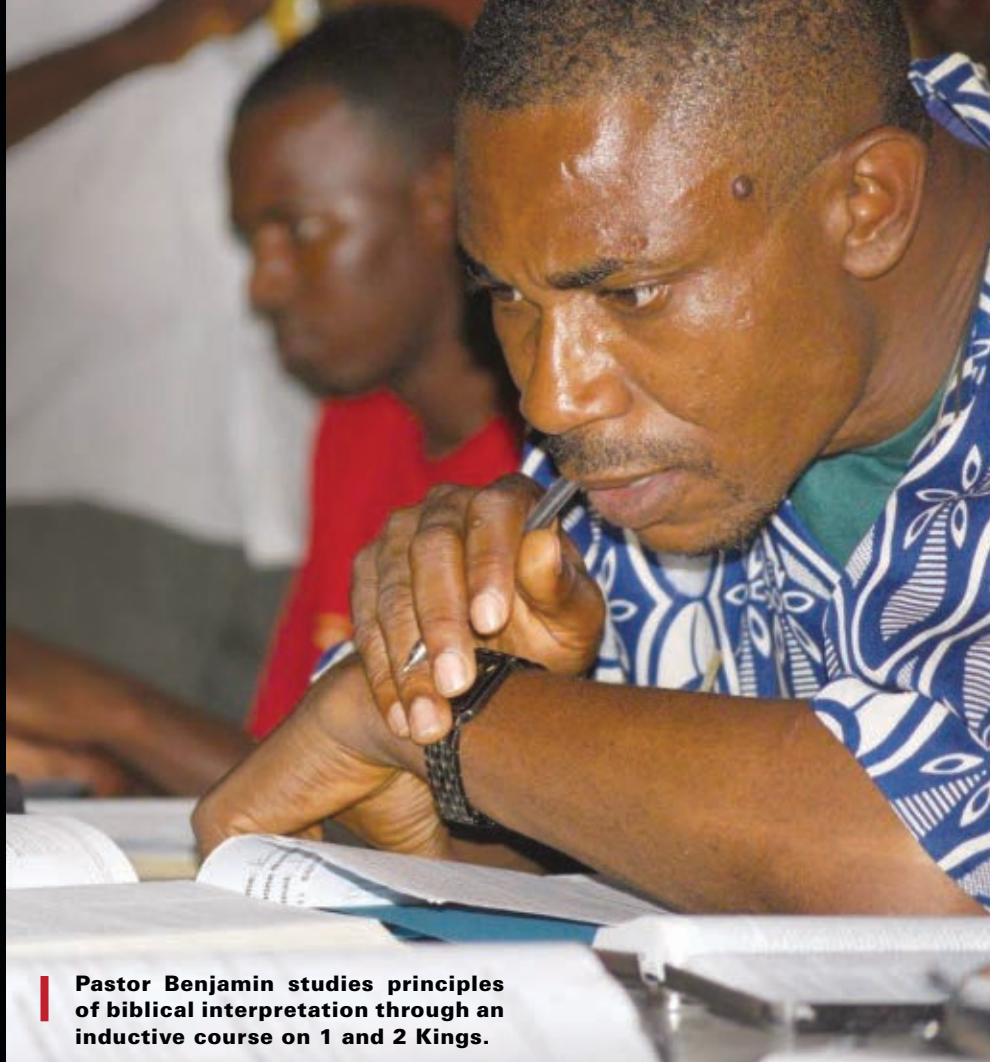
Though many training programs do have their own philosophical biases (including, according to critics, a common tendency to rely heavily on New Age approaches), there is generally openness to religious perspectives of all backgrounds. Coaches are, after all, trained to listen and respect. There are also training programs designed specifically in accordance with Christian principles and purposes. Brett Andrews, director of leadership development and resources at Youth for Christ ministries, used CoachNet International Ministries to complete his coaching training, a nine-month process that involved lots of reading, workshops, practice coaching, and being coached himself.

Currently, Andrews is working with the CoachNet program to create a coaching program for emerging leaders within Youth for Christ. He feels that the coaching industry in Canada has taken big steps forward recently, and predicts that within the next few years observers will notice a lot of growth, particularly within Christian ministries seeking to develop young leaders. "I think that the current generation under 30 is very open and eager to learn from others," says Andrews. "They don't want someone to give them the answers; it's more about someone walking alongside them and asking the right questions."

There are a lot of things to consider for someone wondering if a coach is right for them. But if you find a coach you can trust, it has the potential to be life-changing. Just ask Petersen. "I've always credited [my coach] for helping me to get to this place. Identifying what drives me, what motivates me, what my passions are. And so I'm really grateful for both coaching and for her. Because I don't know if I would have gotten to this place otherwise. I felt stuck...Her walking with me was very helpful." **FT**

ALISON VAN GINKEL is a freelance writer in Toronto.

Developing Christian Studies in a Muslim Country



Pastor Benjamin studies principles of biblical interpretation through an inductive course on 1 and 2 Kings.

PHOTO: MATTHIAS CHEUNG

A Canadian ministry is making surprising progress in adult education in The Gambia, West Africa, where 90 per cent of the population is Muslim. *By Glen Taylor*

A small Canadian ministry has proven that big things can come in small packages: it has managed to boost the profile of Christianity in a big way in the Republic of the Gambia, where 90 per cent of the two million citizens are Muslim. As a result the formal teaching of Christianity in the small West African country has gone from low to high gear in the past six months.

The Canadian ministry, known as the Christian Volunteer Movement, is headed by Steve Hewko, a doctoral student at Wycliffe College, an evangelical Anglican seminary at the University of Toronto. Hewko and his wife, Sheryl, founded the mission in 2004. She is trained as a nurse and is involved in various healthcare initiatives including training, and he has helped recruit Canadian volunteers for short-term projects improving agriculture, water and education.

The ministry's work in theological and religious education has recently seen some of the most exciting developments.

A few years ago Steve Hewko noticed that many local pastors in The Gambia had no training in theology other than what they could pick up by correspondence or by watching Christian TV programs. At the same time, as a theology student, he watched the occasional African student come to Canada for

theological training at great cost, often only to go glassy-eyed from culture shock and lack of family support. And all too often, in the end, the student would remain in Canada.

Hewko was inspired to do things in reverse: send volunteer professors and graduate students from Canada to The Gambia for short-term intensive teaching of local Africans. After making sure local Gambian Christian heads of various denominations were on board – everyone from independent charismatics to Roman Catholics and High Church Anglicans – Hewko and his team of volunteers began teaching this past February out of an *ad hoc* classroom. The teaching team at this newly founded Gambia Theological Institute included two PhDs from Toronto's Wycliffe College (I was one of them) and four graduate students, as well as Dr. Solomon Tilewa Johnson, the indigenous Anglican bishop. By the end of June, the team completed six courses with roughly 30 students – all for less than the cost of bringing one African student to Canada for a single year of theological study!

Among the students are a government lawyer who teaches at the national university, the heads of Scripture Union and Youth for Christ, as well as up-and-coming young pastors and youth workers, many of them working in poor village settings. As one Methodist minister put it, "This is the opportunity of a lifetime for



Clockwise from top: Bola Carrol, a government lawyer, discusses biblical hermeneutics with fellow students; future instructors Adrian and Wendy Helleman; Glen Taylor, Steve Hewko and Bishop S. T. Johnson, current chair of the Gambian Christian Council.

us, to receive training in our faith from a bona fide Canadian college. We are so grateful!" (English is the official language, helping to narrow the culture gap for the Canadian instructors.)

EXPANDING INTO THE UNIVERSITY

As if that were not enough, Hewko also heard that Christian students at the University of The Gambia (www.unigambia.gm), an institution founded in 1999, have been asking that Christianity be included among its course offerings. Such a request would likely prove to be a mere pipe dream in most Muslim countries, but not in The Gambia.

Gambians are famous for cherishing religious diversity. They value, seemingly above all, peace between faiths. (As violence between Muslims and Christians escalates elsewhere in West Africa, such as in Nigeria, and as fear and misunderstanding brood in places like Canada, people are beginning to take notice of this jewel of religious harmony, seeing it as a model for

Muslim-Christian interaction.)

True to Gambian values, the university responded favourably to the idea of offering courses in Christian studies. Not one to miss an opportunity, Hewko and the country's national Christian leaders offered the university two course proposals, drafted by one of the Wycliffe professors teaching theology at the *ad hoc* institute. As good as that seemed, neither Hewko nor his indigenous partners foresaw an even bigger development soon to unfold.

Dr. Pierre Gomez, a Christian, was recently appointed head of humanities and social sciences. Turning the heads of Christians as well as many Muslims on campus, Gomez immediately called for an entire curriculum in Christian studies, allowing bachelor-level students to do a major or minor in their religion, the same way Muslims students can presently do in Islamic studies. And not to slow things down, he ordered the curriculum to begin in September 2010.

In response, Hewko and Johnson immediately recruited me to work with West African Christians to draft a set of 22 courses in Christianity. We submitted a curriculum sensitive to the West African scene by Gomez's deadline of April 30, 2010.

The curriculum has been approved by the faculty council and is now

waiting approval by the senate of the university, pending initial start-up funding of \$65,000. The Gambian bishop and others in West Africa are looking for funds locally, while Hewko and I are currently seeking financial help from Canadian Christians. (As www.cvmcanada.com notes, the group is not yet registered as a charity in Canada, but is able to offer charitable receipts under the umbrella of the Northwest Mennonite Conference.)

Gomez has promised that the university will sustain the program once it finds its way into the regular list of course offerings, scheduled for 2011.

Two volunteer academics from Toronto, Drs. Wendy and Adrian Helleman, recently retired from teaching Christianity at the University of Jos, Nigeria, plan to begin teaching the first semester of courses when the program launches. **FT**

GLEN TAYLOR is associate professor of Old Testament and biblical proclamation at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto.

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Conrad Grebel University College

One of the key values at Conrad Grebel University College is leadership development. This Mennonite college on the campus of the University of Waterloo provides ample opportunities for growing leaders of faith in its undergraduate and graduate programs.

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Susan Wise Bauer

Writer and historian, member of the faculty, College of William and Mary

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ferred conjointly with uWaterloo, and this past year three of the 12 graduates were Mennonite pastors. Other grads pursue academic careers or provide leadership in various settings, such as camps.

Another example is the chapel committee, which has recently doubled in size to over 20 students. It offers the freedom to lead in Bible studies, worship, music or special services. Students from a variety of uWaterloo's 300 programs get involved in planning during each of the three academic terms.

Ed Janzen, Grebel's chaplain, nurtures these opportunities and gives ideas, direction, follow-up and accountability along the way. "This is a vibrant and creative process," Janzen commented, "with a wide net for leadership opportunities and expressions of worship."

Ecumenical dialogue is important at Grebel, and there is a wide variety of faith backgrounds represented in its residence and academic programs.

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Our focus at Horizon is to prepare lead-

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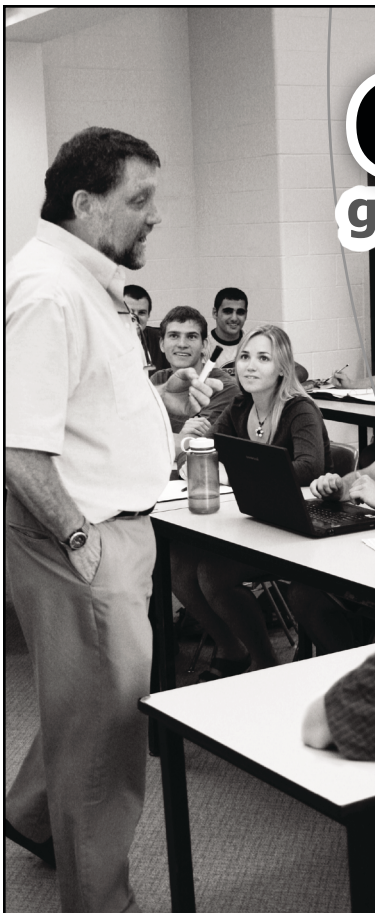


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point in church history.”**

*– Bruce Clemenger, President,
The Evangelical Fellowship
of Canada*

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Jesus and Justice

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

Early in His ministry, Jesus returned home to Nazareth. Rumours were spreading about His teaching and miraculous powers. He was invited to speak at the local synagogue where he had worshipped as a child. Sensing a special moment, Jesus took the occasion to lay out His mission. He read the Hebrew text from the revered prophet Isaiah (61:1-2). And when He finished, Jesus rolled up the scroll and essentially said, “Let me tell you what this means” (Luke 4:18-21).

The meaning of Jesus’ mission is captured in a single vision with two dimensions. Jesus’ hope for a restored humanity has a double focus: people who are *spiritually poor* and people who are *socially poor*.

Spiritually poor: Jesus begins with a personal claim: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” I have been touched by

God and I am in touch with God. And the good news I bring to those of you who are spiritually poor is: You can be in touch with God, too.

Socially poor: Jesus understands the systemic nature of social poverty. He sees people in poverty as those who are held captive. They are oppressed. They are victims of their circumstances. In Jesus’ vision for

life on earth, people living in social poverty need eyes to see beyond the barriers that imprison them. They need to be freed to explore a new future.

The lens we often look through to view Jesus is one that drives His mission toward the spiritually poor. The purpose of Jesus’ life on earth is centred on the cross. “Jesus died.” Surrendering to the will of the Father, Jesus lays down His life to become the Saviour of the world. Sin is conquered. Forgiveness is extended. And the spiritually lost are restored “in Christ.”

We tend to give less attention to the meaning that “Jesus lived.” We do not ignore Jesus’ human virtues. We study

His person as the best life ever lived. And – we appeal to Jesus’ followers to be like Him. “Live as Jesus lived. Love as Jesus loved.” However, we often stop short of profiling Jesus as an advocate for the poor. We are reticent to extol Jesus’ social justice mission.

Consequently, in some circles, little has been done to focus the magnifying lens on Jesus’ life on earth as an expression of advocacy for the poor and socially marginalized. How often have we profiled Jesus rejecting racism, embracing the excluded, protesting gender inequality and dignifying second-class citizens? Yet, when we take Jesus’ incarnation seriously, we discern Him challenging unjust behaviour, re-ordering political power and advocating for both the poor and the privileged.

For example, how many times have we heard a one-sided “spiritually poor” interpretation about the woman of Samaria from John Chapter 4? Certainly the salvation of the immoral woman is to be celebrated, but is there more to the story?

In Jesus’ day, expressions of racism were both overt and approved. Samaritans were the recipients of prejudice and discrimination. In the centuries prior to Jesus’ birth, the Samaritans were the offspring of intermarriages with Assyrians and Hebrews. They were the half-breeds, a mongrel mix of ethnic impurity. Jews felt that the racial purity of the Samaritans was stained. Consequently, they were culturally culled from those who were ethnically pure. The social fallout generated animosity between the Jews and Samaritans.

Jesus understood the prevailing cultural practices, the stereotyping and the segregation. The unnamed Samaritan woman at the well also knew her place: “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (John 4:9). Still, in one purposeful but quiet move toward an unnamed Samaritan woman, Jesus countered culture and broke the barriers of both racial bigotry and gender discrimination. Jesus’ brave expression of love liberates the Samaritans from their second-class status. In a radical fashion, the doors to the community of faith are opened to more than just one ethnic people. Jesus’ actions announce that all peoples are chosen and loved by God. The cultural and ethnic containment of faith is shattered. The encounter is a mighty blow to the cultural status quo.

What can we conclude? Jesus lived rightly. Righteousness was His way of life. He related to others with aspirations for their spiritual well-being. Living his love, Jesus also repeatedly righted wrongs. His vision for justice for the vulnerable drove His intent and guided His practice. In His teaching and in His living, Jesus created opportu-

Further Reading on Justice

- Donal Corr, *Spirituality and Justice*. Orbis Books, 1996
- Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*. Oxford University Press, 2007
- Walter J. Burghardt, *Let Jesus Easter In Us: More Homilies on Biblical Justice*. Paulist Press, 2006
- Steve Chalke & Cherie Blair, *Stop the Traffik: People Shouldn't Be Bought and Sold*. Lion, 2009

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ities for people whose plight in life was curtailed by life-denying forces.

Jesus' life is a demonstration of how to live and love. Jesus incarnated intentional love. He demonstrated purposeful and creative love – love for God, self, neighbour, truth, righteousness and justice. Jesus envisioned what didn't yet exist. He championed freedom from oppression, discrimination, exclusion, inequity, poverty, sin and injustice.

In Jesus' code, to love is to be just. To be just is to love. And when we claim to follow Jesus, we are disciples of justice. Jesus' mission on earth in His time is our mission on earth in our time. **FT**

DON POSTERSKI, who served in leadership at World Vision for many years, now works with the Salvation Army's International Social Justice Commission in New York. Join the global conversation leading up to Cape Town 2010 at www.lausanne.org/conversation.

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Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary

Jaymie Schmidt, current host of the Guest Home, visits with a guest.

A Mennonite congregation with strong connections to the University of Calgary and the nearby Foothills Medical Centre seeks to speak the peace of Christ to its neighbours.

A Mennonite advertising campaign late last year had special resonance in Calgary. “Imagine life without war” and “Peace on earth” were just two of the slogans displayed on transit vehicles (LiveForPeace.org).

Many Calgarians found the messages poignant, especially people who had heard Calgary may have the highest rate of hate crimes in Canada, as much as three times higher than the national average.

Media such as the CBC and CTV responded by conducting radio and television interviews that spotlighted Anabaptist roots to “follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing rec-

onciliation and practising non-resistance.”

The advertising campaign dramatically demonstrated what had been going on on a smaller scale at local congregations such as Foothills Mennonite Church in the University Heights neighbourhood of Calgary. Senior pastor Doug Klassen’s passion is to lead the congregation (www.foothillsmennonite.com) to participate in God’s mission in Calgary and around the world, including “speaking peace” to its neighbours.

As a sign of that mission, Foothills used to display a peace flag declaring “Pray for Peace – Act for Peace.” As the flag gradually succumbed to the weathering of outdoor life, the church board proposed replacing it with a fresh message of peace affixed to the most public outer wall of the church.

A “Name the Wall” contest drew Scripture verses, hymn titles, poems and other suggestions from the congregation before a process of discernment led to a decision to post an edited version of Micah 6:8: “*Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.*”

The wall also continues to encourage congregation members to consider other ways in which they can bless their neighbours.

So far, the congregation has recognized two groups it is particularly equipped to serve: people using Foothills Medical Centre and people connected with the university.

Hospital Guest House

As Klassen took chaplaincy training at the Foothills Medical Centre, he observed highly stressed family members from outside the city struggling with the cost of hotel accommodation to be near their ailing loved one. Others required temporary housing while receiving out-patient treatment.

Since the hospital is visible from the church, it seemed natural to extend a helping hand. The result is the Mennonite Guest

PHOTO: DARREL HEIDEBRECHT

House (www.guesthouse.mennonitechurch.ab.ca).

The initiative began on rented property in 2007, but is now owned by the church and staffed with a full-time resident Christian host from the congregation. The host is there to listen, support and build relationships. Many church volunteers assist by talking or reading to out-patients, offering palliative footcare massages or handling house and yard maintenance.

While Foothills Hospital prohibits advertising faith-based facilities, social workers include the Mennonite Guest House on a list of options for out-of-town family members. Guests have been welcomed from as far away as Newfoundland and California.

When one family's house burned to the ground, destroying everything and leaving a family member in hospital with severe burns, church members took the rest of the family to the thrift store to purchase clothing.

Local and Global Outreach

As for the congregation's links to the University of Calgary, Klassen admits it's difficult for a local church to build a consistent presence on campus. He and others are beginning to envision an off-campus student hub where Christian students can huddle, receive mentoring and training in evangelism, strengthen each other in their faith and reach out to their campus peers.

Klassen repeatedly encourages church members to consider that the church is to be a beacon of light to the neighbourhood. One member whose "beacon of light" was seen now leads a ministry to Palestinian refugees. It all started when a woman at work noticed something different about her colleague and commented, "I want to be like you. I want to come to your church."

However, as in all churches, that outward focus is in tension with a normal inward focus and enjoyment of congregational tradition. "We need to value tradition but not bow down to traditionalism," Klassen says.

He judges that most of his parish needs improvement in talking with immediate



PHOTO: PETER KROEGER

Volunteers from Foothills Mennonite preparing to serve a meal to guests of Inn From the Cold.

neighbours, a vital part of taking God's Kingdom outside the walls of the church. The congregation is nonetheless seeking to prepare its members for change and witness in new settings, starting by taking a closer look at the changing face of Canadian culture and talking about the spirit of the Emmaus Road, where the risen Christ equipped two followers to share the gospel.

The board member responsible for missions and service revamped the committee's focus around the theme "across the street and around the world." The idea is to move the congregation beyond arm's length mission, such as sending funds to support others. Now this committee is known as the SOME people: service, outreach, missions, evangelism. The church budget is framed around an outward focus: 50 per cent of the money leaves the congregation for "glocal" (global and local) outreach activities.

Training Others for Works of Service

With a congregation of more than 500 (averaging 325 adults plus 100 children), Foothills Mennonite Church ministers with only two pastors plus a high level of volunteers. Forty people are involved in the worship ministry; the youngest (pianist) is 11. Thus identifying, equipping and training church leaders is an ongoing and important task.

That task, while challenging, is not onerous, because God has blessed the congregation with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Klassen quips that he sometimes feels he is corralling race horses rather than herding sheep. He is quick to add, "The Holy Spirit directs every member of the body, not just the pastor. We discern together."

A recent HIV/AIDS Project is a good example. After a young Kenyan Masai pastoral intern served last year before returning to his homeland, a congregational group visited and recorded four CDs yielding over \$750,000 for his HIV/AIDS Ministry. Joseph the former intern now works tirelessly with his community to educate, support and encourage people who may not know about HIV/AIDS or how it is transmitted, and with those living with AIDS. He stands up and speaks on behalf of the widows, orphans and vulnerable people, inviting them to take their place in their community.

At press time Klassen was taking a four-month sabbatical, making space for the Holy Spirit to prompt, urge and redirect his missional map. Whatever promptings he senses, he vows to share with the congregation, as part of its group discernment about its future. A congregation shouldn't "make" goals and decisions, Klassen says, they should "build" them. Surely as far as any congregation seeks after God's will, they will also find themselves building His Church. **FT**

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.



With Fresh Eyes

How a short-term mission trip to Brazil helped a church in Stratford, Ont., to see and serve its community in a new way.

“Do we come today?”
As I walk through Anne Hathaway School in Stratford, Ont., I am greeted with smiles, hugs and always the questions. What could possibly create such enthusiasm?

In 2005 after spending six weeks at the Voo Livre mission in Brazil, my eyes were opened to a new approach to outreach. By teaching life skills and providing a safe place for youth to gather, the mission there was slowly earning the right to share the gospel. In Canada if children come from a non-Christian home, they often have no way of learning about God. As a teacher, I had been shocked to discover that many of my young students did not even know that Jesus had anything to do with Christmas.

“Could we try something like Voo Livre for the children at the school next door to our church?” I asked. My pastor listened thoughtfully. “Let’s take a year to plan,” he said. “If we don’t do it well the first time, we may never get a second chance.”

As a result, our church has been on a four-year mission trip – without leaving home! In the spring of 2006 several members began volunteering at the school for an hour or so a week. By fall, when we were ready to formally start our ministry, which we named Kid’s Company, we had earned an open door for collaboration.

Most Wednesday afternoons between October and May, children from Grades 1 to 6 rush to the church after school. They enjoy a healthy snack with their “crew.” After a short Bible story they head to life skills classes. To date we have offered courses in cooking, sewing, woodworking, gardening, crafts, bicycle maintenance, science experiments, magic, board games, the Arts, and of course lots of sports and games. The first year our aim was to have participants get comfortable walking through the doors of the church. In our second year we introduced a short Bible chat.

Through this program the children have sensed that

we love and value them. By the end of our first year we had 37 kids registered, the second year 52, and last year we ended with about 87. This year we started with 100 plus a waiting list! For about 80 of them, Kid’s Company is their only activity outside of school! Parents are appreciative and frequently stop to chat when they pick up their children. A couple of times a year they are invited to share a meal.

Last May some of our Grade 6ers asked if they could come back as helpers. In response, our youth director is developing a junior leadership program for Grade 7 and 8 students, spending time with them and guiding them as they gain practical experience as crew helpers.

As a church we are experiencing what it is to be Jesus’ hands in today’s world. We have a great group of volunteers. Some serve every week as crew leaders. Others teach a four-week course, drive our teen helpers to the church, prepare craft materials or help with the snacks. As they have stepped out of their comfort zone and allowed God to use them, their leadership skills and confidence have grown. It reminds me of how Jesus sent out the disciples to share the good news and heal the sick, as recorded in Matthew 10. Jesus says there, “If anyone gives even a

cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.” We have been privileged at Kid’s Company to have the opportunity to do this, and He has used the experience to open our eyes to our community and to poverty.

This fall a small group of adults began focusing on a co-operative housing development near the church. By painting, cleaning ovens or just sitting down to share a coffee, they are ministering in a practical way. Recently the housing directors asked the church to provide a list of all our ministries, so they can hand it out to new tenants in their welcome package!

Many people in Canada live in a world we cannot imagine, a world of neglect, lack of good nutrition, violence, sadness, poverty, a world empty of God’s love. Let’s find ways to respond to the needs around our churches! **FT**

I was shocked to discover that many of my young students did not even know that Jesus had anything to do with Christmas

HELEN HARRISON is currently writing a manual which details how a congregation can begin a Kid’s Company ministry. She can be contacted at hharrison@cyg.net.



Multiply, Equip, Send

The Brethren in Christ Church includes one of Canada's fastest growing congregations. Its Canadian director explains.

Lives Changed Here" expresses the core of a newly adopted vision statement of the Brethren in Christ Church in North America.

We are an evangelical/Anabaptist denomination including 40 congregations in Canada and 285 in the United States, founded in the late 18th century in Pennsylvania. Some Brethren in Christ came to Canada in 1788.

The Brethren in Christ has woven together Anabaptism, Pietism and Wesleyan-holiness traditions in a unique way. Until the 1960s, many of us were rural or small-town folk who practiced our commitment to holiness and simple living ("separation from the world") through dressing quite plainly and avoiding political activities and many community social events. Not surprisingly, this tendency toward isolationism stunted growth as a church.

The 1960s and 1970s saw much change in our movement, including a new emphasis on evangelism and outreach into local communities and urban areas, resulting in growth and increased diversity.

As we look to the coming decade, we aspire to be an expanding mosaic of churches, all seeing lives transformed by Jesus Christ, as the new vision statement says.

In Canada, that "expanding mosaic" includes both smaller, rural churches, as well as one of the largest and fastest growing congregations in Canada. We have also re-engaged in ministry in Quebec through a creative partnership with the Quebec Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches (AEFMQ), desiring to expand our mosaic to truly reflect who we are as Canadians.

Amid congregations that range from the more classic "community church" model to the multi-site or satellite approach, three overarching priorities guide our ministry decisions and focus: multiply sites for life change; equip leaders for transformation; and send workers for witness and service.

Multiply sites for life change. In the past year the church has honestly addressed the need to revitalize many of our congregations, acknowledging that a significant percentage are not experiencing the health and growth we desire. A newly reorganized leadership and staff structure allows us to focus "leadership muscle" on fostering health and development among our churches and pastors.

We anticipate an intentional effort, where possible, on turning churches around to renewed, mission-driven health. Where this is not possible, we will discern how best to release resources for kingdom growth.

That fast-growing church mentioned earlier is called The Meeting House, a multi-site congregation in Ontario. It continues to expand with three new sites planned for the coming year. We are thrilled that this congregation, although a mega-church with many resources, fully embraces its denominational family and views its health and growth as integral to the fulfillment of our common vision.

We are also quite excited about an approved plan to intentionally birth a new movement within our community, planting a series of new churches that will exist as a "cohort," embracing a strong team dynamic among their ministry leaders. Our goal is to launch at least two "new brand" churches by 2012 with a minimum goal of planting at least 10 more in the next 10 years.

Equip leaders for transformation. Like many other denominations, we also are focusing on leadership – attracting new leaders and developing our existing ministry personnel to be more effective missional leaders to address new realities.

New and emerging leaders require different approaches and different models for ministry in order to pursue compelling opportunities for ministry engagement. Teams or cohorts are more desired, as well as models that affirm multiple ministry leaders within one congregational setting. New leaders are looking to be engaged in holistic, meaningful outreach into their communities at the same time as being fully engaged in addressing needs at a global level.

We are committed to wrestling with all of this as we seek to welcome and equip existing leaders for transformation.

Send workers for witness and service. The Brethren in Christ exists in some 20 countries around the world, and we value the partnership with our sisters and brothers in seeing lives transformed by Jesus Christ among all nations, addressing needs of the whole person and whole communities through avenues such as Brethren in Christ World Missions, Mennonite Central Committee, and the International BIC Association.

We celebrate God's faithfulness, and it is our desire still, as it was over 200 years ago, to follow Jesus. **FT**

REV. DARRELL WINGER is Canadian director of the Brethren in Christ Church, Canada. This column continues a series by affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. For a list, see theEFC.ca/affiliates.



Scientology Under Fire

Christians who want to understand Scientology will certainly not find it boring.

If new religions won awards for being controversial, the Church of Scientology would be way ahead of any competition. Imagine belonging to a religion accused of not even being a religion; of teaching weird theories about space aliens; whose founder L. Ron Hubbard is alleged to have been a pathological liar; and whose current leader David Miscavige is said to deserve jail time. Imagine if your religion accused its critics (including Canada's Gerry Armstrong) of being deranged and argued that psychiatry is a monstrous evil.

There are a few things about the Church of Scientology not in dispute. It was founded in 1954 by L. Ron Hubbard, a native of Nebraska. Hubbard was a veteran of World War II. The central holy text of the movement is *Dianetics*, authored by Hubbard in 1950. The Church's anti-drug program Narcanon started in 1966. The Church was raided by law enforcement both in America in 1977 and in Canada in 1983.

After Hubbard died in 1986, David Miscavige, then 26, became the international leader. The IRS granted the Church tax status in 1993, and Australia recognized it as a religion in 2002. And, as most people know, superstar actor Tom Cruise is a dedicated Scientologist.

Observers also agree what Scientology's basic teachings are: namely that humans are spirit beings (Scientologists use the term "thetans") who are messed up because of previous lives. Scientology courses and auditing procedures (using a device known as an e-meter) provide a path to the ideal state of "clear" and along the "bridge to total freedom." Scientologists view Hubbard as the vanguard figure who provided the "tech" on human liberation.

Beyond these basics, things get messy – and profoundly so. Take Cruise. He is one of the richest Hollywood actors but has paid a price for his faith, especially after his critique of Brooke Shields in 2005 for taking anti-depressants. According to biographer Andrew Morton, Cruise's advocacy of Scientology cost him ties with Paramount Pictures, led in part to his divorce from Nicole Kidman and fractured relations with some long-time friends. Cruise makes no

apologies for Scientology and credits the faith with [its] accurate assessment of psychiatry ("a Nazi science" he told *Entertainment Weekly*) and being the sole source for helping humanity.

Cruise's faith was mocked in the infamous "Trapped in the Closet" episode from Comedy's Central's *South Park* (November 16, 2005). The influential cartoon series lampooned Cruise and Scientology for alleged teachings about Xenu, a space being supposedly introduced to Scientologists during upper secret level training. The show also targeted Scientology leader David Miscavige, Cruise's best friend. The show concluded with Stan, one of the cartoon's

chief characters, saying that "Scientology is just a big fat global scam."

Miscavige himself is under increasing scrutiny. In the last two years major media in North America, Europe and Australia including CNN, CBC and the BBC have featured prominent ex-members accusing him of physical assault, megalomania and running a prison-like program known as the Rehabilitation Project Force. These charges are also reported directly by the ex-members, including Amy Scobee (*Abuse at the Top*), Marc Headley (*Blown for Good*), Jeff Hawkins (*Counterfeit Dreams*) and by Marty Rathbun in his blog Moving On Up a Little Higher.

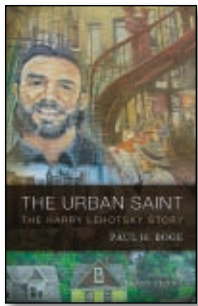
As if this is not tangled enough, consider two other factors. First, Miscavige charges that it is some of the ex-members who are actually guilty of assault. Talk about he said/she said. Second, not all critics of Miscavige are opposed to Scientology. Rathbun, for example, hopes that true Scientologists will help reform Scientology around Hubbard's teachings and oust Miscavige.

Given all of these enormous controversies, along with their attendant lies, distortions and lawsuits, it is particularly important that Christians be informed, loving and sensitive. We should recognize, for example, that Scientology is a religion. Dismissing it as a business misses its spiritual dimension and the incredible devotion of most of its followers.

On more specific Scientology controversies, I am now doing some major additional research. For now, let's be aware that these are interesting times for Scientologists and for those who want to share the gospel with them. **FT**

Given the enormous controversies, it is particularly important that Christians be informed, loving and sensitive

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



**The Urban Saint:
The Harry Lehotsky Story**

By Paul H. Boge
Horizon Press, 2010
314 pages
\$24.95 (paper)



**Revelation: Brazos
Theological Commentary
on the Bible**

By Joseph L. Mangina
Brazos Press, 2010
272 pages,
\$34.50 (hardcover)

**The Urban Saint:
The Harry Lehotsky
Story**

Harry Lehotsky's life should've ended with a teenage overdose – a crumpled heap on a dark, rain-drenched roadside, dumped by three drug-using friends. But God had another plan that took him from New York City to seminary, to marrying a small-town South Dakotan named Virginia and then to 20-plus years of inner-city ministry in Winnipeg's depressed West End.

Biographer Paul Boge, previously an award-winning novelist, does a superb job telling Lehotsky's compelling story – there's sin, grace, redemption, doubts, death threats, contemplated suicide and a life-consuming desire for gospel ministry infused with courageous confrontation, sacrificial love, compassion and sheer hard work.

Harry Lehotsky, with the blessing of a supportive wife and three sons, established New Life Ministries congregation, Lazarus Housing, Nehemiah Housing, Connect 2 (free private voice mail for phoneless individuals), Ellice Café and Ellice Theatre. Along the way he received six honours including the Order of Canada and had three awards established in his name.

The Urban Saint reveals a man who truly exemplified the motto of the 18th century Baptist missionary, William Carey, who said Christians should expect great things *from* God as they attempt great things *for* God. Lehotsky profoundly impacted Winnipeg's West End, leaving a legacy worthy of emulation around the world.

This book is not a blueprint for inner-city ministry, but a compelling demonstration of hope in situations. Here is proof that no circumstance is beyond the reach of grace and redemption. John Mohan of Siloam Mission in Winnipeg says this is a "must-read for anyone seriously interested in the issues of domestic poverty, human suffering and community development."

Lehotsky was taken by pancreatic cancer in 2006. Though absent from this world, living in the presence of his Lord and Saviour, his life and legacy still speaks. You need to meet Harry Lehotsky, and Paul Boge provides the perfect introduction.

—DAVID DANIELS

Revelation

This volume in the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible is a highly refreshing and edify-

ing study on a difficult portion of Holy Scripture that will be valuable to preacher and interested laypersons alike.

As a commentator, Joseph Mangina of Wycliffe College (Toronto) dutifully fulfills expectations of a verse-by-verse explanation of the text of Revelation.

But this Brazos series is different from many others in its emphasis on "theological exegesis," a movement of Bible interpretation that believes "dogma clarifies rather than obscures." Commentary writers were chosen on the conviction that the Nicene tradition provides a "proper basis for the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture."

Mangina, an associate professor of systematic theology, tends to focus more on the big picture rather than close examination of textual or translational problems. If you're used to commentaries which deal with minute details, you'll notice the qualitative difference.

Central to Mangina's reading is his assertion that Revelation is a kind of "apocalyptic haggadah," that is, "a rehearsal, a narrative, a memory of an event in the past that is somehow *not* past, but our present reality, and that

toward which all history is headed."

One of Mangina's strengths is consistently maintaining a Christ-centred focus, always seeking to discern what the book tells us about Christ as Lord over heaven and earth and over history. Thus he avoids unnecessarily speculating on that to which particular symbols (e.g., 666, the Beast, etc.) may refer, preferring instead to constantly remind readers that Jesus Christ has and will ultimately triumph over opposing forces.

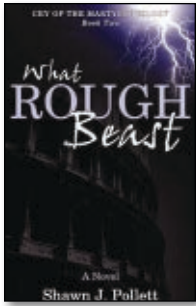
The commentary could've been stronger if it had included a translation of the text. Furthermore, Mangina seems to have all but ignored many of the better existing commentaries in his own sources, and thus risks isolating his work from the larger scholarship. That said, it's still a very worthwhile read.

—DAVID GURETZKI

**What Rough Beast:
A Novel**

It's 253 AD, two years after the events of Pollett's first novel, *Christianus Sum*. The evil Valerianus is back, and now he's Emperor of Rome.

He schemes to eradicate the Christians. But will inter-



What Rough Beast: A Novel

By Shawn J. Pollett
Word Alive Press, 2010
418 pages
\$17.49 (paper)



Growing Up Christian: Why Young People Stay in Church, Leave Church and (Sometimes) Come Back to Church

By John P. Bowen
Regent College Publishing, 2010
216 pages
\$20.26 (paper)

nal strife destroy them first?

Some of those who denied the *Christos* under persecution are truly repentant and desperate for forgiveness. Certain church leaders will give these *lapsi* certificates of peace, reinstating them in the body. Others refuse.

Damarra's and Valens' past suffering at Valerianus' hands gives them high status among other Christians, and many *lapsi* come to beg for certificates of peace. Damarra

writes them; Valens will not. He, who passed the test in the first book, can't understand how another could falter – until he reaches his own breaking point.

Before that happens, a stranger comes from one of the Germanic tribes with a message from the *Christos*: Valens is to evade the emperor's clutches and lead a "clan" of 13 to an unknown event at an unspecified time and place outside the Roman Empire.

The novel follows the assembly and journey of the clan, and the military and political battles of Valerianus and his son, who find themselves under attack from many sides.

The characters are well-developed, and their relationships add richness to the story. When good characters make bad choices, you see it coming and understand why. Tension increases as we keep hoping the individuals will

see the truth and turn back in time.

The *lapsi* make an interesting subplot. Ontario author Shawn J. Pollett has done his research, and he brings the early Christians' surroundings and issues to life.

What Rough Beast along with the previous book in the *Cry of the Martyrs* trilogy are available through local bookstores as well as online in print and eBook versions.

—JANET SKETCHLEY

Growing Up Christian: Why Young People Stay in Church, Leave Church and (Sometimes) Come Back to Church

Here, John Bowen of Wycliffe College in Toronto summarizes his findings from research conducted among alumni of a leadership program at Ontario Pioneer camps. Working with 333 responses to a survey sent to 1,258 former camp leaders, Bowen categorized his participants into four main categories.

Seventy-five per cent of his respondents still called themselves Christian and remained involved in church. By contrast, 4 per cent no longer considered themselves Christian and had stopped attending church.

Between those two ends, Bowen notes 17 per cent who considered themselves Christian but had "more or less dropped out of church" and another 2 per cent who still attended church but were unsure about whether they were Christian or not.

Growing Up Christian benefits by Bowen's inclu-

sion of many quotations – most of them insightful and some of them deeply sobering – from those who returned his surveys. At points, you might wish for more explanation as to how the comments fit into the larger picture he's drawing, but their authenticity compensates somewhat for the absence of interpretation.

You may take courage that the majority of Bowen's respondents remain in church (which he admits relates in part to the population willing to participate in his research). If you're wondering about late adolescents and young adults who have "strayed," Bowen's later chapter on the reasons people return may bring hope.

"Travelling Together," his final chapter on what his participants wish characterized churches, is worth the purchase price of the book and should be required reading for all *Faith Today* readers.

—KEN BADLEY

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Criticizing Christians

Is it ever right to criticize other Christians in public?

Over my career as a writer and speaker – about a quarter century, now – I have had occasion to raise some concerns about certain Christian individuals and institutions. I’ve even criticized some of them pretty hard, both in Christian and in mainstream media.

Invariably, upon such occasions, I or my editor will receive mail from Christians who denounce me for, yes, denouncing other Christians. “We shouldn’t shoot our own,” they say.

Well, here’s why I sometimes do.

First, I’m a Christian, and I try to follow the example of Jesus and the Apostles. They criticize other believers – fairly routinely, as it appears in the pages of the New Testament. And they do so publicly, whether it’s Paul withstanding Peter in front of other Christians, or various Christians disagreeing with each other and with Paul as to whether he should return to Jerusalem, or Paul criticizing individuals and whole churches in the public documents we know as epistles.

And lest we are tempted to blame all this on a cranky Paul, let’s remember that Jesus himself, at both ends of the New Testament, is capable of handing out some pretty strong public criticism. Look at the Gospels, whether what He says to Simon Peter (“Get behind me, Satan” – the likes of which I’ve never said even at my most incensed) or what He says to the Pharisees who congratulate themselves on being sons of Abraham only to have Jesus say that their father instead is the devil (ditto). Then look at the Book of Revelation and what He says to some of the churches in chapters 2 and 3.

So public criticism of other Christians is clearly established as a normal part of Christian discourse.

And let’s notice that many of these criticisms are rendered without any obvious attempt to follow the recommendations of Matthew 18, so we can’t object to public criticism simply because a critic hasn’t approached the individual first privately or then with a few others. Matthew 18 is about the very particular case of someone sinning against you personally. It isn’t a required pattern for all teachings and warnings – so Jesus and the Apostles

don’t always follow it, and neither do I.

Second, the New Testament exhorts us to exhort each other and warns us to warn each other of those in our midst who might lead us astray, bring shame upon the Church and otherwise harm the gospel. So we are not only given examples of public criticism, but also commands to undertake it.

Third, criticism of mistaken Christians can be a legitimate defence of the reputation of God and the Church. Many people in the West have made the point that moderate Muslims have been far too slow to publicly criticize their co-believers who engage in violence or other reprehensible activities. How are we to know, so this line of thinking goes, that the extremists are not representative of the mainstream if representatives of the mainstream don’t distance themselves from extremism?

In Canada today, let’s be clear, many of our neighbours have no more knowledge about, or respect for, Christians than they do members of any other religion. So unless we want those neighbours to carry around prejudices toward Christians as narrow-minded, heavy-handed, self-righteous ignoramuses who want to shove their religion down other people’s throats and impose their morality on everyone else (and you’ve heard those exact phrases dozens of times, haven’t you?), then some of us simply have to disavow others of us in public.

So I’m going to keep doing it. But before I am criticized (!) for unleashing every malcontent and revenge-seeker among us, the Scriptures offer us a number of qualifications we ought to meet before we start criticizing. Space doesn’t allow a full exposition here, but most basic of all is the motive of love: loving God and loving our neighbours.

And let’s be sure to seek the best interests of *all* the neighbours involved, including those we criticize, indeed, but also including their victims and those looking on as well, all of whom God loves. **FT**

The Bible not only gives us examples of public criticism, but also commands us to undertake it

JOHN STACKHOUSE teaches at Regent College and is the author of *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (Oxford).



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—Romans 10:14



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What We Can Learn From Tom Harpur

Despite the unacceptable New Age ideas promoted by Canadian religion writer Tom Harpur, there are a few things Evangelicals can learn from him as well.

By Stephen Bedard

Over the last couple of decades Tom Harpur has become one of the most controversial writers on the Canadian religious scene. Between his columns in the *Toronto Star* and his popular books, he has pushed the limits of what people believe about Jesus and numerous other issues.

Many Evangelicals write off Tom Harpur as a “quack” or a “New Ager.” He is ignored and his influence is discounted as the simple acceptance of gullible people who really should know better. But is there a better way for Evangelicals to respond?

My familiarity with Tom Harpur goes back a couple of decades. Twenty years ago, as a nominal Christian in a liberal Anglican church, I was beginning to be influenced by some Evangelicals. My priest gave me a copy of Harpur’s *Always on Sunday* to show me that there was an alternative to seeing the Bible from an

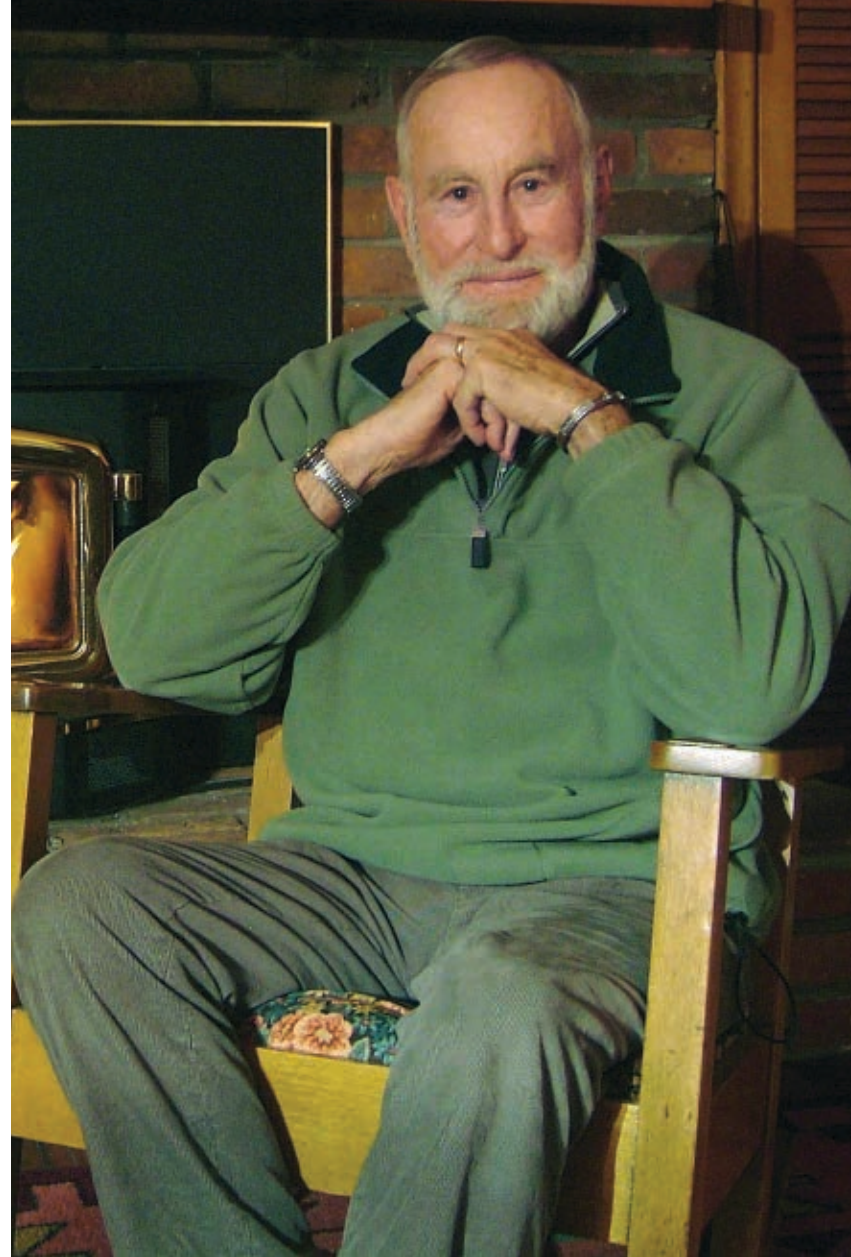


PHOTO: DAVID COLES

evangelical perspective. I read the book, but it did not have the desired effect – a decade later I became a Baptist pastor.

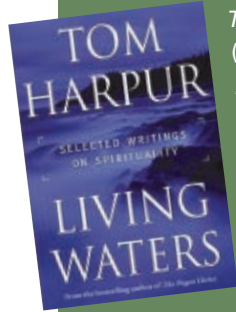
As a pastor and student of the Bible, I found myself confronted more recently by another book by Tom Harpur, this time the much more radical *The Pagan Christ*. In this book Harpur argued that there was no historical Jesus, and that the entire gospel story was simply pagan myths in a Jewish garb. My congregation and many others were quite upset over these claims. While many clergy refused to respond, I could not remain silent. I contacted Dr. Stanley Porter, a well-respected New Testament scholar and president of McMaster Divinity College, and suggested that perhaps there was something that we could do. The result was our book *Unmasking the Pagan Christ* (Clements, 2006), where we reaffirm the historical existence of Jesus and dismantle the claims that the gospel is based on pagan myths.

Since that time I have had the opportunity to get to

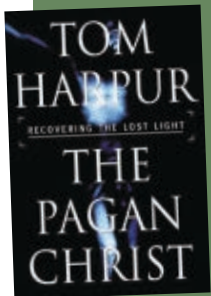
Books by Tom Harpur



Harpur's Heaven and Hell (Oxford, 1983)
For Christ's Sake (Oxford, 1983)
Always on Sunday (Oxford, 1988)
Communicating the Good News Today: Thoughts on Religion in the Communication Age (Lancelot, 1988)
Life After Death (McClelland & Stewart, 1991)
God Help Us (McClelland & Stewart, 1992)
The God Question and Other Faith Issues (Lancelot, 1993)



The Divine Lover: A Celebration of Romantic Love (Lancelot, 1994)
Harpur vs. Hancock: Challenging Viewpoints on Faith and Ethical Issues (Lancelot, 1994)
The Uncommon Touch: An Investigation of Spiritual Healing (McClelland & Stewart, 1994)



Prayer: The Hidden Fire: A Practical and Personal Approach to Awakening a Greater Intimacy With God (Northstone, 1997)
Would You Believe? Finding God Without Losing Your Mind (McClelland & Stewart, 2000)
Finding the Still Point: A Spiritual Response to Stress (Northstone, 2003)
The Pagan Christ: Recovering the Lost Light (Thomas Allen, 2004)
Living Waters: Selected Writings on Spirituality (Thomas Allen, 2006)
Water Into Wine: An Empowering Vision of the Gospels (Thomas Allen, 2007)

know Tom Harpur. We have had coffee and talked about the state of the Church in North America. While we have refused to debate the differences between our books, we have had some interesting conversations. What has haunted me about these conversations is that perhaps we are so busy disagreeing with Tom Harpur that we do not take the time to learn from him.

Let me make myself absolutely clear: I completely disagree with his interpretation of the Bible, his understanding of Jesus and just about every solution that he has offered to the Church's problems. I do discount him as a historian and strongly disagree with him as a theologian. But perhaps Tom Harpur still has something to say to us as a critic of the Church and the religious landscape. I would like to share what I have learned from him.

Part of Tom Harpur's reason for writing *The Pagan Christ* was the observation, from decades of journalistic investigation, that none of the promising renewal movements and innovative church growth theories have ever made the hoped-for transformations in the Church. They create a stir for a period, and then a few years later they are forgotten or left as a footnote in some history book. As a result he felt more than a fine-tuning or tinkering with the Church was required. Rather, the

entire Christian faith had to be torn down and rebuilt with a new understanding.

I disagree with Harpur's solution, but his observation is correct. From time to time people put their hope in new renewal movements and models of ministry. They seem to have some benefit for a time, and yet the Church seems to remain in the same position of trying to demonstrate the transforming power available through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

While we must learn from all of the new models and theories, we must also come to the new conclusion that there is no silver bullet that is going to solve all our problems. The Church was never meant to have it easy, receiving converts with little or no work, being embraced wholeheartedly by the society at large.

From the beginning we were designed to rely on faith for our very existence, knowing that nothing can come to the Church except through prayerful trust and long obedience. Tom Harpur's criticism of easy solutions is something we can learn from.

In many of his books, it is clear that he is not addressing Bible-believing Christians, but rather those who have abandoned or have been abandoned by the Church. He writes for those who have tried the Church and found it wanting. These people could easily be written off by the Church as those who have refused to submit to its authority. But perhaps he has a point in his attempt to reach out to post-Christians.

I disagree with Harpur's tactic of rebuilding people's faith in God by dismantling a literal and historical Jesus. Yet there are many people out there who have given the Church a try and have been hurt. Certainly there are people who have left the Church because they do not like the demands that the gospel places upon our lives. However, there are many problems within the Church that have also led to people's rejection of it.

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons have recently written a book called *unChristian* (Baker, 2007) that looks at the negative attitudes of outsiders toward the Church and how we are often responsible for these attitudes. There is an entire mission field of post-Christians who must be shown that a bad church experience does not require an abandonment of Christ. Tom Harpur is right to reach out to such people, although I strongly disagree with his message.

In preparation for my book with Dr. Porter, I went back and read a number of Harpur's other books. For most of his writing career Harpur held on to a historical Jesus. Although he rejected the virgin birth and the Trinity, he did believe in a literal Jesus that performed healings, died and rose again. Yet there was a tension within those books, as he would embrace certain parts

of the gospel and reject others.

In particular he struggled with the exclusivity of the Christian faith based on belief in Jesus. In one book Harpur suggests that a literal interpretation of Jesus' claim to be the Way, Truth and Life (John 14:6) [is] the source of much of civilization's greatest tragedies, including the Inquisition, Crusades and Holocaust. There is almost a sense of relief apparent in *The Pagan Christ* when, with the dismissal of the historical Jesus, all differences between religions and cultures disappear.

Harpur is, of course, mistaken to abandon the historical Jesus. The historical evidence for Jesus of Nazareth is as strong as we have for any ancient figure. Yet from Tom Harpur's experience, we can see the importance of having a solid understanding of Jesus. Otherwise we can slip into the human tendency to remake Jesus in our image. If we keep Him merely a religious image, we can attach whatever agenda we hold to Him.

People from every religious and cultural spectrum have used Jesus to support their positions. Tom Harpur's explicit denial of a literal Jesus is just a more honest way of doing what many others do implicitly.

If we are going to avoid this, we need to go back

to Jesus. Not the Jesus of religious imagery and warm religious piety, but the historical Jesus who lived in Palestine 2,000 years ago and who literally died and rose again for our forgiveness and eternal life. Unless we understand who Jesus was in His original context, what He said and what He did, we are leaving ourselves open to every new theory and hidden agenda. I am thankful that Harpur, although it was not his intention, reminded me of the foundation we need in the historical Jesus.

After much research and study I remain in strong disagreement with Tom Harpur on a number of issues. He is wrong to deny the historical Jesus and wrong to assign pagan origins to the gospel.

But just because he is wrong in his solutions does not mean that Evangelicals can ignore the problems that he has identified. Let us take a critical look at ourselves, of how the Church reaches out to an unbelieving world and a once-believing world. Let us reflect on where we are going, and perhaps we can learn from Tom Harpur on the way. **FT**

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