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CANADA'S CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2015

# FAITH TODAY

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# THINK

It's a complex world.  
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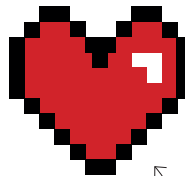
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# What do you think?

Great articles to ponder and respond to

**W**hether or not September is “back to school” in your world, it certainly has a “getting down to business” vibe for most of us. Our cover story reflects that.

John G. Stackhouse Jr., settling into his new position at Crandall University in Moncton, has provided us a great essay to highlight on our front page: “In search of...adequacy: meeting the challenges of our time with intellectual rigour.”

If it sounds heavy, be assured it is just the right weight. This is an article for everyone – pastor, layperson, teacher. Here’s a quote to whet your appetite:

Just as we generally put our trust in our family doctors, while still feeling free to look up medical information online and chat with our friends about their hospital stays, so we ought to have confidence that our pastors are equally reliable experts. Are they?

Last year the *National Post* ran a story about Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, unpacking charity work in what is known as Canada’s poorest postal code. That story raised questions in our minds about what it’s like to minister there. Vancouver writer Julia Cheung takes us to the “DTES” to look for God at work.



Ministry in challenging locations has always raised questions. Short-

term mission trips, for example. How useful are they? Who really benefits? Such questions lined up well with an invitation to join a Samaritan’s Purse trip to Cambodia. Karen Stiller was a full team member, slogging it out with everyone else. But also observing and speaking to the Canadian and Cambodian team members about the unique dynamics of such a trip. See what you think.

There’s lots more in this issue just waiting for you to savour. If you think of a friend who’d appreciate a free copy, please email us and let us know. We’d love to do that for you. Getting Canada’s Christian magazine into the hands of new readers is one of our big goals this year.

Another is to share the importance of Urbana, North America’s largest student mission conference. This event, held by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship every three years over Christmas holidays, has changed the lives of many young Canadians.

We recently held a contest on social media and are excited to announce that *Faith Today* is paying the registration for Jeanie Qiu, an Alberta university student. Meet her at www.faithtoday.ca/Jeanie. Watch for more on Urbana in our next issue, and on Facebook and Twitter in December! /FT

 Karen Stiller of Port Perry, Ont., and  
 Bill Fledderus of Hamilton, Ont., are senior  
editors of *Faith Today*.

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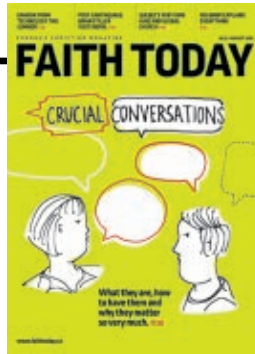
**New at Blog.FaithToday.ca**

IN 1993 my husband Brent and I travelled to Urbana, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship's student mission conference... [It was so good that we pledged] that when we had kids the right age... we would make sure they got there. And we have. Three years ago our oldest son... This coming year, Urbana 2015, he will go again along with his younger sister, in her Grade 12 year. In three years we will make the trek again with our youngest. *—from "Heading to Urbana" by Karen Stiller*

FOR AVID readers, there is just something about the summer. Some little hint of permission to read thick, juicy paperbacks... Maybe it's extra time available to read a theological

work that builds your spirit, even if you're reading it on a chaise lounge. Or, better yet, maybe it's both. Maybe your summer reading includes play and pray? We asked some of our *Faith Today* family and EFC colleagues to let us peek at their reading lists. Maybe it will inspire your own reading this summer? *—from "To Inspire Your Summer Reading" by FT Staff*

IT'S AMAZING what happens when we start listening to the right voices, when we take ourselves out of the 140-character chatter, and make space. We all need space to create.



Space to hear. Space free from the constant urge to produce and consume. Space to rest. Space to notice the wondrous detail of the people and world right in front of us. *—from "We All Need Space to Create" by Christina Crook*

YOUR WRITING may never be a priceless ceramic Ming vase. Maybe it will just be a clay pot, something that looks more like a failed art assignment by a Grade 2 student. But do you think there is anything so bad that God can't use it? *—from "Practice Won't Make You Perfect. But It Will Help Your Writing" by Bill Fledderus*

**Kudos, question**

*Re: Religion Watch (Jul/Aug 2015)*  
THIS CURRENT issue is the best issue since I started my subscription.

Having said that, the reference about Brian Williams was a poor judgment call. What he did was wrong. He paid the price for his "misremembering." I was upset to see a Christian magazine judging the man's character even if it was an established fact.

Your article on the Quebec Nouvelle Vie was great reporting. Keep up the good work. It is much needed and appreciated.  
*Patrick Kelly  
St. Lambert, Que.*

**Insightful**

*Re: Messy Faith (Jul/Aug 2015)*  
I STRONGLY agree that "covering up [sexual abuse] and quick answers only bring more

MILESTONES

**APPOINTED**



**Eric Derksen** as president of Vanguard College, Edmonton, a theological training college of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. It usually enrolls

200 students. Derksen is an ordained PAOC minister and chartered accountant who has served at Siloam Mission, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and congregations in Ontario and Manitoba. He succeeds Stephen Hertzog, president for more than ten years, now Eurasia regional director for the PAOC.



**Darrell Winger** as president and CEO of World Relief Canada, a 45-year-old Christian relief and development organization. He succeeds Laurie Cook, who will help facilitate the transition process

until December 31, 2015. Winger has led the Brethren in Christ Church Canada (executive director for four years, bishop for seven years), pastored at the Meeting House in Oakville, and served as COO for the Brethren in Christ Church North America in Pennsylvania.

**Lyn Dyck** as executive director of Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference / Go Mission! He previously served as the group's vice-moderator and is an experienced business manager. He succeeds Jacob Friesen as head of this group of 27 churches with headquarters in Winnipeg.

**Richard McGowan**, executive director of Emmanuel International Canada, as chairperson of the board of directors of the Christian Relief & Development Association, a group of organizations that focuses on international poverty alleviation. He succeeds Tracey DeGraaf of Crossroads Christian Communications.

**RENAMED**

**Prairie College** is the new unified name encompassing several related institutions in Three Hills, Alta.: Prairie Bible College, Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology, and Prairie School of Mission Aviation. The formal corporate name remains Prairie Bible Institute, but the new brand is intended to help graduates find greater acceptance in professions and academia, and make it easier for some prospective foreign students to get visas and some graduates to work overseas.

**PARTNERING**

**Emmanuel Bible College** in Kitchener, Ont., and **Rocky Mountain College**, Calgary, have partnered to increase their offerings of distance education. RMC has pioneered the Pathways program, which offers flexible distance education. Churches, camps, and other ministries can create learning centres while individuals can also study at home.



harm” and “authenticity is far more effective in evangelism than perfection.” Thanks for an insightful article!

Kimberley Payne  
Millbrook, Ont.

## Sex ed details needed

Re: *How to Talk to Your Child’s Educators* (May/June 2015)

THIS ARTICLE raises important issues and offers sound advice, especially about research, keeping calm and speaking respectfully.

However, more is needed for anyone looking for direction on provincially mandated promotion concerning sexual orientation and “comprehensive” sex ed. By law, educators in public and private schools in many parts of Canada are directed to tell 11-year-olds that oral and anal sex are equivalent to vaginal sex. Various sex ed curricula in Canada make no reference to love or marriage. Well researched, calm and respectful expressions of concern about this have consistently fallen on deaf ears.

## RESIGNING

**Sam Chaise** as executive director of Canadian Baptist Ministries, after a five-year term that ends this fall. A search is underway for his successor. CBM, the global mission organization of four regional Baptist groups, has headquarters in Mississauga, Ont.

**Bev Carrick** as executive director of Cause Canada, an international relief and development agency working in West Africa and Central America. She and her husband Paul founded the agency, based in Canmore, Alta., in 1984. A search is underway for her successor.

**Donald E. Burke** as president of Booth University College, effective June 30, 2016. Dr. Burke has been a member of the faculty of this Winnipeg liberal arts university college affiliated with the Salvation Army since the school opened in 1982.

Yes, parents need to teach their kids about right and wrong. We really cannot expect public educators or legislators to do so. But most parents need help to do

so effectively, biblically and with scientific accuracy.

Al Hiebert  
Steinbach, Man.

**f** 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.com/faithtoday](http://www.facebook.com/faithtoday) to join in discussions sparked by letters to the editor and more.

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# KINGDOM MATTERS

The latest news, notes, ideas and analysis from the Canadian Christian community



Donning the pads for a young kickboxer; ladies participating in outdoor kickboxing training; Pastor Mike Croteau from Community Life, Kanata, Ont.

## Church turns to kickboxing

Gaining outreach opportunities and funds for ministry

**WHEN COMMUNITY LIFE** Wesleyan Church opened in a Kanata, Ont., plaza four years ago, pastor Mike Croteau was already asking, "How can we fill our church facility with life all day long?"

"I'd been dreaming about using a church's vacant time to build relationships and generate revenue through marketplace activities," says the Ottawa-area pastor. For a model he looked to a Washington, D.C.-based church that runs a profitable coffee house whose physical space doubles as a church.

But instead of a coffee house, Community Life turned to kickboxing.

Community Life is part of a growing number of churches – the 2014 documentary *Fight Church* cites about 700 in the U.S. – that include mixed

martial arts, boxing or wrestling as part of their ministry.

The church runs two types of programs – community clubs where it charges fees and outreach clubs, such as the club for students of a private school located in the same plaza. In exchange for space and an athletic program, the church uses the school's rooms for Sunday school and children's ministry.

"The greatest challenge is flip-flopping between running programs as 100 per cent outreach or 100 per cent marketplace endeavour," says Croteau, who started martial arts as a nine-year-old and taught it in British Columbia after graduating from high school. "We're still undecided and run our programs as both."

Whether outreach, revenue

generating or both, the programs have proved effective. Community clubs brought in the funds needed to hire a youth pastor. The midweek youth church, which began as a teen kickboxing program, led to the youth becoming more interested in the ministry.

"So the kickboxing class was shut down," says Croteau, noting the teens "call me coach, but call him [the youth pastor] pastor."

Community classes are a connecting point which includes those from other faith groups, like the Sikh who called Croteau for pastoral counselling and the Muslim who asked, "Why is it you wake up with hope and I don't?"

"I've had moms – a lot of these families don't have a faith background – call me when their kids are getting into trouble," says Croteau, who guesses about a dozen community club members have started attending the church. **—ROBERT WHITE**

# 700

CHURCHES IN THE U.S. THAT ARE ESTIMATED TO INCLUDE MIXED MARTIAL ARTS, BOXING OR WRESTLING AS PART OF THEIR MINISTRY (SOURCE: FIGHT CHURCH)

## First Nations Bible translation effort grows

Three First Nations groups took a step closer to reading Scripture in their own languages at a weeklong workshop

**MEMBERS FROM THREE** First Nations language groups – Plains Cree, Oji-Cree and Naskapi – took part in a recent weeklong workshop designed to help both beginner and more experienced translators improve their skills.

The Mother Tongue Translator Workshop, a joint effort between the Canadian Bible Society and Wycliffe Bible Translators, was held in Guelph, Ont., this past April.

“It’s long overdue,” says Lydia Mamakwa, bishop of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh for the Anglican Church of Canada. “We want to read God’s Word in the language our Creator gave us. We want to do all we can to hold onto our language.”

Mamakwa was one of three leaders who visited the workshop to encourage the 16 participants. The others were Myles Leitch, director of Scripture translation for the Canadian Bible Society, and Mark MacDonald, the national Indigenous Anglican bishop.

Mamakwa also accompanied five women from Kingfisher Lake First Nation in Northern Ontario who attended. She says the community currently uses Cree resources and the workshop gave participants a start on an Oji-Cree translation of the Gospels and Acts.

As the Kingfisher Lake group

starts down the translation road, the Naskapi group is well on its way. Naskapi participants used the workshop to take the translated New Testament they have and make it consistent.

“More and more Naskapi words are being created,” says Cheyenne Vachon, project co-ordinator for the Status of Women in Canada for the Naskapi Nation and church lay reader from the community in Northern Quebec, near the Labrador border. She explained that three different parts of the Naskapi language have been used, creating inconsistencies in the translation.

“It’s important we don’t change words or create new words to confuse,” Vachon says, noting the community is even rechecking the existing translation of the New Testament for consistency.

Ruth Heeg, translation co-ordinator with the Canadian Bible Society Translation Department, says they’d like to make the workshop an annual event.

“The big thing is encouragement,” says Heeg. “They can get to feeling like they’re all alone. And geographically they are, but there’s a whole support system available to them including fellow First Nations people who know what they’re going through.” –**ROBERT WHITE**



## Inspiring ideas from Canadian churches



### Going the long haul for the homeless

James and Christina Friesen have turned their big rig truck into a rolling ministry base. Before hitting the road as long distance truck drivers, they prepare care packages for the homeless people they will meet. Beyond simply meeting basic needs, the couple tries to show each person they are valued and give them hope. [www.christianweek.org](http://www.christianweek.org)



### Feed the need

When members of St. John the Baptist Anglican Church in North Sydney, N.S., heard that children in their community were going hungry, they partnered with a local youth centre and built a community garden. Kids from the youth centre came to the church to help plant, weed, water and harvest the vegetables. Using the produce they grew, the church hosted a harvest feast for the children and their families, and then sent them home with bags of fresh veggies. [www.christianweek.org](http://www.christianweek.org)



### Neighbourhood study

To better understand their community and build collaboration among local ministries, Love Ottawa conducted an extensive neighbourhood study in Vanier, one of Ottawa’s at-risk communities. Summer interns helped compile available demographic data and information on the region’s strengths and weaknesses, and spent considerable time on the streets to “understand the community’s mood.” The finalized report was presented to a group of local pastors, ministries, politicians and community leaders. [www.loveottawa.ca](http://www.loveottawa.ca)



### Christian chiropractors make an impact

A simple initiative started by a group of Christian chiropractors wanting to partner their business with a Christian charity has become a multimillion dollar partnership. More than 90 doctors and clinics have now joined Chiropractors with Compassion (CWC), pledging to donate a portion of the proceeds from every new patient they have. In the last ten years, CWC has raised more than \$2.7 million, donated directly to a special fund with Compassion Canada. CWC members vote on which projects to fund. [www.cwccanada.org](http://www.cwccanada.org) –**CRAIG MACARTNEY**



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## NOTE WORTHY

### CHURCH REMAINS HOPEFUL

The congregation of a Canadian pastor being detained in North Korea held a prayer service marking the 120th day of his detention. Rather than surrendering to discouragement, church members say it has challenged them to be bolder in missions and given them greater passion for the gospel. Rev. Hyeon Soo Lim appeared in a North Korean court recently and apologized to the government. Church members say they are trusting God through this situation. [www.christianweek.org](http://www.christianweek.org)

### PASTORS OPPOSE SATAN STATUE

Pastors in Detroit were unsuccessful in trying to stop the July 25 unveiling of a large statue in a downtown warehouse depicting an enthroned Satan with adoring children on either side. A spokesman for the group behind the statue, the self-proclaimed "Satanic Temple," says, "The statue will serve as a beacon calling for compassion and empathy," and a place where "people of all ages may sit on the lap of Satan for inspiration and contemplation." So far the group has been unsuccessful at relocating the statue to a public location. [www.christiantoday.com](http://www.christiantoday.com)

### BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS

A pilot program designed by Christian Direction worker Samuel Augustin has seen dramatic impacts in a troubled school in the Montreal area. Augustin offered a range of constructive weekly noon hour activities to help at-risk youth develop social skills and build self-confidence. During the school year more than 200 kids attended, with at least 60 attending regularly. Several members of the school's administration reported dramatic improvements in those who attended and even in the school's overall atmosphere. [www.direction.ca](http://www.direction.ca)



### THE POWER OF PRAYER (WALKS)

Neighbourhood Watch volunteers in a lower income neighbourhood of Ottawa have approached a local church asking for prayer. The group noticed a reduction in crime rates during several prayer-walk initiatives church leaders had organized in the area. However, after the prayer walks ended, volunteers say some areas are starting to regress. Pastors at the Village International Mennonite Church have reached out to other local ministries, asking if they would join with them in prayer. [www.thevillageimc.ca](http://www.thevillageimc.ca)

—CRAIG MACARTNEY



Terry LeBlanc and Ray Aldred singing a traditional song.

## Reconciliation event a success in Thunder Bay

**SMOKE BILLOWED UP** from the stage as burning sage accompanied the opening prayers to launch a milestone weekend in Thunder Bay, Ont. On April 24–25 over 250 people gathered together, representing more than 15 churches.

The Walking Together conference explored the challenges put forth by justice Murray Sinclair, chair of Canada's seven-year Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sinclair famously said, "Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts."

Discussions focused on what respectful conversations might look like in a community such as Thunder Bay, home to a large population of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people – and high levels of racism and discrimination.

A number of topics such as the history of Canada, the Church, contextualization of the gospel, theology and mission,

and today's contemporary setting were covered throughout the weekend. The presenters were members of Indigenous Pathways, a Canadian nonprofit organization providing practical support to Indigenous people, their families and communities ([www.indigenouspathways.com](http://www.indigenouspathways.com)).

Led by founding chair and director Terry LeBlanc, the organization is the new entity under which three organizations, some of which have existed since the mid-'90s, now unite – NAIITS: an Indigenous Learning Community (formerly North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies), My People (formerly My People International) and iEmergence.

The Canadian Church is ready for more than discussion, say event organizers. The overwhelmingly positive response to this conference – the first one of its kind put on by Indigenous Pathways in Canada – proved this. —ANNIKA PRETCHUK

## Musician Steve Bell popularizes Freedom Road for First Nation

**AS SOON AS** he read in the Winnipeg newspaper about a nearby First Nation that needs a permanent, all-weather road to connect its island home to the mainland, Steve Bell knew he had to get involved.

Iskatewizaagegan, or Shoal Lake 40, is an Ojibway First Nations reserve that's supplied Winnipeg's clean water since 1916. Forcefully relocated to a manmade island and given no access to the mainland, life on Shoal Lake 40 was already difficult before a boiled water advisory was issued 18 years ago.

Residents have been unable to build a water treatment facility, deal with sewage treatment, garbage disposal or build an economy because they have no road access to the mainland.

Fatalities occur every winter when residents are forced to cross the ice on foot. In the spring and fall when the ice is too thick for the boats and too thin to walk on, residents are completely cut off.

Bell, a Juno-winning Christian recording artist, heard the story just as the Truth and Reconciliation Committee released its report about Canada's harmful aboriginal residential schools.

Bell recognized the moment was right as more and more churches and individual Christians were beginning to ask how they could be involved in the healing process.

Some had thought the problem solved in June 2015, when Shoal Lake 40 brokered a deal that would see the City of Winnipeg, the Manitoba government and the Federal Government build their

"Freedom Road" at an estimated cost of \$30 million.

Although Winnipeg and Manitoba committed, Ottawa has so far only committed to a design study for the project.

The injustice is clear to Bell, who points to the \$350 million spent building the Canadian Museum for Human

Rights in Winnipeg (by Ottawa, Winnipeg, Manitoba and private donors). The water used during construction, in restrooms, to clean windows and wash floors comes from Shoal Lake 40.

"How can we be a part of this instead of just feeling sorry for what happened?" asks Bell. "This is something I can help with."

Bell and his team have started a petition called Road to Reconciliation (on [www.sumofus.org](http://www.sumofus.org)). At the time of writing, there were over 6,000 signatures.

Bell is also asking churches to post "We Support Shoal Lake 40 Freedom Road" on their main signs, take a photo of it, and send it to [churchesforfreedomroad@gmail.com](mailto:churchesforfreedomroad@gmail.com). Organizers will create a collage of all the church signs and send it to every MP in Ottawa.

"The Church has to decide if it has a place in this conversation," Bell says. "People dump on the Church not realizing the powerful good there, but when you wake that giant to issues of justice and fairness, the power of the group is astonishing."

Bell is asking Christians across Canada to help Shoal Lake 40 get their Freedom Road.

—LISA HALL-WILSON



**12,000**

NUMBER OF TYNDALE ALUMNI AROUND THE WORLD

## Tyndale's new campus



OVER THE PAST YEAR, Tyndale University College & Seminary in Toronto has completed its move into its new Bayview campus location. Renovation and construction have given way to a beautiful new location. [www.tyndale.ca](http://www.tyndale.ca)



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- ▶ *ministering alongside the church to reach the marginalized*

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## Reading group springs up in Bible House



**ONE THURSDAY NIGHT** a month, people walking down Lisgar Street in the heart of Ottawa, may glimpse a lively

discussion through a storefront window with stained glass detailing. There is a historic sign out front for "The Bible House."

There are no creaky pews here. But if passersby assumed the stained glass and sign were quaint relics, they would only need to hear the conversations on the other side of the window to realize their mistake.

The discussion ranges from the exact meaning of the Lord's Prayer (in the Greek and Hebrew, of course) to the perks and pitfalls of pluralism to the possible roots of the Pope's conception of mercy. It's a meeting of **ROFTERS** (readers of *First Things*) & Convivium Connections, an ecumenical reading group that uses articles from the magazines *First Things* and *Convivium* – both about the intersection of faith and public life – as a basis for monthly discussions.

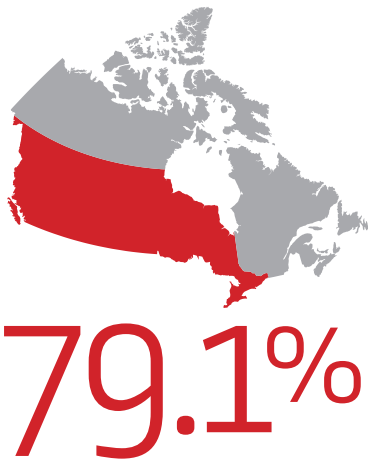
"At its heart it's about loving God and loving other people," says Daniel Richardsen, who founded the group with Joel Reinhardt in 2012. More than three years later the group is still vibrant (members are from 13 Ottawa churches and 12 different Christian traditions), and last fall they moved into the freshly remodelled Bible House, recently dubbed "The New Commons," a hub for Christians and other change makers working to make the city a better place.

"We had been meeting in homes, but then we found out about this space," says Reinhardt. "It made sense with what this space is trying to be as a centre of community."

Organizers are committed to fostering a highly ecumenical community. With this diversity, plus an age range from university students to retirees, the group undoubtedly merits a few curious glances before the curtains are drawn for the evening. Beneath the historic sign and stained-glass ornamentation, it's an inspiring picture of believers who are passionate about their faith and the common life of the nation's capital. —**ASHLEY CHAPMAN**

# Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

Canada's First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit are a young and growing population with significant economic and ministry challenges



PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ABORIGINALS LIVING IN ONTARIO, MANITOBA, SASKATCHEWAN, ALBERTA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA



**64,940**

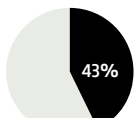
NUMBER OF CANADIANS WHO FOLLOW TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY (4.6% OF ABORIGINALS, 0.2% OF ALL CANADIANS)



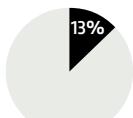
**20.1%**

INCREASE IN ABORIGINAL POPULATION IN CANADA BETWEEN 2006 AND 2011

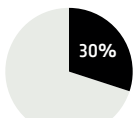
**LIVING IN HOMES NEEDING MAJOR REPAIRS**



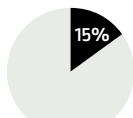
FIRST NATIONS ON RESERVE



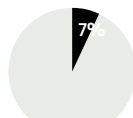
MÉTIS



INUIT



FIRST NATIONS OFF RESERVE



NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

**V. 5.2%**  
FOR NON-ABORIGINALS



**48.4%**

PERCENTAGE OF ABORIGINALS AGED 25 TO 64 WITH A POSTSECONDARY QUALIFICATION

**V.**

**64.7%**

FOR NON-ABORIGINALS



**\$18,400—\$22,800**

AVERAGE INCREASE IN YEARLY INCOME FOR ABORIGINALS WITH A POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OVER THOSE WITHOUT

**202,495**

NUMBER OF CANADIANS WHO HAVE AN ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE AS THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE (14.5% OF ABORIGINALS)

**240,815**

NUMBER OF CANADIANS WHO CAN CONVERSE IN AN ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE (35,000+ HAVE AN ABORIGINAL SECOND LANGUAGE)

**MEDIAN AGE IN 2011**

**26**

FIRST NATIONS

**31**

MÉTIS

**23**

INUIT

**V.**

**41**

FOR NON-ABORIGINALS

**LIVING IN CROWDED HOMES (MORE THAN ONE PERSON PER ROOM)**

**27%**

PERCENTAGE OF FIRST NATIONS ON RESERVE IN CROWDED HOMES

**30%**

PERCENTAGE OF INUIT IN CROWDED HOMES



# Someone is looking for your vote

*Now is the time to set the agenda and tone of the election campaign*

**W**ith summer holidays behind us, it's impossible to miss we're in a federal election campaign. News coverage, conversations with family, friends and neighbours, lawn signs, visits from those wanting our vote – all prompt us to consider the future of Canada and our collective priorities.

Most Christians agree participating in the political process is a citizen's duty. The Apostle Paul used his Roman citizenship in the pursuit of justice – we also exercise ours as we seek the welfare of the land where God has placed us (to paraphrase Jeremiah 29:7).

A critical issue, among the many now being debated, is how our political parties plan to respond to the Supreme Court decision to allow assisted suicide in some circumstances.

This shift is profound, since our law previously affirmed the 6th commandment (“you should not kill”). Historically both Parliament and the courts have promoted the sanctity of human life and protected the vulnerable by keeping assisted suicide illegal, even when compassionate grounds were invoked.

Now that the Supreme Court has given Parliament one year to revise the law, whichever party is elected

on October 19 will have less than four months to pass legislation.

Without new legislation, Quebec will implement Bill 52 that allows medically assisted death. Other provinces may well follow suit, resulting in a patchwork quilt of different rules. Bodies such as the Canadian Medical Association will then need to develop guidelines for professionals who oversee assisted suicide.

Clearly, the longer we go without a national law, the more difficult it will be to pass one.

How each political party will approach the looming deadline – and where each candidate stands

***A critical issue is how to respond to the Supreme Court decision to allow assisted suicide.***

## News FROM THE EFC

### Webinar on changing churches

EFC webinars are short midday meetings that anyone can connect to via computer, telephone or mobile device. Hear a brief interview on a crucial issue, then contribute to a live question and answer



session. The August webinar featured **Rick Hiemstra**, EFC director of research,

discussing how Canadian churches are changing and what they will look like in 20 years if current trends and statistics continue. Listen to previous webinars and find out about upcoming ones at [www.theEFC.ca/webinars](http://www.theEFC.ca/webinars).

### Defending TWU and religious freedom

Are provincial law societies free to refuse to accredit a new law school proposed by Trinity Western University? The EFC has been supporting TWU (an EFC affiliate) through several court cases on the issue, most recently in British Columbia in August. Previous cases ruled in favour of TWU (Nova Scotia) and against TWU (Ontario), although both are being appealed. Read the latest commentaries by EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger and relevant news at [www.theEFC.ca/TWUlaw](http://www.theEFC.ca/TWUlaw).

### Joint mission research

The EFC Global Mission Roundtable recently facilitated a gathering of leaders of interdenominational mission agencies focused on sending out

missionaries from Canada. The group is now partnering with the EFC on a major research project looking at Canadian Evangelicals' understanding of and engagement in global mission. The project will include a national survey to be done with Angus Reid Forum.

### International mission partnership

Missio-Nexus is the largest association of evangelical mission organizations in North America, with members representing 35,000 missionaries globally. It has recently partnered with the EFC Global Mission Roundtable,



led by EFC staff **Matthew Gibbins**, in order to develop and integrate Canadian

content and perspectives in its conferences, webinars, publications and services.

Missio Nexus' new president is Ted Esler, who previously held executive roles with Pioneers Canada and Pioneers USA. He holds a PhD from Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., a masters from Heritage Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Ont., and has been involved in church planting in the Balkans. The association ([www.missionexus.org](http://www.missionexus.org)) is holding a mission leaders conference in Orlando, Fla., Sept. 24–26.

### Need a guest speaker?

Consider inviting an EFC speaker to your event or church. Experts are available to offer a topical presentation or congregational preaching. The most popular topics include Bible use and



on the issue – are literally matters of life and death.

All of us also have local issues to consider. Recently in Manitoba churches led by musician Steve Bell have begun advocating for the Freedom Road, a year-round link between the Shoal Lake 40 First Nation and the Trans-Canada Highway.

A hundred years ago the building of an aqueduct for Winnipeg turned Shoal Lake 40 from a peninsula into an island. Inconsistent access during freeze and thaw causes many problems including inhibiting the construction of a water treatment plant. For 18 years the community has been under a boil water order. It spends \$130,000 per year on bottled water.

Winnipeg and the province have each offered to fund a third of the cost of the road. Should the Federal Government contribute the last

third? Perhaps there are other viable approaches, but certainly there is no better time than during an election to press for an answer.

Whether the issues are local or national, now is the time to ask questions and garner commitments from those who want to represent you in the House of Commons.

Helpful election kits, including fact sheets and suggested questions to ask candidates, are available from The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and other organizations.

When probing candidates and talking election politics with our neighbours, let's also model the civility and respect we want to see from our elected representatives.

Many of us have complained about the bitter exchanges in Parliament. Now is the time to foster an environment where substantive issues can be debated in a construct-


ive manner. Let's remember that the process as well as the outcomes contribute to good governance.

We should not avoid the difficult issues. In a democracy we strive together in pursuit of the public good. However, we are people of grace and truth. Let's demonstrate and model that.

Above all let's remember to pray for the candidates and their families during this long campaign. Whether you agree with them or their party, they have invested themselves in a process that benefits us all.

Let's all ask God to work in the hearts and minds of all Canadians as we set the course politically for the coming years. /FT

**When probing candidates and talking election politics, let's also model the level of civility and respect we want to see.**

 Bruce J. Clemenger is president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Please pray for our work. You can follow us on Twitter @theEFC and support us financially at [www.theEFC.ca/donate](http://www.theEFC.ca/donate) or toll-free 1-866-302-3362.

engagement in Canada, church trends, leadership, partnering for greater ministry effectiveness, protection of the vulnerable (adoption/poverty/human trafficking/pornography), religious freedom in Canada (education/speech/current court cases), religious freedom internationally, sanctity of life (abortion/bioethics/euthanasia/end of life care) and church youth. More details at [www.theEFC.ca/speakers](http://www.theEFC.ca/speakers).

## Now hiring: EFC ambassadors

The EFC is accepting applications for several part-time, casual speaking positions. EFC ambassadors represent the EFC by making local presentations and participating in gatherings such as ministerials. Details at [www.theEFC.ca/jobs](http://www.theEFC.ca/jobs).

## On the EFC blog

### Interfaith work and evangelism on a collision course?

By Aileen Van Ginkel

### TWU law school: Reflections on the Ontario Superior Court's decision

in *TWU v. LSUC*, By Bruce Clemenger

**Will religious observance be allowed at government functions? Reflections on the Supreme Court *Saguenay* decision**, By Bruce Clemenger

Visit [www.theEFC.ca/blog](http://www.theEFC.ca/blog) to read the latest posts by EFC leaders.

## Fall calendar

**InScribe Fall Writers' Conference**, Edmonton, Sept. 24–26

**Prophecy Conference**, Winnipeg, Sept. 24–26

**The People, the Land and the Future of Israel**, Toronto, Oct. 2–3

**YC Newfoundland Youth Conference**, Gander, Oct. 9–11

**Celebration of Hope With Will Graham**, Siksika Nation, Alta., Oct. 15

**Celebration of Hope With Will Graham**, Whitehorse, Oct. 16–17

**Worship in a Multicultural Age Course**, Kitchener, Oct. 19–23

**Global Leadership Summit** (rebroadcast from Willow Creek), simulcast, Oct. 22–23

**Purpose, Power, Potential Conference**, Hamilton, Ont., Oct. 28–30

**Adoption Awareness Month**, November

**Entrepreneurial Leaders Conference**, Vancouver, Nov. 4


**Passionate About Our Marriage Conference**, Montreal, Nov. 6–7


**National House of Prayer Conference**, Ottawa, Nov. 12–14



Visit [www.theEFC.ca/calendar](http://www.theEFC.ca/calendar) to find out what else is new or to publicize your own event.



The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

 Find out about news stories like these and more at [www.theEFC.ca/socialissues](http://www.theEFC.ca/socialissues).

 Learn how to take action on the issues you care about at [www.theEFC.ca/takeaction](http://www.theEFC.ca/takeaction).

  Visit the EFC on Facebook and Twitter for breaking news, great links and lively discussion.

# Keeping the main thing



*Dave Wells of Burlington, Ont., is general superintendent of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Canada's largest evangelical denomination*

■ *The Canadian Church is changing. How has this impacted the PAOC? What big changes have you seen?*

We don't have home field advantage anymore. The Church needs to be alert to today's apologetic. We have to be at the tables. There has been a shift from proclamational to incarnational. It's not that Christians haven't been at tables before, but I see stronger community engagement that is external, as opposed to exclusively internal church programming, which I view as a positive change. It's easier to talk about justice and holistic missions, and those things really do matter, but we are less focused on seeing people become disciplined followers of Jesus.

■ *How do you view the PAOC's role in the fabric of Canadian evangelicalism?*

We're almost a hundred years old. Both locally and nationally we are strongly linked with our evangelical friends. We are trying to be a good family member and, perhaps because we have some size, trying to contribute as together we address the issues I mentioned earlier.

■ *You've personally just come out of heavy involvement with the Pan Am games, with the More Than Gold initiative. Tell us about that.*

It's both a personal calling, and also as a leader I got tired 20+ years ago of hearing Canadian world class athletes were an unreached people group. I've seen an enhanced Chris-

tian presence among the athletes. You just keep showing up and doing your part. I'm also trying to communicate to our constituency that every leader, at least once a week, needs to spend significant time in relationship with people not connected with the faith. Sports involvement has allowed me to keep my covenant. It's not programmatic. It's relational.

■ *How do you care for yourself as a leader?*  
I'd like to say that I'm moderately consistent related to spiritual disciplines. I'm strong in relationships that replenish. Even with my Pan Am involvement, but broader than that, for me, change is as good as a rest. The variety in my life and different venues I find myself in are often replenishing because of the freshness, the people and the opportunities. I married well, so I've got a great friendship. We go on a lot of walks and bike rides.

■ *Top leadership advice?*

Keep the main thing the main thing. In leadership and management literature, there is a lot of discussion about metrics, what you measure as you set goals and take initiatives. For the Church, the metric in the end is that of the Spirit speaking to the churches about what we are called to do. I'm always going to make sure, with any team I'm leading, that the main thing will be the metric in the end, not pseudo-important stuff that comes from all sorts of places, and doesn't amount to a hill of beans.

■ *Who are your heroes?*

I've had great mentors through the years, right from when I was going to college and spending every Thursday over a butter tart with my pastor. My mentors are still in my life. They are with me every day. Peter, Bob, Al, Jack, Wally...you see what I'm saying. /FT



**1,100+**  
NUMBER OF PAOC CHURCHES ACROSS ENGLISH- AND FRENCH-SPEAKING CANADA



**235,000+**  
NUMBER OF PEOPLE ACROSS CANADA ATTENDING PAOC CHURCHES

**1919**  
YEAR THE PAOC BECAME A CHARTERED RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

▶ The PAOC ([www.paoc.org](http://www.paoc.org)) is an affiliate of the EFC ([www.theEFC.ca/Affiliates](http://www.theEFC.ca/Affiliates)). Find more Q&As at [www.faithtoday.ca/Q&A](http://www.faithtoday.ca/Q&A).

# Helping refugees settle into Canadian life

Many Canadian church leaders are responding with action and compassion to the growing refugee crisis in Syria – and pledging to help meet Canada’s promise to offer settlement assistance to more than 10,000 refugees from Syria and 3,000 from Iraq by 2016

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is facilitating a new denominational Middle East Refugees Resettlement Initiative that offers settlement assistance to displaced individuals and families, mainly from Syria and Iraq. The initiative provides a platform and guidance to churches wanting to offer help to refugees settling into Canadian life.

A refugee is defined by the United Nations as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted” is afraid to remain in his or her country of origin and is forced to flee in search of protection. Refugees have the right to asylum, as laid out in the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Canada has signed that U.N. protocol and others, adding a legal obligation to its moral responsibility to protect refugees.

The United Nations reports that the world currently has the highest number of refugees since the mid-1990s, numbering more than 43 million people worldwide forced from their homes because of con-



flict and persecution. There are several million more people displaced because of natural disasters in their homeland.

Arriving on Canadian soil is not the end of the trauma for refugees, although it is a potential new beginning. Trying to build a new life in an unfamiliar land, climate and language requires significant help and can take years. The Canadian Church is stepping up to help this vulnerable group of families and individuals carve out a new life in their new country. /FT

240,000+

NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM THE SYRIAN CONFLICT (SYRIAN OBSERVATORY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS)

4

MILLION

NUMBER OF REFUGEES FORCED TO FLEE SYRIA SINCE CONFLICT BEGAN

130,000

NUMBER OF REFUGEES THE UNITED NATIONS HAS ASKED INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS TO RESETTLE BY THE END OF 2016

*“As Christians, we are called to care for our neighbour and to protect the vulnerable, the needy and the oppressed. The world is watching refugees from places like Syria and Iraq struggle to rebuild their lives. The Canadian Church can and should help. This is now happening.”*

—BRUCE J. CLEMENGER, EFC President

## What can you do . . .

Visit [www.theEFC.ca/MiddleEastRefugees](http://www.theEFC.ca/MiddleEastRefugees) to check if your denomination is signed up for this initiative. If not, share the link with your denominational headquarters. You will also find resources like *Finding Our Way: Immigrants, Refugees and Canadian Churches* to assist you and your congregation help refugees and displaced persons in the most effective and compassionate ways.



# In defence of the Jews

Canadian Evangelicals spoke out between the world wars

**N**o one could accuse Canada of shirking its duty in the fight to defeat Hitler. Canadian soldiers distinguished themselves on the beaches of Normandy, the mountains of Tuscany and the lowlands of Holland. Our small population protected vital transatlantic convoys and trained thousands of military aviators.

However, Canada as a nation did little to help the victims of the Nazis' most vicious attacks, the Jewish people. Thousands of Jews fled Europe during the Nazi era (1933–1945), seeking refuge in other lands, but found little welcome here. Historians Irving Abella and Harold Troper have documented how federal immigration officials and others in the government of William Lyon Mackenzie King (and across the Canadian political elite) worked together to keep Jews out of Canada.

An ocean liner carrying over 900 Jewish refugees, the *St. Louis*, was turned away by Canadian officials after being rejected by Cuba and the United States. It had no choice but to return to Europe, where more than a quarter of its passengers perished in the Holocaust.

Abella and Troper suggest the government was only able to get away with this because Canada's churches failed to speak out. However, in their book *How Silent Were the Churches? Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era* (Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997), scholars Alan Davies and Marilyn Nefsky show the churches were far from silent.

Davies and Nefsky found that Evangelicals were among the first Canadians to understand the plight

of the Jews and speak on behalf of Jewish refugees.

In the mid-1930s, while many Canadians still saw Hitler in a neutral or even positive light, Baptists and Pentecostals led the way in exposing the sinister nature of Nazism. They pointed out that not only was the Nazi worldview deeply opposed to Christianity, but it had nothing but hatred for the people of Moses. Davies and Nefsky conclude that "Evangelicals...were the first Canadian Protestants to sound a note of what can only be described as cosmic alarm at the drift of things in Europe."

The fiery Toronto Baptist preacher T. T. Shields was one of few Canadians who had taken the time to read Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* and understand its implications. Years before the Holocaust he warned his flock that Hitler was an "utterly satanic personality," a "modern Sennacherib" and "an execrable murderer." Like many other Evangelicals, Shields compared Hitler to Haman, the Persian official who set out to annihilate the Jewish people in the Book of Esther.

Evangelicals urged the government to admit desperate Jewish refugees into the country. In 1939 a publication called *The Evangelical Christian* called attention to the vast spaces and resources of Canada, and argued, "The Dominion should do its share in providing a home for the homeless...A nation that calls itself Christian has a responsibility towards those less fortunate than itself...Such a course would have the blessing and favour of Almighty God." Such calls were ignored by a government influenced by anti-Semitism and worried about xenophobic public opinion.

Not all Canadian Evangelicals, of course, spoke out about or even recognized the worsening situation of Jews in Europe. Evangelicals of German descent, such as some evangelical Mennonites and Lutherans, were understandably reluctant to believe the worst about their former homeland and were sometimes slow to realize the true nature of what was happening in Germany. Some other Evangelicals simply ignored the problem.

But some Evangelicals went to great lengths to help the Jews, even while the government sat idly by. Morris Zeidman, founder of the Scott Mission in Toronto, was foremost among them. A Polish Jewish immigrant who had accepted Christ through a Presbyterian mission in Toronto, Zeidman worked tirelessly not only to preach the Good News to Jews in Canada, but also to help them in material ways.

With support from Presbyterians, Pentecostals and others, Zeidman sent clothing, money and medicine to European Jews, and arranged Canadian immigration sponsors for the few Jews admitted to the country. Tragically, Zeidman later learned many of his relatives, including his mother, brother and sisters, were killed at the Treblinka concentration camp in Poland.

(A new book on this history of Zeidman and the Scott Mission, by sometime *Faith Today* writer Ben Volman, will be published for the mission's 75th anniversary next year by Castle Quay Books.)


As Evangelicals, our efforts to influence public policy may earn sneers for being on "the wrong side of history." Thanks be to God that many of our forebears in the faith knew better back then, and refused to remain silent. /FT



**The fiery Toronto Baptist preacher T. T. Shields was one of few Canadians who had taken the time to read Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* and understand its implications.**

# 937

NUMBER OF JEWISH REFUGEES ABOARD THE MS ST. LOUIS REFUGEE SHIP WHICH WAS TURNED AWAY BY THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT (MARITIME MUSEUM OF THE ATLANTIC)

 Kevin Flatt is associate professor of history and director of research at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont. Find more of these columns at [www.faithtoday.ca/HistoryLesson](http://www.faithtoday.ca/HistoryLesson).



MESSY FAITH

**SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE**

# Do you support young marriage?

*Marrying young can solve more problems than it causes. It is a blessing.*

**O**ne Saturday this summer I donned an ankle-length blue gown, fastened my husband's cufflinks and passed my father-in-law a box of tissues. So began a magical day as we witnessed my oldest daughter pledge her heart and her life to a wonderful young man.

At the wedding the joy seemed universal. Earlier this year when we told others of her upcoming nuptials, though, the response was often quite different. It veered more toward incredulity, even among Christians. Rebecca is only 20. Her groom is 21.

It seems many Christians lean toward the "Finish your education and get a good job before you start to date because you can't afford to get distracted" mentality.

But is that really feasible?

After all, one of the few explicit reasons for marriage given in Scripture is Paul's famous "It is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:9). Plenty of twentysomethings are burning right now – even while their degrees are piling up.

And part of that burning is due to biological changes. According to a study by Marcia Herman-Giddens, published in the American journal *Pediatrics*, the average age of onset of puberty for girls was 16.6 in 1860, 13.1 in 1950, 12.5 in 1980 and 10.5 today. And the downward trajectory is similar for boys.

But it's not just that puberty is coming earlier – marriage is coming later. Today the average age at first marriage is around 29 for women and 31 for men. In the 1960s it was only 23 and 25 respectively. And in the 1800s it was



even earlier. A century and a half ago, couples had roughly five years between puberty and marriage. Now we have almost 20.

Of course economic reality has pushed the marriage age up because as our society has become more driven by skills, a middle-class life requires postsecondary education.

We want to know our kids can support themselves before they have to support someone else. So we give them the message, "Don't marry until you can buy a house, become a partner at the firm, get a great job." While we're saying that, we're also implying that money is more important than relationships – hardly a healthy message if we want our kids to prioritize family over self later.

I am not arguing that everyone should marry young. God has different plans for each of us. Many of us won't meet a potential mate in our 20s. But let's not dismiss the idea of marrying young.

I walked down the aisle at 21. Instead of having to combine two ways of doing things, my husband and I figured things out as we went along. We cobbled together hand-me-down furniture and garage sale finds

to furnish our apartment. We figured out how to budget and create a savings plan together. We developed our first cleaning schedule. And we became parents when we were still fairly young. I am only in my mid-40s, yet I have spent over half my life with someone who supports me, loves me and makes me laugh.

However, many people aren't ready to marry at 21 – especially young men. Part of that is biological – the brain isn't finished developing, and the adolescent preoccupation with self is hardly conducive to marital bliss. But I wonder if that is partly our own doing.

Most of our grandparents and great-grandparents were parents in their early 20s. Seventy years ago the free world was saved mostly by young men and women in their late teens and 20s. It is not that young people are incapable of acting responsibly. Maybe it is that we no longer expect it of them, and so we don't raise them to handle such responsibilities at young ages.

Not everyone needs to marry young. But the Christian community should do more to raise our youth so they are ready to do so.

After all, learning to serve others, budget and support themselves, care for their own home – these are all important life skills, whether or not they tie the knot.

Our communities would be much healthier if we gave the message, "You are grown up at 20," rather than, "Don't worry about settling down yet. Just find yourself."

Responsibility is not a bad thing. It is a blessing. /FT

**Plenty of twentysomethings are burning right now – even while their degrees are piling up.**



**31.1**

AVERAGE AGE OF MARRIAGE IN CANADA

PHOTO: COURTESY SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE

 Sheila Wray Gregoire is an author, blogger and inspirational speaker. Find more of her columns at [www.faithtoday.ca/MessyFaith](http://www.faithtoday.ca/MessyFaith).



# Clear on Scientology

More people are learning the truth behind the religion founded in the 1950s by L. Ron Hubbard

**A**s Tom Cruise knows, there is no end to public fascination with Scientology. Even without any headline-grabbing moves by the American actor – the religion’s most famous adherent – attention has grown even greater in recent months.

In March the HBO network released *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*, a critical documentary based on a 2013 book by Lawrence Wright. The Emmy-nominated film, directed by Alex Gibney (known for documentaries on Steve Jobs, WikiLeaks, Lance Armstrong and more), was viewed more than 5 million times in its first two months.

In May the most influential journalist covering Scientology ([www.tonyortega.org](http://www.tonyortega.org)) released a mind-boggling book detailing Scientology’s campaign to destroy an early critic – *The Unbreakable Miss Lovely: How the Church of Scientology Tried to Destroy Paulette Cooper* (CreateSpace, 2015).

In June I ran a five-day conference with Jon Attack in Toronto called *Getting Clear*. Attack, an ex-Scientologist and author of *Let’s Sell These People a Piece of Blue Sky: Hubbard, Dianetics and Scientology* (CreateSpace, 2013), was the featured speaker, but we had presentations from other ex-members (including Canadians Nan McLean, John McLean and Gerry Armstrong) as well as various specialists ([www.gettingclear.co](http://www.gettingclear.co)).

In July St. Martin’s Press announced Ron Miscavige, father of Scientology leader David Miscavige, is writing a tell-all book. Its title *If He Dies, He Dies* comes from reports the son hired private detectives to



**Study shows its main claims are bogus and many of its practices are reprehensible.**

follow his father after his dad left the movement. One of the detectives says he reported (mistakenly) that the father was having a heart attack, and the son replied not to intervene. “If he dies, he dies.” Church leaders deny the story.

And this is not the only major upcoming book on Scientology. Two other longtime insiders, Jesse Prince and Hana Whitfield, have memoirs in the works as well.

David Miscavige’s leadership style, as documented in such books and in *Going Clear* (book and documentary), duplicates that of founder L. Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), who created and supported a pattern of violence at the top of the movement. The abuse has led many senior leaders (for example Mark “Marty” Rathbun and Mike Rinder) to quit, leaving behind perks such as travel on Tom Cruise’s private jet.

Hubbard lied repeatedly about his education, military career, travels in the Far East and health condition. He tried to hide Scientology involvement in various criminal activities including espionage in the U.S. and Canada. In a major lawsuit U.S. Judge Paul Breckenridge ruled in 1984 that Hubbard was “a pathological liar.”


Besides the track record of its leaders, the truth or falsehood of Scientology must be based on evidence. Study shows its main claims are bogus and many of its practices are reprehensible. Some key points:

- Scientology claims to offer the “bridge to freedom” that brings someone to the state of “Clear” (somewhat akin to the “new

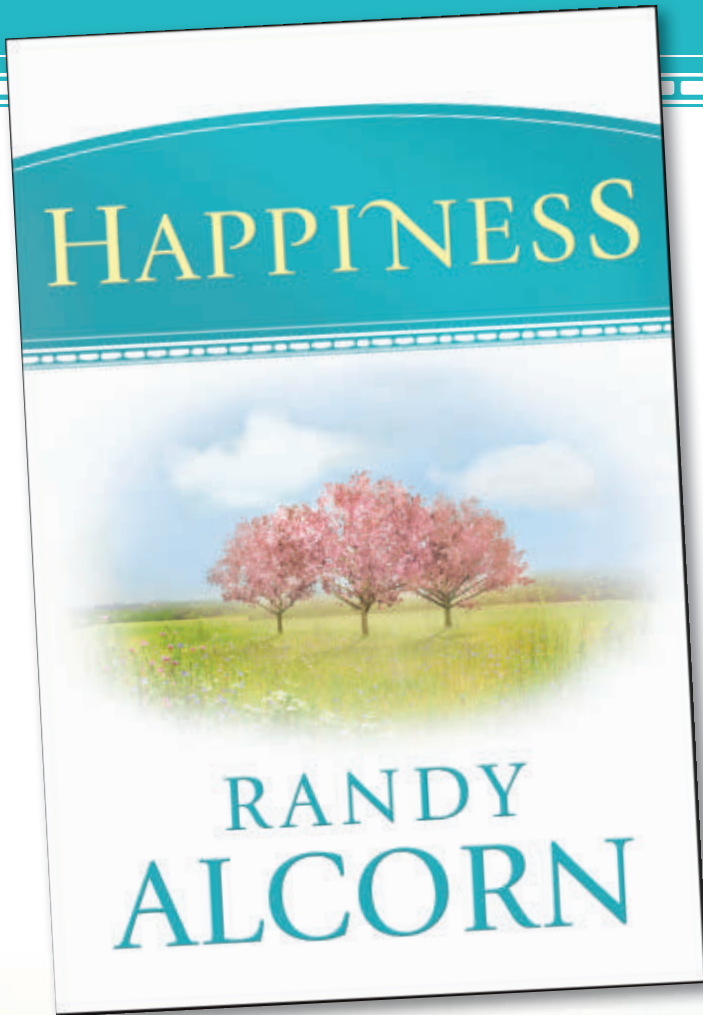
birth” Christians speak of). From there you go higher up the bridge to reach eight levels of spiritual growth. In the end Scientologists supposedly gain the ability to transcend M.E.S.T. (matter, energy, space and time). These supernatural powers have never been proven, a lack that has led long-faithful Scientologists such as Chuck Beatty to turn away.

- Hubbard and Miscavige teach that all human beings are possessed by alien spirits implanted on us millions of years ago as a result of actions by Xenu, an alien being. Scientology followers only learn about this after paying big sums to get to the third of the eight levels. (The Scientology term for soul is “thetan,” and the eight levels are called O.T. levels for “Operating Thetan.”)
- Hubbard engaged in occult practices before he started Scientology, and some current practices are rooted in the occult teaching of Aleister Crowley, the self-styled “Beast of the Book of Revelation.”
- Scientologists are subject to enormous, unrelenting pressure to disconnect from family and friends who leave Scientology, and to give money to the Church. Researcher Jeffrey Augustine has brought to light many elaborate fundraising schemes and legal machinations aimed at keeping the money flowing. For years Miscavige has focused on building Ideal Orgs (aka church buildings) in major cities, even where, as in Toronto, there is only a tiny congregation to carry the debt.

As public attention mounts (or maybe someday wanes), our prayers for Scientologists and ex-members should continue. /FT

 James A. Beverley is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary. Find more of these columns at [www.faithtoday.ca/ReligionWatch](http://www.faithtoday.ca/ReligionWatch).

# HAPPINESS



Christians are supposed to be happy. In fact, we are supposed to radiate joy, peace, and contentment that is so unmistakable and so attractive that others are naturally drawn to us because they want what we have. And yet, in today's culture, the vast majority of Christians are perceived as angry, judgmental people who don't seem to derive any joy from life whatsoever. So why aren't we happy?

Unfortunately, many Christians are taught early on that God doesn't want us to be happy (he wants us to be holy). In fact, many Christians are labouring under the false notion that God himself is not happy. But nothing could be further from the truth! God does want us to be happy. The Bible is filled with verses that prove that ours is a happy, joy-filled God who not only loves celebrations but also desperately wants his children to be happy. Why else would He go to the lengths He did to ensure our eternal happiness in His presence? We know that we will experience unimaginable joy and happiness in Heaven, but that doesn't mean we can't also experience joy and happiness here on earth.

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## GLOBAL VILLAGE **DEBRA FIEGUTH**

### **EUROPEANS CELEBRATE JAN HUS**

The 600th anniversary of the martyrdom of Jan Hus was marked in July by concerts, dramas, lectures and discussions, as well as a silent procession with candles in Prague.

Born in 1370 in Bohemia and ordained a priest, Hus was influenced by John Wycliffe, who pressed for a national church with Scriptures in the vernacular. Hus also called for reforms so Bohemia could govern its own church instead of being ruled by the pope in Rome.

"Hus believed that there was a transcendent truth, which he was required to respect even if this was in conflict with his own safety or life," according to Irish scholar Alister McGrath.

For that Hus was burned alive on July 6, 1415. A century later, his beliefs and actions influenced Martin Luther.

Anniversary celebrations took place around a memorial in Prague's old town square, which was transformed into a medieval marketplace and included activities for children.

Anders Wejryd, World Council of Churches president for Europe, paid tribute to Hus during the observances, saying that in "an era of deep divisions in the Church, Hus called his followers to proclaim the One Church as the mystical body of Christ made up of the chosen people of God."

The anniversary commemorations were organized by the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. The World Council of Churches will also host an exhibition on the life and legacy of Jan Hus in October in Geneva.

— [WWW.OIKOUMENE.ORG](http://WWW.OIKOUMENE.ORG)

### **HIGHLIGHTING CREATION CARE**

The World Evangelical Alliance is encouraging the world's 600 million Evangelicals to reflect on the biblical call to be good stewards of God's creation, an issue highlighted by Pope Francis.



**World Renew, an agency of the Christian Reformed Church, supports literacy, health and other programs in Phongsali province, Laos, where girls and certain ethnic groups have sometimes had little access to education ([www.worldrenew.net](http://www.worldrenew.net)).**

The Pope's recent publication, an encyclical called *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*, is theologically rich and morally challenging, says WEA secretary general Efraim Tendero.

The encyclical reminds us that "climate change, pollution, and other actions that degrade our air, rivers, oceans, forests, and soils disproportionately affect the poor," says Tendero. "Responding to those challenges is therefore also a matter of loving our neighbour and speaking up for the vulnerable."

The WEA has long been engaged in issues of creation care. A joint WEA statement with the Lausanne Movement from 2012 calls on the global evangelical community "to take steps, personally and collectively, to live within the proper boundaries of God's good gift in creation, to engage further in its restoration and conservation, and to equitably share its bounty with each other."

The WEA also has a Creation Care Task Force that networks with other organizations and individuals, equips local churches and speaks out on these issues. — [WWW.WORLDEA.ORG](http://WWW.WORLDEA.ORG)

### **REPORT ON VIETNAM PERSECUTION**

A new report from Human Rights Watch claims the oppression of Vietnam's Christian Montagnards (mountain people) has reached a critical state, with one official promising to put an end to Christianity, or "the evil way," among them.

The report, *Persecuting "Evil Way" Religion: Abuses Against Montagnards in Vietnam*, claims government authorities have arrested Christians, detaining them sometimes for days or months. Many of the detainees, who follow a form of evangelical Protestantism not recognized by the government, were beaten.

Official Vietnamese media have reported that security forces are taking action against activists protesting shortcomings in Communist Party policies. Authorities have denied human rights violations, calling them a fabricated excuse to cover the crime of illegally leaving Vietnam for Cambodia.

— [WWW.CHRISTIANEXAMINER.COM](http://WWW.CHRISTIANEXAMINER.COM)

 Debra Fieguth of Kingston, Ont., is a senior writer at *Faith Today*.

**"Prayer is a call, a command and a gift. Prayer is the indispensable foundation and resource for all elements of our mission."**

### **—The Cape Town Commitment**

(ADOPTED AT THE THIRD LAUSANNE CONGRESS ON WORLD EVANGELIZATION, A MEETING OF 4,200 EVANGELICAL LEADERS FROM 198 COUNTRIES, IN OCTOBER 2010. [WWW.LAUSANNE.ORG/CONTENT/CTC/CTCOMMITMENT](http://WWW.LAUSANNE.ORG/CONTENT/CTC/CTCOMMITMENT))



*In 2009 Sam Reimer and Michael Wilkinson interviewed the lead pastors of 478 evangelical congregations across Canada. The churches were from five denominations – Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Christian Reformed, Mennonite Brethren, Christian & Missionary Alliance and the four Baptist Conventions in Canada.*

*The two scholars – both sociologists, Reimer at Crandall University and Wilkinson at Trinity Western University – wanted to dig deep into evangelical church life in Canada. They researched the nitty-gritty such as budgets and sermon topics, but also topics like clergy well-being and the big, big question of why evangelical churches seem to be faring better in today’s Canada than their mainline cousins.*

*Faith Today spoke with **SAM REIMER** about the research, recently released in their book *A Culture of Faith: Evangelical Congregations in Canada* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).*

**Faith Today:** *We have this idea that evangelical congregations are doing better than other churches. Is this even true?*

**Sam Reimer:** It is true. And their comparative vitality and durability distinguishes them from mainline Protestant denominations like the United Church, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Lutherans – which all started declining around the mid-1960s. In contrast, Evangelicals in Canada are reasonably stable during a time when a lot of churches were declining.

**FT:** *Why is that?*

**SR:** There are a bunch of reasons. Birthrates (how many children they have) and immigration – those are the reasons

churches grow, according to sociologists.

But [birthrates won’t help Evangelicals much longer because] the birthrates of Evangelicals have largely declined to where they’re closely matching the birthrates of Canadians on average.

Immigration is turning more toward other world religions, and so that’s not as good a source as it used to be.

Evangelicals have gained because they are big on evangelism, and have been able to gain some of the most committed of people who have left more liberal churches.

**FT:** *Some say Evangelicals are just 20 years behind the mainline, and will face the same issues of decline. Is that what you think?*





**SR:** There are respected voices in the U.S. in particular who are saying the trajectory of evangelicalism looks a lot like the trajectory of mainline Protestantism 40 years ago. But I think if there is a decline in evangelicalism, it will be less dramatic, and that is because there is still an emphasis on evangelism. Even though proselytization might not always be successful, it still revitalizes the Church. Worldwide evangelicalism has a huge growth factor, and the world is coming to us. We are seeing evangelical immigrants come who are revitalizing churches that might otherwise be dying.

**FT:** *What about Evangelicals who conclude their denominations are holding steady simply because they “preach the gospel”?*

**SR:** I think there’s something to that, but a sociologist would talk about it this way – what a church needs to do is present a religiosity that is unique enough, and distinctive enough from the culture around it, that it creates a strong identity and sense of belonging.

If it’s just regurgitation of the status quo of the culture, we don’t have a very strong identity. Identity is formed partly by distinctiveness. When churches lose distinctiveness, they don’t create a strong sense of identity and belonging. Strong, vital religion tends to be distinctive from the culture around it and has some tension with it. If it’s too strong a tension, than you’re just perceived as really weird. But if you have the right amount, you have a strong identity. Why would you go to church if it were just like the Rotary Club?

**FT:** *What are some identity markers for what you call the evangelical subculture in Canada?*

**SR:** There is a strong sense that we are different from everyone else. The evangelical subcultures in Canada and the U.S. have strong similarities across the borders, and similar subculture boundaries. Subcultural boundaries are about “This is how you get in, and these are people who are not part of it.” It’s about things like whether you are a true Christian or not based on what you say about Jesus’ death and birth and a few other key triggers.

The evangelical subculture also has a variety of cultural stuff, where you can tell

if someone is embedded or not. I could throw out a name like Billy Graham and every Evangelical in the box would know who he is, and the same would be true of a variety of people, like musicians and authors. The deeper you are in, the more likely you are to know. People know about publishers like InterVarsity Press or Zondervan.

Evangelicals learn about these beliefs, boundaries and subcultural stuff at their churches.

**FT:** *In the States it feels like to be Evangelical is to be Republican. But that is not the case in Canada.*

**SR:** Lydia Bean is a scholar who has studied evangelical identity (*The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada*, Princeton University Press, 2014). She spent a lot of time in two churches on each side of the border. She found that they talk the same language and have the same basic moral boundaries. Everything was similar, but in the U.S. there were much clearer Republican partisan political cues than in Canada. Congregations kind of spawned an in-group or out-group status between Democrats and Republicans. But they didn't do that in Canada. There is a marrying of conservative political views in the U.S. that does not exist in Canada.

**FT:** *Do you have a sense of how Canadian evangelicalism is viewed by the broader culture?*

**SR:** Normally Evangelicals in Canada are painted with the same brush as Evangelicals in the U.S., particularly the loudest U.S. voices, to our chagrin. Canadians don't like that. Some Canadian Evangelicals don't even like the term evangelical because they view it as American. We tend to be viewed largely based on conservative, sexual political issues, previously abortion, and now same-sex marriage. That tends to be the perception out there.

**FT:** *And how do Evangelicals tend to view the culture?*

**SR:** As antagonistic, especially when we pay attention to what we are hearing in the media. Some younger Evangelicals are working hard to avoid being rubber-stamped as a certain kind of people, like those who are politically conservative, sexually conservative in fuddy-duddy churches. So they grow beards and get tattoos and become

part of the emerging church movement.

**FT:** *It sounds like a bit of a no-win situation, this mutual suspicion between Evangelicals and the wider Canadian culture.*

**SR:** In some cases we're dealing with unfair public representations. When the only things that make the media are the sound bites, especially ones that are very offensive to another group, we are limited by the media. However, Evangelicals can make space for reasoned conversation by being reasonable and communicating in a way that is not reactionary. That tends to be much more micro, winning people over a conversation at a time. One of my concerns about Canada is there is no place for religious conversations at all. We don't do a good job in the universities, or any kind of public sector where pluralism can actually be discussed.

**FT:** *Tell us what you learned about clergy wellness, a big part of this project.*

**SR:** We asked pastors what their areas of strength were, those things that add energy. Administration was clearly an area of weakness in the sense that most pastors didn't like to do it and found it draining.

Most pastors find preaching empowering and energizing. They like to do it. The default for a lot of pastors is to spend a lot of time preparing a sermon and enjoy delivering it on Sunday mornings. It is very important to them. Based on gifting, some pastors aren't as strong outside the church as inside. Yet most are trying to get their churches to do the outside things. We talk about being missional a lot, but I'm not sure that's where pastors consider themselves strong. They consider themselves stronger preachers than missionaries. For a pastor's well-being it's important that laypeople offer some administrative support. If you have the pastor making the bulletin and photocopying, it doesn't play to their strengths.

**FT:** *And what's your advice for pastors of evangelical congregations, given what you learned in the study?*

**SR:** One of the first suggestions for church leaders is to be careful what they do with

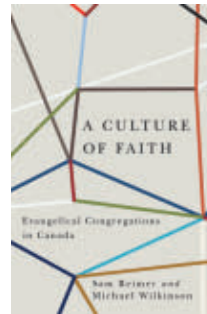
social scientific data. I hear a lot of them misuse it or argue that it justifies what they are doing. Just because social scientists say [a certain initiative brings] more bodies

into the pews, is not equal to what God may intend for your church. We have to remember faithful witness in Canada might not be what social scientists say is working. Social science is more about describing what is, instead of what ought to be.

Social science would say if you want to grow a church, you need to place it in a growing neighbourhood, and you want to target a certain type, and you want to distinguish yourself from competing churches nearby. Where is faithful witness in the older, shrinking rural areas? There is a real call of God on certain pastors to be involved in churches that might not have good growth trajectory.

My second piece of advice is to think carefully about how churches integrate and care for new immigrants. A lot of churches are doing the reactionary instead of the proactive thing. Immigrants are coming to their community. And when a few show up in their pews, they think maybe they should be reaching out. I see a lot of those things happening by default instead of deliberate action. The long-term vitality of evangelical churches is related to our ability to integrate and settle immigrants and have them be part of our congregation.

The third is youth. How do we embrace and keep our youth? That is a chapter in our book and remains a real concern. Key is a good program in high school and good linking across generations, making sure they are engaged in the church. Serving in the church and not just served by the church are important. We're finding a lot of youth are disengaged during high school. Another thing churches could do much better is help high school graduates link better with university programs when they leave their church. Link them to people. Give them a church to check out. Alert the youth pastor this person is coming. We could do much better with that. That would be a min-



imal way to keep youth engaged.

**FT:** And advice for congregations?

**SR:** There needs to be good training for layleaders on how to do church well. Layleaders are not well trained. That is hard for the pastor to do. But if an area person came in and said, "This is how to make life easier for your pastor," and "This is how to do admin and how to think about paying your pastor," that would work much better. Help people develop those skills, especially our younger church leaders. We have to get intergenerational church leadership going on. Let younger layleaders be mentored by older ones.

I would say to readers of *Faith Today* that God's plan to change the world has always been churches. The strength of God's Kingdom rests and grows based on how the churches are doing. That's where we need to focus. Healthy, vital churches are key to the Kingdom of God in Canada.

**FT:** Thank you, Sam. /FT

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# IN SEARCH OF... ADEQUACY

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME  
WITH INTELLECTUAL RIGOUR

BY JOHN G. STACKHOUSE JR.

**M**uch prayer, hard work, costly co-operation and considerable money – all are required of Christians to address the challenges of contemporary society. It has always been so – for those fighting world wars, enduring depression and dust bowl, facing epidemic or environmental disaster, immigrating to a new country.

Yet our present challenges have something in common – a complexity that means we can't just pray and work and co-operate and spend our way out of our troubles, the way Canadians have solved problems since Confederation. We are going to have to think our way out of them too.

Canadian Evangelicals might seem poised for the serious and sustained analysis and reflection our moment requires. As a whole Canadians are among the best-educated people on earth, with a higher proportion of our population receiving postsecondary education than in any other country.

Evangelicals have shared in this trend as we steadily increased the academic quality of our educational institutions. Our pastors typically now have at least one degree and often more.

And all of us are surrounded by a clutter of publishers, websites, seminars and other media that seek to edify clergy and laity alike.

However, we also swim in a constant stream – really, a flood – of information packaged as “infotainment,” as brief and superficial “segments” that promptly tell us what to think, rather than furnish us with solid information to interpret on our own.

(How many statistics do you think the typical editor wants to see in an article, or a producer will allow on the air? How many actual facts are presented in the average news story? Count them sometime.)

Information comes to us arranged according to algorithms of interest. Google, Facebook & Co. use our previous clicking to ensure we are served more of the same. So we live in increasingly self-reinforcing matrices of congenial perspectives and comforting “truths.”

## **DISTRACTED, SKEPTICAL, INTUITIVE**

Among Evangelicals, usually labelled as such partly because of our commitment to biblical truth, the watering down of our knowledge is no less dire.

Bible reading and Bible knowledge have steadily declined, even as our secular education has increased.

Poll data show a truly appalling lack of basic biblical knowledge in most Canadians' minds – but worse, they show scanty Bible reading even among regular churchgoers.

Although Evangelicals are still accused, particularly by some Roman Catholic critics, of thinking each of us is our own pope, we recognize, in our candid moments, how pathetically fragmentary is our knowledge of Scripture.

Most of us can barely quote the 23rd Psalm and couldn't recite 20 verses from anywhere else in the Bible. Scripture memorization is a vanishing folk art, like baking your own bread.

Text-based preaching in our churches is often replaced by clever storytelling and passionate punchlines.

These and similar changes have gained momentum as we turn increasingly toward infotainment and away from more important knowledge. But there's also another key factor – a sweeping increase in skepticism.

Whom do Canadians today believe? Clergy? Hah. At best, they pander to the powerful and at worst, they prey upon the vulnerable. Scientists? You hire yours and I'll hire mine. Physicians? Lackeys of government health authorities and puppets of Big Pharma. Polit-

**WHO  
READS  
THE BIBLE  
WEEKLY  
OR MORE  
OFTEN?**

**4%**

OF QUEBECKERS

**10%**

OF CANADIANS  
OUTSIDE QUEBEC

**14%**

OF ALL CANADIANS  
WHO IDENTIFY AS  
CHRISTIAN

**51%**

OF ALL CANADIANS  
WHO IDENTIFY AS  
EVANGELICALS

SOURCE: ANGUS  
REID/EFC, 2013



ical leaders? Just look at those clowns in Question Period.

This rampant postmodern doubt of everything and everyone leaves only one remaining authority to trust – ourselves.

We find a particular talk show host to be compelling, a particular media pundit to be impressive, this professor to be knowledgeable, that preacher to be inspired – so we believe them.

Our child's school sends home a form advising about an inoculation? Let's see what I think about that, and then trust my child's health to my own opinion, shaped as it might be by my reading the best of contemporary science, or instead by listening to that former *Playboy* model give her impassioned opinion on my favourite talk show.

We have to vote in a federal election? Will I do some research on policies and candidates? Or simply vote to support the leader I somehow find most attractive?

Our church is embroiled in a dispute over sex and sexuality? Well, I try to attend to what comes my way regarding the Bible's teaching on these questions, but you know how experts seem to disagree, right? So doesn't it just seem obvious that—?

*What seems right to me is going to (have to) be right for me.* That's current Canadian thinking. And Evangelicals are no different than other Canadians in embracing this new confidence in intuition, this neo-Romanticism.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE

What then are Canadian Evangelicals to do to meet the complex questions of our day with commensurate intellectual resources?

Yes, we need more Bible knowledge. Even though the Internet stands ready to provide it at a keystroke, we have to know certain information, and sometimes a lot



## EVANGELICALS ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN OTHER CANADIANS IN EMBRACING THIS NEW CONFIDENCE IN INTUITION, THIS NEO-ROMANTICISM.

of it, to know what to look up. We can locate Scripture verses using electronic concordances according to even single words, so long as we know those key words and understand what categories are relevant to our search.

But Bible knowledge on its own can't help us much, of course, just like any knowledge divorced from proper concern, moral judgment, relevant skill and willingness to act remains sterile.

We also need to know what is actually the case in a given situation, what is worth the case and how things can best be engaged in this situation.

In short, we need broader theological knowledge, the knowledge that combines the Bible with the best of what we know in other spheres to come to a comprehensive, coherent and clear interpret-

ation of the issue at hand.

That theological knowledge then can be applied carefully to guide us in obedient action.

Yet who has time for all that research and reflection? We are all, even professors when it comes to areas outside their expertise, in the same situation of being overwhelmed.

How can we one day stand before the Lord to say we did our best? Let's consider three possible interlocking initiatives toward pastors, professors and laypeople.

### 1. RELIABLE PASTORS

First, we need our pastors to be local experts. Since none of us can think through most of the decisions we have to make, we have to trust someone who seems authoritative, whether a car mechanic, counselor or parent. And that's perfectly fine, so long as the people we trust are truly expert.

Just as we generally put our trust in our family doctors, while still feeling free to look up medical information online and chat with our friends about their hospital stays, so we ought to have confidence that our pastors are equally reliable experts.



Yes, pastors aren't infallible, and they might need to refer us to theological specialists from time to time, but for the usual run of intellectual challenges to our faith we ought to find our pastors to be adequately expert.

Are they? Have we insisted pastors receive formal education truly equal to the challenges of life in Canada today?

- We must fund theological students such that they can afford to get those demanding degrees at the best places and not graduate with crushing debt – or drop out as they see the debt mountain loom. If we wouldn't want to be served by a dentist or lawyer who received her professional training online, do we want to be served by pastors who have never been educated in a community of theological excellence?
- We must support the best Christian universities and seminaries such that they can be generous with excellent scholarships to attract and support the best candidates.
- And we must pay pastors well enough that they are not having to cut short their few precious "thinking hours" each day to ponder how to make ends meet.

The objective here, of course, is not to produce pastors who are narrowly intellectual, preoccupied with doctrinal minutiae and detached from the rest of Christian living. Most contemporary congregations include people capable of helping in lots of pastoral ways, but how many well-trained theological professionals are there to meet the need for intellectual help in thinking through the threats and opportunities of our cultural moment?

The 18th century co-founder of Methodism, John Wesley, himself a voracious reader and polymath,

exhorted his fellow pastors: "Ought not a minister to have, first, a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of reasoning with some closeness?"

We Evangelicals can also help our pastors by insisting on and supporting ongoing pastoral education. Working through difficult issues requires two resources in abundance – time and money.

- Our churches need to build into every pastor's year at least one seminar, course or conference on a difficult issue, beyond gatherings that focus on denominational or congregational business.
- We need to be sure every pastor has access to the best books, magazines and websites, and build into his or her weekly schedule the time to absorb them.
- We need to encourage pastors to establish professional study groups that together tackle the hard questions in ongoing conversations of a high order. And these study groups should be networked with scholarly experts, those "specialists" we mentioned, who stand ready to help them on particular difficulties as they arise.

## 2. RELIABLE SCHOLARS

We also need at least two things from our scholarly theologians.

First, we need more experts on disputed issues coming together to hash out their differences. You would think that this is what happens all the time at scholarly meetings. It sometimes does, yes, but on far too many theological issues (as in other academic disciplines, alas), the partisan discourses remain separate, and experts indulge in the lazy luxury of preaching to their fawning choirs.

I recall 20 years ago a Canadian conference on gender issues sponsored by a national organization

that could well have brokered a genuine and constructive confrontation of egalitarians and complementarians. But the agenda was set by only one side, and the other was forbidden from any representation.

Exactly the same thing has been evident recently in major conferences on nonmainstream sexuality (or LGBTQ+) issues. They almost always turn out to be rallies of the already convinced rather than meetings of differing minds. Anyone who is *not* already convinced, however, predictably comes away wondering what the other side would have said, and so nothing gets truly settled among those who are humble enough and open-minded enough to consider more than one opinion.

Prominent organizations of Evangelicals, therefore, (including denominations, scholarly organizations, public interest groups and major schools) ought to do much more than they are doing in bringing experts together in conversations of genuine give-and-take to educate each other, and then the rest of us, about the vexed issues of the day.

Then, second, such experts need training to communicate effectively with us via the media most appropriate to both the subject matter and the audience. Book? Video series? Sunday school class? Weekend seminar? Magazine article? Sermon? Blog post? Tweet? What is the right way to say what needs to be said to the audience who needs to hear it?

These are questions for which academic training provides no guidance whatsoever. But basic principles of good journalism and communications can be taught. Will someone provide them for our experts? Will the experts, with backing from their deans and provosts, undertake such training to communicate much, much better with interested laity?

At least professors need to team

up with journalists and other popular communicators so many more people can benefit from the hard-earned knowledge and wisdom that too often remains behind the walls of the ivory towers.

### 3. EFFECTIVELY GUIDED LAYPEOPLE

Professors and pastors who fulfil their roles will also direct the rest of us to what is worth reading, viewing and listening to.

Review sections of Christian magazines and websites are crucial. Admittedly, editors find it hard to get genuine experts to contribute reviews, the pay is usually poor and the readership scanty. Yet reviews are perhaps the most vital element in any periodical and should be both prominent and excellent.

Less formally, pastors and professors can set up accounts on online services such as Goodreads, as well as on their institution's websites, to offer their judgments to their circles of influence.

Church bulletins should feature a book/website/movie/podcast of the week to help parishioners find the good signals out there amid the noise.

In sum, we badly need our experts to guide us so laypeople can best use our few precious nonworking hours.

Then laypeople need to listen to our pastors and other teachers in adult Christian education programs of sufficient depth and extent. A 20- or 30-minute sermon once a week is insufficient for us to be educated on the difficult issues of the day.

And as important as devotional reading of the Bible surely is, whether by individuals or by small groups, it can be worthless and even dangerous if it is not informed by correct understanding of what Scripture is, in fact, saying – often despite what we *feel* it is saying.

We laypeople need to invest in theological study the way we invest in anything else that really matters – our children, marriages, health, financial security.

Sunday classes, yes, *and* weekday study groups; regular reading *and* taking courses offered by theological schools, whether locally or online, that are intellectually adequate to the issues we face.

We can't become experts, of course. But even to hear and understand properly what the experts are saying requires more time than most of us currently give them.

Laypeople must not only receive, but give in turn. Pastors can't possibly become pundits who pronounce on every matter facing everyone in their care. Pastors are instead called to "equip the saints" with the theological groundwork necessary.

Then intellectually gifted laypeople can apply Christian principles to their respective areas of expertise, and teach the rest of us how to think about topics such as parenting teenagers, selecting appropriate charities for support, the ethics of physician-assisted suicide and the merits of the latest hit movie.

### JUST LIKE THE EARLY CHURCH?

"But what about the Apostles?" someone might retort. "They didn't have fancy seminary degrees and go on study leaves and demand book allowances."

Ironically enough, answering this objection properly demands both Bible knowledge and theological sophistication.

Yes, fishermen were called by the Holy Spirit to write some of the New Testament, but most of it was written by only two people who were both highly educated – Luke and Paul.

The Twelve, furthermore, all had three years of continuous training

with Jesus, while Paul, rabbi though he was, also underwent additional years of theological training from the Lord before he was sent out to teach.

The Early Church was taught, not to put too fine a point on it, by trained teachers. And the quality of teaching mattered very much. The Apostles harshly condemned false teaching, and the New Testament chides churches for settling for childish sermons when they should have graduated to more meaty fare.

Of course, we would be foolish to stop after the Apostles and ignore what the Spirit has been saying to the churches for the last 2,000 years – and particularly what God is saying to us here and now to guide us here and now. There is much to learn.

### THE BIBLE IS COMPLICATED

The Bible is a truly extraordinary phenomenon – "alien technology," in fact, designed by God for an amazing task – to bring the gospel to the world, yes, but also to furnish teaching such that anyone anywhere in the world at any time can be trained by it into sound and mature Christian life.

Such an astounding effect can be rendered, even by the Holy Spirit, only via an unimaginably complex book, as the Bible is.

I once heard a popular media personality question a Christian apologist on the air. "How come," the skeptic asked, "Christianity and its Bible have to be so darned complicated? Why can't the basics of the faith just be written on the back of a postcard so that an eight-year-old child can understand them?"

The apologist, who had done his homework, responded thus. "Fred," he said, "before you were on TV, you were a city councillor, right?"

"Yes," Fred replied.

"And before that, you were a lawyer, right?"





“Yes,” Fred said.

“So tell me this. Why are the laws of this city, province and country so darned complicated? Why can’t you write them out on the back of a postcard so that an eight-year-old can understand them?”

Fred seemed stunned by the question. So the apologist continued.

“I’ll tell you why. Because in Grown-Up World, things are often complicated. Simple truths can guide us much of the time, yes, and we can teach those to our eight-year-olds. But in a world as complicated as ours, we need appropriate complexity to guide us.

“The Bible is a book that can bless an eight-year-old. ‘God so loved the world.’ ‘You must be born again.’ ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ But the Bible is also capable of guiding adults, families, churches and even nations. For that, we need more than a postcard.”

And to make good use of that amazing book, and to listen properly to that subtle Spirit, we need more than your best guess or mine, your intuition or mine. We need an intellectual culture among Canadian Evangelicals sufficient to the challenge.

## **AND TO MAKE GOOD USE OF THAT AMAZING BOOK, AND TO LISTEN PROPERLY TO THAT SUBTLE SPIRIT, WE NEED MORE THAN YOUR INTUITION OR MINE.**

### **INTELLECTUAL CULTURE**

Sadly, I was told last week that Canadian evangelical postsecondary institutions labour under some \$100 million in debt. Almost none are in the black. None can plan confidently for the future on the basis of generous endowments rendered by Christians who believed in their mission enough to trust them with significant resources.

Likewise, national organizations who could do the work we need doing – convening conferences, sending out seminar speakers, offering media training to academics – continue to struggle to find both funds and creative leadership.

Furthermore, most of our most popular churches from coast to coast do not feature anything approaching substantial biblical preaching, let alone extensive adult education programs adequate to the

problems each of us laypeople face.

Some of them even disparage formal theological education, as if glib spiritual formulas, funny anecdotes and peppy worship music will equip Canadian Christians to respond adequately to the political, economic, sexual, artistic and other issues of our day.

And that is the test – adequacy. We Canucks don’t typically think in extravagant terms. None of us will say we need schools flush with cash, or organizations with posh headquarters, or churches offering full-blown college or seminary programs in their Christian education departments.

But we can agree to settle for nothing less than adequacy – enough in the way of personnel and programs to help each of us think Christianly about the main issues of our lives.

Imagine being able to give a compelling “reason for the hope” within us (1 Peter 3:15).

Imagine offering a well-considered defence of a Christian view of complex issues such as sex, abortion, taxation and climate change.

Imagine forming beliefs in actual accordance with the Word and Spirit of God, and not just according to our own preferences.

Imagine becoming intellectually adequate to represent Jesus Christ in the complex day in which we live.

But let’s be absolutely clear. When our thinking has to contend with the daily messages purveyed by the likes of the Royal Bank, the Government of Canada, Apple, Exxon or Twenty-First Century Fox, “adequate” is a high standard indeed.

We Canadian Evangelicals have risen to the challenge before. By God’s grace, let’s do it again. /FT



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# CLEAN WATER IN CAMBODIA



**A 12-day trip in Cambodia brings clean water – and some insights on short-term mission trips**

**BY KAREN STILLER**

**T**erri Wiebe, a nurse from Steinbach, Man., crouches on the ground beside a little boy who shows up each day at our camp in Banteay Meanchey Province in northern Cambodia.

His legs and bare behind are covered in sores and scars. Wiebe gently wipes down his legs and feet with wipes and water from a plastic drinking bottle.

This little guy seems to be mostly cared for by an older sister and brother who watch curiously as their brother is tended to. Most likely, his parents are off working in Thailand or as day labourers in someone else's rice fields.

It was Jayden Jones, a 28-year-old firefighter from Fort MacKay, Alta., who called her over to look at a fresh cut on the little boy's foot.

Other members of our Water for Kids team, in Cambodia for a 12-day visit with Samaritan's Purse Canada, gather around.

This boy has won our hearts through his lollygagging ways, including lounging naked on our picnic table, and his curiosity about the foreigners in his midst.



If we can do something, anything, for him, we want to. We offer our nurse friend body wash, soap, wipes – our desire to solve this one problem in front of us is palpable.

She declines a Band-Aid. "It would be nice to cover it, but I'll clean it up and send them home with soap," she says. "Putting a Band-Aid on this is not a good solution."

## **This is not a Band-Aid**

We are here, ten of us ranging in age from 18 to 61, from one end of Canada to another, to help build water filters for three rural schools. We're also installing individual household BioSand filters for families who have either paid a small price or volunteered a day's labour to receive one.

If these three kids before us are like most people in this rural area, they do not have access to a dependable source

of clean water.

They are at high risk of becoming a number in the awful statistics we hear back in Canada all the time. Every 24 seconds someone – often a child – dies of a water-related illness. The World Health Organization estimates inadequate drinking water, sanitation and hygiene cause 842,000 diarrheal disease deaths per year.

In fact we meet a family just a few moments down the road who lost a two-year-old granddaughter a few years ago from diarrhea that just wouldn't go away. Her surviving brother attends one of the schools receiving a filter during this trip.

Samaritan's Purse has built large filters for 80 schools in Cambodia so far and installed more than 20,700 BioSand filters in the simple, sturdy homes that dot the countryside.

Their Cambodian staff and workers install the vast ma-



**Constructing a community BioSand filter — one of many in Cambodia.**

familiar with serving and not always enjoying it. I do not believe it is nobler to be miserable. It's just more unpleasant. I've always thought that I benefited greatly from mission trips I was on. And to be honest, I never really thought there was *anything wrong* with that.

These thoughts came back to me recently when a friend's Facebook post kick-started a dialogue about whether short-term mission trips are an outdated idea, even harmful. At the very least they should be called something different, went the thread of the discussion, to acknowledge that those who go to the foreign country benefit as much if not more than those they visit.

My Cambodia trip was only weeks away, so I waded into the discussion tentatively, knowing that soon enough I would be posting an unending (and now I suspected annoying) series of shots of beautiful children, water filters and jolting tuk tuk rides through Siem Reap.

People posted that the trips tend to be more about self-discovery than selflessness. A mission to Me. And that people should send the money they spend on their travel to the destination and ministry directly, rather than going there themselves to be a two-week work project for their hosts.

Skeptical me questioned if we are generous enough to do that. But I took those questions with me.

**Schoolchildren showing visitors where their drinking water came from before the filter was installed.**

majority of the filters each year, but Samaritan's Purse also brings teams from Canada to pay for and build filters – 15 this year alone. We are one of those teams.

Each member of this team paid \$1,000 above their other costs to pay for the filters we will piece together on prepared concrete pads under a sun that melts us like wax. The children who attend the schools will have steady access to clean water, most likely for the first time in their lives.

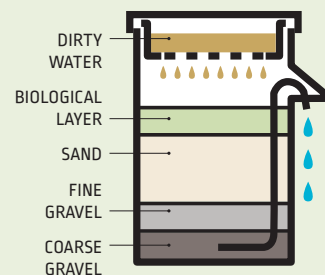
**The water is clear, but short-term mission trips can be murky**

Years ago, as our church prepared to go on a short-term trip to Honduras, a friend told me it would be better if it was not called a mission trip – because we were so excited about going. She couldn't seem to reconcile the co-existence of our pleasure and the idea of sacrifice in another culture that she associated with a mission trip.

Her comment stayed with me. As a minister's wife, I am

**How BioSand water filters work**

This Canadian-made technology uses large tanks and a unique combination of slow sand and biological filtration to quickly transform contaminated water into clean water. Here's how the school filter works:



1. A school collects dirty water in a reservoir tank, which slowly releases the water into an adjacent filtration tank.
2. Fine sand and a biological layer of water in the filtration tank trap and consume disease-causing parasites, micro-organisms and viruses.
3. More filtration occurs as the water continues to travel downward through increasingly coarse layers of sand and gravel where organisms die off without light and oxygen.
4. The gravitational force of the unfiltered water above pushes the filtered water through a pipe and into a large storage tank for drinking and washing.

—WWW.SAMARITANSPURSE.CA



PHOTO: KAREN STILLER; ILLUSTRATION: JANICE VAN ECK



Filling up water bottles in the schoolyard; the schoolchildren were very happy to meet visitors from Canada.

### Water to a home

Hgon Sream and Heourch Amtho are a young couple in their 20s who live in a wooden house raised on stilts. The stilts protect their home from flooding and provide an open space underneath perfect for meeting and storage.

Today, it's for receiving their new BioSand filter.

Their three-year-old daughter Hgon cries much of the visit, probably because she woke up from her peaceful nap on a gently swaying hammock to a group of eager Canadians grinning at her.

We have arrived, sweaty and dirty, from the BioSand filter assembly site just down the rutted dirt road. There we oiled molds, assembled the housing for the filters – Emma Smith, a 19-year-old psychology student, and I first confirmed with each other which was a nut and which a bolt – and lugged bucket after bucket from wheelbarrow to filter, filling the interior chambers of the filters with the thick oatmeal-like mixture of fresh cement.

It is possible to construct 20 BioSand filters a day, and the estimate is that 1,900 will be installed in this province of Cambodia this year.

This family signed up after a visit from a Samaritan's Purse water intern whose job is to convince them and their neighbours that water made 99 per cent clean is better for their health and their daughter than the water they have been carrying home from a nearby pond.

They would have paid \$5 or donated a day's work to water filter construction to pay for this filter. Buy-in is essential to success.

Part of the deal is hygiene and sanitation training as well. This family doesn't have a latrine yet – they sheepishly admit they still go across the road to the edge of the field to use the washroom – but that will be the next step.

Neighbours watch as the filter is assembled. Samaritan's Purse hopes this family will become thought leaders in the community. If a family sees another with easy access to

clean water and all the ensuing health benefits, they might want one too.

The difference between the water being poured in and the water pouring out is startling. From beige and murky to clear and sparkling. From night into day.

### Some answers

Vichet Mongkul is the Cambodian co-ordinator of our Water for Kids team. He hustles us on and off our bus, answers the same questions over and over again, helps build water filters, gamely joins in on loud travelling games, and translates and teaches us about the country he loves.

"Of course, we need donations," says Mongkul. "We really appreciate what you donate to us. But we want you to see the impact." He is pragmatic. "I believe that you coming here will give you more encouragement to give more. Coming to Cambodia will give you the big picture. We want you to see how we can impact people to sustain what they have for generations."

I have been on enough short-term trips to know I will benefit from this experience. I will spend less money on stupid things, at least for a while. I will put beautiful pictures in frames and hang at least one on our travel wall. I will tell funny stories for as long as there is an audience (not very long, actually). Some people who haven't done this kind of thing will think our team is quite something. They won't fully know that we received as much, if not more, than we gave, even if that wasn't our intention.

And I will be re-energized in my faith because I am worshipping with brothers and sisters who have so much less, and so much more.

I confess this to Mongkul. He already knows.

"Some people just want to do something good because they have leftovers and they are Christian," he says. "And while your gift is highly appreciated and we believe this is a blessing for us that will help us bring revival, we want to share this revival back to



you. If you give to us, you bless us financially. We want to bless you spiritually. Let's share the blessing."

### Complicated blessings

Another day, Emma Smith and I, with our soft, pale hands of student and writer, are given the job of continuing the waterline trench another part of the team began earlier in the week at one of the schools. We pick up two shovels and trudge our way over to where the digging ends – and the densely packed mound of sand and gravel surrounding the water reservoir begins.

We have been told to dig through this hill. It simply needs to be a trench through the hill wide enough for a person to stand in it.

In the history of mission trips all over the world, never have two people been more badly matched to a task. She starts to dig up high. I dig down low.

We have no idea what we are doing. We both know this. Plus, it feels like we are on a much hotter planet, Venus

maybe. But who wants to be the team complainers? Not us!

Quickly, we no longer care about that. We holler over for someone to come and explain the part we are missing. Isn't there a bulldozer? Twenty-eight-year-old Chad Morgan, a team member who works like the Energizer Bunny, comes running and attacks the small indentation we have made in the hill with a hoe. Now we have loose stuff we can shovel out.

We use this up quickly. We're no longer talking to each other. It's too hot. I have a crust made of dirt and sweat, with an inner bonfire burning. We give up. This is a hill I will not die on.

We pick up Dawn Graburn, our Canadian team leader, already heat exhausted under the scraggiest tree I have ever seen and make our way slowly back to camp. We lie down flat on a tarp under a canopy roof striped like a carnival tent set up to shelter the men's tents. We cool. We chat. It is good.

Later I pour a double effort into the sheep mask craft with the kids who come for our after school program, trying to redeem myself.

And at night, in my mosquito netting tent-shelter, I flip open my iPad and read my Bible. I'm working my way through 1 Corinthians, a chapter a night, if I can stay awake long enough. The relentless heat and the crowing roosters stomping around all the live-long night, combined with our cooks cutting, slicing, dicing and pounding by 3 a.m. mean sleep is in short, blessed spurts. You grab it when you feel it coming and hold on for dear life.

In my tent each night, I also

tear open a foil sample of very good skin care. I gather these silvery packets from drugstores and magazines throughout the year and use them as a treat when I am away from home. I realize I am trying to maximize spiritual growth while minimizing skin damage, and I feel a little awkward.

### In the end

Near the end of our trip, we visit a school where Samaritan's Purse installed a water filter the year before. They want us to see a filter fully in use, to understand better what we have been part of this week.

Kids run around the playground laughing and playing and careening and bouncing off each other like kids do. And filling up their bottles with fresh, clean, safe water whenever they want. They even splash in it. Here, there is abundance.

A spontaneous soccer game breaks out, as it almost always does, between some members of our team and some of the kids.

Others of us, wilted and withered by the intense heat, sit at a long picnic table in one of the only spots of shade. School staff bring out coconuts. They lop off the tops, jab straws in and hand them out.

And it turns out that coconut works wonders. I guess that's why it grows where it is very hot. I feel myself plump up, fill out, sit up straight. I am a dry plant watered well. I listen to the kids run and yell and laugh. And I am so happy I am here – a small part of this wonderful thing unfolding. /FT



Karen Stiller of Port Perry, Ont., is a senior editor at *Faith Today*.



### The team reflects

"There were lots of great memories about this trip. Pouring concrete into the filter frames in the incredible heat. Trying to fall asleep in the mosquito tent with sweat running off the body in buckets. Jayden crashing through the bus floor, breaking his seat because our driver hit a bump." –**Bernie Thiessen, New Sarepta, Alta.**

"I never expected to be with a group of people who could share personal stories, interact equally with each other, and laugh as much as we did." –**Emma Smith, Toronto**

"My best memory is visiting the school where the BioSand water filter had been installed and in use for a while. It brought me to tears watching one little girl giggle as the water splashed over the top of her cup." –**Miriam Cleough, Tatamagouche, N.S.**

"Seeing the contrast between the source of that water – a dirty pond – and the filtered water itself, and knowing those kids were getting safe water that would keep them healthy made all the sweat, work and discomfort totally worth it!" –**Jeff Adams, Samaritan's Purse, Calgary**



# Middle-aged, divorced and **dating online** – what I learned about myself and the brave new world

BY ALEX NEWMAN

After my 21-year marriage ended, life took on a routine of kids-work-house maintenance interrupted by the occasional emotional bump.

Emotions weren't something I could afford as a newly divorced woman, given the to-do list that faced me each day, so when well-meaning friends started

pushing me to date, I was able to easily put them off – too busy stabilizing the finances, too worried about what studies reveal about kids when their parents date, too freaked out by the possibility of a bad outcome. And too aware of how history repeats itself.

Five years down the road, though, with household matters well in hand, my son almost finished university and my teenage daughter mostly MIA with friends, I began to

wonder if this was It. Kleenexes tucked in my sleeve, Scotch mints at the ready, steadily working through every Netflix rom-com, and studiously avoiding real relationships since the fantasy ones were so easily worked out in 90 minutes.

Let's face it. Dating is hard work. It's messy. The outcome is never sure. One friend advised, "Don't date, it always ends badly." Once you've experienced emotional devastation – and who hasn't after five

or six decades in this world? – dating again is like lying on the train track of life, waiting to get run over.

Unless, of course, you're made of the same stuff as Thomas Edison who, when his factory burned down, famously said, "Great, I get to start anew."

So much had changed in the 30 years since I last dated. I had changed. There was my securely attached emotional baggage – and the body losing its fight against gravity. The world was a different place with the Internet, hook-up culture, and the rise in divorce among midlifers.

There is a multitude of saggy singles out there like me, confused about relationship failures and (possibly) looking for someone to love. Five years ago I wouldn't have

41.9

AVERAGE AGE OF  
WOMEN WHO  
DIVORCE IN CANADA  
(WWW.HRSDE.GC.CA)



been caught dead going online. It smacked of desperation and might even be immoral. If God wanted me to meet a man, wouldn't He have planted one in my path? Like Jacob at Rachel's well or Ruth in Boaz's wheat field?

Alas, no grey-haired shepherds were lining up for cups of water from me. But the dating sites beckoned with their promises of lifelong happiness just a click away, and friends cheered me on. So I waded right in and signed up for two sites.

It seemed so easy.

It turned out to be an emotional minefield, with me ecstatic, depressed, desirable and insecure in turns.

Never one to be self-conscious about my age, reading thread after thread on why men want women several years younger had me reaching for the magnifying mirror, examining my network of lines. Given our culture's obsession with appearance, it wasn't surprising that people on dating sites cherish youth and beauty. My own superficiality, though, surprised me. While nixing the guy dressed in his mall Santa suit was just being sensible, dismissing the others with unfortunate photos wasn't. No photo reveals the whole of a person's smile, intellect or character.

Things were more real on the discussion forums where people drop by to talk about relationships, God, kids, pets and their favourite music. Some threads were even helpful (how to deal with scammers, how to work the online dating process, how to navigate the age thing). Others were not – whether a woman should make the first move, how appropriate it is to kiss before the altar, and whether people in their 60s are still interested in sex. Alas, the friends I made there – male and female – lived too far away for serious contact.

Then there's the chat room. Not

for the faint of heart, it ramps up by 8 p.m., when anywhere from 15 to 25 people cram in, all jostling to contribute to nonsensical conversations moving at the speed of light. What's really taking place are hookups conducted in whispers behind the scenes.

The real work is trolling through profiles, sending out smiles and waiting for responses. Most of the time these are from people you haven't contacted, and usually for good reason. Like the man who said on his profile that women were intimidated by his brains (then told me he couldn't wait to see me in heels). Some were inappropriate because of geography. I don't have enough time

I soldiered on, and a few weeks later arranged a coffee date with someone who seemed nice, intelligent and had no obvious skeletons in the closet. It took two weeks to organize since we lived 100 km apart. And ten minutes to realize there was no chemistry.


Meanwhile, back in the real world, I'd started sailing with friends who introduced me to someone. We laugh a lot and for the first time in a long time I am enjoying the social side of life. But he isn't Christian. I'm dogged by statistics about higher divorce rates in second marriages – and the Christian directive to not be unequally yoked.

What I have learned is that I am vulnerable, and I still carry scars that affect the way I relate to others.

But for five years I'd been so deliberate and careful to choose what was right for my children, myself and my faith that I hid behind those "right things" and all else was swept away. We know what Jesus had to say about houses swept clean. It's like ignoring the blind spot when you drive.

Having made such a colossal failure at my marriage, I was determined not to make another. I had cut myself off from all and every possibility. That's not such a bad attitude if it means acknowledging the broken heart and taking the time to let grieving and grace heal it. Bad, though, if you wall yourself off from life.

While I don't recommend signing up for a dating site as soon as the ink has dried on your divorce papers, the time will come to get back on the proverbial horse. Somewhere along the way, we have to 'fess up to failing – or sinning – in some or many ways, but we can also believe that by the grace of God we might just have another chance to do it right. Or at least better. /FT

 Alex Newman of Toronto is a senior writer at *Faith Today*.

## SO MUCH HAD CHANGED IN THE 30 YEARS SINCE I LAST DATED. I HAD CHANGED. THERE WAS MY SECURELY ATTACHED EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE...

to go around the corner much less meet up with someone in Germany. Besides, there's a trust factor missing when someone can't be referenced by anyone you know.

I attracted an extreme age range – either really young men in their 30s (probably looking for financial support) who said things like, "You're *still* attractive," (but were most likely looking for financial stability) or much older men who wanted to make sure I knew that *they* were still attractive.

About six weeks in I met Someone With Potential – Christian, my age, only 60 km away! We chatted for 90 minutes online one evening and exchanged cheery texts early the next morning. The following day he texted again, this time to let me know he'd selected one of the three other women he'd been pursuing. With the endless supply of fish in this cyber ocean, juggling potential mates is a common practice.

# 80

PERCENTAGE OF SINGLES WHO AGREE THAT ONLINE DATING IS BETTER AT FINDING A MATCH THAN THE HELP OF FAMILY MEMBERS ("STATE OF DATING IN AMERICA," BY CHRISTIANMINGLE.COM AND JDATE.COM)

# MINISTRY IN CANADA'S POOREST POSTAL CODE

Faith Today visits Vancouver's Downtown Eastside to understand what it is like to minister in this hard, hard place BY JULIA CHEUNG

**T**his place is beyond the law. Or perhaps above it.

Most days a black market thrives – as only broken things can – with a limp and a shuffle. On either side of West Hastings Avenue, people lay books, socks, old cellphones and other random items in neat little rows on quilts and picnic blankets. Unattended merchandise appears in random piles up and down the street.

A dishevelled woman sells danishes and doughnuts, while a man sets up a makeshift bicycle shop. Others hawk DVDs and jewelry.

It could be any outdoor Canadian community market, if it weren't for the brokenness palpable in the air. The smell of urine is overwhelming. The style du jour is stained baseball caps, baggy jackets and oversized pants. This is Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) – a three-block radius of desperation and sadness, but amazingly a place where flowers still bloom.

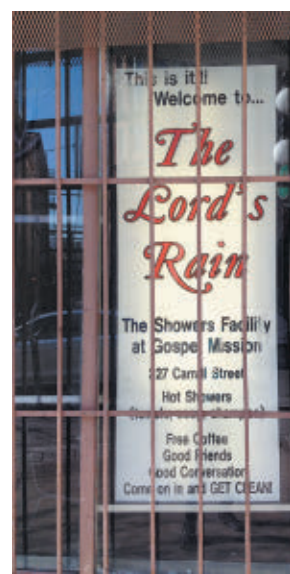
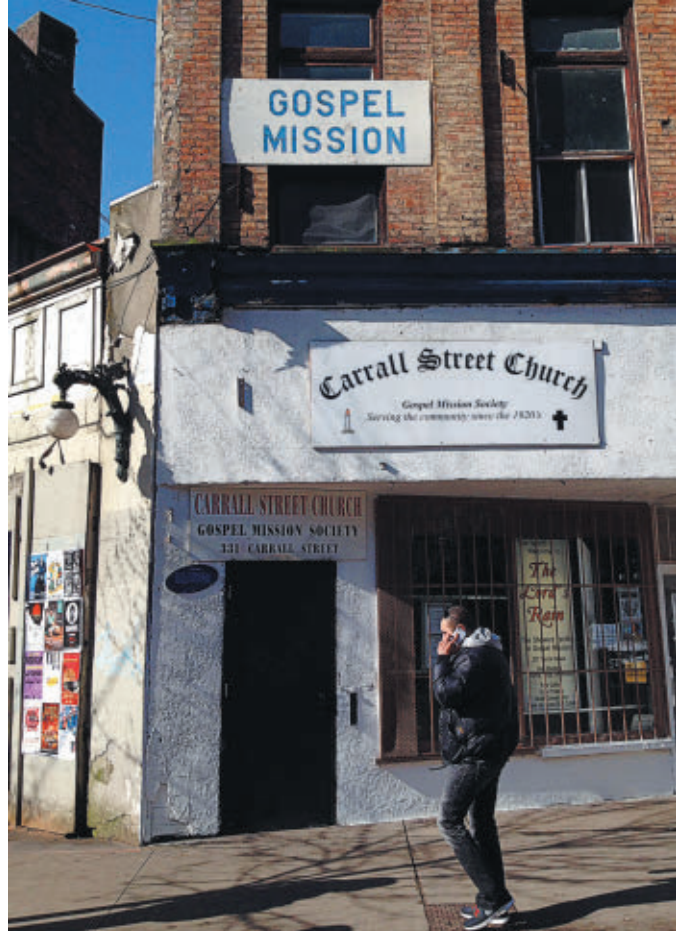
Next to the illegal street market is an illegal garden of sorts. Ten years ago Christians broke the lock

on this discarded property “as a prophetic announcement of God's new life breaking into abandoned, dead spaces” (as recorded in an obscure YouTube clip). The gardeners took over the lot without knowing who owned it.

“We thought the last way to find the owner was to illegally garden the property,” says one young gardener on the video. “Isaiah the prophet cast this vision of just living, and he said there will be those among you that restore the streets to dwelling. It's this idea of restoring waste places. Of turning it into these gardens that provide food.”

After four years, a local church has taken on the mantle of caring for the garden. It's fitting to such a transitory neighborhood. Change and motion are constant here.

“IT'S SO DIFFERENT in the daytime,” Cheryl Sutton keeps telling me. “It's so different. At nighttime, that's really when everyone is awake and out.” Sutton has been coming down to volunteer with Carrall Street Church and to minister in the evenings for over a year. She's taking me through the streets known widely as “Canada's poorest



postal code” on this sleepy Wednesday morning. But as far as I can tell, there is no sleepy quality about this half-block of informal business and wrangling. The illegal street market bustles. It is loosely organized with its own systems and hierarchies. The odd middle-class customer wanders from stall to stall. (Some middle-class folks know that here, you can get things for cheap. Just don’t ask questions.)

We walk into the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre. There’s a basket of free condoms at the welcome desk. Women mill about, waiting for the afternoon meal. And for Sutton, there’s the familiar welcoming embrace of Chilli Bean, a regular volunteer at the centre. She’s a twinkling, maternal woman, probably in her fifties, with a gap-toothed smile and long black hair.

There are no men at the women’s centre, and I noticed earlier there were virtually no women in the lineup for lunch at the Salvation Army’s drug and recovery centre just half a block away. Gender segregation seems to be a necessity for survival here. Perhaps there is safety in homogeneity when the threat of violence hangs in the air so palpably.

“We see a lot of new faces now that springtime is coming. From across Canada. And young ones too,” Chilli Bean tells us. “It’s sad.”

I am impressed by Chilli’s warmth, her care, her smile. “Chilli Bean is a high-functioning drug user,” Sutton tells me later. This is how it is – addiction and illness, mingled with the most human of emotions and distinctly human of interactions.

“THERE WAS A GUY,” Karen Giesbrecht confesses. “I thought he was cute. So I came to volunteer.” Much about Giesbrecht is casual and understated, yet the adventure that began 15 years ago – almost on a whim, with one simple visit to a Tuesday night shelter and meal

ministry – is anything but casual. In the light behind her grey eyes, you glimpse the precocious young adult she would have been back then.

Today the 38-year-old juggles three related part-time jobs – dietitian for one of the Salvation Army’s drug and recovery centres in the DTES, meal co-ordinator at a local church, and co-ordinator for City Gate Leadership Forum, a nonprofit that helps congregations, charities and changemakers who want to work with the poor for the well-being of the city.

So a college-age crush on a fellow volunteer first brought her, a middle-class girl from the ’burbs, to serve in this rough-and-tumble neighborhood. After a circuitous journey from two years in Jamaica to a six-year stint in corporate Vancouver, the grace of God eventually anchored her here.

The cute guy is long gone – he went to be a missionary overseas – but Giesbrecht is still here. In such a transient neighborhood, this is a feat. It takes a unique brand of longevity to be able to deal with the vicissitudes of addiction, chronic poverty and mental illness. But Giesbrecht is fixed on being that regular element in her homeless and recovering friends’ lives.

Jolene Ricci is also in it for the long haul. She worked for almost five years as an outreach worker at Union Gospel Mission on East Hastings. Like Giesbrecht and Sutton, she began as a volunteer, serving coffee and cleaning up. Ricci remembers feeling a bit awkward with the DTES population.

“But once you establish a connection with them, that’s when it’s really rewarding,” she says. “They would come in, some of them really dark and not talking. You could see they came out of their lonely home. We’d have a meal and eventually they’d leave a different person than how they came in.”

It’s important to celebrate the little victories here. Lost jobs, lost spouses, lost children and lost homes are a constant theme, according to Ricci. Setbacks are unforgiving. So friendship has to be.

Ricci is a hairdresser. She maintains personal friendships with guests from Union Gospel Mission’s various programs. In her stylish loose brown sweater and grey tights, it’s hard to imagine her befriending DTES residents. But through free haircuts, meals, hospital visits and mostly just time spent, she has forged strong bonds.

One of these bonds is with Antoinette and her baby Ania (not their real names). “I just went to Ania’s first birthday!” says Ricci. “Antoinette probably still steals occasionally. I don’t even want to know exactly what goes on. But she’s definitely not using anymore and she’s a really good mother. She put on a birthday party like I could never do. Decorated, in her building, with treat bags for everyone.”

Ricci first met her on a professional basis, when she was her caseworker. Antoinette’s mother (also struggling with addictions) had asked her to look out for Antoinette on the streets. A few weeks later their paths crossed. Their friendship bloomed as friendships will on the DTES, in fits and starts with interruptions long and short.

“There are some people who just want stuff from you,” Ricci says. “But even when Antoinette was in prison, sending me letters, I would have a sense that she enjoys our relationship. She knows I care about the people in her life.”

Recently, Antoinette has become stable. But in this neighborhood, that’s no guarantee of a stable future.

“There are so many crazy stories,” says Ricci. “You hear about the most horrific lives that people have led. But it’s satisfying to know that you’re able to bring some inspiration or



**18,500**  
NUMBER OF RESIDENTS  
IN VANCOUVER'S  
EASTSIDE  
(NATIONALPOST.COM)

hope. You are able to love people who don't know they are loved. To pay attention to people who need it."

IF THERE IS ONE pattern among the ministry workers here, it's that long-term, invested interest in the lives of DTES residents makes the largest difference. Karen Giesbrecht points out the difference between relief work and development work. Relief work seeks to swoop down to provide short-term charity. Development work seeks to come alongside people and walk with them into fullness of life.

"There are so many faithful servants of the Lord working in the trenches here," Sutton says. "These folks sacrifice time, money, heartaches and sometimes verbal abuse over the years, working the streets that seem to never change. For me, I've come to learn and am still learning one soul at a time. One sheep at a time."

Sutton sends me a list of over a dozen pastors and volunteers to speak to, to understand more. The net of grace God has cast over this, Canada's poorest postal code, is far wider than I had imagined. Its arms snake through the squalor, the brokenness, the unredeemable pieces, somehow weaving around the pieces to make a comprehensible whole.

ELOISA BOUNCES HER baby on her knee. "I've always been kind of sheltered," she confesses. "And I wanted to change that." Every week she braves the potential of bedbugs, lice, viruses – the so-called contamination – to volunteer at the Tenth Church meal program Karen Giesbrecht runs just a few blocks north of the DTES. For a delicate Korean-Canadian accountant on maternity leave, this seems Herculean.

"The other day," Giesbrecht tells



**250+**

NUMBER OF SERVICE AGENCIES AND HOUSING OPERATIONS IN VANCOUVER'S EASTSIDE (NATIONALPOST.COM)

me later, "I just saw Paul who is homeless – his hair is one big mat and he's at most of our meals – and Eloisa is sitting there beside him holding her baby. They were chatting." Giesbrecht shakes her head. "The fact someone as kind and good and gentle as Eloisa would keep coming back. What else would put a young mom and her four-month-old sitting next to a homeless guy?"

So many of the dedicated volunteers and workers continue to come back here, even when addictions take over and it feels like friends take two steps back for every step forward. The common theme is how broken we all are, how close to the edge we are in our

PHOTOS (THIS PAGE AND PREVIOUS SPREAD): JULIA CHEUNG

## 30 years on the street ANDREW'S STORY

At my first visit to Karen Giesbrecht's meal program, I sat and ate with DTES residents and met a man named Andrew (not his real name). I told him I was there to collect stories.

He grabbed a sheet of paper and started writing, laboriously, biting his lip in fierce concentration. Just watching his effort made me want to cry. Finally he slid the paper across the table. In large shaky print, scrawled across one sheet of foolscap, were these words:

*My Name is Andrew Peter Kimmel  
Born April 4, 1970*

*Father] Workaholic  
Mother] Violent Alcoholic  
Education] Grade 6  
Family members  
1 older Brother  
Being across Canada  
this is home  
and I don't lie that much.*

Then through a wide-gapped smile, chipped teeth and distracted motions, he told me, "I'm a wide variety kind of guy. I've lived 30 years on the street. I have a home now. It's nice. I get to volunteer and be social, and have no fights with people. You'll have to come back for my story."

This Monday night

meal group was his community, his people, he said. After dinner the community would extend to Bible study, led that night by two young seminary students who affectionately called this their own small group.

I returned a few months later on another Monday night, hoping to see Andrew and gather the rest of his story. But Giesbrecht told me she hadn't seen him around lately.

"Andrew was doing really well for a while," she said. Like many of the crew at the meal ministry, he had managed to get back on his feet and was doing some meaningful work. But either his health or his addiction had caused setbacks.

"Andrew's made a couple of the most eloquent speeches. If he had a better start in life, with his big heart, he would be preaching," said Giesbrecht.

"He has almost no teeth," I mused out loud. Giesbrecht sighed.

"When you stop caring for your teeth, that's when you stop caring for yourself. When you have to worry about how to pay your bills, it's the equivalent of knocking you down ten IQ points. It takes so much energy to worry about making ends meet when you are just coping. Your resilience goes down quickly. It's not just a matter of getting a job. It's identity. To work gives us

identity and routine."

She illustrated with Andrew's backstory. "Andrew couldn't get a job and he couldn't get a bank account because he didn't have a birth certificate. So we went to the computer and downloaded a form to apply for one. It was 85 bucks, which for him was completely insurmountable. So through the church we got permission to pay it. We filled it out online. Two weeks later it arrived on his doorstep." She chuckled sadly. "I think he lost it several months later."

So that's what Andrew wrote for me on that slip of paper. A birth certificate of sorts. An identity. —JULIA CHEUNG



sinfulness and desperation.

“That could have been me,” is a repeated chorus. “I could have seen myself slide down the precipice of addiction or depression if not for the grace of God. So I keep coming, praying, hoping.”


COMING, PRAYING, hoping. That is the way most of these workers and volunteers approach their ministry here. It is the way of Christ, the way of one friendship at a time, happening through the city. Where politics and controversies continually float above your head, the quietly obedient stride on.

This is in beautiful Vancouver, B.C., where Canadian dreams come true. But so do Canadian nightmares. A breathtaking backdrop of mountains meeting ocean points to the creative brilliance of its Designer, alongside the smell of urine, broken needles and trash that point to the brokenness of His people.

This is a neighborhood where striking natural beauty and the trendiest restaurants are found next to creaky old grocery carts, dishevelled beards and limp limbs. Ironically, the beards that seem to be everywhere in this neighborhood are signals of both hipster style and DTES poverty, depending on who is growing them. Personal upkeep is a low priority when your next meal is a larger concern.

I watch the urban gardeners YouTube clip again. The pathos of tending new life in a place that refuses to change, refuses to grow, is intriguing. “There are bees in time for the blackberry bloom,” the young gardener points out. “And the whole entrance is flowers. We wanted the lane side to be flowers on both sides.”

Hope is creeping into Canada’s poorest postal code – one long-term volunteer, one blackberry bush, one incremental life change at a time. /FT

 Julia Cheung is a freelance writer in Vancouver, B.C.



*“If not for the hope in Christ, I’d be long gone”*

**Ryan Tang is a recent graduate of the University of British Columbia now interning with Servant Partners Canada in the DTES. Previously he worked as a shelter co-ordinator for Tenth Church’s Out of the Cold ministry and spent two months experiencing the slums of Calcutta. Follow his story on his website BeyondTheGreatWalls.com. He spoke with Faith Today writer Julia Cheung.**

**Q. How did you fall into working in the DTES?**

**Ryan Tang:** I ended up working here as a result of my experiences interacting with the poor, particularly through my encounter with Harris, a man who could have been mentally ill, homeless, a drug addict or all three. He could barely read, but tried to read the Bible to me. He knows he is loved by Jesus, and loves Jesus more than I have ever understood.

The second reason was my own deep desire to see God bridge the different realities of Vancouver. I was a UBC student who attended an upper-middle-class church, but just a stone’s throw away there was an entire area where people lived a completely different reality. This broke my heart and put me in a place of asking God, *How can this be?* So I went to see.

Lastly, I felt God invite me to be changed. There was a promise that seeking the welfare of the city was indeed seeking my own. I



knew I wanted to be part of something where I’d need God. So I felt the need to respond to God’s invitation.

**Q. What is the best part of working here?**

**RT:** People. I love interacting with people and here, the degree of openness, transparency and just casual care I’ve received is phenomenal, unlike anywhere else. When I first arrived, people were informing me of the best places for free meals, or services for myself (and my children, if I had any!). Volunteers, homeless, addicts and just a whole mosaic of diversity! Just to be able to interact with such a dynamic diversity of people has proven one of my greatest honours in this place.

**Q. What is the worst part of working here?**

**RT:** The worst part I’d say is two-fold. One is sustainability. As an incarnational ministry, we need to live in the neighbourhood, and gentrification is really making that harder and harder as rent prices increase, and

affordable goods and services are moving. The second part is simply hope. After hearing many stories of trauma and seeing the faces of many of those currently suffering, my own humanity is bruised. If not for the hope in Christ, I’d be long gone out of the DTES, as the burdens are certainly hard to bear. There have been nights where I’ve come home and burst into tears at the painful realities of people I’ve encountered, and their own lack of hope. How much I need Christ to be my strength.

**Q. If there were one thing you’d wish middle-class Christians knew about working with this population, what would it be?**

**RT:** There is beauty in this place. In the face of brokenness, there is beauty. So I simply encourage those working with this population to see the beauty in the people made in the image of God, and humbly love as we would Christ, and allow ourselves to be transformed as we seek the transformation of the DTES. /FT

# EDUCATING OMAR

**A Christian university in Edmonton has for almost ten years been reaching out to offer education to an infamous prisoner, first in the American-run military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and now at home in Edmonton**

BY DEBRA FIEGUTH



Seven years after she first heard the words, “This is a hopeless case,” and responded with, “We don’t do hopeless,” Arlette Zinck is still determined to see Omar Khadr through high school and into university.

Most Canadians know his name, and most have opinions about him. To some he is an unfortunate victim of his family’s ideology who unwittingly became a child soldier. To others, such as former public safety minister Vic Toews, Khadr is a “well-known supporter of the al-Qaeda terrorist network and a convicted terrorist.” Other government leaders have used similar language.

To Zinck and her colleagues, he is also a person who deserves an education just like any other Canadian.

Zinck’s role in his life began in autumn 2008 when The King’s University (TKU), where she is an associate professor of English, hosted a conference featuring a variety of speakers including Khadr’s lawyer Dennis Edney.

Participants including 600 members of TKU’s student body sat riveted as Edney outlined the case. He ended on a despairing note, suggesting that even public protests would do nothing to change the situation.

The English professor (at the time also dean of arts) felt

it was her job to walk alongside those students who wanted to do something in response. “That was my duty and responsibility.” She was determined “to move them beyond the place of hopelessness.”

About 40 students took action, learning everything they could about Khadr’s case, praying regularly and staging a day of silence. Later that fall they organized a conference, attended by almost 700 people.

Zinck joined others in giving Edney letters to deliver to Khadr, and when she found out Khadr was an avid reader, she gave him this instruction: “Go to the bookmobile and find a book. Let me know what you found and we’ll talk about it.”

Letters quickly became correspondence lessons, and from that Zinck was invited to testify at Khadr’s sentencing trial. He had been in Guantanamo for eight years by that point, without trial or sentence.

After a controversial trial Khadr was sentenced to eight years and put in solitary confinement. He was supposed to be returned to Canada after a year, but that was delayed by 11 months. He was finally returned in September 2012 and put in Millhaven Institution in Ontario before being transferred to Alberta in May 2013.

In the meantime, the U.S. military asked Zinck to come up with a curriculum for him. She collaborated with col-

## THE CASE AGAINST KHADR

**OMAR KHADR’S JOURNEY** has already been a long one. He was born in Toronto in 1986, lived his early years in Pakistan, was a teenage combatant in Afghanistan, a detainee in Cuba, and now a high school student in Edmonton.

His family moved from Canada to Afghanistan in 1996, returning to Canada for short stays about once a year. In Afghanistan his father put him to work as a translator and also sent him to weapons training camps. (His father, suspected of al-Qaeda connections, was killed in 2003.)

The event that shaped most of his life occurred in July 2002, when he was 15 and assigned to guard a compound in Khost, Afghanistan. A firefright broke out, an American medic was fatally wounded by a grenade, and Khadr himself was injured, losing an eye and sustaining a chest wound.

Khadr was taken to Bagram detention centre, where he says he was heavily interrogated, deprived of sleep, drugged, humiliated and abused. Fellow inmate

Moazzam Begg recalls how the still-wounded Khadr was made to pile up crates of water, kick them down and pile them up again, over and over. In October he was transferred to Guantanamo Bay with other prisoners.

Khadr confessed to killing the American medic, Christopher Speer, in a plea bargain, but later recanted. He says he only confessed so he could come back to Canada. He has been named in several lawsuits over government actions and his own alleged actions. —DF

leagues from TKU's education faculty as well as other academics, including a high school math teacher from British Columbia.

"Because Omar was sitting in a prison cell, shackled to the floor, dreaming about home," says Zinck, "we figured what better way to begin than with a series of novels – which he loved to read anyway – about Canada by Canadian authors." Khadr took a literary journey across Canada, reading authors from west to east.

Occasionally Zinck travelled to Guantanamo Bay to teach him, but most of the courses were done by correspondence. Up to 17 teachers were involved. "You need a large team," Zinck explains, "because it's all on top" of every teacher's course load, "and there was an enormous amount of all newly developed curriculum specifically for him."

That continued when he reached Canada. Zinck went to Millhaven a few times, but teaching him became easier once he arrived at Bowden Institution in Innisfail, Alta. He was released on bail in May 2015, equipped with an electronic monitoring device. He has since moved into his lawyer's house, from where he continues his education.

Why so much time and effort to educate one person?

It has partly to do with TKU's mission statement – "To provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant King."

"We live into an understanding of who Christ is and our role in terms of education, renewal and reconciliation,"

explains president Melanie Humphreys.

Foundational to the Christian faith, adds Zinck, "is the understanding that we may not write one another off – that vengeance belongs to God, and that it is our call to be ministers of reconciliation."

David Goa of Canmore, Alta., has closely observed the entire journey from his position as director of the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life, affiliated with the University of Alberta.

"My own sense is that we've got to find ways to pull life from death in situations like this," he says.

Goa has had extensive conversations with Khadr about Islam, Christianity, Judaism and "the place of religion in a

Students – Christian, Muslim, Sikh – need not sign a statement of faith or lifestyle commitment, says Humphreys. Faculty are, however, required to integrate Christian values both in their teaching and relationships with students. "We hold open the gospel to people," she says.

While there was some concern initially from parents and supporters, that has waned. And though not everyone at TKU agrees with what Zinck and other faculty are doing, they disagree "civilly," she notes.

Ron Nikkel, president emeritus of Prison Fellowship International, is an Albertan familiar with prison conditions all over the planet. He comments that "Most inmates are disproportionately uneducated

after his release on bail, and a few days of interviews for a CBC/White Pine Pictures documentary called *Omar Khadr: Out of the Shadows*, Khadr hasn't spoken to reporters.

But he did say this to *Faith Today*, via email through Zinck, when asked what education has meant to him these past seven years. "Education meant to me an enrichment and the invigoration of the mind from the staleness of prison."

Khadr isn't the only one changed by his engagement in education. Zinck's commitment, not only to her calling as a professor, but as a disciple of Jesus, has deepened. "I believe [God] calls each and every one of us to walk out our faith in a way that calls us to think very carefully and deeply about the issues that are placed before us," she says. Once we have determined "what it is that is good, that is right, that is true, then we have a duty and a responsibility to walk that out."

When Khadr appeared before the public for the first time since taken captive 13 years ago, there seemed to be little trace of anger in the dimpled, smiling 28-year-old. Being engulfed in misery and hate "isn't going to get me anywhere," he says in *Out of the Shadows*.

Such a positive attitude, Nikkel says, suggests Khadr has the potential "to be a very, very positive influence on other Muslim men."

While many Canadians may never stop seeing Khadr as a prime example of a home-grown terrorist, Zinck and her colleagues are steadily trying to contribute to an alternative ending to his story. /FT



TKU's Arlette Zinck has co-ordinated Omar Khadr's education since 2008.

civil, secular society," and finds Khadr to be an engaged, inquiring student.

In his opinion, TKU's application of the Matthew 25 injunction to feed the hungry and visit the prisoner is "a marvelous lesson in how to take our Christian faith seriously."

TKU, poised to accept Khadr as a student once he is ready, has an open admissions policy.

or "undereducated." Without education, re-entry into society can be difficult and even debilitating. For those who do manage to learn in prison, education can be "enormously beneficial."

Isolated for so many years, Khadr is now being shielded from public glare while he adjusts to life outside prison. Apart from a brief interaction with journalists on Edney's driveway

# HEARING THE TRUTH, WORKING FOR RECONCILIATION

*Evangelical leaders reflect on the TRC report*

BY DEBRA FIEGUTH

Six emotional years, thousands of sad stories, and 94 recommendations later, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final report in Ottawa in early June.

The executive summary, almost 300 pages long, called *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, outlines the commission's findings and includes several recommendations aimed at churches.

Reconciliation is not about “closing a sad chapter of Canada’s past,” the report reads, “but about opening new healing pathways of reconciliation that are forged in truth and justice.”

Among those present at the Ottawa event were staff from The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and leaders of affiliate denominations including Christian Reformed, Mennonite, Christian & Missionary Alliance, and Salvation Army. Other church leaders who could not attend have been following the hearings and reflecting on the churches’ part in the story of residential schools in Canada.

Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is important to Christians, says Darren Roorda, Canadian ministries director of the Christian Reformed Church, because “reconciliation is important to God. It’s our chief instruction given to us in the New Testament. We are to be reconcilers.”

Before reconciliation can be fully realized, however, there needs to be a whole lot of truth. During its hearings across Canada, the commission received more than 6,750 statements from survivors, family members and others.

Just listening to the stories of residential school survivors was draining for many. “You almost want to shut down emotionally and say, ‘I can’t hear this anymore,’ ” says Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada.

For Cheryl Bear of the Nadleh Whut’en First Nation in northern British Columbia, the stories hit close to home. The band councillor and associate professor at Vancouver’s Regent College attended many of the hearings, listening to the testimonies of people from communities she was familiar with.

“People I knew were so distraught,” she says. “One of them said, ‘My heart physically hurts.’ ” Others were fine before they testified and broke down afterwards.

For some, it was the first time they had told their stories.

“I asked God what was happening,” says Bear. “I felt like I heard the words, ‘This time, these events, are the answers to the prayers of your ancestors.’ ”

If Canadians don’t yet know the sad history of residential schools, they should. An official policy of assimilation adopted in the 19th century in the newly established Dominion of Canada essentially amounted to what some have called cultural genocide. Aboriginal people experienced loss of language, cultural practices, dignity and freedom to make their own decisions.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the residential schools established all across the country and run primarily by churches between 1820 and 1996. In their testimonies survivors gave litanies of these losses – brand new beaded moccasins



thrown in the garbage, long hair lopped off, numbers replacing names, punishment for using their own languages, aching homesickness. In addition, physical and sexual abuse was rife in some schools.

Whole families were destroyed. Parents mourned the loss of their children. As adults, those children didn’t know how to parent. Coping strategies including alcohol and violence born of frustration ensnared many. And so it went through the generations.

In part, the TRC report gives vindication to Indigenous Peoples, says Terry LeBlanc, director and co-founder of several nonprofits including Indigenous Pathways and NAITs: An Indigenous Learning Community. When Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued an apology in 2008 on behalf of the Federal Government, it was like admitting the government was wrong. The apology led to the commission, which was then a way for Aboriginal Peoples to say, “We were right” – right to resist the strictures put upon them that resulted in loss of culture, religion and language.

The long list of recommendations is directed at governments, industries, educational institutions, church organizations and other groups. “The recommendations are targeting multiple levels of society because breakdown occurred at all





Darren Roorda, Canadian ministries director of the Christian Reformed Church (second from left), at the Walk for Reconciliation, May 31 in Ottawa.

engaging churches “for quite some time,” he says. The recommendations “create a different impetus” for the denomination to continue that task, through more teaching at the congregational level and through its close ties with many Christian schools. Still, he says, “It feels like there’s an awful lot of work to do.”

At Mennonite Church Canada, says Metzger, “We’ve always had an active indigenous relations file and have been active in wanting to educate our people and recognize that we are all settler people. We still have a lot of work to do on that.”

Some Mennonite congregations are now studying indigenous worldviews as part of their adult Sunday school curriculum and, where they are near indigenous communities, “seeing how they can very concretely build relations” with them.

Head commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair described the need for reconciliation as “a Canadian problem.” To Metzger that means all Canadians, whether they directly contributed to the residential schools saga or not, have the responsibility to make things right. “It will take a concerted effort,” he adds. “It will be easier to let it fade than keep it active.”

Those who attended hearings were struck by the grace and forgiveness shown by people testifying.

Some of that “grace and resilience” comes from aboriginal culture, Bear explains. “We are a welcoming people.”

After ministering in 600 First Nations across North America, Bear says for all Canada’s faults on these issues, “When I compare Canada to the U.S., we’re giant leaps ahead.”

The six stressful years, the lengthy report and resulting recommendations should give hope, especially for reconciliation among the nation’s peoples. “I think story in itself is what is going to change Canada,” says Bear. “If Canadians don’t know the truth, then how can they respond in any way?” /FT

 Debra Fieguth of Kingston, Ont., is a senior writer at *Faith Today*.

levels,” says LeBlanc, noting that “imposed values” happened in all sectors.

The Mi’kmaq/Acadian scholar, who lives in Prince Edward Island, emphasizes recommendations in indigenous education (e.g. #9), including provincial fair funding plans for on-reserve schools. Funding currently is far behind that of other schools.

As a Christian steeped in indigenous culture, LeBlanc also wants churches to respect indigenous spirituality (#48). The 2007 United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* includes the right to religious freedom, “and freedom from proselytism that denigrates,” says LeBlanc.

That perspective “should fit with any Evangelical’s understanding” of sharing the Good News of Jesus, he says. Many past problems have stemmed from the belief that Christianity is culturally superior and that those who hear the message *must* heed it.

“I want to share that news with others, Native and non-Native,” LeBlanc affirms, “but I want to present it in a way they can decline.”

“The goal of every missionary was to work themselves out of a job,” adds Bear. “That’s never really happened.” She suggests non-Native ministry leaders set five-year goals of turning over leadership to indigenous Christians.

### **THE TRC REPORT AIMS TO OPEN “NEW HEALING PATHWAYS OF RECONCILIATION ... FORGED IN TRUTH AND JUSTICE.”**

One of the resolutions (#60) calls upon religious groups, especially those training workers to minister in aboriginal communities, to respect the culture and be mindful of past mistakes.

That is already happening, says LeBlanc, in Canadian seminaries such as Tyndale, Providence, Briercrest and Acadia.

In education and training, he notes, “Christian institutions are doing as well as, and in some cases far better than, secular institutions.” But teaching in colleges and seminaries “needs to be more intentional.”

Bear has been invited to church gatherings and colleges – Vineyard, Baptist and Mennonite, for example – to teach on aboriginal worldview issues.

The Christian Reformed Church already has aboriginal ministry leaders, says Roorda. Theologically, the denomination earlier accepted the idea that “You don’t really need to throw out native spirituality practices in order to do ministry well.”

The denomination, through its Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee and aboriginal ministry centres, has been

REVIEWS



**Leading in Disorienting Times: Navigating Church & Organizational Change**

By Gary V. Nelson and Peter M. Dickens  
Chalice Press, 2015.

176 pages. \$19.99 [e-book \$12.50]

LEADERS IN churches and Christian organizations may find themselves stuck in a way of thinking that suggests, *If I inspire people to follow me this way, we'll arrive at that future situation I have envisioned.* But when leading doesn't produce expected results, such leaders blame either their followers or their leadership abilities – or, more likely, both.

*Leading in Disorienting Times* offers a different way of thinking – not mechanistic, as in this must lead to that, but organic. Through explorations of chaos and complexity theories – and by way of plenty of personal stories – Nelson and Dickens outline a way of understanding the world that assumes life is too complex and the future too unpredictable for mechanistic approaches to work well.

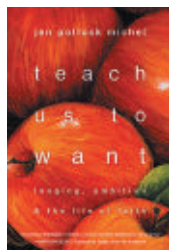
While recognizing that leaders,

because they see the high-level, big picture others usually don't, have a key role in setting direction, they propose that transformational leaders do so in collaboration with those who see things at ground level and all levels in-between.

The book's authors – leaders themselves in the complex world of Christian higher education, both currently in Toronto at Tyndale University College & Seminary – recognize the heartache experienced by many leaders stuck in mechanistic approaches.

They encourage leaders to hold tightly to their spiritual grounding in disorienting times, to live deeply in the knowledge that they are “holy, chosen and dearly loved by God” (as Colossians 3:12 suggests).

This book offers a strong note of hope for those who know their current ways of leading aren't working. –AILEEN VAN GINKEL



**Teach Us to Want: Longing, Ambition and the Life of Faith**

By Jen Pollock Michel  
InterVarsity Press, 2014. 208 pages.  
\$20 [e-book \$9.99]

IN HER first book, Toronto-based writer and blogger Jen Pollock Michel argues the case of desire, a feeling long shunned by Christians as contradictory to the faith. Though she spent years believing the heart can't be trusted, she came to realize that far from being a step in the wrong direction, desire is imperative to our spiritual transformation.

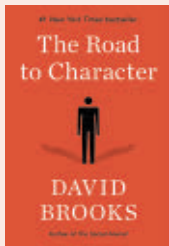
While desire can be dangerous if wielded selfishly, the author argues the gospel of Christ calls not for the abolishment of wanting, but its renewal. She asks, “Might not this newness of life include a newness of desire?” God created us because He wanted to, and so our propensity to do the same is evidence of our stance as image bearers. The issue then is not our longing, but the objects we long for.

A large portion of the book is loosely centred on the Lord's Prayer, which helps us discern what holy desire looks like. She likens it to a theological fence that keeps us from wandering off into dangerous woods, keeping God at the centre of our longing. For when desire turns idolatrous, “Not getting what we want can be salvation indeed.”

Pollock Michel believes we are called to want, and with growth and

**...life is too complex and the future too unpredictable for mechanistic approaches to work well.**

Reading THE BESTSELLERS



**The Road to Character**  
By David Brooks

Random House, 2015.  
320 pages. \$25  
[e-book \$14.99]

THIS IS A fascinating, worthwhile book by a well-known writer who shares his observations on human character formation, making use of the classes he taught on the

subject at Yale University.

Along the way he surveys the lives of a number of remarkable historical individuals including Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot), Samuel Johnson and more.

Each survey includes rich insights into people's strengths and weaknesses. Parents and other mentors are also discussed.

Brooks opens the book by contrasting what he terms “Adam I” and “Adam II,” that is “the resumé

virtues” which present your recognized achievements and “the eulogy virtues” which are celebrated at your funeral.

Adam I is concerned with public success. But Adam II, as exemplified by St. Augustine of Hippo, “lives by a different logic. You have to give to receive... In order to find yourself, you have to lose yourself.”

Brooks contends our society has shifted too much in the direction of “The Big Me.” He

argues the self-promotion of our time is not healthy for personal growth, community or the realization of true fulfillment.

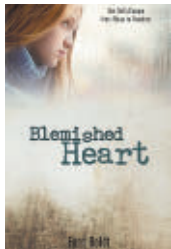
He notes the benefits of growing up with the “vocabulary of simplicity, poverty and surrender” and “self-discipline.” He laments that this tradition of “moral realism” has faded.

This book is full of biblical insights about humility, self-giving and sacrifice. It will repay careful study. –ALLISON A. TRITES

maturity won't cast off wanting altogether, but will leave behind some ambitions in favour of better ones.

The author is a gifted writer and her prose is beautiful, even if at times readers may feel unsure what destination she is aiming for. Much of her work reads like a memoir of personal wrestling, but her conclusions are rooted in Scripture, with biblical narrative and interpretation on almost every page.

*Teach Us to Want* was recently named *Christianity Today* book of the year. —SARAH VAN BEVEREN



**Blemished Heart:  
One Girl's Escape  
From Abuse to  
Freedom**  
By Fern Boldt  
Word Alive Press,  
2014. 200 pages. \$17  
[e-book \$9.99]

*BLEMISHED HEART* is an inspirational novel that shows how churchgoers can hide abuse within their homes. But it also depicts the power of Christ's love to overcome.

Lizzy Bauman, the narrator, grows up in a poor home in Nebraska during the 1950s. Her father inflicts the first of several "dark spots" on her

heart – he beats his children with a piece of farm machinery, motivated by the biblical words, "Spare the rod and spoil the child."

Her older brother's nightly visits to Lizzy's room leave another dark spot. Despite these wounds inflicted by churchgoers, Lizzy's relationship with God is stronger than the shame she feels. Her faith leads her to a Christian high school, where she finally encounters adults who live out the gospel and care about her.

The story progresses somewhat slowly by way of character sketches and vignettes from Lizzy's life, using a fair amount of rural slang.

Yet the book is deeply moving, perhaps in part because it draws on real life experiences. The author, a retired counsellor who trained in Toronto at Tyndale University College & Seminary, authentically portrays Lizzy's doubts and questions about Christian faith in light of the physical, emotional and sexual abuse she experiences from her family.

*Blemished Heart* portrays how God is more powerful than the people in churches who misuse His words. The book was recently named best young adult novel by The Word Guild. —RACHEL BAARDA

## Canadian creatives

"Trinity Western University commissioned this artwork based on Ephesians 3:16–19 in thanks for the wise leadership and selfless service of departing president Jonathan Raymond. This image is a prayer that he would continue to know the love that surpasses knowledge and experience being filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."



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ARTWORK © ERICA L. GRIMM



**Not That Kind  
of Girl**  
By Lena  
Dunham  
Doubleday  
Canada, 2014.  
288 pages. \$20  
[e-book \$14.99]

ANYONE INCLINED to read Lena Dunham's book of personal essays is probably already aware of the controversy that seems to follow the creator of HBO's

*Girls* around like a stink. Whether she is navel gazing and unaware of her privilege or a self-aware genius sending up that privilege; whether she is naked too much on screen or it's sexist to say so; whether she is ignorant of the racial diversity of contemporary Brooklyn – these matters have already launched a thousand think-pieces.

*Not That Kind of Girl* has attracted controversy as well, and the breadth and frequency of

those kerfuffles could be a sign these essays have something important to say about our cultural moment. The book flows thematically rather than chronologically. We learn about her determination to lose her virginity, her awkwardness about sex, her sister's homosexuality, her struggles at school and so on. Many will be offended by its frank sexuality, its unrelenting interest in turning what is private – even sacred – into fodder.

Often, reading these essays feels less like a revelation of truth and more like a revelation of Dunham's preoccupations. Even so, the book does have something to offer. Young artists may be encouraged by her fumbling ambition, and her eagerness to make, in her work, "a better or clearer universe . . . or at least one that makes sense." The book provides a window into the mind of a woman who may or may not be the voice of her generation. —LIZ HARMER

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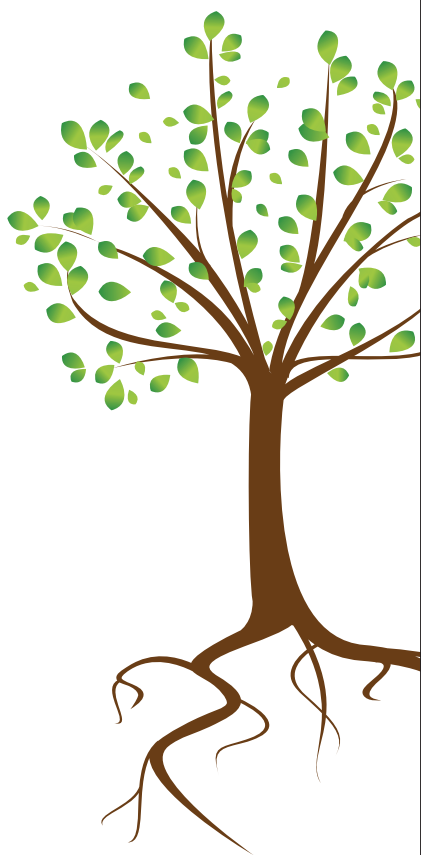
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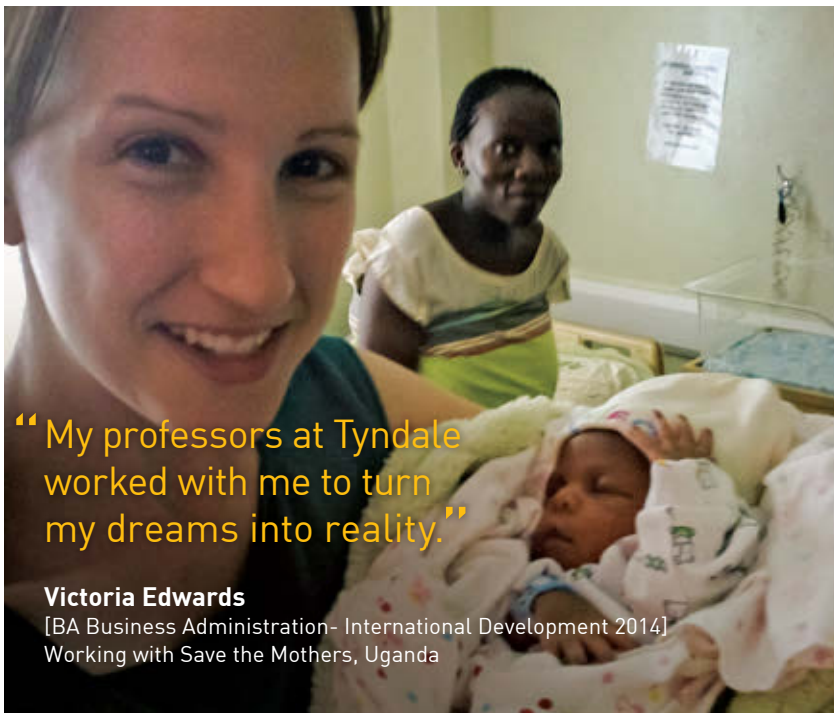
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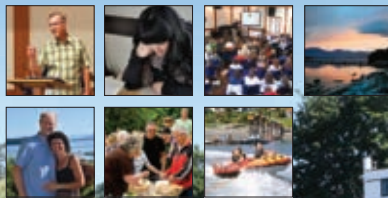
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# Celebrating grace in all religions – and especially ours

*Let's stop oversimplifying differences in what religions teach*

**H**ow often have you heard the following saying? “Religion is man reaching upward to God, while Christianity alone speaks of God reaching down to man.” Perhaps you’ve heard it in a sermon or book?

Or what about this old chestnut? “Other religions offer salvation by works. Only Christianity preaches grace.” You might even have used that one yourself.

Now that the world has come to Canada, in the form of immigrants of every race and religion, we have to re-examine inherited “truths” and beware of perpetuating stereotypes.

These two timeworn clichés among Evangelicals need to be retired and replaced with something both truer and better.

Both are ignorant, for example, of the Hare Krishnas. For a time they were a common sight in our airports and on our street corners, banging their drums, chanting their prayers and offering flowers or books for sale. Some had distinctive haircuts, bald but for a ponytail. What was that about?

It was about Lord Krishna hearing their prayers and reaching down to pull them up by those ponytails into a heaven they could not otherwise merit. Indeed, the most popular forms of Hinduism generally are *bhakti* – devotion to a god (Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva and the like) who will reach down to give the faithful the help they need to avoid the strict outcomes in reincarnation of their respective karmas.

Another major religion that speaks of God reaching down is Buddhism. Popular forms depict the Buddha as a heavenly being who, moved by compassion, came to Earth to be born as Prince Siddhartha and grow up into the sage who would bring enlightenment to all.

And Judaism, which shares ancestry with Christianity in ancient Israelite religion, thus shares with us Christians belief in a God who came down to speak out of a burning bush, give the Law on the top of a mountain, and dwell with His people in a tent and then a temple.

As for the second cliché, is it true that Christianity is the only religion preaching that the Supreme Being offers us unmerited favour, gifting us with blessing beyond our deserts? We need look no further than Islam for a counterexample.

Yes, Islam’s God is often depicted as using a dread set of scales in which our actions are weighed to see if we merit his approval, and certainly much folk Islam is of this sort.

***We must stop repeating these oversimplifications. They are wrong and can be offensive to our neighbours.***

But so is a lot of popular Christianity equally legalistic and moralistic.

In fact the Qur’an speaks of God as “the Compassionate, the Merciful.” Every major division (or *surah*) begins with this same phrase: “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.” (Actually, all but one begin that way, and many scholars therefore conclude the exceptional *surah* is merely the

second half of a *surah* inadvertently severed early in the tradition.)

The most popular form of Buddhism in Japan is Pure Land Buddhism, which trusts the Amida Buddha to graciously help us arrive after death in his Pure Land, an optimal place in which to meditate to achieve final nirvana.

Indeed, the largest segment of Buddhism globally is Mahayana, the “Greater Vehicle,” which offers the assistance of dozens of buddhas and bodhisattvas – enlightened ones who, out of compassion, voluntarily delay their release into nirvana to attend to the prayers of devotees for aid along the Noble Eightfold Path of deliverance from suffering.

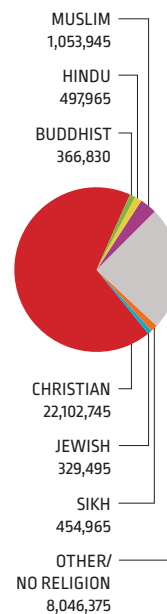
We Christians therefore must stop repeating these oversimplifications. They are wrong and can be offensive to our neighbours.

We must celebrate, instead, that the most popular forms of religion in the world feature the opportunity to call for help from supernatural beings, rather than rely on our own merits. Isn’t that interesting? And isn’t that a lovely opportunity in which to share the gospel?


And we must proclaim that gospel, which has at its heart a God who not only reached down to humankind to offer grace, but actually became human to suffer and die in our place, and unite humanity to Himself in resurrection, so He might call all of us to join the circle of divine love forever.

That is the global salvation and amazing grace found in Christ alone. /FT

## HOW CANADIANS SELF-IDENTIFY



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY, 2011 (POPULATION: 32.8 MILLION)

 John Stackhouse is the Samuel J. Mikolaski professor of religious studies at Crandall University in Moncton, N.B., and the author of *Need to Know: Vocation as the Heart of Christian Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, 2014). Find more of these columns at [www.faithtoday.ca/ChristAndCulture](http://www.faithtoday.ca/ChristAndCulture).

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# FT. RILEY & ROSE PG.8

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TO LOVE,  
OR  
NOT TO  
LOVE

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*FOLLOW IN  
THE  
FOOTSTEPS  
OF  
POPE FRANCIS*



**ISSUE 11**  
SEPT/OCTOBER

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# WORDS FROM THE EDITOR



## Christianity and the World

Effective ways to respond to the rise of anti-Christian values, and seemingly increasing opposition towards God and the Christian life is needed. Inarguably, it seems as though a more rugged war is rising up against us, and the louder and more aggressive the oppression against Christians is, the louder we want to raise our voices. We Christians need to fight to be understood, and in a sense respected; however, we tend to contain our voices to social media domains while our actions in the physical world are being suppressed.

Often times, we become frustrated with the increasing evil in the world and the disregard for our values, beliefs, and the ways of God. That being said, we need to come to a mutual understanding that arguing with our friends, colleagues, and neighbours, or to judge the lifestyle choices of those living contrary to what the Bible teaches is not a successful way to get our point across. We need to remember that condemning others is not the answer. If we want to be heard, more educated actions and words are required from us, and the only way to accomplish such a task is to remain grounded and plugged in to the Word of God.

Now more than ever, we have the ability to voice our opinions very quickly, but we need to recognize that sometimes the best way that we can effectively communicate towards others is by not speaking at all. Some of our words on social media tend to drown the Christ-like actions we need to be demonstrating. We are asking the world to reconsider their actions, practices, beliefs and morality, but it may be difficult for them to see what it's supposed to look like, or be like, because we spend a lot of energy disagreeing and condemning the ways of the world through our words. It is a simple matter of letting our light shine through our obedience towards God, doing good works, and loving, that the world will look towards us and have a substantial example to follow. We are measured by the things we do, not only by the things we say. When we do respond to opposition, we must respond with purpose.

We tend to forget the God we serve as we allow the chaos in the world and around us to consume us. God knew that all of this was going to happen, and we should know it as well. He is the same God that was in control thousands of years ago; yesterday, and that will continue to be today and tomorrow. It's important to remember that the victory has already been won and it is a matter of living your life loud for Christ and letting the light in you drown out the darkness.

~Crileidy Liriano, Senior Editor

LOVE MOVEMENT/LIA MAGAZINE

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# DON'T GIVE UP

# OR

# GIVE OUT

BY. CANDACE MAXYMOWICH //

Whether it's using a computer, watching TV, reading a newspaper, talking on the phone, or listening to the radio – we interact with media several times a day. Through media, you can find out about important news, listen to your favourite music, or watch your favourite TV show. There are also negative sides of the media that can be especially harmful to teens and young adults. A study done by the RAND Corporation shows that teens are twice as likely to have sex or engage in sexual acts if they see similar sexual behaviour in the media.

There's no question that we live in a culture that is saturated with sexuality. From the media to technology to the grocery store, we're bombarded with sexualized imagery on a daily basis. Many objects in the media that involve sex target teens. Reality TV shows and teen dramas often portray the "cool kids" as the ones who are having sex. A lot of what you see, look at, read, and hear is going to tell you that it's abnormal or impossible to abstain from having sex. I personally believe that the best way for a child to come into the world is being born to two people who are married - that is, committed to one another in the eyes of God.

When I put my name forward to run for public office a year ago, I was vocal about my beliefs. Did I think that it would attract national media attention? No. Yet, I soon found myself being flooded with interviews by reporters. People on social media chimed in as well. I read comments like: "she could eat corn through a picket fence", "you look like a horse kicked you in the face", "I kind of wish her mother would have abstained", "you're disgusting", "what a shameful human being you are", and "hey you ugly toad. When's your next live debate so I can show you that I don't need to hide behind a screen?" People were relentless. Amidst the unrelenting comments I read that filled my social media feeds, I stumbled across one website that showed a picture of me in a bathing suit and in the comments section, men were posting sexually explicit comments. Ouch!

During my campaign, I was also invited to speak at a Christian school on the topic of abstinence. I shared that staying abstinent is a choice you make every day. Opening your soul to someone, letting them into your spirit, thoughts, fears, future, hopes, dreams- that's being naked. No matter what others say or what's portrayed in the media, don't give up, give out, or lower your standards for anybody. It's not worth it. You see, at some point, if you're lucky, you realize if the person you are with says he is in love with you, but won't wait for you, then that person is lying. Plain and simple! You are a person worth waiting for.

Make a promise to God, and renew your commitment daily. Decide where you're going to draw the line, and tell God that with His help, you are not going to cross that line until marriage. Don't commit to it unless you mean it. The Bible says it's a serious thing to make a vow to God. Make a decision today to choose a life of purity

**T**here's been a lot of fuss lately in the Christian community about things going on in the public sphere. There's been a lot of talk about the new sex education curriculum in Ontario, or the recent decision to legalize gay marriage across the United States. All of these discussions can be healthy and necessary, but in those talks, are we asking ourselves – what is the purpose? What do you hope to achieve? Do you really know what you're talking about?

A U.S. Supreme Court decision, made in June 2015, deemed marriage between people of the same sex to be constitutionally protected nationwide, and the media exploded. There has been a lot of responses from the Christian community – people being upset, and wanting to express those feelings. But I heard it well from someone commenting along the way: Are your comments intended to bring people closer to God – or to distance them from Him?

I believe that the Bible teaches marriage to be between one man and one woman in the perfect world God intended: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh"- Genesis 2:24. I believe it teaches homosexuality to be a sin. But I also believe the Bible teaches lying, adultery, gossip, and slander to all be sin as well.

---

## TO LOVE, OR NOT TO LOVE?

IT'S NOT EVEN A QUESTION

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God" – 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. I don't cite this verse to solely point out the sin of homosexuality. This verse shows that this sin is listed among adultery, drunkards, and even those who covet (desire for things that aren't theirs). It doesn't say "...and the worst one is homosexuality." We are ALL sinful and we ALL fall short of God's righteousness and holiness (Romans 3:23). Why, as a Christian community, are we not seeing ourselves on a level ground with the rest of the world who are a fallen, broken, people? He who is without sin cast the first stone (John 8:7).



BY. EMILY COOK

Yes, this is a hot topic, and yes, the Christian community needs to be firm in standing up for and expressing their convictions on this issue. And yes, if this discussion were within a church it would be a different conversation. Inside the church we are, or should be, striving towards being made like Christ, and are therefore held to different standards. You can't expect a world without Christ to live like Christ. But when talking about the world – we need to know they can't be held to the standards of a Christian when they are not one!

Above all, these conversations need to be done out of love. Why do we approach someone who is homosexual differently than someone who is having sex outside of marriage? Or who is committing adultery? Or who covets their neighbour's house, or car, or job? I understand this issue is on a broader scale than one-on-one conversations, but we can never forget that God is ultimately in control. Do you think He doesn't know this is going on? You think wrong. He is all-powerful and all-knowing and He doesn't need to be protected.

Think about what is truly behind the root of your conversations on this topic before you open your mouth. Is what you have to say glorifying to God? Is it humble? Is it coming from the knowledge that

you are fallen, and you are sinful, and only Christ can save you too? Christ ate with sinners and tax collectors and showed them love. It's a tactic that wouldn't hurt any of us to try.



**A**  
**MESSAGE**  
**OF**  
**LOVE**

BY. BRITTANY PETTINGER

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We are being targeted; we can no longer deny the truth. Every Christian who is killed has a choice before them. Refuse Jesus and live, or follow Jesus and be killed. While Stephen was being stoned, he knew that God was ready to take him. Those twenty-one Egyptian men who were beheaded, knew that God was ready to take them. The people that are killing Christians are completely ignorant to the fact that every person they kill is going to live again. We will keep fighting until He returns. We accepted to wear the armour of God, the day we asked Him to cleanse us. It is time we put that armour on. We need to stop thinking and start praying. We need to stop cheering and start worshipping. We need to be the witnesses He asked us to be.

The next time you feel hate towards a group like ISIS, look back on the sins that you have committed. A lie is no worse than murder. Adultery is no worse than jealousy. Hating these people is not going to fix anything. Remember that Christ died out of love for every single person. He died for Osama Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Bashar Al-Assad, Al-Baghdadi, men who have committed some of the most horrible acts of terrorism this world has ever seen. We are no worse. The only difference between them and us is that His blood has cleansed us.

An army is coming; an army of people who would die in the name of Jesus Christ; an army that does not carry guns, but a much powerful weapon. This army is coming with a message of love for everyone who wants to kill them and we are that army, and we are winning.

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# DREAM, PRAY, BELIEVE, AND RECEIVE

## -HE'LL MAKE IT HAPPEN

BY. DAGMAR MORGAN

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**B**urning bibles on concert stages in the name of tolerance. Famous singers wearing costumes that feature the devil's horns, shoes that emulate his hooves, calling their fans, "monsters", and rappers wearing satanic sayings on their shirts. The entertainment world today is moving beyond its usual secular leanings to a full out war against Christian beliefs and lifestyle. But, in the face of today's blatant secular slamming of all-things-Christian, there have been a few celebrities that are highlighting their unabashed connection to Jesus. They are part of a movement that we would like to see grow; Christians showing their worldly spoils and reflecting the Glory back to God. Our God wants us in high places and these examples show us believers can thrive and succeed in a secular world and use it as ministry to those around us. Joining this celebrity ministry is Canada's very own Chantel Riley; landing the role of Nala in Broadway's Lion King has launched her career and her faith into the lime-light.



No stranger to the Glory of God's work in her own life. The story of how she made it to Broadway is a testimony in itself. Chantel tells us, "...I don't have the training that others went through to prepare for a Broadway theatre career. According to the standard way of doing things, my story doesn't follow the rules. The talents that I have are God given and I will always tell people that He gave me this. It wasn't me. If it was just me I wouldn't be here."

So how did she get here? Responding to an open casting call for Disney, she joined the cast of *The Lion King* in Germany; learning the entire show in German, tackling her first large stage show, and moving away from home for the first time was a lot to handle, but this fierce young woman took it all in stride and focused on her growth in Christ to see her through these challenges. She was rewarded for her faithfulness, and soon got the call to join the Broadway cast in New York City starting off her run during their 15th anniversary year which included TV appearances, (*Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, *The Chew*, *Tony Awards-2013*), and promotional tours all over the world.

And that's not all; this Toronto native is not sitting still. She activates her faith by constantly pushing into new territories. She has released her own original music on iTunes, shot a feature film called, "Race", the biopic of



Jesse Owens, who broke world records at the 1936 Olympics in Germany under the rule of Adolf Hitler, and was recently featured in a photo spread for Teen Vogue. Having her hand in a few different areas of entertainment I asked: “What are your feelings on being a Christian in a very secular industry?”

Riley says, “ I think I’ve lucked out with where I work. Most members of the Lion King cast are believers. They know their bible, they praise, and they recognize God is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, which has helped with my faith and journey.”

If you follow her on any social media, her faith is more than apparent. Riley is a constant source of Bible scriptures and thankful posts about God and what He has given her.

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**LIA:** You are very open in regards to your faith, why it is important for you make those kinds of public declarations when there are a lot of Christians in this business that don't?

Riley responded, “The reason why I do it, is because Jesus told us to go out into the world and preach the gospel. For some people that might mean being a preacher, while for others, like you and I, it means doing it through our craft. Any kind of open door to let people know that there is a higher power should be taken. For me, my story is pretty unbelievable. I don't have half the training, but somehow I'm here. It wasn't by my works. That's why I put it out there, to let other people know with the hope that it will inspire them and encourage them to deepen their faith.”

**LIA:** During these times when so many people are radically against Christianity do you worry about backlash?

Riley reflected and responded stating, “I'm sure at some point there will be backlash. The Lord warned us about this, that they will come against us, that we would be persecuted. So, this is not a surprise to me, but there is strength in prayer and when we come into agreement with each other and use the Word against it, we can fight it. We don't have to be weak. Jesus was a fighter and I will fight as well. I'm going to preach the love and compassion that the Bible preaches”.

Spreading the Gospel is exactly what this 29 year old continues to do as she branches out into different areas of the entertainment industry. Riley has teamed up with another amazing



young woman of God, Crystal Rose, an artistic force in her own right (screenwriter/director), to bring their passion and focus for Christ into the fashion world. Crystal joined us to talk about their newest venture, Riley and Rose, a fashion line with a message and how it came to be.

**LIA: How did the decision to begin a fashion line come about?**

**Rose: We were both just fed up with what we saw people wearing on the streets.**

**Riley: A lot of street fashion has t-shirts with curse words and derogatory language.**

**Rose: Yeah, stuff we have no interest in paying for, or wearing.**

**Riley: We just had this conversation and I was saying I just really want to start a fashion line, and Crystal told me she had just prayed about that, and that God told her to talk to me about it!**

**Rose: We wanted something that we could wear.**

**Riley: Yes, dedicated to bringing the positivity back into fashion.**

**Rose: The first line is Liberate. It is not just about fashion; it's about a message. We use Psalm 139:14 as our tag line, "You are fearfully and wonderfully made."**

**Riley: We want people to know God loves them and that He accepts them.**

**LIA: Why was it important to include God in this? You could've just done a fashion line and left it at that. Why the message?**

**Riley: I don't think Christians have to be quiet. There are other companies that have placed Christ on their packaging and they are doing very well. God is obviously blessing them for it. It's our time as Christians to not be afraid.**

**LIA: There is obvious ministry around it, but**

**is there more ministry to come? Are there other things that you will do with the fashion line and it's proceeds?**

**Rose: For sure, we want to do a scholarship fund and help other young entrepreneurs build their dreams. We've talked about supporting orphanages in other places. There is a lot that we want to do.**

**Riley: Especially if they are in the arts. We see this fashion line as more than just writing words on t-shirts. God tells us we are blessed to be a blessing. So, we want to bless others. We want to expand so that we can do that.**

**LIA: I've noticed that your approach to having the word of God on your products is understated. Was that purposeful?**

**Rose: We want everyone to wear it. We want to start conversations, for people to be intrigued by the design and then go deeper.**

**Riley: We find that we want to get the word out as much as possible and we wanted people to be open. It is subtle; we are representing but not hitting people over the head with it.**

**LIA: How did God manifest in the process of the fashion line coming together?**

**Riley: Just the way it came together, that we both had it on our hearts at the same time. That He gave us the download. We thought to ourselves, we shouldn't walk away from this. If it's His will, it's His bill. He'll make it happen.**

**Rose: I feel that there is a lot of pressure building in the world. There is no time to be on the fence with your faith. God is trying to make a distinction and the idea to be wearing your faith is something that came directly from Him. He is the idea. We just listened.**

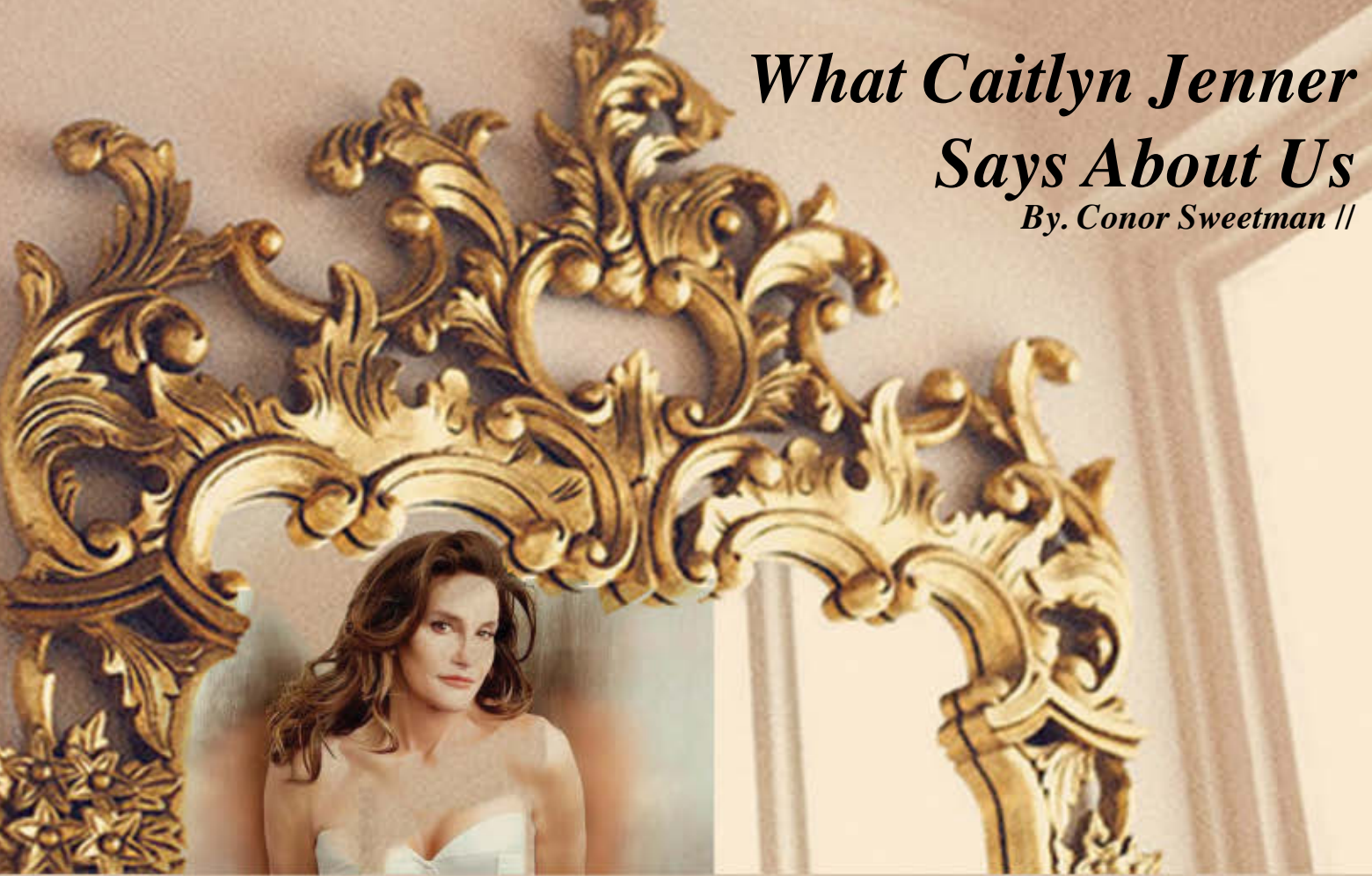
**LIA: Chantel, one final question. If you could tell the people who are going to read this, what would you like to say?**

**Riley: "I always say these four words to people: Dream, pray, believe and receive. Those four words got me here and they can get you where you need to go."**

Look for the film "Race" in theatres this fall and for more information on the Liberate line of clothing visit [www.rileyandrose.com](http://www.rileyandrose.com)

# *What Caitlyn Jenner Says About Us*

*By. Conor Sweetman //*



The clouds of publicity that have gathered around the recent actions of one “Caitlyn Jenner” have released a hailstorm of emotions from both the liberal and conservative minded alike. Throughout the journey of Bruce Jenner over the past year, the North American population has been entranced by the voyeuristic drama of an individual’s deeply personal struggle with identity. Jenner’s trials and successes have given voice to a secular generation which ultimately — and for the most part, unknowingly — aims to reverse one of the most basic facets of the natural order. Yahweh instituted the foregrounding of our humanness in the distinction between male and female when He declared, “He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them ‘Mankind’ when they were created.” (Genesis 5:2) The actions of Bruce Jenner are a product of deep insecurity and troubled rationalization — formerly classified as a mental disorder known as “gender dysphoria” — playing out on a public stage, and his fallen-ness is no worse than each of our own. He is in as desperate need of God’s grace as anyone else, and can receive it just as easily. However, the public and media’s reaction to this man’s disturbing behaviour is a clear revelation of the state of our North American culture and the way it views the very foundation of its humanity.

Where God has established boundaries and necessary components of the Imago Dei — the image of God — in setting apart humanity as His prized creation, a race that bears His image, the elite authorities wish to blur these lines and flip the Imago Dei on its head. Doing away with God as the ultimate authority, the secular agenda continually seeks to dismember the natural order and rearrange it according to their desires. “If a man wants to be a woman, so be it!”

Passionate, almost hysterical support has flooded the airwaves and news outlets, exemplified by the fact that Bruce Jenner’s name was continually heralded as the top news story on Facebook, as well as the outstanding amount of Twitter followers (4 million), the newly branded Caitlyn Jenner amassed in mere hours after her unveiling. The crowd has spoken, the numbers don’t lie, Caitlyn Jenner is a cultural icon, having become so through severe surgical measures and outspoken declarations of a troubled mind. A bronzed and airbrushed statue of human accomplishment, North America has bowed down to worship their own power on the altar of “Vanity Fair”.

The dissenters of such cultural movement — those who speak out through blogs or even in their high school hallway — are immediately disregarded as close-minded attackers of individual liberty. Christians who insist against that which is widely regarded as “heroic” and “admirable” have metaphorically lost their voice in the public square amidst the deafening roar of approval. Although deeply unsettled, many conservatively minded individuals feel the need to follow the cultural trend in the direction of a misguided freedom, where there are increasingly severe blows against God-ordained human existence, able to flourish in joy and obedience to Him. What is even more disconcerting than the mere actions, is the fact that the media has so shrewdly played to the tastes of the public, in that what would have been considered obscene and profoundly disturbing a mere 50 years ago is now considered normal and even deserving of an award of courage.

Despite society’s misguided emotional ardour, Bruce Jenner should not become a target for Christians to hurl disdain and consider him the embodiment of 21st century sinfulness. Within each of us we carry insecurity and idolization that steps outside the deeply good will of God for each of our lives individually, and society as a whole. However, the common opinion of transgender-ism as a beautiful victory for the human race — and the passionate outcry against those who disagree — should be deeply questioned and examined as a signpost of the direction we are heading.

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**I**n the midst of so much anger and fear surrounding the issue of gay marriage the last few years, one has to wonder how someone who actually takes a traditional stance on gay marriage managed to be declared “Person of the Year” in 2013 by a magazine devoted to LGBTQ news. This magazine is called Advocate and the man I am talking about is Pope Francis. While a certain level of naïveté and ideological mischaracterizations helped make the Pope a liberal celebrity, so did his compassion and understanding toward LGBTQ persons and many others who are oppressed minorities all over the world.

As Christian voices continue to be disregarded by mainstream western society, it is important that we continue to take the tone of people like Pope Francis. Our faith in Christ must never be turned into a means of unwarranted apocalyptic fear or violent political revolt. Rather we must continue to follow the unique path Christ laid for us. For Pope Francis this means bringing in a fresh voice against an often generic and generalized political discourse. In a recent examination of both liberal and conservative ideologies the Pope cries out against both the conservative value of free market economy, and the liberal value of supporting abortion. The Pope believes both of these values are a symptom of a “use and throw away” culture. For the Pope allowing the “invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy” encourages people to be enslaved to debt, support the sexual exploitation of children, and abandon our elderly parents when they can no longer provide us with anything in return. While this is a scathing attack on conservative economic values, the Pope is no easier on the liberal support of abortion. Pope Francis believes that prenatal “children are most innocent and defenseless among us.” And while I deeply believe that more education, as well as financial and emotional support is needed for pregnant women and girls facing the choice of abortion, new scientific discoveries are making abortion less and less about a lack of resources, education, loving support, and more and more about parental greed. A new blood test in Britain which screens prenatal babies for Down’s Syndrome and other serious illnesses has increased the abortion of Down’s Syndrome children by 34 per cent in that country. This occurs despite the fact that persons with Down’s Syndrome tend to live happier lives than people born with a “regular” set of chromosomes. Liberal ideology in this way falls into the same trap of the use and throwaway culture.

A Christian worldview, which sees intrinsic value in all creation regardless of what it can do for the consumer, defies both conservative and liberal values. Within a Christian worldview societal controls like divorce and abortion push far away from the Christian ideal. But so does material consumption and environmental degradation for the purpose of economic prosperity. Conservative Christians who believe deeply in disproving human-based climate change and turn environmental destruction into some type of apocalyptic hope for Christ’s return have missed the whole point of the Christian life. First and foremost Jesus Christ is here to love, redeem, and make new a broken Creation through his death, resurrection, and ascension. This means Jesus is not merely our “homeboy” as so many celebrities downplay him to be. Nor is Jesus about trying to get us all tickets of escape off the planet to heavenly bliss like so many conservatives proclaim. Jesus calls us to hope in something bigger than ourselves, bigger than our current political choices. When we hope in Jesus no societal ideological structure will ever quite fit. Pope Francis gets this and has managed to both excite and disappoint all spectrums of political ideology because his ultimate hope is not in making them happy, but in Jesus Christ.

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# LEARNING TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF POPE FRANCIS

BY. JESSE HOVE



CREATIVE GOD,  
CREATIVE MINDS

# TURBINES AND CATHEDRALS

By. Mike Bonikowsky

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**O**n the day I turned my daughter's car seat around, we go for a drive together. It's a big deal. For the first time, she is tall enough to ride facing forward, old enough to see the world that passes by the windows above her head, and so we went exploring in the empty rural township where we live. It's early March, the last raw days of winter, and the world is brown beneath the receding snows.

We live in Melancthon Township, one of the least populated areas in Southern Ontario. It's dotted with ghost towns, stops along a railroad that's long since disappeared. In some cases all that remains is a gas station with the name of town that no longer exists. In some cases there's still a sign, and some houses. In some cases all that remains are weathered foundations.

In the case of the town of Melancthon itself, the only structure left is only an old Catholic church that stands alone in the middle of the fields. From the highway it looks like just another dead building, the windows dark, empty eyes staring out over the brown land. But it is not.

The church stands at the corner of the lonely highway and a lonelier dirt road. The walls are literally crumbling, but a sign proudly proclaims that its congregants still meet for Mass every Sunday morning at 9:30 AM. The cross that is meant to stand at the pinnacle of the spire has been lashed roughly to its side with rope.

The wind is blowing. It is almost always blowing here, and always in the same direction, shaping the trees and wearing the buildings of man away. I park the car in the empty gravel lot and we get out. It is spring, the first really warm day. My daughter learned to walk in the depths of winter and now it is her delicious novelty to totter across any hard surface. She makes her unsteady way around the parking lot as the wind swirls around her. She delights in it.

I put her on my shoulders and we explore the old cemetery. At least a third of the stones have fallen, toppled by frost heaves or the depredations of bored country teenagers. There is a fence that separates the cemetery from the empty windswept fields that surround it and along this fence are hung a series of images of the crucifixion, the Stations of the Cross. Most of them have been blown down by those ceaseless winds, and not returned. Their frames broken open, the printed face of Jesus faded in the snow.

There is no one around, no traffic. It should be no other sound than the eternal voice of the wind, but there is: a steady subaquatic woosh woosh woosh, like a fetal heartbeat. Across the old dirt road from the church is a wind turbine. It was erected last summer, sleek and spotlessly white, and it stands three times the height of the battered steeple. They stare at each other across the gravel as if in opposition to one another, the church so desperately crumbled, wearing away in the wind, and the turbine so effortlessly mighty, the clean white blades inexorably turning.

To the naked eye the outcome of such a standoff seems inevitable: the church will shutter and close, the windows smashed and the roof falling in, to be bulldozed or burnt to the ground some day not far from today. Maybe another turbine will be built on this spot, for surely more are coming. Every summer the roads fill with convoys, carrying the long white blades up from the city to be raised above the fields, with all the wealth and wisdom and good will of the age behind them. Not so the churches. Every year the congregations diminish, we are told. Every year more are sold, turned into galleries or trendy condominiums. No one builds cathedrals anymore.

But the truth is that in forty years they will both be gone, both the turbines and this church. The march of technological progress will pass the turbines by. Something exponentially more efficient will replace them, and they will become just another quaint reminder of a simpler age.



# TRINITY FASHION

## LIBERATE

“We see this fashion line as more than just writing words on t-shirts.” ~Riley

“It is not just about fashion; it’s about a message. You are fearfully and wonderfully made” ~Rose

Check out Riley and Rose’s first line, Liberate, online now!  
[www.rileyandrose.com](http://www.rileyandrose.com)



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