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JULY/AUGUST 2014



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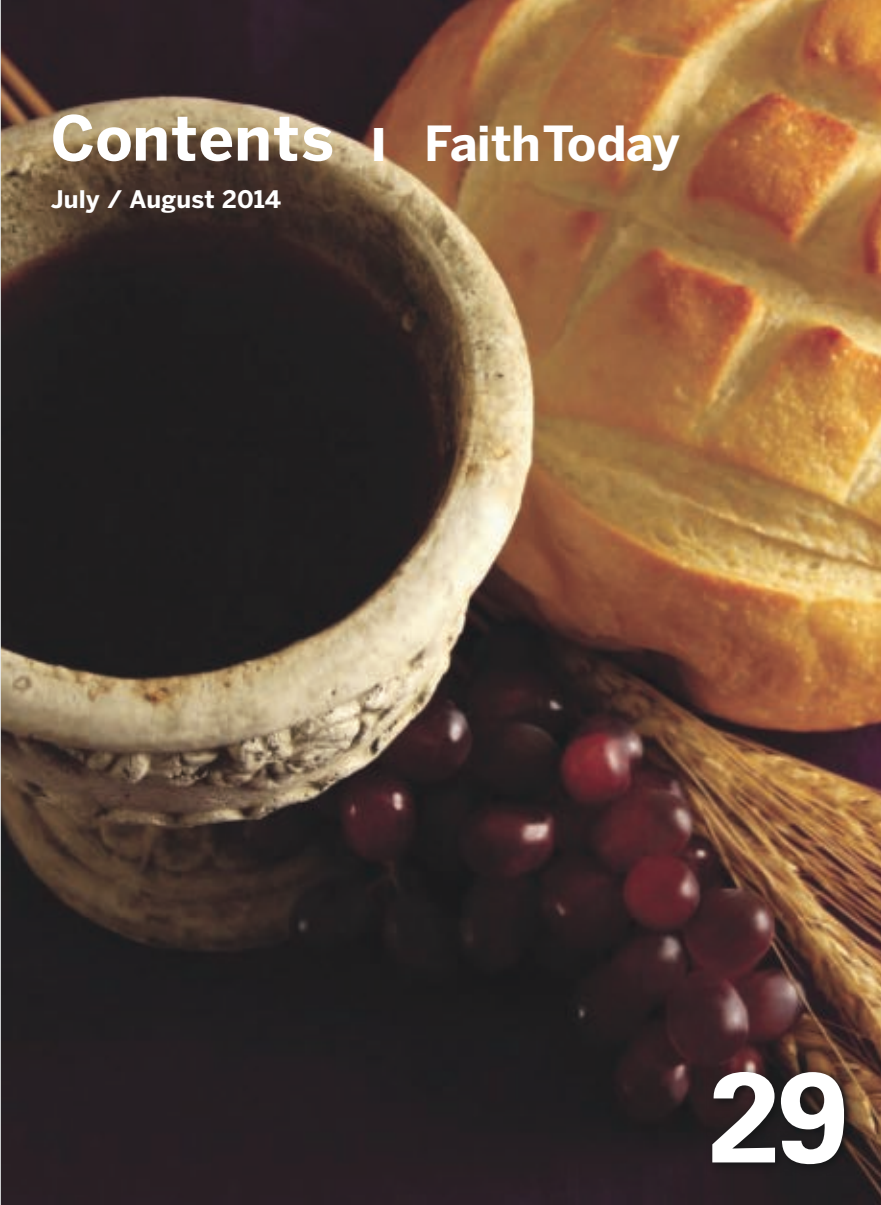
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ONLINE EXTRA



Love In Action youth magazine, issue #5

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Tools for Thinking

Ready? Set? Engage your summer brain and go!

When the Canadian Bible Engagement Study was released, we brainstormed how we could help *Faith Today* readers make sense of the data.

The report (www.theEFC.ca/BibleEngagementStudy) is a troubling examination of how much – or how little – Canadians use the Bible. Even most of us who identify as Christians rarely read it!

But that didn't seem to ring completely true to our experiences with church small groups. Wouldn't those of us who meet weekly with a small group be more likely to engage regularly with Scripture?

Exactly which aspect of small groups makes the difference hasn't been proven. Peer pressure? Deadlines to completing a Bible study? The sheer power of community?

Whatever the combination, we found small groups to be an important story. Read on to find out how they work and – most importantly – why.

Our treatment of soldiers struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was a story longer in the making. We started discussing it in early 2014 when it seemed a week did not go by without the tragic news of soldiers or veterans taking their own lives. We realized we really didn't

understand the nuances of PTSD. We set out to learn and draw out some ways the Canadian Church can help. Let us know what you think of the results.

We believe this issue's entire package of features, news and reviews will get you reading, thinking and maybe even debating. Check out "Evangelicals and the Pope" if you need some dinner party discussion fodder!

As you consider these articles at your leisure this summer, *Faith Today* staff are already deep into the fall issue. We're involved in an exciting

creative process with a designer who is helping us reimagine what *Faith Today* could look like. You'll see the results in the Sep/Oct issue, along with a new tagline: Canada's Christian magazine.

After all, that's what we are. **FT**

This issue will get you reading, thinking and maybe even debating.

BILL FLEDDERUS of Hamilton, Ont., and **KAREN STILLER** of Port Perry, Ont., are senior editors at *Faith Today*. **STEPHEN BEDARD** of Cambridge, Ont., is associate editor (L in above photo). Feel like talking? Discuss these

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Sober Reflection

Re: Shocking Statistics on Bible Reading (May/June 2014)

Your recent article certainly causes sober reflection on the state of Christian faith, discipleship and practice. Rev. Rebecca Brimmer recently provided some insights on this vital subject [at www.faithtoday.ca/RRB].

I cannot help but ponder

the impossibility of a Bible-less Christianity. It appears we are in some measure there, and the results are sadly speaking for themselves, with examples of deceived Christians and obscured truths about the biblical Hebraic roots and foundations of our faith.

Matthew 24:11 warns that “Many false prophets will arise



is less on people with impairments and more on those who could build inclusive spaces, programs and activities, but do not. We are not to create barriers in the first place. We are to include, not exclude, a wider range of human variation – including those who are frail or who do not see, hear or walk well.

Yet, in church we discriminate against people with disabilities with our computers, sound equipment and architecture. *The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* exists to stop such irresponsible cruelty. The silence about this must still grieve the Lord.

John Jay Frank
Waterdown, Ont.

and will mislead many.” Still, God will raise up some to be His voice – His biblical voice – in this and future generations, until Jesus returns.

Eric Malloy
Winnipeg, Man.

Depth of Vision

Re: Evangelical in Quebec (Mar/Apr 2014)

It’s exciting to hear the clarity and depth of vision for a truly indigenous Quebecois church. So, so encouraging!

David Knight
Waterloo, Ont.

Accessibility Needs Improvement

Re: How to Welcome People With Disabilities Into Church (Mar/April 2014)

The Bible’s focus on disability

Review Questioned

Re: Books & Culture (Mar/Apr 2014)

I am troubled by the unfair review of Carolyn Weber’s *Holy Is the Day*. I question why a male reviewer was assigned to evaluate a book clearly aimed at [female] readers.

Weber’s memoir focuses on the aftermath of a traumatic event (a near-death experience during emergency surgery



New Online From Faith Today

Faith Today launched a new website and a weekly blog at www.faithtoday.ca in May. Writers in the print magazine also contribute additional material to the blog.

Recent topics include: “We Just Don’t Get Muslims,” “The Localization of Grace,” “Why Not Just Go With My Gut Instead of Reading the Bible?” and “How to Be Called a Bigot in One Easy Step.”

Visit www.faithtoday.ca today! And watch for the redesign of our print edition coming in September.

Milestones

PHOTO: CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH



Darren Roorda

APPOINTED

Darren Roorda as the Canadian ministries director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a binational denomination of a thousand congregations with 25 per cent in Canada. Rev. Roorda, a pastor in Kitchener, Ont., was a

member of the church’s board of trustees, but resigned prior to being appointed.

ELECTED

Christopher Ferguson as general secretary of the World Communion of

Reformed Churches. This ecumenical organization, based in Hanover, Germany, represents Reformed, Congregational, Presbyterian, Waldensian, United and Uniting churches, most of them in the Global South, while working with a particular focus on justice issues. Rev. Ferguson, a former representative of the World Council of Churches to the United Nations in New York, is a theologian and pastor in the United Church of Canada.

INSTITUTED

The Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh, a uniquely

aboriginal diocese in the Anglican Church of Canada, encompassing over 25 First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario and Northern Manitoba. Rt. Rev. Lydia Mamakwa is its first bishop.

RENAMED

The Professional Association of Christian Counsellors and Psychotherapists is the new name for the former Professional Association of Canadian Christian Counsellors. This group, with headquarters in Saskatchewan, formed in 2001 and includes 250 counsellors across Canada.

without anesthetic while giving birth to twins). The reviewer seems to disparage Weber's statement – "I am a tired mama, a worn-out teacher, a burnt-out writer, a weary wife" – as self-absorption and "problems of the privileged."

He then announces, "On my reading desk are photos placed there to remind me of Guatemalan friends who live in squalour and constant fear," and wonders aloud if "there is, perhaps, a potential danger in not maintaining a larger perspective."

Memoirs are bestsellers because readers find insight and encouragement from others' experiences. If Weber had suddenly started writing about the plight of the developing world, her editor would have removed the material as [being only loosely related] to her assigned topic.

The reviewer acknowledged Weber is "a writer of unusual skill." She deserved better.

Wendy Elaine Nelles
Toronto, Ont.

Faith Today loves to receive your letters. Even when you disagree (or we disagree with your disagreement!), your letters remind us all that we live in evangelicalism's big tent, where there is ample room for many opinions. Visit us at www.facebook.ca/faithtoday to join in on discussions sparked by letters to the editor and more.

AWARDED

Three *Faith Today* articles from 2013 won first place awards in May from the Canadian Church Press: "Social Media for Social Good" (service journalism), "Interview With Rev. Dawn McDonald" (interview) and "Faith Fits With Action for Fashion Designer" (biographical profile). The association includes more than 50 periodicals. *Faith Today* also won second place awards for media reviews and news as well as thirds for a front cover and general excellence in a magazine (see all the winners at the page bottom of www.faithtoday.ca/aboutus).

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Military Christian Fellowship Provides Ministry Opportunity

A loose affiliation of Christians through the Military Christian Fellowship of Canada (MCF) continues to provide community and an opportunity for churches to connect with soldiers.

MCF of Canada (www.mcf-canada.ca) began in the early 1970s as an outgrowth of a United Kingdom-based Christian fellowship, says president Gerry Potter, a retired Royal Canadian Air Force colonel whose service included deployment to Afghanistan. While he wasn't a Christian when he entered the military in 1977, Potter became one in 1983 and spent about 30 years involved with MCF of Canada.

"Wherever I was based, I participated," says Potter. While the MCF of Canada has a formalized executive, it's less structured at the grassroots level, he says. Ministry takes many forms

around the mission "to take the Good News of Jesus Christ to the military community in Canada and abroad."

Potter lists some of the efforts – weekly Bible studies on some Canadian Forces (CF) bases, weekly one-on-one meetings, virtual meetings, times of prayer and encouragement. "Whatever it looks like, as long as Jesus is in the centre, we'll support you and be there for you," says Potter. And, he noted, as CF members move they can connect with the MCF of Canada office for a point of contact in their new location.

MCF of Canada is also careful not to

tread into areas where it doesn't have adequate resources, or other departments or groups are handling it well, such as CF members dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"The chaplains are working on [PTSD] and have a well-thought-out strategy," says Potter. "We don't walk into that area other than being a friend to a military brother or a nonbeliever experiencing it."

He also encourages local churches to adopt, reach out and support the military Christian community. One of his wife's biggest challenges was the lack of understanding by those in the civilian church they attended.

"The complexities [military families] deal with are vast and unique to those not involved," he says. "And it's not that they didn't understand. They didn't make much of an effort to understand the unique struggles she was going through."

"If you live near a base, make it a ministry opportunity. Work with military members in your church." **FT**

—Robert White



PHOTO: SGT KATHERINE GREER-HULME / CANADIAN ARMY

Canadian soldiers participating in military exercises.



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Gerry Potter

Science Conference Bridges the Gap

An upcoming conference organized by the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation (CSCA), American Scientific Association, and Christians in Science will attempt to demonstrate the compatibility between science and religion.

"From Cosmos to Psyche: All Things Hold Together in Christ" (www.cscs.ca) will take place July 25–28 at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont. The title of the conference is inspired by Colossians 1:17, which is actually also McMaster's motto. This will be the first time all three organizations have participated in a conference together in North America.

The conference will touch on multiple scientific disciplines such as physical, life, mind and environmental sciences. The variety is seen in the plenary topics such as "Brave New World" by Megan Best; "Brain, Soul and Psyche: Embodied and in Christ" by Alasdair Coles; and "Evolution, Moral Cognition, and the Question of Human Exceptionalism" by Jeffrey Schloss.

Janet Warren, vice-president of the CSCA, explains that

to allow the widest Christian spectrum, the basic statement of faith for members of the organization is the Nicene Creed.

"There are differences in theology, but everyone is respectful of other views."

What about those who are not scientists? "The great thing about this conference is that it is stimulating, but not elitist," says Warren. "Since there is such a wide range of disciplines represented, no one is an expert in all of them. Speakers don't speak above the level of the audience. You don't have to be a specialized scientist to enjoy the sessions," she says.

The annual conference is not just about science, says Warren. Participants enjoy the worship, fellowship and networking opportunities available when science and faith meet. **FT**

—Stephen Bedard



Christian Groups Jazz It Up in Montreal

Montreal is one of Canada's most culturally vibrant cities, and this summer its renowned International Jazz Festival serves as the backdrop for a joint venture between Youth With a Mission's University of the Nations

(YWAM), Wycliffe Bible Translators and Christian Direction. Arts, Faith and the City is a five-week seminar, running until July 21, focused on the intersection of art, culture and the Christian worldview. Co-ordinator Noémie Jean-Bourgeault says it "will give students

essential tools to understand the history and the roots of the culture they live in."

By the end of the five weeks, according to the seminar's website, students will be equipped to "understand the role that the arts play in a Christian worldview; understand the theological themes informing the

fine arts; articulate a Christian worldview of the arts for one's person and one's congregation; and integrate this perspective for the three primary artistic expressions under study in the course; and appreciate and evaluate these three expressions in the context of an urban missiology."

The first week of the course will be an introduction to the city and the "post-Christian urban context" led by YWAM Montreal director Pierre LeBel. The next two weeks will be the core seminar material presented by Glenn Smith, executive director of Christian Direction. In week four, Wycliffe Bible Translators' Kember Lillo offers an exploration of ethnomusicology in the hopes of fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of music and art hailing from rural and urban areas around the world. The seminar will wrap up with a week looking at applying the material and tools to living a



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Noémie Jean-Bourgeault says the seminar "will give students essential tools to understand the history and the roots of the culture they live in."

"Kingdom lifestyle" as an artist in an urban setting, led by Jean-Bourgeault.

For Jean-Bourgeault, the opportunity for artistically inclined Christians to come together to study and gain these tools is not just an exercise in self-improvement – it's vital to the fabric of the urban community itself.

"This is the only way to build sustainable action steps that seek the well-being of a city in a short- and long-term run. [It's] how to make an effective impact and engage their present in a post-Christian context with their creative gift." **FT** –Ryan Paulsen



Canadian Christian Charities Prepare for Anti-spam Legislation

On July 1 one of the broadest anti-spam laws in the world will come into effect in Canada. While its primary targets are businesses that seek to exploit online communication for ill-gotten gains, Canadian charitable organizations also face challenges when it comes to complying with the new legislation.

"Spam" generally refers to unsolicited emails that offer products or services to massive numbers of potential customers. It also includes more malicious attempts at criminal activities like fraud or identity theft. However, all forms of electronic communication, including phone calls and social media messaging, are included under the umbrella of Canada's Anti-spam Legislation (CASL), if they are primarily sent for commercial purposes. Unless organizations have explicit or implied consent from their recipients, they could face fines reaching into the millions.

While there is an exception written into the legislation that allows charities to send fundraising-related messages to potential donors, the penalties are severe enough that most

nonprofits are scrambling to obtain consent from as many people in their databases as possible. Messages seeking consent are themselves considered commercial, and will be prohibited once the law comes into effect.

The Canadian Council of Christian Charities (CCCC) has issued a "how-to" for their member organizations. John Pellowe, chief executive officer of CCCC, feels that while there is a push to get consent in time, most of their member organizations are in good shape.

"What they're working on now is contacting people while they still can to ask them whether they have permission to continue sending," he says. "It only applies to certain aspects of charities' work, so it's not seen as a huge concern. It is something we can do something about, and there's time to do it."

Organizations are considered to have received implied consent from individuals with whom they have a pre-existing relationship, based on whether there have been any commercial or financial transactions between the two parties within the past two years. The more people that organizations can convince to opt in to future communications, the better.

Although the deadline looms, Pellowe feels that for most organizations there ought not to be a huge rush, since the legislation has been in the works for some time now.

"It's had good coverage over the past year, so it should not be a surprise. It's more a case of 'Are you ready for it?'" says Pellowe. **FT** –Ryan Paulsen

PHOTO: CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHARITIES



John Pellowe says that most of CCCC member organizations are in good shape.

New Association Equips Church and Scholars in Quebec

A new academic association in Quebec is bringing Evangelicals together to serve the local church. Association Axiome (www.associationaxiome.ca) is the brain-child of David Haines, a PhD student in philosophy at Laval University.

"The purpose of Association Axiome is essentially to bring together a group of evangelical Christians who are pursuing academic excellence in their research in order to serve the local church, by providing it with a reasoned defence of the historical Christian faith through the many different means that are available to us," says Haines, who has lived in Quebec since 2005.

Being involved as a volunteer with a church plant near Trois-Rivières opened this scholar's eyes to challenges facing the Church. "Seeing the huge challenges that are being presented to the Church, both as concerns evangelism, and, to be honest, as concerns keeping the church doors open [led to the creation of Association Axiome]," he says.

"Axiome wants to work together with the already existing evangelical associations and seminaries in order to provide solid French apologetics material for the churches and to engage Quebec society," says Haines. He says that an apologetics conference is in the works, and hopes to publish much-needed theological books in French and provide resources such as online philosophy, apologetic and theology articles.

In order to be an active member, the candidate must agree with the Axiome declaration of faith, be an active member of a local church, be recommended by their pastor and hold, or in the process of pursuing, a master's or PhD in their area of expertise. There are currently 16 members of Axiome. **BT**

—Stephen Bedard

Bible for Missions Thrift Stores Celebrate Anniversary and Fruitful Ministry



Groundbreaking of the Halifax store.

Casey Langbroek didn't think Bible for Missions (BFM) thrift stores (www.bfmthriftstores.ca) would survive five years. "I thought, 'This is kind of a fleeting thing.'" But the executive director of Bible League Canada (BLC) – and a founder of the BFM thrift store movement – was proven wrong. Happily.

This year marks 25 years of service for the national chain of stores that donates its gross revenue to BLC. The stores have so far generated almost \$60 million in revenue. Those funds fuel BLC, an organization that provides literacy programs, equips indigenous leaders to plant churches and supports persecuted Christians in more than 40 countries.

BLC works overseas, using Scripture to teach adults literacy, mainly women living in poverty. Passages focus on financial responsibility or human rights. Partway through the year-long program, the gospel is introduced. Most students gain a Grade 5 reading and writing level. Some become followers of Jesus.

More than half the organization's an-

nual operating budget comes from store revenue.

The first BFM store opened in Chilliwack, B.C., in 1989. There are now 43 locations. Three more are scheduled to open this year in Cobourg and Belleville, Ont., and Charlottetown, P.E.I. Volunteers, often recruited from local churches, staff

each store, sometimes with a hired manager. Beyond being a very effective fundraising tool, the stores also minister to Canadians, says Langbroek. Some stores provide vouchers for goods to community organizations that give them to families who need to buy things like clothes at the stores. Some BFM stores donate linens to homeless shelters, or give items to people

who have lost their homes because of fire. More than one million people decided to follow Jesus last year as a result of BLC's ministry, says Paul Richardson, president of BLC. "That living Word of God placed in their hands has now been placed in their hearts, and they're transformed." **BT**

—Meagan Gillmore



Casey Langbroek

PHOTO: WWW.ASSOCIATIONAXIOME.CA



David Haines

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Note-worthy

Father Wins Right to Have Son Exempted From Religious Programs at Catholic School

A Toronto-area father has won the right to have his son exempted from all religious programs at a local Roman Catholic high school. "The court's decision means my family will no longer have to [live] with this prolonged anguish we have been put through any longer," said the father, Oliver Erazo. The decision could set a precedent across the province.



WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

Social Isolation a Threat for Seniors

Social isolation is a risk factor in the development of chronic illness and a strong

risk factor in early death, according to a new report by the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. Research shows that social isolation is as strong a factor in early death as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and consuming alcohol. It is also a factor in the development of chronic illnesses such as "chronic lung disease, arthritis, impaired mobility and depressive symptoms."

Supreme Court of Canada Rules Against Anglican Parishioners



The Supreme Court of Canada has refused to grant the parishioners of St. Aidan's Community Church in

Windsor, Ont., leave to appeal, dismissing their case with costs. The group of about a hundred broke away from the Anglican Church of Canada in 2008 and joined the Anglican Network in Canada, and went to court over ownership of the church building on Wyandotte St. E. It is one of several Anglican parishes across Canada that has sued to gain control of their church buildings after splitting from the Anglican Church of Canada. None of the parishioners' lawsuits were successful.

Canadian Economist Testifies in Michigan on Same-Sex Marriage Law

Douglas Allen, a British Columbia economist, was called to testify on behalf of the State of Michigan to preserve its ban on gay marriage. Allen was grilled by prosecuting attorneys about statistical studies



PHOTO: WWW.SFU.CA

Douglas Allen

purporting to show that same sex parenting does not compare to its heterosexual equivalent. The court ruled that same-sex marriage should be permitted, calling it an "absurdity" to ban marriages on the grounds that they might yield "sub-optimal" kids.

Fires Destroy Two GTA Churches

Aurora United Church in Aurora, Ont., and St. Elias the Prophet Ukrainian Catholic Church in Brampton, Ont., were both destroyed by fire shortly before Easter. The fire at Aurora United was caused by roofers working with boiling tar. The cause of the fire at St. Elias is still under investigation. Both churches have pledged to rebuild.

Church Celebrates Holy Humour Sunday

Members of First-Wesley United Church in Thunder Bay celebrated Holy Humour Sunday in May. Church members were encouraged to laugh during the service and tell jokes. Some wore wigs, hockey jerseys and clown costumes. The sermon was spent practising laughing yoga. Reverend Scott Gale said the day shows members "that laughter and humour should be part of worship, and should be part of our faith as well." **FT** —Darryl Dash

Hemorrhaging Faith Continues Impact at Briercrest

Engage 2014, a conference hosted in March by Briercrest College and Seminary in Caronport, Sask., continued to examine the conclusions of *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church*, the 2012 study commissioned by the EFC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Roundtable. Dubbed a Christ-centred, intergenerational, experiential conference retreat, Engage 2014 welcomed participants from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, who were asked to attend in pairs – one a millennial, or younger than 34 years old, and the other older, or 34 plus.

In a conference postmortem, organizers found this request actually kept some from attending. "It was ironic that those wanting to attend a

conference meant to stimulate intergenerational conversation didn't even have a relationship to start the conversation," says David Guretzki, Briercrest's professor of theology, church and public life. "People who most needed the conference didn't have a relationship."

Engage 2014 was part of Briercrest's three-year commitment to deal with the issues raised by *Hemorrhaging Faith*. An invitation-only think-tank in 2013 kicked off the effort. The intergenerational dialogue at this year's conference led participants and organizers to conclude that the church is facing what they call a crisis of ecclesiology.

"We need to get back to the fundamental questions of 'What is the Church?' and 'How should the Church carry out her mission?'" says Guretzki. "Each genera-



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"We need to get back to the fundamental question of 'What is the Church?'" says David Guretzki.

tion brings cultural assumptions to the table, assuming them to be theologically valid. Some may be, some may not be. But it's not at all clear what is cultural and what is ground-level, bed-rock theology."

Guretzki says participants' collective desire to keep the intergenerational dialogue going – including a look at what's been tried and what's working – will form part of the groundwork for the next Engage conference, slated for March 2015. A focus on how

to maintain that dialogue during the transitions from youth to young adulthood, from young adulthood to middle adulthood, etc., will also be a priority. **FT**

—Robert White

Do you have a Kingdom Matters story to share? Email us at editor@faithtoday.ca.





Forgiveness and Healing

The RCMP funeral in Moncton was a profound experience we can all learn from.

The city was sombre. From airport staff to restaurant waiters, everyone was pleasant and friendly, but also subdued. Moncton was preparing to host thousands of police officers, gathered to mourn the loss of three fallen RCMP officers. The violence had rocked the city, and many were experiencing the trauma of the shootings in otherwise quiet and safe streets.

As I flew into Moncton that June morning, the flight was full of police from across the country coming to show their solidarity and heartfelt sympathy. I sat beside a pregnant RCMP officer travelling with her five-year-old daughter. The officer, stationed in northern Saskatchewan but raised in Moncton, told me she joined the RCMP to make a difference in the lives of the people in the community she serves.

She says she still looks forward to going to work each day.

The memorial service was a tribute to the lives and passion of the three – David Ross, Douglas Larche and Fabrice Gevaudan. All were dedicated to their families as husbands and fathers, and to their work of serving and protecting others. One was Catholic, one Evangelical, one spiritualist – for each, their faith played an integral part in their lives and their work.

The loss of the three will be felt for a lifetime by family, friends and the community.

The city came together in the days between the senseless murders, the arrest and the memorial service. The city too will require time to heal from the trauma. For some who witnessed the shooting firsthand or were locked down for fear of death, life will never be the same.

In the midst of the neighbourhood where the murders occurred stands St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Its pastor is Martin Kreplin, a member of the board of directors

of the EFC. That fateful night there were about 40 people meeting in the church when the shootings took place, in proximity to the church property. For over four hours the 40 were locked in the church, and then, when deemed safe by the RCMP, they were allowed to leave – two by two.

Some in the neighbourhood witnessed the shootings first hand, and others hid in their basements fearing for their lives.

Kreplin is trained in critical incident stress management, as is his wife Eleanor, who is also trained in trauma and works as a therapeutic counselor. After the "all clear" was issued they immediately began working with their neighbours, helping people gathered in small groups to process their experiences at a physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual level.

"For such a time is this" were words Eleanor read one morning in the Book of Esther – a fitting verse to describe this uniquely trained and located couple who provided the very care and support needed.

Martin Kreplin preached on the need for forgiveness that Sunday. Yes, he said, it may be too soon for some to make the transition to forgiveness, but the alternative is letting

the anger fester into bitterness, which is a cancer to the soul.

It is forgiveness that enables us to begin to love despite what was done, and reach out in compassion and not judgement. Love does not mean the one who hurt us should go unpunished, but it does mean we should seek to model ourselves after Jesus, who loved us in spite of what we do or say.

Love and judgement are not contradictory. Rather, justice is a dimension of the love of God, and how we love one another.

The city seemed lighter after the service, a vital part of the healing process. But healing will take much longer. Kreplin pointed out to me that the city motto is *Resurgo*, "I rise again." May this be true.

Throughout this summer and fall, let's remember to pray for the families and friends of the two wounded officers, the three fallen officers and for so many impacted by the tragedy of their deaths. Let's take time to thank those who serve us and keep us safe. And let's pray for those like the Kreplins who minister to their neighbours, giving comfort and hope. **FT**

The city will require time to heal from the trauma.



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 www.theEFC.ca.

BRUCE J. CLEMENGER is president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Please pray for our work. You can also support it financially at www.theEFC.ca/donate or toll-free at 1-866-302-3362.

Prostitution Law Unveiled

The EFC responded to the unveiling of the Canadian government's proposed new prostitution laws in early June.

"It's great to see the government take seriously the task of crafting new laws to ensure that prostitution is not decriminalized," said EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger. "Our desire is to ensure vulnerable and at-risk persons are protected, and that all forms of sexual exploitation be eliminated. The new legislation will go a long way toward achieving those objectives." Get the latest details at www.theEFC.ca/prostitution.

Quebec Legalizes Euthanasia

In June Quebec's National Assembly passed Bill 52, which legalizes euthanasia under the name "medical aid in dying." All healthcare institutions in Quebec now must develop policies for responding to adults who request help to die. For the EFC's response, see www.theEFC.ca/euthanasia.


Major Study on Bible Engagement Released

The EFC, along with its partners in the Canadian Bible Forum, have released a major new study looking at Bible engagement in Canada. Learn more and find links to download the report at www.theEFC.ca/BibleEngagementStudy.

EFC Denominational Leaders Meet

Bruce Clemenger participated in a gathering of denominational leaders in April. Twice a year leaders from EFC affiliate denominations meet together in a peer-led gathering to pray together and discuss issues of common concern.

Bruce and Tracy Clemenger Address Adoption on TV

Bruce Clemenger and his wife Tracy were interviewed on *Context with Lorna Dueck*. The show featured Governor General David Johnston. They spoke on why adoption and fostering is a social and justice issue for Canadian children and youth. Check out the EFC's www.AdoptionSunday.com. 

Meet the EFC Board: Bill Fietje

As part of the 50th anniversary celebrations at The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Faith Today has been introducing members of the board of directors (listed at www.theEFC.ca/board). Bill Fietje is chair of the board and president of the Associated Gospel Churches.

FT: What made you want to sit on the EFC board?

BF: I have had a long and positive relationship with the EFC since the early 1990s. Sitting on various EFC roundtables and meeting excellent leaders engaged my mind in the opportunities and challenges of Evangelicals in Canada. I could see that being on this board would have the greatest amount of impact for the work of Christ in this nation. It is an honour to serve.

FT: What's the most important thing the EFC is doing these days, in your opinion?

BF: The role the EFC plays in being a collaborative voice for Evangelicals today is of most importance. The EFC listens to Christian lead-

ers across Canada and represents that voice to the very highest levels in our nation. The EFC is proactive in mobilizing resolutions around issues of human trafficking, prostitution and abuse of all types against children, women and minorities. In addition, the issue of religious freedom here in Canada and around the world is an issue the EFC takes very seriously.

The two recent research studies, Hemorrhaging Faith and Bible Engagement, co-sponsored with others, have captured the attention of Christian minds in Canada. These studies have awakened many to the need for theological clarity around what it means to be a committed Christian in Canada.

FT: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing Canada right now?


BF: The Canadian Church has been increasingly isolating itself from the mainstream of Canadian thought. In doing so, the Church has not presented to our society a holistic and full gospel at all. It has refined



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Bill Fietje

the truth of the gospel to an individual escape from hell and entrance into heaven. The gospel certainly is about that deliverance, but the gospel is also a work and a word about reconciliation of the world to God. The evangelical church in Canada has for far too long lived on the margins of our society. Now Evangelicals must engage our society with meaningful involvement at every level. The Church needs to awake and present and live a gospel that transforms our post-Christian society through faith.

FT: Thanks, Bill. May God bless your service on the board and with the AGC. 



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James Kim

James Kim is executive director of **Pioneers Canada**, a church-planting mission organization engaged with people who have the least access to the gospel around the world (www.pioneers.ca).

situation. I usually give three books to any leader that reports to me: *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* by Jim Collins (Harper Business, 2001); *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen (Image Books/Doubleday, 1994); and *Spiritual Leadership: A Commitment to Excellence for Every Believer* by J. Oswald Sanders (Moody Publishers, 2007). These three books have shaped my own understanding of leadership.

What is your best leadership advice?

Mistakes are inevitable. Therefore, take risks and don't be afraid of failure. However, learn from your mistakes and try not to make the same mistake twice.

What is the mission that drives your organization?

Nearly 3 billion people are considered unreached. Our passion is not only to see evangelistic churches planted among those who have the least opportunity

How do you disconnect from your work at the end of the day, or at the end of an overseas trip?

I picked up gardening, and have learned so much about leadership through this hobby. It also allows me to spend time with our three young daughters and teach them life lessons while having fun.

Who are your heroes?

Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, was the chief defender of Trinitarianism against the Arian heresy prevalent among Christians in his day. He was known as Athanasius Against the World – because he stood for truth against his own boss (Arius), a majority of the bishops of the early Church and powerful Roman emperors. My heroes are people like Athanasius, who are so in love with Jesus and His word that they stand up for Him despite threats of persecution, imprisonment, exile and death. Pioneers Canada is looking for modern-day Athanasiuses.

What leadership book do you give out most often?

There are many good leadership books out there. I consider what a person needs for their age, maturity and

opportunity to hear the gospel, but also for them to equip and send out their own missionaries. Since most of those who have yet to hear are in places difficult for missionaries to enter, we use innovative means and methods to minister.

How do you view Pioneers' relationship with the Canadian Christian community?

We are developing synergistic partnerships with local churches and organizations, looking for ways that each partner can contribute their unique resources, experience, and expertise to co-labour in God's redemptive plan. One way we do this has been through our Church Partners' Forum events, engaging with church leaders to discuss and take practical steps in taking the gospel to the hardest places together.

What are the most pressing global issues for the Church to respond to in the next few years?

To engage in bringing lost people into God's Kingdom. One way is to develop and send out biblically sound men and women who are culturally adept, and growing in character and intimacy with Christ. 

New Prostitution Laws

By Julia Beazley

What should we make of the government's proposals in Bill C-36?

In June the Federal Government proposed new prostitution laws for Canada. The laws were tabled in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in the *Bedford* case, which found three prostitution laws in the Criminal Code to be unconstitutional.

Bill C-36, the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, directly targets the demand for prostitution. In this regard, the bill represents a paradigm shift in law – and eventually, we hope, in public attitude when it comes to prostitution.

- The preamble of the bill recognizes that:
- prostitution is inherently exploitive and dangerous
 - the objectification of the human body and commodification of human sexuality is a social harm
 - discouraging prostitution is important to protecting the dignity and equality of all Canadians
 - it is “important to denounce and prohibit the purchase of sexual services because it creates a demand for prostitution.”

This shift in thinking alone is worthy of celebration. The model proposed draws from proven legal approaches pioneered in Sweden and successfully implemented in other European countries, but tailored to Canadian realities.

Specifically, this legislation has three stated objectives:

- protecting those who sell their sexual services from exploitation
- protecting communities from the harms caused by prostitution
- reducing the demand for sexual services.

So, what are the highlights?

The bill proposes a new offence prohibiting the purchase of sex, anywhere. If passed, the purchase of sexual services would be, for the first time, illegal in Canada.

The sex trade operates according to simple market principles of supply and

demand. As long as there is a demand for paid sexual services, there will be pimps, gangs, traffickers and organized crime ready and willing to guarantee a steady supply.

With this proposed change in law, the government has recognized that putting an end to sexual exploitation means we need to focus our efforts on eliminating the demand for paid sex.

Research shows the vast majority of prostituted persons are not engaging in prostitution because of free informed choice, and would get out if they felt they could. The model proposed in Bill C-36 recognizes this reality, and targets the individuals who put women in prostitution and those who keep them there.

This is good news.

In crafting the legislation, the government has taken a big-picture perspective and courageously challenged the belief that men are entitled to paid sexual access to women's bodies – or that any person's body can be considered a consumer good to be bought, sold or traded.

The bill also maintains and enhances prohibitions against pimping or profiting from the sexual exploitation of another person, as well as making it an offence to advertise the sale of sexual services of others in print media or on the Internet.

Most significantly, the bill shifts how we view those who are prostituted – in the spirit and intent of law they are no longer seen as nuisances but as vulnerable individuals. So, except in specific circumstances, they are given immunity from criminal penalty.

The proposed laws turn the previous understanding of prostitution on its head. Where, historically, those who are prostituted have borne the weight of our prostitution laws, under Bill C-36 buyers



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Julia Beazley

and pimps will bear most of that weight. Hopefully, that intent will be upheld when it comes to enforcement.

Criminal laws are not merely penal, they give expression to the social norms that undergird a society. Criminal laws

both express and reinforce the basic commitments that bind a society together.

In this way, the law is a teacher.

The changes proposed in Bill C-36 will create a legacy for generations to come – generations of children who will grow up understanding that human bodies are not commodities to be bought and sold.

Bill C-36 is intended to be part of a two-pronged government approach. In addition to legal reform, the Government has made a commitment to support programs that assist individuals in exiting prostitution. This will be critical to the success of this new model.

Ending prostitution will not happen simply or quickly because of a change in the law. There is still much work to be done. But a fundamental change in law and attitude such as this bill proposes will help, making it clear that in Canada we will not tolerate or condone sexual exploitation.

The bill isn't perfect, and the EFC will be looking to speak to how it might be improved when it is sent to committee for study. But it is a very significant step in the right direction. If you agree, write or visit your Member of Parliament and let them know. **FT**

JULIA BEAZLEY of Ottawa is a policy analyst at the EFC's Centre for Faith and Public Life. She blogs at www.theEFC.ca/activateCFPL. Please pray for the work of the EFC. Financial support is welcome at www.theEFC.ca/donate or toll-free at 1-866-302-3362.

Why Small Groups Matter

According to the Canadian Bible Engagement Study, a huge percentage of Canadians who read their Bibles every day also go to a small group, usually every week. Here's why small groups matter and a look inside how many groups work.

By Alex Newman



It really was a dark and stormy night in early May. From subway entrances on the four corners of one of the busiest intersections in downtown Toronto, people streamed onto slick sidewalks, then dispersed in all directions, huddled under umbrellas or building overhangs.

A few headed toward a high rise condo, buzzed in by a concierge unconcerned they didn't sign the register. He's clearly used to these Wednesday nights. For five years a group has met here for a small group they call home church, just one of 17 in the downtown campus of The Meeting House (the Brethren in Christ church known for being for people not into church). As lightning cut the evening sky, illuminating a mass of high

rise towers all around, people crowded into Brent and Carol Babcock's 22nd-floor condo. They hugged each other hello, grabbed snacks from the kitchen island and found seats in the living room. From knapsacks came bibles, notebooks, and a photocopied sheet with a list of questions related to the previous Sunday sermon.

On this night the discussion ranged from free will and choice, enslavement to sin, the book of Jeremiah, the nature of suffering, predestination and omnipotence. Questions were raised. Would my son exist if I hadn't made the choice to marry his father? How does eternal versus temporal fit? Is God ever surprised by our actions?

As the evening wore on, the discussion deepened



PHOTO: WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

while the group wrestled with topics that impact their lives.

“Where else in our culture can you get together to talk about these kinds of deep questions?” asks Rick Hiemstra, research director for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), a key player in the recently released Canadian Bible Engagement Study, sponsored by the EFC and the Canadian Bible Forum. “Increasingly we live alone with our thoughts, consuming info via podcasts or online. Face to face, there is accountability. There’s a chance that others might ask if all is well with you, or may even challenge you if your life is grossly out of step. Small groups allow you to dig and engage in ways that not even church can, because you can still tune out in church.”

Brent Babcock moved downtown with his wife Carol seven years ago, started attending The Meeting House (MH), then later hosted and led a small group. Now an associate pastor at MH, he says the real value of home churches is the safety to “work out life, even for those with no faith. We sit in a circle and discuss together. It’s not someone teaching or lecturing, and by the end of the night we take away things that actually apply in our lives.”

In fact, MH annual surveys reveal that 92 per cent who attend a small group say they’re growing in their faith. “Sunday morning is absolutely beneficial and important for the community,” says Nate Vawser, lead pastor of the downtown site of MH. “But when we face each other and talk about what this teaching means to us,

sharing what we're struggling with, the journey we are on, both trusting and challenged by the people in our home church, that's when we see transformation take place."

His observations jive with the Canadian Bible Engagement Study. The study – making waves with its observations that the majority of Canadian Christians do not regularly read the Bible – discovered that in small groups relationships are nurtured, and conversations about the Bible's meaning are encouraged. And people who talk about the Bible more, read it more.

Rob McDowell is the pastor responsible for small groups at Deep Water (Wesleyan) Church in Halifax. Small groups also have a positive impact on the life of the church itself, he says. While Sunday morning encourages mingling, it's not necessarily an environment that promotes spiritual growth. "We're driven by Sunday morning numbers, we program for it, talk about our success or failure around that. The myth of church is that we know a lot about people, but we don't really know them."



PHOTO: SHELBY MCCONNELL



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■ Clockwise from left: Rick Hiemstra, Aubrey Krahn and Nate Vawser. "Increasingly we live alone with our thoughts, consuming info via podcasts or online. Face to face, there is accountability," says Hiemstra.

Small groups, he feels, can help a church along in that maturation process. Deep Water's model of spiritual maturity includes holiness, living intentionally and missionally outside Sunday mornings, giving generously, spiritual discipline and living in community with each other. They believe small groups to be instrumental in helping people grow those characteristics.

But even small groups have to tread lightly in some cases and sensitivity is required. McDowell points out that the Church hasn't maintained its position in the city centres, which have grown rapidly in the past two decades. Consequently, there are increasing numbers of unchurched people. "When the unchurched come to an urban church, which is a big step in itself," McDowell says, "and they're faced with going to the home of someone they don't know to talk about something they're not sure they believe in with people, that's intimidating."

The EFC's Rick Hiemstra believes there's an additional benefit to small groups – the opportunity for God to speak to us through others. "When someone else's point of view can change yours, that is profound because your willingness to hear through someone else is radically different from what happens in culture, where truth is internalized and intrinsic only to me. The idea that truth could come from outside of myself, either from the Bible or from another person, is what a good small group can achieve."

What Small Groups Study

The Meeting House has a structured format with specific questions and discussion topics related to the Sunday sermon. Winnipeg's Church of the Rock, on the other hand,

Guide to a Great Small Group

- Keeping the numbers to no more than 12 ensures a small enough group to develop close ties. Anything over 12 can lead to discussions that aren't as well focused. However, if a leader is extremely effective, they will have higher numbers and will likely be able to steer the discussion.
- Whether your small group chooses to discuss the Sunday sermons, or follow a DVD series, books of faith, or particular book of the Bible, make sure to devise a reading plan – what to read and/or watch in preparation and possibly a list of discussion topics or questions. This helps each group member know what to expect to discuss, and also encourages daily Bible reading.
- Weekly small group meetings foster the kind of close relationships that ensure people feel safe enough to really grapple with the subject matter, and to know that no question is too dumb to ask.
- Meeting in homes is traditional – this is how the early Church met – but some churches have found that newcomers, especially those who are unchurched, can feel intimidated going to the home of someone they don't know. As a solution, some have started opening the church for small groups.
- It's important to have a leader who can guide a discussion without "lecturing" or instructing. Most churches offer initial training, especially in practical leadership topics, as well as ongoing coaching either through workshops or mentors. **FT** –Alex Newman

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Small groups matter according to Bible Engagement Study

	Canadians who call themselves Evangelical	All Canadians
Belong to a small group which meets regularly for worship and/or prayer	 1 in 4	 1 in 20
Talk to others about the Bible outside of religious services	 1 in 3	 1 in 20
Attend religious services	 2 in 5	 1 in 6

goes for a range of content – Christian topical books, a DVD or sermon series, or books of the Bible. To ensure consistency, church leaders suggest topics, but remain open to suggestions from the individual groups.

Deep Water Church in Halifax began life as a small group of 35, but as the church grew a small group ministry was needed. Initially, groups discussed only the Sun-

day sermon. Now they have branched out for variety, but use sermon-based content for at least one of the three small group semesters that start in September, January and May. Rob McDowell, pastor responsible for small groups, says following the sermon creates unity in the church. “You can still talk to someone at church not in your group and be on the same page.”

When Small Groups Take on a Life of Their Own

In 2004, John Pritchard had a midlife crisis of sorts. A pastor with 27 years’ experience under his belt, he could feel a growing discontent with church as we do it in North America and was “seriously rethinking church.” He resigned his position and took his family off to South Africa, in search of a different vision. “There God opened my eyes to the freedom, joy and intense passion of following the Lord in spite of material privation. I decided I wanted to be part of such a church that follows Him so simply but so passionately.”

When Pritchard and his family returned to Canada a year or so later, he connected with Henry Schorr, senior pastor of Centre Street Evangelical Mis-

sionary Church in Calgary, a congregation growing so fast it needed to launch satellite campuses. Pritchard wasn’t interested in that, however. He wanted instead to experiment with a model that would “live this life of Christ out.”

It seemed to him and to Schorr that home church was the best model. The move was a radical one for a megachurch – at roughly 8,000 attenders, Centre Street (CS) is Canada’s largest church. In addition to its regular small groups, CS launched a home church ministry, The Edge, which operates separately from the church. In fact, of the 350 people who attend The Edge home churches, Pritchard figures only a handful attend on Sunday mornings

as well. What began in 2006 with four house churches has now swelled to about 25 in Calgary, with connections to four others in Vancouver and one in Medicine Hat, and plans to start ones in Salmon Arm, B.C., and Virden, Man.

Not surprisingly – given how the ministry began – one of the core values is discernment. “It’s about hearing God’s voice and doing it,” Pritchard says. “I know what all our house churches are teaching, but I haven’t dictated any of it.”



John Pritchard

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When Small Groups Meet

Meeting weekly is the best way to foster the kind of relationships that encourage safe discussion of deep topics, but carving out the time can be daunting. That's why every 18 months Winnipeg's Church of the Rock suspends all church programming except small groups for 40 days, and asks each member to commit to a weekly group. "Committing to a year can be overwhelming and many are inclined to pass," says Aubrey Krahn, pastor in charge of small groups. "But everyone seems able to do it for six weeks."

Where Small Groups Meet

Because its members come from all over the city, Deep Water's small groups meet primarily in homes and apartments in their own neighbourhood. This is typical. "We want to be close enough that a snowstorm wouldn't prevent us from meeting," explains Rob McDowell.

That's a principle McDowell picked up from Randy Frazee's *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community* (Zondervan, 2001), which told how Frazee challenged people to sell their homes and move closer to the church. Frazee also suggested small groups choose

In small groups relationships are nurtured, and conversations about the Bible's meaning are encouraged.

to gather at the home with the biggest front lawn, to be visible and better equipped to reach out and connect in an organic way.

How Small Groups Are Led

When a small group ministry starts out, leaders must come from the congregation, but once the groups are underway, most churches find that leaders "raise up" new leaders. At Deep Water a leader starts in a small group, then serves as an apprentice before going on to lead their own group. In addition to ongoing – monthly – informal coaching, they meet with other leaders quarterly.

Because newcomers find it hard to break into existing small groups, Aubrey Krahn says

the Rock's constant start-ups allow new members to enter a new group comfortably. Training consists of three 90-minute sessions to teach practical and fundamental leadership methods, with additional training offered during monthly dinner meetings. **FT**

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

Even so, there's a lot of sharing going on – leaders eat together at least once a month and discuss what they're learning and doing. Individual house churches hold events together. Each house church, besides once-a-week fellowship, prayer and worship, gets together informally for parties or dinner out – anything that builds relationships, because following Jesus into people's lives is one of the Edge's mission statements.

"We are doing life and mission together," says Pritchard.

Thanks to the strong multicultural component of The Edge, children are always included. And it can be noisy, Pritchard says. "But we want our kids growing up to believe that church is extended family, aunts and uncles who care about us. It's noisy, yes, but it's

life and we have to come to terms with that."

What's unique is the full support – financial and otherwise – and complete freedom The Edge receives from Centre St. "It's risky but has to be that way," says Pritchard. "We have people who will never attend traditional church. Some are hurt or skeptical, but still want to know God and aren't interested in going to traditional church to find Him. It's not about being angry with conventional church, either – many feel there's a better, simpler way to do this."

It's a principle that Centre Street understands – they initially committed to just a year. It's been eight years. "They give us freedom and aren't looking for Sunday morning increases in return," Pritchard says. **FT** –Alex Newman

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The Walking Wounded

How our soldiers struggle with war trauma and what the Church can do.

By Karen Stiller

Lieutenant-Colonel Chris Linford of Sooke, B.C., now retired, was first injured in Rwanda in 1994. It took ten years to diagnose his injury – a wound made worse by that time through neglect and being hurt again and again, most recently in Afghanistan. Injury on injury.

Embedded shrapnel, a limb blown off, a bullet shot through, all those might have been simpler to name and therefore to heal.

Linford's injuries were internal – blows to the mind, heart, spirit, imagination and memory that resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

Linford can pinpoint when his injury first occurred – a word he uses very deliberately.

"I think the correct terminology when talking about PTSD is an injury. The highly emotionally charged events that I witnessed and participated in caused this to happen to me," says Linford. "To me, that is in the same category as if I was walking along and someone took a shot at me and hit me square in the chest. That is an injury as well. You can develop PTSD from one single exposure to a single trauma."

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide – more than 800,000 slaughtered in one of the ugliest bruises on our world's heart. Back in 1994, many of us couldn't even bear to watch an entire story about it on *The National*. It could give you a nightmare and leave a bad taste in your mouth for days to come.

Imagine being there.

"I was at the height of my professional competence. I was a nursing officer, a trauma nurse very good at my job," says Linford. "I was driving a vehicle with my reconnaissance partners. We were coming up a hill around a corner. I noticed a dark fluid running down the road. I assumed it was oil. But then I saw a man lying face



Lieutenant-Colonel Chris Linford witnessed and participated in highly emotionally charged events. Inset: At Kandahar Airbase Afghanistan, 2009.

SUPPLIED PHOTOS

down on the road and realized it was blood coming from him. We could see he had been run over by a vehicle. He had a tread mark on his back. He was still alive, but most definitely fatally injured. We moved him as a team and tried to give him a little bit of dignity as he died."

As they tended to the dying man, Linford noticed two other men, probably in their early 20s, "essentially black skin over bone. They were malnourished, dehydrated, starving to death."

Linford moved to help them. His boss

said no. It was too late, for the starving men and for the Canadian crew. They were dying. So was the light – and every time the sun set during the Rwandan genocide meant hell was about to break out again.

"I felt hopelessness and helplessness at the same time. We could not be exposed at night or we would jeopardize our mission. It wasn't a huge trauma from the perspective of someone blowing up. But I had been trained as a nurse, had been a soldier for ten years by then, and to be told to turn our backs on people who were dying – I had a hard time coming to grips

with that in my life. I had to essentially ignore what my true beliefs were.”

Linford returned to his vehicle, invisible tread marks running down his back. He had just been run over by Rwanda.

When Your Heart Turns to Wax

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me,” wrote King David in Psalm 22:14. King David had some kind of PTSD, believes Major Denis Bujold. Bujold is the lead practitioner for clinical chaplains in the Canadian Armed Forces (which groups Christian chaplains together with chaplains from other religions at www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-support-services/chaplaincy.page).

He and his team minister to soldiers diagnosed with PTSD. The chaplains who work within the seven major operational and trauma stress support centres across Canada bring the balm of spiritual presence to those who request it.

Bujold is a pastoral associate, a counsellor and a trauma therapist. “We are doing pastoral counselling with people diagnosed with PTSD. Our main focus as pastoral counsellors is to address spiritual issues and morale issues.” There are a few of those. “Many will say, ‘I believe in God, but I’m angry with God right now,’ and ‘If there is a God, why is He permitting these things to happen?’ All of these people are in some kind of anger toward God. They will never say it explicitly, but you will feel there is some kind of guilt around that, and they are struggling with it.”

Some of the soldiers Bujold and his team are counselling still believe, “but they aren’t able to make any kind of connection or find any meaning through that. Where was Christ at that time? If Christ is my Saviour, He was supposed to be there for me.”

With clients questioning their faith and open to talking about it, Bujold says, “It is very easy to start with the Bible and bring out some examples of people struggling with some kind of PTSD, like King David crying out to God.” It is never just Bujold and the client in the room, he says. “It’s me, the client, and Christ and the Holy Spirit. It’s the work of the team, and I am on the team with Christ.”

Come Back Safely

Derrick Nearing was actually in church in Pembroke, Ont., when he realized he really was in trouble. Holding his infant daughter, singing the hymn “Gift of Finest Wheat,” he looked down to see his daughter’s face replaced by a young black child he had tended as a medic with the Canadian Armed Forces in Somalia. The child had died.

Nearing wept. He knew he needed help. And he finally asked for it.

Asking is the excruciatingly difficult part.

“Sometimes guys don’t want to come forward because they think their career will be in jeopardy. Sometimes they’re embarrassed,” says Nearing.

But “When you get to that level of honesty, you can begin to heal,” explains Chris Linford. “It is a macho environment we

are in, and the women are some of the toughest soldiers there are. It’s hard to get all warm and fuzzy within that. You fear the judgement of people.

“That was certainly my life for about ten years after Rwanda, because I was so worried I’d be judged as a failure and weak, everything I didn’t want to be. It was a really tough place to go.”

The help is there for soldiers, both men say – and with wait times significantly less than for the general population seeking equivalent care. But it takes as much courage as a soldier can muster to become that vulnerable and ask for help for an invisible mental or spiritual wound.

“I suffered for 14 years. When I was diagnosed, it’s like a blind lifted. I was like the diabetic who doesn’t know they are diabetic for 14 years. I functioned, but I struggled,” says Nearing. Over the phone he recites part of the Medic’s Prayer. “Care and protect the soldiers you serve. Care and protect each other. Care and protect yourself. Come back safely.”

What Church and Community Can Do

“The church community has a great role to play in supporting people with PTSD, especially if they are still practising their

faith,” says Bujold. “The social support is crucial. People with PTSD have a tendency to isolate themselves. If they are able to have some support from a church, they will be less inclined to isolate, or at least be involved with other people and be supported by a community of faith.”

But that community, cautions Bujold, must have as its model Christ, who, when the woman caught in adultery was brought to him said, “Is anybody condemning you? Well, I’m not. Go and sin no more.”

Canada’s Chaplain General John Fletcher says, “I think every one of us in

“Sometimes guys don’t want to come forward because they think their career will be in jeopardy.”

the country have a heightened awareness of the issues and a heightened desire to be a resource for responding positively to families who are struggling, to be beacon and bearers of

hope. I think upholding the military community and those who serve them in prayer is one of the things we deeply value.”

Remember, says Fletcher, “A good chunk of the men and women who served in Afghanistan are reservists. They go back to working in communities. There is a tremendous need to provide care and outreach to them wherever they live and work. In most of our larger centres and some of our smaller, there are reserve units. [But] we often don’t know much about them. What’s the avenue for connectivity between those local congregations and what goes on?”

Mike Blais is president and founder of Canadian Veterans Advocacy, a non-profit that focuses on improving the quality of life for Canadian veterans (www.canadianveteransadvocacy.com). “There is a place for every person of faith” in this issue, says Blais.

“Spouses and kids are first responders, and they are often simply terrified. Their loved one might be self-medicating, doing things not characteristic of them – they are isolating themselves, going into a cycle of despair. Once we identify this is happening, that is where churches and clergy could help,” he says.

Blais believes faith can be part of the solution, helping soldiers to recover, “to



PHOTO: DERRICK NEARING

Derrick Nearing (far right) treated a boy who came into his clinic with his achilles exposed and the skin ripped off his heel. The boy had caught his foot in a wheel on a gas pump. His father was grateful for Nearing's efforts.

say their life counts, that they are not insignificant, that their contribution to this nation is not being dismissed." Churches can provide community, he says.

These days, Chris Linford tours the country speaking with his wife about their journey through PTSD. He is the national ambassador for Wounded Warriors Canada, a non-profit that focuses primarily on mental health and what they call "the staggering impact of PTSD" (www.woundedwarriors.ca).

"I've had people tell me straight out they would rather have been shot, or even lost a limb, because it's identifiable and you can address the injury and not worry about trying to convince people that you are not quite right following deployment," says executive director Scott Maxwell. Churches sometimes raise always-welcomed funds for the organization.

Donated funds support "a whole bunch

of initiatives. There's not one solution to this problem, and everyone is different," says Maxwell. Wounded Warriors provides service dogs to veterans and last year launched an equine program geared toward spouses and soldiers. They're funding a doctoral scholarship focused on military and veteran mental health.

During his travels, Linford meets a lot of Canadians who say, "I've got this neighbour who was in the army and now he seems so beside himself. Other times, he seems okay."

Respond, advises Linford, by starting the conversation. "Ask them if there is anything [you] can do. Many people are afraid of PTSD because they think they will trigger them, and they'll go up on a water tower and start to shoot people. There is zero per cent chance that will happen. They want to know someone cares about them."

Linford has hope, for himself and his

family, and for a country welcoming home soldiers who have seen, heard, done and had done to them the unimaginable – or the unbearably and deeply sad.

"I believe I'm seeing an openness where mental health needs are talked about openly. I'm quite enthusiastic and encouraged," he says.

Time and therapy helped Linford. And the love of his wife and children. Music and art helped. Singing and playing guitar in coffee shops too. He even wrote a book, poignantly titled *Warrior Rising: A Soldier's Journey to PTSD and Back* (FriesenPress, 2013; www.awarriorrising.com). **FT**

KAREN STILLER of Port Perry, Ont., is a senior editor at *Faith Today*. Readers can find prayer suggestions from an association of Christians in the military at www.mcf-canada.ca/prayer-blog/prayer-points.

Evangelicals

Evangelicals and Catholics have sometimes had an uneasy relationship. Does a popular new pope change all that?

By Ron Csillag

When telltale white smoke curled from atop the Sistine Chapel on March 13 last year, and the Argentinian Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio emerged as Pope Francis, the world sat up, not only for the momentous occasion, but because, clearly, something was different about him.

His predecessor's reign was short – only six years – but in that time, Benedict XVI came to be widely regarded as rigid, dogmatic and frosty. As the former longtime head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – the Roman Catholic Church's no-nonsense law enforcement arm – everyone knew where Benedict stood, which was mainly ramrod straight.

But in his first year alone, the exponentially warmer Francis has said and done things that have turned observers on their ears, with statements about the poor (he slammed trickle-down economics and reportedly has stolen out of the Vatican at night with an archbishop, dressed as an ordinary priest to minister to Rome's homeless); homosexuals (“If they [homosexuals] accept the Lord and have goodwill, who am I to judge them?” he said about gay priests); sexual abuse (he established a committee to probe the issue); even atheists (who can be “redeemed” and enter Heaven if they “do good”). Meanwhile, “It’s not necessary”

to talk about abortion, gay marriage and contraception “all the time.”

With all that – and the promise of more – it’s little wonder he was *Time* magazine’s Man of the Year in 2013. Doubtless echoing the sentiments of millions, especially those in the media, the *Miami Herald* pronounced on the anniversary of his investiture, “Pope Francis has made being Catholic cool in his first year.”

But what does all this have to do with Evangelicals? Given their tenuous, sometimes rancorous relationship with Catholicism in the past, why should they care about a new pope and what he says or does?

Bruce Clemenger, president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, believes Evangelicals should indeed care. “The Catholic Church is a complex structure, but an effective Pope can establish a tone and focus that will influence both bishops and priests, as well as lay Catholics. And as the leader of the largest church, he can also influence both the relationships between Christian traditions and how Christianity is perceived by non-Christians,” says Clemenger. Karen Hamilton is general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, an organization with 25 member denominations, seven of which are evangelical. This pope

In his first year alone, Francis has said and done things that have turned observers on their ears.



Geoff Tunnicliffe, secretary general of the World Evangelical Alliance, met with Pope Francis at the Vatican in 2013.

“has ratcheted up more dramatically” calls for Christian unity, says Hamilton. “The unity of the Church is foundational for us all. And we all do it better some days than others,” says Hamilton who unabashedly gushes about her papal audience earlier this year at an ecumenical service at the Vatican. “People asked What colour are his eyes? Usually, I notice those things,

and the Pope



PHOTO: VATICAN PHOTO OFFICE

but I said, 'I don't know.' Because he just twinkles. The love of Christ, the joy in life, the engagement with people and the world just sparkle in him. He reminds us that Jesus has come to bring life and bring it in abundance - and that means enjoying each other's company and doing the work that is set before us, but doing it with an enthusiasm and a love of other people."

But don't wait for any core doctrinal matters to change under this pope. "There is a need [for Evangelicals] to pay attention, but there are fundamentals that won't change, I can assure you," asserts Sun News television commentator Michael Coren, whose defence of conservative Catholic values is no secret, "[whether it is] female ordination or married priests.

So pay attention," Coren advises, "but don't have delusions because there's not going to be a unified Christendom in the foreseeable future. Popes come and go, but the faith remains."

Some observers, Coren included, say Evangelicals may find solace in Francis's still-conservative stance on issues such as abortion and gay marriage. Meanwhile, his focus on poverty and his ascetic personal habits could also start a needed discussion about the global poor.

And as Catholic theologian George Weigel argues in his latest book *Evangelical Catholicism: Deep Reform in the 21st-Century Church* (Basic Books, 2013), popes Benedict and John Paul II introduced a new evangelical period for the Catholic Church in which it offered rebuttals to an increasingly secular world. Both popes, Weigel states, gained many evangelical admirers by preaching against the "culture of death" and the evils of relativism, and for a "culture of life."

Other have voiced sentiments far less warm and fuzzy. "Evangelical Christians simply cannot accept the legitimacy of the papacy, and must resist and reject claims of papal authority," Albert Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said in a podcast following Francis's installation. "To do otherwise would be to compromise biblical truth and reverse the Reformation." Prior to that Mohler said, "The Roman church is a false church and it

teaches a false gospel.”

Meanwhile, American activist Shane Claiborne, a pioneer in the New Monasticism movement and a popular name especially among younger Canadian Evangelicals, mused, “The most remarkable thing about the pope is that what he is doing should not be remarkable. He is simply doing what popes and Christians should do – care for the poor, critique inequity, interrupt injustice, surprise the world with grace, include the excluded and challenge the entitled.”

But Pope Benedict also fostered goodwill between Catholics and Evangelicals, points out Geoff Tunnicliffe, secretary general and CEO of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). It was Benedict who convened a synod on the New Evangelization in 2012. Tunnicliffe was one of 15 non-Catholics invited.

“That’s indicative of growing relationships,” he says. In 2011, “We signed a document with the Vatican and the World Council of Churches called *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* – the first document ever signed between the globe’s three Christian bodies,” namely the Vatican, the World Council of Churches and the WEA. The statement served as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world.

“There is certainly a shift taking place in conversation” between Catholics and Evangelicals, Tunnicliffe feels. “But that doesn’t negate the fact that there are serious theological issues they wrestle with.” He recalls growing up in Vancouver in a Brethren assembly where Catholics were vilified as conspiring to create a one-world church and were even linked to the number 666 – the sign of the apocalyptic Antichrist. That sort of thing “has diminished significantly,” Tunnicliffe says. “There’s not that kind of angst anymore.”

There are real differences though – the number of sacraments, papal authority, the role of Mary, the doctrine of justification.



PHOTO: WWW.REDLITTERCHRISTIANS.ORG



PHOTO: WWW.MICHAELCOREN.COM



PHOTO: © 2014, MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

Clockwise from left: Shane Claiborne, Michael Coren and Karen Hamilton. “There’s not going to be a unified Christendom in the foreseeable future,” says Coren.

And similarities too, says Tunnicliffe, like belief in the triune nature of God, the authority of Scripture, and “working together for a more peaceful world, concerns around religious freedom, understanding of family and social justice issues. There are many areas we have in common.”

Apart from the obvious differences between Catholics and Evangelicals, Tunnicliffe “can’t think of anything” he finds confusing about the Catholic Church. The favour seems to be returned. Francis himself had no problems with Evangelicals when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, scandalizing conservative Catholics by kneeling and being blessed by Pentecostal preachers in an auditorium. He “has proved himself amenable to Protestant evangelical piety,” noted *Time* magazine.

For his part, Coren is sympathetic to the possibility of Evangelicals feeling alienated from Canada’s majority Christian denomination. “Every door was closed in the past. I think a lot of Evangelicals felt rather excluded and I think that’s probably changed now. There’s now a feeling of greater warmth on the emotional level, which is very encouraging, and ecumenism seems to be possible. But I wouldn’t hold your breath on that one because, again, there’s a limit on what can be done.”

Still, Pope Francis has touched a chord on a personal level for many. “The kind of lifestyle he is modelling, the simplicity he lives with as a Christian leader, should be a challenge to us in the evangelical community, to how we live our lives,” Tunnicliffe says. “The people I know who know him more closely say it’s not about PR. There’s a genuineness there.”

It may be infectious. “Evangelicals are probably, in general, as enthusiastic about Francis as the population as a whole,” feels Lee Beach, assistant professor of Christian ministry at Hamilton’s McMaster Divinity College. And within what

Beach terms emerging Christianity, “The old divides between Catholics and Evangelicals have been diminishing for years, long before Francis. He will probably help that trend continue, and probably even fuel it.”

Clemenger says: “His fresh and open manner has attracted a lot of attention and fostered a renewed interest in not just the place and role of the Pope, but more generally about the nature and meaning of Christianity. His passion for caring for vulnerable persons and his desire to talk about Christ and the message of the Gospel will resonate with Evangelicals, despite our theological differences.”

It’s also perhaps simplistic to speak of the Catholic Church as a monolith. With 1.2 billion adherents and thousands of institutions, “You’re talking about many different things,” says Tunnicliffe. Still, “We have to deepen our reflections together, find areas of common ground, recognize that we are different parts of the Christian family. It’s a tightrope in some ways.” But ultimately, it comes down to Christians “working together for a common good for the Kingdom.” Hamilton seconds that. “He’s changing the face of the Church Universal.” **FT**

RON CSILLAG is a Toronto-based freelance writer.



PHOTO: WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

Communion Made Beautiful

In churches across Canada, making the elements of communion is an act of love and ministry. *By Alex Newman*

It's a dreary Saturday afternoon in winter, and Eugenie McMullan pads around her kitchen, pulling industrial-sized glass jars of hand-milled flour and sugar from the cupboard, butter, eggs and yeast from the fridge. These ingredients join the jumble on her already crammed counter. She talks while mixing – “Did I add yeast?” – then talks some more when turning the lump of dough out to knead.

“In the kneading, that's when I do my best thinking, or praying,” she says, pushing at her short, spiked red hair with the back of her hand. “On a good day I end up thinking how good God is to me. On a very bad day I may take the dough and slam it into the counter, which is therapeutic, but also kneads the dough.”

Every week for 40 years McMullan has made this communion bread for her church – Toronto's Little Trinity Anglican. This ministry arose out of a particularly in-

tense period of her life. Arriving from Winnipeg in 1969, she found herself with a failing marriage, a demanding job, three small children and undiagnosed clinical depression. She reluctantly went for pastoral counselling when it was suggested, and spent every Thursday afternoon “stomping around the rector's office, shouting – anger was the strongest emotion in my life – but he was very patient. If he hadn't been, I would still be a mess.”

Eventually, McMullan felt something give. “I said to God, ‘I can't run my life anymore. Can you do it for me?’ ”

It was the weekend before Thanksgiving – McMullan doesn't remember the year exactly – and she offered to make the communion bread for the upcoming

service. “I had just been healed of something, I wasn't sure of what exactly, but I was particularly thankful.”

She makes four loaves, one for the morning service, one for evening, one to give

away and one just in case, and figures two generations at Little Trinity have grown up on it. Slightly sweet and moist, the bread sometimes elicits compliments.

“Then people get em-

barrassed speaking that way about it,” she says. “But it's Psalm 34:8, ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good,’ and why should the Lord not taste good?”

Baking the communion bread – and praying while kneading it – is a tradition that started in the Middle Ages when churches designated a local baker. Working in solitude, he was required to fast

Baking the communion bread – and praying while kneading it – is a tradition that started in the Middle Ages.

or pray while baking and use a separate oven.

Although a 1406 charter stated only men could bake the bread – something that would surely roil McMullan – congregation growth soon outpaced what a single baker could produce, so orders of nuns were asked to begin large-scale wafer-baking operations.

At Winnipeg's Covenant Christian Reformed Church, the communion meal consists of cubed white bread and grape juice, but in 2000 when parishioner Caroline Booy's husband, Robert, was diagnosed with celiac disease, she cast about for a substitute. The smallest breadcrumb was enough to make him very sick, and he eventually had to stop taking communion, which was awkward since a plate of cubed white bread is passed along the pews.

When Booy came to the pastors with the issue, they discussed going completely gluten-free, but since most people in the church, especially the seniors, were used to the white bread, and liked it, they opted to create an alternative.

So she experimented with different recipes and came up with a gluten-free wafer made of rice flour, which turned out a little like a fortune cookie and kept well in the freezer. To prevent contamination from the regular bread, the wafers are stored in a small tin and passed around on the same plate. Pastors announce before communion about the gluten-free alternative, with as many as ten taking it.

Booy has a few celiac friends in other churches. "It's such a shame. They slip the bread into their palms or into their purse so no one sees. Having the gluten-free wafers is a small thing, but it means no one feels left out of the Lord's Supper."

This kind of inclusion, says Tyndale professor Victor Shepherd, is at the heart of communion. "Christ's presence isn't located *in* bread and wine. Rather, Christ pledges himself to His people in all aspects of congregational life, including the service of Holy Communion when we most pointedly remember His death in the Hebrew sense of remember: render-

ing an event in the past – the reconciliation with God that the cross effected – as the operative truth and reality of our lives in the present."

Communion is an element of congregational life, Shepherd adds, "and so Christ is present to His people in that. But He is also present in every act we do in church."

That's what Tony Turner discovered when he started making the communion wine for his small Anglican church in St-Bruno, Que. Ten years ago Trinity was having trouble meeting its budget. Someone started making the bread, and since Turner was already making wine – in his condo locker – he thought, "Why not? Besides, the wine they were using was really awful."

Using a kit and a 23-litre bag of grape juice, Turner mashes everything together before letting it sit for a few months, then bottles it and stores it for another year before using. He's experimented with different varieties, from Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir to the full-bodied Amarone they now use.

Since the church only uses about a bottle a month, the savings is small, but Turner says there's a deeper meaning going on. "At first people seemed surprised, especially when they saw me leaving church carrying empties. So I showed them the bottle and its special label, and they liked that it comes from within our community."

Howard Soon has had similar reactions from fellow parishioners at St. Michael and All Angels in the diocese of Kootenay, British Columbia. "The smell fills the church as soon as the stopper is taken out of the cruet. Even the kids like it – they used to wipe the back of their hands across their mouths after communion – now you don't see that [very often]."


A wine-making professional for 34 years, and master vintner at award-winning Sandhill Wines in B.C. since it started in 1997, Soon only started making wine for his church five years ago. "It

made sense that in one of the best wine-growing regions in Canada, we should be able to make an acceptable wine for communion."

Soon uses only grapes – no juice or derivatives – but has experimented with types. There's been a port-style wine made with grapes grown by the Osoyoos Indian Band. And he's used Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc grapes from Vanessa Vineyard in the Similkameen Valley, a smaller river valley running parallel to the Okanagan Valley and just west of the Okanagan.

Soon makes the wine in barrels at home in his garage, although he has samples analyzed at the Sandhill Wines lab so he knows what is going on with the grapes and the subsequent wine. Once bottled, it gets a real label – Cathedral Communion Wine.

Not all churches use wine for communion. Many use grape juice – that's how Welch's got its start – and anyone who is impatient with that doesn't understand the social history, says professor Victor Shepherd. "In the 19th century alcoholism had reached epidemic proportions, with whisky being legal tender in the United States. As the frontier moved west, men went crazy and liquor was the thing that blunted the pain of insuperably hard life on the frontier," explains Shepherd. "In 1750 colonial New England, people drank 250 per cent more per capita than people do in the United States today. When William Booth started his ministry in England, bars had a counter for men to lean a foot [on] and a counter half-size for children."

The elements used in communion, Shepherd says, express the relationship between what we make and what God creates. "Grapes and wheat are what God makes. Wine and bread are what we make. God using what we make is a vehicle of His self-impartment. Since everything we make is tainted by our own sin, the miracle of grace is that God still uses it." 



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Victor Shepherd

The elements used in communion express the relationship between what we make and what God creates.

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

“My Faith Today is hearing God’s words through the stories of others who follow Him.”

– Karen Hoel is a *Faith Today* reader from Edmonton



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The *Faith Today* Interview: Iwan Russell-Jones

Iwan Russell-Jones is an award-winning filmmaker, theologian, writer, and the first incumbent of the Eugene and Jan Peterson chair in theology and the arts at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C.

Russell-Jones (IRJ) has been a producer and director for the BBC in both television and radio. "I didn't enter the BBC thinking of myself as an artist. I thought of myself as a journalist. That grew on me over the years. I started to view filmmaking as an art," he says. Documentaries are one of his specialties. He is an explorer of the intersection between faith, media, art and culture. He spoke with Karen Stiller (FT) about Christian art (the good, the bad and maybe the ugly), how Christians can encourage artists and why art matters so very much.

FT: You teach theology and the arts. I assume you have a theology of the arts? Can you explain it to us?

IRJ: For me, it's something very basic. It's about being a human being in which the imagination plays such an important role. It's an amazing thing to be a human being, to listen, to see, to feel, to touch, taste. All of this is part of our humanity. The imagination is absolutely tied in with all of this, the ability to conjure up things. We may be sitting on a park bench in the middle of a city and we close our eyes and we're in the Alps, or the mountains of B.C., or the beach. This is a phenomenal aspect of what it means to be a human being. For me, it is absolutely tied in with something central to our humanity, theologically as human beings made by God. A Christian theology of the arts is absolutely rooted in Christian biblical anthropology – our understanding of what it means to be a human being in the world before God.

FT: I wonder if some of us fear the imagination?

IRJ: There's a long history of it, isn't there? Clearly in the Protestant tradition we've had a problem with it, but it goes back farther than that. In the early centuries of the Church, there were images being made and people became uncomfortable with it in certain aspects. In the 8th and 9th centuries, there was a big reconsideration if Christians should be making images or

not, the Iconoclastic Controversy. The question of is it possible to make images precisely because of Jesus, because God has become a human being and taken on all of what it means to enter into this world and become

physical. So to make images is valid. Image making is valid because of the incarnation. Then we have had the questions like: Are we worshipping the work of our hands? Are we distracted from the reality of God by what we made? It's not an accident that Christians have had a problem.

FT: Some churches are so plain and so clearly purposely without adornment, is that part of it?

**In our time
we have
extraordinary
examples of great
Christian art.**

IRJ: I think it's there. You find it too in some Catholic traditions. There's a scarcity there. It's the absence of images. It's the purity of the building that has its own beauty, actually. That can also be a beautiful tradition, but for a lot of Evangelicals it's more the suspicion of beauty itself, the suspicion of anything that will distract you from worship. I think that probably comes from this overwhelming fear of the seduction of beauty, the seduction of image. I think that is an overreaction.

FT: Let's talk about bad art. Some Christian movies, Christian fiction and so on, I approach them with the attitude that they may not actually be as good as secular work.



PHOTO: SIMON JENKINS PHOTOGRAPHY

IRJ: I think the problem is what we hold up as exemplary, what we think of as good Christian art. When we think of Christian art, do we think of Thomas Kinkade and sickly sweet landscapes, and this version of the world we know is false? Or do we hold up someone like Rembrandt and the fantastic historical figures that clearly were believers? Do we hold up people who are dishonest in their art or not very skilled at what they do? In our time we have extraordinary examples of great Christian art. We just had Marilynne Robinson here, the novelist and Orange Prize winner who wrote *Gilead*. It's just shot through with an interest in theology, but also with a sense

of the mystery, the majesty, the glory of life. I think she's brilliant.

I would want to say to people skeptical of Christian art, let's look and see what's out there and hold up what's really good. That's something to aspire to. If we want to be writers, let's look at what Robinson does. She writes essays too. She writes beautifully about life. I think for any writer to read that, you want to say, "Yes, this is great art," but it's also clearly coming from somebody who is a committed Christian.

I have a friend in the U.K., Michael Symmons Roberts. He is a top poet. His various collections have won national prizes. His latest, *Drysalter*, is a kind of play

on the Psalter. It is 150 poems and they have this psalmlike quality and clearly engage in issues of faith and life. They have won national prizes because they touch the reality of life and engage with people who are not Christians, but leave them thinking there is something more. There is transcendence. There is more than we can describe in material terms. His work again just witnesses to the fact that there are creative people around doing excellent stuff that we ought to hold up [not just] as great art, but as great expressions of faith.

FT: How can the local church encourage the artists in our midst, and let them know they are valued?

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IRJ: In the past the Church has been a great patron of the arts. It still goes on in great cathedrals around the world. Local churches can encourage artists to make things for their church. I was at a church weekend at St. Peter's Comox over on Vancouver Island a couple of weeks ago. It was really interesting to see the stained glass there, beautiful and contemporary at the front of the church. It had been done by a local artist.

It occurred to me that even replacing stained glass is a thing churches are regularly doing, or have the possibility of putting in. That can be a fantastic way of encouraging local artists to think about biblical narratives, even if they're not Christians, and to contribute to the worshipping life of the local community.

That church also did a Lenten theme and invited local artists to produce work for that. There are all sorts of ways churches can be welcoming to artists and invite them to contribute work.

Last year I was at a conference for evangelical students, a conference held in Provence. They invited Christian artists from



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across Europe. It was really interesting to see the way in which these people were creating fantastic things, but also reaching out into their communities using art as a way of doing it, creating workshops for children, doing things that had a social impact. They bring in artists to contribute to campaigns.

One had to do with ridding the streets of dog poop. It was hilarious to see what they did with that. It was addressing a social problem, but also connecting with others who really cared about their community.

I just feel there is something going on here that is going on in many different places, where churches know this means something to people and it's a fantastic way of connecting with neighbours.

FT: What about when art gets controversial? When people are offended about what is portrayed in the art?

IRJ: It is tricky, particularly if this is not something people are used to, and they are not used to seeing art and not used to

seeing what people are capable of producing. Then it's more likely you're going to get people taking offence. If you bit by bit are able to expose people to good art, then over time we are educated by that. We can realize it's not something offensive – the nude, for example, in art, is not necessarily pornographic.

It can be, but it has also been a wonderful way of getting our "creatureliness," our reality as phys-

ical human beings in the world. There can be something wonderful about that.

To introduce the nude into a church context may not be the right thing to do immediately. Over time, as people engage with the art and see what is being done by all kinds of artists, we are educated to see this as more than a kind of in-your-face, offensive, sexy occasion to stumble. But it may be something that opens our eyes to the wonder and the reality of being a human being.

FT: The wonder and reality of being a hu-

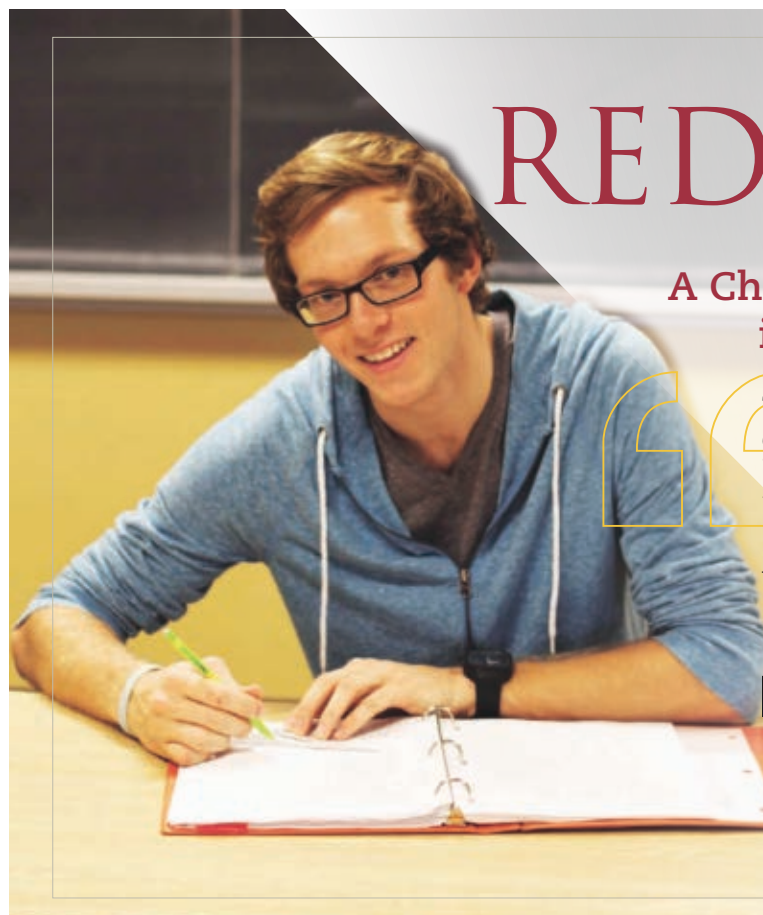
man being, does that sum up what art can express and do?

IRJ: Yes, for me, this is where art is at its best. Whether it is by believers or not, it does do this. Art reminds us of the wonder and the reality of the world we live in, and the fact that we are creatures in it. We are not gods. We are not immortals or dictators, people who can call all the shots. There is something about our place in the created order that is both wonderful and a call for humility. The physicality of creation has the sense of, "Wow! Isn't it amazing!" We have bodies and art comes out of our bodies, but at the same time we are aware of death, sin. Art reminds us of that too.

Art can do that without glorying in it. It has a prophetic quality to it. Also this forward-looking aspect, this sense God has done something for us in Christ that has changed the world, changed our destiny. There should also be something in art that speaks of destiny that elevates the human spirit and leads to hope.

FT: Iwan, thank you so much. FT

Art reminds us of the wonder and the reality of the world we live in.




REDEEMER

A Christian University in Hamilton, Ontario

The small classes at Redeemer allow my classmates, professors and I to explore how faith can be integrated into whatever we're studying.

- Jake K. Math major; minors in physics, business and religion

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Building Bridges

What lies behind one of Canada's philanthropic powerhouses?

By Patricia Paddey

I was sweating the first time I set eyes on Reg Petersen, retired businessman, philanthropist, former nursing home mogul and founder of Bridgeway Foundation, the sought-after prom date of every Canadian Christian organization trying to make ends meet. I'd planned to arrive well in advance of the appointed hour, but my hopeless sense of direction led to a few wrong turns. By the time I pulled into a small lot – the wrong lot – just north of his Cambridge, Ont., office, I was perilously close to being late. My adrenaline surged.

I'd wanted to meet this man for years. And given his track record of accomplishment, I sensed he wasn't a person you kept waiting. Besides, I had a lot of questions to ask him.

What was it, I wondered, that allowed him, as a successful business owner in his late 30s with a wife and growing family, to look at his finances and conclude they had enough? What compelled him to then freeze his estate (against the advice of experts) and create a private foundation that would fund Canadian Christian organizations to bring transformation to communities around the world? What prompted him to ensure all future growth in his business accrued to the foundation? Then what drove him, for the next three and a half decades, to work harder than ever, neither for his own nor his family's benefit, but to enrich the foundation, ensuring it would continue to give away millions of dollars for many years to come?

I'd asked for an hour of Petersen's time. I didn't want to waste a minute. Craning my neck for a break in the traffic that would allow me to back out of the forbidden lot, I noticed a nicely dressed older gentleman walking down the street toward me. Recognizing my predicament he bowed slightly, smiled and extended his arm, gesturing when it was safe to back out.

Gratefully, I did, found a parking spot and raced to my appointment. If Reg noticed I was flushed when he walked into Bridgeway's boardroom and shook my hand, he pretended not to.

At 72, Petersen is not a *noisy* Christian. He is quiet about his faith in an actions-speak-louder-than-words kind of way. His actions speak volumes, his words are understated, matter-of-fact. "I realized there was more to life than just earning and creating wealth," he once told a journalist about why he froze his estate to establish Bridgeway as a private philanthropic organization.

From Bridgeway's inception in 1980 onward Petersen only grew his nursing home business, Versa-Care, to give the profits away. But he ran Versa-Care like a business. Rick Willis (whom Petersen hired to work as his president in 1989) says Petersen was very clear about keeping the money-generating role of

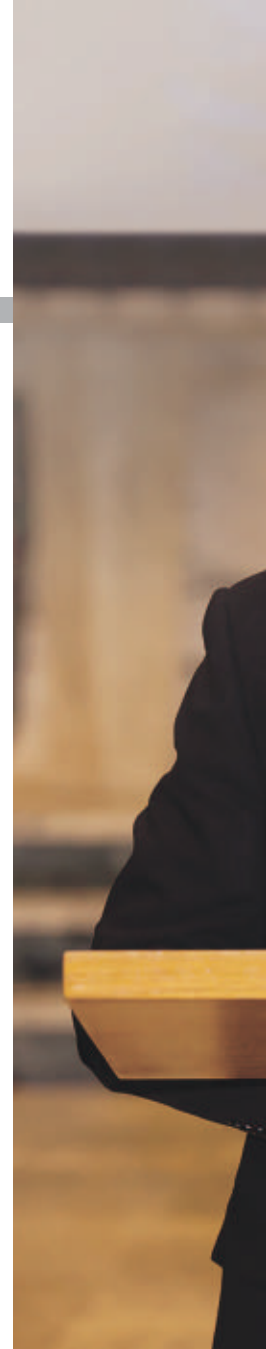
Versa-Care separate from the philanthropic role of Bridgeway. He describes his former boss as "tough as nails" when it came to operating the business. "He would fight for every last penny," says Willis.

When Petersen sold Versa-Care to Canadian billionaire Paul Reichmann in 1997 for \$220 million, he gleefully

poured the \$60 million profit (the purchasers assumed \$160 million debt) directly into Bridgeway.

"It absolutely blew the minds of the Reichmanns when they found out [after intense negotiations for the sale of Versa-Care] that he was going to give all the money away anyway," remembers Willis. "[They wondered,] 'Who fights

“I was a representative of God, and He lives in me, and so I don't want to disgrace Him in any way.”





Reg and Carol Petersen introduce the 2013 R.L. Petersen Awards for Non-Profit Innovation held at Tyndale University College.

PHOTO: MOUSSA FADDOUL

that hard when they're just going to give the money away?"

Petersen took his conviction that it is more blessed to give than to receive directly to Bridgeway's bank to help build capacity for charitable organizations. Hundreds of Canadian ministry initiatives have been blessed to receive ever since.

* * * * *

Petersen doesn't remember a time in his life when he *didn't* believe in Jesus. The third of four children, his father was a pastor, his mother a nurse. He recognized early that with Christian faith comes responsibility. "One time, when I was a kid, this little girl saw my dad walking down the street," he says. "She yelled at her mom and said, 'Mom! Mom! Come here! There goes Jesus!'"

"That had such an impact on me as a young kid." He re-

members wondering what his father had done to merit such a comment. But the memory took root in his imagination and helped shape the person he would become. Ever since, he has carried a strong sense "that I was a representative of God, and He lives in me, and so I don't want to disgrace Him in any way."

At 19, he married Carol. (Also the child of a pastor father, she is more than his lifelong partner – they've been married 52 years – she is the cofounder of Bridgeway.) As a young husband he worked hard as an accountant, as he and Carol would soon have five children to provide for. Reg was still in his 20s when his father (who had been forced to abandon his pulpit due to a throat ailment) approached Reg and his brother with an appeal to purchase a nursing home so the elder Petersen might run it as a second career.

It was out of love and respect for their parents, rather than any desire to get into the nursing home business, that

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Learn more about the Bridgeway Foundation at www.bridgewayfoundation.ca

the brothers borrowed the money to finance the purchase of the nursing home. Within a couple of years, they bought another one, and then another. A few years after that, Reg's brother asked his younger sibling to buy him out. Reg did, and suddenly found himself president of a nursing home business. He left his accounting job.

"I realized I was all alone," he says. "I remember – very distinctly – deciding that my new partner was God." It was a pragmatic decision, born of the recognition that he would need help. But Petersen is a pragmatist. He's also an optimist, and a visionary. "I thought, 'Well, now I'm into it. We're gonna make this thing grow.'"

And grow it did. By the time Petersen sold Versa-Care in 1997, it included 47 facilities in three provinces – 5,000 employees cared for more than 6,500 residents. It was the largest nursing home company in Ontario and the second largest in the nation.

But it was well before all that growth occurred that Petersen had decided to do something tangible to demonstrate God really was his partner. That something was Bridgeway.

Bridgeway Foundation has donated more than \$32 million to date (mainly to Christian nonprofit organizations throughout Canada), supporting roughly 75 organizations each year. Ten per cent of what Bridgeway gives is put back into the Petersen family's community of Cambridge, supporting the local food bank, the community hospital and other such organizations. Another 5 per cent goes into a family fund in which each member of the Petersen family, children, spouses and grandchildren over the age of 13, is allotted money annually – to give to their favourite char-

ity. The family fund was established to bring Petersen's family together around giving, "to focus on others rather than themselves," he says.

One year after selling Versa-Care, Petersen directed his efforts to investing to ensure continued income generation for Bridgeway. This led to developing a management holding company, which would eventually morph into the wealth management firm known today as Southbridge Capital. One hundred per cent of Southbridge profits go to Bridgeway. In his memoir *Building Bridges* (Heritage Memoirs, 2011) Petersen observes that he drove Southbridge much harder than he ever did Versa-Care. The reason? The profits would "have a direct impact on people's lives around the world."

* * * * *

God is not only Petersen's partner in business. He is his partner in life. Petersen worked hard at his day job, but his priority was faith and family, and his family knew it. Eldest son Mark says his father "was always home for dinner. He was always around. He didn't disappear into his business."

Petersen seldom missed church, where he would take meticulous notes during every sermon.

"My dad's not a contemplative [person]," Mark says. "He wasn't one to have family prayer times. He wouldn't play worship music. He'd just hear it on Sunday and try to live it out."

Petersen retired recently from his generosity empire. Southbridge is thriving. (His second son, Mike, who restructured the organization into a wealth management firm, has taken over as president and CEO.) So is Bridgeway. (His eldest son, Mark, is executive director.)

* * * * *

It was weeks after my meeting with Reg that the penny dropped. One morning, I awoke with a vivid memory of the chivalrous fellow who'd helped guide me out of my parking jam. An email confirmed my suspicion. It *was* Petersen who had come along in answer to my adrenaline-fuelled prayer. He hadn't known it was me he'd helped, but he remembered the incident.

It was a small gesture of kindness he extended that day. But small gestures can reveal much bigger things. In Petersen's case his good-natured willingness to help a stranger in need was intuitive – and representative of a lifetime of generosity and stewardship.

"When Christ was on Earth, He set an example of reaching out to the poor and needy," Petersen says in his memoir. "As a follower of Christ I am committed to helping those same people. That's my role and that's what drives me – to see our companies grow and give to the needs of people throughout the world." **FT**

PATRICIA PADDEY of Mississauga, Ont., is a senior writer for *Faith Today*.

Only One Per Cent?

Myths about the number of Christians in Quebec.

By Glenn Smith

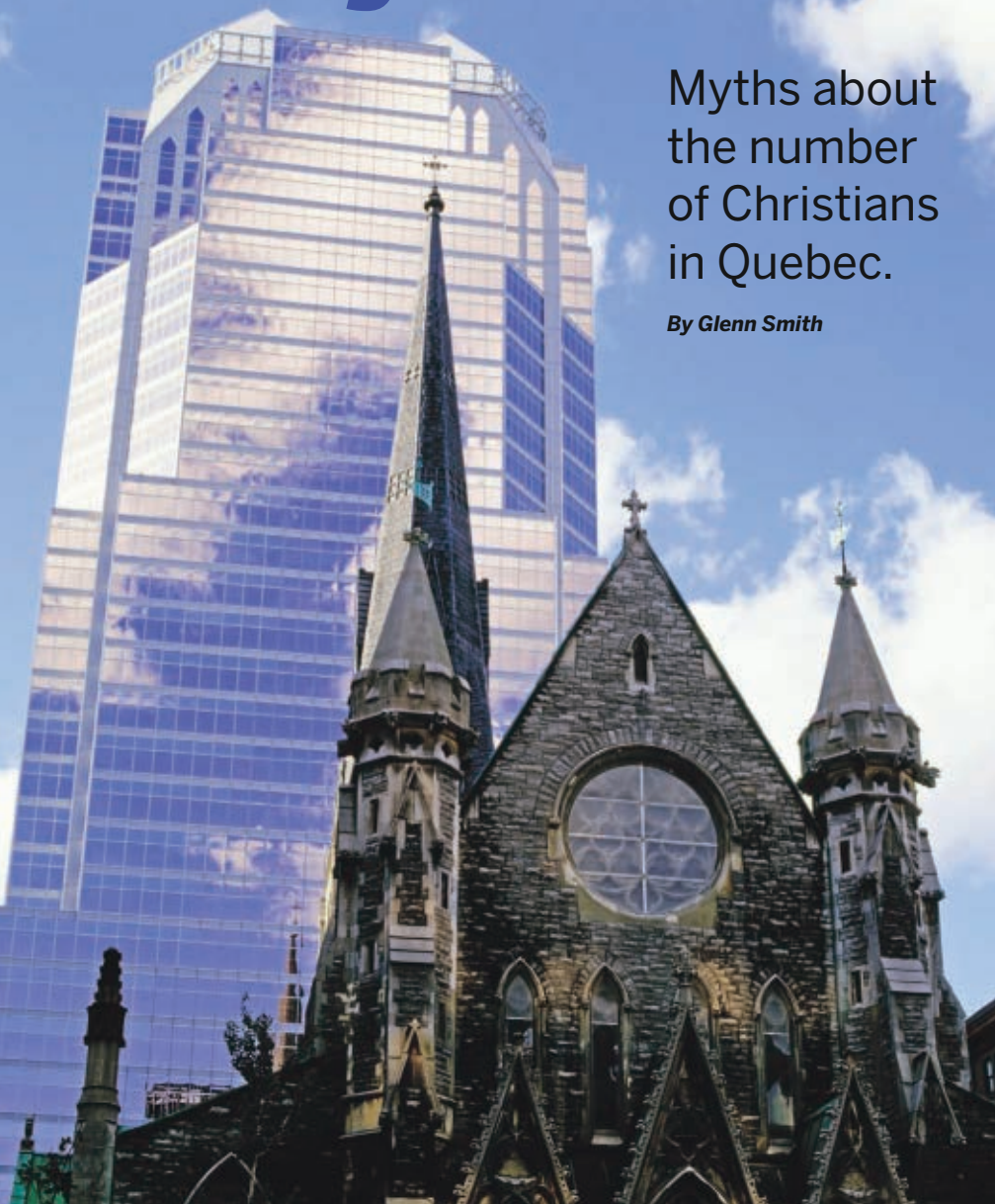


PHOTO: WWW.DESIGNPICS.COM

Religion is alive and well in contemporary Quebec. Is it fair to conclude that people showing up in evangelical congregations are Quebec's only Christians?

Have you heard this statistic? “Less than 1% of Quebecers are Christian.” This sort of thing can come up in discussions about how secularized Quebec has become, and how great the need is for church planting here. Instead of simply nodding in agreement, we need to think more carefully. What do these numbers mean?

Any analysis of Quebec needs to take

into account that religion is alive and well in the culture. Official religious affiliation continues to remain very loyal to the Roman Catholic Church – 75% of Quebecers continue to self-identify as Roman Catholic.

Admittedly, it's significant that this figure fell below the benchmark of 80% for the first time in our history in the 2011 census. But to paraphrase sociologist Reg-

inald Bibby from another period, “Catholics in Quebec continue to identify with the religion of their parents. To the extent that they don't, the tendency is to say that they have no religion.”

There are many studies that confirm Quebecers still value and participate in religion. Yes, weekly Roman Catholic Church attendance has declined significantly (a drop of 67% since the benchmark study done in 1961 by Norbert Lacoste, when 63% of the population was in mass on a specific Sunday in November of that year across the province).

But ongoing Léger Marketing documents suggest that today 63% of respondents think religion is important and 38% very important in their lives (a drop from 20 years ago, when 80% reportedly thought religion was important or pretty important).

So where does this 1% statistic come from? (Even someone in *Faith Today's* March issue quoted it.) Well, if you look at it a certain way, you might even say it was my fault.

Twenty-five years ago, I documented that less than 1% of Quebecers attended French-speaking churches with an evangelical confession of faith.

That study turned into articles that asserted less than 1% of Quebecers are evangelical.

And now, I regularly read people saying that less than 1% of the population is Christian. (Remember, that 1% statistic came from a decade when roughly 80% of Quebecers told pollsters they thought religion was important!)

I even saw a slide presentation where one denominational leader was audacious enough to say that there are only 35,000 Christians in the province. He simply did the math.

“Lord, save me from my interpreters!”

What is going on with these conclusions?

Evangelicals react because of the huge gap between the stated “affiliation” of our



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(Curiously, so do my devout Roman Catholic friends!)

Is it fair to conclude that people showing up in evangelically labelled congregations are Quebec's only Christians? I have seen many counts which assume there are zero Christians among people attending mainline churches. Really?

It gets harsher when I have been told we need low numbers so we can solicit funds for our ministries in Quebec.

As I like to say, "If, after 60 years of evangelical witness in modern Quebec and the millions of dollars that have been invested in the work, there are only 35,000 Christians, then heads should roll!"

I am often struck by the orthodox affirmations of Christian faith that are alive and well in Quebec culture in spite of the


massive marginalization of the social significance of religion and Christian practice.

What we need, perhaps even more than money for church planting, is serious engagement with Quebec culture, and practical education to help congregations

Is it fair to conclude that people showing up in evangelically labelled congregations are Quebec's only Christians?

be the entities that interpret the good news that Jesus is Lord. We pastors, lay leaders and ministry practitioners in (post-) Christendom Quebec need to be able to

identify worldviews to reflect about spirituality in our context.

But we also need to get beyond this funny way of counting. 

GLENN SMITH is executive director of Christian Direction, a ministry seeking to see God transform people, families and their communities in the cities of Quebec and the French-speaking world (www.direction.ca).

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What Canada needs – and in particular what our cities need – is a church planting movement. Our biggest cities are being continually populated by new Canadians who have, at some time in their lives, felt a strong call to plant a church. Now they have made their way to Canada and found a home, and the great question is, How will we partner with them to see their call and vision realized?

The task of planting churches may be daunting to those who have never been involved in this type of scenario, but in reality the small ethnic or other-language church is the masterpiece of the Christian mosaic which has become the new reality on the Christian landscape. For many new immigrant Canadian pastors, it actually makes perfect sense to start a church community with no people base, no money and no prospects. It is the way they did it back home, wherever that was – and, with a little help from our friends, we can do it here.

These small churches are not an anomaly. They are actually the reality of our new perspective of the Kingdom of God. We should not be surprised that churches are smaller. It means, in the long run, that we need 20 churches of 50 attenders each where we once dreamed of planting one church of 1,000. It is doable if we synergize the potential of the new reality. We need to mobilize hundreds, even thousands of new church planters. Although this may seem like a crazy idea to some, it is arguably the only way to ensure Christianity survives in Canada, and in our major metropolitan areas. This has to happen.

As a former missionary, educator, pastor, entrepreneur and church planter, I find it easy to work within this framework. I gleaned a lot working for great organizations like Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada and The Canadian Association of Ministries and Pastors. Over the years I was privileged to witness training new Canadians, extending credentials to people with vision, accepting that ministry is so diversified that no one group can have a vision for it all, and understanding how to plant and grow churches.

For many new immigrant Canadian pastors, it actually makes perfect sense to start a church community with no people base, no money and no prospects.

Larger denominations already have a lot to offer. But consider in addition the model for a church planting movement that Gilgal Christian Community has been working out in the Greater Toronto Area since our founding in 2013. Our 2013/2014 plan will see some 35 church plants come to life. Some have now begun to be registered and released. The goal is to equip, cover, train, mentor and release church plants. We help them through the crucial first years.

We essentially do what large denominations do, but we do it with the understanding that no one stays in Gilgal forever. Gilgal will never become a denomination. All must leave and occupy a land. Some of our churches will become independents, some will become part of a denomination, or become a branch of another church.

The very fact we will not become a denomination means we are free. We have no vested interest and this gives us great freedom to be completely objective. We are midwives. We help the birth, but don't assume the role of parent.

It all starts with a church plant agreement between Gilgal and a leader who has a call from God to plant a church community. We provide church planting seminars, two-day intensives and other training to church planters. We also provide spiritual covering, mentoring and leaders' training to

emerging leaders, while working within the framework of each pastor's vision.

If we can learn to mentor and release new church planters, then our future will be a great one, left in the hands of the Spirit of God. We are looking for church planters, both men and women, from anywhere, from everywhere. We believe in church planting because Jesus was a church planter, and if you are a church planter, don't let go of that vision. **FT**

RON MORIN of Mississauga is president of Gilgal Christian Community and also director of operations of The Canadian Association of Ministries and Pastors. For a list of affiliates of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, including Gilgal, visit www.theEFC.ca/affiliates.



Four Keys to Success

Tips for executives at mission-focused businesses.

Book publishers today will tell you business is tough. My American publisher recently emailed me to say their business was bankrupt. They couldn't pay outstanding royalties from 2013, but would ship my inventory – at my expense – to any destination I chose. My first Canadian publisher trod a similar path five years earlier. Today I'm working with another publisher who could be headed in the same direction.

The eventual demise of these Christian-led businesses was obvious for several years in partial and delayed bill payments. However, many of us don't heed such warnings and thus miss the opportunity to deal with structural challenges. Instead, we chase money-driven, unsustainable quick fixes.

But business executives who focus on relevant success factors will spot threats and opportunities early, and respond appropriately. I suggest these four keys for a successful organization:

- a clear vision and mission
- careful attention to success factors
- an attitude that puts people first
- a simple strategy understood by the workforce.

Vision and Mission

For a Christian-led business, the vision and mission should satisfy needs or wants that honour God. (In business, "vision" defines an organization's purpose in broad strokes, while "mission" expands and clarifies it.)

Highly visible and understood affirmations of the organizational vision and mission are essential to help a workforce remain engaged and motivated.

Unfortunately most organizations drift away from their mission. During boom times, new money-making ventures can seem too enticing to pass up. Leaders may hire and use loans to grab short-term benefits. But as the new business fades, debt grows, employees are laid off and a toxic environment develops.

Executives must never forget that the mission is the guiding light. Leaders must pursue it passionately, methodically and consistently. Doing so enables them to resist the temptation to follow every business opportunity that crops up.

Success Explained and Tracked

Employees should know how their organization measures success, not only in their department, but overall. They

should know the ingredients of success and understand it's more than one bottom-line number.

I learned early at business school that "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it." The challenge is to identify "it" – five to seven critical factors to track continually. Executives must monitor inputs that determine employee and customer satisfaction, and profitability.

Sadly, most people try to manage the wrong items. They may focus wrongly on outputs, when in fact only inputs (amount and quality of material, labour, and so on) are truly manageable.

Christian-led businesses must follow biblical principles while achieving reasonable returns. Executives must be unequivocal that the business will never compromise its values. When I served as vice-president at Alcan Inc. (now Rio Tinto Alcan), we had to submit a yearly letter to the president affirming we were unaware of violations of Alcan's principles, objectives and policies. This formal process cascaded to front-line managers – each level submitting letters to the one immediately above.

Putting People First

People are the greatest asset of any business. Motivated, passionate workers go beyond what's needed. They lift productivity and provide superior services to customers – who in turn willingly share their positive experiences with others, thus benefiting the business.

Executives must invest time selecting, training and developing employees. They must value employees highly and treat them according to the Golden Rule.

A Clear Strategy

Vision, mission and strategy statements need to be simple and easily understood. A strategy should depict how the business intends to do its mission – essentially, how it will provide superior value to its customers.

Executives should explain the strategy to the workforce – especially managers who must build and work with congruent departmental strategies and budgets.

The Bible teaches that the Lord will guide us when we believe in Him, trust, obey and lean on Him. Fundamentally, for Jesus' followers, success is developing and treading paths that glorify God while doing His mission. It is aligning our lives with His – and these four keys to business success can help serve as signposts on our journeys. **FT**

MICHEL A. BELL is founder and president of Managing God's Money (www.managinggodsmoney.com), adjunct professor of business administration at Briercrest College and Seminary, and a former senior business executive.



PHOTO: SPRUCE GROVE ALLIANCE CHURCH

■ Spruce Grove Alliance Church never set out to plant a Filipino congregation, but one developed through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Good Things Are Growing in Spruce Grove

An Alliance church in Alberta focuses on “growing up, growing together and growing out” while following the Holy Spirit.

While Spruce Grove Alliance Church does plan and organize ministries, its leaders have also found that growth comes mainly by following the Holy Spirit.

“We’re going about our ministry business when suddenly the Holy Spirit opens up a door of opportunity,” says lead pastor David Chotka. (Spruce Grove is a city of 26,000 just west of Edmonton.)

While the congregation offers a variety of programs, all are linked by “a blessing from the Holy Spirit, who is raising up leaders and motivating people to do ministry that blesses the church and our community,” agrees executive pastor Russ McDermott.

As an example of the Spirit’s leading, both pastors point to the way Spruce Grove developed into three campuses.

It never set out to plant a Filipino campus, but a number of Filipino people gathered for fellowship and the group quickly grew beyond what was originally planned. This congregation now meets for worship every Sunday.

Something similar took place with another campus. Chotka received a call from his denomination asking for help with a nearby church that was small and struggling. As he sat at his desk contemplating how Spruce Grove could help, a man walked into his office offering to become a volunteer pastor.

About Spruce Grove Alliance Church

- **Meets at:** 250 Century Road, Spruce Grove, Alta.
- **Founded:** 1945
- **Denomination:** Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada
- **Weekly attendance:** 900
- **Average age:** 35
- **Website:** www.sgac.net

"I could never have planned that. That was all God," says Chotka.

By sending people to help, including that volunteer campus pastor and other resources, Spruce Grove has breathed new life into what is now called the Calahoo Campus. McDermott too finds it exciting. "Our Calahoo Campus is thriving and building cross-denominational partnerships in a very rural, small town context," he says.

While adding campuses would be a strain on any church, it has been a tremendous benefit to Spruce Grove. "Much of the growth has been from the new campuses," says Chotka. Seeing this growth has given Spruce Grove a glimpse of the way God can use their church.

God is also using Spruce Grove beyond



PHOTO: SPRUCE GROVE ALLIANCE CHURCH

"We're going about our ministry business when suddenly the Holy Spirit opens up a door of opportunity," says lead pastor David Chotka.

Edmonton, partly through mission teams sent to other countries. Uganda has been a major focus for both evangelism and building projects.

"One of the young adults used her college tuition to ransom a young girl from Niger who had been forced into

an arranged marriage," says McDermott.

Chotka's book *Power Praying: Hearing Jesus' Spirit by Praying Jesus' Prayer* (Prayershop/Harvest Prayer Ministries, 2013 [2009]) has also had a wide influence. It has been translated into multiple languages and given to pastors in many countries.

Locally, Spruce Grove Alliance Church also continues to make a difference in people's lives.

It's "like my extended family," says Emeline Lamboson. "It's a delightful feeling to come to church, to see every face and hear stories that inspire me to smile and keep the faith." **FT**

STEPHEN BEDARD of Cambridge, Ont., is associate editor at *Faith Today*. Is your congregation an EFC affiliate? Join today at www.theEFC.ca/affiliate. Watch for our Sep/Oct issue to see a redesigned version of this column series.

A promotional advertisement for a Holy Land tour. The background is a collage of images: the Dead Sea, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall, the Mount of Olives, and the Israeli flag. The text is overlaid on the collage.

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Hope for Somalia

Somalia in the Canadian media appears most often as the playground of pirates, profiteers, warlords, criminals and terrorists. Human Rights Watch's 2014 report on Somalia contains a long list of violations that include beheadings, foreign aid siphoning and sexual violence against women. Open profession of any religion other than Islam leads to expulsion or execution.

And yet, Somalia is in a better place now than it has been in recent decades, when civil war was dividing its three desert regions. In the past few years 30,000 African Union peacekeepers have taken control of a "safe zone" around Mogadishu, the city where Somalia's fledgling government resides (the zone reaches 35 km from the city). Even though security threats like terrorist bombings are still high, the peacekeepers have provided a level of stability that enables small businesses to grow.

Some of the changes happening in Somalia are summarized in a short film from 2013 (youtu.be/rPNv2BSvxxs). "I have the view that Somalia is on the right track," says Abdi Saaid, then prime minister. "We inherited a government that functioned only in Mogadishu, but we have managed to spread governance across other regions of the country."

Part of this governance initiative takes the form of mobile courts, which were implemented in 2009. These courts travel to remote villages and rural areas, providing justice for the 95 per cent of Somalis who

would otherwise not have access.

Though this justice is by no means Western – it is a mixture of sharia and customary law – it is effective at keeping order. The United Nations Development Programme in Somalia reports, "Mobile courts have proved to be very crucial in a society where even simple cases like stealing a goat can turn quickly [and] escalate into conflicts between individuals and sometimes even between clans. They have thus proved to be very efficient conflict solution mechanisms."

There is so much perceived hope for Somalia that Somalis who once fled the country as refugees are now sending their children back. A missionary working with Somalis says a number of the Canadian-Somali parents he knows are afraid their children are losing their Muslim identity in the West. Now that they see signs of positive change, they are enrolling their children in one of Somalia's many Qur'anic schools.

This recent development is cause for alarm for some Canadian officials, because the Somali radical Islamist terrorist group al-Shabab is known for recruiting youth from many of these schools. After two young Somali-Canadians abruptly left Canada to join al-Shabab in 2011, former CSIS counterintelligence chief

**Somalis who once fled
the country as refugees
are now sending
their children back.**



PHOTO: WWW.GLOWIMAGES.COM

Geoffrey O'Brian expressed concern that Canadians who joined could be "radicalized with training and then recruited here [to] do damage here on our own soil."

News like this is sobering, for Somalis and Canadians alike. Canadians may well rejoice in the renewed hope Somalia is experiencing now, while also realizing there is far more work to be done.

And the need for prayer and other support is still strong. Many youth are reportedly still being indoctrinated into believing hope for their country lies in suicide bombings. Somalia, which is 99.6 per cent Muslim, still sees Christian foreign aid workers expelled for being "oppressors" and Somali Christians killed for being "traitors."

Imagine what real hope would come if Somali hearts were transformed by Jesus. **FT**

PETER FRIESWICK is a writer in Huntsville, Ont.


Canadian Connections

- While it is impossible to openly share the Christian faith in Somalia, 44,995 Somalis live in Canada, a large number of them in Toronto. Adam House, a Christian refugee reception centre in Toronto, provides new refugees with immigration, settlement and spiritual support. www.adamhouse.org
- World Vision Canada classifies Somalia as one of seven "fragile" counties where children are especially at risk due to limited government abilities. www.worldvision.ca
- Read our earlier profile of Somalia at www.FaithToday.ca/Somalia2012.

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What's the Real Divorce Rate?

The oft-cited sky-high divorce rate among Christians has been seriously debunked.

My salt-of-the-earth-family-values friend was dating my hairdresser, but after four years was still hesitating to pop the question. "I've seen so many friends divorce," he explained. "I don't want to do that to us."

Divorce, in his mind, was like a virus. If you're not careful, it will sneak up on you, and soon you'll find yourself kicked out, broke and crying into your coffee.

Our society treats divorce like it's a contagion, and it's not hard to see why. The divorce rate is close to 50 per cent, isn't it? And the even sadder part? Christians divorce at the same rate as everyone else – and some say even higher.

As a marriage author and blogger, I hear these stats every day. They've always confused me. Do they even pass the smell test? In the late '80s and early '90s, I was involved with the Queen's University Christian Fellowship group. Of the dozens of friends I remember from those days, as far as I know only three have divorced. The other marriages have so far made it, even 20 years later. If divorce is really 50 per cent, then we must have either been incredibly lucky or part of a bizarre subgroup with the ability to withstand Kryptonite.

But forget anecdotes. What about logic? If Christians believe God helps us forgive, helps us through grief and to withstand temptation, why do we not believe God can make a difference in marriage? Why do we accept these stats at face value?

Perhaps this "divorce virus" is weaker than we think.

That's what Shaunti Feldhahn found when she analyzed the studies for her new book *The Good News About Marriage: Debunking Discouraging Myths About Marriage and Divorce* (WaterBrook Multnomah, 2014). In 2006 Feldhahn was trying to dig up the divorce rate for an article. She asked her assistant, who sought out the original sources, to check it. And nothing could justify the rate of 50 per cent – in fact, there didn't seem to be a credible source at all. And so the two of them started a six-year project to uncover the real divorce rate.

What they found was revolutionary.

The divorce rate for first marriages is actually around 30 per cent – and likely closer to 28 per cent. Christians have between a 30 per cent and 50 per cent lower divorce rate than the general population – which puts us at around

14–20 per cent, assuming the lower 28 per cent rate overall. Since these are American figures, we Canucks can likely shave a few points off. A 15 per cent divorce rate in the Church still represents a lot of heartbreak. But it also means the vast majority of marriages are happy.

So where did that "50 per cent of marriages end in divorce" stat come from? In the 1970s, when divorce rates were skyrocketing, researchers were asked to estimate the divorce rate. They said, "If divorce rates continue to rise as they are now, we would expect the divorce rate to be 50 per cent." But divorce rates didn't rise. They fell. And so that stat – which was only ever a projection – never came true.

What about the idea that Christians have just as high a divorce rate? That came from a study from the Barna Group, where respondents were asked to identify their religion along with their marital status. George Barna himself has disavowed the common interpretation of his study as one about the divorce rate of Christians. If you really want to know the Christian divorce rate, you don't just ask what religion people claim. You ask about key things, like if they read their Bible, if they pray or if they attend church, to help determine if they are serious about their faith. Do a survey that way and the divorce rate plummets.

Feldhahn's book is filled with all the analysis that a stats geek will love even more than Star Trek reruns, but here's what it means for the rest of us, and why she wrote it: What if the biggest threat to marriage isn't divorce, but discouragement? If we believe 50 per cent of marriages end in divorce, then marriage looks really risky. People will choose to cohabit rather than take the plunge. Or, once they are married, if problems crop up, they think, *This is why marriages end. We're one of the couples who won't make it.*

But if people realize most couples do make it, then more people will tie the knot. When troubles come, they can say to themselves, "Most people have problems, but most people get over those problems, and we will too."

Those who are married live longer. As the Institute for Marriage and Family Canada pointed out in a recent study, they tend to be wealthier and have a much easier time getting out of poverty. Their kids do better in school, are less likely to take drugs or alcohol, and are more likely to delay sexual activity. And, of course, they're happier.

There's good news about marriage out there, and we need to listen and spread the word. Most marriages make it. Over 90 per cent of married people would marry the same person again, according to Feldhahn's research. Marriage is still a wonderful thing. Pass it on. **BT**

SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE is an author and inspirational speaker (www.sheilawraygregoire.com).



Going Down Hard

The need and the danger of presenting a callous face to the world.

The young man was walking nonchalantly, just another expressionless face in the pedestrian bustle downtown. He was wearing a clean white jacket. His hands were thrust deep in his pockets as he sauntered into the large bus shelter where I was sitting.

As he passed in front of me, I noticed a commotion in the street. A police car pulled to a sudden stop and two officers leaped into action, springing from the car and sprinting into the shelter like dogs after a rabbit.

He never saw them coming.

They jumped him from behind and he went down hard, his face smacking the tile like a steak slapped onto a butcher block. He didn't co-operate at first, but neither did he fight. He just lay unyielding and unbending as the officer's knee ground into his back, harshly wrestling rigid wrists into cuffs.

But once the officers got him secured, the young man went abruptly limp and whatever spirit he had seemed to seep into listless compliance.

"Do you have any drugs on you?" asked an officer.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In my pocket."

"This one?" asked the officer, grabbing hard and high at the outer side of the young man's pant leg. A muffled "yes" issued from the mouth on the floor. The cop wrenched his hand into the tight pocket and came out with a baggie of brown powder.

"Any money?"

"Sixteen dollars. In my back pocket." They extracted it.

"Any weapons?"

"No."

The action was happening just a few feet from my perch on the bench. I never moved. The officers hauled the young man roughly to his feet and gave him a full pat down with his face squished up against the wall. They were not gentle. There was no more chatter in the shelter. People gave the police a respectful clearing to do their business and mostly kept their eyes to themselves.

"You're under arrest for trafficking drugs. Do you understand?"

A meek "Yes."

With these formalities out of the way, the officers frogmarched the young man out of the shelter and stuffed him

into the backseat of the cruiser. I had a front row seat as they passed before me. He *seemed* so young, so docile, so clean, so full of positive potential. So ill-prepared to face the penalties for drug trafficking – a puppy in a pool of piranhas.

Mask of Indifference

But it's the blank face that sticks with me still. No emotion – no anger, no fear, no remorse, no sadness, no aggression. Not even a hooded shimmer of contempt. He *seemed* so indifferent to the fact that this incident seriously jeopardized his prospects for life.

Later, I recounted the incident to a group of friends. How could he not care? I just didn't get it! What could turn a robust young man into such a cold-faced robot?

"Oh, I get that," replied one of my listeners. And the story was sad, for she'd seen the same stolid face on one of her sons who'd lived for a season on the wrong side of the law. "You can't show emotion to police officers," she explained. "That's a sign of weakness. If you show fear, they'll make you rat on your friends. You've got to be tough, and the way to do that is to act like you don't care."

But the tough exterior is a façade. A mother knows, because the same young man who deals drugs, plays cat and mouse with the police and fights crazily in the midnight parking lot will also cuddle – shaking with fears and brimming with tears – with the mother who holds him tight and prays the tender shoots of his conscience that push upwards in the lonely times will not be trampled on the asphalt of his bravado.

She knows the drugs are a big part of the problem. They distort reality, damage healthy bodies, promote criminal activity and stamp on relationships. She also knows apathy is a callus that grows unwittingly over those sensitive souls still yearning for love and affection, care and concern.

She knows a pose can conceal better qualities of character lying dormant deep within.

She knows, furthermore, that jail usually nurtures the wrong impulses. It kills kindness and stifles the human spirit. It's a school for deviance, not restoration. She knows it from bitter experience. And she knows the young man who went down so hard in front of me is putting on a mask of unfeeling he might one day grow into.

She prays he will encounter a softhearted listener and another chance. **FT**

DOUG KOOP is a Winnipeg writer and spiritual health specialist. This column is the last in his series. *Faith Today* thanks him for his contributions. Watch for a redesigned *Faith Today* in September.



Case Will Shake Scientology

Leader of popular religious group could face grilling in court.

There are only two in all of Canada. One opened in Quebec City in 2010, the other in Cambridge, Ont., in 2013. These so-called Ideal Orgs – refurbished, state-of-the-art church buildings – are rising across the globe. Both Canadian facilities were opened by David Miscavige, the controversial head of Scientology.

Miscavige said at the Cambridge opening that “this church is the incarnation of all Scientology bestows to this world, forged of the very purpose with which L. Ron Hubbard bestowed Scientology itself: to help man to again find his footing in this materialistic society; to restore to him the goodness, love and decency with which he was created; and to help him fulfill his eternal dream of spiritual freedom.”

There is, of course, a wider Scientology presence in Canada: six other churches – in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal – and smaller missions in Victoria, Halifax and three more in Toronto.

Though Canada’s Ideal Orgs are a testimony to the incredible sacrifice of Scientologists, as is their new cathedral in Clearwater, Florida, they give little indication of the huge ongoing controversies connected to the church established by Hubbard in 1954.

While Canada has been home to some of those controversies (the Toronto Church was raided by the Ontario Provincial Police in 1983, and the Scientology anti-drug program Narconon was shut down in Trois-Rivières in 2012, for example), the most serious current battle involves a court case in New Braunfels, Texas, about 50 km northeast of San Antonio.

There, U.S. Judge Dib Waldrip is presiding over *Monique Rathbun v. David Miscavige, Religious Technology Center and the Church of Scientology International*. Monique is the wife of Mark “Marty” Rathbun, a former top official in Scientology who left the church in 2004 and went public against it in 2009. Her lawsuit, filed in 2013, claims that “the Defendants have worked around the clock for three years to destroy Mrs. Rathbun. She has been harassed, insulted, surveilled, photographed, videotaped, defamed and humiliated to such a degree as to shock the conscience of any decent, law-abiding person.”

Four years ago I wrote in this column that public disputes about Scientology are like “he said, she said” to the max. I found that as true as ever as I worked through the

latest back-and-forth allegations to prepare a conference lecture for Baylor University.

Virtually everything Mark Rathbun states against Scientology is met by the same accusations against him, I found in long conversation with Mark Rathbun and Scientology leaders Eric Roux (France), Susan Taylor (Washington, D.C.) and Janet Weiland (Los Angeles). It’s one huge vicious circle.

Three factors make Monique Rathbun’s case pivotal for understanding Scientology. First, and most important, Judge Waldrip has granted her request to have Miscavige deposed under oath. Having the international head of a religion under legal cross-examination is no small matter. Scientology will probably object all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Second, the case will also centre on Mark Rathbun’s testimony as the former second-in-command. He joined Scientology in the late 1970s and worked with Miscavige from 1982 to 2004. Mark Rathbun accuses Miscavige of serious crimes and will likely have his day in court in support of his wife.

Third, the drama in Texas involves momentous issues that determine the future of Scientology, including alleged criminality by Miscavige, tax exemption for Scientology and the nature of Scientology doctrine.

Why should Christians care about Scientology in general and this Texas showdown in particular? After all, contrary to Scientology claims, it is not the fastest growing religion. It may have some celebrity adherents (such as American actors Tom Cruise and John Travolta), but it’s estimated to have less than 200,000 core adherents worldwide, including a few thousand in Canada.

Regardless, concern on the part of disciples of Jesus should not depend on numbers, and we should bring the gospel to all people, including followers of L. Ron Hubbard. Further, since our witness should be an informed one, this huge case will likely bring some clarity to who is telling the truth in a world of polarized interpretation of all things Scientology.

We should also support the religious liberty of law-abiding Scientologists since they are often the victims of persecution. Susan Palmer, a professor in Montreal and leading scholar of new religions, has documented many police raids on Scientology in various countries of the world. Mark Rathbun’s own *Memoirs of a Scientology Warrior* (CreateSpace, 2013) provides some chilling narration on various nasty government activities against Scientology throughout its history.

So, we have a Texas showdown of worldwide consequence. Stay tuned. **FT**

JAMES A. BEVERLEY of Tyndale Seminary in Toronto has studied Scientology since 1978. He recommends following Scientology through its own website (www.scientology.org) alongside critical sites (such as www.tonyortega.org).

Best Writing of the Year Awarded

Writers from a wide range of Canadian churches won awards from The Word Guild, a national writers' association, in June. The annual Word Awards drew more than 220 entries published last year across 28 categories. Winners were presented with cash prizes at a gala event in Mississauga, Ont., on June 11.

This year's \$5,000 Grace Irwin prize went to Carolyn Weber of London, Ont., for *Surprised by Oxford: A Memoir* (Thomas Nelson). The book also won the life stories category. Another memoir by Weber, *Holy Is the Day*, earned honourable mention for the Irwin prize.

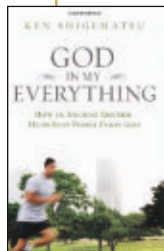
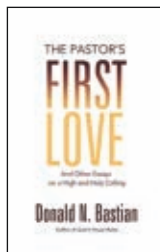
Several other authors were multiple winners. Ken Shigematsu of Vancouver, author of *God in My Everything* (Zondervan), won the Christian living

category and honourable mention for the Irwin prize; Donald N. Bastian of Brampton, Ont., author of *The Pastor's First Love* (BPS Books), won the instructional category and honourable mention for the Irwin prize; and June Stevenson of Ajax, Ont., won for both song lyrics and poetry.

Faith Today readers may recall the winning news article "Christian Law School Proposal Raises Discussion" by Jeff Dewsbury from our Mar/Apr 2013 issue; and a recent essay by Weber, "Coming Home as a Follower of Christ," in May/June 2014.

A complete list of winners is available at www.thewordguild.com.

Afterward 200 writers, editors, agents and publishers met in Guelph, Ont., for three days for Canada's largest Christian writers' conference, also held by The Word Guild. —FT staff



Sorrow & Blood: Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom

Editors: William Taylor, Antonia van der Meer and Reg Reimer
 William Carey Library, 2013. 568 pages.
 \$32 (e-book \$9.99)

Most secular news outlets ignore reports of Christians being under attack, yet some Christians hyperbolize tragedy, either because they misunderstand or intentionally sensationalize. *Sorrow & Blood*

is a detailed international resource that can help readers discern and respond appropriately.

Co-edited by an American, a Brazilian and a Canadian (Reimer), and drawing on a global array of authors, it carefully leads readers through

the maze of one of today's major global news stories.

Reimer, known for his leadership at World Relief Canada, spent his adult life in Southeast Asia, including years in Vietnam. His knowledge of that area is legendary, with much of it devoted to alerting the world to persecution.

This book lays out the scope and details of what Christians face around the globe in a gripping narrative. Three-quarters of persecution based on religion is against Christians. Although many assumed persecution would recede a few decades ago when the Iron Curtain fell and China opened its doors, the killing of Christians has not ended.

Part One of the book defines terms such as martyrdom and persecution to provide a lens through which today's assaults can be better understood.

Part Two offers reflections from Scripture and theology on what to expect in our public and private witness of the gospel.

Part Three immerses readers in actual case studies fol-

lowed by guidelines on how Christian mission might best work in the myriad of religious and cultural contexts where suffering is a real factor.

Altogether the book offers more than information – readers will find it emotionally moving and also helpful in enabling better discernment for their prayers, advocacy and support of Christians facing persecution.

Sorrow & Blood can be previewed and ordered at www.sorrowandblood.com. It does a great job at clarifying the often murky waterway of persecution today. —Brian C. Stiller

Conspiracy of Light: Poems Inspired by the Legacy of C. S. Lewis

Author: D. S. Martin
 Cascade Books, 2013.
 122 pages. \$15

There is creative reading as well as creative writing," said the 19th-century American thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson. D. S. Martin's new book demonstrates the fruit of

his creative reading of C. S. Lewis.

Martin, a Toronto-area poet and teacher (www.dsmartin.ca), takes readers in 77 poems through explorations of the role of the poet, riffs on ideas and lines from Lewis' writings, explorations of Lewis' fantasy novels, and musings about communication, our final state and more.

From the first lines of the first poem – "A glance over your shoulder / assures you you can always get back" – to the final "Destination," it's a magical trip.

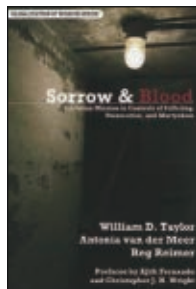
Do readers have to know Lewis' original writings from the 1940s and 1950s (such as *The Screwtape Letters*, *Mere Christianity* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*) to understand these poems? No. They stand on their own, though Martin has included an end section where he names the inspirational source of each.

Readers intrigued by questions of truth and reality will be satisfied, as will those who enjoy recognizing biblical echoes such as "Better is one day in his boats / than thousands elsewhere" (from "The Sacred Fish").

Martin effectively adapts Lewis' ideas to a new generation. In "On the Latest Impending Doom," which was inspired by Lewis' "On the Atomic Bomb," Martin's dooms are 21st century: "So you've found a new engine of doom / running on fossil fuel."

Most of the poems are free verse and wonderfully crafted. Martin uses lots of alliteration and rhymes, perfect and imperfect, within and at the ends of lines. These echo across stanzas, unifying poems and making them a pleasure to read aloud.

Conspiracy of Light reminds



me of the moon. In reflecting the sun's light, the moon displays its own topography. Martin's poems, reflecting on the brilliance of Lewis, also reveal the man who wrote them.

—Violet Nescdoly

How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation

Author: Stanley E. Porter
Baker Academic, 2013.
222 pages. \$21.99
(e-book \$9.99)

How many Bible translations do you have in your personal library? In mine, started by my late father, I have dozens. Reading them, I often reflect on how we got the Bible.

This is exactly the question Stanley E. Porter, professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ont., addresses in this book, originally delivered as a series of lectures at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, N.S., in 2008.

A renowned scholar and prolific author, Porter focuses on three interrelated components of the process resulting in the New Testament – text, transmission and translation. How can the most reliable Greek text of the New Testament be

reconstructed? How were our major New Testament manuscripts formed and transmitted? And how do ancient and modern translations ensure the transmission of the New Testament?

“This is not a simple or straightforward issue to address,” Porter admits, “and is an even more difficult one to describe.”

Encyclopedic in scope – witness, for example, the more than 600 detailed footnotes – this resource will appeal to the inquiring and educated layperson, as well as the conscientious college and seminary student. It is not for the fainthearted as it requires keen concentration to follow Porter's line of reasoning.

To his credit, the author carefully and respectfully interacts with scholars who do not take a high view of Scripture, whether those of the well-known Jesus Seminar, the former evangelical Bart D. Ehrman, or the Canadian Tom Harpur.

Along the way, Porter offers both cutting-edge scholarship and modest proposals for advancing the discussion about such “vital topics for Christians who seek greater understanding of the foundational text of their faith.”

The dedicated reader cannot but admire and benefit from the amalgam of stories, scholarship, evidence and theories. —Burton K. Janes

People-Pleasing Pastors: Avoiding the Pitfalls of Approval-Motivated Leadership

Author: Charles Stone
IVP Books, 2014.
234 pages. \$17.98
(e-book \$9.79)

All pastors must navigate the expectations of their congregants, other staff and their board members. The temptation to keep the peace by giving in to those expectations, rather than holding steady to the course where God seems to be directing you, is a strong one. The easy way is people pleasing.

Charles Stone, lead pas-

tor at West Park Church in London, Ont., tackles these issues directly and honestly in *People-Pleasing Pastors*,

sharing from experience when he erred by people pleasing and when he fought the wrong battles. The strength of this book is the mix of leadership principles and real-life examples.

His proposed solution begins not with the church but with the pastor. What were the significant events of the past? What are the pastor's values? Answering these questions is necessary before the external relationships can be transformed.

The pastor does not have to find self-worth in the approval of others. A confident pastor will know when to stand up for what is important and when to let the insignificant battles go. It will never be easy to enter into conflict. To be successful requires ongoing self-care as a reminder of who the pastor really is in Christ.

Stone writes in a way that rings true to me as a former pastor. He is neither condemning nor patronizing. He writes as one who is on the same journey.

This book is relevant to most leaders, whether a solo pastor of a small country church or a lead pastor of a megachurch. The principles presented have the potential to lead to much healthier congregations. —Stephen Bedard

Yawning at Tigers: You Can't Tame God, So Stop Trying

Author: Drew Dyck
Nelson Books, 2014.
240 pages. \$20.99
(e-book \$9.99)

It's not fashionable to preach God's holiness these days, let alone share that God is like a wild tiger not meant to be

tamed. Thus Dyck's goal with this book is risky.

We humans tend to domesticate God rather than let Him be Himself. A wild God is unpredictable. We want to be safe. We fear being melted in the presence of a thrice holy God. We shun that presence and do our best to cage God.

Dyck tells us this wild holiness is part of God's transcendence – He is beyond human understanding. But the book goes on to contrast this with the truth that God is also immanent and approachable. God longs to overwhelm us with His “divine embrace.”

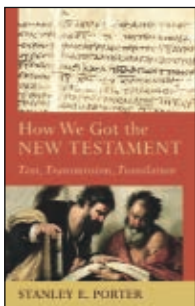
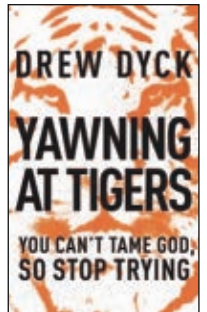
Reading all this makes you wonder if Dyck is talking from both sides of his mouth. Should we fear this wild tiger or embrace Him? The answer is both, as demonstrated by the lion Aslan in the fiction of C. S. Lewis. God is far and yet near, unpredictable yet faithful.

Every Christian has to come to grips with this mystery, probably discarding some prejudices along the way. The book assists with a discussion guide including suggested Bible readings.

Dyck tells of his infant son being fearfully reduced to tears as he saw the wild waves of the ocean for the first time. When he returned the next day, he could not stop staring at those majestic swells. Same ocean, but a day later. Same God, but a metaphoric day later.

Dyck is managing editor of *Leadership Journal* in Chicago. He's from Alberta and has previously written for *Faith Today*.

—Pye Chew





Helping in the Name of Christ

To Russia with love and back again. The rich history of the Mennonite Central Committee in Canada.

In 1920, two Mennonite women from Milverton and Markham in Southern Ontario wrote letters to the Mennonite Central Committee, a brand-new organization based in Pennsylvania. They were concerned about the suffering of fellow Mennonites in Russia and wanted to send clothing, quilts and money. Mennonite communities in Russia had been hit hard by the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing tyranny of the Soviet government. Canadian Mennonites wanted to help.

Although the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) originated in the United States, Canadian Mennonite and Brethren in Christ groups co-operated with the MCC and also formed their own organizations to co-ordinate relief efforts and help refugees from the crisis settle in Canada.

Thus began the long history of involvement by Canadian Mennonites and Brethren in overseas relief and development work, which Esther Epp-Thiessen unveils in her new book *Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History* (CMU Press, 2013).

In the decades to come, Mennonites, including many Russian Mennonite immigrants and their children, rolled up their sleeves to help those in need around the world. During the Second World War, John Coffman from Vineland, Ont., suggested the MCC sew the phrase “In the Name of Christ” into clothing it handed out to those affected by war. Soon refugee children in war-ravaged Europe were receiving blankets, clothes and toys “in the name of Christ.”

The work continued after the war. Eventually in 1963 Canadian Mennonites and Brethren in Christ came together at a meeting in Winnipeg and decided to form a Canadian branch of the MCC. MCC Canada was instrumental in forming the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, an organization that has worked to relieve global hunger since 1983.

Likewise, Canadian MCC supporters were enthusiastically involved in MCC programs originating in the United States. One of these programs, SelfHelp, sold handicrafts made by people in places like Haiti and India as a meaningful way to help poor artisans and their families. SelfHelp was the beginning of the North American

“fair trade” movement. Today it is known as Ten Thousand Villages.

While MCC’s mission seemed simple – to help in the name of Christ – actually carrying out that mission was not. Like any large multilevel organization, the MCC experienced tensions over the decades between the various provincial, national and international MCC bodies over things like decision making and the equitable sharing of funds. At times, even sharp disputes arose between MCC leaders (reminiscent of the split between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36–40).

The organization’s supporters, who typically wanted MCC Canada to focus on disaster relief and related projects, sometimes had different priorities than the organization’s leaders, who tended to envision a broader role including things like relationship building with Canada’s indigenous communities and peace activism rooted in the Mennonite belief in nonviolence.

Like many Christian churches and ministry organizations, the MCC has also wrestled in recent decades with how to respond to emerging cultural and ideological trends such as feminism, the environmental movement, the gay rights movement, postcolonialism and so on. Which of these movements had something valuable to say to Christians, and what elements had to be rejected from a biblical perspective?

In short, Epp-Thiessen’s book reveals that running a major aid and development organization, especially one that tries to bring together many different people and churches, is a messy business. Helping “in the name of Christ” is complicated, and not at all for the faint of heart. Yet such work – including the work of building and stewarding institutions that can carry on a mission across generations – is both necessary and rewarding.

In the 16th century Menno Simons, an early Anabaptist leader and founder of the Mennonite tradition, had this to say:

True evangelical faith is of such a nature that it cannot lie dormant, but manifests itself in all righteousness and works of love.... [It] clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute; it aids and consoles the sad; it returns good for evil; it serves those who harm it; it prays for those who persecute it.... [It] binds up that which is wounded. **FT**

KEVIN FLATT is assistant professor of history at Redeemer University College in Hamilton, Ont.

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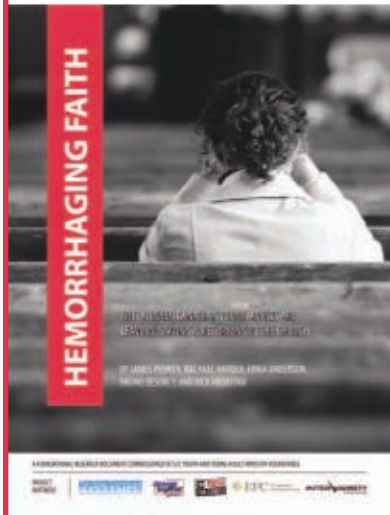
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Only Good Is Good Enough

Why “rights” don’t matter and only “right” does.

Christians in Canada face severe – and increasing – resistance for maintaining various traditional views and practices. But it should not surprise us that such pressures exist and will continue. For it has ever been so.

Societies around the world and throughout history typically offer relatively small scope for deviance from the norms mandated by those in power. Social coherence is most easily achieved, after all, when everyone thinks and talks and acts the same. Rulers love social coherence and fear any significant division – and therefore diversity.

A native Canadian tribe, a Roman imperial colony, a Chinese city, a Scottish village – in every case, strong pressures of conformity ensured little real variety of opinion or behaviour. Indeed, only in ports, where the business of everyone was business, and such business could be conducted to everyone’s profit only by considerable tolerance of cultural differences, could you count on significant liberty – or license. Normally, the norm is enforced.

Don’t let all the modern talk of “rights” confuse you. The increasing acceptance of sexual identities and behaviours that until recently would have been condemned without a second thought has not stemmed from some rapid rise in Canadian commitment to human rights, diversity and multiculturalism in the abstract. Instead, such language typically has been the wedge used to force open a conversation about the legitimacy of such things.

And once the opening has been made, it has been a short and crucial step to argue that such things are simply right and ought therefore to enjoy full affirmation. Anything less than that – anything that smacks of mere “toleration” of “second-class citizens” and the like – turns out to be unacceptable. Only the final stamp of “right” will do. “Rights” simply open the door.

Political philosophers have laboured to frame the proper grounds for, and exercise of, the rights of minorities – and especially of the tiny, crucial “minority” of the dissenting individual. We all care about what we care about, and tolerating someone who insists on a different idea or practice requires of us –

Well, what is required? A grand conception of human beings as possessing a dignity and liberty that deserve

protection. A humble conception of ourselves as very possibly wrong about even matters of great importance. A recognition that requires us therefore to remain open to alternatives and even correction from those who differ.

Christianity offers such a view of human beings, which is why the idea of universal human rights arose in a Christian cultural context. But few other worldviews provide similar resources. And, alas, we Christians too tend to see all those who deviate from the norm as treasonous threats who must be controlled if they can’t be converted. We, too, rarely abide any significant differences of opinion in our churches, ministries and families.

In sum, we ought to expect such treatment by our fellow Canadians today – and we ought to be slower to label it all as “persecution.” Some of that resistance might well be prompted by genuine anti-Christian sentiment, or by a more sweeping secularism that hates all religion. But some of it comes from the natural human instinct to promote the good and crush the bad.

To some of our neighbours biblical views look just like racism or sexism, so of course they’re disgusted. It’s no wonder they have trouble seeing a good reason to tolerate such repellent ideas.

Some Christians are responding by advancing a more sophisticated understanding of multiculturalism and liberty. But even among professions where this case ought to be unnecessary – politicians, lawyers, jurists, professors and journalists – too many still happily resort to the law to promote the right with which they agree, not to protect the rights of those with whom they don’t.

Instead of taking refuge in the flimsy shelter of Canadian commitment to “rights,” we are going to have to engage in an apologetic of “right.” We are going to have to show it’s in everybody’s interest to allow Christians to go about their business, despite their weird and even archaic views about sex, abortion and the like.

The evidence of social utility is there to be offered. Committed Christians can be shown to be more likely to form stable and happy marriages, raise decent and productive kids, give time and money to charities (including non-Christian ones), and in other respects contribute to society in ways in which any Canadian can approve. That’s going to have to be our way forward – at least until Canadians develop a fresh commitment to the tolerance of significant diversity. **FT**

JOHN STACKHOUSE teaches at Regent College in Vancouver and is the author of *Need to Know: Vocation as the Heart of Christian Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

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Bill Hybels is founding and senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church and chairman of the board for Global Leadership Summit, a world-class leadership event that trains 170,000 leaders in over 100 countries. An exceptional communicator, Bill speaks around the world on strategic issues related to leadership, evangelism, and church growth. He is a bestselling author of more than 20 books, *Too Busy Not to Pray* and *The Power of a Whisper*. He and his wife, Lynne, have two adult children and two grandsons.



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Tristan Bronca



Editor in Chief
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Editor in Chief
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It's sobering to think about how much time we spend on the Internet. It's the hub for so much of the world's knowledge and entertainment, organized by clever algorithms to funnel everything we'll find interesting towards our glowing blue screens. It's personalized. It's engaging. And, not surprisingly, we sometimes spend hours following the links, being drawn through an endless maze of articles, games, quizzes and videos. For this issue, my job was easy: get lost in that maze...

Still, there's something very impressive about that: How these content creators can sometimes enthrall us with a few silly rants or sharp social commentaries; with a few trick shots or bold journalism. So in this issue of *LIA*, we decided to look at arguably the most enthralling medium of modern entertainment: Internet video. Our newest contributor, Jacky Habib, picks three channels that will not only draw you in but may very well leave you with renewed perspective on your faith. Then in our cover story, I speak with one master in the art of awesome Internet video which, I think, you'll have as much fun watching as I did.

I am also sorry to announce that I will be stepping down as the senior editor of *LIA* after this issue. I've been editor here since the first and it's been a ton of fun working with such positive and passionate people. Thank you to Ben and Joel for the opportunity and to the writers and graphic designer for all your hard work.

And thank you, dear reader, for spending your valuable time and precious clicks on these pages. I hope you'll keep the love moving.

- Tristan Bronca, Senior Editor of *LIA*



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LOVE MOVEMENT

What We're Watching on YouTube

By: Jacky Habib

We're probably all guilty of spending a little too much time YouTube, watching music videos, interesting talks and pranks. The site is now the second most popular online search engine behind Google so if you're putting well-produced content, chances are it's being seen and shared by others. The possibility of videos going viral seems to keep millions dedicated to creating them.

In the midst of video game reviews and make-up tutorials, there's another category that's trying to make its way into the popular section: faith-based videos. There are several Christian vloggers



Image courtesy of The Skit Guys, Eddie James (left) and Tommy Woodard (right)

using YouTube to share testimonies, perform music and educate others. Below, we've highlighted some of our favourite channels. Be sure to check them out and write to us at info@lovemovement.org to tell us about some of your favourites.

Jefferson Bethke

Category: Spoken Word & Vlogs

Who is he? A YouTube vlogger, author and public speaker. He rose to fame in 2012 when his video "Why I Hate Religion but Love Jesus" went viral. The spoken word video, which now has over 27 million views, garnered praise and sparked controversy with several Christians countering Bethke's arguments through blogs and videos. Since then, he's written a *New York Times* best-selling book titled *Jesus > Religion: Why He Is So Much Better Than Trying Harder, Doing More and Being Good Enough*.

Where you may have seen him: While "Why I Hate Religion but Love Jesus" is Bethke's most popular video, several others of his have gone viral. His other spoken word videos include "Sex, Marriage and Fairytales" or "Sexual Healing" which have both went viral as well. Bethke's videos cover a range of topics from listening to secular music to addressing modesty at Halloween. He also records Q&A's with his wife Alyssa, usually around topics of dating and relationships. His videos are blunt so if you're looking to learn about the struggles and modern challenges that come with being a believer check out his channel.

The Skit Guys

Category: Skits, Q&A's

Who are they: The Skit Guys is comprised of Tommy Woodard and Eddie James who've been best friends since high school. For 20 years, they've been teaching God's word through comedy and drama but in the past few years, they've taken their work to YouTube, gaining worldwide fans through their creative performances.

Where you may have seen them: Their most popular video is "God's Chisel," a moving skit about God wanting to carve out His masterpiece in a man who struggles to surrender himself. The Skit Guys have made videos about baggage, idol worship, and more. Although their videos are all overtly religious, they don't come off as preachy and their sense of humour is refreshing.

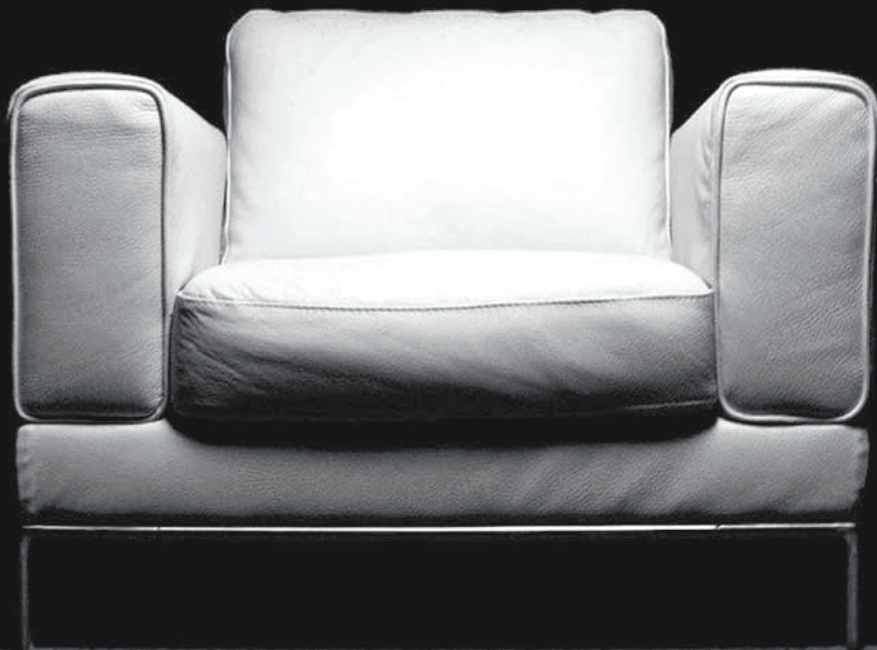
I Am Second

Category: Testimonials

Who are they: I Am Second is a movement based on the concept that God comes first and we come second. Numerous celebrities have participated in the series, from NASCAR racers to musicians to actors. The I Am Second movement is not just a film series, but also includes concerts, small groups and missionary trips.

Where you may have seen them: The I am Second series is known for shooting each testimonial on its signature white chair against a dark backdrop. The most viewed video testimonial is of the Robertsons, the family that starred on the TV show Duck Dynasty. Other celebrities including Brian Welch, founder of the nu metal band Korn, author Anne Rice and shark-attack survivor Bethany Hamilton also share testimonies as part of the series. The stories are transformative and hopeful, sharing the impact Christ can have on a person's life. They cover topics such as substance abuse, disabilities, death, racism, cancer and divorce. This film series is a reminder that living a Christian life doesn't mean being isolated from the world.

I AM SECOND®



The **BIG** Shots

By: Tristan Bronca

A conversation with (probably) YouTube's greatest trick shot group on their meteoric rise to success, entertainment, and their faith.

There is something amazing about the things that Tyler Toney can do. I don't say "miraculous" — even though that's probably more accurate — because that word has ceased to mean very much around those of us who use it to describe things that aren't impossible. But I assure you, some of the things Tyler Toney can do should not be possible. I'm talking about things like draining a basketball shot from a moving airplane, or from 500+ feet at Reunion Tower in Dallas, or from above the cheap seats in Texas' AT&T stadium. Now, I don't need to convince you he's done these things because you may have already seen them. Millions of people have...

Tyler is a member and co-founder of Dude Perfect, a Texas-based group best known for their spectacular and creative trick shots. In five years, these five best friends (and one panda) have gone from filming games of HORSE in their backyard to a media brand with its own iPhone game, book, and more than 268 million Youtube views. They've been featured on TSN, ESPN, NBC, MTV, and Fox and worked with brands like Gatorade and GMC. Yet, as impressive as some of these shots may be, their success may be attributable to something else — something that's less about the performance and more about their natural chemistry. It's their infectious energy — the way they bounce around like kids after too many sweets — and their genuine joy in doing these incredible things makes it so entertaining.

Now, they've expanded their repertoire with the insanely successful stereotypes series (where they parody the different types of people you may see at the gym, the golf course, or the movies) and turned these videos into careers for themselves. I don't know if that's miraculous, but it's certainly amazing.

LIA: I wanted to start off with kind of a stupid question but how do you do it? The trick shots.

Tyler (DP): Yeah it's kind of crazy how it caught on because looking back, it felt like our first videos were really unimpressive. You know, something anyone could do. But then we started brainstorming and thinking about how to take these shots to the next level. I was a quarterback in high school, so I've naturally got a bit of a stronger arm and pretty good-sized hands. I can palm the basketball and throw it like a football so I kind of use that to make those shots happen.

LIA: Yeah but even some of the other ones. I mean, there's one where you're in a stadium and you teed up a basketball and hit it with a baseball bat into a

DP
DUDE PERFECT

basketball net way out in the diamond. I thought to myself 'how does that even happen?' If anyone else hit that, I feel like they would have flubbed it four yards...

DP: Yeah that was a crazy one. We did that in AAA baseball stadium here in Dallas. We'd seen some other people do some bat shots before and if we just thought, 'man if we're going to do a bat shot we need to really knock it out of the park.' We were actually running out of time filming that one — our baseball edition — and had maybe an hour or so to wrap everything up. They basically gave us a countdown, like 'we gotta shut down the lights so you guys got 10 tries left.' I had four left when I sunk that shot so maybe that's why I was so excited.

“There's entertainment out there that's good and clean but also enjoyable and fun.”

LIA: Tell me about how you guys started out. It says on your website that “everything started with one trick shot,” how did things take off from there?

DP: So me and the redhead in our group, Garrett Hilbert, bought a basketball net and put it in the back yard. It was all grass so we couldn't dribble or anything so we'd just play HORSE. We were about to go to lunch one day and I was like, 'hey if I make this hook shot from across the yard you got to buy my sandwich.' And he was like 'yeah, okay whatever, let's go eat.' So I threw it up, made it and he was like 'wow, that's pretty good. Alright I'll buy your sandwich.' When we got back, we thought about what would happen if we tried to catch some of these on film and put them all together in a compilation video. So when everybody got back from class, we all started trying to outdo each other and I think we filmed that in like two afternoons. We just uploaded the video for our friends and family, never expecting anything to come of it and Good Morning America called the next morning wanting to air it on TV. I think Cory — one of the twins — was the one who woke up at 6:45 to a ringing phone and I still don't know how they got his number but he came through the house screaming like a little girl: 'We're going to be on TV! We're going to be on TV!' From that moment on it just kind of took off and it's been a pretty crazy ride since.

LIA: So you mentioned that you played quarterback growing up. Did you play in college?



DP: None of us played college sports. I don't know how y'all rank your high schools but we basically do a 5A classification, so I went to a 3A school and played every sport I wanted to. I was shortstop, ran track, played golf, everything. The other guys were all basketball players and almost all of them won state at some point in their high school careers. I'm sure we could have gone and played at some small schools and stuff but none of us really wanted to try to balance class with all that if we weren't going to a D1 school. So we accepted our shortcomings as D1 athletes and decided to just go to school. But it ended up working out.

LIA: Is there one of you that's a better athlete than the others? I imagine you guys are pretty competitive.

DP: Yeah we're competitive in every way. We got our shuffleboard delivered to the office today because we had to figure out who's the best shuffleboard player. And I think that's what's made Dude Perfect what it is today: we're trying to be the best at everything we do.

LIA: I want to ask you now about your faith and why

you guys have made an active effort to make that part of your image?

DP: When all this stuff started happening— Good Morning America was calling, our emails were blowing up — we knew that it wasn't just because of something that we did. We knew that this was a God thing and we knew that this was a platform that He had given us to give the glory back to Him. It's been really cool to do the different speaking engagements and have these kids look up to you as role models and their parents coming up and saying, 'hey, I just appreciate the fact that y'all put up videos that I can turn on and leave my kids in the other room and not have to worry about them.' I think that ties together the reasons for the success we've had. It's allowed us to be on all these different TV shows and platforms and just reach so many different people. I think that's all because we've been good stewards with what He's given us.

LIA: What kinds of things have you guys been doing in terms of community involvement, charitable contributions and that sort of thing?

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DP: Compassion International was one of the first groups we partnered with when we first came up with the “giveback” concept. Then Garret, Cody and I were still working other jobs, the twins went to Africa for a two-week mission trip and they did this documentary

DP: Probably the slingshot, we spent eight or nine hours on that. I don’t know how many shots but that one was kind of a beating.

“When all this stuff started happening - **Good Morning America** was calling, our emails were blowing up - we knew that it wasn’t just because of something that we did.”

thing there. Charity Water has been another one that’s been really cool to partner with. We’re not necessarily looking to make our own charity branch but we want to maybe build some Dude Perfect basketball courts in some inner city places or something like that.

LIA: What is it that makes you guys different?

DP: I think there’s a lack of good, clean entertainment right now in the media. I think it’s a big reason why Duck Dynasty blew up: people saw something that they could watch as a family and it was fun yet nobody was running around doing drugs, getting drunk, or sleeping with a ton of girls or anything like that. I think it was a kind of reminder for people out there that there’s entertainment that’s good and clean but also enjoyable and fun. I think we have that combination but mainly, it’s been God that’s let us get this big and we don’t want to take that for granted.

LIA: I want to do like a rapid fire round of questions if that’s cool with you? Just say the first thing that pops into your head.

DP: Cool, let’s do it.

LIA: Career highlight...

DP: The airplane shot, made that one on the second try.

LIA: The most misses...

LIA: Which stereotype are you?

DP: A lot of them. I am not the “Rage Monster” even though I always end up portraying him. A lot of the golf stereotypes that I was in were pretty accurate.

LIA: Favourite athlete... Any sport.

DP: Little Steve Yzerman, Detroit Red Wings.

LIA: Are you just saying that because you know you’re talking to a Canadian?

DP: No I’m a big hockey fan. My dad’s from Detroit so all his side of the family is up there in Michigan.

LIA: Last one: Who’s in the panda suit?

DP: Ah, unfortunately that is one I cannot answer. At this point, his identity will remain a mystery.



DUDE PERFECT



Love & Lyrics

By: Christina Helvadjian

Melissa Miller is a bright-eyed 23-year-old newlywed who knows for certain that her music will be used for the greater good. The video for her song "Love's Embrace" is in the works as she continues to work and wait patiently for the right doors to open for her music career. At 13, she began to teach herself how to play the guitar and has added her vocals to the songs that she began to write early in her career.

The lyrics from her upcoming release are reflective of her experiences from recent mission trips to Uganda where she quickly realized "how easy it is to take things for granted here." She worked in orphanages with child refugees who were rescued after the northern war and brought back into the care of trained mission workers. Miller, who has a

background in social work, cared for these children in hopes that they will one day be integrated as functional members of society. She recalls very clearly that during her first mission trip her musical style and depth shifted. Her vision became clearer as she was able to use her experiences as fuel to encourage and uplift others around her. Now, with her gifts being used for Kingdom advancement, she is confident that at the right time her dream to educate youth and perform will come to fruition.

“**But when I see you face to face
and I'm caught in love's embrace
// what can I do but give this life
to you // and when I finally see
the truth there will be no need
for proof // what can I do, but
give this life to you.**”

- Lyrics from Love's Embrace





-Texting Out Loud-

BY CHRISTINA PORTER



School is out and our lives are a little less bound to our schedules. Thanks to our phones, we can check in with whomever we want just about whenever we want but while we do, we should take some time to consider if we're really as connected as we think we are. Sure we're updated, but is that the same? Does sharing an "LOL" really compare to sitting next to someone doubled over in laughter? Does "poking," "smiley face"-ing, "liking" or any other symbol of love and acceptance come close to the real thing? The summer is here! Time to love text-less.

HERE'S HOW:

Step 1. Find and list all the abbreviations and symbols you use to reach out to people on your phone (that includes Facebook, Twitter or texting). The longer the list the better.

Step 2. Beside each symbol or abbreviation, write down how you could communicate that symbol face-to-face. For example:

"LOL" – share a laugh with someone.

"Poke" – nudge a friend as you stand beside them in a line.

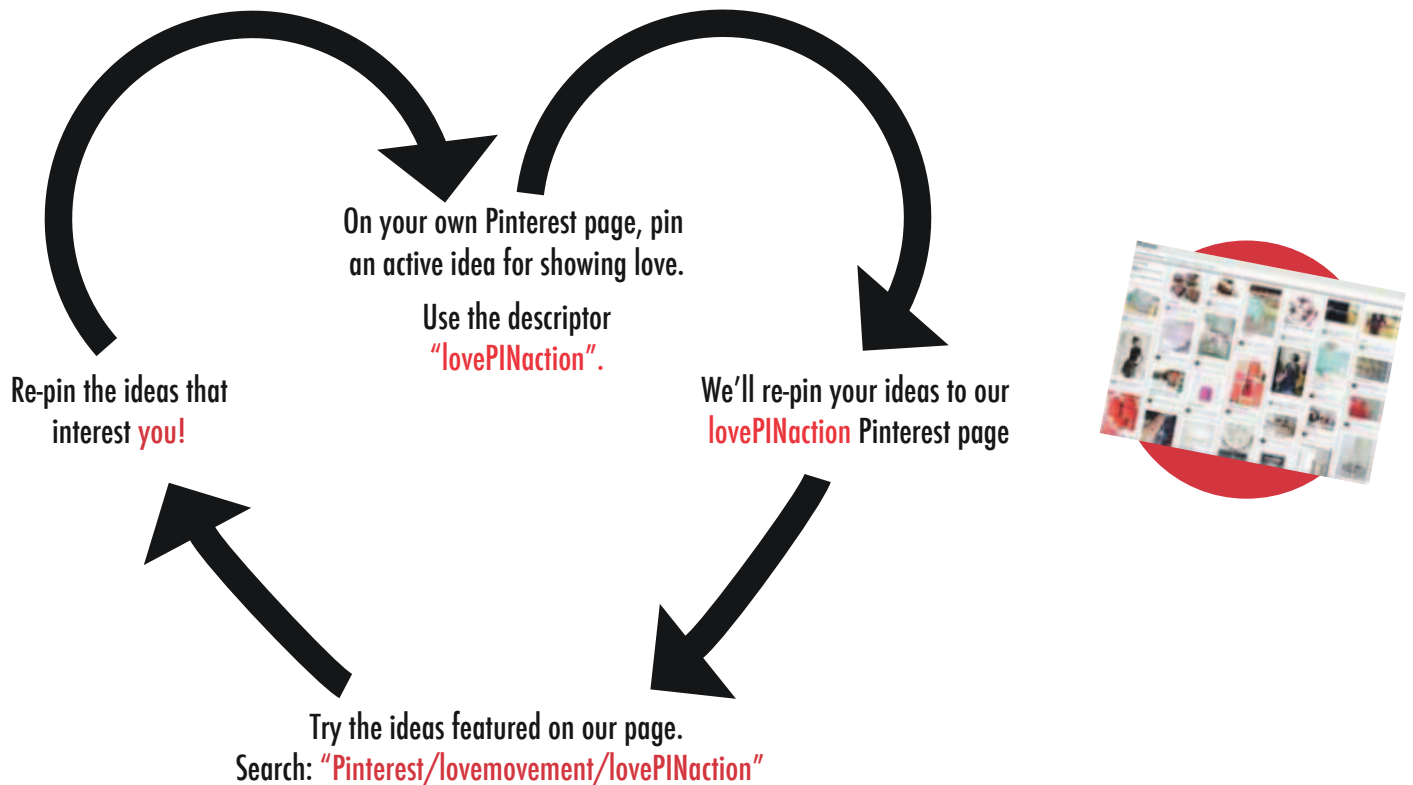
"Smiley face" – smile at a stranger.

"Wink" – tell someone that they are looking great (preferably not in a creepy way). Or, you know, wink.

"Sad face" – find someone who you know is having a rough time and just sit beside them. See where it goes.

"Like" – tell someone something you like about them.

Step 3. Put your phone down and with your list in hand, go out and complete every action. Check them off as you go and try not to touch your phone until you're done.



UNFAMILIAR

ENVIRONMENTS

By: Steve Norton

I don't know many people that like feeling alone.

To be clear, I'm not speaking about being alone. Lots of people like to be by themselves to think, pray, recharge, etc. but that's not what I mean. Rather, I'm talking about feeling alone. The type of feeling that reminds us that, if you yell, no one will hear. The type that takes away your safety net and makes you feel a deep-seated discomfort. I'm talking about the 'stuck on a deserted island' type of alone.

There are all sorts of moments that can stir this feeling within us, whether it's walking along a deserted roadside or travelling to a foreign country for the first time by ourselves. In these moments, one often experiences what it means to be truly lost in an unfamiliar environment, creating anxiety and fear even in the most confident people. Still, despite the obvious hardships in these moments, I do believe that there is one benefit to experiences such as these.

Being alone is when you find out who you really are.

A great example of this comes through the story of Joseph in Genesis 39 (that's right, the one with the technicolour dreamcoat). The youngest in his family, Joseph was definitely his dad's favourite son which, as you can imagine, did not sit well with his brothers. So, they plotted to kill him. Sounds harsh, right? The brothers thought so too so, instead, they opted to sell him as a slave to a travelling caravan who then sold

him to Potipher, one of Pharaoh's highest appointed officials. All of a sudden, the young man who once seemed to have everything finds himself alone in the middle of nowhere.

The most interesting thing to me about Joseph isn't what happened to him but how he handles himself in this unfamiliar environment. Here is someone who was stripped of his lifestyle, sold as a slave and shipped off to a country where he had never been before. To most people, this would have been a crippling blow. It could be compared to those early-life struggles that have come to define superheroes we know and fly around pretending to be.

And like our superheroes, Joseph thrives.

What's more, this isn't the type of success that might have been expected from a slave. This is a measure of success that would be more commonly applied to a wealthy master in his own household. Speaking in modern terms, this would have been similar to a White House kitchen cook being elevated to President's Chief of Staff or a cameraman being invited to take the position of Vice-Chairman of Warner Bros. A true rags to riches story: like a towel boy being elevated to assistant GM of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

In other words, it simply doesn't happen. (Although, if they get desperate enough, the Leafs situation remains a possibility...)

The question remains, however, as to how someone manages to survive, let alone thrive as he does. What was it that set this boy apart from the rest of the servants in Potipher's household?

It all comes down to identity.

Despite having his whole life taken from him, Joseph's identity lay in his commitment to the Lord. A great example of this comes when Potipher's wife wants to "lie with him." She pursues him day after day but Joseph recognizes that to act on this would be a "sin against God." In other words, Joseph is less concerned with ruining his relationship with Potipher than he is about how he would appear in the eyes of God.

Without question, everything that Joseph does in this household stems from his belief that again 'the Lord was with [him]'. Even though his life exemplified the term 'hostile takeover', Joseph was ultimately committed to serve God wherever he was. No matter what Potipher asked him to do, he did with a good attitude. In fact, "the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph."

Whether he was working as a slave or trapped in jail, Joseph knew that his identity did not rely on where he lived or the clothes he wore. He had found his true self in the love of God. As a result, Joseph didn't fall apart when he was stripped of everything that he had. Alone in the middle of nowhere, Joseph drew courage and strength from the knowledge that he wasn't alone at all. Rooted in his faith, Joseph was able to come alive in an environment where many would have crumbled under the weight of their own hurt and fear.

Most importantly, however, he also found out who he really was.



THE MEXICAN SCHOOL OF FRIENDSHIP

By: Mark Fisk

In 2008 I had the privilege to go on a short-term mission trip to Mexico City. We stayed in the beautiful old suburb of Coyoacán, filled with colonial architecture and cafés that roast fresh, locally grown coffee beans every morning. It was the home of Leon Trotsky during his exile and it's also where the Frida Kahlo museum is. I was immediately struck by the beauty of this neighbourhood in a city, sadly, known globally for pollution. Parks and squares seem to open up off of every other street and while the borough often bustles with activity it does not seem crowded.

The trip was organized through Latin American Mission (L.A.M.) and hosted by long-term L.A.M. missionaries based in Mexico. The purpose of the trip was to teach English and host English language conversation groups. We often taught in classes at UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico) one of the largest universities in the world, allowing the students some practical experience with native English speakers.



I was nervous before our first day at the university. Most of the students would be the age of the team or slightly older and we were worried that they might be hostile or indifferent towards us. I soon found that each group of students challenged my own conventions of social behaviour, and not because they were hostile or indifferent. They were quick to open up to us and ask us questions about ourselves. They laughed at the Canadian stereotypes of uncomfortable, weather-related small talk and were more interested in talking about themselves or the people they were in conversation with. We had to be careful not to go over our allotted time in each class because conversations were clearly more important to them than any schedule. In later gatherings at coffee shops, students were quick to show us what to order. One student even left the café and came back with roasted corn on the cob — he wanted us to try the delicious treat from one of the ubiquitous street vendors. The corn, doused in lime juice and sprinkled with chilis, was delicious and quickly became one of our favourite snacks along with hot fresh churros covered in cinnamon sugar and filled with chocolate or strawberry sauce.

Throughout my short stay in Mexico I realized that the rest of North America has a lot to learn from Mexico. When people gather as friends in Mexico that is all they do, whether they are at home or out the community. There is no expectation that friends are gathering to “do” something. In the U.S. and Canada, it seems like a party or a movie or shopping is a necessary excuse to get together with friends. In Mexico, there are no excuses. Friends simply gather to catch talk about life and family. It surprised me, as a young man from Canada, how quickly our Mexican friends opened up to us and how quickly they asked us questions we may not have been comfortable answering with acquaintances back home. Family and friends are of the utmost importance in Mexico and they care deeply about learning about and from one another. Friends are only friends if you get to know them well and Mexicans have a knack for getting to know people quite well and quickly. It is a skill we would do well to strengthen here in Canada.



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