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To Connect, Equip and Inform Evangelical Christians in Canada

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2011



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The Unbreakable Link Between **Faith & Science**

Five Canadian scientists
share their stories

Kienan Hebert's Kidnapping & Return: Read the story behind the story p. 10

Good Teens With Bad Drugs: Evangelical youth and today's drug culture p. 24

Live Theatre Touches the Heart: How Christians are offering thought-provoking entertainment p. 33

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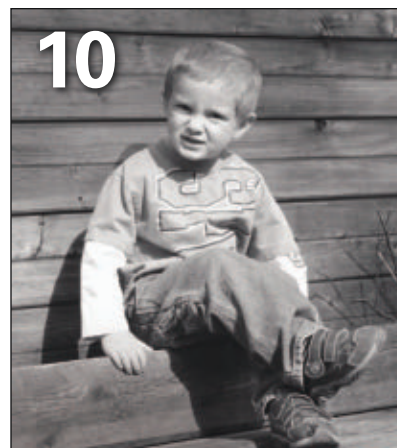
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Faith Seeking Understanding

Fresh takes on science, addictions and hospitality.

In the last hundred years or so, it's been rare to hear the words "Christian" and "scientist" in the same phrase. Most Canadians have assumed if you are a scientist, you will find the claims of the Bible harder to embrace. And certainly education in our schools has often continued that divide.

Yet scientists of the past were often Christians. Many took their faith as a starting point in their search to understand creation. Using Scripture as a plumb line, they uncovered many complexities – and gave God the glory.

Our cover story, "The Unbreakable Link Between Faith and Science" by Alex Newman, shows that such an approach continues to work well even today. Five Canadian scientists share how science actually bolsters their Christian faith.

Each tells of being led by their faith into areas of scientific study and research. They relate how their relationship with – and understanding of – God have given them confidence to keep searching for answers.

We shouldn't be surprised that Christian faith and good science can go hand in hand, says Ross Hastings in "What Science and Theology Have in Common." But we often are.

Hastings, a theology professor and chemist, explains how both theology and science arise from a desire to know the truth. "No discovery will ever surprise or outsmart Christ," he reminds us. "Christian theology and science in fact share a common commitment to the fearless pursuit of truth no matter its source...Both acknowledge that knowledge is gained by more than mere abstract reasoning."

Another challenging feature, "Good Teens With Bad Drugs" by Lisa Hall Wilson, focuses on how some evangel-

ical youth are swept into today's drug culture, often beginning a habit with prescription drugs from their own home. Teens are vulnerable because of peer pressure and the need to be loved and accepted.

Churches and parents need to make a difference. Greg Cornelson of Teen Challenge Alberta reports that up to 50 per cent of their clients come from Christian homes. Perhaps we can find hope in how these challenges are not hidden as much as in the past. Creating an accepting and supportive environment in your congregation does help.

Improving the welcoming nature of a congregation is also encouraged in Debra Fieguth's article, "Why Hospitality is Holy: A Call to the Ancient Art of Welcoming." Hospitality is biblical and holy, she writes. "We are called to welcome people into the Kingdom, and what better way to do that than through hospitality?"

Whether it's dealing with cliques during church coffee hour, welcoming refugees or people living with HIV/AIDS, Evangelicals can learn the biblical attitude of hospitality that will bless others and themselves.

As we respond to all these challenges, let's remind ourselves *doing* is not always enough. Putting our faith into action begins with our own gratitude to God and His hospitality toward us. While *we* were yet sinners, He loved us. Remembering this during this holy season will make it easier for us to reach out with the same attitude. **FT**

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

Faith Today

Vol. 29 No 6

Publisher: The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Bruce J. Clemenger, president

Managing Editor: Gail Reid

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Production: Robert Robotham Graphics

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Copy Editor: Janet Dimond

Printer: Dollco Printing, Ottawa.

Printed in Canada

Founding Editor: Brian C. Stiller

Founded: 1983

Member: Access Copyright, The Canadian Church Press (DDP), Christian Periodical Index (acl.org), Magazines Canada

Proud sponsor of: www.christianity.ca

Faith Today is a communications ministry of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada to connect, equip and inform evangelical Christians in Canada.

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Appreciation

Re: *Where Is Free Speech Heading in Canada?* (Sep/Oct 2011)

I greatly enjoy receiving and reading *Faith Today*. The quality of writing, the depth of content and the breadth of discus-

sion are superb and well above most Christian publications I receive. Please pass on my compliments to those involved with this consistently above average publication.

Ron Suter
Ottawa, Ont.



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Milestones

APPOINTED

Steven Brown as president of Arrow Leadership Canada, a ministry which now serves about a hundred Christian leaders



Steven Brown

in its character- and skill-development programs. Former president Carson Pue remains in the position he assumed last year, CEO for Arrow North America. Scott Vandeventer is the new president of Arrow Leadership USA.

The restructuring aims to help Arrow expand. The North American and Canadian headquarters will remain in Vancouver, B.C., supported by offices in Portland and Los Angeles. Brown has served seven years with Arrow, most recently as vice president of programming.

David Murphy, CGA, as chief operating officer of Navigators of Canada, an evangelism and discipleship ministry with headquarters in Arva, Ont. Murphy has been director of finance there for 13 years.

Robert J. Lawless as president and CEO of Opportunity International Canada, which provides small business loans, savings, insurance and training to more than two million people working their

way out of poverty in the developing world. Lawless recently chaired its board of directors. He worked 30 years with McCormick and Co., serving as chairman and CEO before his 2009 retirement. He succeeds Paula Curtis who served as president since 2009.

David Di Sabatino as executive director for Kerr Street Ministries, Oakville, Ont. Previously he served as senior pastor at Liberty International Church in Toronto. Kerr Street Ministries provides holistic support and care for 5,000 people, particularly children, youth and low-income



Mags Storey

families.

Mags Storey as editor of *ChristianWeek Ontario*, a regional version of the national newspaper *ChristianWeek*, based in Winnipeg, Man. Storey, an award-winning novelist and journalist in Newmarket, Ont.,

succeeds Robert White.

MERGED

Two mission support networks, **Cross-Global Link** and **The Mission Exchange**, agreed in October to merge, forming a body representative of 35,000 evan-

gelical missionaries deployed in every country by more than 190 agencies and churches. CrossGlobal Link (formerly the IFMA) was founded as an association of independent faith missions in 1917 and is directed by Marv Newell in Wheaton, Ill. The Mission Exchange (formerly the EFMA) was birthed in 1946 out of the National Association of Evangelicals as an umbrella association for mission agencies including denominations. Its president is Steve Moore in Stone Mountain, Ga. CrossGlobal Link lists many Canadian member organizations on its website, from AIM Canada to World Team Canada, while The Mission Exchange lists mainly member offices in the United States, except for Navigators of Canada and MB Mission (formerly MBMS International).

AWARDED

Peter Mahaffy of The King's University College in Edmonton with the 2011 James Flack Norris Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Teaching of Chemistry, sponsored by the American Chemical Society. He is the second Canadian to do so since the annual award was founded in 1951. Mahaffy helps direct The King's Centre for Visualization in Science (kcvs.ca) which empowers undergraduate students to develop digital resources for teaching and demonstrating difficult

Letters to the editor

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concepts. He is co-author of a chemistry textbook for Nelson Canada (with digital resources, of course). He also serves on a committee with the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, which secured a United Nations designation of 2011 as being the International Year of Chemistry.

RESIGNED

Rob Pittman as president of Alberta Bible College, a Calgary school of 130 affiliated with the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. Brent Williams is serving as interim president as the college seeks a new president.

Ron Penner as president of Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., although he will continue to serve until a new president is selected. Penner, who is 66, has been with the college 14 years, the last five as president. The college has more than 450 students.

CEASED PUBLICATION

The *Fellowship LINK*, a quarterly magazine for Christian seniors, with its October issue. Founded in 1991, it was published by Ontario churches from the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada. Editor Eric Wright points to an inability to increase circulation enough to recover publication expenses.

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Parents Forgive Their Child's

The September kidnapping – and then amazing return – of Kienan Hebert shocked Canadians. The ability of his evangelical parents to forgive their son's abductor may provide yet another surprise.



Kienan Hebert. (Inset) Tammy and Paul Hebert: Not the first time they've had to trust God with the life of one of their children.

Paul and Tammy Hebert of Sparwood, B.C., credit their faith with sustaining them through their three-year-old son's abduction, and with giving them the strength to forgive the perpetrator upon Kienan's return. "Faith is always easy when you need God," says Hebert, a sales director, in an interview with *Faith Today*. "It's hard when things are going well."

This isn't the first time the father of eight has had to trust God with the life of his child. Caleb, their six-year-old son, was born with a heart defect and has undergone multiple surgeries. "Every day was a new day, and we figured life was a gift, whether it was short or long," says Hebert. "We were able to separate our wants as humans from our needs as God's disciples. The more you learn about God through the Bible, the

more you realize He's with you."

It was this deep knowledge of God's character that provided peace to the couple when they discovered Kienan missing from their home the morning of September 7, in a missing child case that quickly gripped Canadians. "We knew right away that someone had taken him because three blankets were missing, and you know the habits of your children," says Hebert. "We've always left our doors unlocked in case someone needed a place to stay. We never thought someone would take our kid."

The distraught couple – who moved to the small coal mining community two years ago – contacted the RCMP. Search and rescue teams immediately began looking for a little boy in Scooby-doo shorts. "Investigators can state that this is a case of child ab-

duction," said Cpl Dan Moskaluk, spokesman for the BCRCMP. "It is not a matter of a child walking away from the home. Kienan was abducted. The person who abducted Kienan . . . did enter the Hebert home and removed Kienan from the house."

Four days later at 3 a.m., Kienan was returned. The word miracle was used.

In 26 years of policing, Moskaluk – one of many police lining the road to the Heberts' house when an anonymous call informed them Kienan was back home – has never seen a child returned by the abductor, let alone unharmed. "I truly want to smile about this because it's not very often that these types of things happen in these types of investigations, frankly," he said. Kienan's return occurred just

12 hours after the Heberts issued a tearful plea to the suspect, broadcast from the white tent that served as headquarters for the search and rescue teams.

"Kienan is only three years old right now," Hebert told cameras. "And as you know, and we know, he can't speak. He can't tell us who you are. This is your chance, right now, to get away. All we want is for Kienan to come back with us and to be safe in our arms again."

After receiving the anonymous phone call, police alerted the Heberts who were staying at a friend's house. Rushing home they found Kienan asleep on a chair with his three blankets. "He was sleeping on the chair as if nothing had happened," recalls Hebert. "It was as if God was saying, 'Here is your son back. Thank you, faithful one.'" The quiet boy is reported to have run to his mother and thrown his arms around her. Within hours he was playing with Silly String with his brothers and sisters.

"To the person who returned Kienan safely, I would like to say thank you," Hebert said in an emotional public statement. "It was the right thing to do. I thank God that Kienan was returned unharmed... He is happily home and playing... Thank you. Thank you."

When Paul called his pastor, Ron

Abductor

Rutley of Sparwood Baptist, to tell him, "Kienan's back!" Rutley was shocked. "They never gave up hope that he would be safely returned," says Rutley, who has served Sparwood since 2008. "I've certainly seen God's hand on this and His presence with the Hebert family."

In a message to his congregation that Sunday morning, Rutley urged congregants – who had surrounded the family with meals, prayer and volunteered in the search – to continue praying for the suspect. "We don't love our neighbours as we should," he said, "and this man is our neighbour. We need to pray that his heart would be changed."



Ron Rutley

In spite of the trauma inspired by such an event, Hebert says they've already forgiven the suspect. "I would be a hypocrite if I asked God to forgive me and I didn't do the same for this man," he explains. "We're very thankful to him for returning Kienan, and willing to help him find his path back on track. Hopefully he finds the Lord through this as well."

Throughout the ordeal Paul and Tammy – who now lock their doors at night – say they never knew anything but peace. "We just knew through the whole thing that God was going to take care of Kienan."

Even now, weeks later, it seems their three-year-old was largely unaffected by the event. "It's as if he had a playmate for three or four days," says Hebert. "Nothing's troubled him. He's living as if everything is okay."

For Rutley this is proof of the "bigness" of God, of His ability to take something as horrific as Kienan's abduction, "something as terrible as every parent's nightmare," and turn it into good.

"But we might never know the reason why, this side of eternity," Rutley adds. "It might be that a generation yet to come will look back at the events of this past week and see the reason behind them. But we can't. We are too close to them." **FT**

–Emily Wierenga

Canadian Label Brings Fresh Music to the World



PHOTO: TYLER SIMPSON

Nehemiah Records Hip-Hop Crew "Immigration Click" with Steph Forster, 2011.

A new record company based in Vancouver, B.C., is creating a fresh beat by signing artists from the slums of the developing world.

"Our goal is to alleviate poverty and suffering in disadvantaged areas of the world and to give a voice to the voiceless through their art," says Steph Forster, founder of Nehemiah Records.

Having worked with local musicians for the past five years through the non-profit Nehemiah Arts Foundation, Forster has connections to major publishing houses and studios worldwide. It wasn't until she began scouting talent in the ghettos of Haiti for the score of an upcoming documentary that the vision for Nehemiah Records was born.

"I ended up meeting some guys in Tent City," says the 28-year-old, who has been filming a documentary about Haiti since 2009. "We had a freestyle session in a hut and I realized there was talent there. I got the gangsters in the studio and ended up sharing God with them and we started a prayer meeting. I talked with them about putting down their guns and taking up the cross, and then they began rapping about freedom and faith. It was a huge transition."

When she returned home in the summer of 2011, Forster contacted Michael David Kulyk, a friend and an agent for Grammy nominee Fresh IE, and asked if he would partner with her. With his support, as well as the financial backing of Calgary's Re:LIFE mentorship group, Nehemiah Records signed six artists in its first month.

"We identify and recruit musical talent in remote third-world countries," says Forster. "We bring our artists to a point of full studio production, then copyright, produce and release music on our label promoting our artists. In addition we develop an aggressive marketing strategy to promote and distribute the music produced by our talent."

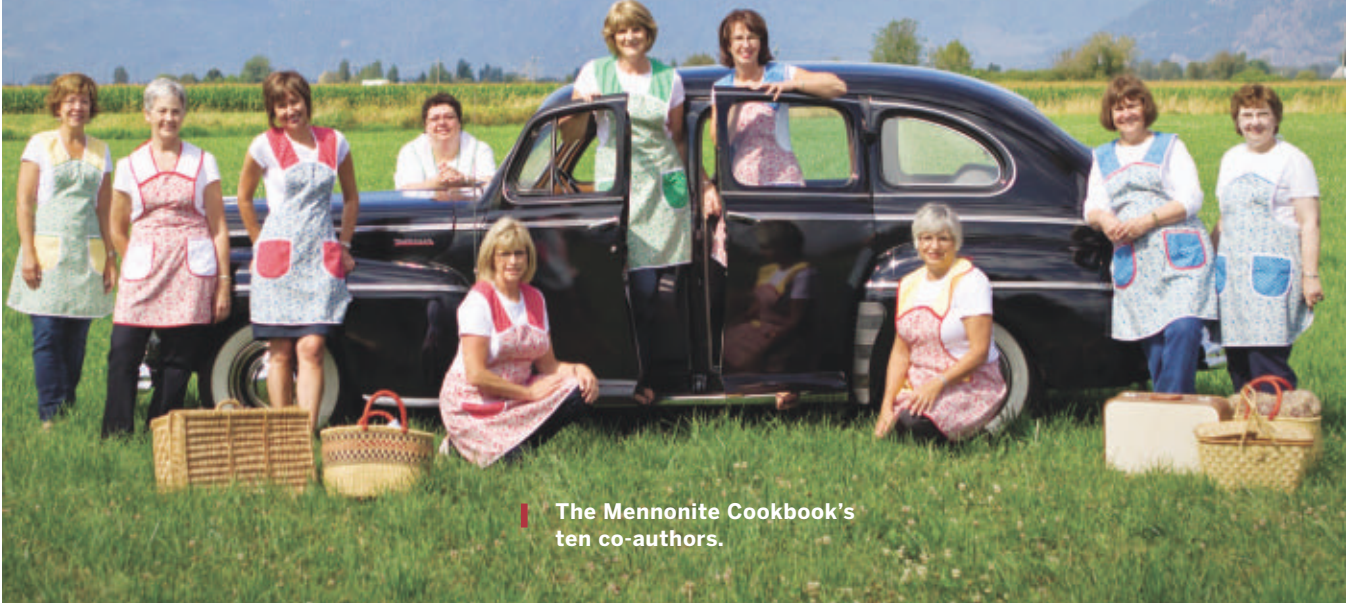
The vision, she says, is to connect unknown talent with established labels and artists, thereby creating a platform for those who wouldn't otherwise have one. Her only stipulations are the production of clean content and an affiliation with a reputable charity.

"It is my heart to give a voice to the voiceless," says Forster. "I want to create a movement to empower people." **FT**

–Emily Wierenga

Mennonite Cookbook Sells Like Hotcakes

PHOTO: BEATRIZ PHOTOGRAPHY



The Mennonite Cookbook's ten co-authors.

Barely a month after its release, *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* (Herald Press, 2011) had sold 6,400 copies, was in its second printing and attracting growing media attention. The cookbook is the natural genesis of the popular Canadian blog of the same name whose recipes and stories of faith have drawn over 2.4 million visitors.

"I really see how God is using this cookbook beyond whatever we could have dreamt or imagined," says Lovella Schellenberg, one of the ten co-authors. Through the cookbook these women share their faith, honour their Russian-German Mennonite heritage and help

needy children by donating all their royalties to charity.

The cookbook (details at mennonitegirlscancook.net) is a compilation of favourite recipes handed down to the authors by their mothers and grandmothers. In this sense the 208-glossy-page hardcover is very much a labour of love. The authors, all western Canadians save one, worried that eventually these recipes would be lost. There were no recently published cookbooks on Russian-German Mennonite foods and certainly not ones with colour photos. So they set about the difficult tasks of taking vague instructions – "add enough flour so the dough is soft" – and making

them precise and reproducible, down to the last millilitre.

"We wanted to demystify how these dishes are made," says Schellenberg, so that everyone can enjoy fragrant *zwieback* (rolls) or homemade *kartoffelpuffer* (potato pancakes).

However, the cookbook is more than a collection of recipes. It is also a manifesto encouraging Christians to rediscover the practice of hospitality. The authors, who range in age from 50-63, share childhood memories of sitting around the kitchen table with family, friends and neighbours. They write of *faspa*, the simple Sunday meal enjoyed with guests, expected and unexpected, and of mealtimes as an opportunity for building relationships. "We want to encourage the younger generations," says Schellenberg. "Open your home – do this as a gift to your family."

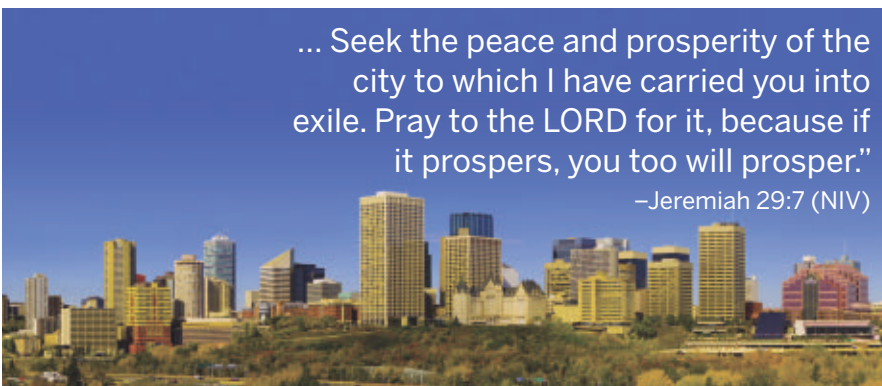
The strong, evangelical flavour of the authors' faith also comes out in the mini-devotionals peppered throughout the book. Because of the faith these women inherited from their mothers, and in gratitude, they are donating their royalties to an orphanage in Ukraine. **ET**

–Stephanie Douglas

... Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

–Jeremiah 29:7 (NIV)

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Generations Discipleship School Helps Youth Mature Into Adult Faith

It was a wearying pattern, one Pastor Rick Barker was sick of seeing: vibrant youth graduating from high school and, simultaneously, out of their Christian faith. "I love young people," says Barker, "and I want to see them in church, loving God."

Three years ago Barker founded Generations Discipleship School (GDS) with the goal of helping youth make the transition into adult faith through a mix of studies, service and mentoring.

The school (generationsdiscipleship.com) operates out of Cariboo Christian Life Fellowship (CCLF) in 100 Mile House, B.C., where Barker is senior pastor. It attracts both local and out-of-town students ranging in age from 18 to 23.

The one-year program at GDS aims to give students a strong faith foundation through a balanced offering of study and service. Students spend mornings in class and afternoons or evenings in ministry, working through CCLF's children and youth programs or through local ministries to seniors and the poor. Service opportunities include several brief, out-of-town projects and one optional mission trip. Curriculum pays special attention to biblical studies, with instructors drawn from the local pastorate as well as visiting lecturers.

What makes GDS unique is its strong commitment to discipleship. "Jesus spent close, personal time with His disciples

for intentional mentoring," Barker says. "Our desire is to reproduce this."

The size of the student body enables the school to pay more than lip service to the concept. GDS sees three to four students a year on average, small numbers which add up to lots of personal mentoring by staff. Additionally, students are billeted in church members' homes with the express purpose of encouraging ongoing discipleship in a family context. For a number of graduates their host families have continued to offer spiritual support as they move forward into adulthood.

While still in its infancy, the program at GDS is meeting with success. To date all of its graduates remain in the faith. "We're in this for the long haul," says Barker. **FT**

—Stephanie Douglas



GDS student Rebecca Granholm with a boy on a GDS mission trip to Ensenada, Mexico last March. The team worked in orphanages, helped with construction work and assisted single moms.

Recovery Church Preaches Message of Hope to Recovering Addicts



Pastors Brent Cantelon and Jason Roberts.

When staff at Christian Life Assembly in Langley, B.C., decided to take a hiatus from their Sunday evening service two years ago, little did they know they would birth a new and unique church in the process: a recovery church.

Senior Pastor Brent Cantelon insists his team "didn't strategize" to have a church geared to the unique needs of addicts and those in recovery from addic-

tion. "The Lord started something and we just followed," he explains. And we realized we'd struck a chord with that community."

It wasn't long before Recovery Church (recoverychurch.ca) had outgrown the little side room to become a church in its own right. Now one of five campuses that compose Christian Life Assembly, Recovery Church draws 150 to 200 worshippers to each service; 50 of them are transported by

the church bus or vans from local recovery houses and the rest arrive on their own.

"We service a group of people who are used to snorting something up their nose or shooting something into their veins," says Roberts. "The worship time is always very emotional. There's always an altar call, and every week people are putting their faith in Christ. The Lord knows what they need."

The focus of the teaching is usually related to addiction recovery. "When you talk about suicide, rage or anger, people who come from a background of addiction understand what you're talking about," says Roberts, himself a former addict.

Serving people of all ages Recovery Church offers nursery care and Sunday school classes for little ones, as well as midweek support groups for addicts and those who love them. Recently, they've also begun holding workshops for outside groups to teach other churches how to care for the addicts in their midst.

"There are congregations all over Canada that have similar issues and don't know what to do about it," says Cantelon. "But it isn't rocket science. We'd love to support them." **FT**

—Patricia Paddey



In a Secularized Culture

The quest for God today often shows up as a quest for justice.

Canadians have lost a significant voice in Quebec evangelicalism. Éric Wingender, a professor and former president of École de Théologie Évangélique de Montréal, died suddenly of a heart attack on October 5. (ETEM is a Mennonite Brethren-supported Bible college.)

I recall a memorable evening with him in a downtown Montreal restaurant as he passionately described the dynamics of evangelicalism in Quebec, particularly among the Québécois community and the importance for his generation – those who had come to faith in Jesus Christ in the '70s and '80s – to live out the gospel in ways that would impact the unique culture and history of Quebec.

Months before he died he published an article in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* in which he explored the implications of how Quebec's culture has changed during his lifetime. He wrote:

The rapid erosion of distinct Christian elements from Quebec's cultural heritage means church activities and more generally what churches are about seem to become less and less intelligible. It is as if our culture is going digital, while the church keeps broadcasting analog.

Using powerful imagery he said, "Like a brush soaked with a powerful paint remover, secularism has liquefied and scrubbed away religion from people's lives." What spoke to his generation has become a dead language to younger generations, a language unable to communicate the gospel.

These secular generations will not, he contends, look for meaning in spirituality focused on "an 'I' trying to

beautify its inner life with something more uplifting than the crass materialism that pervades everything." Rather they will be animated by "a profound, existential acknowledgment that one's life ought to serve a higher purpose."

For these resisters of the prevailing culture, "The quest for God in a secularized culture will often manifest itself by a quest for justice and a desire to contribute to the well-being of the larger community."

Incarnational living by which we model our lives after Jesus is the beginning of our witness. "Evangelicalism ought then to begin by something that can be called 're-incarnation': like God did through Jesus, we begin by being with people, trying to understand them and connect with

them. Then we start to serve them in accordance with their needs and in keeping with our resources and abilities."

Our caring for others, our pursuit of justice and standing against the excesses of our culture will attract these secular seekers, who may come to understand their desire for a more just world "is a whisper of the Spirit of God."

His analysis is also applicable to the rest of Canada. When the heads of the

EFC's affiliates met in Montreal two years ago, we began to understand the implications of Quebec's unique history – but also that many of the current dynamics of secular Quebec are also coming to expression in the rest of Canada.

What Éric Wingender calls us to is a full understanding and expression of discipleship. It entails a rejection of the impulses of secularism that reduces the Christian faith to mere spirituality, something wholly personal and for private enrichment only.

True discipleship compels us to care for the vulnerable and marginalized, to pursue justice and righteousness. This, he wrote, is the beginning of evangelism, as it will inevitably result in conversations with others, just as Jesus encountered others while healing the sick and bringing Good News to the poor. Éric Wingender was an inspiring and challenging thinker who was passionate about being a disciple of Jesus and encouraging others to likewise live out their Christian faith. We honour him by wrestling with his analysis and conclusions about faithful witness in a secular Canada.

To read Éric Wingender's full article, go to theEFC.ca/wingender. 

"It is as if our culture is going digital, while the church keeps broadcasting analog."



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.

BRUCE J. CLEMENGER is president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Read more of his columns at theEFC.ca/clemenger.

EFC Leaders at Indonesia Gatherings

EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger led a delegation to the second gathering of the Global Christian Forum, held October 4-7 in Indonesia. The event (globalchristianforum.org) drew Christian leaders from 81 countries representing all major Christian traditions to discuss trends and changes in global Christianity.

Clemenger and EFC Vice-President of Operations Bill Winger also participated in pre-forum meetings of the World Evangelical Alliance's International Leadership Team, a group comprised of senior staff, commission chairs, regional general secretaries and representatives of the WEA's global partners (worldevangelicals.org).

Pray for the Persecuted

"Pray for us!" This is the plea of Christians around the world who are being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. The World Evangelical Alliance encourages all Christians to remember our hurting brothers and sisters on November 13. In Canada a group including the EFC offers free resources to equip churches and individuals to participate. Visit the website of the International Day of Prayer Canada (idop.ca) and join with believers around the world.

Open House in Ottawa

The EFC's Centre for Faith and Public Life hosted its annual open house in September. Christian leaders, Parliament Hill staffers and MPs were challenged by a brief talk from Sudhakar Mondithoka, a visiting expert from India, on the increasing persecution of Christians and the development of anti-conversion laws in India.

The EFC Submits Ideas on Religious Freedom Office

The EFC's Don Hutchinson, vice-president, general legal counsel and director of the Centre for Faith and Public Life, was one of six panellists at the Canadian government's consultation on the establishment of the Office of Religious Freedom (in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade). A number of EFC affiliate ministry organizations also sent representatives to the consultation.

Training Evangelicals Abroad

The EFC's Aileen Van Ginkel, vice-president of ministry services, began facilitating a 10-week online course on partnering in October. The course helps train leaders in evangelical alliances around the world. The course is part of a Certificate in Association Leadership program offered by the World Evangelical Alliance's Leadership Institute (weali.org), headed by Canadian Rob Brynjolfson.

Prayer Leaders Gather in Ottawa

A group of national prayer leaders facilitated in part by the EFC's Aileen Van Ginkel gathered in Ottawa, Sep-

tember 12-14. The gathering included a prayer walk on Parliament Hill, for which the EFC's Don Hutchinson provided background commentary, and a time of prayer for EFC staff based in Ottawa.

Catholic School Decision Disappoints

EFC Legal Counsel Faye Sonier expressed disappointment over a September decision by the Toronto Catholic District School Board. It rejected amendments to the board's equity policy intended to ensure faithfulness to Catholic teaching on homosexuality. Sonier said the policy is part of a widespread effort to promote a "new diversity" that can only operate by excluding contrary beliefs (see her Sept. 6 blog at theEFC.ca/ActivateCFPL). The EFC had sent an open letter to the trustees, urging them to respect the denominational and religious freedom rights of parents and students (see theEFC.ca/TDSB2011).

Free for All Post-secondary Students

Faith Today is offering a free gift for Christian students studying at post-secondary schools in Canada: a complimentary four-year online subscription. If you have a child, nephew, niece, friend or someone else who could benefit from a deeper understanding of the evangelical church in Canada, encourage them to sign up at faithtoday.ca/subscribe.


Canadian Serves French Speakers Worldwide

The World Evangelical Alliance, of which the EFC is a member, has appointed Stéphane Lauzet to serve as its global ambassador to French-speaking national evangelical alliances and fellowships. Lauzet is originally from Quebec, although he has lived in France for many years, serving as secretary general of the Alliance Évangélique Française since 1995. The head of the World Evangelical Alliance, general secretary/CEO Geoff Tunnicliffe, is also a Canadian.

Religious Expression in the Supreme Court

EFC President Bruce Clemenger was present in the courtroom October 12 as the EFC's Don Hutchinson presented arguments before the Supreme Court of Canada opposing Saskatchewan's human rights code restrictions on freedom of religious expression on matters of public policy debate. For more see theEFC.ca/Whattcott.

Interfaith Forum on Faith and Climate

The EFC's Don Hutchinson spoke at the Interfaith Forum on Faith and Climate, on October 24 on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. The foundation of his presentation was in the biblical principles expressed in *God's Earthkeepers*, an EFC publication (free PDF download at theEFC.ca/GodsEarthkeepers). 



Finding Our Canadian Mission

By Gary Nelson

God is at work in Canada in unique ways. We need to find out how – and join in!

Gary Nelson's 45-minute presentation at the Hinge Conference (November 17, 2010) was called "Discovering Our Unique Canadian Voice: Thinking Missionally in Context." It is available free in video or audio (MP3) formats at the EFC.ca/hingesessions, along with a variety of other resources produced by the conference sponsor, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

When asked how he sees God at work in churches across Canada, Nelson offers these initial observations:

- **Growing distrust for the quick fix.** Instead many see a need for ongoing co-operation. Many more see how local contextual expressions of church, taking shape in unique ways, are better than following a standardized model.
- **Distrust of overreactions to our past church experiences.** Nothing is worse than in-house reactions. They are never balanced and always pendulum swings.
- **Responses deeply rooted in practice and practitioners.** Canadians see action ("praxis") rather than theory as foundational. Young and old are willing to take a chance and see what God may be calling them to do.

The novelist Robertson Davies once commented, "Canadians are an insecure people, but one thing we are sure of, we are not Americans." Yes, it can be hard to understand how we are different from our neighbours, especially when we hear so many loud neighbourly voices in the media and elsewhere. But let's consider why we might need uniquely Canadian voices, particularly in the area of Christian ministry.

(1.) Canada isn't the USA. In the 1950s more people went to church in Canada per capita than in the United States. We were a church culture. To be sure, it was not the same public religion of our neighbours to the south, but we went to church. Then something happened. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, we just stopped. At first it was a trickle, but then it happened in droves. Canadians didn't slam the door when they left (except maybe for the so-called quiet revolution in Quebec). Canada just slipped out the side door and never came back. Most who left were more apathetic than angry. They discovered better things to do than church, leaving many of us who remained bewildered.

(2.) The Christian character of Canadian society was rooted mainly in the rural framework of our historical development. That has also changed dramatically. Now more than 90 per cent of all Canadians are urban dwellers. No matter how much we try to make subdivisions feel like small towns, the urban influence alters our values and sensibilities.

(3.) Today, although most Canadians say they believe in God, weekly church attendance is down to 16 per cent of the population, according to self-reported behaviour in a recent Ipsos Reid poll. Over 47 per cent of those polled believe "religion does more harm than good." My experience is Canadians are open to speaking about spirituality but extremely suspect of institutional religions such as Christianity.

(4.) We have moved in recent decades to a



■ Gary Nelson

time when the church no longer plays a role at the centre of society. Christianity has been pushed to the margins or even opposed with hostility. More and more Canadians have no church experience. They are not looking for cosmetic improvements to the way we do church – they have decided we are irrelevant.

(5.) Let's add one more item to this oversimplified list of what makes Canada unique. Canadians have long preferred the image of a "mosaic" rather than a "melting pot" in discussions about nation building. We acknowledge cultural challenges produced by the coming together of various narratives of meaning and values. This intercultural awareness, this multicultural pluralism, affects everything we do.

To minister effectively in our new context requires many of us to reorient the way we think and seek to be the church. Like the early church we must take the redemptive mission of God to the world, and find our identity not inside the walls of the church, but outside in the borderlands where faith, unfaith and other faiths intersect.

To those avid missional thinkers, this is not news. They have been encouraging us to remember Christians are people on a mission – God's mission. This God who sends His Son to the world calls the church to that same purpose – and at Pentecost flings it out. This mission did not first involve forming committees and constitutions but being a people of the Good News both in word and deed.

Reimagining the church in the borderlands is to realize we are not *taking* God there. He is *already* there. Our task is to find out where God is at work and join with His activity. **FT**

GARY NELSON is president of Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto and the author of *Borderland Churches* (Chalice Press, 2008).

Why Defend Them in Court?

By Don Hutchinson

One of the common questions I'm asked when the EFC intervenes in a court case is why. "Why do they need our help? They can afford their own lawyer." "Why are you supporting that guy?" "Why are you supporting them? They're not even Christians!"

As an intervener we seek to inform the court's decision. We're not necessarily in court to support one side (party) or the other. We assess the legal principles the case relies on and the potential impact it may have.

The court does separate interveners to one side of a case or the other, but it's like the attendance list at a wedding: "Are they with the bride or the groom?" The court decides which side based on the content of proposed legal arguments.

In each instance the EFC is required to satisfy the court in a written application (request to intervene) that we have something unique to contribute to the court's consideration of legal principles.

The EFC ends up in court for one of two reasons.

First, we intervene to promote biblical

principles on the matter of public policy concerned. The courtroom is another arena – in addition to Parliament – in which we can bring those principles to bear. The EFC has promoted such principles on a wide range of issues. Below, you can see five Supreme Court of Canada examples relating to the unborn, assisted suicide, child pornography, the patentability of higher life forms, and genetic technologies.

Second, we promote principles of a robust pluralism that protects religious freedom, with particular interest in the continuing ability for Evangelicals to worship freely, share our faith openly and continue presenting biblically informed positions on matters of law and public policy. Like the Apostle Paul, we claim the citizen's right to appear before the courts to ensure Christians are accorded the same rights as all other citizens.

Below, you can see eight such examples of Supreme Court interventions addressing: a province's failure to fund independent religious schools; a private Christian university's lifestyle policy; the

right of parents to express a religiously informed position on education policy; the government's duty to accommodate religious practices; the duty of municipalities to facilitate the building of houses of worship; and, the collective right to religious freedom of a community. We're still awaiting decisions in the other two listed there.

We prayerfully consider each intervention opportunity and then choose to engage at the court level which has the greatest potential for national impact on continuing public policy concerns. (Many of these important cases are heard first in a lower court, then appealed to an appeals court, then appealed to the Supreme Court.)

When the EFC goes to court, we are promoting biblical principles and religious freedom through reasoned legal arguments. The Supreme Court of Canada has welcomed us to do so on more than 20 occasions. **FT**

DON HUTCHINSON is vice-president, general legal counsel, and director of the Centre for Faith and Public Life at The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

The EFC at the Supreme Court

Promoting Biblical Principles

1. The constitutional status of the unborn, in *Borowski v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 1989.
2. The legal status of assisted suicide, in *Rodriguez v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, 1993, resulting in a strong quote from the court on the unique nature and dignity of human life.
3. The child pornography sections of the Criminal Code, which the EFC had advocated in Parliament for years before they were introduced into Canadian law, in *R. v. Sharpe*, 2001.
4. The patentability of higher life forms, in this case a genetically designed mouse, with the court agreeing that living, breathing beings can't be subject to patent, in *Harvard College v. Canada (Commissioner of Patents)*, 2002.
5. A constitutional challenge to federal regulation of genetic technologies, another piece of legislation the EFC had previously advocated, in *Reference re Assisted Human Reproduction Act*, 2010.

Protecting Religious Freedom and Promoting Pluralism

1. *Adler v. Ontario*, 1996, which considered the constitutionality of the province's failure to fund independent religious schools.
2. *Trinity Western University v. College of Teachers*, 2001, which considered whether public benefits could be withheld from a private Christian university because it had a lifestyle policy that prohibited students from engaging in homosexual sexual practices.
3. *Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*, 2002, which considered the right of parents to express a religiously informed position on education policy.
4. *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem*, 2004, which considered the duty to accommodate religious practices that have a connection with religious beliefs.
5. *Congrégation de témoins de Jéhovah de St-Jérôme-Lafontaine v. Lafontaine (Village)*, 2004, which considered the duty of municipalities to facilitate the building of houses of worship through zoning and permits.
6. *Alberta v. Hutterian Brethren of Wilson Colony*, 2009, which considered the collective right to religious freedom of a community of believers (prior decisions of the court dealt with the individual's right to religious freedom).
7. *S. L. v. Commission scolaire des Chênes*, decision pending, where Christian parents requested their children be excluded from a 10-year Quebec public school curriculum teaching religion as equivalent to mythology.
8. *Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission v. William Whatcott*, decision pending, which considered the constitutionality of human rights codes establishing a lower threshold of limitation than the Criminal Code on constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression rights, particularly when that expression is based in religious beliefs.



The Unbreakable Link Between Faith & Sc

Five Canadian scientists share their stories

By Alex Newman

All across Canada – in universities and industry – there are scientists who bring to work with them a deep and abiding faith. Science does not contradict their beliefs – in fact in many cases science bolsters faith. *Faith Today* spoke with five such scientists working in Canada, cur-

Paths clearly laid

When it came to choosing a career, environmental consultant Barb Wernick fell back on childhood pastimes. “I always really liked poking in streams and on the seashore, playing in puddles. But I didn’t know that I’d be a biologist.” And then there was God. “I never experienced the what-shall-I-do-with-my-life angst that many young people do,” she says. “When I look back, I see a path clearly laid out for me.”

But it was a university ecology course that triggered the convergence of those two things, when she suddenly realized her “heart was in ecology and environmental sciences.” Though growing up Anglican Wernick later made a choice for Mennonite. Her values, she says, have been shaped a certain way because of that faith: “Every environmental issue is a people issue, and therefore a social justice issue.”

At Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C., Wernick began to hear about creation caring, and the connection between faith and the environment. Before then she wasn’t fully aware that ecology was a Christian concern. Then Wernick attended two summers at Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, a field school in Michigan for students from Christian colleges that approaches ecology from a biblical foundation. She delved into courses on fish ecology, limnology, field geology and ethnobotany – the study of relationships between people, culture and plants – and sustainable farming practices. Wernick found her worldview of creation caring becoming further rooted, “specifically that God is the creator and the Bible outlines a mandate for Christians to be stewards of His creation.”

Today Wernick works frequently with industry, studying the effect of industrial waste on water and helping with environmental planning. She has been monitoring the environmental effects of mine water run-off from the historic Britannia copper mine north of Vancouver. Wernick also assesses damage from toxic spills – the Wabaman Lake oil spill near Edmonton, for example – particularly how benthic [sea or lake bed] invertebrate communities, such as young larval insects that live in



Every environmental issue is a people issue, and therefore a social justice issue: Barb Wernick.

rent or future leaders in their fields, whose specialities range from heart imaging, to earth’s gravity, to recycling used clothing for the good of the planet.

ience

the water before hatching, and fish health are affected. Wernick actively engages her clients in developing ways to reduce impact on the environment: "It's a Kingdom issue, taking care of what belongs to God."

In the eye of the storm

Meteorologist Pete Bowyer seems to like being in the eye of the storm. After completing an undergrad physics degree at the University of Toronto, he was hired by Environment Canada. He then spent the next 28 years studying, interpreting and reporting the weather from the Halifax office, eventually becoming the go-to guy for media interviews on tropical weather situations, notably Hurricane Juan which tore up the east coast in September 2003.

In 2004 Bowyer was recognized nationally with the 2004 Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society's Andrew Thompson Prize in Applied Meteorology.

"It's been an astounding career and absolutely the right thing for me to do at the time," Bowyer says, "but it was not a calling."

Five years ago, though, he got his "call" – during a perfect storm of life events. Having emerged from a personal breakdown a few years before, Bowyer became very involved in his church, especially with people whose "lives were crashing all around them," and who kept coming to him for help. He was similarly so effective at work one colleague suggested he start holding seminars there. What began as a church program soon

turned into seminars developed specifically for the workplace, but drawing on biblical principles. His first seminar, held over 10 lunchtime sessions, was about the art and science of balancing life. Usually this kind of seminar would



The only grounds on which Christianity stands or falls is the historicity of the resurrection:
Jared Strydorst.

draw five to 10 people, he says. His session attracted 60, which told him "there's an appetite for this stuff."

It's really just biblical principles, he says, about integrating the four dimensions of mind, heart, body and soul. But it's not that far removed from physics either. "What's most at play here is Newton's law of entropy – everything winds down, becomes diluted or disintegrates. It even shows up in leadership principles too where 'vision leaks' and requires what Bill Hybels [Willow Creek] calls leaders casting and recasting the vision."

After the first session Bowyer held more until he was given a job to oversee and teach staff how to bring change about more effectively within his own department at Environment Canada. One of his seminars is aptly called "Building a Powerful Life."

Matters of the heart

Jared Strydorst's work and faith life hum along like the hearts he monitors on the nuclear imaging machines he



PHOTO: FAITH BOWYER

Applied meteorology has been an astounding career: Pete Bowyer.



seeks to further improve. He grew up Christian Reformed, moved sideways into United Reformed and is now a Reformed Presbyterian. “No dramatic change for me,” says the 32-year-old PhD student. “I’ve basically stayed more or less the same [denomination], though obviously you mature as you grow up.”

Vocationally his story is the same. Fresh out of university with an undergraduate degree in physics and engineering, he was hired by a telecommunications firm to work with fibre optics. After a few years, when

Strydhorst saw the industry was flagging, he returned to school. Introduced to biomedical engineering as an undergrad, he decided to study medical physics.

Because his PhD research focus is nuclear imaging, he’s completing his PhD at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. His primary research is conducted on lab animals,

and seeks ways to improve the quality of images produced by the scanner used for nuclear medicine imaging research. These images are applied to studying disease and

“What was the origin of our universe and what is its final state?”

What Science and Theology Have in Common

A theology professor with a PhD in chemistry presents just how much these two worlds have in common. You might be surprised!

By Ross Hastings

My interest in the integration of science and theology comes from having lived out both vocations. Separate groups of scientists and theologians have expressed disbelief that doing both is even possible.

“How do you put those two things together?” is the skeptical question I am often asked when I say during the occasional golf game that I have worked in both chemistry and the Church.

My interest in both theology and science arises also from a curiosity to know the truth that “takes care of itself,” as Roman Catholic author Thomas Merton has written, in every realm of reality, and that sets us free. I am motivated by two faith commitments: first, all truth is God’s truth, and second, all truth concerning the creation of the universe and its reconciliation is centred in the God-Man Jesus who said, “I am the truth” (John 14:6).

He is as the eternal Word *both* the agent of creation *and* the revelation of God to us. In Him God has both created and reconciled all things in heaven and on earth to himself. In Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

A vigorous integration

Therefore fledgling Christian scientists may pursue truth fearlessly in careers in science, assured that no discovery will ever surprise or outsmart Christ. In light of this it is only appropriate for Christians to develop a curiosity for knowledge about creation and science that will evoke a sense of wonder and worship.

Any attempt to integrate science and theology must be vigorous, though always tentative and guided by the es-

entials of Christian faith or historic Christian orthodoxy, as this has been revealed in Scripture properly interpreted and expressed in the Creeds.

Christian theology and science in fact share a common commitment to the fearless pursuit of truth no matter its source, in a hands-on or empirical fashion. Both acknowledge that knowledge is gained by more than mere abstract reasoning.

This not only validates science, but also theology.

Theological discoveries are made in a fashion similar to how scientific discoveries are made. Scientists tend to privilege fact to what is scientifically verifiable to the neglect of historical fact. In fact both have merit. The development of the most important doctrine of the Christian faith, the full deity and humanity of Christ and then the Trinity, was in response to the historical and tangible experience of the apostles and the early church.

John’s particular description of this as *sensual experience* is intriguing: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). Lesslie Newbigin writes in an essay entitled “The Trinity as Public Truth” the doctrine of the Trinity was the result of “a new fact.” That new fact was the Resurrection.

Of course science does require reproducibility of findings. However given that historical facts do not allow such a possibility, forming theological knowledge on history is not absurd, but reasonable. We will have to wait to the end of the age to argue the reproducibility of the Christian experience of resurrection, but we can see some evidence of it in the regenera-

developing and testing pharmaceuticals and diagnostic procedures. For example, radioactive dye injected into the bloodstream is absorbed by the heart muscle. The emitted radiation can then be detected by cameras outside the body, which provide a picture that shows if the heart is functioning normally or has been damaged.

“My work is mostly mathematical modelling of how gamma rays from radioactive isotopes interact with tissue and the scanner itself, and the effect that has on the accuracy of the images acquired. It’s not fertile ground for rich theological insight,” reflects Strydhostr. “As for whether it might cause me to question my faith, the only grounds on which Christianity stands or falls is the historicity

of the resurrection, and that’s a historical question on which science has no bearing, much less the minutiae of photons in medical scanners. Science is often portrayed as somehow challenging or being opposed to faith, but that’s mostly overblown by people who don’t know a lot about either.”

Green chemistry

Chadron Friesen says he “fell into” a career in fluorine chemistry because of relationships developed with people who would later become Christians. After undergrad studies in chemistry at John Brown, a Christian University in Arkansas, he applied for a summer undergrad

tion of human believers and in the continuity of the Church.

How science has helped

Personally I have found scientific training has served me well in exegesis (the critical explanation and interpretation of a Bible text) and theological thinking. Both entail forming hypotheses based on the available data, are empirical in that sense, share the rigorous application of intellect, and ought also to appreciate the limits of intellect.

Science and Christianity are not as far apart as my golfing buddies’ incredulities suggest.

Science is also art

Michael Polanyi, a chemist and philosopher, believed “science can’t be done without imagination and passion.” In other words science is also an art. Polanyi observed creative acts (especially acts of discovery) are riddled with strong personal feelings and commitments. His most famous work was titled *Personal Knowledge* (Harper, 1958). Arguing against the then-dominant position science was somehow value free, Polanyi sought to bring reasoned and critical interrogation into creative tension with other more tacit forms of knowing.

Christians may engage boldly with science by realizing science is in fact Christian in its historical origins, and that a *specifically Trinitarian, incarnational worldview has been more compatible with the pursuit of science than other worldviews*. The reason this sounds counter-intuitive has a lot to do with Enlightenment prejudices. Doing science within a Christian framework was in fact the way science prospered best in the history of human civilization, as Michael Foster, an Oxford philosopher of the 1930s has shown. Foster sought to overcome the warfare language with respect to science and faith propagated by others. He demonstrated the medieval Christian view of matter as created, and thus important but not divine, made the study of science even possible.

Many nations of a pantheistic bent were too fearful of nature to study it by means of sensuous experience. Other nations, like the Greeks, viewed matter as unimportant, and

could never advance science beyond abstract reasoning. Empirical science through sensuous experience took root, as my fellow Regent College Professor Loren Wilkinson writes, “through the Christian experience of the Creator-God of love who invented physical reality, and who in Jesus, became a part of it, [and] changed forever how we value that knowledge.” [“The New Story of Creation: A Trinitarian Perspective ‘What God does,’ *Crux* XXX, 4 (December 1994): 26–36.] Wilkinson continues, “Like who God is, is inexhaustible, surprising and gracious. Knowledge comes through engaged experience, not detached contemplation.”

What post-modernity has done

Interestingly in this post-modern era, the compatibility of science and Christian theology as faith seeking understanding has edged closer. Post-modernity has, by its honesty about the relative uncertainty of knowledge, done the Christian Church a great favour, enabling us to engage in the public square with confidence the assertions of everybody else in that square are also fiduciary (based on faith in something in nature). Even atheism lives by an indemonstrable faith. Post-modernity has exposed the gods of modernity as unreliable.

Christians should, of all people, engage in science fearlessly. It is a significant vocation in the fulfilling of the creation or cultural mandate given initially to the first Adam to steward creation. Scientists can in Christ recover the wonder of being priests of creation, humans who give creation a voice, and in so doing play a crucial role in the caring of this amazing creation which God has entrusted to us.

If God has in Christ reconciled creation to himself, it must have a future. We as the new humanity need to rise up, scientists included, to participate with God in that renewal.

Christians need have no fear of engaging in the world of science, for we should have no fear of truth. **FT**

ROSS HASTINGS teaches theology and spirituality of mission, pastoral theology and ethics at Regent College in Vancouver. He holds PhDs in both organo-metallic chemistry and theology.



research project at the University of Alabama. But due to his Christian background, they hired him instead for a project on scientists' ethical decision making.

The following spring Friesen was invited to apply for the graduate program, and in 1996 he returned for PhD studies, working with a fellow researcher who seemed to be in search of God. "He asked if I was a Christian, which opened the door for many discussions." A few years later, that man became a Christian.

DuPont hired Friesen for a term during his PhD studies because his research in fluorine chemistry, along with his understanding of the mechanism allowing lubricants to operate at extreme temperatures, dovetailed nicely with their research program. Friesen's lab partner there was a man in his 50s completing a chemistry degree

at night. They had many conversations, particularly about faith, and a few years later that colleague became a Christian as well.

Though Friesen loved the problem solving at DuPont, he felt God had other plans, especially when Christian friends and colleagues suggested he might use his talents in education. He and his wife discussed the option. In spite of the "big difference in income," they decided it would be "worth it to apply to university and see how the Lord would deal with that."

Long story short, Langley's Trinity Western University hired him. But the rest is *not* history – two years ago Friesen ran into a former student at a Mennonite Central



Chadron Friesen "fell into" a career in fluorine chemistry because of relationships developed with people who would later become Christians.

Committee sale, and learned about MCC's challenge with a whopping 56,000 pounds of unusable used clothes piling up. The biggest challenge was how to recycle clothing that was a blend of natural and synthetic fibres.

The potential solution lay in Friesen's past – fluorine – and after some research he and his students were able to devise a method to separate synthetic fibres from natural using a fluorine compound. Cotton could be converted back to cotton fibres, or into a fuel source, while the synthetic polyester could be melted into pellets for use as manufacturer's parts.

Even better, Friesen's sister-in-law works with a California-based organization, Village Enterprise Fund, as-

Further Reading on Christianity and Science

- The Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation is a fellowship founded in 1973 "to investigate any area relating Christian faith and science." It's also a charity. Its website has helpful links and resources. www.csc.ca
- The Pascal Centre for Advanced Studies in Faith and Science. Based at Redeemer University College in Ontario. Holds conferences and publishes academic books including a series titled *Facets of Faith and Science*. www.pascalcentre.org
- The Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology (ISCAST) is an Australian organization dedicated to exploring the interface between science and the Christian faith. Its membership includes scientists, theologians and professionals with standing in their own fields and a commitment to the Christian faith. Website include free helpful resources. www.iscast.org
- The Cosmos website at Regent College, Vancouver, is "designed for anyone interested in thinking and acting at the interface of issues of science and faith." Includes a helpful list of resources and Internet links. <http://cosmos.regent-college.edu/about/cosmos-refaithing-science>
- *Science and Christianity: Four Views*, edited by Richard Carlson (Intervarsity Press, 2006)
- *Science and Religion in Quest of Truth*, by John Polkinghorne (Yale University Press, 2011)

sisting Africa's rural poor in developing their own small economies. "My research team had been looking at the chemical side of mission opportunities," Friesen says. "The hope and dream is to partner with organizations such as Village Enterprise and use the chemical methodology where it is needed most."

Back to the beginning

For Don Page, professor of physics at the University of Alberta, it's all about beginnings. Page's research and teaching focus is "gravitational physics" – and covers the challenging topics of black holes and cosmology. "There are two big problems we are trying to understand: What was the origin of our universe and what is its final state?" he explains. "Gravity plays the key role in the solution of these problems. The Einstein equations are used to explain the dynamics of the universe as a whole and the large-scale structure formation in it. They also predict black holes, the mysterious objects which are final states of evolution of compact masses. In our research we focus on classical and quantum gravity and its applications."

Page's starting point that God is creator – regardless of how that creation was accomplished – has garnered some criticism from both Christian and secular corners. Some Christians may be bothered by his scientific openness: "There is a lot of evidence that the universe was much smaller and hotter about 14 billion years ago than it is now, which leads to the idea that the universe began in a big bang billions of years ago," says Page. "However other ideas are that this was just a certain small hot phase in a universe with no real beginning. To me that doesn't seem contradictory to a creator because I do think that whatever the universe is, it's consistent with God creating it."

Nor is Page bothered by the recent theory of the multiverse, or multiple universes, which "raised the issue that the particular properties of our particular universe or part of the universe may not have been designed separately and individually," Page explains. "My faith in God is strong enough that I don't need such 'fine tuning' arguments for believing in the existence of God, so I'm willing to entertain alternative ideas."

Page has drawn some fire for his Christian views, but not from his physicist peers who expect debate as a healthy part of the scientific community, and have a code of respect for each other. It appears to be mostly new atheists who react so strongly because they can't sanction the potential for any link between God and this science of the cosmos.

It's all about beginnings: Don Page.



PHOTO: ANNA JOY CLAIRE PAGE

Perhaps Page's upbringing has made him thick skinned to criticism. Growing up in a Christian family in Alaska – in Inuit villages so isolated he took high school by correspondence – he would hear church via radio, and had Sunday school materials sent by his uncle, a pastor in Missouri. While at CalTech in the early '70s doing his masters and PhD studies, he was involved with a vibrant, anti-establishment Christian community. During post-doctoral studies at Cambridge in the late '70s, Page joined an Anglican church. Though he admits to "not being immune from doubts at times," particularly around the problem of evil, he's able to sustain faith during the most heated of times in scientific study. **FT**

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

Good Teens With Bad Drugs

How evangelical youth are swept up into today's drug culture – and what we can do about it.

By Lisa Hall Wilson

At 12, Andrew Fehr, now 22 of Chatham, Ont., started abusing drugs. “OxyContin made me feel good. For about four years I was able to hide it. By 16 I would do anything to get high.” Andrew Schroeder, 25 of Vineland, Ont., began experimenting with drugs early in high school. “I started with marijuana in Grade 9, selling it, and then selling and using ecstasy, and then cocaine and crack. Got into opiates, OxyContin.”

Both men were raised in stable, healthy, two-parent homes, regularly attended evangelical churches, and participated in youth groups throughout their childhoods.

They're not alone. Christian teens are dabbling in a drug culture with potentially lethal stakes.

Juan Manigault, executive director for Teen Challenge Alberta, an international faith-based drug and alcohol rehab program, reports “Fifty per cent of the students who enter Teen Challenge [in Canada] are from two-parent Christian families.” Today's drug culture features drugs much harder than marijuana and alcohol. Crack, a cheaper crystallized form of cocaine, and crystal meth (methamphetamine) share popularity with pharmaceutical and designer drugs like OxyContin and ecstasy.

The 2009 *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Study* by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health revealed the top four substances abused by Ontario students were alcohol, marijuana, non-prescribed use of prescription pain relievers and tobacco. Results from other provinces are similar. A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health reports, “The majority of the street-drug using population in main Canadian cities

was non-medical PO [prescription opioid] users, with the exception of Vancouver and Montreal.”

How Do Good Kids Stumble Onto Bad Drugs?

The most common place for teens to find prescription drugs is at home and from friends. Adults with unused prescriptions often keep them in the medicine cabinet instead of safely disposing of them. Teens depend on no one noticing a few pills missing from an opened bottle. It's not just the high that's attractive. The profitable street market for prescription drugs tempts everyone from Grandma to the third-grader on Ritalin to sell their prescriptions.

Randy Robb, 52 of Barrie, Ont., is the author of *Two Roads:*

One Man's Journey From Drug Lord to Salvation (Word Alive Press, 2009). He's been clean for 20 years. His addiction lasted 17. “Today you can walk into a teen dance and find any number of pills on the dance floor. For three dollars our teens and even pre-teens can get high on ecstasy and suddenly fit in,” he warns.

Church Is Not a Safeguard

Susan Fehr, after the heartbreaking experience with her son Andrew, encourages parents in the Church – parents who may be complacent about the lure drugs and alcohol could have on their Christian kids – to educate themselves. “Often we think that if they're raised in a church, they won't turn to stuff like that. But they're not immune.

“The most
common place
for teens to find
prescription drugs
is at home and
from friends.”





PHOTO: SIMONE VAN DEN BERG / WWW.GLOWIMAGES.COM

It happens to them. It doesn't matter how [often] you have them at church."

Marion Goertz is a registered marriage and family therapist, and runs a private practice in Toronto. "Regular exposure to a church community (remember, one which comprises various degrees of healthiness in its membership) is no guarantee that the undergirding principles of godly character will be acquired or lived out," says Goertz. "While it is vital that parents expose their kids to the formalized teaching of solid life principles, sometimes they themselves model something by their actions that contradicts God's message of love and acceptance."

Greg Cornelsen, director of Teen Challenge Alberta, says there is a multitude of reasons why kids get involved with drugs. "They have been hurt, they experience peer pressure, they have a need to be loved, accepted and needed, and don't feel they are," says Cornelsen. "They have guilt, are fearful, frustrated, may struggle with depression. Perhaps there are some who feel invincible and are curious to experiment." Cornelsen says to "Think of the Christian youth that you know. Is it possible that they struggle with some of the same things? Most definitely they do."

Addiction Does Not Pick and Choose

The underlying reasons for addiction are prevalent in every level of society. "People generally are increasingly seeking to 'feel better' in mind, body and spirit, and tend to be less and less willing to accept ambiguity or discomfort in their lives, given the multitude of options available to them regarding self-soothing," says Goertz. She says alcohol, food and prescription drugs are a few in the long list of most popular forms of self-soothing.

In a society that desires instant gratification in a feel-good world, people are seeking ways to stop feeling bad immediately. It's never been easier, with the help of drugs, to feel better, forget or become something you're not.

Andrew Schroeder attended church with his family throughout his childhood years, and, at 13 began playing drums for the church worship band. "I lived in a small town and wanted to be popular, have lots of friends...I put on a good façade, put on a good show. Raised my hands, knew every worship song, played it, sang it, prayed it, and would leave and go smoke with my buddies," he remembers.

Andrew Fehr is quick to admit everyone is ultimately responsible for their own choices, but as a youth he felt excluded. "When I was in youth group, I got picked on and

Christian Help With Substance Abuse

In addition to these faith-based programs, Canada has many excellent mainstream rehabilitation programs. Ask your doctor.

- Teen Challenge (www.teenchallenge.ca)
- The Mustard Seed (www.theseed.ca)
- Celebrate Recovery (www.celebraterecovery.ca)
- Rock Solid Refuge (www.rocksolidrefuge.com)
- *How to Drug-Proof Your Kids* (www.focusonthefamily.ca/dpyk)

I didn't turn to God. I believed in Him, but I didn't turn to Him. I didn't understand how that would help," he says. "If I had found support or acceptance in the Church, I don't think I would've left the Church, because that's what I was looking for."

When Fehr's mom was being treated for a brain tumour, he stole OxyContin from her supply. First, it was out of curiosity. The stealing continued when Fehr realized he could get high. He had no idea how addictive or damaging the drug could be. "When I was 12, I thought my

little while, and then I'll get out of it. But it doesn't lead you anywhere good."

What the Church Can Do Well

George Schuurman is a 30-year veteran of the Toronto Police Service, now pastor of compassion ministries at Harvest Bible Chapel in Oakville, Ont. "There is substantial substance abuse among some people in the Church and much more in the extended families of those in the Church," he says. "Whether it's the Church attendee or the family members, there is often a sense

of powerlessness over how help can be received and what resources are available. There's not that much help available in the Church." Yet, Harvest Oakville runs a 10-step program based on the Crossroads curriculum, a step-by-step guide away from addiction. Now in its third year the program at Harvest Oakville is gaining momentum.

Schuurman warns a ministry to addicts, however necessary in today's Church, is difficult and messy. "When we get serious about reaching out to the world around us, including those on the margins and trapped in addictions, we will end up with people in our church who come from much brokenness and who will sometimes still fall and sometimes go back to the addictions," he warns. "We have people who come and check us out. They might only come for a few weeks, but hopefully when they're with us, they'll experience something, and when they're ready [to get help]... hopefully they'll remember us. We're just beginning to see

life would be awesome. I'm going to go to school, be successful. You don't ever think you're going to end up 19 years old, homeless and spending every last dollar on cocaine or OxyContin, or whatever it is," says Fehr. "I just thought I'm going to do this for a

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Warning Signs to Watch for in Teens


- Drastic change in behaviour, character, attitude, friends, interests or clothing. Teens are prone to highs and lows, but these are classic “red-flag” symptoms.
- Lack of interest or enthusiasm for things previously enjoyed (sports, clubs, hobbies) and school.
- Repeated requests for money. If your teen is always asking for money, but is secretive about how they spend it, or you never see anything purchased with the money, be concerned.
- Too much money? Ask questions if your teen seems to have lots of money, but can't explain why.

that happen. It's an awesome thing.”

There are little things everyone can do to help share the love of Christ with addicts. Prayer is paramount. Beyond his speaking commitments, author and anti-drug activist Randy Robb reaches out to addicts on an informal basis outside of a formal ministry. “I have taught the Alpha program in the prison system for a year, and get a number of inmates seeking me out when they are released. I also frequent the crack houses here in Barrie when I get a call from parents who know their kids are inside,” says Robb.

There are many secular options available for those seeking healing from a substance addiction, but there are only a few faith-based programs such as Teen Challenge (worldwide), the Mustard Seed (Alberta), and Celebrate Recovery (local church-based).

“The point is to get help,” says Goertz. “Check what is available in your geographic area.”

Susan Fehr's advice to parents: Get help *now*. “As a parent you feel so embarrassed, and that's why you keep it to yourself. But that's not the right thing to do,” says Fehr. “I felt guilty because it was my prescription drugs he was taking. It was hard for me to deal with that. Get all the education you can on drugs. I read a lot of books and I still did not believe that he was doing it.” 

LISA HALL WILSON is a freelance writer in London, Ont.



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Why Hospitality is Holy

A Call to the Ancient Art of Welcoming

Let's get out of our comfort zones and engage in the very biblical act of hospitality.

By Debra Fieguth



Our small house was abuzz with activity on Christmas Day as we hosted a big dinner for family, friends and international students. I asked sisters-in-law to slice bread and prepare vegetables. I directed a brother-in-law to serve drinks and had our two “adopted” Mexican university students to carve the turkey and stir the gravy. The small kids were running around and jumping down the stairs, shrieking. The noise level was high and climbing higher. The stress in me rose as I tried to pull together all the details before 20 of us sat down to eat.

Suddenly, I wondered where my husband was, and why he wasn't helping! I poked my head into the dining room, and there was Ian, deeply engaged in conversation with two Chinese students, answering their questions about theology and Church history, completely oblivious to the frenzied activity going on around him.

In this scenario I was definitely like Jesus' friend Martha, and Ian was – not Mary, not quite Jesus – but doing what he does best. Both of us believe the reason behind feasts at Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving is more important than the food itself, however sumptuous. That day it was Ian's job to make sense of

it all, to explain the biblical and theological meaning to people who had no previous notion of God or Jesus or church.

If you Google the word “hospitality” you'll immediately get a multitude of referrals to hotels, restaurants and other services. You can have a career in hospitality. You can wait on tables, serve drinks, make beds at a hotel or be a bellhop, concierge or hotel manager.

That's the “hospitality industry,” and it's a very important part of our society for business people, tourists and other travellers. But the kind of hospitality Christians are called to has almost nothing to do with industry and everything to do with the Kingdom of God. We're called to welcome people into the Kingdom, and what better way to do that than through hospitality?

The Scriptures are full of promptings to extend hospitality. For starters, God created the Earth, and He made it hospitable. For us. We're guests on this planet, free to enjoy all the beauties and resources God has made for us. Why wouldn't we want to share, to be good stewards of, the small bits God has given us to take care of? Our homes, gardens and kitchen cupboards – they're not really ours in the first place.

The Old Testament, of course, is sprinkled with stories of hospi-



“Mama Debra” (fourth from right) and volunteer Yvonne Leach with student friends from Japan, Northern Ireland, Brazil, Germany, China and the Philippines show off Valentine’s cookies they made together.

PHOTO: SACHIL SINGH (FROM SOUTH AFRICA)

tality: Think of how Abraham begged the three passing strangers at the oaks of Mamre to accept his welcome and enjoy his food; how the widow of Zarephath obeyed the prophet Elijah and made bread for him out of her last flour and oil; and how Rahab the prostitute harboured two spies and protected them from the king of Jericho.

But of course the greatest scriptural example of hospitality for us as Christians is Jesus. Ironic that he was born homeless, became a refugee as an infant, and had no place to lay his head as an adult. Yet as a guest he turned water into wine at a wedding feast and made sure the 5,000 people listening to him teach all afternoon in Galilee got something to eat. He also invited himself to dinner (with Zacchaeus the tax collector), as well as criticized his host (Simon the Levite) for not being hospitable enough – and suggested the “immoral woman” was doing a better job of welcoming him. And in Luke’s Gospel he tells a host not to invite all his rich friends and relatives when he gives a dinner, but to welcome “the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.”

So many stories about Jesus involve food. It’s clearly a profound part of his ministry. Remember how after the resurrection he showed up on the beach at Galilee and prepared a breakfast

of fish for several of His disciples (after they had been fishing all night, and caught nothing until Jesus told them where to cast their net and they pulled in 153 fish). Then Jesus segues to spiritual food, asking Peter if he really loved him. “You know that I love you,” Peter insists after the third time. “Feed my sheep,” is Jesus’ answer.

How are we to apply these glorious stories of hospitality in our own lives and churches? It starts with the heart. If we’re open, have an attitude of hospitality and a sense of gratitude for God’s hospitality to us, soon we’ll find opportunities to share hospitality with others.

Then we need to stop making excuses. “I don’t know how to cook”. “My house is too small.” “I’m too shy.” As disciples we’re supposed to get out of our comfort zones and go places we didn’t think we could. It’s not like we have to host a dinner for 20 strangers tomorrow. Tea and cookies with someone we don’t know very well is a manageable start.

My husband and I have found one of our biggest joys in the last six years has been hosting a dinner and Bible study every Friday night for international students from a nearby university. We can expect anywhere from 15 to 25 (sometimes more) to at-

How to Begin to Welcome Others

- Do you have cliques in your church's coffee hour? Make a point of seeking out those who might be visiting and make them feel at home.
- Invite someone new to lunch or dinner, and find out more about them. If a meal seems too much, ask them over for coffee or tea.
- If you live in a city with a university, chances are there are international students in your community. There are several ways to reach out to them: invite them in for a meal, host them while they find a permanent place to stay, consider becoming home-stay parents (and get paid for it).
- Look around your church neighbourhood. Who lives there? Single-parent families, newcomers to Canada, students? Tailor an event at your church to welcome them. A themed potluck (for St. Patrick's Day or Valentine's Day or Thanksgiving) is an easy way to start.
- Consider sponsoring a refugee family. This takes time, resources and patience, but is so enriching and rewarding. Your denomination should be able to help you make the contacts you need and provide more information. —DF

tend, with a mix of students from Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Europe and Asia. The majority of students from other countries, many of whom come from very hospitable cultures, never see the inside of a Canadian home. What a perfect opportunity to make our home a mission, where young people – often the brightest minds in their home countries – can relax, enjoy food, ask questions and learn.

It's a holy thing when we see a Chinese student, taught all her life that God doesn't exist, begin to understand that not only is there a God, but that He loves her. It's precious to watch as a Muslim student begins to ask tentative questions about how the Jesus we worship is different from the Jesus he has read about in the Koran.

Russian spy for the past two years. If he were deported, he would be jailed and his family would suffer the loss of a husband and father.

Some of these expressions of hospitality are radical, and not for everyone. But everyone can, and the Bible basically says "should," do something to open their hearts and homes. Who knows? We might even entertain angels without knowing it. **FT**

DEBRA FIGUTH is a senior writer at *Faith Today*. Her book, *The Door is Open: Glimpses of Hospitality in the Kingdom of God* (Guardian Books, essencebookstore.com), was released in December 2010.

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Live Theatre Touches the Heart

Christian actors and theatre directors are offering thought-provoking entertainment in a variety of settings. Some are even managing to make it a career.

By Carol Lowes

Using drama can be a great way to challenge audiences to reflect on our values, according to a variety of Christians involved – but it works better when offered as exploration and reflection rather than teaching or preaching.

Some Christians such as Dennis Hassell of Toronto are involved because of how plays allow people to talk openly about the Kingdom of God. Others such as John Alexander of Saskatoon are excited about building up local churches' dramatic skills so they can communicate Christian messages by way of sketches that help people see the scriptures differently.


Not only are these individuals (and those mentioned later in this article) passionate about the dramatic arts, they have also managed to make a living from it. They don't work any other job on the side to support themselves.

A Christian career in live theatre does not come easily however, as Ron Reed of Vancouver's Pacific Theatre points out. His theatre has faced financial crises several times in the last few production seasons. In spite of this he and many others continue in their labour of love, using it to communicate meaningful stories imaginatively and creatively to non-believers and church audiences alike.

Maki Van Dyke was surprised by theatre as her vocational choice. She did not plan to go into performing and teaching live theatre, but it has become a "life-long calling." She is now the education director of the Rosebud School of the Arts. Rosebud, a school offering training in the performing arts, is located in the hamlet of Rosebud, Alta., where Van Dyke teaches and acts in plays.

"I fell into a career in theatre," says Van Dyke. "God granted the desires of my heart without my having to ask for it. At 25 I wanted to meet people, to tell stories that are inspiring and messy and to follow my heart. This led naturally to a career in theatre."

Van Dyke says that 20 years ago there were not that many Christians in the performing arts in Canada because at that time it was more difficult to earn a living that way. But she and others have managed. Since 2003 she has been teaching post-secondary students theoretical courses like script analysis and theatre history.



Evan Frayne and Masae Day in *The Great Divorce*, based on C.S. Lewis's novel of the same name, performed by Vancouver's Pacific Theatre.

PHOTO BY RON REED.



Live theatre can be used profoundly for outreach, but it's not as useful as a teaching tool: Dennis Hassell.

Having graduated first from Redeemer University College, then completing a master's degree at the University of Alberta in theatre, Van Dyke has studied such topics as Mennonite playwrights. This education combined with her own experiences in acting are what she draws from when teaching her students.

The most moving production she was in was based on the life of Billy Graham's wife, Ruth Bell Graham. "*Footprints of a Pilgrim* was filled with the poetry and diary entries of Ruth Bell Graham. She's such a giant of the faith," says Van Dyke. "I was able to crawl inside the words of her as a

woman who was so dependent upon God. She suffered so much. The play had three women switching characters, so at times one of us was playing her and at others we were Billy Graham and other people. I found the play personally inspiring."

In contrast David van Belle aimed for a career in theatre because of an early childhood experience that inspired him. His first trip to the acclaimed Stratford Festival in Ontario hooked him on live theatre. He was 12 and his parents took him to see *The Mikado*.

"It turned out to be a landmark production for Stratford, and I saw it as something I could do," recounts Van Belle. "I spent seven years working with an ensemble in

Yellow Rabbit Theatre, a touring company, and that took me across Canada and through Europe from Glasgow to Prague and Amsterdam."

Van Belle has now been working as an actor, director and playwright for 13 years. His work with Ghost River Theatre in Calgary has allowed him to experience different forms of theatre, from traditional scripted work to formats that start with an idea rather than a finished script. In a show set to open in October 2011, Van Belle spends most of his time on stage suspended and flying in a harness over the crowd. This solo performance of *The Highest Step in the World* is about an air force captain who rides a weather balloon to a high altitude then skydives back to earth.

Yet another highlight in his career was co-writing three short plays to celebrate the anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands from the Nazis. The productions entitled *Friction* opened in Calgary and then toured Amsterdam. For Van Belle this was personally rewarding because he is of Dutch heritage.

"My faith has enormous impact upon my work," notes Van Belle. "Theatre is about human presence, a lot like church is. I want people who attend the shows to look beyond externals and to go

deeper and look at what their fellow human beings are struggling with. For me it's all tied to the idea of loving your neighbour as yourself."

For Dennis Hassell expressing his faith through live theatre may culminate in a Hollywood movie. Recently approached by a Hollywood company, Hassell says he

“Using art as a preachy tool is like using a violin to prop open a window.”

Supporting Christians in the Dramatic Arts

Among the organizations that support Christian playwrights, actors and directors in Canada is Imago. This Ontario-based association (www.imago-arts.on.ca) promotes and advocates for many of the performing and visual arts.



John Franklin

Its director, John Franklin of Toronto, highlighted some additional exciting developments in the theatre sector of interest to Christians during a conversation with senior editor Bill Fled-

derus of *Faith Today*.

FT: Are there any particularly Christian resources for actors and directors in Canada?

JF: A few come to mind. In addition to Rosebud School of the Arts [mentioned in the adjacent article] there is Christians in Theatre Arts (www.cita.org), a North American association that helps practitioners stay in touch with each other through conferences and newsletters. Regent College in Vancouver has hosted courses for film makers.

Two of the people profiled in your article, Maki Van Dyke and David Van Belle, trained first at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont., and that's great. Professor Ray Louter has been teaching and directing drama there for 20 years or so and continues to train a new generation of actors and establish the value of drama and creative ways to integrate it with the life of faith both for performer and audience (www.redeemer.ca/academics/departments/theatre).

FT: Can you give some examples of Christians who are doing exciting



I fell into a career in theatre. God granted the desires of my heart without my having to ask for it: Maki Van Dyke.

doesn't want to get his hopes up just yet.

"Roughly 80,000 scripts are registered each year with the Writer's Guild – that is what we've been asked to do – and 300 get made into movies," notes Hassell. *Glory Man*, the script he has registered in recent months, is about the violent beginnings of Habitat for Humanity, a Christian charity that builds houses for families in need.

Hassell writes plays, performs one-man shows, directs and teaches theatre workshops. In the past five years he has been increasingly involved with youth theatre workshops. Toronto Baptist Ministries, part of Canadian Baptist Ministries, hired him to run drama camps and workshops for youth. To do this Hassell created *Every Youth*, a play about youth issues which has toured as far away as Colombia.

"To see youth breaking out loud in prayer at the end of a drama camp in London, Ontario, was an unforgettable

experience," says Hassell. "They were asking Jesus to help them to put on the show. I found that I just loved them, and they're an inspiration to my writing work."

Hassell believes live theatre can be used profoundly for outreach, but that it's not as useful as a teaching tool. "Live theatre is not useful for proclamation or preaching," says Hassell. "Using art as a preachy tool is like using a violin to prop open a window – it's unnecessary."

Hassell's main struggle is with narrowing his focus because he juggles so many projects at once. He writes sitcoms, musicals, stage plays – different productions that require different skill sets – but he can't resist being drawn into new opportunities to use live theatre to reach people for Christ.

A founding actor in Pacific Theatre and now its executive director, Ron Reed loves using live theatre to tell Christian messages in a similarly "non-propagandist"

things in theatre today?

JF: Lost and Found Theatre in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., (which launched through support from Imago) does great work and does not bear a Christian label, but the members of the company operate from a Christian perspective (www.lostandfoundtheatre.com).

Ins Choi is a Korean actor who has just completed two years at the mainstream Toronto theatre Soulpepper, in their Academy (and before that at the Stratford Theatre in Ontario, famous for its Shakespeare productions). He wrote and acted in a play called *Kim's Convenience*, and it was voted one of the best at the Toronto Fringe Festival in August.

The play is loosely based on the story of the prodigal son (kimsconvenience.com).

Another person who has done imaginative work with the parable of the prodigal son is Jason Hildebrand in Toronto. He may be the best known actor in Christian circles in many parts of Canada for his play and film *The Prodigal* as well as his *Blue Like Jazz Live*, both Imago-supported projects (www.jasonhildebrand.com).

Tom Carson is shaping a new venture called The Arts Engine and is the director of the Christmas touring production *2000 Candles*, as well as *Fish Eyes* and a number of other productions

(www.theartengine.ca).

Also significant are Fire Exit Theatre in Calgary under the direction of Val Leske (www.fireexit.ca) and Chemainus Theatre on Vancouver Island (www.chemainustheatrefestival.ca).

Finally there is a budding theatre company in the Ottawa area called 9th Hour Theatre under the direction of Jonathan Harris. I met with him a couple of months ago and he is doing great work (www.9th-hour.ca).

FT: We should stop there for now, John. Thank you very much for making us aware of these, and for all the support that Imago continues to give to Christian artists. ■

mode. The result has included award-winning productions like those of this past season in which Pacific Theatre won a Jessie Richardson award for “curation and execution of an outstanding season of theatre.” But it’s not all smooth sailing for the theatre. In the last three years there were three different times when the theatre was economically fighting to stay in the financial clear.

“We’re in the business of telling stories, not preaching or giving messages,” explains Reed. “This allows us to have a wide audience, because what we’re doing is not a sermon. The stories we tell are about universal subjects like forgiveness, but they are all subjects that Jesus had a great deal to say about.”

Theatre designed for churches is more the domain of John Alexander, who has personally written more than 2,000 Christian scripts through his organization Drama Share. Alexander and his wife Judy travel to churches to give drama work-



David van Belle spends most of his time on stage suspended in a harness over the crowd in *The Highest Step in the World*.

shops, and their work has taken them across Canada and the United States and beyond. His and members’ scripts, drama manuals and sermon starters are available online at www.dramashare.ca.

His outlook is that it doesn’t require a special gifting from God to be good at live theatre. Good theatre can come from believers who are open to spiritually directed coaching. “Our ministry is to come alongside people interested in doing Christian live theatre and to help equip them for it,” says Alexander. “Because I believe

this, it doesn’t mean that I believe in doing second-best quality productions. The organizers’ job is not to say you’re good enough or you’re not good enough. It’s to take the people God supplied and to equip those called.”

One of the most meaningful scripts Alexander has written is *A Meeting Between Two Mothers*. It’s the story of Mary meeting Judas’ mother on a dusty Jerusalem street after the crucifixion. “I don’t think it’s too far-fetched to write thinking ‘What if this happened?’ then ‘What if [that] happened?’ ” says Alexander. “I feel the script just wrote itself like it was divinely inspired.”

Alexander has been running Drama Share since 1984, because he was looking for a ministry that could reach young people in new ways with the gospel. He believes the churches he has ministered to have met – and continue to meet – that goal.

“So many books say you must be artistically inclined and some go so far as to say that you must be good-looking – all to be involved in live theatre within the Church,” he observes. “We support people at the level they’re at, and the results are very rewarding.”

From Alexander’s style to Hassell’s and beyond, Christians are writing their own scripts to deliver creative performances that show the gospel rather than preach it. More Christians today than 20 or 30 years ago are entering the performing arts to tell their stories. It’s a far from easy vocational calling, but it’s becoming more possible as the existence of Pacific Theatre and the Rosebud School of the Arts prove. **FT**

CAROL LOWES is a freelance writer in Toronto.

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cbm Canada is a Christian international development organization with a clear focus on helping people struggling to survive the double disadvantage of poverty and disability. Visit www.cbmcanada.org.

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Revival and Independence

The general secretary of the Independent Assemblies of God International (Canada) introduces another EFC-affiliated family of churches.

The Independent Assemblies of God International (Canada) was first formally organized in 1918. At that time it was led by Rev. Dr. A.

W. Rasmussen and christened the Scandinavian Assemblies of God in the United States of America, Canada and Foreign Lands. Of course its roots go back further, perhaps most clearly to a revival in 1890 among Scandinavian Baptist and Pietist communities.

Another key formative influence emerged shortly after the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 in Los Angeles, when many received the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit. In 1935 at a convention in Minneapolis, the 17-year-old denomination merged with another group named the Independent Pentecostal Churches and adopted the current name, The Independent Assemblies of God International.

In the 1940s a group of people from North Battleford, Sask., travelled to the William Branham crusade in Vancouver and witnessed the powerful anointing on Branham's life. The group returned to North Battleford to pray for revival. From that prayer meeting a move of God began in 1948, spreading across Canada and around the world. This move touched many lives. Souls were saved,

and churches and ministries were established. Many ministers left mainline and Pentecostal denominations to follow the deeper things of God, the gifts of the Spirit with manifestations and the healing and prophetic gifts. This revival brought new members to the denomination, as ministers sought spiritual and governmental coverings for their ministries as independent congregations.

Our uniqueness as a denomination stems from our conviction of the sovereignty of the local church. We believe it is imperative that ministers and churches are able to follow through on that mandate, governed by God without interference from an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

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overseas ministry is done by nationals under the direction of national overseers.

All of us are by God's grace seeking to obediently grow as an integral part of the continued outpouring of the Holy Spirit, helping fulfill the Great Commission. **FT**

This apostolic ministry includes 700 ministers and 500 churches and ministries in Canada, plus mission outreaches around the world.

REV. PAUL MCPHAIL is general secretary (national leader) of the Independent Assemblies of God International (Canada), and has served in this office since 2005. It has offices in Chatham, Ont., and a website at iaogcan.com. This column continues a series by affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. For a list, see theEFC.ca/affiliates.



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“I feel like I’m going crazy. I am not happy. I have always loved what I do, but now the joy is gone. For the past eight months I have been obsessing over every little thing at work, calling in on my days off to make sure I haven’t made a mistake. I come from a family that sees quitting as weakness, but my relationship with God, my husband and my daughters is suffering. How can I be the woman God wants me to be? I don’t even have energy to open my Bible.”

Several years ago, during a particularly challenging season of change, my own life was headed for burnout. With God’s help I set new healthy boundaries to bet-

ter honour Him. Still, I could relate to Linda’s struggle, giving her courage to realize she wasn’t alone and no longer needed to hide the truth. In fact, it was the Truth that set her free.

Questions we all ask

At some point every woman asks questions like Linda. *Am I doing too much? Am I doing enough? Is my life making a difference? How can I be the woman God wants me to be?*

We have more opportunities than any other generation, leading us into the deceptive cycle of striving without end. We confuse abundance with overdoing it and lose sight of what Jesus meant in John 10:10: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (TNIV) or “have it more abundantly” (KJV).

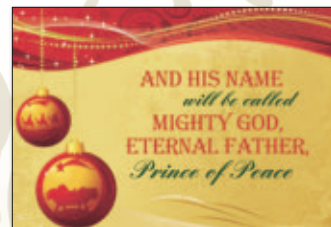
In response to such questions, we can pray through each responsibility and commitment we have, asking God to show us whether it is His will in this season of

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our lives. Linda realized that choosing to let go actually meant choosing life! Just because you *can* do something doesn't always mean you *should*.

Like Linda, let's ask God for courage to let go where necessary. Instead of weighing ourselves down with guilt trying to live up to impossible standards – that, interestingly, are different in each woman's mind – we need to pursue God's standard.

What is God's standard? First and foremost, "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." And, "love your neighbour as yourself."

Pursuing this standard doesn't mean forever searching and striving. He came so we could rest in Him, not our own accomplishments. Jesus came so we could know freedom, not fear. Jesus died and rose again so whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

It's easy to get caught up in what the world says we need to be. Linda's story is not uncommon. (Although a true story, I have changed her name for privacy). May her honesty encourage you that you are not alone, and God has not forgotten you. In His strength you can stop striving and be set free.

Setting healthy boundaries

Are you headed for burnout? Consider these helpful tips:

1. Run, walk or crawl to God. Satan loves to use discouragement and weariness to hinder our relationship with God. Pour out your heart in prayer, no matter how weak or tear-stained an attempt it may be. We are urged in 1 Peter 5:7 to "cast all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you."
2. Study God's Word. Is there a clear biblical answer for your situation?
3. Evaluate your heart. Have you been choosing sin over obedience to God? Going your way instead of His? If so, repent and seek His forgiveness.
4. Set (new) boundaries. Pray through each responsibility and commitment you have, asking God to show you whether it is His will for you in this season of life. Let go where necessary.

5. Reach out to a trusted family member, friend or pastor. Do not make a rash decision that you'll later regret. Instead, seek godly counsel and support as you move forward. You are welcome to share your story, prayer requests and praise at www.womenalive.org.
6. Praise Him through the pain. Thank the Lord for the trials you are experiencing, knowing He has a purpose beyond what you can understand. You'll

be amazed at how an attitude of praise can change your perspective. **FT**

MICHELLE (NAGLE) ARTHUR is executive director of Women Alive, a ministry equipping Canadian women and teen girls to become dedicated followers of Jesus Christ, living out their God-given potential in their personal, professional and spiritual lives. Read more in this series at theEFC.ca/womenaliveFT.



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No Avoiding Hellgate Controversy

The best-selling book *Love Wins* by Rob Bell shows how compassion without careful research can be harmful.

If book sales are proof of truth, *Love Wins* (HarperOne, 2011) is infallible. If igniting international controversy in the church is evidence of spiritual greatness, its author Rob Bell is a giant. HarperOne announced in October that *Love Wins* “is one of the most important books since the Bible.” Wow? Yes, wow – but things are not that simple.

Ten months ago Rob Bell was a high-profile pastor in Grand Rapids, Mich. Now he is world-famous. What happened? Well, *Love Wins* happened. Of course, it helped to have a tweet or two (John Piper), great viral marketing, some intrigue (Zondervan refused to publish the book), glowing endorsements from major Christian leaders (Eugene Peterson, Richard Mouw, Brian McLaren, for example), and widespread critique from other major Christian leaders (Al Mohler, John MacArthur, and Toronto’s own Tim Challies).

What makes all of this messy is the disputed view that Rob Bell is a universalist, believing all humans will be saved (Bell refutes this charge in interviews). The universalist spin owes most of its strength to advance marketing on the book – what Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Seminary, called “the sad equivalent of a theological striptease.” Based on such material, Justin Taylor, an influential Reformed pastor, posted the now-famous blog question in late February: “Rob Bell: Universalist?” *Time* magazine then asked on its April 14 cover: “What If There’s No Hell?” These and other factors set the stage for what is now called Hellgate, an ongoing international controversy over what the Bible teaches about hell.

Scot McKnight, one of evangelicalism’s leading Bible scholars, notes this controversy is going to be with Christians for a long time. There is not only *Love Wins* to deal with. There are already major book replies, including Mark Galli, *God Wins* (Tyndale House Publishers, 2011) and Francis Chan, *Erasing Hell* (David C. Cook), and significant critiques on the Internet, such as one by Kevin DeYoung at theGospelCoalition.org. Bell’s latest book also contains very controversial views on the nature of Christ’s death, evangelism to those of other faiths and what it means to interpret the Bible correctly. Finally, controversy over *Love Wins* forces serious thinking about the way Christians should react to one another. Most of

Bell’s major critics have not gone beyond decency even while being tough. However some of the blog attacks on Bell and his critics are way out. One website transforms a picture of Bell into a snake with a forked tongue.

By all accounts Rob Bell is a great guy. Richard Mouw is right to appreciate Bell’s aversion to “stingy orthodoxy.” Bell is correct in his recognition that the idea of everlasting, conscious punishment is a tough doctrine. Bell is often an amazing communicator, as even his major critics testify. *Love Wins* has some really great sections; many parts of it are beautiful, truthful and biblical. Bell really “gets” the postmodern culture. As well, he loves Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, the only Saviour and Lord, healer and coming King.

Despite these important and undeniable merits about Bell and his book, there is a large negative reality as well. *Love Wins* contains many careless points, half-truths and outright errors. Given this, Bell lost an opportunity to serve as a fully reliable guide to what Christians should believe about hell, missions, other religions, the death of Jesus and so on. The Rob Bell of *Love Wins* is often a poor exegete, inadequate historian, sloppy thinker and careless theologian. His failures in these crucial areas are significant and undermine the book’s value.

Here are ten examples of errors and weaknesses:

- He misinterprets Luther on post-mortem salvation (Galli).
- He distorts the theory of substitutionary atonement (Chan).
- He misuses John 3:17, ignoring the context of the verse (DeYoung).
- He overstates the prevalence of universalism in church history (Galli).
- He misuses logic to deny important truths (Galli).
- He minimizes the wrath of God and the holiness of God (Chan).
- He overplays the notion that God gets what God wants (Chan).
- He distorts traditional Christian views of Jesus as the only Saviour (DeYoung).
- He misunderstands the nature of the Lord’s Supper (DeYoung).
- He overplays questions to avoid clarity and decisiveness (Galli).

What we have here is a gifted teacher and dynamic pastor who let his love for the lost run ahead of the time needed for better research, more careful analysis and clearer communication. Missing that path has caused a lot of unnecessary grief, confusion, anger and misunderstanding. That’s not the whole story, but the major failings mean *Love Wins* is not a total win for Bell or the Christian community. **BT**

JAMES A. BEVERLEY is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. On the issue of hell, *Faith Today* recommends David Hilborn (ed.), *The Nature of Hell. A Report by the Evangelical Alliance [UK] Commission on Unity and Truth Among Evangelicals (ACUTE)*, STL North America, 2003 (Paternoster Press UK, 2000).

Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church, Waterloo, Ont.

“**W**e are a *sent* community – the essence of God Himself” is the way Dean Sherk, pastor of missional communities, describes the journey at Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church. Just as God sent His Son into the world, members of this congregation are learning to obey Christ’s call to “Come, follow me into mission!”

People in Process

The congregation adopted this new vision last fall after about five years of laying the groundwork. It’s now moving away from calling people to *come* to church (a building) towards equipping and training people to go and *be* the Church (a living organism) in the community. They call it a decision to live “God at the core.”

Now a consumer orientation is gradually being replaced with a service focus. Programs-for-us are becoming Good-News-in-the-neighbourhood. Congregants increasingly see themselves as the hands and feet of Jesus, offering their presence – His presence – in the community. Their story is wrapped more intentionally within His story.

Previously members already understood the biblical basis of mission. But good old-fashioned Bible study – they call it Manuscript Studies – has also helped people catch a deeper vision. Journeying with Jesus through His parables and miracles is moulding a new mindset and new action.

Members increasingly resonate with this mission to *be* the gospel in their community, as Jesus articulated in Luke 4: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me...He has anointed me...preach good news to the poor...proclaim freedom for the prisoners...release the oppressed.”

Asking ourselves the right questions is crucial, says Karen West, pastor of missional initiatives. “Are people being invited to belong in our lives, not just in the church? Even if someone never enters the church, has Christ’s presence been felt through



PHOTO: WATERLOO MB PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

■ Camp Wumba, a community summer day camp runs for four weeks, full days. Half the kids are not associated with the church but live in the neighbourhood.

neighbourhood relationships?”

Julie, a young mom and member of the congregation, meets regularly with other young moms on her street to build caring relationships. These same neighbours delivered meals to Julie when her grandfather died. They caught the vision of what it means to be there for one another.

People on a Journey

As the congregation implements this missional vision, its small groups are becoming neighbourhood groups. Members are learning to think like missionaries in their community, growing in their understanding of the culture, values and needs of their neighbours.

Two years in a row one Sunday was designated Church Out of the Building. Members were encouraged to learn about their neighbourhood, get involved, build bridges of friendship or help someone in need.

Members encourage one another to demonstrate courageous

faith, justice and generosity in their communities outside church, gladly sharing the hope of Christ with a world needing God's redemption. They come alongside people at various stages in their faith journeys, encouraging each to take the next step. They discern tangible ways to join God's mission in their neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces.

A ministry called Hospitality House spawned from this missional thinking. Four young adults pooled resources to acquire a house with room for two others, intentionally inviting people on the margins to live in community with them. The challenge for all is to live below one's income enough to share with others.

Concerned citizens, along with several different faith communities, worked with the mayor, several city councillors and the city planning department to birth SHOW (Supportive Housing of Waterloo), pulling people off the streets into their own apartments. SHOW is staffed through the

YMCA plus volunteers from a number of local churches.

To support SHOW, one of the congregation's neighbourhood groups raised funds through a BBQ. Others supplied cleaning products for move-in day, one bucket of supplies for each of the 30 residents. Another congregational group rented a truck and gathered furniture from people throughout the city. The congregation contributed funds for new box springs and mattresses in each unit.

"If I want to be part of God's Kingdom on earth, how do I live the gospel?" is a question members are encouraged to ask themselves. A community garden was planted in one family's backyard to share produce. Rather than sell or trade a car, some give their vehicles away.

Practising this generosity also frees all involved to speak naturally about God and His Kingdom.

Perhaps the congregation's most visible program is called Barnabas Missions.

It offers weekly help with meal planning, cooking and budgeting for those struggling financially in the community. Occasionally participants cook something extra for the church freezer to keep sharing the gift.

The congregation also offers the King's Court, an after school program in a nearby apartment. Young and older adults assist with homework, interspersed with games and healthy snacks. From Jesus With Love is a free annual Christmas shopping spree for 200 families that struggle financially, plus a Christmas party for them. In the Bethlehem Baskets ministry, congregation members can nominate neighbours who struggle or experience loss. A congregation member in the neighbourhood will personally deliver the basket and then nurture relationships throughout the year.

People of Diversity

Sherk says Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church longs to be an intergenerational, multiethnic community of faith. The local Spanish community hosts new Canadians from Columbia and Mexico, so the congregation mixes in Spanish songs with PowerPoint to its Sunday services and provides Spanish Bibles. Five church staff studied conversational Spanish to help their neighbours feel more at home.

One of the church's neighbourhood groups adopted a new Canadian family from Egypt, providing winter coats and assisting with résumé writing. Other families participate in the Place of Refuge program, walking alongside refugees by inviting them to join family events, cook meals together and learn English informally, day by day.

To reflect on the congregation's vision, Sherk recommends *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community*, a book by Hugh Halter and Matt Smay (Jossey-Bass, 2008). He concludes, "We are trusting God to lead us in our vision to be a people transformed by Jesus Christ, with faith to change the world." **FT**

CHARLENE DE HAAN is a freelance writer in Toronto, the executive director of CAM International of Canada, and founder of StepUpTransitions.ca. Read all the profiles in this ongoing series at www.faithtoday.ca.

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the perfect time for churches to educate and empower themselves and their families to care for Canadian children and youth.

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Download your free Sunday Service video at: AdoptionSunday.com or contact AdoptionSunday@theEFC.ca



Men Made in the Image of God

Let's be free to use our manly attributes in God's service.

In the coming weeks families and churches will begin to prepare for the Christmas season. Christmas is a great celebration of how God became human, how Jesus entered this world to be the Way, Truth and Life. This was a necessary step because the image of God in us had become distorted and marred by our own sin.

As a child who grew up attending very good local churches, I don't recall ever looking closely at what it really means to be made in the image of God. Scripture is very clear in Genesis 1:27 that men and women are both originally His image bearers.

There has been much focus over the years about various characteristics of God. He is our shepherd, our friend and the lover of our souls. In recent years there has been a growing

trend to also recognize God as our king, our strength, our provider. However I do wonder if we have had a strong enough focus on celebrating how the image of God is revealed in men and women.

There are many programs in the Christian community with opportunities for people to serve and for people to *be* served. But when a man experiences these ministries, does he feel he has to check the image of God revealed in him at the door? Does he need to fit the definition of a Christian created by someone else? Or is he discovering he can be a man *and* follow Jesus?

I'm the father of three sons and a daughter. Every day I can see how they're different. Sitting in Sunday school for an educational experience is not high on the boys' priority list. They want to move around and discover or experience life. Personally I've always learned best by experimenting or learning as I'm doing. Yet there is a significant focus on "sit and learn" in our world that does not engage the heart of a man or a boy.

The aggressive, competitive nature that characterizes many men is often ignored or treated as almost sinful. It's



We are more than conquerors. This is our inheritance as God's Children.

We may be hard pressed on all sides, but regardless of the situation, the victory is in Christ.

Through sufferings, persecution, civil unrest, discrimination from society and government, we are to follow Christ undeterred. **He is our Rock**, our firm foundation. In His name we find refuge.

The International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church (IDOP) is a time of prayer for our brothers and sisters currently persecuted/or their faith. It also reminds and inspires us Canadians, pursuing Christ in our daily lives, to remember what we must be willing to lay down for God and what price we must be willing to pay.

To see the real stories and get involved, Download the IDOP kit at www.IDOP.ca

true these traits can be displayed in a sinful manner, but I'm glad Jesus was aggressive in calling out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. I'm also glad the Bible talks about rewards in eternity for our faithfulness here on earth.

For centuries many men have been drawn to combat. A hockey crowd is loudest when a fight breaks out. Today mixed martial arts is drawing the attention of large numbers of Canadian men.

Violence can be an example of the image of God distorted by sin. But it's also true God is a warrior (Exodus 15:3). He fought the powers of sin and darkness for our souls. There is nothing wrong with a man's desire to fight for what is right. The world is waiting for men to fight for justice for the poor and oppressed, and to fight against the powers trying to divide their marriages and families.


There are men who love to build and create things. Who does that remind you of? There are men who love to protect and provide for those they love. Where would that instinct come from?

If you're a leader of men, it's important you challenge them towards something greater than themselves while allowing them to *be* themselves. There are men who are not "teachers" in the stereotypical use of the word. Yet some of my children's greatest teachers have been men. These men have not always sat and read a Bible story to my kids. They teach by being

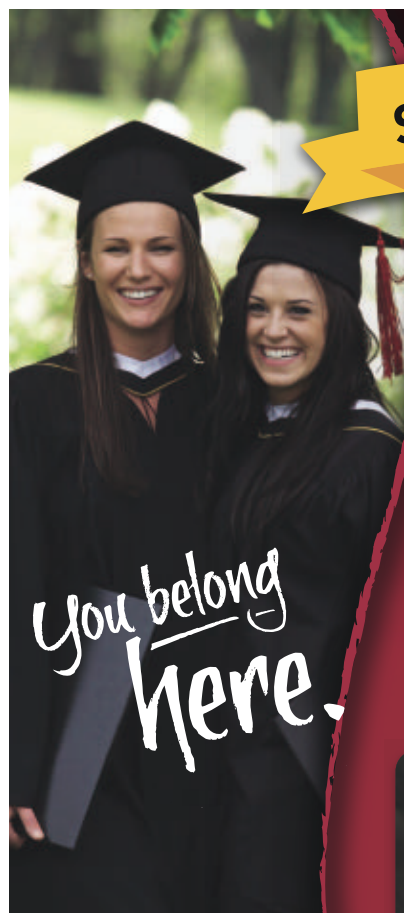
themselves and investing in the lives of my children.

It's been exciting to see men in my own church impact our community through simply being themselves. We have men who have started a motorcycle ride each week (when the weather allows), and men who are leading a darts morning twice a month. In these environments the men are being who they are, but they are also seeing other men from the community become involved.

Men, we need to look at how the image of God is revealed in us, and we need to be grateful to Him for that. However, this does not come without responsibility. We have to recognize how our own sin still distorts the image of God being revealed in and through us. We must seek to know and follow Jesus, and invite Him to chip off those parts of us that are getting in the way.

This Christmas season may you see Jesus as the One who has come to be the Way to the Father. May you also see how Jesus has revealed the fullness of what it looks like to reveal the image of God in us. 

KIRK GILES is the president of Promise Keepers Canada (www.promisekeepers.ca), a ministry dedicated to ignite and equip men to make a godly impact in families, workplaces, churches and communities. Read more in this series at theEFC.ca/promisekeepersFT.




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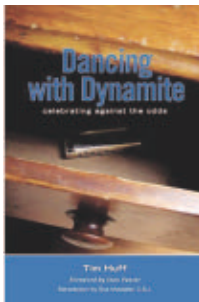
Dancing With Dynamite: Celebrating Against the Odds

Author: Tim Huff
Castle Quay Books, 2010.
176 pages. \$18

Having lived and served more than 20 years among society's least-desired people, Tim Huff is uniquely qualified to write this book. Picking up where he left off with *Bent Hope* (Castle Quay, 2008), Huff invites readers into a real-life world of disappointment and devastation, all the while showing there is cause for hope and celebration.

While Jesus declared His Kingdom "is not of this world" (John 18:36), Huff believes the phrase from the Lord's Prayer "on earth as it is in heaven" calls us to see that Kingdom at work here and now. A skillful storyteller, he reveals God at work in the most unlikely places and people. The book is "a tribute to those who reveal light and broker joy when the odds are clearly stacked against them."

Careful reflection on years of compassionate service among the disenfranchised convinces Huff there is ample reason for hope. Whether in the dreams of a parentless boy in a bleak Romanian orphanage; in the generosity of a much-too-young-to-be-homeless girl in downtown Toronto feeding a homeless veteran on Remembrance Day; or an elderly lady expressing to a love-starved, abused little boy attending a week-long Bible club that he is of great worth in God's sight, this book is filled



with stories that invite us all to celebrate against the odds.

But even as Huff invites us to see cause for celebration in the gut-wrenching stories shared, careful readers will also observe deeply rooted, tear-stained compassion for those relegated to the margins. "The who's who of the street world," writes Huff, "is primarily a revolving door of broken-hearted dreamers, survivors and victims." It is to this "revolving door" world, especially in Toronto, that Tim Huff has devoted his life. And he graces us with glimpses into

that world through *Dancing With Dynamite*.

Huff says the book is for those who "believe there is no God, those who hate God, those who struggle with God, those who believe

in another one, and those who believe in Him as Abba Father." That pretty well includes all of us. I highly recommend this book, not as a theology of ministry to the disenfranchised, but as a meditation on the image of God, however obscured it may be, resident in every woman, man, girl and boy.

—David Daniels

Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts

Author: Jeremy M. Bergen
T & T Clark, 2011.
338 pages. \$43

I've been reading Jeremy Bergen's *Ecclesial Repentance* in tandem with another book, Gerry Steele's *Bathtubs but No Water* (Fernwood,

2011). Steele, an advisor and negotiator on aboriginal affairs at national, regional and provincial levels, recounts the Canadian government's resettlement of Labrador's Aboriginal people on Davis Inlet in 1967. Innu traditions and beliefs were broken, resulting in what Steele calls a "downward spiral." Both are brave books.

Bergen, assistant professor of religious studies and theology at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., uses a twofold approach. First, he illustrates how the churches confront their sinful pasts with concrete examples of church repentance in recent decades. Then he explores the theological issues raised by such examples.

A series of questions anchors his inquiry in Part 1. How can the church's repentance for acts in the past have integrity and be meaningful today? How is sin present in and through the church, and what is the basis and nature of the church's holiness? How does ecclesial repentance fit into the context of forgiveness and reconciliation?

Bergen tackles head-on Christian offences against Jewish and Aboriginal peoples; slavery and racism; sexual abuse, violence and injustice; and Pope John Paul II's Day of Pardon during Lent 2000. Bergen's working assumption is that ecclesial repentance "may reflect the work of the Trinitarian God," even as it "may require Christian theology to speak a bit differently about God," especially the church's role in God's mission. In sep-

arate chapters in Part 2, Bergen deals with the doctrine of communion of saints, the mark of the holiness of the church and the church's mission of reconciliation in forgiveness.

It's refreshing to read a book that is both descriptive and proscriptive. To his credit, Bergen builds on descriptive data to formulate a doctrinal tradition of the Church that makes sense of acts of apology and repentance. His Trinitarian account of ecclesial repentance shows how the Church is inextricably tied to forgiveness in Christ. Ecclesial repentance that is Holy Spirit inspired and Christ centred serves to "conform the penitent Church evermore to Christ's body – that body on the cross which is God's endurance of sin and victory over it."

—Burton K. Janes

Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild

Author: Mary A. Kassian
Moody Publishers, 2010.
260 pages. \$16

Some concepts are best understood in relation to their opposites. Jesus knew this, and accordingly contrasted for His audience the wise man and the foolish man, the wise servant and the foolish servant, the wise virgins and the foolish ones.

In *Girls Gone Wise* Alberta author and speaker Mary Kassian employs the same technique. Drawing extensively from the Proverbs 7 portrait of



the wayward wife, and from that of her virtuous antithesis, the Proverbs 31 woman, Kassian skillfully contrasts 20 traits and habits that distinguish wise girls from wild ones. When I read the phrase “wild thing,” my mind jumps immediately to certain female pop icons whose attitudes defy everything wholesome and godly. This is, of course, the type of girl that Kassian has in mind, but it is not only her.

With equal amounts of cultural savvy and compassion, Kassian invites us to examine our own lives for those untamed tendencies that need to bow low at the cross of Jesus. She also explores the devastating repercussions of the feminist movement, and speaks boldly to the common

behaviours – both learned and instinctive – that most women fall into. Because they fly in the face of God’s plan, these patterns are inherently self-destructive,

and move us further and further from the deepest yearnings of our hearts.

A snappy website (www.girlsgonewise.com) complements the book. It includes quizzes, summaries, discussion questions, articles and a video blog – it is engaging and comprehensive. *Girls Gone Wise* is an invaluable guidebook, ideal for both personal and small group study. It is especially recommended for mothers and daughters to work through together. For modern women desiring to follow Christ in a culture whose clamouring dictates are

so opposed to God’s design, this book is a timely gift and a beacon. *–Evelyn Pedersen*

Spiritual Rhythm: Being With Jesus Every Season of Your Soul

Author: Mark Buchanan
Zondervan, 2010.
327 pages. \$19.99
(e-book \$9.99)

If spiritual life is measured by fruit, seasons make a good metaphor. Winter, spring, summer and fall are all needed to produce a good harvest. One year’s growth cycle leads to the next, and Mark Buchanan suggests our own trip through the seasons will be ongoing as well. The difference with spiritual seasons is we don’t always experience them in order. Circumstances can thrust us from midsummer into the depth of winter.

The first half of *Spiritual Rhythm* looks at the four seasons of the heart, offering suggested activities to make the most of each one and to encourage a healthy progression to the next. And it points us to Jesus, the Man for all seasons. In the second half the focus is spiritual rhythm, covering topics like balance, abiding, seeking the Kingdom, walking in the light, perseverance, gratitude, worship, the Bible, prayer and friendship.

The seasonal activities and spiritual practices are down-to-earth and equip us to better manage our spiritual lives. The book also includes 29 short sidebars which allow us to ex-

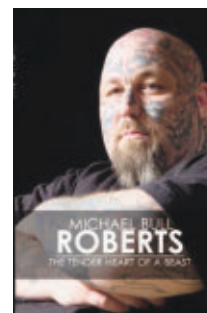
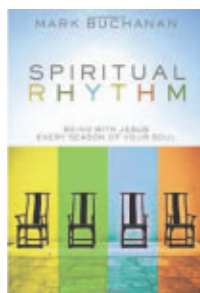
plore specific areas where we might benefit. It can be read straight through, or you can dive in where you most feel the need. To allow this there is minor recapping of previous material in places.

No review of a Mark Buchanan book is complete without mention of the author’s lyrical writing style. *Spiritual Rhythm* even includes some of his poetry: brief, evocative and real. Rev. Buchanan knows how to tell stories that connect with ordinary people: stories of ordinary people and of those who have walked

paths many of us will safely avoid. He shares his own stories with an engaging transparency, and never lingers on them long enough to sound self-absorbed.

Buchanan is an award-winning author and Baptist pastor in British Columbia.

–Janet Sketchley



The Tender Heart of a Beast

Author: Michael “Bull” Roberts
Trimatrix Management Consulting Inc., 2009.
182 pages. \$24.95
(order from bullroberts@gmail.com)

Michael “Bull” Roberts experienced overwhelming trauma and abuse as a child and a teen. As an adult he dealt a lot of pain to those who crossed him. His purpose in this autobiography is neither to portray himself as a victim

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The Tender Heart of a Beast won a 2010 Canadian Christian Writing Award and an honourable mention in a second category. Copies are available from the author, or you could request an inter-library loan from your public library. For those who just want his story, DVD copies of his testimony are \$15 plus shipping (run time 1 hour). Email bullroberts@gmail.com.

Born in Newfoundland, the author now resides in Ontario.

–Janet Sketchley



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Putting Christ Into Good Friday

Why we should remove Good Friday from the list of statutory holidays.

Every Yuletide we Christians encourage everyone to “put Christ (back) into Christmas.” But if we were serious about putting Christ into Good Friday, we would insist that it no longer be a Canadian statutory holiday.

Christmas itself has become so blurred through the addition of semi-religious figures such as Santa Claus and non-religious figures such as Frosty and Rudolph that you can easily argue it has become a generic midwinter festival in which all Canadians can participate.

But Good Friday? That’s as irreducibly Christian as you can get.

Even Easter Sunday can be domesticated with bunnies, chicks and chocolate. But a man dying on a cross just can’t be swallowed by the Sentimentality Industry. The corners stick in the throat: agony, shame, injustice, insults, darkness, desertion—and beneath and behind and above it all the outrageous idea that here the salvation of the world is being accomplished. “Foolishness to the Gentiles” indeed!

So why is such a definitively Christian holy day still a statutory holiday? I’ll give you three good reasons why we Christians should be agitating for its removal as such.

First, Good Friday as a Canadian statutory holiday is irrational. While a majority of Canadians continue to call themselves Christians, close to a third do not. And the majority doesn’t go to church much, or read the Bible, or believe basic Christian teachings. More to the point, Canada is not a Christian nation in any official sense, and you don’t have to be a Christian to be a citizen fully participating in Canadian society. So why must you stop work, or close your business, or leave off shopping, or delay going to school because of one religion’s holy day? You shouldn’t. So we should stop making it so.

Some might reply that Christianity is an important part of our Canadian heritage. But being members of the British Empire is an important part of our Canadian heritage, and yet we don’t sing “Rule, Britannia!” at public events.

In fact we don’t even sing “God Save the Queen,” although that makes more sense than mandating that everyone in Canada, to a greater or lesser extent, participate in the special day of just one religion.

Second, retaining Good Friday as a holiday is unhelpful. It continues to annoy some Canadians as an unfair accommodation of one group of Canadians (Christians) over everyone else. It contradicts the ideal of a just society treating everyone even-handedly. And as long as we Christians tacitly endorse this state of affairs, let alone challenge it, we look like we’re quite content to enjoy privileges we don’t deserve. And that is both evangelistically and politically unhelpful.

Some might reply that if we retain Good Friday as a statutory holiday, God might use it to prompt some people to consider what it means and maybe come to faith. Possibly, sure. But what is almost certain is we Christians look bad in the eyes of our neighbours for happily continuing a kind of cultural dominance. Either we know what’s going on and so we look selfish, or we don’t see the absurdity of it and so we look stupid.

Finally, retaining Good Friday as a statutory holiday in this country at this time is irreverent. Good Friday

is an unfathomably sacred day when our Lord and Saviour offered himself up to death, even death on a cross, for us. What a small, pale thing it is to make this day a statutory holiday in a country that otherwise pays Christ no mind in its public affairs. What tokenism! To allow Good Friday to be reduced to a vague vestige of a once-dominant religion in Canada is to treat what is holy and vital as if it is merely quaint.

Nowadays we Christians have to repeatedly make the dual point that (a) we are good Canadians who truly endorse the full Canadian character of our non-Christian neighbours and their cultures, while (b) we are good Christians who want to protect what is sacred to us from being profaned as a mere social convention. So let’s start, perhaps, with an obvious issue. Let’s take back Good Friday and put it where it belongs – in the church year, and not in the general Canadian calendar. **FT**

Good Friday is an unfathomably sacred day when our Lord and Saviour offered himself up to death, even death on a cross, for us.

JOHN STACKHOUSE teaches at Regent College. His book *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* is now available in paperback from Oxford University Press.

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CHRISTIANWEEK

World Vision

Parachuting Christian Material Into Colombia

The Unusual
Methods of
Missionary
Russ Stendal

By Deann Alford

Russ Stendal, 53, believes the gospel can succeed in bringing peace to Colombia where nothing else has worked. "Politics as usual won't do it," Stendal says. Colombia's violent quagmire will continue and the Marxist guerrilla insurgency could actually take control "if we can't pull the rug out from under them ideologically by changing hearts with the gospel."

Stendal is the founder of Colombia Para Cristo Society, a ministry headquartered in Maple Ridge, B.C. The ministry distributes Christian literature in many parts of Colombia inaccessible because of armed groups or rough terrain. It distributes to people on all sides of the conflicts that have been active in the country since



the 1950s. Colombia's current era of violence began in 1964 with the birth of the FARC, the guerrilla wing of the national Communist Party. These 10,000 guerrillas claim to be winning the dirty war, but so does Colombia's much larger military.

Death culture prevails in much of the country. A wrong committed 50 years ago can still bring revenge. Lawless groups control much territory that has never known institutional authority.

Thanks to Stendal's many relationships with leaders on various sides of the war, he and his ministry workers are able to reach into conflict areas, distributing Bibles, Christian books and solar-powered Galcom radios fix-tuned to his radio stations in central Colombia. The radios play secular and Christian music on one channel; the other features teaching and preaching, much of which is by Stendal himself.

To deliver in the most hostile areas, Stendal ties the care packages to little parachutes – the best, he says, are sewn by Oklahoma Baptist ladies – and drops them into guerrilla camps, coca groves and soccer fields from one of his two airplanes. (Coca is grown widely in Columbia, mainly to produce the narcotic cocaine, and is a factor in much of the fighting.)

Four bullet holes from an unfriendly FARC front pock the fuselage of his 600-pound ultralight. His other plane is a 1953 Cessna, whose previous owner painted pink and adorned its tail with the Pink Panther to distinguish himself from narco-traffickers. The drawing seems prophetic of its current mission. The cartoon cat looks over his shoulder at Colombia's flag, his hands clasped as if praying for this blood-drenched country.

In June 2010 FARC commander Mono Jojoy sent an envoy to meet Stendal and an American journalist, asking them to deliver messages to Colombia's military and the American presidential candidates that the FARC wants peace talks.

Who Is Russ Stendal?

Stendal's family arrived in Colombia from Minnesota in 1964 to translate the Bible into Kogi. His pilot father, Chad, taught him to fly. Early on Stendal saw *campe-*

sinos (farmers) cultivate coca because it paid them enough to feed their families where legal crops didn't. So Stendal bought catches from area fishermen, air-lifting them to better markets elsewhere in Colombia.

Colombia also suffered from leftist guerrilla movements seeking to overthrow the government. These groups, then as now, funded their work through kidnapping and hiring out to drug interests to guard the lucrative crops. On August 14, 1983, Stendal, then 26, flew his small plane to a southeastern town to meet with fishermen. FARC rebels kidnapped him.

For five months Stendal saw life within the FARC reflected in its worldview. The group promised freedom and prosperity to lure mostly poor, uneducated *campesinos* to fight their war to impose communism. "That's why there are guerrillas: no schools, no roads, no communications, no skills," says JAARS radio engineer Ray Rising, a mid-1990s FARC hostage for more than two years. "People are easy to get to believe the revolutionary ideologies."

But when *campesinos* join the rebels, leaders control them with fear. Personal freedom is non-existent. Dissent is not tolerated. The disobedient and would-be deserters are executed. Stendal realized his captors were themselves hostages of their false ideology. So are vast FARC-controlled regions of Colombia where commander Mono Jojoy ordered churches shuttered and threatened pastors with death. In Puerto Lleras, a central Colombian town, the FARC shut down churches for three years. In southern Guaviare Department, guerrillas banned Christian meetings 25 years ago. "Not even two people singing a hymn in a home," Stendal says.

Stendal built relationships with his captors while sharing the gospel. Although he was generally bound with a rope tied in a slip knot like a dog collar – to this day ties give him horrid headaches – he also managed to pen a Spanish manuscript about his life, faith and time as a hostage, aptly titled *Rescue the Captors*. Amazingly FARC commanders let it circulate the camp.

Guerrillas embrace Marxism as America's founding fathers embraced their own cause as right and noble, deeply believing



PHOTO: DEANN ALFORD

their war will bring a more just society. Still, as Stendal prayed for his captors and lived among them, guerrillas and their leaders began approaching him with questions about life and faith. And some even started expressing doubts about the violent, godless ideology.

Stendal experienced an epiphany. "I prayed and told God that I was willing to do whatever He saw fit, that He could do anything He wanted with me, and that I trusted Him completely." After an anonymous donor paid Stendal's \$50,000 ransom, he ignored American Embassy advice to forever flee Colombia, instead pursuing his newfound calling. He'd left the FARC on good terms. Because Colombian society is built on friendship, his FARC connections were foundational to returning to his former captors and bringing them Christ's love.

Open Doors for Witness

Doors opened to witness to the FARC and beyond to Colombia's army, paramilitaries and police. His largest mission field became hundreds of thousands of *campesinos*. These people sympathize with one side or are forced to support whoever makes offers they can't refuse. "Most of the *campesinos* have a son or daughter in the guerrillas or in the paras, or possibly a son in the army," Stendal says. Almost all have lost family members to the war. They

live in fear of the other side. Most are open to the gospel.

As for FARC guerrillas, "There isn't one of them who hasn't heard several dozen of my [radio] messages," Stendal says. He offers FARC commanders Bibles and Christian literature for their ranks, "but only if you want it." Before deciding, commanders review the material – Bibles, the published version of *Rescue the Captors* and books from Voice of the Martyrs.

Each armed group views Stendal as neutral in the fight and seems to respect his frank message that would have gotten just about anybody else shot. "We build a case that God exists and that everybody will have to come into account," Stendal says. "I've always been on the record saying that the guerrillas need to make one change – they need to put God in his rightful place. They attack people for being led by God. "We're not asking them to surrender to the other side. We're asking them to surrender to God. I'm just trying to get everybody into a personal relationship with the Lord."

Leaders of each side often gather their troops to hear him preach. Guerrillas "call me on the phone because they're sick,

they got shot, nobody will help them," he says. He offers medical help to guerrillas too wounded to fight. Some guerrilla commanders have not only blessed his distribution of literature, but also help pass out Christmas care packages. Among those helping Stendal access FARC-controlled areas is Giovanni, the commander who held him hostage in 1983.

Stendal and his staff of 30 also produce radio, video and website content, and deliver truckloads of literature and Gal-

com radios for free distribution. In areas too remote or dangerous to access by land, Stendal parachutes materials from his airplanes. He's heard reports of people praying for decades for a Bible "and all of a sudden one lands in a parachute at their back door." Years ago an escaped hostage policeman called the radio station to say he had received one of the Peace Campaign's airdropped Galcom radios. There are even reports prominent hostages freed in July 2008 – former Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and three American counternarcotics contractors – each had these radios while captive.

General Reinaldo Castellanos, retired commander of Colombia's army and an evangelical Christian, is one of several military leaders who backs Stendal's dangerous mission. "The FARC has been around for a long time without being defeated," Castellanos says. Stendal must be "very careful. He must be prudent. But the work must go forward. It's having a big impact on the guerrillas. We supported him and told the military to respect him, so God's Word could go forward. It's a blessing for everybody."

Colombia's government remains confident it's winning this war. "But even with 480,000 troops fighting with massive aid and intelligence, the military can't root out 10,000 guerrillas," Stendal says. "If the guerrillas can outlast this president, they can make a comeback because neighbouring countries are going to help them."

“We build a case that God exists and that everybody will have to come into account.”

What is the Colombia Para Cristo Society?

Russ Stendal's ministry, the Colombia Para Cristo Society, is registered in Canada and headquartered in Maple Ridge, B.C. Almost half its financial support comes from Canada.

It partners with Voice of the Martyrs Canada and with Galcom International Inc., which has provided thousands of solar-powered fixed-tuned radios.

Russ Stendal attaches the radios, Bibles and Christian books to white parachutes, many of which are sewn by Canadian volunteers, and drops them over areas of Colombia inaccessible by land, such as FARC camps and FARC-controlled towns. The aircraft Canadian supporters have recently donated to CPC is registered in Canada for use in countries that won't allow American airplanes.

Stendal's ministry also works with New Beginnings in Vancouver to send 40-foot relief containers from Canada to Colombia. Groups all over Canada prepare quilts, clothes and parachutes for the ministry. He frequently speaks about his work at mission expo events across Canada and the United States. The ministry hopes to expand into Venezuela. –DA



Clockwise from top left: the little parachutes – some are sewn by Oklahoma Baptist ladies – are dropped into guerrilla camps, coca groves and soccer fields from one of Stendal's two airplanes; some guerrillas and their leaders have approached Stendal with questions about life and faith; and Stendal and his staff prepare the Bibles and their parachutes for delivery.

God's presence, however, is affecting all sides. Supernatural occurrences among guerrillas are similar to reports from closed Muslim countries, such as bright lights shining all night through dense jungle into the guerrilla camp. Guerrillas start "getting worried about what God thinks," Stendal says. "They're not getting saved right and left, but they are getting saved."

One rebel fighter I shall call Aldo is like many guerrillas from Christian homes. At age 12 he rebelled against his family and ran away to join the FARC. He began listening to Stendal's radio messages in 2002. "Everybody with a radio listens to him," Aldo, now 26, says. Aldo describes Stendal as everybody's friend. "We know he's not against us. His way of thinking is respected. He wants to help. If we can

help him, we do, but his way of thought differs from ours."

The FARC leadership's peace talk overtures notwithstanding, neither side seems truly interested in laying down weapons, "except individuals who have been touched by the Lord. And then those on the same side want to blow them away," Stendal says. It's another odd contradiction in this war that makes little sense. "Each side is convinced that the other needs to repent." But Stendal's decade-long gospel bombardment of many guerrilla-controlled areas has helped foster a growing wave of warriors who receive Christ and reject violence. He says some become missionaries. Others get killed. Some leave, though desertion is nearly impossible.

While Colombia's army allows Stend-

al's Peace Campaign to provide guerrillas humanitarian aid, over the years American Embassy officials in Bogotá have called in Stendal dozens of times. After 2001, Stendal says, those meetings included warnings that providing humanitarian aid for people linked to terrorist groups may violate the Patriot Act and could land him in Guantanamo Bay.

Stendal tells officials what he tells everybody: Only the gospel will stop this violent bedlam. He's seen God do so much in Colombia that he refuses to be persuaded otherwise. **FT**

DEANN ALFORD, a journalist in Austin, Tex., travelled to Colombia for this article. An earlier version was published in the April 2010 issue of *Christianity Today*.