

Faith Today

To Connect, Equip and Inform Evangelical Christians in Canada

JULY/AUGUST 2012



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VIRTUAL Virtue

How are we behaving online
– do we need to make
any changes? p. 18

Immigrant Ministers
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PHOTO: GLOWIMAGES.COM



PHOTO: BRAD STEPHENSON



It's a Smaller World

Let's be prayerful and intentional in our use of electronic communication.

There was a time, not long ago, when we could move on from many of our past mistakes, trusting they would mostly be forgotten. But no longer.

Recent news stories have informed us of several young people who took their lives because their mistakes were posted online for the world to see. To them it seemed there was no other way out of their shame.

As adults we can each remember foolish or thoughtless mistakes we made, rooted in our youthful naïveté, usually motivated by the desire to be accepted.

As Christians we know the dark horror of facing our own sins. We know Christ has paid the price for our mistakes, and we are forgiven. But few of us would want the details posted online.

In our cover story, "Virtual Virtue," writer Karen Stiller explores the temptations and challenges of Facebook and other online social media used today by all ages. These technologies have become such a part of our lives, we can miss their challenges. In fact, you may be surprised by the warnings and insights of the experts whom Stiller interviewed.

The cautions can help us be wise as we take advantage of these new opportunities to connect. Facebook, Twitter, mobile phones, email – they have made many of us better informed and connected to those we care about. But we can also benefit from the reminders to be prayerful and intentional about how we use these technologies.

In "Sacred Spaces" by Anne B. Douglas, we learn about another form of communication – prayer. While it's not new, the prayer room movement is growing. As Douglas explains, these prayer rooms are spaces set aside just for prayer. They can be in a church or even a mobile truck. Their purpose is to provide a unique place for people to connect with God, enabling them to talk to Him and listen to Him freely. For some, praying in these sacred spaces provides their first experience of intimacy with God. And many have discovered these encounters leave them with faces aglow, which some explain as having been with God in a new way.

Do you remember the first time you prayed out loud? Perhaps it was with others in a Bible study group or more formally in a church service. Perhaps it was kneeling by your bed as a child.

As we grow in our faith we discover the blessing prayerful intimacy with God provides. Douglas' article may offer new ways for you to pray with others, or simply be intentionally alone with Him – in a place especially set aside.

And feel free, as you are blessed by what you read in this digital-only issue, to share it over whatever electronic communication networks you are part of. **FT**

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

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More Corporate Chaplains

Re: Marketplace Missionaries (May/June 2012)

I enjoyed this article. There is a growing trend in the workplace of embracing corporate chaplains as a premier face-to-face model of employee care.

I was a little shocked however to see Corporate Chaplains of Canada wasn't on your shortlist. We're Canada's frontrunner in supplying workplace chaplains in Canada since 2004. Phantom Screens (mentioned in your feature) is actually one of our flagship clients.

You can find out more about us at chaplains.ca.

*Marco Bianco, Ontario Director
Corporate Chaplains
of Canada*

Editor's Note: Thanks for helping correct our oversight.

Your national director, Gerry Kraft, is a familiar name to many of our readers for his leadership at Outreach Canada.

Church-School Partnership

Re: A Church You Should Know (May/June 2012)

God has just been throwing the doors wide open since [the article about Central Baptist Church in Victoria was written]. The school has literally invited us in (even as we read about schools nearby in the Lower Mainland trying to get Christians out of their buildings) and has asked us to write in their parent's newsletters, sit on their Parent's Advisory Committee and even be a part of the Welcome Wagon for new students!

I'm amazed at how much our attempt to build genuine relationships and partnerships have been reciprocated, and am praising God each step of the way!

*Kevin Thiessen
Victoria, B.C.*

Wary of Satanism

Re: ReligionWatch (May/June 2012)

James Beverley took his positive encounter [with the head of the Church of Satan] and turned it into an opportunity to encourage readers to cast off stereotypes and consider Satanists, though misguided, as nice people like us who love their wives and weep over dogs who die. But I can't shake the discomforting sense that image has been shaped by Satan who disguises himself as



an "angel of light" [2 Corinthians 11:14].

*A. Craig Polach
Kitchener, Ont.*

Women Leaders

Re: Canadian Women Are International Leaders (Mar/Apr 2012)

Thank you for your interest in Canadian women leaders. I knew and have worked with

Continued on page 8

THE EFC ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

You can find **The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada** on the web's most popular social networks. Many of the videos, updates and posts are exclusive to these social meeting places and offer a uniquely Canadian evangelical perspective that you won't find anywhere else. Join the conversation and visit us online at:



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most of those included in the first section. Blessings upon your work.

Eileen Stewart-Rhude
Oakville, Ont.

Beyond Personal

Re: Hinge: Rethinking Discipleship (Jan/Feb 2012)

Bruce Clemenger identified an element of secularism that caught me by surprise. He

wrote that secularism includes the belief "The gospel is only about personal salvation and does not also include the reconciliation of all of creation."

I have spent all my working life teaching and leading in Christian schools to challenge that kind of secularism in the Christian community, but until now have never heard that belief

identified or challenged in evangelical circles. (I'm 58, grew up in an evangelical church and attend one today.) I hope the EFC will throw its weight behind Christian

schools to combat that narrow view of salvation, and reverse the slide towards secularism in the evangelical church.

Bob Moore
Guelph, Ont.

Correction

The photo of Darryl Dash and his family (May/June 2012 issue, p.16) was taken by Laurie Houghton / horizonsphotography.ca

Milestones



Bruce Fawcett

APPOINTED

Bruce Fawcett as president of Crandall University in Moncton, N.B., effective Aug. 1, 2012. He holds a BA from Crandall and a PhD in empirical theology from the University

of Wales and is currently academic dean, director of doctoral studies, and associate professor of leadership at Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S. He succeeds Brian MacArthur, who ended an 11-year term as president in December, and interim president Andrew Hopper. Crandall is home to nearly a thousand students, many of them Atlantic Baptists. It also recently appointed Robert Knowles as vice-president for advancement.

C. T. (Calvin) Andrews as superintendent of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador, after an election to replace Paul Foster, who served since 2002. Andrews currently pastors Westside Tabernacle in Cornerbrook, N.L. The denomination has 124 assemblies and 400 credentialed pastors.

David Johnson as interim president and CEO at Providence University College and Seminary of Otterburne, Man., upon the recent retirement of August Konkel. Johnson started teaching New Testament at Providence in 1990 and has held many positions, most recently executive

vice-president, provost and member of the board of governors. Konkel, president since 2001 (professor since 1984), reportedly plans to move to Ontario to be closer to family. Providence includes a university college of 280 students and a seminary of 180 students.



William Raccah

William Raccah as president of Alberta Bible College. He holds a PhD in biblical studies from Laval University, specializing in Old Testament ethics and cultural anthropology. He previously served

as president of a Bible college in Israel, a country where earlier he converted to Christianity from Judaism. Alberta Bible College is based in Calgary, has about 130 students and is affiliated with the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

AWARDED

The Anglican Journal, *Geez* and the United Church of Canada periodical *Mandate* won general excellence awards for their work in 2011 from the Canadian Church Press (CCP). *Faith Today* won seven awards including two firsts for an editorial column by Bruce J. Clemenger and a news story by freelance writer Emily Wierenga; two second place awards; two thirds and an honourable mention. The CCP is an association of 80 Canadian religious periodicals. Details at theEFC.ca/CCP2012.

A Faith Today feature on John Stott authored by senior writer Drew Dyck was a winner in this year's Canadian Christian Writing Awards, held by The Word Guild. Judges also gave awards of merit to *Faith Today* columns by John G. Stackhouse Jr. and to a feature on Haiti by Lisa Hall-Wilson and Marcy Kennedy. More details on p.48 and at canadianchristianwritingawards.com.

LAUNCHED

Ottawa Theological College was launched in June by a group of evangelical Anglicans. They aim to become a centre of "mainstream evangelical training and practice" and to serve a cross-denominational audience. Classes, in the downtown area near Parliament Hill, start in September. The college principal is George Sinclair, rector of Church of the Messiah, a congregation in the Anglican Network in Canada. Applicants should have already completed a bachelor's degree and apply by Aug. 1 for the fall semester.

RENAMED

World Renew is the new name of the agency formerly known as Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. The Christian Reformed Church in North America affirmed the change in June, in part because the work of this 50-year-old ministry reaches well beyond the denomination, involves much more than disaster relief, and has been overseen by a board rather than a committee for decades.

faithbook

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Christian Grocers Bring Food North

“I think that because we’re men of faith, this isn’t just a business. We want to serve people. And we want to serve God with this business,” says David Stezenko, co-owner – along with his brother Dan Stezenko – of Quality Market, an award-winning independent grocery store in Thunder Bay, Ont. So when David, a member of Redwood Park Alliance Church, learned of the nutrition-related health problems in remote northern communities, he wanted to do something.

“When you really start to get a picture about the living conditions, the eating conditions, the pricing and the lack of availability of fresh healthy food, it breaks your heart. This is the greatest nation in the world, and yet we have Third World conditions just a stone’s throw from one of our major cities. Why is it okay to let this continue?” asks Stezenko.

Under the Federal Government’s Food Mail program, food was often spoiled by the time it reached its far-North destination. Even when healthy foods arrive in accept-



PHOTOS: BRAD STEPHENSON



David and Dan Stezenko desire to serve both people and God with their new grocery store business.

able condition, prices are many times higher than in cities in the south. A diet of pop, potato chips and sugary snacks is more affordable than milk, fruit and vegetables.

When Stezenko learned the Federal Government was looking for southern

food suppliers for its more efficient and new Nutrition North Canada initiative, launched in 2011, he wanted to be part of it. Under Nutrition North Canada, fresh food would be flown directly from selected suppliers to eligible communities.



Satellite Spreads the Gospel in the Middle East

While visions of satellite dishes may have negative connotations for some of us, the sight of them throughout the

Middle East is cause for rejoicing for the satellite TV station SAT-7. Launched in 1996 by British-born Terry Ascot, SAT-7 began with just two hours of broadcasting and a minimal budget of \$1.6 million. (At the time Ascot was living in Cyprus after being deported from Egypt in 1988.)

Today it offers 650 hours of Christian broadcasting every week in three languages – Arabic, Farsi and Turkish – with a budget (from all channels and support offices) of \$14.5 million.

The station’s aim, says Ascot, is to bring the gospel

truth to the Middle East – a potential audience reach of half a billion – and to support and encourage the persecuted Church there.

In the beginning Christians were reluctant to appear on TV for fear of recrimination including imprisonment, torture and execution. But Arab Christians are losing their fear, says Ascot, which has been replaced by joy and knowledge of God’s love. Witness, for example, the 60,000 strong who attended a 12-hour prayer service in an Egyptian cave church recently, in spite of mounting tensions and increased persecution.

SAT-7 offers call-in shows, documentaries, films and current affairs newscasts – focused mostly on education, equality and evangelism.

But it’s kids’ shows that are really catching fire – and

But when Quality Market applied to become one of the 33 food suppliers for the program, government officials expressed doubt about the ability of a small family business to do the job.

However, the Stezenkos' reputation for honesty and integrity had earned the trust of Grand Chief Stan Beardy of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, who wrote to government officials expressing his confidence in Quality Market's ability and commitment. The Stezenkos were granted the food supplier post. To make it easier for individuals and community groups to place orders, Quality Market launched Thunder Bay's first online grocery system.

"We promised the grand chief that we would charge the same prices as we charge in Thunder Bay, plus a fee of 7 to 9 per cent to cover the cost of preparing and packing the food, and the cost of maintaining our system," says Stezenko. "We made this commitment about pricing because there are so many companies that have taken advantage of people in the North. In many cases they charged high prices because they could.

"It can't be just about profit. If we're using profit to serve God and serve the community, then we know that we're making a difference. That's what really drives us. We have the opportunity to be a piece of the puzzle that could help bring restored health to this nation," says Stezenko. **FT** *—Marianne Jones*

It's Like Facebook for Preachers

Kenton Anderson wrote the book on preaching – literally. Actually, three of them. His latest is titled *Choosing to Preach: A Comprehensive Introduction to Sermon Options and Structures* (Zondervan, 2006). Now the professor of homiletics and president of Northwest Baptist Seminary in Langley, B.C., has brought his preaching insights to a website he describes as "Facebook for preachers." Preaching.org is intended as a tool to help both beginning and experienced preachers "improve their preaching through the power of social networking."



Preaching.org is an online community where members encourage and motivate each other, sharing their experiences, wisdom and knowledge. Members contribute status updates, book reviews and engage in group discussions. "If you are active in helping people hear what God is saying through His Word, whether in small groups, classes, youth groups or pulpits, this site can help you," says Anderson.

The website includes commentary, feature articles and a virtual classroom based on the integrative method of preaching. "Most people can recognize a good sermon when they hear one, though they might have difficulty articulating why," he says. "For those of us who try to preach those 'good sermons,' it is useful to understand what it takes to get those positive responses from our listeners." The articles and discussions aim to help preachers grow as effective communicators, especially in sermon preparation and delivery.

Anderson also works with preachers through direct tutoring. For a minimal fee participants send in a video of a preached sermon, and Anderson replies with a videotaped evaluation: Was the sermon faithful to the Bible? Did the sermon make sense? Were the stories and illustrations well chosen, used wisely and effectively told?

It's all in the service of "more faithful and effective preaching for you and your listeners," says Anderson. **FT**

—Eric P. Fehr



Terry Ascot

opening doors, Ascot says. Of a total audience of 9.2 million children, 4 million are in Iraq – which means that one in four Iraqi families are watching. In Saudi Arabia, where most of the 9/11 terrorists came from, 1.8 million kids are tuned in.

"People regularly comment on how the shows are changing children's behaviour," he says. "And we've won the trust of millions of families."

The reason satellite TV and not Facebook or Twitter is the way in, Ascot explains, is "functional illiteracy. You have to

be able to read to use Facebook, and you don't with TV." And almost everyone has a television, even in the Cairo slums he visited. At least 50 per cent of the Arab world – over 250 million people – have satellite TV. In Iran alone, which has banned satellite TVs, there are still 40 million dishes.

Even so, pastors and parishioners are losing their lives, and the Arab world is a long way from democracy. While there is still much work to do, Ascot is encouraged by what he is seeing, and the opportunities for the Church to grow. The Arab Spring (a term for the democratic revolutions of the past year or two) has revealed the growing discontent with governments and people are clearly seeking alternatives.

Erwin Van Laar is the Canadian director in charge of fundraising for SAT-7. He says, "The Lord is calling us, like Gideon, to do this with very few people. He will guide us, and His Word changes people's lives." **FT** *—Alex Newman*

Choral Group Sings for Justice



Harmony Through Harmony members with children from the Amanzimtoti Elementary School Choir during the choral group's 2011 tour in South Africa.

discouraged by the increasingly self-centred reasons people were joining the choir she led. “The *American Idol* culture was having an impact. They were joining for ‘my fame, my glory.’ It was disturbing me.”

This discontent, plus a mission trip to South Africa, helped Wiest develop the concept of Harmony Through Harmony (HTH), a choral group that develops musical and leadership

When Beth McLean Wiest, a young Christian woman in Calgary, heard how secular business leaders were doing so much for social justice, she was a bit embarrassed. In response, she started a choir like no other.

Wiest grew up in a Christian household where Ron Sider’s groundbreaking book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving From Affluence to Generosity* (Thomas Nelson, 1978) influenced how the family

lived out its faith. But the challenge to put her faith into action struck her hard when, as the director of a secular choral group, she attended Leadership Calgary, a leadership development program.

“It was probably the most secular environment I’d been in,” recalls Wiest. “But my colleagues were doing more about social justice than I was. I was talking more than doing.”

Around the same time she became

skills in its members by building community and raising awareness about social justice issues. Members range in age from 18 to 35.

After returning from South Africa, Wiest connected with four friends – provisionally, a soprano, alto, tenor and bass – who were also choral directors. Adding six young people culled from the quartet’s circle of friends led to a 10-voice choir that held its inaugural season in 2009 – and

Apologetics Training Takes Off

After 10 years in youth ministry in British Columbia and stints overseas, Andy Steiger learned he was possibly contributing to students leaving Christianity.

It wasn’t intentional.

Steiger learned about the problem at a conference in Los Angeles, where he was confronted with evidence that roughly 70 per cent of young people leave the Church during post-secondary education.

“[I] was really just astonished about what was happening,” he remembers, “and realizing as a pastor that I was completely ignorant of it for all those

years that I was in ministry.”

He’s making up for lost time now as director of Apologetics Canada, a group that trains young adults to think carefully about their faith and be ready to respond to skeptical questions.

In those earlier days, he’d gone to California out of a desire to minister more effectively, enrolling in a masters program in apologetics at Biola University in California. (Originally from Portland, Ore., he’d already studied and married in the Vancouver area.) At the time he knew he wanted more depth as a pastor. Learning to give a reasoned defence for Christianity seemed the

most effective option.

He and his wife had been thinking of foreign mission work, but the conference and the masters program changed his life.

“I still went off into missions, if you will,” he reflects, “but not where I thought.”

He began identifying questions students were facing on university campuses, many that he had felt unready to fully address even in his years as a youth pastor: concerns about the meaning of life; the existence of God; suffering and evil; claims that all religions lead to God; and the proof of Jesus’ resurrection.

After further research and work with Los Angeles-based apologetics.com – a ministry devoted to equipping

raised \$55,000 for charities in that first year.

The choir meets every week for dinner, book study and rehearsal to help build community awareness of social justice issues and musical abilities. Some members are taking leadership of the book studies, occasionally expanding them beyond the rehearsal time to meeting independently in homes. Two members are developing into assistant directors, and others are helping with HTH administration, including fielding concert requests.

HTH (harmonythroughharmony.com) is now a 20-voice group. It has finished two full seasons of concerts, including a trip to South Africa (this time as a group), and has raised funds and awareness for a variety of causes.

The issue of human trafficking and sexual exploitation has turned out to be a focus of HTH. Its first book study was David Batstone's *Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight It* (HarperOne, 2007), and one of its early concerts was a fundraiser for Hope Returns, a charity which rescues children from sex trafficking in Cambodia.

The emphasis on the topic wasn't part of HTH's plan, but "seems to be the chapter we're currently in. God is at work bringing the issue of human trafficking forward in a myriad of ways," says Wiest. "We're part of sharing this message a lot more than we thought we would be." **FT**

—Robert White



■ Andy Steiger

Christians to be passionate defenders of the Christian faith – he returned to Vancouver.

In 2010 he founded Apologetics Canada (apologeticscanada.com), a co-operative effort with Christian Education Ministries International and apologetics.com. His new organization has since hosted two conferences and produced *The Thinking Series* of DVD videos addressing central questions about Christianity while sharing the gospel. A companion book is in the works. Steiger also speaks at local Bible colleges and coffee houses.

"The real irony is even although we live in an information age, it seems as though people have never been more ignorant," he says. "Yet often people have never been more opinionated as well."

But they're interested. The conference grows every year. Steiger expects the next one, March 1-2, 2013 in Abbotsford, B.C., to be the largest yet. Speakers include Biola's William Lane Craig and the University of Ottawa's Dr. John Patrick. The organization is also working to help families better cultivate their children's intellectual lives.

"One of the things we need to understand is that Jesus was not just about the heart," says Steiger. "The Gospels describe a Jesus who had a razor-sharp intellect." **FT**
—Meagan Gilmore

Kaitlin's Wish Has Come True

Nobody would have faulted her for keeping her wish for herself, but in December 2010 Alberta teenager Kaitlin Boyda donated the funds that would have been used for her Children's Wish Foundation wish to help provide safe drinking water for kids in Africa.

Diagnosed with brain cancer which eventually claimed her life last year – at the age of 17 – her generosity enabled a \$7,000 donation to Compassion Canada. And incredible things have happened.

People across Canada and around the world have been inspired by her selflessness. What is now her legacy fund at Compassion has raised more than \$300,000 to dig wells all over eastern Africa.

The word of Kaitlin Boyda's effort spread so far, in fact, that a song was written and recorded in her honour by Stephanie Poort (vocalist for Hello Bella) and pop/rock act Phao, with all proceeds from its iTunes sales going to the fund.

"It was a bit of a surprise for us," says Tracy Smith, advocate network national manager with Compassion Canada. "We had no idea that the song was in the works. We caught wind of it just before it was released to iTunes. It was their choice to write the song for Kaitlin, and then to donate all of the proceeds from the song to Kaitlin's legacy."

More than 20 wells have been funded by Kaitlin Boyda's legacy so far, with more money rolling in every day. For Smith, it's a testimony to the power of an individual to inspire real change and true generosity in others.

"It's been amazing to see people pick up that torch," she says. "We have people doing all kinds of fundraising activities. That song is probably the biggest and most well-known because of it being on the inspirational iTunes chart, but there are so many people who were inspired by her. And that's not Compassion promoting it or anything. It is just people being really transformed by the [story of] her donation and wanting to do something."

More information on the fund and a link to contribute can be found at compassion.ca/kaitlinslegacy. To hear the song, search for "Kaitlin's Song (Coming Home)" on iTunes.

"Her story touches the hearts of people because it is so selfless," says Kaitlin Boyda's mom Brenda. "In a time when it would be okay to put yourself first, Kaitlin chose to think of others, and we are humbled and touched by the response of everyone." **FT**

—Ryan Paulsen



■ Kaitlin Boyda

Do not be anxious about anything, but in **every situation**, by **prayer and petition**, with **thanksgiving**, present your requests to God.

—Philippians 4:6



PHOTO: DESIGNPICS.COM



Serving or Being Served?

How should we discern technological innovations?

I confess I am not on Facebook. Most of the people I know are – so much so that I sometimes feel the need to apologize and explain. Am I out of touch – or worse, a Luddite?

I am not a Luddite, though I think we can learn from this 18th century English movement that selectively destroyed machines they felt were harmful to the social good. They were not anarchists. They asked whether each new device served the human good by improving the human condition, or whether the device would actually undermine our humanity, working conditions and community. Some Christian groups such as the Amish have taken similar approaches.

Many of us see a person who avoids the latest device or medium as out of touch or “anti.” This defensive conclusion is actually a sign of an internal tension with technology that affects us all.

The prophet Isaiah described it in a way that is still true in our age. We take materials around us and fashion them into products and tools that benefit us. We also take these same materials and fashion them into idols which we worship – to which we become devoted.

I actually had a Facebook account once. I joined so I could see what the 13,000 “social media friends” of the EFC were seeing and saying. I started with one “friend”: our IT guy, David.

But soon others discovered my participation in Facebook. When my second friend request came, rather than explaining why I really did not want a Facebook friend, I friended him.

Then came another knock on the door. I ignored it, rather than doing the polite thing of explaining. Of course, Facebook does not make this easy. The medium is designed to facilitate having *more* friends, not less. When my friend jokingly complained I was refusing him after I had already

befriended at least two others on Facebook, I added him.

I realized there was a consequence to the medium. To ignore the invitation creates problems. And accepting the invitation suggests you will regularly read the status updates your friends post and that you too will post enough to make the “friendship” worthwhile. Often, if you ask someone on Facebook a question about their life, they will ask why you haven’t read their posts.

Soon the number of knocks on my door began to grow. There seemed no easy way to explain why I might not want to be someone’s Facebook friend, other than to first accept them as a friend and then send them a message about why I really didn’t want Facebook friends and didn’t plan to update my timeline.

The use of the medium created dilemmas that didn’t exist before. For the people who sent me friend requests, all they knew was I was ignoring them. So, I deleted my Facebook account. Now I don’t regularly see what the EFC is posting to Facebook, but neither am I offending my friends (at least in the Facebook world).


I do have a Twitter account. (See, I am not a Luddite.) I enjoy reading the tweets of those I follow, and my following them creates no expectation they will follow me. Besides, I rarely tweet anyway.

What scanning newspapers did for me in the past, scanning Twitter posts does now. Those I follow end up informing me about most news I should be aware of. They provide helpful links, and the occasional banter is entertaining. Twitter serves me and creates no moral dilemma – at least thus far.

Media critic Neil Postman, in a lecture at Regent College, suggested that when making a decision about using new technology, we should ask, “What is the problem this technology is meant to solve?”

Think about the advantages and disadvantages, expectations and demands, as well as the opportunities and limitations. Does the technology actually serve *you* in your relationships and tasks? Or might you find yourself serving *it* as an idol?

When anything intended to save time, and facilitate your calling and relationships, begins to demand time and distracts you from what you are called to do, it is no longer serving you.

Using tools requires discipline. When the technology disciplines us, it’s time to rethink. Are we serving or being served? 



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.

Why Young Adults Leave

“When those raised in the church leave it, they don’t tend to convert to other world religions,” says EFC researcher Rick Hiemstra. “They leave organized religion altogether.” This is one of the findings of *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church*.

The report is the result of a research project by the EFC Youth & Young Adult Roundtable, in partnership with James Penner & Associates, The Great Commission Foundation, Youth for Christ and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.

Seventy-two young adults were interviewed and 2,049 others surveyed on the Angus Reid Forum. The report will be available this fall at hemorrhagingfaith.com. Watch for a full report on the findings in the Sep/Oct issue of *Faith Today*.

At March for Life

More than 10,000 people (some suggest as high as 20,000) participated in the National March for Life on May 10 in Ottawa. At the Parliament Hill rally EFC president Bruce J. Clemenger delivered a stirring address quoted by media sources across the country. Earlier that day, EFC vice-president Don Hutchinson led a Protestant non-denominational worship service. He also opened the rally in prayer.

Their words, along with photos, are at theEFC.ca/ActivateCFPL.

“The March for Life is a great opportunity for Catholics, Protestants and pro-life individuals from all backgrounds to take action in demonstrating their support for life, at all its stages. Outside Canada Day celebrations, this is the largest annual event on Parliament Hill,” says Hutchinson.

The EFC Welcomes Trafficking Plan

Many of the recommendations made to government in recent years by EFC submissions on human trafficking would be implemented by the government’s National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, launched June 6.

The EFC welcomes the “strong steps to deal with the realities of modern-day slavery, both within Canada and in Canada’s role within the international community,” says the EFC’s Julia Beazley.

“The EFC has been active on this file through successive governments,” says vice-president Don Hutchinson, “and it’s exciting to see the various initiatives together now in a co-ordinated plan.”

Read more about EFC submissions (our 2011 report was called *Seeking Justice*), the new government action plan, and related information at theEFC.ca/humantrafficking.

Beazley was also a presenter in late May at a forum

called “What’s So Human About Trafficking?” in Oakville, Ont., sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance’s Global Task Force on Human Trafficking. Beazley and Hutchinson also spoke about human trafficking in early May at The Justice Summit in Ottawa. Beazley also addressed a Senate committee in June on Bill C-310, which would extend the reach of the human trafficking provisions in Canada’s *Criminal Code* outside our borders.

Prostitution Law

Canada’s prostitution laws have been challenged, found flawed, and will soon be debated in the Supreme Court of Canada. In response the EFC, together with the group Defend Dignity, held several educational events this spring, including a breakfast on the Hill for MPs and Senators and open forum evenings aimed at local Christians in Edmonton and Toronto. Details at defenddignity.ca.

“It falls to Parliament to implement laws that are more effective in addressing prostitution, the number one reason for trafficking in persons,” explains the EFC’s policy analyst Julia Beazley. “The EFC has encouraged the federal government to focus the law’s punitive powers not on those who were being sold, but on the pimps and johns.”

Such a change in Sweden reduced street prostitution “by half” compared to the capital cities of Norway and Denmark, “and has not shown any bounce back,” says Beazley. It has also reduced organized crime and human trafficking in Sweden.

New Issue of Church & Faith Trends

A free EFC journal released new articles in June on socio-logically significant factors that make for vital congregations, the state of the Wesleyan Movement in Canada, and two new books addressing faith and public life (both by former New Democratic Party MPs, Bill Blaikie and Dennis Gruending).


Read the articles at churchandfaithtrends.ca.

“Human Being” Motion This Fall

EFC legal counsel Faye Sonier sent an open letter to all Members of Parliament encouraging them to vote in favour of Motion M-312, which would assemble 12 MPs to review Canada’s legal definition of “human being.” Debate on the motion and a vote were set for June but have now been postponed till the fall.

Learn more at theEFC.ca/human. There’s a template letter you can send to your MP, encouraging him or her to vote in favour of the motion.

Open House at New Office

The EFC celebrated on May 1 the official opening of its new office at 103-9821 Leslie Street, Richmond Hill, Ont. Pictures are available at theEFC.ca/openhouse2012pics. 

Q & A With Mark Harris

Mark Harris is senior pastor at Grace Chapel in Halifax, where he has served for nine years. He has published three books including *Companions for Your Spiritual Journey* (Regent Publishing, 2005). He and his wife Adrienne have three adult children and one grandchild. They share passions for reading, beaches and gardening, and Mark has a solo passion for the Detroit Red Wings.



■ **Adrienne and Mark Harris.**

PHOTO: EMILY POND

What is your greatest joy in ministry?

My greatest joy is coming alongside people one-on-one, and seeing the ways God is at work in their ordinary yet extraordinary lives.

What has been your greatest struggle?

My greatest struggle has been the one with my good old self. It's been a struggle to let go of an inordinate desire to please others, a deep-rooted performance anxiety. But God, and my congregation, have been patient with me!

What Bible passage do you most connect with right now?

Micah 6:8 keeps coming back to me. When so many things in life and faith seem complicated, it's clarifying and bracing to come back to this touchstone verse.

What is the best theological book you've read in the last year?

I'll cast my vote for Marilynne Robinson's *When I Was a Child I Read Books* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012). She's better known as a novelist, but these essays are rich with theological insight.

What is your greatest concern for the Canadian Church?

That we're not connecting with so many people, especially young adults.

What book is on your nightstand?

Wayne Johnston's brilliant and hilarious novel *Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (Vintage Canada, 1999).


What is your best advice for those entering ministry right now?

Ground your service in a real and growing relationship with Jesus. Resist every temptation to put prayer on the periphery. Find a spiritual mentor to meet with regularly. Find out what your principal gifts are, and try to spend most of your time serving out of them.

What is the sermon you wish you had preached yourself?

Any sermon by William Willimon or Fleming Rutledge. And my dad.

What do you look forward to next in your ministry?

Seeing where God is taking us as a church in mission to the poor and vulnerable of our city. 

So What Does “Homophobia” Mean?

By Don Hutchinson

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” as Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada was recently accused of being “homophobic.” We have faced this accusation many times simply because we are a Christian ministry. This latest example occurred when we were presenting a reasoned position on a public policy issue.

American civil rights activist Coretta Scott King (widow of fellow activist Martin Luther King Jr.) once stated:

Homophobia is like racism and anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry in that it seeks to dehumanize a large group of people, to deny their humanity, their dignity and personhood. This sets the stage for further repression and violence that spread all too easily to victimize the next minority group.

This is a fair statement. Scott King was calling on Christians and civil rights activists (this was 1998, when she was 71) to engage in the “love thy neighbour” expression of standing up for those experiencing a form of injustice. This was not very different from her husband’s challenges to segregation laws in the United States of the 1960s, or to Jesus’ challenge to the religious leaders of His day.

Jesus was heavily criticized for spending time with “sinners.” He responded by noting the imperfections of humanity, calling all of us to have grace for one another, and challenging religious leaders to get real.

Jesus accepted sinners for who they were. This does not mean He accepted or approved of their sin. Jesus did not

confuse identity with behaviour. The woman caught in adultery was a recipient of Jesus’ acceptance. Her behaviour was not.

Unfortunately what was intended by Scott King as a call to defend has been twisted into a weapon of attack.

As sword rather than shield, the term “homophobic” is used to suggest a psychological disorder, and thus generate fear in those who dare to disagree with certain assertions about homosexuality. It bullies people into silence. It insults and indicts the very nature and character of the accused.

A similar twist in words took place in the 1950s, the era of U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy. He spun a defence of democ-

racy and a fear of communism into something more, so that unfounded allegations of being either a communist or communist sympathizer led to the ostracism and ridicule of thousands of Americans. Jobs were lost, and voices that held legitimate public policy positions were silenced. A simple statement of suspicion became

accepted as conclusive evidence of a threat to society.

Accusations of homophobia have little or no place in public discourse, public dialogue or public debate. Reasonable people will disagree with one another, but we are still called to accept and respect one another – as Canadians.

As Justice Gonthier wrote in his de-

cision in *Chamberlain v. Surrey District School Board No. 36, (2002)* – a point on which the full Supreme Court of Canada

was in agreement – “The key is that people will disagree about important issues, and such disagreement, where it does not imperil community living, must be capable of being accommodated at the core of modern pluralism.”

There is much evidence that gays and lesbians have indeed suffered like blacks in the segregated American South of the 1950s.

The solution of that day was not found in calling “racists” names, but in cultivating an awareness of injustice and a pursuit of justice.

There is mounting evidence that calling Christians “homophobic” (even when some are admittedly behaving badly) is not a defence for a powerless community, but an attack from empowered activists. A new injustice that serves to repeat a pattern, rather than improve a democratic society.

Martin Luther King Jr. drew on his roots as a Baptist pastor when he reminded us, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” **ET**



■ Don Hutchinson

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

Jesus accepted sinners for who they were. This does not mean He accepted or approved of their sin.

Virtual Virtue

Now is a good time for **Christians** to think about how we are **acting online** – and how we should be.

By *Karen Stiller*

His long, fake fingernails meant Johnny Depp needed help to go to the washroom while filming his new movie *Dark Shadows*. I know this useless, ridiculous fact because it was one of the lead stories I read on MSN.ca, when I was supposed to be listening to a man talk about tourism in Israel.

The worst of it is, I made a point of glancing up every now and then at the lunchtime speaker, so it would appear I was listening to him – maybe even taking notes! – instead of trolling around on my iPad. I probably even offered up a fake I’m-listening-to-you-intently nod of the head.

My iPad wasn’t the problem. The free Wi-Fi at the hotel conference wasn’t the problem. It was my own bad manners, enabled by the ease of technology, fed even more by the fact I was still in the infatuation stage with my new, ridiculously fun gadget.

My sneaky feeling that the way-smarter



person sitting next to me might realize I wasn't jotting down reasons to visit the Holy Land was my clue. That fear told me something wasn't quite right about my behaviour.

And so I wrenched myself out of the seductive grip of my beautiful electronic friend, and forced myself to place it down on the table in front of me. I shut off my technology for a few minutes so I could slip back into the kind of attentive listener I would prefer myself to be.

Christina Crook, a Toronto-based writer, severed her connection with the online world for 31 days this past January. And then she wrote a book about it. The very fact this move is radical enough to be book-worthy material is telling.

"It was the entire Internet," explains Crook. "Email, Facebook, Google maps, everything online (although I allowed myself to use online banking). I did it because of this unsettledness I had had for a long time about the role of the Internet, and Facebook in particular, in my life."

Crook wanted to ask herself some tough questions: "What role does this play in my life? What needs am I trying to fill through it? Are my activities drawing me towards Christ and others, or are they not?"

Big, potentially uncomfortable questions for any thoughtful Christian who enjoys – and for good reason – the connectedness, the speed, the fun, the instant responsiveness, the relational nature, the fab fabulousness of the online world.

David Lyon is Queen's University research chair in surveillance studies in Kingston, Ont. First of all, "The idea of an offline, online divide is a fabrication," he says. "Christian people need to discuss this thing not as if it [were] an arm's length away. Our telephone conversations, for example, do not happen in some other world. It's real life that happens to be mediated through a telephone line."

Shattering that false split between online/offline is just the starting point for Christians who want to think theologically about these things. Many of us have neglected such thinking, and now have some catching up to do, asserts Arthur Boers. "It's not saying this is good or bad – it's saying, 'Let's pay attention,'" he says.

Boers, associate professor and R. J. Bernardo Chair of Leadership at Toronto's Tyndale University College & Seminary, has just released a book that outlines areas of discernment where he believes Christians need to pay

more attention. It's titled *Living Into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions* (Brazos, 2012).

Displacing Relationships?

One of his main points focuses on relationships. "That is a big one for Facebook and others," says Boers. "Is it enriching or displacing relationships? There is lots of evidence to suggest that people are getting lonelier despite technology that promises to deliver community."

It's easy to pick on Facebook, with almost the entire planet signed up to use it. "It so dominates the field," says Lyon, "that it's foolish not to have Facebook front and centre in this discussion. It's still the dominant story."

Lyon has spent much of his academic career studying how governments study their citizens, the "personal data flowing too freely between different kinds of institutions." That is also a topic Christians – or anyone for that matter – should be concerned about, he says.

The founder of Facebook "is dismissive of notions of privacy," asserts Lyon. "Facebook and other social media are a hugely lucrative and revealing source of data that they don't even have to pay people to collect. We put it up there voluntarily. This is a huge shift in our culture."

But it is the changing nature of relationships Christians could also take more time to examine. "How does one [act Christianly] in a world so saturated by social media, and what does [this online activity] mean for the most important things?" asks Lyon.

The most important things are always relational, he argues.

Christina Crook's month away from Facebook made her view it as "a lot of self-indulged chatter, which I participate in and I'm not proud of. Facebook is not real life."

Crook's cautions fit with several that other thinkers are naming: the seeming superficiality of status updates; the fact online blunders are recorded forever (a challenge to a Christian theology of forever forgiveness); the changing nature of what the word "friend" means; and the incredible amount of time that can dissolve as you use it.

Displacement, says Boer, is a critical issue. "When you move something into the centre of your life, what gets displaced?" he asks. Time spent massaging Facebook relationships is presumably time not spent on face-to-face relationships. For people who follow a God

“When you move something into the centre of your life, what gets displaced?”

who has shown himself to be incarnational in His very nature, this is a topic worth examining. “What priorities are being displaced?”

Susan Winter Fledderus is clinical director of Shalem Mental Health Network in Hamilton, Ont. As a marriage and family therapist, she sees more and more relationships affected – sometimes fractured – by negative online habits. “The most common complaint is that someone’s partner is online too much. It’s an absence kind of thing: ‘I come home from work and they are online, or they spend the evening online and we have less time to connect.’ That’s a biggie,” she says.

“The other thing I hear often is about boundaries in relationships.” Emotional affairs can happen easily. We can idealize people from our past. Couple that with flat-

tering online photos and clever, witty status updates that often show only the shiny side of life – or “a carefully edited version of someone’s life,” says Winter Fledderus



PHOTO: CHARIS MICHAELSON

Clockwise from top left: Christina Crook, Val Michaelson and Arthur Boers: What we are doing with online technology, why we are doing it, when we are doing it, and with whom?

Five Tips to Help Kids Online

Helping youth navigate online means more than protecting them from Internet predators, although that is hugely important. In a world of social media saturation and mobile devices, it can also mean helping them do things like disconnect every now and then, and helping them not post photos or comments that seem funny at the time, but could cause regrets later.

- Stick to Facebook’s 13-year age requirement, or set your own household age to sign up even higher.
- Make time to talk to the children in your life (grandkids too!) about what is wise to leave offline. If they wouldn’t post it on the bulletin board at the local grocery store, then they shouldn’t put it online, says Noni Classen, director of education for the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. Help them understand there “should be no expectation that it’s a private environment online, whether it’s pictures

or personal information,” says Classen. “You lose control over how someone else chooses to use things you post.”

- If you have a child on Facebook, make sure to get your own account and be their Facebook friend. Classen suggests going even further, and every now and then asking your child to sit down with you, sign on, and go through their Facebook page together. Watch for photos and comments your child may not have thought through fully enough before posting.
- Consider having your kids “turn in” their mobile devices before going to bed. They’ll sleep better, read more, and you’ll rest better knowing your kids are having a media break.
- With mobile devices, “It’s not about the location of the computer so much, as that parents are emotionally connected and available to their child,” says Classen. If kids are harassed or approached inappropriately online, if they post something themselves they regret – or stumble upon explicit content they wish they hadn’t seen – they need to know they can safely approach their parents and share with them what is happening. Take time to talk to your kids regularly about their activities online. **FT** –KS

– and the fault lines in a relationship can deepen.

If we wouldn't go out for a coffee with an old love without discussing it with our spouse, then friending them on Facebook is worth a second thought. "If we wouldn't say it in front of our spouse, why would we type it or text it or message it?" she asks.

"Using social media is one of those things we are invited to reform and redeem," she adds.

Pride and Presence

How then should Christians approach these issues? David Lyon has a suggestion. "Start by asking about the big picture: What do we believe about being human, about being friends, about communications? And how does Facebook line up with that? There is a place for suggesting guidelines."

Facebook and other social media might invite disclosure, for example, but not foster transparency. That may be an area where Christians can aim higher by showing themselves online in more balanced ways.

"The self-presentation factor is crucial to this discussion," says Lyon. "We have turned what the biblical Scripture says is pride into a virtue. What was supposed to be something we avoid, or try to grow out of in our Christian journey, has become something that is encouraged at every level. Facebook is a particularly potent location to do just that."

Stepping away from Facebook for 31 days helped Christina Crook see "Comparison is a huge, huge thing. The ability to compare ourselves to one another is so magnified on Facebook. It is unhealthy and it is nearly impossible to avoid."

What used to be considered "showing off" is now a big part of many expressions of social media. Thinking about this change is part of the larger discussion of "engagement etiquette" that concerns Boers.

For example, "Studies have shown that email is really destructive in dealing with conflict," says Boers. "Positive emails are read neutrally. Neutral emails are read negatively. Negative emails are read apocalyptically." Tone is lost or misinterpreted. Sarcasm can be read as cruelty. Humour as unkindness or lost completely.

Engagement etiquette can also be about the timing of social media use. "When I see parents at the park pushing their kids in a stroller or a swing while texting at the same time, I think in the future I will see people saying their parents weren't available to them," says Winter Fledderus. "I worry about that as a marriage and family therapist."

Being connected with thousands of others virtually – while missing the person we are physically present

with – is a "yellow light" for Boers. "I can think of people who go overseas for service, but remain so connected via social media with family and friends back home that they fail to be really involved with the mission they are at. I've talked to leaders who say this is an emerging problem."

Val Michaelson, an Anglican chaplain at Queen's University, makes a similar observation. These technologies demand very little of us, she says. "We can be [video-chatting on Skype] with Gramma while [text] messaging someone else at the same time.

"I hear students say that texting is so great because it takes so little effort, but there is a time where we need to make the effort, where we need to give our full attention to talking to Gramma," she says.

“As we become connected with thousands of people, we can be disconnected from the person across the table from us.”

Good Advice on Christian Living in a Digital World

- Practise turning off all phones and devices and be truly present with one person at a time, suggests Val Michaelson.
- Talk with your family together about how to manage social media in your home. This should include screen-free meal times as often as possible, says David Lyon.
- Take a sabbatical, like Christina Crook did, from as many online activities as possible. "I felt incredibly free," says Crook. "What I'd really been hungering for was to hear God's voice again more clearly."
- Consider the idea of threshold, says Arthur Boers. "The threshold to use technology is very low. The threshold for practices that truly reward us is very high. But activities with a low threshold are often not rewarding." If you're tired, it's easier to turn on your iPhone than read a book, for example. Every now and then, go for the high threshold activity.
- "We can text a partner to pick up bananas on the way home, or we can text them to say we love them," says Winter Fledderus. Ask yourself how you can use social media to enhance your most important, face-to-face relationships.
- Talk about your use of social media in a small group with other Christians, suggests Arthur Boers. "It's good to talk about how we use our time and money – and how we use technology. What's the first thing we do in the morning? What's the last thing we do at night?" Keep a log of your online activity, says Boer. You'll probably be surprised at the results.
- Spend some time all alone, says Val Michaelson. "Make sure we can do that. Don't just use the Internet to fill our loneliness. Learn – move through loneliness to solitude." **FT** –KS

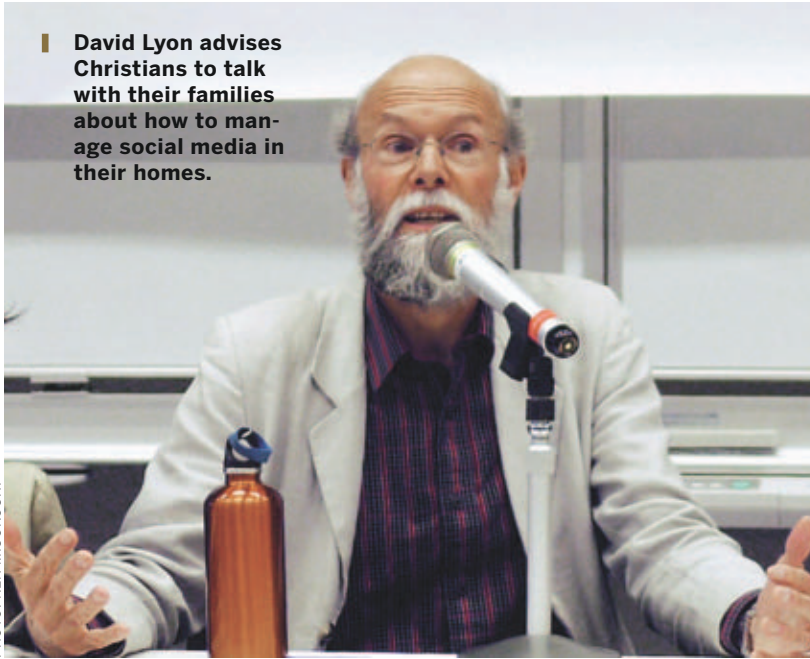


PHOTO: KEN MISOKOSHI

David Lyon advises Christians to talk with their families about how to manage social media in their homes.

“As we become connected with thousands of people, we can be disconnected from the person across the table from us, and that is tragic.”

Being Christlike, says Michaelson, is being present. “If there’s one thing the incarnation tells us, it’s that God

is in the business of what is real, tangible, created, in the flesh. “It’s a profound calling for Christians to figure this stuff out,” she says. “How can we imagine a grace-filled approach to technology that is not a cheesy tacking-Jesus-on-to-it, sending around emails that are clever little Christian things? How can we really use this tool to live more deeply for God’s glory?”

Good questions for Christians to be asking. But answering them honestly is not easy. Many of us quickly “get self-righteous when you talk about these things,” warns Boers. “People get defensive, and then you’ve lost it. I see this as a pastoral issue: people are struggling. They know they are not quite living the way they want to. If we can help them articulate that, it can give us the courage to choose something else.”

For most of us who love social media and all its amaz-

For most of us who love social media and all its amaz-

For most of us who love social media and all its amaz-

For most of us who love social media and all its amaz-

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO



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Using Social Media as a Christian

What have you learned about living in a world that is so digitally connected? The editors at *Faith Today* would love to hear from you, and if possible share your stories in our FaithForum (letters to the editor page) or in a future issue. Start or join a discussion on our Facebook page at Facebook.com/FaithToday. Or write us at editor@faithtoday.ca.

To get the ball rolling, here's something we learned recently. At least two Canadian church denominations have implemented their own social media platforms focused on ministry.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has The Network (network.crcna.org). The website describes itself: "Across the CRC, there are people like you doing ministry. They are deacons, Sunday school teachers, musicians, office staff, webmasters, missions team members, [girls' club] leaders, elders, librarians, and so much more. They are in San Diego, Prince Edward Island, and everywhere in-between.

"Wouldn't it be cool to connect? You know, compare notes. Tell stories. Learn from each other. Get help. And discover that, hey, we're not alone! This website is all about connecting – with each other, with resources, with experts – for ministry."

The Anglican Church of Canada has The Community (thecomunity.anglican.ca). It notes: "The Community is a place for Canadian Anglicans to get together and talk about life in the church. Use the Online Lectionary, or log in to join the conversations about liturgy, congregational development, French language ministry, children's ministry, ministry and technology, ecumenism, everyday Christianity, administration or start your own topic in our forums."

Does your church have something like this? Do you have a personal story about handling Facebook wisely as a Christian? What's your response to the articles in this issue? Please do let us know! **FT**
–Bill Fledderus

ing possibilities, that choice will not be to forsake technology, maybe not even for 31 days like Christina Crook managed to do. It may be a choice to step back, individually and especially in Christian communities, to ask ourselves what we are doing with online technology, why we are doing it, when we are doing it, and with whom.

After all, it's everybody's loss if there are things unfolding in the room right in front of us that we are missing. **FT**

KAREN STILLER of Port Perry, Ont., is a freelance writer and also associate editor at *Faith Today*.

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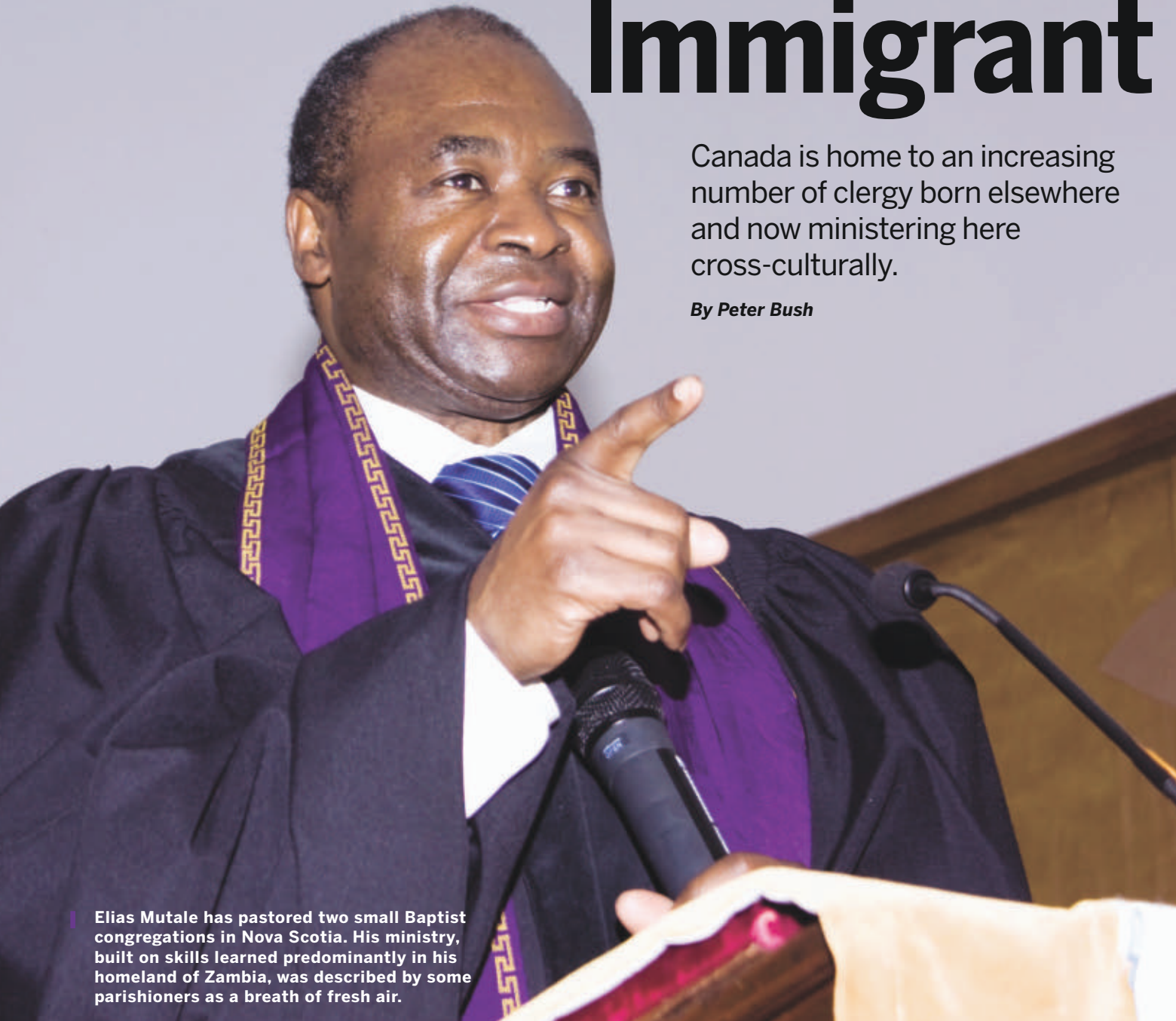
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Sea of Galilee

Immigrant

Canada is home to an increasing number of clergy born elsewhere and now ministering here cross-culturally.

By Peter Bush



Elias Mutale has pastored two small Baptist congregations in Nova Scotia. His ministry, built on skills learned predominantly in his homeland of Zambia, was described by some parishioners as a breath of fresh air.

PHOTO: DEACON ODUSANYA, CORNWALLIS BAPTIST CHURCH, HALIFAX

One weekend while in university, Sean Kim attended a campus ministry retreat. Around the campfire the last night, as others were making commitments to follow God, he heard God calling him to serve as a missionary in a cold place. “Is God calling me to Moscow?” he wondered.

Today he laughs as he tells the story. Rev. Sean Kim, an immigrant from Korea and the first person in his extended family to convert to Christianity, is now minister

of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Thompson, Man., a mining and regional centre 800 kilometres north of Winnipeg. “Thompson is a cold place,” he adds with a wry smile.

The congregation he serves in Thompson is not an ethnic Korean congregation. Those attending are predominately Anglo-Saxon. And Sean Kim is not alone in this interesting situation of being a first-generation immigrant minister serving a racially white congregation in Canada. The experience was rare before the 1970s and

Ministers Shine Brightly

'80s, when only a handful of newly arrived immigrants from Asia served mainstream congregations in Canada. Through the 1990s these isolated examples grew, and by 2010 observers of the Canadian church were talking about this as a sign of "missionary rebound," a term describing how some regions that used to receive missionaries – for example from Europe and North America – are now sending missionaries back to those places.

Sean Kim and quite a few of the new immigrant clergy are coming as intentional missionaries, seeing Canada as a mission field where people need to hear the gospel. An interesting example of such ethnic cross-cultural mission is the "K-1" group which has partnered with The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. This group of 25 Korean Christian families have moved to Brandon, Man., and are starting a ministry centre with the goal of ministering to First Nation reserves in the area.

Other new immigrant clergy come to Canada as students or on exchange programs, and then through a series of circumstances choose to stay in Canada in response to ministry opportunities. Rev. Elias Mutale, originally from Zambia, accompanied his wife who had received a scholarship from Acadia University. He transferred from the Zambian school he was attending to Acadia Divinity School. Upon graduation he needed a summer appointment in Canada, an appointment that grew into an eight-year ministry in two small Baptist congregations in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia. His ministry, built on skills learned predominantly in his homeland, was described by some parishioners as a breath of fresh air.

Still other clergy arrive in Canada as refugees. Fleeing persecution, oppression and economic crisis, these clergy come seeking to continue in their new country the work they did in their homeland. As Rev. Charles Kahumbu, originally from Congo says, "I am a preacher. I can't not preach."

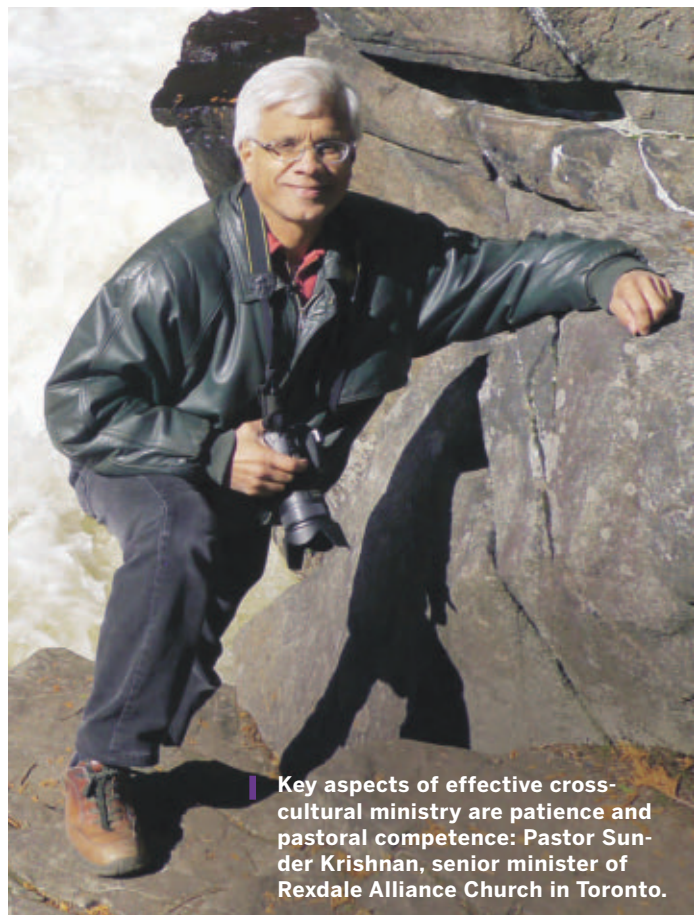
Not all clergy who are former refugees are able to

find ministry opportunities serving congregations of their ethnicity or language group, and so in Canada end up leading racially mainstream (mostly Anglo-Saxon) congregations. Others make the choice intentionally.

Individuals in all three scenarios made a commitment to Jesus Christ prior to coming to Canada. Their faith and ministry practices were formed in whole or in part outside Canada.

A fourth group, with some parallels to the previous three, are new arrivals who became Christians while in Canada and now serve congregations in Canada.

This fourth group's faith and practice of ministry have been formed in Canada, even though they were



Key aspects of effective cross-cultural ministry are patience and pastoral competence: Pastor Sunder Krishnan, senior minister of Rexdale Alliance Church in Toronto.



Called to serve as a missionary in a cold place, Rev. Sean Kim is now minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Thompson, Man.

PHOTO: GERRIT VAN TONDER

not born here. Jinger Goma, associate pastor at Kelowna Christian Fellowship (Mennonite Brethren), came to Canada from the Philippines at age 15 and converted while attending a Canadian university.

"Christianity is a migratory religion, and migration movements have been a functional element in its expansion," notes Jehu Hanciles, a Sierra Leonean teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in California.

From the Book of Acts through today, Christians have carried the Good News with them as they travelled, moved or migrated. The movement of Christians to Canada from other places in the world, be that as intentional or un-intentional missionaries, continues this pattern.

Pinning down the exact number of newly arrived immigrant clergy serving non-ethnic congregations is difficult. There are stories from a variety of contexts, including the Ethiopian minister who served the Pentecostal congregation in Williams Lake, B.C., helping to bring revival to that community; the Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor born and raised in India serving a primarily Anglo-Saxon congregation in suburban Toronto; and the Anglican priest from Sudan serving in Swan River, Man. The trend may be most obvious in the Roman Catholic Church, where for example nearly one-third of the priests in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg are first-generation immigrants.

What can be said is there are examples of missionary rebound across the full spectrum of the Church in Canada, including all branches of evangelicalism. People who attend predominately Anglo-Saxon congregations can assume immigrants and refugees "of colour" have

a culture – while missing the fact white Canadians themselves also have a culture.

Pastor Junie Josue, a Pentecostal from the Philippines, recently made this point to a Winnipeg group including Anglo-Saxon and non-Anglo-Saxon pastors: "We all have a culture, be that Canadian, Filipino, Native, whatever. We all have a culture."

Congregations served by newly arrived immigrant clergy usually develop increased cultural competence to benefit from the skills and passions their clergy bring.

Cultural competence begins with recognizing everyone has a culture –

and that every culture has strengths and weaknesses. This awareness of the limitations of one's own culture provides the space for new immigrant clergy to introduce worship practices and faith traditions from their country of origin.

Elias Mutale identified a cultural strength many African clergy bring to their congregations. "I and my wife and family sing, not professionally, but we sing and the congregations responded well to that." Members of congregations served by Korean-born clergy note the commitment to prayer their pastors exhibit, and the ways in which the congregation's culture of prayer is changed by that commitment.

Among the mistakes congregations make is the assumption culture is just about language. "Once his English improved I thought he would be just like us. But that wasn't the case," said a congregational leader trying to explain why their African-born minister was let go after less than two years in the congregation.

Members of one culture can never claim to fully understand another. Cultural competence requires a willingness to keep on learning

about the other, accept there will be surprises, and continue discovering new things about the other's culture.

Immigrant and former refugee clergy, like all immigrants and former refugees, feel obligations to family still in their home country, including providing financial support to family back home. Canadian congregations may have difficulty understanding this, feeling put upon to support not just the minister's nuclear family, but the extended family as well.

Further, new arrivals to Canada, even when they become Canadian citizens, usually wish to teach their

“Quite a few of the new immigrant clergy are coming as intentional missionaries, seeing Canada as a mission field where people need to hear the gospel.”



Rev. Joshua Kang, pastor of York Memorial Presbyterian Church in Toronto, quickly realized the style of witnessing he would use in Korea would not fit the Canadian context.

children the patterns and culture of the parents' place of birth. Culturally competent congregations are invited to recognize the importance of this for their ministers, seeking to support this important parental task.

New immigrant clergy must also demonstrate cultural competence if they are going to effectively minister cross-culturally. Pastor Sunder Krishnan, senior minister of Rexdale Alliance Church in Toronto, was born in India. For him, key aspects of effective cross-cultural ministry are patience and pastoral competence. After nine years as a member of the congregation leading a Bible class and serving as a board member, Krishnan was invited to be the preaching pastor. After 16 years in that role he was called to be the successor to the senior minister, a Caucasian who was leaving the congregation. During this gradual evolution, Krishnan's ethnicity was a non-factor – he was simply part of the congregation.

His advice to new immigrant clergy is, "Don't make a big deal of ethnicity – yours or theirs. In Christ we are all one. Just serve the people humbly and gladly." Such advice is in fact relevant to all pastors, newly arrived or Canadian "lifers."

Rev. Joshua Kang of York Memorial Presbyterian Church in Toronto had a deep desire to witness to the Caucasians in the community around his church. But he quickly realized the style of witnessing he would use in Korea would not fit the Canadian context. That didn't stop him from living out his passion to witness. Instead, recognizing how often

Canadians say things like "I'll pray for you" or "You are in my thoughts and prayers," Kang has developed "Blessing Witnessing Through Prayer."

To use Kang's method, Christians approach people asking what blessing from God they need in their lives, and then ask permission to pray for God to bless the individual. The prayer includes not just the individual's prayer request, but also a request that the Good News would grow in the person's life. From his Korean experience of the faith, Kang has developed a witnessing tool designed for the Canadian context.

The Lausanne Covenant for World Evangelization of 1974 stated, "We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of Western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelization." The authors in writing those words were thinking of partnerships between the traditional sending churches and the traditional receiving churches.

Only in fledgling form did they imagine what was to come, a time when Filipinos and Congolese, Koreans and Indians would bring the gospel to new mission fields – the mission fields of Europe and North America. **FT**

PETER BUSH is a teaching elder at Westwood Presbyterian Church, Winnipeg. He thanks the Louisville Institute for the Pastoral Studies Project grant for making this research possible.

Understanding Mental Illness

Terms like **schizophrenia** and **depression** scare many of us. What should we know and do?

By Sarah Lampson

A significant change in behaviour can be an important clue. Ruth (name changed to protect her privacy) was a vibrant university student when her family noticed she was behaving very differently. She had always been gregarious, ambitious and passionate about her life, studies and friends. Now she appeared very withdrawn and was no longer engaged in her family, social or academic life.

Ruth refused to discuss her changed behaviour with anyone and became very hostile when asked about it. As frightening as this change was for her loved ones, it was all the more terrifying for Ruth. Angry voices filled her head, threatening violence and saying vicious things. She knew something was terribly wrong, but had no idea what to do.

She delayed seeking help, but as the problem persisted she was unable to present even a thin veneer of self-control. All those around her realized something was terribly wrong. Her parents took her to a doctor without Ruth fully understanding where she was. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Her parents found hope in the diagnosis. They felt it was the first step on the road to recovery. Ruth didn't share their optimism. Her illness was chronic, and because of it she was no longer able to continue her studies. Each medicine she tried made her too nauseated to move from her bed. Her refusal to persist with the medications caused huge conflicts with her well-meaning parents.

One year after her diagnosis, Ruth was living in a

group home, socially isolated and very ill as her friends graduated from university, married, started careers, and enjoyed the privileges of good health. Ruth could no longer even carry on a conversation, follow a television show or read a book. She, who had been voted Most Likely to Succeed in high school, spent most of her days alone in her room. It seemed to her parents their beloved daughter was lost to them.

What Is a Mental Illness?

Every year one in five Canadians under the age of 65 will have a mental health problem, according to a widely cited 1996 study by David Offord in the *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. Not all mental health problems are as severe as Ruth's, but all can benefit from treatment. Children and senior citizens are also vulnerable to psychiatric illnesses.

Like physical ones, mental illnesses are varied and strike at different times of life. A mental illness

can have "a serious impact on a person's ability to function effectively over a long period of time," according to a Health Canada website. "Depending on the illness, a person may have a serious disturbance in thinking, mood or behaviour. They may not be able to cope with the simplest aspects of everyday life, and may need help in regaining balance in their lives."

Regrettably, psychiatric disorders also retain a significant stigma. Our fears delay and discourage us from seeking medical attention.

Fortunately, all mental illnesses can be treated.

“Mental illnesses are varied and strike at different times of life.”



PHOTO: DESIGNPICS.COM

Stigma about mental illness is also often a barrier to obtaining work and housing, explains Janet Young, a chaplain at a regional psychiatric hospital, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, West 5th Campus.

"Although many people with mental illness can live just like their neighbours, with a family, friends and a career, [some can't] do so without support. A significant number receive government support, pensions or disability allowances and live in poverty, sometimes on the streets of our cities."

In Canada, initiatives by churches, Bell Canada, Canada Post, and others have drawn public attention to mental health to educate, decrease stigma and reduce fear.

Not a Sign of Spiritual Failure

As our society moves toward more compassionate and accurate views of mental illness, Christians are playing an important role – but there is much to be done. Church can often be the place where those who struggle with mental health problems feel most vulnerable.

"Often those of us who do experience mental illness [mistakenly] feel it is as a result of our own spiritual failure," explains Dr. John Toews, a Christian psychiatrist in

Calgary and author of *No Longer Alone: Mental Health and the Church* (Herald Press/Mennonite Publishing Network, 1995).

"Because too many churchgoing individuals often have a hard time accepting human vulnerability, it is important that the Church teaches about what it is like to be human, and that we are loved, no matter what."

First Hamilton Christian Reformed Church, just a couple of kilometres down the Escarpment from the hospital where Janet Young works, has a ministry of social and spiritual support for persons living with mental illness. The church's neighbourhood has a high percentage of persons battling mental illness, and so the congregation has organized a ministry to these neighbours.

From 2004 to 2009 it employed Lynda Tracy as coordinator of community mental health ministries. Tracy is a retired music therapist, former registered nurse, and has a Master of Divinity with a counselling focus.

The church's program, known as HUGGs (Healing Under God's Grace), included a monthly movie night, bowling outing, collective kitchen and newsletter. The movies were chosen for their redemptive elements, and each attendee was given a card with a Scripture verse

and quote from the Bible that related to the movie.

Tracy also visited clients in the hospital and led a sing-along in the park during the warmer months. Occasionally members of the congregation hosted special events for the group such as a pool party or hike followed by ice cream.

Tracy advises that in such ministry, "Being sincerely loving is more important than anything. Jesus reduced the commandments to 'Love God, love each other.' "

Another key, she says, is "the concept from Genesis 1 that all people are created in the 'image of God.' My work gives me the opportunity to learn more about the person of God as I spend time with people."

How should believers put this biblical attitude into action? "The biggest role Christians can play is keeping their connection with people who experience a mental illness. If someone is admitted to hospital or a correctional facil-



Being sincerely loving is more important than anything: Lynda Tracy.


ity, regular visits from people who know them can contribute to their recovery." Phoning ahead is advisable, especially because some people find surprise visits overwhelming. Those who can't visit in person can ask if an institutional chaplain is available to visit someone on their behalf. Or they can contact a patient's church to request a pastoral worker to visit.

Toews advises that we "need to ask those who may be struggling about how they are doing. Show interest. Listen. Do not jump to give them advice when it is not requested. Recognize that they are going through a tough time and be there for them. Also, treat the conversation as confidential."

Fighting Loneliness

Loneliness and social isolation are common for many people who have a mental illness. In hospital, many receive no visitors or calls. Outside the hospital is no different

Ten Ways to Share Christ's Love

1. Hold a collection of books, art supplies, activity books, jigsaw puzzles, DVDs, games, magazines or musical instruments, and deliver donations to a psychiatric ward, hospital or group home for those with mental illnesses. Be sure to stipulate the donations are to be made available to patients immediately, and not kept in a locked area where patients can't access them without hurdles.
2. Sponsor a movie night at a psychiatric ward by donating the movie and refreshments. Hospital diets do not generally include popcorn, chips or other favourite movie treats, and these are most welcomed by patients who can't go out and get these things.
3. Sponsor a workshop by an art or music therapist for those who are hospitalized.
4. If you have a talent, lead a class at your church and make a point of including people with mental illness or host it at a psychiatric hospital.
5. Organize a speaker to lead some workshops on mental health in your home, neighbourhood or at your church. Education reduces stigma and better positions us to seek help for ourselves or a loved one.
6. Hold a special event to raise funds for a local ministry to those with mental illness.
7. Advocate: Find out what resources are available in your community. Talk to users of the services and see what else would have helped them. Identifying gaps will help you think creatively about what your church can do to meet needs more effectively.
8. Ask: Don't assume community services are reliable, respectful or accessible. Before you support an agency, make sure you have talked to clients. Ask the agency for metrics: How many people do you serve? How many do you turn away? Do you charge a fee for your services? How many hours are you open, and are those hours clearly posted? What roles, training and accountabilities do staff members have?
9. Invite a survivor of mental illness, legal expert or healthcare ethicist to present at your church about issues faced by those with mental illness who are accessing care. Facilitate a discussion about how our cultural treatment of those with mental illness measures against Christian ethics.
10. Include books and other resources on mental health in your church library. Canadian author Marja Bergen operates livingroomsupport.org, a faith-based mood disorder support initiative in Burnaby, B.C., and has published *A Firm Place to Stand: Finding Meaning in a Life with Bipolar Disorder* (Word Alive Press, Winnipeg, 2008).  -SL

for those with few friends. It can be a great help when Christians go as group to engage an ill person in an outing, game, or simply share a meal and a prayer. Many welcome the chance to discuss their spirituality.

“Spirituality has been identified as a major component of recovery by people who experience mental illnesses,” says Chaplain Young. But mental illness is usually a time of spiritual struggle. Strugglers often find crowds difficult and may feel unable to attend worship services, so individual visits or participation in a small group are crucial. Too often those with mental illness feel forgotten – a simple card or telephone call can make all the difference.

Ruth’s story has a happy ending. Twenty-five years after she moved into the group home, she was prescribed a medicine that had just come onto the market, and it radically improved her life. The new drug didn’t have significant side effects. It stabilized Ruth’s schizophrenia enough that she was able to begin building the life she had always wanted.

The medicine opened up possibilities, and Ruth’s family and other community members helped her seize them. Ruth was able now to converse, but after 25 years she no longer remembered how. She didn’t know what to say. Even when she knew the words, she couldn’t quite piece them together into an appropriate topic for the context. Her mother and some friends helped her regain her social skills.

Today Ruth is able to interact with nieces and nephews and enjoy a part-time job. She still lives in a group home, but is able to visit friends and family for dinner and go on outings alone. Her self-confidence has returned and she is able to participate more fully in her community.

Effective medication was vital to Ruth’s recovery, but so was the support she had from loved ones. Clearly, the many people who struggle without such resources would benefit if more everyday Christians stepped forward in faith to help. **FT**

SARAH LAMPSON is a freelance writer in Dundas, Ont., who began raising awareness about mental health after twice suffering from postpartum depression.

Her answer was “Yes.”

“Dear Jesus, I want you in the center of my life and commit through your power, to serve and obey you. Anytime. Anywhere. At any cost. To do anything.”

This is the prayer at the heart of The Life. Currently being developed by Canadian parachurch organization Power to Change, The Life is an ambitious initiative. Its aim? To challenge one million Christians across Canada to make their lives count for Christ.

It’s a prayer many believers wrestle with. “People worry about what God is going to take away from them if they pray this prayer,” says Leonard Buhler, president of Power to Change. “But they need to realize the real point is what they’ll gain – a life that’s rich and full, beyond measure.”

Asked for an example, Leonard would point to someone like Tanya Price. Tanya is the director of the Power to Change division known as DRIME (Disciples Ready in Mobile Evangelism). A farm girl from Alberta, Tanya faced her own Life challenge almost twenty years ago, when she found her heart going out to the city of Vancouver as she drove its streets. “I saw the brokenness first-hand,” says Tanya, referring to the city’s poorest neighborhoods. “Seeing the spiritual vacuum in people’s lives, it pierced me.”

Reaching out to people with the gospel was not a new idea to Tanya. During her Bible school training, she had the opportunity to get creative with evangelism. “I had done a couple of missions trips and had used a drama tool. Even though I couldn’t speak Spanish I could communicate. It sparked a heart in me for missions and outreach.”

That day in Vancouver, Tanya sensed that God wanted to turn her compassion for the city into action. Her answer was “Yes.” What came next? Tanya put together a team and they performed gospel-themed dramas on the downtown streets. Not only did passersby stop and watch, they were willing to engage in spiritual conversations.



Black t-shirts, a sound system, and willing volunteers, Tanya realized, were all it took to make a huge difference for God.

Fast-forward through two decades and many global adventures. Those same dramas are now being performed in cities like San Diego, Bangkok, and Nairobi. DRIME’s lean, portable approach to evangelism proved easy to replicate: today there are nearly a dozen DRIME bases throughout the world. The running joke at Power to Change is that Tanya will be leading 100 bases around the world within a few years.

It’s an almost outrageous vision born out of the confidence people have in Tanya. And perhaps more outrageous is the way Tanya remains completely humble. One DRIMER, after a trip to Hong Kong with Tanya and team, said that the best thing about Tanya’s leadership is that she isn’t uptight about how things should go and is quick to give grace. Her initial attitude of surrender continues to this day.

Is it always fun? No. Remembering her original “Yes,” says Tanya, is what helps her persevere through the hard times. She’s also rejuvenated whenever she shares Jesus with others. “I’ll have one simple conversation and think, ‘This is totally worth it, there is no better way I could have spent this Friday night.’”

It’s exactly the feeling Power to Change is hoping to help Christians experience – the adventure and abundance that go along with total commitment to Christ.

Are you all in?

THELIFE.COM

THE life

Sacred Spaces

How the **prayer room movement** brought me to my knees.

By *Anne B. Douglas*

The room was completely silent. It smelled like candle wax and musty church basement. But there was something else in the air. It was a sort of otherworldly aroma, like the bowls of incense in Revelation, the prayers of the saints.

A sign said, "Please remove your shoes, for this is Holy Ground." I slipped off my Birkenstocks and tip-toed to a table lit up with white Christmas lights. Verses, photos and articles on urban poverty and social justice were taped on the wall over the table. I sat down to read, ponder and pray.

Over the next hour I moved from station to station. I listened, painted, contemplated and even wrote prayer requests on Post-it notes. This prayer room was an encounter with God unlike anything I'd experienced.

The creative mind behind this particular prayer room was Jim Tice, a personal friend and discipleship pastor at Parkwood Gardens Community Church in Guelph, Ont. His interest in prayer rooms began after learning



PHOTO: GOHOP

about 24-7 Prayer (24-7prayer.com), a movement that calls itself a "global, non-stop prayer meeting." The 24-7 movement is characterized by these kinds of contemplative prayer rooms, also called boiler rooms, that Tice set up at his church and has since initiated at other churches in Guelph (24-7prayerguelph.com).

"Being a disciple is about drawing close to Christ, and from there living out mission and purpose based on the Great Commission," says Tice. "Prayer rooms provide a place for people to connect with God, helping them talk to Him and listen to Him."

My husband Andrew and I felt so inspired by Tice's prayer room, we decided to do the same thing at our church, Kortright Presbyterian, also in Guelph. We ran a small group investigating different forms of prayer, culminating in a prayer room called the Prayer Project over Easter weekend 2010.

Each of the 12 people in the group was responsible for one prayer station, which we set up in the youth room of our church. The Prayer Project was opened immediately



“Prayer rooms provide a place for people to connect with God, helping them talk to Him and listen to Him.” One of the Greater Ontario House of Prayer’s most unusual prayer room locations was in a U-Haul truck set up in a parking lot in downtown Hamilton.

following the Good Friday service. More than 150 people visited the Prayer Project over the weekend, and many reported, with faces aglow, encounters with God.

My next stop in our prayer room journey was attending a conference hosted by the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. With over a thousand full-time staff, the IHOP (ihop.org) in Kansas City calls itself a missions base. A prayer room runs 24 hours, seven days a week. A ministry school and internship program equip intercessory missionaries worldwide to pray for revival and social justice.

At the conference I experienced a desire like never before to sit at the feet of Jesus, praying, worshipping and meditating, drawing closer to Him.

“The Lord is going to clear your schedule,” said one woman I had never met. Another participant at the conference told me, “He says, I’m going to take care of everything so that you can sit at my feet and commune with me.” Another shared, “The Lord is taking you into a six-month period of concentrated prayer and reading.”

Something leapt in my spirit when I heard these

words. How did they know what I was longing for? The only explanation was God knew the cry of my heart, and was calling me to a time of concentrated prayer.

On the way home an idea started to take form in my mind. I could create a prayer room in our basement. For six months I could pray there and invite others to join me if they wanted.

So, I left my job. We repainted and decorated our basement family room as a prayer room, complete with art station, prayer request board, musical instruments, sofa, prayer books, candles and, of course, twinkle lights.

I decided my schedule would be 9:30 to 3:30 each day in the prayer room while my children were at school. During daytime hours it would be open for other women to come and pray on a drop-in basis. Anyone who wanted to use our prayer room in the evening or on weekends could email us to book a time.

Two things happened I didn’t expect. The first was after an initial rush of people, the schedule slowed down and I had many, many hours in the prayer room by my-



Teams of participants at churches are encouraged to come up with six to 12 stations, one of them being a nations station with a world map and missionary information.

self. The second was that God wooed me.

This surprised me. Here I was, jobless, sitting in my basement, Bible open, hands raised. Why would He need to woo me? But that's exactly what He did.

I can't describe the pleasure it was to just be with Jesus during those hours. Many people have asked how I didn't get bored of long periods of prayer. But boredom was the last thing on my mind. I danced, I sang, I meditated and interceded from the Scriptures, I paced, I wrote.

My favourite kind of prayer was soaking prayer, when I turned on music, lay on the sofa, resting in the presence of God. During those soaking times, He allowed me to experience the transcendent pleasures of His presence, experiences which drove me to read the writings of St. Theresa of Ávila to find out more about her ecstatic prayer moments.

Other times, He would show me pictures of people

and situations to pray for. Most days, 3:30 would come far too quickly. Day by day I felt my spirit growing bigger, stronger, transformed from one degree of glory to the next. And something else was happening – I was falling deeply, hopelessly and irreversibly in love with my heavenly Bridegroom.

Although I wasn't bored, at times I was lonely. I found out the Greater Ontario House of Prayer (GOHOP) was holding harp and bowl prayer meetings about 30 minutes down the highway. Harp and bowl prayer is a form of musical intercession which originated at the IHOP in Kansas City. The name is based on the harps and bowls mentioned in Revelation 5:8.

Tim Hart, a harp and bowl musician and intercessory missionary or "modern monastic," is on staff at the GOHOP (gohop.ca). Hart views his job as part of a global move of

Ten Steps to Your First Prayer Room

In addition to prayer rooms being started as independent organizations, there are also congregations, summer camps, retreats and youth groups creating prayer rooms.

Usually they last 24 hours to a week. You need a co-ordinator, a team of willing people and an appetite for the presence of God. If you'd like to host a 24-7 week of prayer at your church, here's how to get started:

- Host an informal gathering of friends and cast the vision, showing photos of other prayer rooms.
- If you have a team of four to 12 people interested in helping, approach leadership with the idea. Be clear you will set up,

clean up and organize shifts. Many churches are concerned about security, so develop a plan to keep the building and people safe, especially in the night hours with locked doors and a doorman.

- Decide how many days your prayer room is going to be and whether it will go through the night. Some churches start with 24 or 48 hours, while others go for a full seven days.

With your team, come up with six to 12 stations. Some ideas are:

- journalling station, perhaps with a guided journalling exercise
- listening or soaking prayer station with music (and headphones)
- nations station with a world map and missionary information

prayer that is preceding a global move of God in the world.

“An intercessory missionary is somebody who has dedicated their time vocationally to seeking the face of God and being in the presence of the Lord,” says Hart. “When you look through Church history, great moves of God are always accompanied by moves of prayer. I believe the prayer movement of the last 30 years is setting the stage for the greatest revival that history has ever seen.”

Hart moved to Kelowna, B.C., and now serves in the Kelowna House of Prayer, a multichurch initiative that offers three evenings of harp and bowl prayer each week. He stresses prayer rooms don't have to be running night and day to make a difference. It's about starting *something*, and if several groups in your city start prayer initiatives, eventually the city will be covered with ongoing prayer.

That spring I joined GOHOP regularly for harp and bowl intercession. Founded 11 years ago by executive director Jill Weber, GOHOP hosts prayer rooms and meetings in churches, youth centres, office spaces, homes and drop-in centres around Hamilton. But perhaps GOHOP's most unusual prayer room location – and one of the more unique prayer experiences I had with GOHOP – was in a U-Haul truck set up as a mini prayer room in a parking lot downtown.

“The prayer truck is our attempt to create sacred space in the marketplace,” says Weber. “The truck allows us to invite church and community to pray together, and the best part was we got to pray with people who don't go to church, who don't know how to pray, including at-risk youth and urban poor. The prayer truck is about moving prayer into the neighbourhood.”

When Weber started GOHOP, she

- prayer request station with Post-it notes, a bulletin board and journal for answers to prayer
- art station with paint, pastels and clay
- social justice station with news articles about various issues.

Plan the stations and delegate who will bring which equipment. Sometimes the best way is for each person to choose one station and be in charge of planning and setting it up.

Set up a schedule on the 24-7 website (24-7prayer.com).

imagined it looking like the IHOP in Kansas City. While harp and bowl is still a key component of their ministry, she says God has evolved the vision to adopt more of the missional mindset of the 24-7 movement. It fits better within their context and draws more people of various backgrounds together, she says.

“Many people asked how I didn't get bored of long periods of prayer. But boredom was the last thing on my mind.”

Whether in a private basement or in the middle of the city, prayer rooms are a defining element in the development of what Richard Long, director of Together Canada and former associate director of the National House of Prayer in Ottawa, calls the prayer movement. “One of the fastest moving growth areas in the Canadian Church is the prayer movement, and prayer rooms are on the leading edge,” says Long. “I travel across the country a lot, and everywhere I go I hear of new initiatives starting up.”

But perhaps the best part of the multiplication of various prayer rooms

across the country is that they make prayer so accessible. “Prayer rooms demystify prayer,” says Weber. “So it's not just for the G.I. Joes of prayer, but for the average Joe. Prayer rooms get people praying.”

As for this average Joe, though I've helped set up a variety of prayer rooms since my own, it hasn't really been about prayer rooms. Prayer rooms are an outward manifestation of our primary reason to be on this earth. In the words of the Westminster Confession, “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever,” or in the words of David in Psalm 27, to “dwell in the house of the Lord. . . to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.” **FT**

ANNE B. DOUGLAS is a freelance writer who lives in Guelph, Ont., with her husband and three kids.



Many people display an open Bible prominently in their prayer rooms.

Publicize the prayer room to the church and community. Send out a link to your schedule on the 24-7 website. Be creative with your marketing. Creating a Facebook event is a great way to issue invitations. It's helpful to show photos so people know what to expect.

Set up the room. Be sure to create ambience with lamps, draped fabrics and twinkle lights.

After the week of prayer, clean up well so your church will welcome the next prayer room.

Debrief with your team. Share feedback and responses with your church leadership and other churches. ■ –AD

Using Social Media –

How Christian groups in today's digital world can minimize the chances of ending up in court.

By **Kenneth A. Hall**

We tell our kids to be wise on the Internet, to avoid talking to strangers, but what about ministry leaders who post online about places they are going?

"I'm blogging at Starbucks on Central again. I take my kids here every Tuesday afternoon after school."

Many of us have read online posts like that. It seems natural for pastors to share what they are up to, perhaps to give parishioners an idea of how they spend their time or simply to make themselves more approachable.

Or imagine the leader of a community care ministry who posts on her Facebook page: "I'm going to see the new *Men in Black 3* tonight. Who wants to meet me at Silver City at 9:20?"

Some of us may see nothing wrong with such online behaviour, but others will caution that leaders are often singled out for harassment and even attacks. In most Christian ministry workplaces there are usually brothers and sisters around for protection, but what about elsewhere?

Electronic communication magnifies the potential for the good, the bad and the ugly. Yes, it offers great new ways to spread the gospel and create relationships within our congregations and beyond. Think of how we can now chat or Skype with friends and missionaries across the globe.

But we need to think carefully about it, from blogging to email, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Facebook, Pinterest or the next new thing.

It would be foolish to ignore how such technologies can also be used by criminals for financial fraud, by predators for targeting victims, and by gossips for spreading lies that can ruin a ministry's reputation.

Our own unthinking misuse can also land us in court at the wrong end of a lawsuit, starting with a single inappropriate text sent by an adult volunteer to a teenager, one prayer request shared in confidence and then inadvertently spread online, or one late night set of unsubstantiated musings or ramblings on a web diary or blog.

We are all on a steep learning curve about the legal risks involved, including those of us in the insurance industry. But some key areas of potential online liability

have already been identified. Christian leaders would be wise to institute an electronic communication policy – with special attention to social media – to assist board members, staff and volunteers involved in electronic communication. Here are some ideas for consideration.

Communicate Appropriately With Minors

A good policy should outline acceptable forms of communication and content between your organization's workers and the children and youth in your programs.

Many organizations officially discourage social networking media such as mobile text messages, Facebook posts, tweets, etc., to communicate with minors. Volunteers in particular should be prohibited from communicating directly with unrelated children or students via text messaging. Such informal communication may too easily be misconstrued, misinterpreted and/or considered age-inappropriate.

Where employees do use text messaging with minors, it should only be with formal written consent from parents or guardians. Content should be limited to information and announcements to promote upcoming events. Any questions in the text message should be kept simple and require a "yes" or "no" answer (such as attending an event or requiring transportation). Pastoral care or counselling should never be done through text messaging.

Some churches maintain a policy where they will only communicate electronically with children under 16 via their parents' email addresses, leaving parents responsible to review messages and convey them to their kids verbally or electronically.

Monitor Website Content

It's best to restrict your website to using photographic images in which the individual faces of members, guests and participants are unrecognizable. For example, use far-away shots for group activities. If a close-up shot is needed, use a stock image of generic program participants for which you have obtained permission.

Any photography of individuals used on your web-

While Avoiding Legal Risks

site should have written consent on file, for example obtained through signed registration forms, parental permission forms or membership agreements.

The ease of capturing images, text, music, or video clips from the Internet doesn't mean such content is necessarily in the public domain and appropriate to use on a website. For example, one church that used a poem as a theme for a fall sermon series – without permission from the author – is now facing a lawsuit for misappropriation of copyrighted material.

Leaders should review any articles from other websites your organization intends to reproduce or link to. One slip and you can be responsible for material that is illegal, defamatory, immoral or injurious to your organization's reputation.

Email, Blog and Tweet Responsibly

The risk of lawsuits from third parties claiming libel, slander, defamation and invasion of privacy (known as "personal injury" in the legal world) is magnified when using email, online chat, blogs and the like.

If your church, school, camping ministry or agency hosts a message board, chat or Facebook group to share discussion, photos, videos and other content within your group, such content should be "moderated" rather than "open" so any inappropriate content can be avoided or quickly removed.

Further, the standards of the host should be clearly

communicated to users, such as discouraging off-topic discussion and prohibiting bad language, obscene texting, bullying and discrimination.

"Sometimes social media can be abused as a platform for hurtful remarks and negative feedback," as an article by the Canadian Council of Christian Charities recently pointed out.

Both employers and employees can be subject to discrimination, harassment, human rights, and civil pro-

PHOTO: GLOWIMAGES.COM



ceedings if management or workers post offensive comments about the performance or faith beliefs of fellow employees.

Organizations that use social media to advance ministry should design a policy to reflect the organization's statement of faith and expectations for use of social media tools, both at work and outside the office. Improper use (that contravenes stated employer policy and harms the organization or others) can be made grounds for discipline and termination.

Depending on the organization, it may also be wise to explicitly discourage staff and volunteers from blogging in a style too casual, controversial, inflammatory or verging on gossip, libel or slander.

Manage Streaming Media

Audio/video streaming and podcasting worship services, sermons, education lectures, and other activities are increasingly popular ways to reach followers and non-Christian audiences alike.

However, these often don't have the safeguards of traditional media, such as being subject to tape delays, editing or network censoring to eliminate content that may be unintentionally offensive or intrusive.

Unfiltered and unedited live streaming has the potential to cause libel, slander, defamation and invasion of privacy. Care should be taken that speakers or guests on a webcast are not likely to make inflammatory statements that may cause undue harm to individuals or identifiable groups in society.

It's also best to avoid close-up images of individual audience members who

have not given consent to the public use of their images.

Secure Every Wireless Network

Wireless Internet connections are increasingly popular for smartphone, laptop and game console users in public spaces including church premises. But many of these wireless networks are unsecured and therefore vulnerable to hackers, illegal use and access by minors to potentially inappropriate websites.

Open Internet access should not be made available to children or youth who are unsupervised. When wireless routers are installed, be sure to run the setup disc to make customizations and a proper security setup. The network should be available only by password and the password, containing both numbers and letters, should be changed on a regular basis.

There have now been cases where unregulated free Wi-Fi has resulted in inappropriate web surfing by minors and illegal online activities – and where the host provider has been held liable for unlawful activity and been named defendant in a lawsuit.

Passwords, terms of service agreements, and supervision of minors are important steps in managing the risk of being an Internet host, whether the service is paid or complimentary.

Check Insurance Coverage

For most churches and ministries, media activities are secondary to their operations. But it is still important to check with your insurance provider to ensure your coverage will address any liabil-

ity risk arising from both traditional media activities (such as broadcasting, telecasting and publishing) and from online activities, including website content, blogs, discussion forums and Internet streaming.

Most Commercial General Liability insurance policy wordings expressly exclude coverage for legal liability arising from online discussion forums that an organization hosts, owns, or over which it exercises control. To ensure coverage, a special Internet Streaming and Web Content endorsement should be added to the policy.

(At Robertson Hall Insurance, we offer a Church Protection Plus program for churches and Christian charities with customized liability solutions that modify the standard exclusionary wording and provide full coverage for website content, including the distribution, broadcast or streaming of printed, audio, video or electronic material prepared and produced by our client organizations.)

The situation is different for Christian organizations whose primary purpose is to advertise, broadcast, publish or telecast, to design or determine website content, provide Internet search services, or act as a service provider. Such organizations need to obtain a separate Media Liability policy.

Given all the cautions we need to remember, let's also remind each other that risk management and Christian ministry are not only compatible, they are essential to both the public testimony and long-term effectiveness of any church or ministry organization.

Managing risk is not about saying no to the ministry opportunities created by social media. It's about how to say yes, responsibly and wisely. **FT**

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KENNETH A. HALL of London, Ont., is president of Robertson Hall Insurance Inc. At robertsonhall.com you can also read articles such as "The Ten Commandments of Youth Abuse Prevention" and "Can Social Networking Get Us Sued?" (look for the *Abuse Prevention Newsletter*, 2011 edition). For more help developing a safe social media policy for children's and youth ministries, consult the *Plan to Protect* abuse prevention resources available through winningkidsinc.ca.

Ministry & Missions Profiles

Freeing the Dalits

Dalit Freedom Network

India's 250 million Dalits (untouchables) live in physical, emotional and spiritual bondage. The caste system keeps them shackled in poverty, discrimination and oppression, generation after generation. Due to their low status, Dalits are often illiterate and unskilled, thus vulnerable to human trafficking and other slavery.

Dalit Freedom Network (DFN) is committed to bringing hope and spiritual freedom to the Dalit people, empowering them through education, health care and economic development projects based on a Christian worldview. We operate 107 schools across India, educating over 25,000 students through our sponsorship program. Our schools also provide health education, medical treatment, vocational training and small-business assistance to surrounding villages.

These initiatives often mean the difference between a life destined for oppression and exploitation and one filled with hope, dignity and opportunity. By providing the Dalits with knowledge and skills, we equip them to rise out of poverty and dream of a new future. Today the Dalits are experiencing freedom – one child, family and community at a time.

To watch a trailer of our new film, *The Dalits Unshackled*, please visit dalitfreedom.net. To order a free copy of the full-length version, email us at info@dalitfreedom.net.

Together, we can bring freedom to

the untouchables. Join the movement: dalitfreedom.net.

Reaching women with the gospel

Gospel for Asia

Much of Southeast Asia's female population is trapped by poverty, illiteracy and isolation, their lives and rights trampled on by their male-dominated culture. For vulnerable women in Asia, every stage from birth to death is a minefield. Even before a baby girl is born, her life is at risk,

because she is considered worthless. The World Health Organization estimates that one-quarter of the world's illegal abortions happen in India. Of those who survive, thousands will eventually be sold into prostitution. Women who are fortunate enough to be married off will be ostracized when their husbands die. The suicide rate among these women is 10 times higher than the world's average.

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In many Asian cultures, genders rarely mix, so men are limited (in ministering to women.)

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aries have dedicated themselves to taking God's love to women in Asia. Given a culture where genders rarely mix, male missionaries are severely limited in ministering to women. "Bible women" can go where men can't. They are well trained and full of compassion.

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Questions for Mormonism

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may be making headlines, but serious problems remain.

Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate for U.S. president, has created enormous interest in all things Mormon. Romney is a lifelong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), based in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The LDS Church and other Mormon groups trace their roots to Joseph Smith (1805-1844), who founded the Mormon Church in 1830 in upstate New York, the same year he published *The Book of Mormon*. During his lifetime he led Mormon communities in New York, Ohio, Missouri and Illinois.

Smith visited Canada in September 1833, and the LDS Church established a strong presence in Alberta in the late 1800s. There are now 200,000 Mormons in Canada and 14 million worldwide.

The Romney moment creates an opportunity to think anew about the LDS claims to be the one true Church of Christ, with an authentic priesthood, a modern prophet, ancient Temple rituals, fresh revelation beyond the Bible, and accurate understandings of God, Jesus, salvation, polygamy, whether blacks can hold the priesthood, the origins of the American Indian, etc.

Whatever contemporary media sources may assume, the status of the LDS Church as truly, fully Christian is not settled by reference to Jesus in the church name, or even by obvious love on the part of Mormons for the Creator God and for Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

Despite the latter, the LDS Church, its founder and unique message represent a theological and spiritual failure. Here are five reasons for this sad but necessary verdict.

1. Joseph Smith is not to be trusted since his work on “translating” the gold plates for *The Book of Mormon* was done with the same weird psychic methods he used in digging for buried treasure. The practice of “glass looking” was a criminal act for which Smith was arrested and convicted in March 1826. Smith returned to his magical occult ways two years later when he used his seer stone again, only this time with his head and stone buried in his hat as he “revealed” the contents of *The Book of Mormon*. Dan Vogel explains more in *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Signature Books, 2005).

2. Joseph Smith is not to be trusted given his breaking

of his marriage vows with his wife Emma Hale. There is evidence of a first adultery in 1832 in what Oliver Cowdery, a prominent Mormon leader, called Smith’s “dirty, nasty affair” with Fanny Alger. Smith’s later plural marriages were covered up by his repeated lies and getting his wives to marry other men. He threatened various women with divine wrath if they did not consent to marriage. He wrote one couple and told them to have their daughter ready for his visit, unless Emma was around. See Richard Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy – A History* (Signature, 1989) and Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness* (Signature, 1997).

3. Mormon prophets from Smith to the present are not to be trusted given their endorsement of Smith’s fabrication of the Book of Abraham (published in the *Pearl of Great Price*, 1921). The Mormons purchased some Egyptian papyri in 1835, and Smith promptly said the scrolls contained a book from Abraham. He even provided a translation. The scrolls have nothing to do with Abraham but involve ancient Egyptian funeral instructions. See Egyptologist Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri* (Smith-Petit Foundation, 2012) and Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus* (Institute for Religious Research, 1985).

4. The LDS message is not to be trusted since it teaches non-Christian views: there is more than one God, God grew up to be God, Mormon males can advance to godhood just like God did, and more. Mormonism teaches God lives near the planet Kolob (Book of Abraham 3:3), has a body, and He and His wife have produced all humans through normal means of procreation. These late polytheistic and anthropomorphic views of Smith are contradicted by his own earlier *Book of Mormon* teaching on God.

5. The Mormon prophets are not to be trusted since they have over the years changed divine revelations, advanced racist views against blacks (for which the current Mormon prophet should apologize), covered up incriminating evidence against Smith, ignored the masonic roots of Mormon Temple ceremonies and downplayed salvation by grace alone. These and other sad realities are covered in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism* (Moody Press, 1979).

Romney’s legitimate candidacy for president gives Mormonism new visibility. This is distinct from the issue of LDS credibility. The evidence remains clear that the LDS religion, while Christian at many points, remains sub-Christian and even anti-Christian on others. **FT**

JAMES A. BEVERLEY’S new book *Mormonism: A Brief Guide* will be released in fall 2012 by Thomas Nelson. He is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto.



We Don't Need All the Answers

Respectful and accepting listening can open a door to share the good news of God's unconditional love.

A few weeks ago I found a note from another author in my inbox, stating he refuses to mention the word "God" in any of his writings. He believes when he does, people stop reading what he writes. I am not convinced this is true.

From conversations I have had, I do believe many people around us think they have heard all there is to say about the Christian faith. For a variety of reasons their exposure to Christianity has brought them disappointment and disillusionment. Consequently, the moment anyone uses words evoking their negative experiences, they check out of the conversation.

How then do we share our faith with them? One thing we might do is encourage them to explore why they react as they do to Christian vocabulary. Those who hold truth need not be governed by fear.

As we are truthful we admit we carry our own doubts and fears. We do not have all the answers and probably never will. On our journey of faith we choose to discover reasons to continue to trust, even though there are many things we do not understand.

We can learn to live with optimistic ambiguity. Such an attitude frees us to invite others to share their unanswered questions. When they do so, we can explore possible answers together as we seek authentic faith.

Many years ago I made friends with Mary, who grew up in the church but was not attending at that time. When she was in her teens, a negative experience left her hurt and disappointed. Mary wanted nothing more to do with the Christian faith.

As our friendship developed, we began to share with each other some of our disappointments in life, but also some of the reasons we could have hope. During long conversations we both discovered evidence God was at work in our lives.

For me as a young Christian it was a great encouragement to realize certain events could best be explained as God's activity in my life.

For Mary her discoveries became the stepping stones eventually leading her back to faith. As her faith has grown,

it has enabled her to encourage many others to learn to trust. She provides a safe place where they can ask honest questions and seek solid answers, or at least a framework where they can leave their unanswered questions.

The best analogy I have found for dealing with our unanswered questions is an imaginary basket. We always carry this basket around with us. In our baskets we place the unanswered questions we have about faith. They resemble gems, all caked in dirt and dust.

As we journey through life, from time to time we are able to pull out of the basket some of these gems. As we apply to them a little of the knowledge we have gained, some of the dirt and grime rubs off, and we begin to see a little more of the beauty buried beneath these layers.

There is always within us a longing for God. He created us with it. When we explore our yearning for Him and how it can be fulfilled, we begin to appreciate the value of what we believe. We give a priceless gift when we create listening relationships, offering safe places where our friends know they can ask tough questions and be treated with respect and compassion. We extend to them the hope of discovering dynamic faith, while stretching in our own understanding of Christianity.

A few years ago my husband Glen and I led a college and careers Bible study group. The Christian young adults who were part of it found their faith grew most when a young man from a Muslim background joined our group.

They had heard the standard frequently asked questions and answers about what it meant to be a Christian from the time they were toddlers. They thought they knew it all. Then came this young seeker, asking questions they had never thought to ask. They were amazed they could find some answers or at least clues to what appropriate responses might be. According to them, wrestling with these questions helped them most to grow as Christians that year.

We need not be quick to correct. We can listen and love. As we offer authentic love and unconditional acceptance, while seeking truth along with others, our sincerely seeking friends will find their way home to the God who loves them supremely. **FT**

ELEANOR SHEPHERD of Montreal is co-chair of the board of Women Alive (womenalive.org) and author of the award-winning book *More Questions Than Answers: Sharing Faith by Listening* (Wipf & Stock, 2010). Women Alive's executive director, Michelle (Nagle) Arthur, will return to writing this column in a future issue.

Christ Memorial Church, Oshawa, Ont.



PHOTO: CHRIST MEMORIAL CHURCH

■ Towels for a teen shelter were placed around the church's altar.

God was leading Christ Memorial Church in Oshawa, a city east of Toronto known for its General Motors assembly plant, in a new direction even before Rev. Judy Paulsen arrived almost nine years ago.

This Anglican congregation wasn't sure how a new vision might be shaped. Some members were focused on denominational decline and an aging demographic, but most dreamed of new ways of building on the congregation's history of neighbourhood outreach. Paulsen's doctoral program in missional leadership (at Fuller Seminary) enabled the congregation to reflect more intentionally and apply outcomes more strategically as they embraced this journey together.

Prayerfully, they addressed three key aspects of ministry. Keep what is essential – the gospel. Adapt what is worthy – worship. Scrap what is hindering. “We are here for the community, not for ourselves,” states Paulsen. She believes the first task of the church is not to *preach* the gospel but to *hear* the gospel, to hear God's purposes. People need a sense of where change (loss) will bring new life (gain or possibilities).

Mission-Shaped

Outreach has always been part of Christ Church. As members reflected together, the parish celebrated what God had been doing since 1928. In 1949 Christ Church Nursery School, for children

two to five, opened to the community and continues operation today under a board of Christ Church members.

Church members were involved in establishing Luke's Place, which grew from a tragic situation within the parish to support women and children at risk from spousal abuse. And members also helped 30 years ago to found Gate 3:16, a drop-in resource centre to serve marginalized people in the city's downtown.

Christ Church has also sponsored the Lakeridge Hospital Chaplaincy in Oshawa for many years, providing hospital visitors and training on-call chaplains who visit and pray with patients, their families and staff.

By spring 2004 members were ready to look at God's mission to the post-modern, post-Christendom generation. In addition to the classic contemplative and traditional worship services, the congregation launched a contemporary Eucharist which began to attract young families, becoming the congregation's largest weekly service with about a hundred attendees.

Messy Church

Another new initiative, Messy Church, grew from a desire to reach the “de-churched” – people raised in the church who left because it was boring or due to growing suspicion of institutions.

“Surprisingly, people want their kids to know about faith,” says Paulsen. Yet Sundays are often booked with kids' sports,



Parish members donated backpacks full of gifts to needy local teens.

shared custody and parents' shift work. She felt responsible for addressing today's reality.

Christ Church particularly listened to parents who brought children to be baptized but didn't engage with church life. Parents and grandparents expressed a desire to experience a faith journey together with kids.

Messy Church is a Saturday, one-hour, monthly multigenerational, multisensory form of worship and learning based on a biblical story. In the last four years it has drawn a whole new group of families to become involved in church.

Fresh Expressions

Five years ago Christ Church surveyed its neighbourhood within a 2-km radius, recognizing God is also at work outside the church. Where could they see His fingerprints? The first new missional connection came through a natural network between a member of the congregation and the principal of a local high school, O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute, just four blocks away. They met to discuss how the congregation could encourage and offer assistance. Since the school already hosted a Bible study, the principal was stumped – until the congregational member asked about the economy.

No longer does O'Neill cater primarily to children from wealthier backgrounds. Some come from chaotic families or those lacking financial resources. Twenty teens were "trying to make it on their own."

Christ Church youth agreed to purchase cool backpacks and place them around the altar for parish members to take and fill. Interest was so high, 45 backpacks were returned. They were delivered to two high schools and a special education program for teens returning to complete their studies. The principal's thank you letter expressed how delighted teens were to find individualized contents in each backpack. Paulsen's response: "God's mission honours each person as an individual."

The following year O'Neill identified a need for reduced-cost bus passes for kids travelling a distance to school. The large teddy bear peanut butter jar at the altar collected \$800 for "Tickets 4

Teens" to get to school.

Christ Church was learning to respond to expressed/felt needs in its neighbourhood. The head of guidance at O'Neill shared with the congregation the difference this project made in the lives of teens and families.

While on vacation, Paulsen received a letter from the March of Dimes clearly sent to a number of churches. Upon her return she contacted the social worker. Not one church had responded to the need for \$200 each to fund a scooter for a man in their community who recently suffered a stroke. Paulsen asked the congregation, "Who among us would want to be immobile?" and collected \$500. She believes people want to make a difference locally.

Missio Dei

The idea of *missio dei* (God's mission) started filtering through the congregation as parish members began looking for opportunities to serve their community. One senior gentleman in the church heard the following story at a Kiwanis meeting and brought it to the church.

"The principal at Mary Street Public School phoned a truant child and was surprised when the child answered the phone. In response to the question, 'Why aren't you at school?' the child responded, 'My mother has *the coat*.' "

A Missional Action Team was formed to determine how the church could help the school.

Eventually the church restructured its outreach to galvanize parish members around specific passions – kids, schools, the hospital and disabled.

During another chat with the principal at Mary Street, one team learned many children were undernourished. An extra weekly serving of milk per child costs \$3,000 annually. Congregants are committed – this is their third year of sponsorship.

"When people start to think missionally, it sparks other ideas," states Paulsen. Hospitality emerges in local neighbourhoods. A garage band from the congregation contributed music for a block party. Neighbours commented on the classical rock and asked questions about church.

The challenge is to keep an upward and outward focus.

"Because of our broken nature, churches tend to become inwardly focused on programs and personal preferences. But the nature of God is mission!" Paulsen also admits, "Building a healthy congregation is an ongoing challenge to change the culture of a parish until it is willing to experience its own discomfort in order to reach outside itself. Success will be measured by a deeper understanding of God and what He wants us to do in our own neighbourhoods." **FT**

CHARLENE DE HAAN is a freelance writer in Toronto. She is also executive director of Camino Global and founder of stepUPtransitions.ca. Read all the profiles in this series at faithtoday.ca.



Don't Just Back Off

Even the strong, silent type must sometimes speak up.

The first time I met a woman I'll call Debbie, she seemed a little sad, and I soon found out why. Her longtime female friend had died the night before, losing a heartbreaking three-month battle with cancer. The death left a bewildered husband and two young adult children to fend for themselves.

When I saw Debbie two months later, I asked how the new widower was doing. She reassured me he had friends and that her own husband was one of his best buddies. The two men often went golfing or watched sports or tinkered with tools together.

Then she turned to me and said, "But they don't talk about that kind of stuff. My husband has no idea how much that man is struggling."

She went on to tell me how the flower beds her girlfriend used to tend so lovingly were turning into weed patches. And how lonely the man had been when his wife's birthday passed without acknowledgment.

Debbie learned these things because she asked about them, and then listened attentively as the stories spilled forth.

But, she added with a hint of sorrow, "My husband doesn't even know."

Blind Spots

Many North American men are like this in their casual disregard for the inner life of even their closest friends, especially when it comes to suffering or anything that could be construed as a sign of weakness.

For some reason it's considered unmanly to probe at the soft spots in another man's situation. Neither is it manly to be open and revealing about spiritual and emotional turmoil. We prefer to portray an appearance of control. Relationships hum along so much easier when they stay at the surface level. Uncomplicated.

I commented on the prevalence of male insularity to Debbie, and told her *Seven* magazine (promisekeepers.ca/seven) devotes a column to this reality in every single issue, about how to minister by taking conversations below the surface.

Two days later Debbie greeted me with a hug. Her eyes sparkled as she told me how her husband had spent an evening with his bereaved friend and another man at a coffee shop, how they'd talked for hours about their own thoughts and feelings and circumstances, and had come away eager to meet again.

What had changed?

"I told my husband about the conversation I had with [his hurting friend], and also the one with you."

Apparently it had not occurred to her husband to ask such personal questions. As a result he was blithely unaware his friend was struggling.

When it got right down to it, however, he did actually care about his friend's emotional and spiritual health. Once the existence of the struggle was laid out so he could see it, he realized he had a role to play. He knew he was needed, and was keen to go into action. That, for sure, was a manly thing to do.

Strong, Silent Type

Different men communicate in different ways. Macho bravado is one common form that too often amounts to little more than posturing bluster. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the strong, silent type, the sort of man who uses words sparingly and lets his silence communicate his inner strength. (At least he hopes to leave the impression all is under control and serene within.)

Both types are reluctant to let others know them deeply and well. Both tend to mask emotions and resist any intrusion that might undermine their sense of independence, competence and control. Both bottle things up and keep their distance from the inner reserves of other men.

This is not a biblical view of how we should behave. Humans are wired to be relational, and the best relationships are marked by deep honesty. It is not weakness to recognize that sharing our burdens actually lightens the load and helps create the kind of community we truly desire.

It's what we should be doing. As the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Coming to terms with limitations is a sign of maturity, not weakness. Just as a man who is willing to stop and ask directions arrives at his destination more quickly, so knowing when we need help and accepting it brings us to a place of health sooner than when we insist on shouldering it alone.

Which means we must be willing to speak up when we need help. And be attuned to opportunities when we can enable other men to release some of their inner turmoil in the company of trusted companions.

Don't just back off when you sense your friend has something on his mind. Ask the question. Real friends care about the inner man. **FT**

DOUG KOOP is a Winnipeg-based writer and spiritual care provider. He previously served as editorial director of the national newspaper *ChristianWeek*.



My Week in China

We met for two hours in May to talk about Evangelicals, what we believe and why the movement is growing so rapidly in China and beyond. Our small team from the World Evangelical Alliance – led by Secretary General Geoff Tunnicliffe – was hosted by General Minister Wang, director general of the State Administration for Religious Affairs in Beijing.

Tunnicliffe and I are both Canadians connected with The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. We were in China for almost a week, meeting with senior leaders of the China Christian Council (CCC) and The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM).

On Our Knees

• For basic facts about China and suggestions to add to your prayers, visit operationworld.org/chinaandpersecution.net/china.htm

Our conversation ranged from issues like the challenges of rapid church growth, business ethics and religious liberty, to gendercide, human trafficking and of course the Bible.

Our meetings continued a conversation started last year when General Minister Wang and leaders of the CCC were hosted by the Billy Graham Association in the United States.

The CCC is the Chinese government's liaison with Protestant Christians – the registered Church. Created in the early 1980s (following the Red Guard purge of the 1960s and '70s), the CCC kept track of Christians, who they were and what they were doing.

The TSPM began in 1954, built around three ideas – self-governance, self-support and self-propagation. This was China's reaction to earlier work by foreign missions, building on what the Chinese often refer

to as “post denominationalism,” seeking to be indigenous without reliance on groups outside China.

The unregistered Church, however, concerns both the government and registered Church leaders. Many in the unregistered Church – after years of living in the shadow of government oversight – still fear government control. Entrepreneurial leadership always finds bureaucratic oversight claustrophobic.

The actual number of Christians in China is up for grabs. The country's official census figures indicate there are 24 million. The Pew Foundation pushes that number to 67 million with others speculating even higher numbers. China is a huge country of more than 1 billion 300 million people. While the central government makes laws and sets policies, they are enacted sometimes far from the oversight of Beijing. Regional and municipal political leaders and police exercise judgement on matters often outside the official line. This is a country undergoing massive change.

Undoubtedly the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) will be taken to task for meeting with the national government. Some argue the WEA should not be seen meeting with the official government representatives of China because of reports of religious repression. Some believe the WEA should be protesting, not conversing. I respect that opinion. However, the WEA is the international body representing Evangelical Protestants around the world, and it is our task to meet officially with the most senior levels of government, ensuring the chan-



nels of communication are open.

It is our call to represent the broad stream of Evangelical Protestants and to help – in this case – the Chinese government know who *we* are.

China is changing. This year it will print its 100 millionth Bible. This nation is becoming a global superpower. As I travel about Africa, I see signs of China's economic might everywhere I go.

I'm assured the Spirit will continue to pulsate across this people, culture and land. The Church here is growing, overcoming obstacles and finding its expression in the indigenous roots of its history, language, culture and traditions. The Church in China will look different from what we might be used to. They train pastors differently. And their nervousness triggered by memories of colonial exploits of the past presses them to define church differently. I believe the day is coming when the Chinese community will exercise worldwide witness of the gospel, opening doors of service to countries in need of Christian care and leadership beyond the economic muscle they now employ. Out of their unique culture and life, made powerful by the presence of the risen Lord, their passion for Christ will be an example to us all. **FT**

BRIAN C. STILLER of Newmarket, Ont., is the global ambassador for The World Evangelical Alliance.

Canadian Connections

- Back to God Ministries International produces six Chinese-language websites, including a website for children, and six social media sites that give people in mainland China access to biblical resources. backtogod.net/global-ministries/chinese
- The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) of the Anglican Church of Canada works through the Anglican Cathedral in Hong Kong to provide HIV services, health education and care to migrant workers. Pwrdf.org

For more about how EFC affiliates are working in China, visit theEFC.ca/globalvillage.



Learning Christian Unity As We Grow

A Canadian movement in the Stone-Campbell restorationist tradition invites all Christians to boldly cross denominational lines in Christian fellowship.

Perhaps you are familiar with the Second Great Awakening, a revival movement in the 1800s especially prominent in the United States. It helped shape the people of its time, and drew thousands of interested participants from across denominational lines. It helped reform, renew and restore Christian unity, regardless of the wide range of theological views held by many denominations.

This heritage is often labelled “restorationist” or “primitivist” based on the desire to focus on the basics of the Early Church. Among the groups moving forward with this heritage is The Evangelical Christian Church in Canada (Christian Disciples).

We prize the goal of facilitating conversations with Christians and networking with church leaders throughout Canada, opening the way for further dialogue on Christian unity. Christians continue to believe and are taught the Church of Jesus Christ is one body, but we are called to maintain and guard the unity of oneness (Ephesians 4:2-3).

And over the last five years many denominations, clergy, and congregations have indeed moved more freely within evangelical circles, making significant contributions to evangelical discussions in theology, ecclesiology and Christian unity. Many Christians are recognizing that each of us, even each congregation or denominational tradition, is not an island unto itself.

This impulse fits well with the aim of the restorationist movement to restore the whole Christian Church, unifying all Christians into a single body patterned after the Church of the New Testament.

Two of the early leaders in this movement were Barton Stone (1772-1844) and Thomas Campbell (1763-1854). So at The Evangelical Christian Church in Canada today, we often describe ourselves as a mainstream non-denominational Stone-Campbell restoration movement.

Stone originally helped organize a group called the Christian Church in 1804 in Bourbon County, Kentucky, and in 1810 near Charlottetown, P.E.I.

This movement later merged with the efforts of Campbell and his son Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). The eventual result was several movements: the Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental), the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and The Christian Connection.

Their shared vision emphasized religious freedom, Christian unity, and a commitment to the priesthood of all believers. The vision aimed to avoid man-made ecclesiastical traditions, aiming instead to be largely without dogma or structure, committing only to a primitive Christianity.

At the ECCC today, we are incorporating these ideals into the vision of the church by inviting all Christians to boldly cross denominational lines in Christian fellowship.

Many Christian leaders are hearing this cry among their own people.

As Christians unite, we will find we have much in common with a wider evangelical Christianity as a whole. Our shared emphasis is a commitment to the authority of Scripture, prayer, and the importance of a relationship with the living God. Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus is a document addressed to Christian unity. The first three chapters provide a theological basis and a clear road map for unity. The final three are principally concerned with the practical

implementation of oneness in Christ.

In our pursuit of restoring Christian unity in the Church, it is absolutely crucial we appreciate the important lessons learned from Church history. Those who take their claim of faith in Christ seriously will work conscientiously for unity among other fellow believers today. This became Christ’s earthly focus in His prayer of intercession for all believers: “Holy Father, keep...those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are” (John 17:11). **FT**

In our pursuit of restoring Christian unity in the Church, it is absolutely crucial we appreciate the important lessons learned from Church history.

DR. DAVID LAVIGNE of Waterloo, Ont., is bishop of the Evangelical Christian Church in Canada, which has a hundred congregations across the country, and president of its Waterloo Bible College. This column features affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. For a list, see theEFC.ca/affiliates.



Christian Writers Awarded

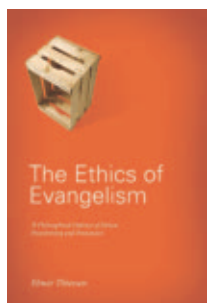
Writers from a wide range of Canadian churches won awards from The Word Guild, a national writers' association, in June. The annual Canadian Christian Writing Awards drew more than 350 entries published last year across 35 categories. Winners were presented with cash prizes at a gala event in Mississauga, Ont., on June 13.

This year's \$5,000 Grace Irwin book award went to Deb Elkind of Elkwater, Alta., for her novel *The Third Grace* (Greenbrier Book Co.).



Among the most-nominated authors this year were Carla Anne Coroy of Steinbach, Man., (*Married Mom, Solo Parent: Finding God's Strength to Face the Challenge*, Kregel); Elmer John Thiessen of Waterloo, Ont., (*The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion*, IVP Academic); Connie Brummel Crook of Peterborough, Ont., (*Flight*, Fitzhenry & Whiteside); M. D. Meyer of Norway House, Man., (*Joshua: The Group*, Word Alive); and periodical writers Lisa Hall-Wilson, Wendy Elaine Nelles, Adele Simmons and Marcy Kennedy – all of Ontario – as well as Thomas Froese of Kampala, Uganda.

A complete list of winners (several *Faith Today* articles and regular contributors among them) is available at canadianchristianwritingawards.com.



At the awards gala the Leslie K. Tarr Award for outstanding career achievement was presented to Roman Catholic author Jean Vanier, who also founded the organization L'Arche to serve people with developmental disabilities.

Afterward 250 writers, editors, agents and publishers met in Guelph, Ont., for three days for Canada's largest Christian writers' conference (writecanada.org), also held by The Word Guild. **FT**

–Bill Fledderus

the Church the model for living out that Kingdom. *How God Became King* provides academics and non-academics, leaders and laity with a biblically based framework for what many believers already intuitively know – following Jesus is more than just a personal, spiritual experience. Jesus does not call people to simply bide their time as they wait to go to heaven someday. Since Jesus now possesses all authority in heaven *and on earth*, we are called to extend His Kingdom through every aspect of our lives. –Alan Gilman

Refresh: 19 Ways to Boost Your Spiritual Life

Author: Ron Hughes
Gospel Folio Press, 2011.
160 pages. \$11.99

Who doesn't need a bit of spiritual refreshment from time to time? Ron Hughes' slender book, *Refresh*, offers simple and practical ways to deepen and grow our spiritual lives.

The author is quick to admit he hasn't "arrived" yet, but these practices continue to help him, and can help us too.

Each section can be read in a single sitting. They open with "A Story to Start" (as told by a biblical character), followed by biblical background, exploration and application, potential pitfalls and "A Word of Encouragement."

Topics include solitude, confession, service, simplicity, rest and more. I found them easy to read and reflect on, yet with scope for a lifetime's practice. *Refresh* is a book to re-read over the years, because its truths aren't meant

How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels

Author: N. T. Wright
HarperOne, 2012.
284 pages. \$28.99

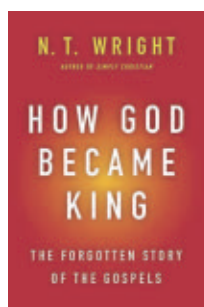
N. T. Wright's latest book is the climax of his lifelong theological contribution calling the Church to a clearly defined allegiance to Jesus as Lord.

Currently professor at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, Wright is well known to Canadians. Besides his over 50 books, he was assistant professor of New Testament

at McGill University in the late 1980s. He also lectured at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto and Regent College in Vancouver, and holds an honorary doctorate from Wycliffe College in Toronto.

In *How God Became King*, Wright uses his unique personal and engaging style to eloquently explain four important themes found across Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. "The gospel in the Gospels," as Wright calls it, includes (1) Jesus' divinity, (2) the early Church, (3) the story

of Israel and (4) the kingdom clash between God and Caesar.



The first two, while absolutely essential, have been distorted, Wright asserts. The other two are often ignored.

But it is only when we hear all four themes in the right balance can we grasp what the gospel is really all about – God's rule on earth as it is in heaven.

Wright dedicates a whole section to showing how the suffering and death of Jesus as Messiah established the Kingdom of God, while providing

for a one-shot benefit. It's not a formula for do-it-yourself spiritual growth, but operates on the principle "God works

in us when we actively share in the process." Canadian author Ron Hughes is president of FBH International, a Christian media ministry based in Ontario. There's a free downloadable workbook for individual and group use at fbhinternational.com/refresh. You can also read an excerpt (a fictional account from the prodigal son's father) and purchase the book there. *—Janet Sketchley*

Kindness

Artist: Steve Bell
Signpost Music, 2012
At stevebell.com for \$16.99

After a career as one of Canada's most prominent Christian singer-songwriter-guitarists, Steve Bell's 16th album shows him still in top form. His work continues to appeal in part due to the character of the man, a theologian and advocate of spiritual formation/discipline.

The depth of discernment in his lyrics sets them apart from the internally focused offerings so common to contemporary Christian music.

Besides his gifts as a lyricist, Steve Bell is also a superbly accomplished musician, guitarist and composer. Anyone who has sat in on one of his concerts and observed will have been amazed at his guitar playing. There is no need for other instrumentation as filler when Bell plays and sings.

On this CD he again keeps his distinctive tenor voice clear and easy to hear in

the mix of instruments, which makes the music accessible. It's easy to experience each of Bell's songs as an encounter rather than entertainment.

Each track on this CD has been assembled to develop the theme of kindness. The opening track "About Love" sets the tone, and each following piece

builds on its message – a message of the love of God as the ultimate and only possession you need to strive for and accept. Inspiring

and highly recommended. **FT**

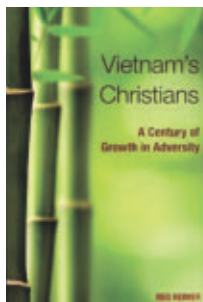
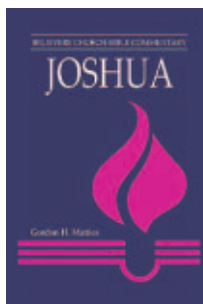
—R. Wayne Hagerman



There's a free downloadable workbook for individual and group use at fbhinternational.com/refresh. You can also read an excerpt (a fictional account from the prodigal

New and Noteworthy Resources

- *Joshua (Believers Church Bible Commentary #25)*, by Gordon Matties (Herald Press, 2012). "In a time of religious justification for terrorism and counter-terrorism, Joshua may be a book for our time," says this professor at Canadian Mennonite University.
- *Mark (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament #7)* by Mary Ann Beavis (Baker Academic, 2011). A professor at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan, examines this Gospel's cultural context and theological meaning.
- *French-Speaking Protestants in Canada: Historical Essays* edited by Jason Zuidema (Brill, 2011). A variety of academics examine the history of this important religious minority.
- *An Emerging Dictionary for the Gospel and Culture: A Conversation from Augustine to Zizek* by Leonard Hjalmarson (Wipf and Stock, 2010). A Canadian professor creatively "gathers, interprets and files many of the key ideas that are impacting church and culture in our time," to use the words of reviewer Alan Hirsch.
- *Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity* by Reg Reimer (William Carey Library, 2011). A Canadian who has worked as a missionary in Vietnam for 45 years



shares an authoritative summary.

- *Mercy Immense and Free: Essays on Wesley and Wesleyan Theology* by Victor A. Shepherd (Clements Academic, 2010). From the first chair of Wesley studies at Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto.
- *Chasing the Wind: Finding Meaningful Answers From Ancient Wisdom* by Robert White, (Word Alive Press, 2011). A short and easy-to-read discussion starter on Ecclesiastes by an Ontario editor and journalist.
- *Otherworld: A Novel* by Erin Hatton (Word Alive, 2011). A metaphorical contemporary romance about a prostitute, her pimp/dealer and her lover by a recent graduate of Redeemer University College.
- *Truth & Dare: One Year of Dynamic Devotions for Girls* by Ann-Margret Hovsepian (Cook, 2011). The latest from a best-selling, award-winning Montreal author.
- *Hitting the Wall: Finding Perspective When Life Stops Working* by David Payne (Xulon, 2010). "There is usually no quick fix for the wall. Rather, you have to begin a slow, steady growth over it. This book will nourish that growth," says this veteran pastor in Aurora, Ont.
- *Taking Your Soul to Work: Overcoming the Nine Deadly Sins of the Workplace* by R. Paul Stevens and Alvin Ung (Eerdmans, 2010). Practical and biblical ideas for "turning professional work into the catalyst for a richer, more balanced spiritual life." **FT**



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Is Christianity the Only True Religion?

Here's a short answer and a long one.

There are lots of religions in the world, as perhaps you've noticed. So how can Christians presume our religion is the only *right* one? The short answer is we shouldn't. Our religion isn't the only right one – if by “the only right one” we mean everything our religion says is right and everything every other religion says is wrong.

If we assert such a strict either/or, we are denying one of the fundamental claims of our own religion – namely, Christianity is the fulfillment, not the negation, of the religion of Old Testament Israel.

Furthermore, Christianity obviously has a lot in common with both Judaism and Islam – we can't ignore that. In fact, Christianity has at least a few teachings and practices in common with pretty much every other religion in the world. Christian missionaries have been building on those common features for centuries.

Admittedly, that short answer leaves a lot of loose ends. To help with some of those, let's try out a way of thinking about religions that uses ideas from geography and maps. (Like any metaphor, this one has important limitations, the most important of which is that it doesn't foreground the Christian conviction that what matters most is our personal relationship with Christ. So let's consider it with that caveat.)

Religions, we can say, offer us maps of reality and some directions on how to best negotiate that reality.

As such, religions that fail to describe reality with any kind of accuracy (or to tell us how to negotiate it effectively) eventually fall out of use in favour of religions that do a better job.

Thus it follows that religions that do work, at least somewhat, will make assertions about reality that overlap with assertions made on other maps that work, at least somewhat.

For example, if we're trying to walk from one side of Venice to the other, any effective map is going to include

a description of the Grand Canal and at least one of the very few bridges that cross it.

So even the worst usable map – imagine one that a resident of Venice draws on a napkin for you – will share at least some information with the best geophysical survey map possible.

Thus we should not be surprised the world's religions share various claims and practices with others. The world is what it is, and living in it is done most effectively this way rather than that. So religions that approximate those realities are going to share a lot of the same claims.

Now, we must take care when we allow that more than one religion can be true in important respects. Some people may think we are claiming all religions are equally good, or else that no single religion can be the best of those available. No Christian should claim either of those things.

To clarify these ideas a bit more, imagine you actually had a map and a guidebook furnished by the founder, planner, builder and ruler of an area, one who also demonstrably has taken great pains to communicate with you as truthfully and helpfully as possible.

You'd be very glad to have such instructions. You would have good grounds to consider them the best available. You would even want to share them with everyone you care about.

That's what Christians do when we preach the gospel. We say, “We are so thankful to have been given The Directions by The Maker. And they're free!

Come get them!”

If we can sound like this, instead of like, “We alone are right, you stupid, sinful Canadians” – or the other extreme: “We have our opinion and you have yours. Let's just get along” – we'll likely see more people pay attention to our Good News.

And, we pray, they'll even want to meet the Map-maker himself. **FT**

Christianity obviously has a lot in common with both Judaism and Islam – we can't ignore that.

JOHN STACKHOUSE teaches at Regent College, Vancouver, and is the author of *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford, 2006).


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