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To Connect, Equip and Inform Evangelical Christians in Canada

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012



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Losing and Keeping the Faith

A new study shows how we can make a difference for our youth.

As a teenager I may have been in the pew each week, but my mind and heart were often elsewhere – even though I had given my life to Jesus at the age of nine.

If I were a teen today, perhaps I would be leaving the church – but back then it wasn't that easy. In the 1950s people stayed within the structured church as if there were no way out. Everybody seemed to follow the rules. Women could work, but when they married were still expected to stay home – with children or no children.

Then it all changed. In the 1960s many threw church out with the other bath water. We wanted to tackle some of the biggest problems in our society, and church didn't seem part of the solution. We were going to make a difference.

Oh, there were many prominent people who had a strong faith, but they often didn't connect their faith with taking action for change.

That's why I find hope in our cover story "Why They're Leaving." It demonstrates how some churches are making a difference for young people today, and how we can do better.

Karen Stiller interviews key people involved with an important research project surveying Canadian youth aged 18-34. The results are very interesting. Only one in ten respondents raised in Catholic and mainline traditions re-

ported they still attend worship at least weekly – compared to four in ten raised in evangelical traditions.

Yes, young people are leaving Canadian churches. We may feel some relief that evangelical churches aren't doing as badly as some others, but really the report challenges us to make the changes needed to stop *any* hemorrhaging of young people and their faith.

It shows the significance of transition points in young people's lives – times when they are very vulnerable. In those critical times it suggests "engaged parents, experiences of God, vibrant community and empowering teaching and beliefs" can help them through these transitions.

Clearly, this is a challenge for our churches and our own families. May it

help us prayerfully hear more from God and obey.

Faith Today recently began to make all our issues since 2008 available online for free. The next time you are online, please stop by www.faithtoday.ca/digital, browse, and share one of the articles with your friends by email or Facebook – especially your teen and young adult friends. **FT**

Our cover story demonstrates how some churches are making a difference for young people today, and how we can do better.

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

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Changing Is Difficult

Re: Activate (Jul/Aug 2012)

I am deeply concerned for people who have become addicted to the gay lifestyle. Homosexuals are victims of

our permissive lifestyle, not villains. If we firmly believed what God said, we would be more concerned with what our children are fantasizing about early in life, and point them away as

we would from any other kind of danger. I was spared [from the gay lifestyle in part through family support and 10 years of participation in a single parents' group], even though I had temptations and could easily have become hooked by the power of suggestion.

I find the lack of moral suasion in many of our churches to be pathetic, leaving our children without a strong moral compass. It is very dif-

icult to kick an addiction, but with God's help it can be done. I got hooked on the valium my psych-

iatrist gave me for depression after my wife died in a car accident. I was on it too long, but with God's help I got free, married my second wife, and we celebrated 34 years in May. [Many people may not agree with the comparison between addiction and a homosexual lifestyle, but] I have published



Letters to the editor

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Milestones

APPOINTED

John Denbok as executive director of SIM Canada. He was formerly president of Partners Worldwide Canada. SIM (Serving In Mission, originally Soudan Interior Mission) includes nearly 2,000 missionaries in 70 countries, including a growing number of missionaries serving in Canada. Denbok, who also serves on the board of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, succeeds Gregg Bryce at SIM.

music theory program. She succeeds Gerald Gerbrandt. CMU has 1,700 students and offers undergraduate degrees in arts, business, humanities, music, sciences and social sciences, as well as two graduate degrees.

Marcel deRegt of Hamilton, Ont., as executive director of Canadian Christian Education Foundation, which funds the development of Christian learning materials, teachers' guides, educational research, scholarships and awareness campaigns about Christian education. He succeeds Barbara Ferrier of Guelph, Ont., director since 2008.

Stephanie J. Ling as chancellor of Tyndale University College & Seminary in Toronto, a position tasked with strengthening relations between Tyndale's external and internal communities. She holds a doctorate in educational administration and leadership from the University of Toronto, has taught and built up the Children's Primary Centre and Cornerstone Montessori Prep Schools in Toronto, chaired the board of governors for Knox College at the University of Toronto, and is currently on the senate at York University as well as the board of Toronto Schools of Theology.



T.V. Thomas

at Wheaton College. EAN is a catalytic coalition of nearly 80 Christian ministries, denominations and churches in the USA and Canada, focused on reaching diaspora peoples for Christ. He also continues as multicultural/intercultural ministries consultant to The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada.

Geoff Bellew of Waterloo, Ont., as board chair of FaithLife Financial, a Christian not-for-profit financial services organization that provides insurance and investment solutions to 33,000 members in Canada. He has been vice-chair since 2006. His career has included senior executive positions at Scotiabank, Manulife, ING, Aegon and Dspfactory. He also served as president and CEO at Southbridge, an investment management firm guiding the assets of the Bridgeway Foundation.

RESIGNED

Wendy Fletcher as principal and dean of Vancouver School of Theology, effective December 2012. Rev. Dr. Fletcher has served at the school since 2000 and will return as professor of the history of Christianity. A search committee was seeking her successor at press time.



Shawn Branch

Shawn Branch as national director of Threshold Ministries, effective Oct. 1, 2012. This evangelistic ministry, headquartered in Saint John, N.B., and formerly known as the

Church Army, has been headed by Bruce Smith for 16 years. Smith, now based in Toronto, becomes ambassador-at-large. Threshold has Anglican roots but partners interdenominationally across the country in many forms of local outreach, including social service, chaplaincy and ministry training. It has autonomous counterparts in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica and East Africa.

Cheryl Pauls as president of Winnipeg's Canadian Mennonite University, effective Nov. 1, 2012. She previously worked as a professor in the university's piano and

ELECTED

T.V. Thomas of Regina to a three-year term as chair of Ethnic America Network (EAN) of the Billy Graham Center

a book called *It Could Help a Young Man to Know* (Essence, 2011) which explains many of these ideas.

Donald W. Dolson
Toronto, Ont.

Free Online Versions

Re: May 2012 decision to offer all issues at faithtoday.ca/digital for free

A great move forward. It will pay off!

Richard Long
Ottawa, Ont.

Please keep addressing all core Bible doctrines and false ideas, raising awareness to the larger body of Christ. This is a much-needed work.

Timothy Temilola
Ibadan, Nigeria

faithbook

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Climbers Raise Funds to Reduce Human Trafficking



The path down from Uhuru Peak. Inset: Ramona Gliege says that it felt like God took her up Mount Kilimanjaro.

PHOTOS: CHERYL WEBER

How do you tackle a mountain of a problem? One step at a time. Human trafficking represents an enormous ongoing injustice in our world. According to the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, traffickers in 2008 made \$31 billion buying and selling other human beings (the majority women

and children). Only about half of one percent of that dollar figure was spent by the global community the

same year to combat the problem. To change that imbalanced equation, 47 women from 10 countries – including five Canadians – raised funds in January by trekking to the top of the highest mountain in Africa as part of Operation Mobilization’s “Freedom Climb.”

The grueling, often dangerous six-day

hike of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania was the first such event organized by Operation Mobilization to raise funds and awareness for oppressed and enslaved women and children. The climbers, who ranged from 18 to 73, were each required to raise a minimum of \$10,000 over and above personal expenses.

Cheryl Weber, producer and co-host of *Full Circle* (a daily Canadian talk show that airs on CTS TV), was part of the media team that documented the climb. By the

Consortium Prepares Students for Cross-Cultural Ministry

Lee Goodman of Calgary believed he pretty much understood missions when he signed up for cross-cultural training with Cross Training Global. But now he admits, “I came into it with a little too much confidence.”

Goodman had experience as a youth pastor, was working at a ministry to poor and homeless people and was taking Intercultural Studies at Rocky Mountain College. So he didn’t expect to learn radically new concepts.

For the first four months students in the program take modular courses on urban realities and global ministry – subjects

Goodman already knew well. They also intern at an ethno-specific congregation in Calgary. His time with a Punjabi congregation reminded him to value community over efficiency.

Working in a different language was challenging but prepared Goodman for the second half of the program, an internship with Word Made Flesh in Calcutta, India. That’s when he realized he still had a lot to learn.

Calcutta revealed new truths: the realities of sexual exploitation, disease, poverty – and, Goodman says, his own selfishness as well. Children clung to him throughout the day,

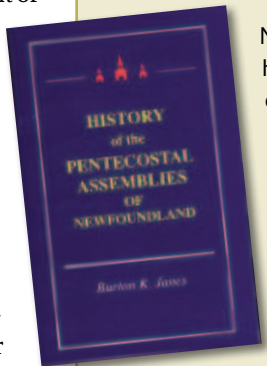
second day, she was experiencing altitude sickness. "I stayed sick the whole time," she says. "Dizziness, constant nausea, no strength at all, headache every day. Every morning I woke up with my lips all swelled up. I actually wondered if I was going to have a heart attack."

While two women were carried off the mountain on stretchers, 90 per cent of the team – including Weber – made it all the way to the top. The highest point of the mountain is called Uhuru Peak, which translates from Swahili as "Freedom Peak."

Ramona Gliege, 53, from Fernie, B.C., says she was an "empty nester" looking for an opportunity to become involved in missions when she heard about the climb and decided to participate. "I felt like God took me up that mountain," she says, adding the experience taught her "when you put your mind to something, and God's in it, it's going to succeed."

Tina Yeager, director of the Freedom Climb, says trekking up Kilimanjaro was the first such effort, but it won't be the last. A training climb is being held in Colorado Springs in September, and plans are to scale Mount Everest in April 2013. "There are 28 specific projects [that the funds raised will be supporting]," says Yeager. "They all have to do with oppression, exploitation or human trafficking."

"It really felt like a life or death battle," admits Weber. "But it was the experience of a lifetime. The women we were advocating for were never far from our thoughts. All I had to do was suffer for six days. Some of these [trafficked] women suffer for a lifetime." **FT** –Patricia Paddey



Congregational Histories Document "Warts and Foibles" in Newfoundland



Newfoundland writer, editor and journalist Burton K. Janes believes people can learn much from the past. So he helps church congregations preserve theirs by documenting their congregational histories in written form.

Having a written history is, he believes, "an ideal way for individual congregations to preserve their history for future generations so our descendants can see exactly how God moved in the past."

An ordained minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador (PAONL), Janes has written six histories to date and is working on a seventh, each one focused on a different Pentecostal church in his home province. The six histories and their years of publication are *From Hinder's Hall to Emmanuel (Deer Lake)* 1996; *Reflections From Ship Cove Pond to the Harbour Hills (Port de Grave)* 2000; *The Ancient Landmarks of Happy Cove and the Faithful Seven (Birchy Bay)* 2001; *The Jug in the Window (Springdale)* 2003; *From the Cottage to the Tabernacle (Embree)* 2006; and most recently, *A Journey of Faith and Grace (Elim Pentecostal Tabernacle, St. John's)* 2010.

Author also of the *History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland* (Good Tidings Press, 1996), Janes says all of the churches that today make up the PAONL evolved from the Bethesda Mission, which was established in 1911 by Alice B. Garrigus. An American, Garrigus arrived in Newfoundland a year earlier with the goal of preaching the gospel.

Janes hopes to branch out in future, writing about churches of other denominations – or of no denominational affiliation – in other regions of Canada. Each congregational history takes months – sometimes years – of work, and begins with a week-long visit to the town in which the church is located. There he launches into a process of intensive research that includes interviews and poring over church records.

Janes says he strives for truth, accuracy and authenticity in his church portraits, and isn't afraid to include "warts and foibles" to show how "God uses weak vessels to accomplish His purpose. The overriding thing I have learned is that congregations – and the Church in general – are made up of forgiven people, not perfect people," he says. "I write my histories as accurately as possible, even to the point of including controversies that may have developed." **FT**

–Patricia Paddey

but he would grumble at night when his fan cut out, leaving him sweating in the heat. He says his character grew and he returned to ministry among the poor in Calgary with a renewed sense of how the Kingdom of God includes an end to injustice.

Character transformation is one of the main goals of Cross Training Global, a consortium of churches, academic institutions and mission agencies collaborating to equip Canadian Christians for ministry in a cross-cultural context.

Since 2004 the program has operated from Calgary, but this fall it will relocate to The Peoples Church Toronto. Marrian Geddert, who served as a director since 2005 with her husband Len, says this move will allow for partnerships with more mission agencies.

The program's experiential learning uniquely prepares students for cross-cultural ministry. Many, like Goodman, attend as part of their Bible college or seminary studies. Internships at local ethnic churches provide some of the cultural training necessary for when students work overseas with an organization of their choosing.

Many students return to ministry in Canada. Others, like recent alumna and Prairie Bible Institute student Kristen Penner, 22, hope to work overseas. The passion and experience of her teachers inspired her. "It's cool to know that one day I could be telling those kinds of stories too," she says. **FT**

–Meagan Gillmore



PHOTO: ROBERT WHITE/QUAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Creative Arts Conference Grows

Central Community Church pastor Bill Markham during the closing worship session.

A 100 per cent increase in attendance from last year's Create Conference, an Ontario event encouraging excellence in video, design and communication, has co-ordinator Adam Fry "really excited about where this is going."

Fry is creative communications dir-

ector at a St. Catharines, Ont., Pentecostal congregation, Central Community Church, and he explains that the conference itself grew from the growth of the church. In the past decade the now multi-campus church has expanded from an average Sunday morning attendance of

400 to 1,700 in three sites in St. Catharines and one in Niagara Falls.

"Churches were calling us, saying, 'What are you doing?' 'How are you doing it?' 'Can we learn?' 'Can we see?' There was nothing in Canada for the creative church, the creative mind," says Fry.



Website Matches Retirees With Mission Opportunities

of spreading the gospel well.

Tony Vanderlaan, co-ordinator of customer service for Finishers Project Canada, says this cohort is invaluable to mission work because they bring skills along with the maturity gained over the course of careers in the workplace. Their diversity of talents offers mission agencies flexibility in placing them in roles.

"The new web program is like the eHarmony of missions," says Vanderlaan. "People can find opportunities that are matches for them as callings."

Robert Cousins is director of Tyndale College and Seminary's Intercultural Missions Centre and is also pleased by the new program. "Finishers are a target

group for long-standing mission [organizations] like SIM [Serving In Mission] and Wycliffe Bible Translators, because they are already so knowledgeable," says Cousins.

"The finishers are a group that will make a real difference to missions as people retire early, still have years of good health and are prepared to make the commitment to missions."

Cousins also notes many mission agencies ask their workers to retire at 65. To never return to their mission field – where they have spent the greater part of their lives – is difficult for some career missionaries to do. Cousins says retired career missionaries make excellent

Seniors and retirees can now match their skills with long- and short-term mission opportunities more easily than ever through a new program on the Finishers Project website (finishersproject.ca).

Since mid-2011 the website has been matching approximately 10 to 15 people each month with opportunities to serve. The target group are the 55+ group of retired Canadians who want to finish what the Apostle Paul writes is the race

The conference exists, as its website explains, to “inspire, encourage and equip Canadian church leaders in the area of creative communications: arts, design,

video, social web and leadership.”

With approval from the church’s staff and board, plus a helping hand from an organizer of a similar American conference held in Dallas, Create was born last year (createconference.ca). With about a hundred registrants, “a bit lower than we were expecting,” the first

conference cost the church about \$10,000. “The board saw it as an investment,” says Fry. “When we started talking about doing one in 2012, the loss didn’t deter it.”

This year’s Create, held June 4 to 6, brought in more than 180 preregistrations and enough walk-ins to push it over the 200 mark – excluding speakers, volunteers and conference staff.

Gary Molander opened the conference. He is author of *Pursuing Christ. Creating Art: Exploring Life at the Intersection of Faith and Creativity* (WestBow Press, 2011), a book that examines the intersec-

finishers and partners in leading short-term mission trips with local churches, because they can stay engaged in mission work and are already familiar with where they will be working.

Finisher’s Project Canada is committed to attracting Canadian retirees – 55 and older – who have not been previously engaged in longer-term mission pursuits. They may have worked with their local churches on short-term mission trips, but may be drawn now to mission opportunities that exist on other continents such as Europe, Africa, South America or Asia.

Affiliated with the EFC’s Global Roundtable on Missions, Finishers Project Canada is not a sending agency, but attracts potential applicants for mission work. The mission agencies themselves screen applicants. **FT** –Carol Lowes

tion of faith and art which, if #Create2012 tweets are any indication, has become a must-read among creative types in the Church.

The conference closed with the Skit Guys, a humorous duo (playwrights/actors Tommy Woodard and Eddie James) who create short videos that often help Christians laugh at themselves. The Skit

Guys reminded attendees they were God’s creation and were “created to create.”

Fry is already planning for Create 2013. “The growth says to us that we’re connecting with people and answering the questions people are asking,” says Fry. “We’re really excited about where this is going and the network being established.” **FT**

–Robert White

New Evangelism Outreach Coming to Canada

An outreach ministry that’s reached 10 million people in 58 countries during the past five years is coming to Canada next year.

My Hope, initially launched 10 years ago by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), has been successful in helping lead people to Christian faith in the developing world. According to BGEA, more than 2.7 million people made faith commitments in India in 2006, more than 340,000 in Brazil in 2008, and at least 168,000 in Malawi in 2010.

Its success in Spain and Portugal convinced the BGEA of Canada that My Hope could also be successful in a secular country like Canada.

“That was the selling point,” says David Macfarlane, BGEA of Canada director of national initiatives. Spanish church leaders, he adds, “were in tears at the end. They never thought it would work in Spain.”

Macfarlane says it is “totally relational evangelism” that makes My Hope successful. Christians will invite neighbors, co-workers, and friends into their homes for a meal or dessert where they’ll watch a TV broadcast or DVD featuring a message from either Billy or Franklin Graham.

The presentation will be tailored to a Canadian audience with testimonies from well-known, still-to-be-announced Canadians. At the end of the DVD, hosts will share their faith and invite those there to make a similar commitment.

Church groups can also use My Hope as an outreach, suggests Macfarlane. Available in nearly 30 languages, My Hope can also be used for cross-cultural outreach. “It’s never to be a bait and switch,” he says. “You’re inviting guests for a purpose – to listen to a spiritual talk by [Billy] Graham.”

With My Hope slated for a November 2013 launch, Macfarlane spent this spring explaining the outreach to leaders in eight communities from Halifax to Vancouver. Eventually My Hope staff will train pastors to run the project, who in turn will train church members to run My Hope events.

“It’s a win-win,” says Macfarlane. “Churches benefit from free evangelism and follow-up training, and it puts evangelism back on the front burner of local churches.” **FT**

–Robert White



Q & A With Ginette Howse

Rev. Ginette Howse is lead pastor at Malvern Christian Assembly in Toronto, where she has served in that role for seven years. She has been on staff since 1996. Ginette is married to Digby (32 years). They have two adult children, one grandson and one on the way.



PHOTO: MALVERN CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

What is your greatest joy in ministry?

To see and experience the transformation that takes place in people's lives through the power of His Word.

What has been your greatest struggle or frustration?

Finding the physical and mental strength to minister, administrate and lead while going through my own personal challenges. My other frustration has been the inactivity of some. Bill Hybels asks in one of his books on leadership, "Why a person would sit when he can soar, spectate when he could play, or atrophy when he can develop is beyond me." My thoughts exactly. Inactivity will not build anything. I am always looking for people ready to help, ready to work and ready to move forward. The Christian life is not for the faint-hearted, but for those who wait upon the Lord and renew their strength every day – then they will be strong and courageous and ready to fly!

What Bible passage do you connect with most right now?

Hebrews 4:12-13 and Psalm 119:105. I have encouraged our church to read through Psalm 119 during a time of intense study.

What is your greatest concern for the Canadian Church?

I have two areas. Complacency and believers satis-

fied with the status quo. And compromise when we water down the Word of God and tolerate sin.

What book is on your nightstand right now?

I have two books there. *The Fire of the Word: Meeting God on Holy Ground* by Chris Webb (InterVarsity Press, 2011) and *Axiom: Powerful Leadership Proverbs* by Bill Hybels (Zondervan, 2008).


What is your best advice for those entering ministry today?

Be humble, teachable and ready to work long hours.

If you could mobilize or equip the people in your church – or any Canadian church – to do one thing for the sake of the Gospel, what would it be?

To be baptized in the Holy Spirit and filled with His power every day, so they would have boldness to share their story and faith in Jesus Christ, just like Peter.

What do you look forward to next in your ministry?

To the vision God has given me for the next seven years with passion and excitement. That vision is for a major transformation of our community, growth and expansion in our church, and a greater impact in missions both at home and globally. 

Changing Canada and the World: Perspectives and Hopes From EFC Interns

By Jessica Corbeil and Chris Ramey,
interns at the EFC's Centre
for Faith and Public Life

We can look at the current condition of our neighbourhoods, cities, provinces, nation – our world – and wonder how we've reached the state we're in. Men, women and children are being bought and sold as commodities. Individuals are being persecuted for their faith. People are starving in nations whose governments are wealthy enough to feed them. And choices are made every day that prevent children from ever taking their first breaths.

It's easy to sit back and say, "Someone should do something about this." This summer provided us with the opportunity to "do something" by working with – and learning from – others who are.

Interning with the EFC in Ottawa enabled us to see God at work in Parliament, in the courts and in the hearts of both believers and non-believers. As a group, we attended Supreme Court of Canada hearings and criminal court proceedings. We also joined EFC staff as they provided expert testimony to parliamentary committees and hosted an informative "Breakfast on the Hill" event for MPs and Senators.

Chris notes, "These opportunities encouraged my faith in God's ability to do all things and inspired me with the hope that God can use His people to do good works."

When she was a new Christian, Jessica found that God began to reveal to her His heart for various social justice issues. Participating in this internship program as a law student felt like a natural outworking of that calling.

"God has commissioned Christians," she says, "to be the hands and feet of



(L-R) Intern Chris Ramey, intern Jessica Corbeil, CFPL administrative assistant Candace Maynard, CFPL policy analyst Julia Beazley and intern Nick Johnson at the Royal Assent Ceremony for Bill C-310, June 28, 2012 .

Christ and to take a stand for the things that break His heart. For me, this means using the skills and abilities He's given me in the area of public policy."

In her engagement with the EFC and its partners, Jessica witnessed how Christians have been successful at effecting positive change in Canada's political and legal system. "It was inspiring to be at the royal assent of Bill C-310, a bill passed by Parliament to enhance Canada's laws against human trafficking, standing alongside those who had worked so hard to see its success, including the EFC's own policy analyst Julia Beazley."

To witness the successes that stem from hard work and a reliance on God have taught Jessica how to further prepare herself to be an agent of change. She does not question God's presence or existence when she witnesses injustice. She knows He is in the midst of it because He is working through individuals like those at the EFC, along with others He has placed in positions of influence, to address the injustice and make a positive difference.

Chris is also greatly concerned by the

plight of the persecuted Church. He perceives persecution as just one example of a battle between right and wrong that takes place in nations around the world. He sees that "Public policy engagement is one means by which God can use Christians to ensure that justice is achieved and the innocent are protected."

This summer has given both of us the opportunity to "fight the good fight" when it comes to public policy and legal engagement. As students we can – and did – make a difference. And we hope to spend our lives serving God in this manner. **FT**

JESSICA CORBEIL is a second-year law student at the University of Ottawa. She's equipping herself to become a human rights lawyer to fight human trafficking and other forms of social injustice.

CHRIS RAMEY is a fourth-year political science student at the University of Ottawa who plans to study law with the goal of defending those who experience religious persecution. To learn more about EFC's internship program, visit theEFC.ca/internship.



Faith and Public Debate

Should faith-based arguments be excluded from public debates?

Should faith-based arguments be banned from the public square? A journalist recently posed this question to me. It's a good one. By "public square" he meant the places where citizens debate issues concerning the public good, including the media and our legislatures.

Some people do think faith-based arguments should be excluded from such debates. Their rejection is usually directed at the messenger rather than the message – they focus on whether churches should participate, rather than the specific arguments they make. If the State has no business in the bedrooms of the nation, they contend, then the Church has no business in the legislatures of the nation.

But of course such arguments ignore that the State does have an interest in what happens in the bedrooms – rape or incest for example. And they ignore the valuable contributions religious institutions have made to the deliberative process of a liberal democracy.

Is the public square a secular place, meaning that people wishing to contribute should enter as citizens and not as members of a specific religion or faith? The Canadian-born cleric Richard John Neuhaus regularly challenged this idea, most memorably in his book *The Naked Public Square* (Eerdmans, 1984). I agree with him that excluding faith-based arguments from public debate is a mistake.

Historically our Canadian "public square" was secular to the degree that we realized one denomination or church tradition could not prevail without alienating a significant part of the population. In Canada secular did not mean non-religious, but rather non-sectarian.

A key concern was for the religious minority: Protestants in Quebec and Catholics in the rest of Canada. So we guaranteed minority religious education in our Constitution. And our prime ministers, whether Catholic or Protestant, did not wear their denominational colours on their sleeves. To do so could hinder their ability to be seen to be non-sectarian.



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.

Admittedly there was resistance to including other religious traditions when looking for non-sectarian points of convergence. Jews and Seventh Day Adventists had many battles for accommodation regarding their day of religious observance, notably in areas of employment.

Jews joined Catholics and Protestants on the 1967 inter-faith committee for Canada's birthday celebration. Today of course, our idea of "multi-faith" is dramatically wider.

Being secular, as the Supreme Court affirmed in the 1980s after the Charter came into effect, means law must have a secular purpose, not a religious sectarian purpose. We could no longer have a Lord's Day Act to compel stores to be closed on Sunday, because this was sectarian and did not accommodate people of other faiths (Jews for example). We could still have a common pause day, but the purpose could not be sectarian.

In a non-sectarian Canada, faith-based arguments should be welcome. If the public square is truly public, it will not only allow but welcome religious groups and their contributions to civil society and the pursuit of the common good.

In fact, there will be no *common* good without their participation. As Justice Gonthier said (speaking for the rest of the Supreme Court): "[M]oral positions (whether secularly or religiously based) taken as positions of conscience are entitled to full participation in the dialogue in the public square where moral questions are answered as a matter of law and public policy."

Our EFC contributions to the courts and parliamentary committees are usually welcomed. However we do not simply state religious principles that apply to a given issue – we go the second mile and promote the application of the norms and principles derived from our faith and frame them in a way that relates well to the legislative or legal issue. We use language and arguments that could serve a non-sectarian solution.

In democratic processes, we should be at liberty to give voice to the religious grounding of our submissions and arguments without being ignored, dismissed or ridiculed. (Neither, of course, should we be dismissive of others. In fact Christians should model respectful and constructive engagement, as this too flows from our faith.)

We continually need to practise expressing scriptural principles in language able to be understood by, and even persuade, others. It's not only prudent, but it's a form of public witness. **FT**

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

Assisted Human Reproduction

In July the EFC issued an open letter to the federal ministers of justice and health about the need to ensure a national standard on the assisted reproduction of human life.

Since December 2010 there has been “a virtual open season,” explains EFC Vice-President Don Hutchinson, on aspects of human-animal genome experimentation and embryo importing, exporting, research and destruction.

It was then that a split decision by the Supreme Court of Canada struck down parts of the federal *Assisted Human Reproduction Act* and left regulation of the field in a state of confusion.

With its letter the EFC included a new report, *Recovering What Was Lost: Recapturing the Integrity of the Assisted Human Reproduction Act*.

“The EFC encourages Parliament to ensure absolute prohibitions, where appropriate, and then to again engage in national consultation with the provinces and territories,” says Hutchinson.

Details can be found at theEFC.ca/AHRArelease2012.

Pray for Persecuted Christians

November 4, 2012, is the suggested day for churches to observe the International Day of Prayer (IDOP) for the Persecuted Church, an event supported by the EFC and the World Evangelical Alliance. Each year Christians in over 130 countries stand in prayer with our 200 million persecuted sisters and brothers.

IDOP Canada is a partnership of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Open Doors With Brother Andrew, The Voice of the Martyrs (Canada), Intercede International and International Christian Response. It offers free resources, including short videos and liturgical materials, at idop.ca.

Human Trafficking

The EFC has played an important role in Canada’s recent progress in combatting human trafficking. EFC vice-president Don Hutchinson reflects on this contribution in his July 9 blog, “Combatting Human Trafficking in Canada: Champions, Trophies, Roses and the Shoulders of Others,” at theEFC.ca/ActivateCFPL.

Hutchinson and EFC Policy Analyst Julia Beazley were invited guests who recently attended the release of Canada’s new *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking*.

EFC staff and summer interns also attended the royal assent ceremony for *Bill C-310, an Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Human Trafficking)* on June 28, which extends human trafficking law to Canadians outside Canada. The EFC team also attended a Parliament Hill reception celebrating the occasion.

Did You Get the Newsletter?

What’s the easiest way to keep up with major news from the EFC? That depends on how often you want to receive it.

The EFC print newsletter *Canada Watch* is now avail-

able six times per year (previously four). There’s a simple sign-up form at theEFC.ca/canadawatch so you can be sure you don’t miss an issue!

On our homepage, theEFC.ca, you can also find links to a weekly email newsletter called the *EFC Update*.


There’s also links at theEFC.ca to our Facebook and Twitter feeds, which are often updated daily.

Those who have a mobile device can also get those feeds as part of the *Faith Today* app, available for free at faithtoday.ca.

Please join us in becoming better informed and praying for the latest needs across Canada.

World Evangelical Alliance

The EFC is a regional member of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), which serves a worldwide family of 650 million Christians. The organization, headed by Geoff Tunnicliffe of Delta, B.C., continues to grow, tackle difficult world issues and offer useful new resources. Here are some recent items available from the WEA and affiliated organizations at worldea.org.

- “Muslims, Christians, and Hope for a Peaceful Future,” an inspiring one-page reflection by Tunnicliffe.
- *The Jesus Agenda*, a new nine-week DVD course on poverty and the need for justice in dozens of nations including Nigeria, Norway, Hong Kong, Germany and the United Kingdom. Part of Micah Challenge’s wider plan to mobilize Christians to remind world politicians to keep their Millennium Development Goal promises made in 2000 to cut extreme poverty by half.
- *Racism*, a new book in the WEA Global Issues series. Argues racism is wrong theologically and that dividing humans into different races makes little sense biologically. Includes an essay on caste in India (authors: Thomas Schirrmacher and Richard Howell).
- “The Islamic View of Christians: Qur’an and Hadith,” an eight-page article on how Muslims view Christians and how Christian-Muslim relations have evolved (author: Christine Schirrmacher).
- *Sorrow and Blood: Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom*, a forthcoming book from the WEA Mission Commission edited by Bill Taylor, Antonia van der Meer and Reg Reimer (a Canadian who has served in Vietnam for many years).
- The International Institute for Religious Freedom journal. The most recent issue focuses on Religion and Civil Society and includes opinion pieces such as “The Key to Securing Religious Freedom in Post-Arab Spring Nations” and “A Response to the High Counts of Christian Martyrs per Year,” as well as essays on religious freedom in various countries. 

Events Near You

Is your ministry planning to host an event? To avoid duplication, check the EFC’s free Christian community calendar at theEFC.ca/calendar. You can also post your own event.

Why They're

An insightful **new report** from The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and several partner groups examines **why** and **when** Canadian young adults are **leaving, staying** and **returning** to church.

By **Karen Stiller**

Engagers



PHOTO: DESIGNPICTCS.COM

Sam Grottenberg is a 21-year-old Canadian male who lives in Calgary and loves Jesus and His Church. Grottenberg was raised by parents whom he describes as “dedicated Christ followers.” They prayed and read the Bible with him, and Grottenberg clearly remembers talking about spiritual things throughout the week, not just on Sunday morning.

“I could go to my dad, and my mom too, with theology and beliefs I was wrestling with. They supported me in trying to figure out what faith was for myself, and not dictating to me and saying ‘This is what you have to believe,’” he says. “There was the freedom to explore and understand Christ for myself.”

Growing up, Grottenberg’s church was an intergenerational experience – which he loved – complete with a mentor named Bill who “absolutely affirmed me and

walked with me through my early days of serving in the Church. He was always there to support me.” Grottenberg had what he calls “tangible experiences with God” throughout his teen years. “That really stuck with me, even when politics and crap happened in the church. That gave me something to hold onto,” he says.

Grottenberg’s regular participation in church life as a young adult and his ongoing openness to God make him an Engager – and a minority among his peers – according to *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults Are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church*, a new report commissioned by the EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable and sponsored by the EFC, Great Commission Foundation, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada, Stronger Together 2011 and Youth for Christ Canada.

The research project – the first of its kind in Canada –

Fence Sitters



surveyed Canadian youth aged 18 to 34, investigating their spiritual lives as children, teens and young adults, and their subsequent church attendance patterns.

Engagers like Grottenberg generally still attend church and feel positive about it. Six out of 10 Engagers affiliate with an evangelical tradition. Engagers are the most positive about the churches they know, but the other three spiritual types identified in the project – Fence Sitters, Wanderers or Rejecters – are negative (see sidebar by Rick Hiemstra for more insight into these four spiritual types).

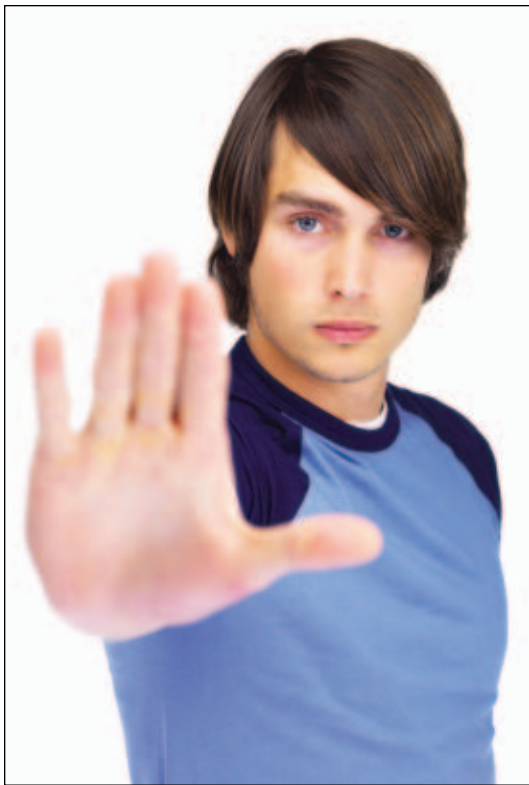
The research project consisted of three phases: a literature review of existing academic research on this topic, much of it American; interviews with 72 young adults from across the country that helped shape subsequent survey questions; and then the survey itself conducted by Angus Reid Forum, an on-line research panel that facilitated 2,049 survey respondents in June 2011.

“This has been a long time coming,” says Grottenberg, who was not a participant in the survey. “I’m glad there’s finally a voice to what I’ve seen happening to my peers and my age demographic in the Church. The report is an affirmation

Wanderers



Rejecters



to me of what I’ve been observing.”

And what Grottenberg has been observing is many youth leaving Canadian

churches and not coming back anytime soon.

Hemorrhaging Faith reports that “By young adulthood only one in 10 respondents raised in Catholic and main-line traditions reported attending religious services at least weekly – compared to four in 10 raised in Evangelical traditions.”

The report, available at hemorrhagingfaith.com, carefully takes more than a hundred pages to dissect the survey and responses in detail, quote respondents (anonymously),

Leaving



PHOTO: JOELLE DUBBER

Engagers like Sam Grottenberg generally still attend church and feel positive about it.

and provide some evaluation and responses to the why and when of those who leave, stay and return.

Exit Interviews

“There is a wonderful gift in this report,” observes Aileen Van Ginkel, vice-president, ministry services for the EFC. “It’s actually like exit interviews. By listening to those who are leaving, you have a huge opportunity to find out why.”

John Wilkinson is chair of the EFC’s Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable, and executive director of Youth Unlimited (Toronto YFC). “For those of us who are close to what is going on in youth ministry across Canada, the research findings are not so much surprising as they are confirming,” says Wilkinson. “Many who have grown up in church are no longer regularly attending by the time they reach their adult years. We have heard their stories but now this research validates their actual departure. More importantly, it provides a glimpse behind the curtain as to why and the challenge that needs to be addressed. We should not take the findings lightly.”

James Penner is co-author of *Hemorrhaging Faith*, a youth specialist and co-founder of research firm James Penner and Associates. For him the report is “a call for

mainline churches to take more seriously the young adults within their midst and ask the question, ‘What does it mean to hear them even if it changes some long-held structures?’ That’s a creative and important conversation that mainline churches may have to start more than others,” he says. “And evangelical churches need to ask themselves, ‘What happens at the transition points for youth when you have these fabulous programs and para-church ministries that start and stop?’ ”

The significance of transition points – those pivotal moments that change a youth’s life because of changing circumstances in their home life or church, and/or significant birthdays that move them from one age group and one church program to another (or none at all) – may be one of the most startling insights provided by *Hemorrhaging Faith*.

Bruno Désorcy, a Montreal-based cultural sociologist who oversaw the francophone portion of the project, wants to highlight “one thing that was very important and true for all of Canada, but especially Québec. The moment the young adults grew from children to young teenagers, or teenagers to young adults – that is where we lost them most of the time. Transition times are critical.”

Reg Bibby is a sociologist in Lethbridge, Alta., and author of books such as *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Novalis, 2004 [2002]). He was not involved in the research and writing of *Hemorrhaging Faith*, but read it at *Faith Today*’s request as a veteran of Canadian religion surveys on religion. The importance of transition points caught his attention as new information as well. “The fact that when we are looking at decline, the decline between childhood and teen is greater than the subsequent teen to young adult drop-off is significant. That blows a stereotype right there,” says Bibby.

Transitions that open the exit doors of the Church for youth aren’t just about birthdays, says Rick Hiemstra, director of research and media relations for the EFC. “The report showed something very important – that transitions are not just when youth go off to college, but transitions are also what they experience going on around them in the church, like when a youth pastor leaves and church just isn’t church anymore to them, so they stop going.”

In many cases, says Hiemstra, churches and parents do not handle transitions well. “We lose more kids transitioning between Sunday school and youth programs than from teenagers to young adult status, sometimes



Hemorrhaging Faith is a research report commissioned by the EFC and several partners.

because that is when parents give them the freedom to choose whether or not they go to church," says Hiemstra.

"They've never been in the service, we've spent years teaching them that there is nothing going on of interest to them upstairs during the service, then they age out of Sunday school, so why would they be suddenly interested in what we are doing?" he asks.

"Young adults experience culture shock, and anyone who experiences culture shock just wants to go home. The very basic reason you come to church on Sunday is to say thank you to God for your salvation, but the fundamental reason most youth come is because Mom is dragging you."

Dragging you to a place that, especially for the Wanderers and Rejecters types, simply does not seem worth attending.

"When I look at their patterns of staying, leaving and returning, the findings are the same as we're finding for the population as a whole," Bibby says. "It's relational links and the involvement that touches family life and their own life. Those relational links are so critically



The data suggests a greater decline in the early teens than in the early 20s. "That blows a stereotype right there," says Reg Bibby.

important, at the end of the day my overarching interpretation is that this whole question of who will stay and who will go depends on people being able to define their involvement as worthwhile. If they can find worthwhile ministry, they will be involved. If they can't, no one will."

Hemorrhaging Faith identifies four major reasons why youth find their church worthwhile and stay in or return



PHOTO: DESIGNPICS.COM

The View From Quebec

By Bruno Désorcy

One thing that really struck me when I was doing interviews for the *Hemorrhaging Faith* project was how we need to teach children from the very beginning to think Christianly, not to learn lessons by rote. That is one thing the Church needs to

learn, that the adults need to learn also.

Thinking Christianly might mean admitting we don't have the answer. It's pretentious to think we have all the answers. Personally, and mostly through the interviews I conducted in Québec, I learned we need to make space for different kinds of spiritual expression in the Church – sometimes going to church on Sunday morning is not the answer for teens who want to follow Christ. It may be something like a youth group or a small group for young adults. We're talking about entry points.

Young adults, although they may have been raised in evangelical or Roman Catholic churches, are generally biblically illiterate, especially in Québec. You can ask them

who spent three days in the big fish, and they will answer "Pinocchio." Many parents in Québec and beyond have totally cut their relationship with not only the Church, but with everything religious.

There is hope, but only if we do not try to "play church." We need to distinguish between tradition and traditionalism. Traditions are good because they leave us with a sense of belonging. Traditionalism is unhealthy because it doesn't leave room for other spiritual expressions of following Christ. We need to make a clear distinction between those two.

Evangelicals are very good at proclaiming the message, but the problem comes when we get to the meaning. The meaning is the life beyond the message. This raises the question of the theology of incarnation. How do we embody the message for young adults? Sunday morning worship is not enough. We need to get into solid relationships of discipleship with them. That's what happened to me 30 years ago. Someone had the courage to invest time, money, heart and mind in my life. And that story is about incarnation. **FT**

BRUNO DÉSORCY is a Montreal-based cultural sociologist who oversaw the francophone portion of the *Hemorrhaging Faith* research project.



“Parents probably don’t feel they are influential, but in long-term stability of spiritual centredness, the family is actually more important than the Church,” says Don Posterski.

to it. These “drivers” to church involvement are spiritually engaged parents, experiences of God, vibrant community, and empowering teaching and beliefs. Each driver has an evil twin, of course. A “barrier” identified as a factor that keeps youth away. They are spiritually disengaged parents, lack of experiences of God, stagnant community, and restrictive teaching and beliefs.

Parents Outweigh Church

“Parents probably don’t feel they are influential, but in long-term stability of spiritual centredness, the family is actually more important than the Church,” says Don Posterski, author, researcher, cultural strategist and consultant for *Hemorrhaging Faith*.

“If you look at the barriers and drivers, the power of modelling, the consistency of

life and the transmission of values, there’s no greater predictor for spiritual perseverance than the family you are brought up in. The Church probably needs to spend some

time thinking about how they can assist parents in the nurturing of kids and some dimension of spiritual formation.”

In fact, the survey respondents who fit in the Engaged category reported growing up with parents who modelled their faith authentically, engaging in practices for their own spiritual growth that their children witnessed. They watched their parents pray, read the Bible, and grapple with their own spiritual lives in an open and transparent way.

Parents of Engaged young adults also dialogued about matters of faith with their children. According to the report there were frequent “instances where parents deliberately pass on their faith. Contrary to common belief, this usually doesn’t look like lecturing. The most effective faith instruction takes place organically.”

“When it comes to the faith commitment of parents,” John Wilkinson says, “it is hugely important that their children observe their faith as a lifestyle throughout the week if it is to make a statement about its vibrancy and authenticity. They are very quick to recognize a faith that lacks depth and true meaning and fast to distance themselves from it.”

That finding resonated with John McAuley, executive coach at The Leadership Studio at Muskoka Woods and

The Four Spiritual Types

By Rick Hiemstra

The *Hemorrhaging Faith* online survey in June 2011 included 2,049 respondents. Based on their answers, they can be divided into four different groups.

Engagers (23%) Church is good



PHOTO: DESIGNPICS.COM

Most young adults who are in church on Sunday are Engagers. Almost all Engagers report having experienced God’s love and answers to prayer. They are more likely to be female than male. Engagers generally report having opportunities to serve and lead in their local church and having attended Christian camps and mission trips. Engagers are the most likely to have a parent born outside Canada. Their parents are most likely to have consistently lived out their faith at home and in a church context.

Only a minority of Fence Sitters

attend church on a regular basis, but their attitudes toward church are still somewhat positive. Many have made life choices that conflict with the moral teaching of the church. They are likely to report having experienced God’s love and answers to prayer, but also think it would be hypocritical for them to attend church. Most feel their church makes a positive difference in their community, but is not as accepting of people as it should be. They don’t read their Bibles regularly, but many still pray. Their parents have likely been inconsistent in their patterns of church attendance and practice of spiritual disciplines. They may still want church, but on their own terms.

Fence Sitters (36%) Could I have church on these terms?

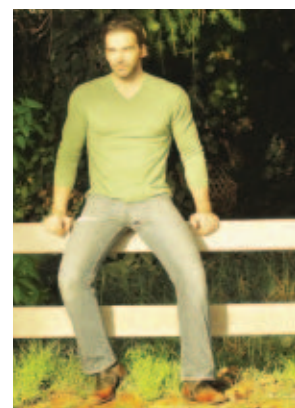


PHOTO: GLOWIMAGES.COM

part of the *Hemorrhaging Faith* project team. He remembers walking in on his own dad, head bowed, Bible open on his lap. “I stood there at the door and looked at him, and I remember having this epiphany that this was real for my dad. This was really real.”

McAuley remembers the experience as powerful, and the memory was reassuring as he moved into his own parenting years. “We might really beat ourselves up as parents because we’ve been given this paradigm of what it means to lead family devotions, but we’ve also been given this beautiful paradigm of the overflow of your life from Deuteronomy, that we teach

our kids as we walk along. When parents read that they need to be engaged, it doesn’t have to be this big thing,” says McAuley. “It’s as you walk along the road.”

Authenticity comes up again and again in the *Hemorrhaging Faith* research, within the home but also inside the church doors. “We need to be a church that creates a place that admits we haven’t arrived yet ourselves,” says McAuley.

“We’re not finished, we’re not there yet. If we just confess that, young people will say, ‘I can actually still belong there.’”

And even though youth who leave the Church and stay away frequently cited what they perceive to be the Church’s disapproval and negative treatment of the gay community (file that under Restrictive Teachings and Beliefs), there is a sense among the researchers this issue does not necessarily need to be a deal breaker.

Looking at the four categories, “from Engagers to Fence Sitters to Wanderers to Rejecters, the last three think churches should solemnize gay and les-

bian marriages in the same way they solemnize heterosexual ones,” explains James Penner.

“For the Engagers, it’s a minority that supports this position, so this definitely is a key issue. The perception of the vast majority of young adults is that we have handled this issue very badly as a Christian Church.”

But there is a sense in the millennial generation, ac-

“**Fence Sitters, Wanderers and Rejecters think churches should solemnize gay and lesbian marriages in the same way they solemnize heterosexual ones.**”

Wanderers have left the church building, but have not yet shaken the dust off their feet. Their parents are likely to have stopped attending church, thus bringing their own attendance to a halt. They find church

moral teaching incompatible with their lifestyles and almost never attend. Wanderers think church has a positive role to play in society, just not in their lives. Prayer and Bible reading are almost completely absent from their lives. Those who hold onto their childhood religious identity usually do it for their families – the rest are likely

**Wanderers (26%)
Church is not for me**



PHOTO: DESIGNPICS.COM

to have written off organized religion. Wanderers, like most young adults raised as Christians, do not join other faiths.

Rejecters almost never darken the door of a church anymore. While they report having been raised Christian, half now say they are atheist and almost all have cut ties with organized religion. They are more likely to be male than female, and report no experience of God’s love or answers to prayer. Rejecters didn’t have opportunities to use their gifts in church or to be involved in leadership. They are cynical about the motivations of Christians, reject Christian moral teachings, and find the Church judgemental and unaccepting. The parents of most Rejecters never consistently lived out their Christian faith before their children. For Rejecters the Church is out of touch, and attendance is pointless. **FT**

**Rejecters (15%)
Church is bad**

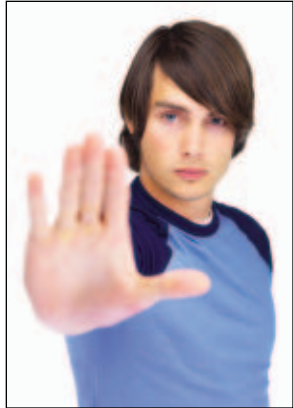


PHOTO: DESIGNPICS.COM

RICK HIEMSTRA is director of research and media relations at The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

Tips for Engaging Young People

By Jeremy Postal

It's hardly a surprise to most churchgoers to hear young adults are bailing out of church in concerning numbers. This elusive group of formerly or soon-to-be formerly churching young people are characterized as wandering, curious, technologically savvy and somewhat tired of the Church. Despite our best efforts to serve them great coffee, simulate community and use clever marketing hooks to catch their attention, Jesus and His Church don't seem to be a top priority for many.

The tumultuous years between finishing high school and graduating university are vital years for the Church to engage in the life of young people. Here are ten areas of engagement which will help churches – clergy and laity together – hold onto this generation – and even call it back.

- 1. Engage Scripture.** The active and systematic exploration of Scripture promotes Jesus, His Kingdom and its values. Young adults given the opportunity to dialogue with Scripture themselves find the meta-story of Scripture attractive. Careful teaching and understanding are crucial.
- 2. Engage Mission.** Engaging with real mission promotes a faith outside the church in and among the realities of work, campus and relational life. For many, this is where a skeletal faith takes on flesh.
- 3. Engage Authentically.** Authenticity promotes depth, trust and credibility with young people beyond the superficial. This means we must invite them into our lives – and not just for a moment! This generation values authenticity and transparency over the Photoshopped and finely tuned smoke and mirrors we like to provide them in the name of relevancy. Real relevancy is found in the muck of real life.
- 4. Engage Longevity.** In a culture of change and transition, longevity promotes consistency, stability and familiarity in young people's lives. Longevity serves to help orient wanderers and is one of the few constants within their shifting worlds. Serving the next generation in ministry is a long-haul project.
- 5. Engage the Issues.** Dealing with taboo and morally grey issues is important. Topics continually discussed in coffee shops and pubs revolve around sex, wealth, justice, power, alcohol, marijuana and political movements like the Montreal student protests. Engage by offering a biblical narrative and a grace-based perspective. We all need help with these topics, but young adults especially.
- 6. Engage Multi-generationally.** The treasure of multigenerational ministry is felt most strongly by our next generations. Engaging young people in the lives of those younger and older promotes biblical mentorship models and encourages a unity found in the diversity of our local churches.
- 7. Engage Short-Term Projects.** Short-term projects promote hands-on service without the big scary C-word – commitment. Show young adults a cause and invite them into a one-off volunteer or service experience, and you'll help craft memories, relationships and future commitments.
- 8. Engage Young Leaders.** When young leaders serve in key positions of church authority and responsibility, we promote "church ownership" and offer a great visual demonstration for other young people considering their own role and identity within a church. Churches which have significant influence in the lives of young people often put youth first in their budget, resource, personnel, communication and ministry practices. Simply, when young people lead, young people will follow.
- 9. Engage Story.** When we tell stories, it promotes more stories being told, many of which will surprise and shock you. We must tell better stories! Three true stories I constantly tell young adults are (1) stories about myself and the Church, stories they already know but never thought I'd admit to, (2) stories about them they never suspected I'd know and (3) stories of God.
- 10. Engage Simple Living.** Churches that promote spiritual practices like Sabbath, hospitality and generosity are places where young adults enjoy interacting. Simple living encourages a slower, more rhythmic pace to life. There is a reason Zen marketing works among young people – they don't want to live the overworked and over-cluttered life of their parents. Slow down your church calendar and watch as more young adults engage with you. 

JEREMY POSTAL has spent more than a decade working primarily with a lost and wandering crowd of 20 somethings. He is based in Whistler, B.C., and writes regularly at jeremypostal.com.



Rachael Harder: The first message we want to send to young people is that they belong.

According to Penner, that there is a way through this issue – and others like it. Although these are thorny paths, we can still allow people to have different perspectives and still belong to a Christian community.

For Rachael Harder, co-author of *Hemorrhaging Faith* and part of Penner's research team, it would be helpful for the Church to consider the issue is perhaps less about someone's sexuality and more about identity.

"When we deny those that are same-gender attracted the right to act on their sexual orientation, they interpret our actions as rejection of them.

"We may think we're communicating disapproval of action only, but to the rising generation, what a person does and who a person is are interchangeable. Regardless of their sexual orientation, the first message we want to send to young people is that they belong. From there, we trust the Spirit of God to transform people into His likeness," says Harder.

"I would say to church leaders and parents, 'Let's not shy away from it, let's grapple with it, let's understand the underlying issues here – that it really is about identity.' And are we doing anything to speak a message louder than what the world speaks?"

Discomfort, says Harder, should not be our guide in dealing with this and other painful issues.

Grace must play a part in the conversation, says Bruno Désorcy. "We need to show grace every time, leave room for repentance, and pray for strength for people who are struggling."

A focus on who God is, how beautiful marriage was designed to be, and our own peculiar brokenness can also help take the sting out of what is perceived by young adults to be harsh judgement of others.

Majoring on Jesus

And remember, suggests Posterski, "to focus on the big issues of faith, and by

that we mean major on the majors, focus on the essence of faith rather than the endless expressions of church doctrine. Let's continue to champion the best, but let's also love the reality."

Let's talk about Jesus and not topics, adds John McAuley, who admits to being most intrigued by the million or so Fence Sitters in Canada (Penner's estimate).

"Those one million young people may not go to church, but they may come to camp," McAuley observes. In fact, Christian camp experience and short-term mission trips were a common part of the Engager identity.

"Bill Hybels has said for years that the Church is the hope of the world. I believe Christian camps are the hope of the Church," says McAuley. "Every church should have a strategy to get more kids to camp. And a lot more camps need to be creative places to invite people to belong. When we come at them, we are often asking them to surrender their own views, but

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if we can get them to encounter God in Christ, then they will surrender to love.”

Christian camp and mission trips are probably so significant because they lend themselves well to a direct and moving experience with God, which is something Engagers say they have had, and Rejecters say they have not.

Those dualities of experience, leading to dramatically different outcomes for young Canadian adults, characterize the entire report. “When we asked if the pastors could answer their toughest questions, for those who stayed, the majority

said ‘Yes.’ For those who left, the majority said ‘No,’ ” says Penner.

“That would speak to a role that someone in the congregation needs to play. It may not be the pastor. It can be informal – in fact, informal is probably better.”

Hemorrhaging Faith, says Penner, is “a wonderful invitation to do some analysis of one’s own congregation.” He does not expect anyone to be terribly surprised at what *Hemorrhaging Faith* reveals. “I think we know this to be true. Here’s what I think needs to happen. There doesn’t need to be a lot of talk about this as much as

there needs to be some silence. I would simply encourage congregations to prayerfully take the report to God and then out of listening there will come a wonderful sense of where to take it.”

Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults Are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church is available at hemorrhagingfaith.com. **FT**

KAREN STILLER is associate editor at *Faith Today*. She’s also a freelance writer based in Port Perry, Ont.

Love Movement Calls Youth to a Deeper Understanding of Love

By Carol Lowes

Ben Porter and Joel Gordon launched a charity in February to help teens and churches gain a more biblical understanding of love.

The Love Movement offers a video series called *Take Action* for small groups and is also preparing to launch a national TV series for Christian youth called *Love Is Moving*.

“Love is a lifestyle which the Church must live out, but it seems like many people do not understand fully what love is,” explains Porter, who works as a counsellor at the Gateway men’s shelter in downtown Toronto, a ministry of the Salvation Army.

Christian love is more than dropping off clothing or canned goods at a shelter. And it’s different from the kind of “selfish sexual feeling” that popular culture equates with love, he says.

“When you read the Bible and understand who God is and why He created us and why Christ died for us, you see that love involves deep, selfless action, always lifting the other above yourself in service and care.”

Donating to needy people is loving, but it’s not a full expression of love when donors don’t “have contact with the people they are trying to give love to,” says Porter.

To challenge Christians, especially teens, to deepen their understanding and practice of love, the group hopes to offer even more resources at lovemovement.org alongside their existing *Take Action* curriculum for schools, Christian clubs and church youth.

Porter and Gordon also visit schools and churches to talk about how God’s love differs from portrayals of love in the media and those that spring from human nature.

Porter is also busy writing a book called *The Search for*

Love about God’s message of love to humanity, and what churches can do to live out biblical teachings about love.

Co-founder Joel Gordon, a television producer, plans to begin filming the TV series *Love Is Moving* this winter, featuring youth using the Love Movement curriculum to embark on art projects and service initiatives in their communities. Churches are currently invited to contribute video recordings for the TV show, which will also include some in-studio discussion as well as showcase Christian artistic expression.

Porter and Gordon hope many churches will use their video materials as part of a series of evenings or discussion sessions about selfless biblical love and how churches can serve their communities better.

The Love Movement also is working on a documentary film which follows how God has been moving the ministry forward.

The documentary called *In Search of Love* started out as “a translation of Ben [Porter]’s research for his book to a visual form.” The research originally aimed to “show the lack of understanding of love among youth and how that plays out in relationships. And it evolved into a documentary chronicling the development and growth that we’ve experienced through the Love Movement” in its first year, says Gordon.

A lot has happened since February when the Love Movement had its Toronto launch event featuring guest speaker Josh McDowell, drawing 900 teens and young adults. Gordon and Porter are trusting God that there is a lot more to come. **FT**

CAROL LOWES is a freelance writer in Ajax, Ont.

WHY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING THE CHURCH?

A new ground-breaking report explains why and what you can do about it.

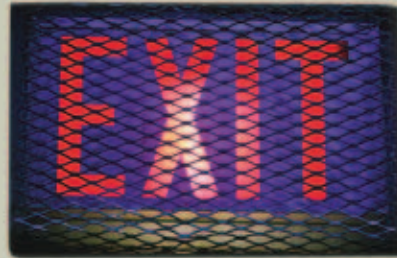
Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults Are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church is a new report commissioned by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable. It explains why some young people who have grown up in church are no longer engaged by the time they reach their adult years and why others are staying.

The report surveyed Canadian youth aged 18 to 34. Researchers investigated their spiritual lives as children, teens and young adults, and their subsequent church engagement patterns.



Visit

www.hemorrhagingfaith.com to download a copy of the report (\$15 when downloading for individual use; \$12 when downloading for group use plus \$3 for every copy made of the downloaded document).





A Visit to the World's Newest Country

Associate editor **Karen Stiller** was invited to see the life-changing work Canadians are doing to help in “a very, very difficult place” – **South Sudan.** *By Karen Stiller*

Even from 5,000 feet above, I could see I had it all wrong. The Yida Refugee Camp in South Sudan sprawled like a vast village below our Cessna aircraft – just 18 kilometres away from one of the newest international borders in the world dividing Sudan from South Sudan. I had not expected a refugee camp to look like a small and growing town, but in many ways that is exactly what it has become. A town by nobody's choice.

From the air it is a barren and brown landscape broken up by scattered trees and scrub brush – and now also by straw huts that serve as temporary homes to the 37 000+ (and growing daily) refugees who have made their way to this unlikely place of refuge. “It is a very, very difficult place,” says David Philips, country director, Samaritan's Purse, South Sudan. “But as bad as a refugee camp can be, it's not a war zone.”

Sky-blue tarps dominate the landscape, tied down over the roofs of the straw huts to protect them from dry wind and torrential rain. Most of them are printed with the logo and name of Samaritan's Purse, the Canadian evangelical

ministry based in Calgary that has brought our team of journalists here, the first stop on our journey to visit two refugee camps. They are the lead non-governmental organization (NGO) in the Yida camp. (Several other EFC affiliates also work in South Sudan. See sidebar on p. 30 for full list.)

Samaritan's Purse – better known to me, at least, for their Operation Christmas Child shoebox campaign – is one of few NGOs present in the Yida camp. It was Franklin Graham, president and CEO of Samaritan's Purse International, who prompted this trip in the first place. Concerned that Canadians might not fully understand the tragedy still unfolding in this long-troubled part of northeastern Africa, he suggested Jeff Adams, communications director for Samaritan's Purse Canada, find a way to let Canada know what is happening here. I am part of a team that includes Kevin, a Calgary-based CTV photojournalist and Tina, a freelance radio journalist who works primarily with CBC and who will become a good friend by trip's end.

Our journey to Yida was a two-and-a-half-hour flight from the tiny dim airport in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan, the world's newest nation. But for the refugees who make their way to Yida, it is usually a trek from two to 10 days, almost always on foot, carrying children and whatever possessions, food and water they can manage to bring. This is in landlocked Africa in May. The day before we landed in Yida it was 48.9 degrees Celsius.

In and around the Juba airport, signs still hang that say, “Countdown to Southern Sudan Referendum.” They feature a sketch of a hand ramrod straight above a large inked thumbprint in a circle and the word “Separation.” Heat, time and dust have made the posters look older than they must actually be, because the vote took place just over a year ago in January 2011, and the dream of independence became reality on July 9, 2011.

The dream itself of a Sudan free of war – and particularly a South free of routine and devastating attacks – is also looking a little battered by now. If the international community is disappointed, they are probably not terribly

One of the newest international borders in the world divides Sudan from South Sudan, the world's latest nation.





PHOTO: SAMARITAN'S PURSE CANADA

A child being treated in a medical facility operated by Samaritan's Purse Canada. The child's hands are bandaged to stop him from removing the tube going into his nose and down his throat.

surprised. Pre-separated Sudan, after all, was home to Africa's longest-running civil war. It claimed the lives of an estimated two million people during its 22-year run. Darfur became a Hollywood cause and a household name, and the word "genocide" was heard again in Africa.

Peace plans have come and gone before. Promises broken. Oil lying rich and dark under the dry red ground of South Sudan – with the pipeline that takes it to market laid across the North – muddies the waters even more. So does the new border line that separates Sudan into two different countries. The new line has locked members of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, who fought alongside Southern Sudan for the long disputed South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, into what is literally the enemy territory of the North. The lines may have changed, but the war (now unofficial) picked up again pretty quickly from where it had briefly ended.

The Nuba Mountains, former home of many of the refugees in Yida, is routinely bombed. Not even the refugee camps are completely safe. Sudan's armed forces

dropped bombs on Yida last November. No one died, but refugees heard the dreaded growl of Russian Antonov aircraft flying into their world once again.

When reporters ask refugees why they fled their homes, the women, men and youth almost always say it was the Antonovs, the bombardment and, increasingly, the hunger resulting from planting and harvest times that are war's less obvious casualties. It is known as the hunger gap. "Farmers couldn't plant last year because of the bombing," explains Philips. "In the early days when we asked people 'Why did you flee?' they would say it was the Antonov bombs. Now, they are also driven out by the hunger caused by violence."

And the hunger is bound to increase, and with it the number of refugees who turn up at the registration centre just outside the camp's constantly widening boundaries, every morning. "We're planning for a larger influx," says Philips, "but we're praying it won't happen."

When Hussein Algumbulla, head of Yida's refugee community council, is asked what would make him feel safe enough to return home, he says, "A no-fly zone." His voice



PHOTO: SAMARITAN'S PURSE CANADA

A water well is operated using a hand pump. Most of the wells in the refugee camps use electric-powered pumps that can achieve much more volume than other pumps.

is soft, almost a whisper in the darkness of the grass hut where we meet with him and some members of his council.

“We need activities for the kids, we need additional primary health care,” he says. He and the rest of his council are elected by their fellow refugees to run the camp. Back home he was also in government as a commissioner in the Nuba Mountains.

Nikda, the only female council member present at our meeting this day, is in charge of overseeing activities for children and youth. Her portfolio is called “social affairs.” She arrived at the camp on July 21, 12 days after independence. “I wish to end this war soon,” Nikda says. “Our

problem is very big.”

Nikda also worked for the government in the Nuba Mountains before fleeing to Yida and finding herself governing once again, this time in a refugee camp. Hers is a life violently uprooted and then tentatively transplanted in much thinner soil.

Vendors are selling goods just a brief walk from the room where we share scalding tea from small juice glasses with the community council. There’s a limited variety for sure, but commerce has arisen out of the potential chaos of a refugee existence.

Conner Lucas-Roberts, Samaritan’s Purse’s area director from Walla Walla, Washington, says there is a nightclub of sorts here and a matinee that have “formed spontaneously.” The NGOs working here “provide what they cannot do themselves. We bring in the outside assistance,” he explains.

At Yida this means water, food, materials to build basic shelters, basic medical care and, most heartbreaking to see, therapeutic feeding for malnourished children, identified as such when they first registered at the camp.

The nutrition compound for these children is a set of large white tents with beds both inside and out. A tiny girl sits on her mother’s lap, sipping from a metal cup.

Another mom sits on a green plastic mattress on a bed frame with peeling white paint. Her baby’s shirt slides off one tiny shoulder, making her appear even more vulnerable, if that’s possible.

It’s all mothers and children here, some returning to health and the world of plump cheeks and bright eyes – how children are designed to be – and others still walking in the valley of the shadow, close to death. It is like a wispy shadow of a maternity ward, actually, where the happiest moments and the most tragic co-exist on some kind of ever-tilting scale. There is joy. Then, there is sadness beyond sadness.

On this day the centre is treating 20 children categorized as stable, four who are critical. Tiffany Young, Samaritan’s Purse nutrition co-ordinator from Raleigh, North Carolina, answers questions for the CTV camera. Kevin, the photojournalist who has been around the world and back, tells her that in all the troubled areas he has visited, it always seems to be the people of faith he is doing the stories on. “Why are you here?” he asks her. Young responds in a clear and strong voice: “For those who have received much, much is required, for the glory of Him.”

God is about to get even more glory as our team climbs back into the Cessna and flies to another refugee camp in the Maban district of Southern Sudan. This camp is older, bigger, muddier and more fully recognized by the United Nations as

Canadians in South Sudan

A number of Canadian groups are working in South Sudan. Those with an asterisk below are affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

- Africa Inland Mission International (Canada) – aimint.net
- Cal Bombay Ministries – calbombayministries.org
- Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund – crwrf.ca
- CBM Canada – cbmcanada.org
- *Crossroads Christian Communications Inc. – crossroads.ca /missions
- EMCC World Partners (*Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada is an EFC affiliate) – emcc.ca/world/world-partners
- Engineering Ministries International Canada – emicanada.org

- Fellowship for African Relief – farsudan.org (partners with Emmanuel International Canada – e-i.org)
- Global Aid Network (*Power to Change is an EFC affiliate) – globalaid.net
- *International Teams Canada – iteam.ca
- *Samaritan’s Purse Canada – samaritanspurse.ca
- *SIM – sim.ca
- World Renew, formerly CRWRC (*Christian Reformed Church in North America is an EFC affiliate) – crwrc.org
- *World Relief Canada – wrcanada.org
- *World Vision Canada – worldvision.ca

Sources: crda.org/map/map.asp; digital.faithtoday.ca/faithtoday/20101112/?pg=15

a permanent camp, so there is more funding available for more programs to help the refugees.

Samaritan's Purse is the food partner on the ground here, distributing World Food Programme supplies to the refugees: 500 g per person per day of cereal, 50 g per day of pulses, 5 g per day of salt, and oil to cook with. The organization, as at Yida, is also providing water through boreholes and water storage systems they are always trying to improve and expand to meet the growing demands of camps. Maban could reach 80,000 refugees if the political situation does not stabilize. At an estimated 20 litres of water for each refugee a day, that is a lot. More boreholes will need to be dug, and soon.

Our host here is Peter Wright, a 26-year-old Ambrose University graduate from Belleville, Ont. He is a logistics manager, the guy who solves problems such as where to buy the beans for the feeding program now that the local market no longer sells them. Logistics, according to Wright, "is figuring out the details." It is a development specialty, and it's essential to the work of NGOs.

But Wright is also figuring out big issues of God and suffering and faith – this is a refugee theology being worked out on the muddy ground of this camp. "I've seen a lot of faith out here that doesn't need big buildings," he says. "People are suffering and still trusting and believing." Wright says he is not a guy of "grand calling. I just said 'Yes.' God is here right now working in this place with these people."

"What better place to come and learn about God than where I think His heart is beating the most? For the marginalized and the poor." Wright never comes right out and says it, but I wonder if he doesn't feel a little sorry for us, just flying in and out of this camp so quickly where he has asked to be part of what God is doing, where he is learning so much.

"God is a mystery always unfolding," says Wright. "I'm a lot stronger now than I have ever been. I don't think people back home understand the need or the conflict here. If we can tell them what is going on, that they have a choice to do what is right or what is wrong."

Outside the gates of this camp Moca Mohan is one of the hundreds of newly arrived refugees waiting to register. He is from the Blue Nile district and tells of a day when seven bombs fell. "They killed many people. My two sisters were killed by an Antonov." He is a student of agriculture, about to join the long packed line

with his wife. Surely speaking for almost everyone lining up in the growing heat of a Sudanese morning, he says: "I'm sad. I came here for help." **FT**

KAREN STILLER is associate editor at *Faith Today*. She's also a freelance writer based in Port Perry, Ont.



GUESS WHO'S COMING TO OUR HOUSE.

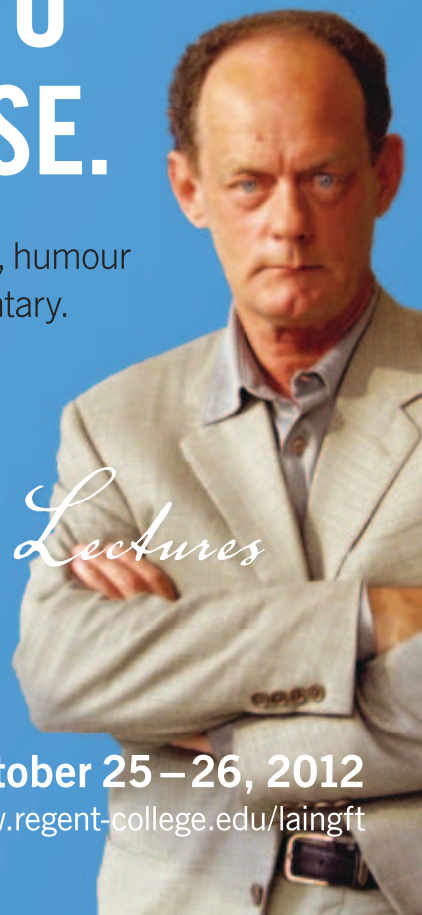
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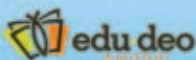


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Sorting Through Resources on Muslim Outreach

Recommended Canadian-made materials include the DVD *Truth Unlocked*.

By Robert White

As many as 50 per cent of the immigrants and refugees who came to Canada last year were adherents of Islam, says Randy Hoffman, chair of the Canadian Network of Ministries to Muslims (CNMM). Thankfully, Christians who want help relating to new Muslim friends and neighbours have a variety of resources to choose from.

Linda Raymond of Alberta first came in contact with Muslims a number of years ago when she, her husband and their church helped an immigrant couple get settled.

"We had a conversation with them in their home that was a little disturbing," recalls Raymond. After being asked to share their beliefs, Raymond asked how Christians would be welcomed in their new neighbour's home country. "They said they'd befriend us, try to convert us, and if we didn't convert to Islam, they'd be able to kill us."

When the conversation ended, Raymond wondered how she could continue to share their faith with Muslims in light of the apparent dangers of Islam and its teachings – especially with her husband's continual contact with Muslim colleagues.

"It was a wall we couldn't get past. We didn't know how to speak into their lives," she says.

But a number of resources are now available to help people like Raymond. None are perfect, says Hoffman from his office in British Columbia, but he and his network of ministry experts have found some they recommend for individual and small-group use.

The CNMM, a group originally incubated on The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's ministry partnerships platform and now affiliated as an independent ministry organization, looked especially for non-inflammatory materials that provide a basic introduction to Islam and consideration on how best to share the gospel with Muslims.

So far they recommend three resources on DVD in particular for use in Canada: *The Five Principles: A Practical Guide to Sharing Your Faith*, *Battle for the Heart* and *Truth Unlocked: Keys to Reaching Your Muslim Neighbour* (see sidebar for ordering details).

Raymond recommends *Truth Unlocked* in particular. Recently, she saw three new Muslim families move into her neighbourhood. But she was conflicted about reaching out because of that troubling experience 10 years earlier. Then a friend pointed her to *Truth Unlocked*, a six-session Canadian video series created to help a skeptical audience – who knows a bit about Muslims from the era of the 9/11 terrorist attacks – learn enough to engage

constructively with neighbours who are Muslims.

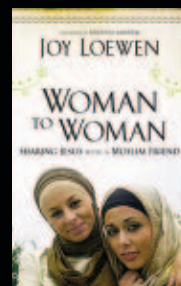
The project began when Greg Pharaoh and Tim Clemens, partners in Guelph's Talon Productions, had their own experiences with Muslims in their Ontario town. While looking for a project that would equip the church about some topic, they separately came up with a vision to "educate and equip the church about Islam," says Pharaoh.

"Both of us felt it was from God, because neither one of us had a particular [expertise on] Islam."

Canadian Resources

- *Truth Unlocked: Keys to Reaching Your Muslim Neighbour* DVDs are available at truthunlocked.org. Prices range from \$29.95 for the DVDs alone (six sessions on two DVDs) and higher if you also want workbooks or other materials.
- *The Five Principles: A Practical Guide to Sharing Your Faith* is a DVD and booklet. The DVD contains "Five Areas to Explain to a Muslim" as separate teaching sections on the DVD, each about 18 minutes long (total length: 90 min.). It's available for \$2.99 plus shipping at (800) 667-0558 or orders@powertochange.org.
- *Battle for the Heart* is a DVD series produced by Trans World Radio, Operation Mobilisation, Life Challenge Africa, Power to Change and others. It has 20 teaching sessions, each 45 minutes, with experts discussing the basics of Islam, how to reach Muslim friends and neighbours, apologetics, answering Muslim objections to Christian doctrines and more. Good for an adult Bible class or mature Christians. Inquire at info@twrcanada.org.
- *Your Muslim Guest* is a free brochure from the Toronto Fellowship for Faith for Muslims at ffm.toronto@sympatico.ca.
- *Woman to Woman: Sharing Jesus With a Muslim Friend* by Joy Loewen (Chosen/Baker 2010). Visit joyloewen.blogspot.ca to choose from various languages and formats. Original printed book (208 pages) is \$11.99.

Source: Recommendations by Randy Hoffman, chair of the Canadian Network of Ministries to Muslims



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Knowing what they didn't know, the duo filmed 20 hours of interviews with experts such as Wagdi Iskander from Three Hills, Alta., who was raised a Muslim in his native Sudan before converting to Christianity, and Peter Pikkert, who teaches Christian-Muslim relations and missiology at Toronto Baptist Seminary.

They've even begun working on a follow-up project aimed at answering questions Muslims have about Western culture. Intended to be given as a gift, the DVD can be used as a conversation starter with Muslim friends and neighbours.

Raymond used *Truth Unlocked* as a curriculum for her small group of "people in very comfortable lives who weren't responding [to Muslims] with an open heart because of fear. Right away with the first DVD, conversations became so dynamic and interesting. I'd never seen the group that animated. By the fifth session people were visibly moved, saying they'd made a terrible mistake in how they perceived Muslims. I wish we'd had this 10 year ago," she says.

Raymond's group is now planning a trip to the Middle East to take part in an outreach ministry there. Raymond and her husband have also volunteered at a local ministry. And Raymond has hooked up with Pharaoh and Clemens to promote *Truth Unlocked* and raise funds for the next project.

Those who want to research their own resources, says Hoffman, would be wise to look first for a respectful or loving attitude towards Muslims. "If you start by speaking in a harsh or derogatory manner about Mohammed [Islam's key prophet], it isn't going to win you any friends."

Second, good material clearly points out what is wrong with Islamic teaching – again in a loving way.

Third, the context for which the material was created is important. "Something developed to reach Muslims in West Africa may not be appropriate for Muslims in North America," says Hoffman.

A variety of resources will also be available at the CNMM national conference Oct. 25-27, 2012, in Richmond Hill, Ont. Register at lovingmuslimstogether.org.

ROBERT WHITE is a freelance writer in Guelph, Ont.



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I Was Sick and You Visited Me

We may worry visiting sick or dying people will feel awkward, especially if they aren't friends or family. But visiting can make a profound difference.

By **Kathy Bethune Munroe**

I remember the first time I visited someone who was sick. I was a teenager at the time, and a girl in my class had ended up in hospital after an unintentional overdose. Although I hardly knew her and was desperately shy at the time, I decided to go visit her.

I didn't do things very well. I remember sitting by her bed like the proverbial bump on the log, not really saying much at all and then, when other visitors arrived, quietly leaving.

The familiar words "I was sick and you visited me" come from Matthew 25, where God judges the "sheep" and the "goats," and says the sheep are "blessed" because they fed and clothed the hungry, thirsty and poor, were hospitable to strangers, and visited prisoners and sick people.

Even as a teenager it seemed to me if visiting was important enough to be included on this list of charitable works, then clearly it should be important to us too.

Why Visit the Sick?

Frequent hospital visitors report many patients, particularly the elderly, often feel lonely and left out. Earl Levasseur of the Brantford Worship Centre has done a lot of visiting in nursing homes and retirement centres. He observes that often "the residents do not have many visitors."

Yes, there are "professional visitors" such as chaplains and senior pastors and elders, but an amazing number of family, friends, lay visitors, and volunteers are also active visiting needy people across the country. Yet even more are needed.

Some people who make regular visits are initially inspired by personal experience. Rod Martens of Calgary, a volunteer visitor for Centre Street Church, was a hospital in-patient some years ago, saw the need for visitors and sought to fill it. Other frequent visitors may have had a loved one die in palliative care or a hospice and want to "pay back."

Once you've seen how much visits can mean to patients, it's hard to forget.

What Would I Do?

Many people avoid visits because of potential awkwardness. They may worry they wouldn't know what to do or say, and are afraid they might say something upsetting or make the patient feel worse.

Levasseur says, "If only they would realize all that is really needed is their presence."

Visitors who want to make a visit special might bring a few flowers from their garden or, if the patient is willing, offer to read the Bible or another book aloud. But normally visitors don't need to do much, particularly if the patient is very ill.

What Qualities Should I Have?

The most helpful visitors have "a calm compassion and a listening ear," says Colleen Clancy, development and communications

Guidelines for Visiting Hospital Patients

By **John Vlainic**

1. Whenever possible, pull a chair alongside the bed and sit down. This allows eye-level contact, and gives the message you have come to be with them and have time for them.
2. Be sure you are not sitting with a window behind you, or the glare of the light can make it hard for the patient to see you.
3. Let the patient share their understanding of their illness and do not ask probing questions about their diagnosis.
4. Be sensitive to the needs of the patient and adjust the length of your visit accordingly. For example, a shorter visit might be best with a post-operative patient.
5. If you pray with the patient, stay for a while afterward to address any personal concerns which may have arisen in the patient's thoughts through prayer, or any emotions that may have surfaced. **FT**

REV. JOHN VLAINIC is a chaplain at Hamilton General Hospital in Ontario. He has been ordained with the Free Methodist Church in Canada since 1977. These points are excerpted from a training handout he created.



PHOTO: DESIGNPICS.COM

in visitation. Even those of us who begin regular visits without training learn all sorts of things about themselves. Most eventually learn how to make visits more effective.

Anyone can learn through training and practice.

What Should I Say?

Seeing a visitor arrive with a big black Bible can intimidate some patients. Marji Krahn says there are “other ways to *be* Christ to people.” Going in as an encourager is one such way. People who have been in hospital for a long time sometimes begin to wonder if anybody cares anymore.

Henry Thiessen of Ontario attends Guelph Bible Church and often visits sick and dying people. His main goal is to encourage those he visits. Just talking with them, he says, is enough to let them know they’re not forgotten.

Whether a visitor should talk about the illness or only about spiritual matters will depend on the patient. Again, cues should come from the patient.

Earl Levasseur freely admits, “There have been times when I had no idea what to say, so I would ask how they were doing and let the visit go from there.”

And he adds, “Don’t be afraid to ask a person if you can pray for them” – not right away, but near the end or middle of the visit. Almost no patients refuse prayer from a visitor who has already spoken to them for a while and found out how they are doing.

Rev. John Vlainic is a chaplain in Ontario at Hamilton General Hospital. “I listen while I’m talking to some-

body to see if there isn’t something that’s moving out towards God in what they’re saying.”

manager for the Salvation Army’s Agape Hospice in Calgary. Listening to a patient is very important, agrees Marji Krahn, former palliative care chaplain at Intercare’s Southwood Care Centre, also in Calgary. She says visitors should go without having any agenda but to follow the patient’s cues.

With someone who is dying, such cues may be as simple as the patient’s eyes turning away.

“You have to be so sensitive to them. They sometimes hardly have the strength to speak,” says Krahn.

Many Christian churches and ministries can offer training

body to see if there isn’t something that’s moving out towards God in what they’re saying.”

So, if he hears thankfulness in a patient – the patient may or may not have mentioned God – Vlainic responds, “Would you like me to offer a prayer of thanks?”

Or sometimes he hears the beginnings of a cry for help when a patient shares bad news. Then he says something like, “Would you want me to pray for you about that?”

“If we listen well, we will often hear that they’re already on the road to prayer. Our role may then be to help them express

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it more fully – if they let me pray with them.”

It's often best for the visitor to say, “Can I pray?” instead of “Can we pray?” because the patient may feel too weak to contribute or unsure about their own relationship with God.



Will My Visit Make a Difference?

As well as visiting for Centre Street Church, Rod Martens visits at a long-term care facility close to where he lives in Calgary. He says the patients are very receptive and appreciative of the visits. He also finds satisfaction that God uses him in this way.

If we listen well, we will often hear that they're already on the road to prayer: John Vlainic.

Earl Levasseur remembers making a difference with one particular dying man. “The

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family requested that I not say anything about death, as they did not want to frighten dad. As I was walking down the hall to his room I could hear this man gasping for air. I spoke with the family and told them what I was going to do. I read Scriptures, then prayed for their dad.”

Listening to a patient is very important: Marji Krahn.

Reading Scripture is often a surprisingly profound blessing – it is really letting the Holy Spirit move through the words.

“As I was praying I said that Jesus was waiting for him, saying, ‘Come home, my son.’ By the time I finished praying for him, his breathing had settled down to the point where we had to really look to see if he was still breathing. About 10 minutes later, he went home to be with the Lord.”

Clearly, Christians who avoid visiting are missing out. Drawing on the wisdom of others – and of course praying to ask for God’s help – can help us past the obstacles that hold us back. When I was a teen wanting to visit my classmate all those years ago, I wish I had asked some others about visiting. Even though I would still have had a lack of confidence,

the visit would have gone better.

Learning how to visit the sick and be as helpful as possible can make us, whatever age we are, a blessing to those who need it most. **FT**

KATHY BETHUNE MUNROE is a freelance writer in Calgary.

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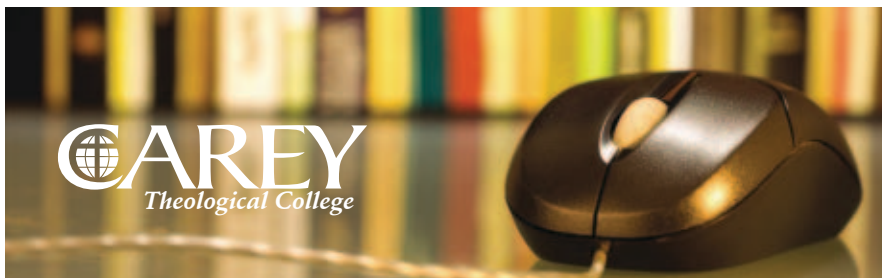
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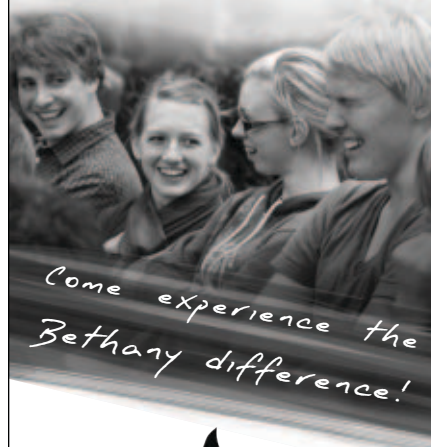
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Emily Slotegraaf will graduate with an MDiv in 2017. Currently working in Toronto's at-risk neighbourhoods, Emily helps teen mothers achieve their high school equivalency diplomas. At Tyndale, Emily has begun to have "hope for healing" as she grows in her knowledge of the integration of psychology and theology. She is encouraged by "meeting people who support you and talk to you."

Dr. Kinson Ng and Dr. Harding Leung, from the Toronto Chinese Community Church, each graduated with an MDiv from Tyndale. Together they are leading a congregation to live out their faith. "Isn't it our turn to help others?" asked Dr. Ng. The church purchased a 46,000-square-foot warehouse to renovate into a full community centre.

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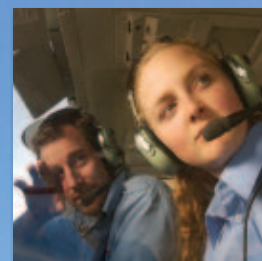
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Passing the Torch From Generation to Generation

A national leader writes about why it is so important for mature leaders to lead by letting go.

There's a major shift taking place within many fellowships and denominations in Canada. For many of us it's now a season for a wholesome, on-purpose transfer of anointing, authority and responsibility.

For some it's our first broad season of transfer, and our style and ability in achieving this will set precedents and expectations for generations to come.

In many cases it will mean the difference between status quo maintenance and simple institutional survival, or life, growth and expansion.

By God's grace, for all of us, may it be a break-out season for proclaiming the gospel and building churches. May we be taken into an arena of growth from faith-to-faith and glory-to-glory as the invincible seeds of the gospel are planted within the hearts and minds of our young leaders rising up within our congregations.

It is a shift from being and doing to enabling and passing on hard-earned wisdom, grace and opportunities. All very noble, if not frightening.

The trouble for many of us is that having independently begun – and having spent a career of making something of nothing – we find it hard to give away that which has had so much personal sacrifice attached. We fear we are passing on our work to those who may not be able to nurture, develop or extend what has been our life's work. But if we don't take this risk, we risk our work's stagnation and death by holding it tightly. A sort of organizational strangulation.

Paul's second letter to Timothy, chapter two, verse two speaks volumes to my heart (It reads: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach."). Here, at the end of his days, we see Paul's clear eye looking beyond his tenure toward the protection and development of that which he'd given his life to ensure.

This is the moment the two great focuses of his life converge. He is aware with this marriage he personally will have been removed from centre stage and no longer retain direct control.

Those two great focuses are of course the message he'd received, refined and transmitted by word and deed, and the men he'd trained and crafted to carry it on further. Even this great man of Christ suffered many disappointments, failures and desertions. Yet Paul understood the man carries the message, and at some point others must be endorsed and released.

If I were able to mentor a young man to carry my life's work forward, who having served with me as a son was able to go beyond my borders, I would define my life as a brilliant success. But there is more in this passage.

Paul did not just personally endorse and release Timothy to carry the message. He commissioned him to train the leaders that would take the message beyond the borders that neither Paul nor Timothy had ever seen.

There are multiple generations of leaders mentioned in that passage. There's Paul, Timothy and the many witnesses, plus the faithful and able men who will also teach others. There is a pattern where the gospel was spread up and down, from old to young, as well as side to side, from those who'd heard to those who had not.

It's not sufficient for me to train a man to carry on with some of my responsibilities, but rather train men, who will in turn train men, to carry the gospel into every

darkened corner of this nation and the nations of the world.

I've recently wondered where the Pauls of this age are. But that isn't the only question we face. There is a potential shortage of Timothys as well. Not simply a young man or woman who can carry on with an entrusted message, but those we can train to be equippers themselves.

May God give us all eyes to see and hearts to perceive the uncut gemstones He has certainly hidden in our midst. May our hearts be large enough to see what they can become – and not stumble over what they do not yet seem to be. **FT**

We fear we are passing on our work to those who may not be able to nurture, develop or extend what has been our life's work.

DAVID MCGREW is president of the Canadian Fellowship of Churches and Ministers, and lives in Sidney, B.C.



Strengthen Your Marriage

Some advice and biblical ideas worth considering.

Growing up I hoped to one day be a flower girl in someone's wedding. I envisioned donning a frilly white dress and presenting rose petals with a flourish. I recently learned my sister-in-law had – and, let's be honest, still has – this same ambition. There is something about weddings that intrigues us as women from a young age. A mystique. A glowing expectation. The dream of happily ever after.

Prior to our marriage last year, my husband and I were warned about the realistic challenges and hard adjustments couples face once they cross the altar. Sadly, many well-meaning folks focused on the trials and forgot to mention the blessed assurance of knowing God has brought you together. My husband and I often look to one another and say, "This is so *right*."

Right and sacred and beautiful. God's design for marriage is all these things, yet often society – even the Christian subculture – sends subtle messages of defeat and discouragement. "Even Christian marriages have a 50 per cent failure rate," they say, forgetting to mention this statistic means there is also a 50 per cent success rate.

As my husband and I recently counselled an engaged couple, we shared the following encouragement that had been passed on to us, biblical wisdom to strengthen every married couple, whether newlyweds or lifelong loves.

You are a sinner. The book *When Sinners Say I Do – Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* by Dave Harvey (Shepherd Press, 2007) delves deeper into this topic, but suffice to say you married a sinner and so did your spouse. Remember that whole "plank in your own eye" thing? Consider your own sin the biggest problem in your marriage before criticizing your husband.

Seek to outserve one another. Your husband is not meant to fulfill all your needs – only God can do that. This is not about simply serving your spouse, but seeking to *outserve* them. Delight in serving them, rather than waiting to be served.

Allow your spouse to serve you. Sound contradictory, even selfish? In Tim and Kathy Keller's book *The Meaning of Marriage – Facing the Complexities of Commitment and the Wisdom of God* (Dutton, 2011), they describe a vacation when Tim hoped to visit a seminary bookstore (my husband can relate!), but didn't mention this desire to

Kathy – who would have been left alone to care for their children. When Tim finally shared his disappointment, Kathy replied, "Yes, that would have been inconvenient for me, but I would have *loved* to have given you that freedom. You denied me a chance to serve you!"

Don't expect your spouse to read your mind. There's nothing wrong with hoping our husbands will offer a compliment on a new hairstyle, but we set them up for failure when we succumb to overly romanticized daydreams. If special occasions seem especially prone to this trap, discuss expectations in advance so you can both enjoy. When our daughter was born I hoped my husband might give me jewellery to celebrate her birth, but also knew his practical mind might discard the idea since he has given me jewellery in the past. A short conversation assured him jewellery is always appreciated and that her birthstone could make a unique gift. This lifted the pressure he felt in finding the "perfect" gift, while still giving him the joy of seeing my face light up when I saw the beautiful, meaningful emerald pendant necklace he chose.

Walk with others. Don't wait until your marriage is on the brink of disaster. Marriage mentors provide encouragement and support during the good times, not to mention observing potential trouble areas to work on before they explode. It's also never too late. If your marriage is struggling, seek a godly couple to walk alongside you towards restoration.

Be filled with the fullness of God. During our marriage ceremony, Pastor David Robinson exhorted us through Ephesians 3:14-21 that a thriving marriage is not based on our own efforts. Instead, as Christ dwells in our hearts, it is our Heavenly Father who will root and establish us in love, strengthening us by the power of His Holy Spirit to be filled with all the fullness of God.

The triangle metaphor is cliché but true. Picture you and your husband at each corner of the base of a triangle with God at the top. As you grow closer to God, you grow closer to one another. You may need to be creative in new seasons of life – late night feedings of our newborn daughter now provide the perfect devotional and prayer time for our family!

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21). **FT**

MICHELLE (NAGLE) ARTHUR is Bruce's wife, Elisabeth's mommy and executive director of Women Alive, a Canadian ministry equipping women and teen girls to become dedicated followers of Christ, partly through mentoring (womenalive.org).

Village Church, Surrey, B.C.



Almost a thousand onlookers celebrated with 55 Villagers baptized at a pier on the Pacific Ocean.

PHOTO: VILLAGE CHURCH

This two year old has a mature and exciting vision – and has exploded in size.

A few years ago a congregation of 800 Baptists felt a distinct call to plant churches. South Delta (Fellowship) Baptist Church is located in Tsawwassen, at the southwestern edge of the Greater Vancouver Area. Among those hearing and responding to the call were 16 people who began collaborating to start a new congregation in nearby Surrey, a growing community with many young families.

The new congregation, named Village Church, launched in 2010 with 50 people. The original aim was “two hundred people by 2012.” But attendance has already reached 1,200.

“One thousand are God’s kids!” is how the leaders explain it.

Mark Clark is lead pastor. Before that he served as an associate pastor at South Delta. Village Church became legally autonomous in 2012, but strong ties remain with South Delta.

Both congregations want to sacrifice for Kingdom growth. Their desire is to train others to multiply ministry. “Intentional division for strategic multiplication” is a model they hope to repeat.

Rob Clark (no relation to Mark) arrived as executive pastor in May 2012, quickly taking ownership of Village Church’s vision and mission.

“Seeing people transformed into fully devoted followers of Jesus is simple to say but difficult to live,” says Rob.

Village Church summarizes its understanding of its mission with three priorities – gospel, community and culture.

Gospel

The primary force that drives Village Church is the gospel, the means by which God transforms people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus.

Mark is a passionate speaker, connecting God’s Word practically with life’s issues. Village Church sermons are recorded and made available through Vimeo, iTunes and podcasts. So far they have been downloaded 65,000 times across 52 countries. Some house churches in Thailand, China and the Netherlands use Mark’s sermons for gathering and discipleship training.

“Only God produces growth,” says Mark.

Clearly, then, God is at work in all this.

God has also used Mark’s gift for preaching to help people come to Christ for the first time. An avid atheist named Paul heard Mark at a Skeptics Forum event hosted in a coffee shop,

and followed up on Mark's lectures on the existence of God with questions sent by text message. Paul attended Mark's Community Group, spent three hours talking about the reliability of the New Testament and then gave his life to Christ.

Paul says, "It was the greatest night of my life – God working in me to resolve many of my questions about the most important things in the universe."

Community

God takes individuals who are being transformed into fully devoted followers of Jesus and builds a community. This gospel community is one of the primary ideas that led to the name Village Church. A village is a connected and intimate community, able to serve one another in concrete ways. Village Church is a prayer-driven church, caring for people's emotional, physical and spiritual needs.

In a congregation of 1,200, value is placed on smaller Community Groups who live life together during the week so everyone is connected. "We're becoming smaller while growing bigger," states Rob.

The Village congregation includes people who've never been to church and others who admit attending once or twice before coming to Village Church. A few are lapsed churchgoers who turned away from church because of negative experiences. Now they are all seeing God work in and through their lives.

Susan and Joe (pseudonyms) were married for many years and attended church, but Joe had secretly cheated on Susan years earlier. He went to church week

in and week out and didn't feel convicted. When they came to Village Church, God started working on Joe's heart until one week, as Mark preached on sex, the Spirit convicted Joe to such a point he went home and confessed everything.

"Years earlier," Susan says, "because I didn't understand the gospel, that would have been it. I would have left. But having the message of Jesus unpacked over many weeks changed me. If God treats me with grace, love and forgiveness, not based on my performance, how could I not forgive Joe and look to rebuild our lives?"

Culture

Gathering in community helps prepare fully devoted followers to renew the culture around them.

"In Jesus," Mark explains, "God came into our culture and journeyed beside us, experienced what we experience and worked to renew us."

And so groups of church members work with disabled kids' baseball teams, clean up people's houses and gardens, work (for free) in farms that resource the local food bank, or rent a theatre to host a family movie night.

But God's mission is not limited to these initiatives. Village Church members view their lives on mission to serve Jesus and those around them every day. Whether they are teachers, doctors, nurses, politicians, coffee baristas, media or business owners, they try to allow God to use them to renew Surrey every day in Christ-honouring ways.

This wider focus is evident in the pray-

ers that permeate Community Groups, prayer chains, congregational and staff meetings. Members often pray for other churches in the community.

"It's not just about the Village. It's about seeing people transformed through God's servants everywhere," says Rob.

That transformation was evident recently as almost 1,000 onlookers celebrated with 55 Villagers baptized at a pier on the Pacific Ocean.

Transition

Growth is exciting and energizing – and challenging. The congregation's three weekly worship services held at the Rosemary Heights School are running to capacity. Some sit outside in the rain to attend services. Up to 90 volunteers must arrive Sundays at 6:45 a.m. to transform the school into a church.

And having two pastors for a congregation of 1,200 presents a challenge to disciple new believers. It's impossible for the lead pastor to know everyone intimately and for each congregant to know him well.

"We need to remind ourselves that all the people are experiencing transition, not just pastoral staff," says Rob.

Through a miracle only God could design, a new venue (the Bell Performing Arts Centre) opened up nearby in July. One thousand seats and state-of-the-art media resources should enable Village Church to spread the gospel more broadly and deeply into their community. Video messages will continue at Rosemary Heights with a campus pastor.

As they experience rapid growth, Village leaders are asking God how they can encourage, train and resource other churches. Their desire is for all churches to see people transformed into fully devoted followers of Jesus.

Mark concludes, "Our goal as a church is nothing less than the transformation of our city through the transformation of lives given over to Jesus." **FT**

CHARLENE DE HAAN is a freelance writer in Toronto, executive director of Camino Global and founder of stepUP-transitions.ca. Read all the profiles in this ongoing series at faithtoday.ca.



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Troubleshooters Wanted

Helpful men are a gift from God.

Travis is a troubleshooter. It isn't written quite that way in his job description, but it's pretty well what he does. He's usually the first guy his colleagues call when something goes wrong. Why? Because he shows up with a can-do attitude, sizes up the situation without delay and starts to put things back in order.

Many men take pride in setting things right. It feels good to be of practical assistance, to be of service. It's especially satisfying to take something broken and give it back fixed. At least that's how Travis experiences it. He's a problem solver by nature, the kind of man it's good to know when things aren't panning out they way they should.

Now, it's one thing to troubleshoot a balky lawnmower or run through a set of diagnostic questions to track down a bug in a malfunctioning computer. Machines have an inherent logic or mechanical connection. While they can be very complicated, their glitches typically yield to the persistent investigator.

Other kinds of problems, however, are often not so readily solved – and many resist resolution altogether. This is particularly true when the human element is factored in. Our foibles, idiosyncrasies and sins can confound even the best of helpers. Relational dilemmas and emotional quagmires will defy even the most skilled of restoration experts.

Blessed is the man who addresses human challenges with the same level of skill, dedication and joy that Travis brings to his co-workers' equipment.

Worth His Salt

What does it take to be good at helping others? Well, a hopeful attitude is always necessary. Any troubleshooter worth his salt believes the situation he's tackling – no matter how dire – can somehow be redeemed. He begins with a confident spirit, a sense improvement is possible.

This doesn't mean being naïve. Not everything is fixable, and good intentions will not always prevail. Regardless, a man who wants to help will come up with useful

ways to generate at least some change for the better – and get better at generating it over time. Experience is a wonderful teacher, even if some of its most useful lessons are learned through failure.

We become more skilled as helpers through our hands-on encounters with people and their problems. But it isn't the problems themselves that draw us. No man will keep showing up in times of trouble unless he has a genuine desire for the well-being of others.

Helping is really a matter of the heart. Its rewards are discovered in acts that are not self-centred.

Travis isn't particularly fond of blinking fluorescent bulbs and misaligned shelving units. He could live quite happily without the fix-it pleas that interrupt him. He doesn't care if he never sees another clogged coffee maker or sproinged door latch.

Beyond Irritation

Rather, something in him responds to these irritating calls with elation. Bringing relief to others is fulfilling and energizing. He is pleased when he can play a role in lessening

the troubles of others. He knows he can help people and will earn and deserve their gratitude. That's satisfying.

This is what really makes Travis a good handyman. What he sometimes forgets as he goes about his fixing is that his presence is as much a factor as his skill. Simply by showing up he is already helping to settle anxieties. It's his willingness to help that people respond to, his habit of making himself available. It's the desire to do what he can to make things better – a service-oriented attitude – that is truly attractive.

In this way Travis is tracking directly in the footsteps of God the Father, who

is the Helper beyond compare.

At least that's how the Apostle Paul saw it: "Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 TEV).

A troubleshooting man is good to find. Be one. **FT**

Many men
take pride in
setting things right.
It feels good to be
of practical assistance,
to be of service.
It's especially satisfying
to take something
broken and
give it back fixed.

DOUG KOOP is a Winnipeg-based freelance writer and spiritual care provider. He's not much of a handyman.

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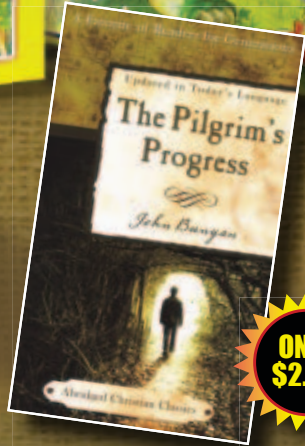
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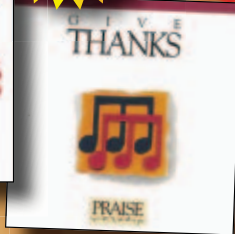
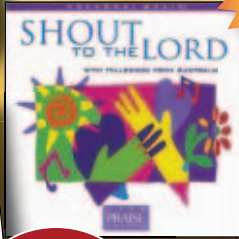
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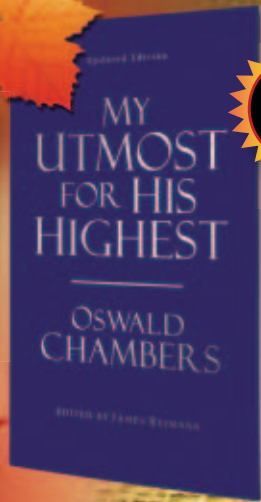
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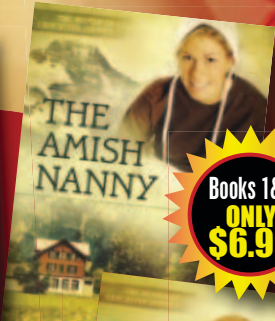
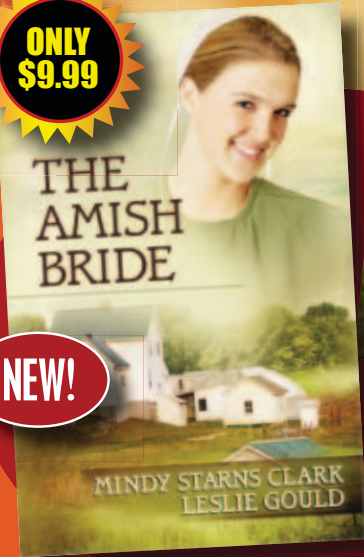


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The 2012 Prophecy

What are Christians to make of New Age claims the world will end in December?

A trailer for the apocalyptic thriller *2012* asked this question: “How would the governments of our planet prepare six billion people for the end of the world?”

The answer: “They wouldn’t.”

The trailer went on to encourage viewers to search the Internet for answers. It was all part of a campaign to hype the movie. And it worked. *2012* was the fifth highest grossing movie in 2009.

Part of the success of the film is rooted in the idea the Maya calendar predicts the world is supposed to end this year, on December 21 to be precise – an idea so popular there are now more than 300 books on it and hundreds of websites.

This time the prophecy comes from New Age authors, not Christian ones, but as with Harold Camping’s predictions last year, you can expect enormous media attention come December.

New Agers are taking this prophecy very seriously. Some young people who have been scared by the scenario of apocalyptic doom have considered suicide.

What should Christians make of the whole phenomenon? Before we get to that, here are some answers to important preliminaries.

Why is December 21, 2012 the chosen date for the end of the world? According to New Age leaders, the Maya people were astute in astronomy, and their “Long Count” calendar marks the completion of a “Great Cycle” which began on August 11, 3114 B.C. and ends at 11:11 a.m. on December 21, 2012.

Who are the Maya? The Maya are an ancient people native to eastern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and the western parts of Honduras and El Salvador. The Maya classical age ranged from 250 to 900 A.D. and saw remarkable achievements in architecture, mathematical skills, astronomical learning and writing finesse. The Maya people today (scholars use the adjective “Mayan” only in reference to the language, not the people or the culture) speak 31 different languages. To get additional trustworthy details, stick to reputable resources such as the *Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (Sage Publications, 2006).

Who started this 2012 prophecy? The focus on 2012 as a crucial date in human history started in 1975 with New Age leaders Jose Arguelles and Terence McKenna. By the 1990s December 21 became the focused date for the ma-

ior turn for humanity, either as the end of the world or a change in consciousness.

Arguelles and McKenna are both deceased, but other New Age leaders have continued to push the 2012 date, including Carlos Barrios, Nancy Lieder, John Major Jenkins, Daniel Pinchbeck and Patricia Cori.

Is there anything credible about the Maya prophecy? Well, the Maya are a real people and they were actually good at constructing reliable calendars since they understood astronomy. One of their calendar systems ends on December 21, 2012 but, as Mark Van Stone, a scholar of Mesoamerica, states, “There is nothing in the Maya or Aztec or ancient Mesoamerican prophecy to suggest that they prophesied a sudden or major change of any sort in 2012.”

How do New Agers defend their 2012 prophecy? New Age leaders support their prophecy with a vast array of claims. Some assert NASA has documented planetary alignments that will impact the earth on December 21. (NASA scientist David Morrison demolishes these and other myths on his YouTube videos.) Other New Age leaders, like Nancy Lieder, say aliens are providing data on how and where destruction will take place. She notes Canada is a relatively safe country because of absence of earthquake faults. Some New Age leaders predict a planet called Nibiru will hit our earth in December. (There is no evidence for such a planet.) Other New Agers argue December 21 is about changing human consciousness and not advancing paranoid end of the world scenarios.

Proper Christian response to 2012 should include several considerations. First, it is imperative to remember that New Agers, with rare exceptions, believe their theories are true. It does not help Christian witness to dismiss New Agers as hypocritical or argue this is all a hoax to make money. (The 2012hoax.org site is marvellous at critique, but does not sufficiently recognize even New Age teachers can be sincere.)

Second, Christian response must be rooted in a gentle witness. This means avoiding mockery and ridicule even if we think New Age theories are false and illogical. Since New Agers think they have the truth, a nasty response will lead nowhere, especially since it will only confirm New Age suspicion that Christians are narrow-minded bigots.

Third, behind false New Age views on 2012 lies a deep realization that humanity is in crisis. This is joined with deep aspiration for a better future for our planet. Together these create an opening for pointing to Jesus Christ, Saviour and Lord, as the divine answer for any age. **FT**

JAMES A. BEVERLEY is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto.

Christian Documentary Raises Hell Issues



PHOTO: HELLBOUNDTHEMOVIE.COM

“Our goal with the film is to bring together a variety of voices in this debate to provoke informed discussion about hell.” Filmmaker Kevin Miller interviews people on the street about their views on hell.

A documentary on different views of hell, by British Columbia filmmaker Kevin Miller, is set to appear on screens across North America October 12. Miller was already pondering the idea in 2006, but it wasn't until early 2011 the pieces finally started to come together.

“Then Rob Bell released his book *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* [HarperOne, 2011], and hell exploded across the infosphere,” as Miller puts it – confirming in his mind the time was right for this conversation.

“Our goal with the film,” Miller explains at hellboundthemovie.com, “is to bring together a variety of voices in this debate to provoke informed discussion about hell, and to help viewers explore the sources and the implications of their views.”

As for his own views on hell, he would rather not answer.

“First of all, there are a num-

ber of people behind this film, and we don't all agree on this topic either, so there's really no way to provide a comprehensive answer. Second, apart from mere curiosity, what often motivates a question like this is a desire to figure out which category we fall into: ‘us’ or ‘them.’ Rather than give you the luxury of slapping a label on us, we encourage you to watch the film and then engage us in a discussion based on what you see.”

Hellboundthemovie.com includes endorsements from a wide range of prominent Christians, from William Paul Young, author of *The Shack* (Windblown, 2008), to Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Baker, 2008). Among those interviewed in the film are Brian McLaren, Hank Hanegraaff, Mark Driscoll, Mike Bickle and Peter Kreeft. DVD versions and other formats are promised soon.

–Bill Fledderus

BOOK REVIEWS

Your Church Is Too Safe: Why Following Christ Turns the World Upside-Down

Author: Mark Buchanan
Zondervan, 2012.
224 pages. \$20.99

British Columbia pastor Mark Buchanan begins his new book with the following statements: “I'm bored. As are many people in church.”

The book goes on in a provocative and captivating style, including dramatic storytelling, to stir the spirit of the reader, to make us feel absolutely uncomfortable as he builds on those ideas. (That, by the way, is a good thing.)

His engaging style won't surprise fans of his previous books, but it will likely continue to enlarge his audience.

Your Church Is Too Safe has a similar theological and biblical tone to his earlier volume *Your God Is Too Safe* (Waterbrook Multnomah, 2001). In that work his contention was we often assume God is a safe God, a boring God, a domesticated God, a nice God, but certainly not the true God who both disturbs and shows kindness.

In this new volume, he looks at the churches of North America and asks: “When did we start making it our priority to be safe instead of dangerous, nice instead of holy, cautious instead of bold, self-absorbed instead of counting everything loss in order to be found in Christ?”

By telling moving stories from his 22 years of pastoral ministry, he outlines why the Church must not be any of these if she is to be the true embodiment of Jesus and a representa-

tion of the Kingdom of God in the world. He wears his heart on his sleeve in this book, holding nothing back, appealing to the bored, the curious, the bold and the timid, who want more from the Church and for the Church.

His generous use of relevant biblical texts and care for exegetical application are admirable. This book, if read by more pastors and ministry leaders, could have significant impact on the future of the Church. It's a must read.

–R. Wayne Hagerman



Living Into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions

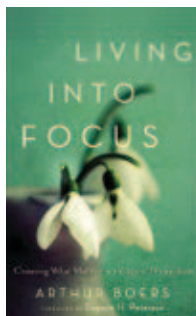
Author: Arthur Boers
Brazos, 2012.
256 pages. \$20.50

Reading this book made me buy hiking boots for my husband. Author Arthur Boers, associate professor and R.J. Bernardo chair of leadership at Toronto's Tyndale University College & Seminary, plunges straight into one of the most vexing current dilemmas of contemporary culture: How do we live well inside an endless deluge of technology?

As a mother (and wife) who counts up “screen time” hours (and has become quite a nag about this, actually), I welcome Boers' contribution to a conversation that is about more than hours wasted away watching television, playing video games, texting, tweeting, emailing – whatever your technological Achilles heel is.

Rather, it's a conversation

about what we value in life, and how those big values need to shape our everyday decisions about how we spend our time. Boers depends heavily



on American philosopher Albert Borgmann's work on focal realities and practices, the things we do (you could say hobbies here, but they are more than that) that

bring us peace, contentment, meaning and balance to our lives. Enter the hiking boots.

In Boers' own life, he discovered the joy of hiking – even a city hike to and from Tyndale – and that is one of his own main focal practices. The book finds its own pleasant balance between theory and practical realities, offering tips for managing technology as basic and important as the use of email to resolve conflict (spoiler: not a great idea); reclaiming Sabbath; questioning how busy, busy, busy we are and what we can do about it. This is a significant and readable book for any person of faith wanting to at least consider we might actually be servants of technology, instead of the other way around.

–Karen Stiller

Slow Sunday on the Malaspina Strait

Author: Hannah Main-van der Kamp
The St. Thomas Poetry Series, 2012.
96 pages. \$20

We're all used to the insistence we need to go faster. In her fifth poetry collection Hannah

Main-van der Kamp instructs us on going slower. In our helter-skelter society we don't have patience for such activities as prayer, meditation and poetry. This is an encouragement toward Sabbath rest.

In the book's title poem she acknowledges we often need help.

Mist, old friend, welcome
 Though most October mornings you offer
 a taste of ease, today you fill the windows.

Old acquaintance, again you dissolve islands.

Here, she says, "we are / engaged in slowness training."

Main-van der Kamp demonstrates for us the importance of giving our undivided attention to the creation which surrounds us. She submerges herself in the sights and sounds of her British Columbia home: "The cove / is full of sky and plenteous in murmurs" ("Talitha"). I find myself envious of the problems she faces with deer invading her garden, and a mother otter giving birth beneath her kitchen floor: "Upside-down Pentecost; little tongues under our feet" ("Ecstatic Utterances").

She takes literally Christ's instruction to "Look at the birds of the air." She notes the differences in female rufous hummingbirds ("Not One is Exactly Like the Illustration") and watches a crow bury a morsel of bread for future retrieval ("Black Point Crow"). Similarly, she reminds us to "Consider the lowliest of the field weeds. / Not even the wardrobes of the rich... / can raise the fashion measure / like this fall day" ("Like One of These").



Hannah Main-van der Kamp does not always emphasize the spiritual dimension in her observations, but is always ready to do so – an attitude we can learn much from. She says, "For the cloudiness

that lays me down to watch robins rest, / I offer a stammer of praise." Amen.

Her book is the 26th in the St. Thomas Poetry Series, published in Toronto and available at stthomaspoetryseries.com.

–D.S. Martin

Children's Ministry That Fits: Beyond One-Size-Fits-All Approaches to Nurturing Children's Spirituality

Author: David M. Csinos Wipf and Stock, 2011.
188 pages. \$17.60

Listening to children has become a counter-cultural activity in our fast-paced, media-saturated society, but it has much transformative potential. *Children's Ministry That Fits* is the result of careful listening, and has the potential to transform the Church's ministry *with* its children.

Csinos writes, "The practice of listening to children is fundamental to seeing them as valuable." His research *with* rather than just *about* children honours children's ways of knowing God and recognizes them as fellow spiritual pilgrims on a journey.

This book outlines Csinos' understanding of children's spirituality and reports on his interactions with children from three varied congrega-

tions, sharing the ways these children know God through word, emotion, symbol and action. It also gives a variety of important strategies for ministry with children in our time and place.

He asked children questions such as: Where in your church do you feel closest to God? Why? What makes your church's worship different from a school assembly? What do you like or dislike about it?

He also asked them to take photos of places and objects that helped them feel close to God, and to draw pictures of worship. Then he invited children to explain their images: where God is, where they are, where they would like to be, etc.



Their responses convinced him children are "faith-filled agents and learners, continually making meaning of the world around them, including the people and places with which they interact." What would the rest of us learn if we took time to build relationships of trust and asked these questions of the children in our congregations? What new strategies would such a project recommend for the way we can grow together as spiritual pilgrims in our homes and congregations?

This emerging leader, with his informed passion for integrating children and their ways of knowing God into the worship life of the Church, can help transform and equip the Church to move into the hopeful future Jesus is calling it to.

–Elsie Rempel



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In the Public Interest

Why should the public pay for our churches?

Europe is filled with beautiful historic churches, from Iona to Istanbul, from St. Peter's to St. Paul's, from Gaudi's to St. Giles. Too many of them, alas, are now empty or close to it, even on Sunday mornings. Most have stood for hundreds of years, but this next century will see many more of them succumb to acid rain, deferred maintenance, urban renewal or a vanished congregation.

Tourists often confront a collection box at the back of such churches with a sign eliciting help from the public for the church's upkeep. Having toured an architectural wonder, or perhaps at least a curiosity, one is moved to drop a few pounds or euros in the slot.

What, however, can be said on behalf of Canada's churches? What argument can be made for public support for them? A few warrant preservation for historical or aesthetic reasons, important elements of our cultural heritage. But most don't.

Evangelicals like to say, however, that the church isn't the building – it's the people. And most Evangelicals build churches accordingly – not as enduring monuments of faith, nor as richly endowed encouragements to worship, but as functional auditoriums, educational facilities, social rooms and the like.

That's fine by me. Such buildings accurately represent our priorities, just as the churches of Europe's past centuries represent the values of their sponsors.

Yet many of us want public support for our church buildings in Canada today. We want favourable tax codes, zoning and parking regulations. We want to be free to serve the hungry in our kitchens and the homeless in our gymnasiums in whatever way we think best.

As Canada continues to move away from its Christian century (1860-1960), however, many Evangelicals are still not prepared to make a public case for this public support.

Growing congregations complain they can't get approval for the bigger parking lots they want, but also can't articulate why their neighbours should put up with dozens or even hundreds more cars moving through residential streets.

Most Evangelicals build churches – not as enduring monuments of faith, nor as richly endowed encouragements to worship, but as functional auditoriums, educational facilities, social rooms and the like.

Socially minded churches want to care for the needy of their cities, but then complain about complying with civic codes of health and public safety.

Worship leaders whine about persecution from "the world" when area residents insist noise bylaws be enforced as the worship band kicks it up to jet engine levels.

Street evangelists claim the protection of free speech when they set up anywhere they like – including leafy residential blocks or quiet city parks – with amplifiers blasting sermons into the ears of fellow citizens who didn't sign up for a gospel rally.

And Christian organizations feel the financial bite of their employees failing to qualify for clerical allowances in income tax when few or none of their employees actually work as pastors.

As Canada approaches its 150th birthday, we Christians need to work with our fellow citizens to forge the

bonds of a better multiculturalism, to shape a new community of diversity that will keep the State from over-regulating our lives while allowing it to do its proper job of framing a context in which we all can flourish. Certain groups such as The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (the publisher of *Faith Today*) are already hard at work in that regard, and we need to support their efforts.

Let's all of us, and particularly leaders of Christian organizations, keep learning how to think publicly. Let's keep putting the shoe on the other foot, turning the tables, making sure we are not asking favours for ourselves that we would not grant fellow Canadians of a different outlook.

There is often much to be said for public benefits to be given and allowances to be made for Christian churches and other

organizations. So let's offer such an argument whenever we can. Few of our churches are lovely relics of a bygone time, but most are vital sites of important community life.

If we can't come up with a good reason for the public to support what we do, we should no longer expect public support. It's as simple as that. **FT**

JOHN STACKHOUSE holds the Sangwoo Youtong Chee chair of theology and culture at Regent College, Vancouver. He is the author of *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (Oxford, 2008).

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