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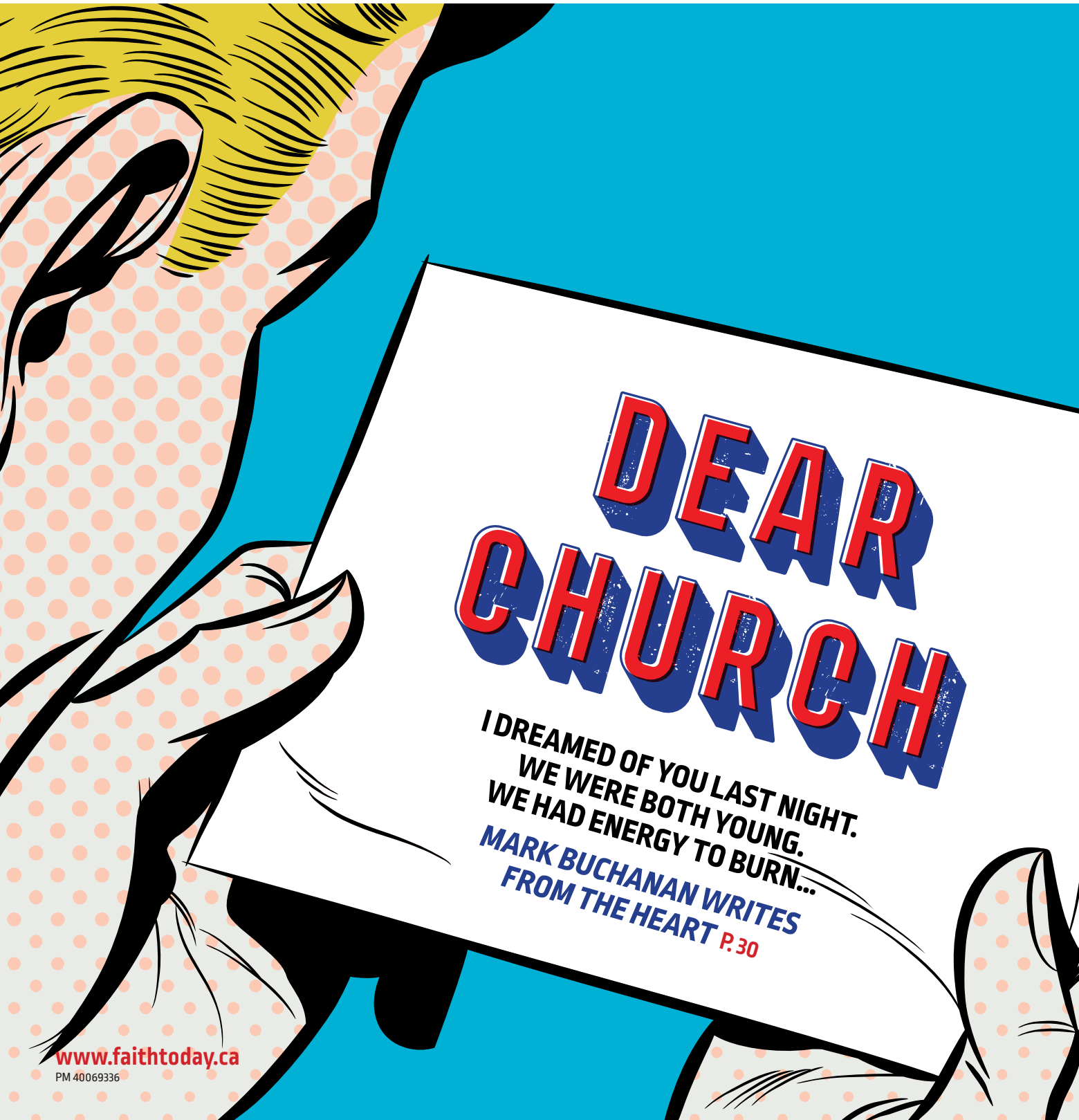
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CANADA'S CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2016

FAITH TODAY



DEAR CHURCH

I DREAMED OF YOU LAST NIGHT.
WE WERE BOTH YOUNG.
WE HAD ENERGY TO BURN...

MARK BUCHANAN WRITES
FROM THE HEART P.30

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January / February 2016



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Loving the local church

And: Celebrating the EFC's new youth magazine

So many of the stories *Faith Today* publishes have to do with the local church.

In this issue for example you can read Inspiring Ideas that churches just like yours are trying out (page 9), including raising money for refugees with an exercise-a-thon on elliptical machines or hosting an educational community event about human trafficking (page 12).

We've been thinking a lot lately about how local congregations are so crucial to our lives and our culture. So we decided to ask Mark Buchanan, author, pastor and professor, to give the local church a shot in the arm – to uplift and encourage it, to remind the local church it is loved. He did that and more (page 30).

His piece is a shot in the arm, but it's also a loving tap on the back to maybe do a few things a bit differently. What do you think? Do you love to go to a worship service every week? Or are there obstacles for you? What advice would you give your local congregation? What are the churches in your neighbourhood doing right, and not so right? We'd love to hear your thoughts.

Alongside Mark Buchanan's essay we are doing something special to recognize the hard work of Canadian pastors. We're asking congregations in every province to nominate their pastor for a free getaway provided by a regional retreat centre (page 24).


We think perhaps pastors are not thanked often enough – and in some cases not remunerated enough – to find the time in their own hectic lives for a little replenishment. Please nominate your pastor for this.

If you're reading this magazine in its printed format, you'll probably also have encountered our new baby sister, a youth magazine called *Love Is Moving*. Wow, are we proud of all the amazing teens and young adults who have come together to create this new magazine (along with our colleagues Crileidy Liriano, Joel Gordon and Ben Porter).

This team has already been producing an online version of the magazine, formerly known as *Love In Action*, for two years – and now finally it's also in print.

Please make the extra effort to pass along *Love Is Moving* to a potential reader, and encourage them to send feedback on these first printed efforts.

Meanwhile in *Faith Today*, we hope you will appreciate this issue's fascinating article on another huge refugee crisis Canada was involved in a hundred years ago, our FT Interview with Danielle Strickland on working with those less fortunate (page 26), and all the rest. May God richly bless you, your church and the youth in your life this New Year. /FT

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

We are doing something special to recognize the hard work of Canadian pastors – see page 24


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PLEASE PRAY with me that God uses Urbana 15 to stir up this generation to go unto all the nations as His witnesses.... Being the Body of Christ means that we go the distance to celebrate, collaborate, connect, pray, support, encourage and lament with our worldwide family members. All of this requires the sacrifice of time, money and our very lives. *—from “In a World of Danger, Are Short Term Missions Worth the Risk?” by Steve Colby*

A COUPLE of years ago I visited refugee camps in South Sudan. I interviewed some of the people who lived there, people who had fled dropping bombs and withering crops to find refuge. They were refugees.

Fathers, mothers, teachers, mayors, nurses, community organizers, grandmas, mechanics. They were just people. Just like us. I was embarrassed that somewhere along the line I had forgotten that. *—from “In Light of Paris: A Refugee Support Group Finds Its Way” by Karen Stiller*

IN OUR house, we force our kids to go to church almost every Sunday. It really boils down to two simple things: (1.) We believe it is the best thing for them. (2.) We believe they [even in their teen years] do not always know themselves what is the best thing for them. *—from “Why We Force Our Kids, Almost Without Fail, to Go to Church” by Karen Stiller*

JOAN OF Arc’s example bears witness today that remarkable things can happen when we cultivate a willing heart and an obedient spirit, seek God’s direction, step out boldly in faith as He leads and trust Him to accomplish all that He promises. *—from “An Evangelical Explores the Idea of Saints ... and Discovers a Great One” by Patricia Paddey*

EVERYDAY MY blog gets an influx of over 10,000 people in marital crisis. And quite often they end up at my blog because other Christians have hurt them with bad advice. What



they’ve been told is exactly the wrong thing to do. Is he spending all day playing video games? “Just submit and he’ll become a spiritual lead-

er!” Is he being verbally abusive towards the children? “Win him without words!” Is he using porn too much? “Just have sex!” Or even this one: Unhappy in your marriage? “Just pray more!” Submit. Don’t speak up. Just pray. All of that advice tells women, “Don’t actually confront the problem.” *—from “When Easy Answers Don’t Help a Marriage” by Sheila Wray Gregoire*

MILESTONES

APPOINTED

Terry Smith as executive director of Canadian Baptist Ministries. CBM, the global mission organization of four regional Baptist groups, has headquarters in Mississauga, Ont. Rev. Dr. Smith has served with CBM since 1994, and as deputy executive director since 2012. He holds degrees from the University of Ottawa, two seminaries in France and Acadia University (doctorate in missiology). He succeeds Sam Chaise.



Kevin Schular as executive director of the Baptist General Conference of Canada, a denomination headquartered in Edmonton. Rev. Schular has been a pastor for 35 years, served since 1997 as executive director for Assist Canada, a support ministry for national

churches overseas, and served as board chair of The Mustard Seed, a ministry helping homeless people in Edmonton and Calgary. He succeeds Ed Stuckey, who served for two years as interim executive director.



OM’s Lifehope, a UK-based evangelistic ministry among immigrants and marginalized people. He succeeds Harvey Thiessen, who after 12 years in the role has now been appointed area leader for North America, overseeing roughly 800 full-time workers around the world engaged in evangelism, relief and development, church planting, justice and mentoring.

James Sinsel as executive director of OM (Operation Mobilization) Canada. From a pastoral background in North Carolina, he has held leadership roles with OM Ships and most recently with

Mark Harris as principal-dean of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, an institution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (Eastern Synod). The seminary, a federated college of Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont., was founded in 1911 and is soon to be renamed Martin Luther University. Rev. Dr. Harris is an assistant professor of functional theology, former pastor (Peterborough, Owen Sound and Waterloo), and bishop’s assistant who has served on the boards of various Lutheran organizations. He succeeds Rev. Dr. David Pfrimmer.



Riku Tuppurainen as dean of graduate studies at the new School of Graduate Studies at Summit Pacific College. (Formerly known as Canadian Pentecostal Seminary, the

Prejudices disappointing

Re: *Christ & Culture in Canada* (Nov/Dec 2015)

I ENJOYED getting a free copy and most of the contents, but was disappointed to read John Stackhouse compare my view that women should not be serving as pastors/elders, a view shared by a large cross-section of thoughtful Evangelicals in Canada, with the view that propagates the hatred of gays [in a listing of common prejudices about Christianity]. I understand his position on women in church leadership based on his recent books, and that's just fine, but this felt like a cheap shot.

Steve Adams, *Great Village, N.S.*

Two thumbs up

Re: *Middle-Aged, Divorced and Dating Online* (Sep/Oct 2015)

VERY INFORMATIVE and helpful. You tackled a sensitive subject with a wonderful balance of transparency, humour and creative insight.

Marvin Gillmore, *St. Thomas, Ont.*

Bond well done

Re: *The World Is Not Enough* (Nov/Dec 2015)

The James Bond / Jesus Christ article was the best compare-and-contrast article I've ever read. Well done, Mr. Stackhouse!

Dan T. Sebben, *Hamilton, Ont.*

Corrections from last issue

A PHOTO credit on page 11 should have read "Sue Careless," not Serve Toronto. A Milestones item wrongly reported that The Gideons International in Canada had changed its name to ShareWord Global; in fact, the new brand name will only be used for their work outside our borders. In the feature on youth rallies, David Haskell should have been listed as first author (not second) and Kevin Flatt referred to as associate professor of history. *Faith Today* regrets these errors.

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 to join in on discussions sparked by letters to the editor and more.

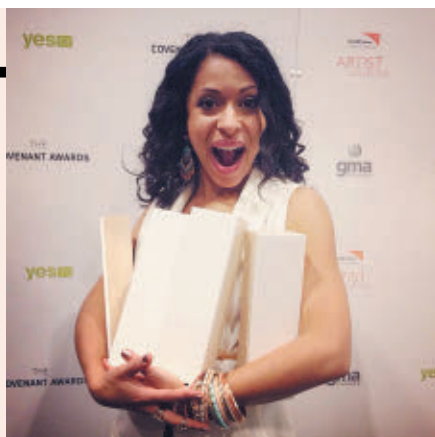
graduate school was consolidated with Summit Pacific College in Abbotsford, B.C., in April 2015.) Dr. Tuppurainen was formerly the dean of graduate studies at Continental Theological Seminary in Belgium and also pastors Finnish Bethel Church in Vancouver.

RENAMED

Global Scholars Canada is the new name for Christian Studies International, a 20-year-old organization that places Christian professors in public universities overseas. Global Scholars USA and Canada together have more than 75 professors working in universities overseas, many in countries closed to conventional Christian missions.

ELECTED

T.V. Thomas of Regina as chairman of Lausanne's Global Diaspora Network, an international group that promotes more effective ministry among migrant communities. Thomas, who was born in



Malaysia, continues to serve as multicultural/intercultural ministries consultant to The Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada.

AWARDED

Chelsea Amber (above) with a leading four awards – female vocalist, video, pop album and urban song of the year – at this year's Covenant Awards. Winners in two dozen other categories, awarded by Canada's Gospel Music Association on Nov. 5 in Edmonton, are listed at www.gmacanada.ca.

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KINGDOM MATTERS

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



A family of Syrian refugees is interviewed by authorities, in hope of being approved for passage to Canada, at a refugee processing centre in Amman, Jordan.

Refugee sponsorship spikes in wake of Syrian crisis

Canadian churches step up to meet need

THE BIGGEST REFUGEE crisis since the end of the Second World War has led to a huge outpouring of compassion.

"It's been nonstop," says Serena Richardson, justice and compassion co-ordinator for the Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada (C&MA). "It's been really amazing."

The C&MA was already active in refugee work. The denomination began in 2014 to encourage some of its 450 churches to sponsor those fleeing the Syrian conflict.

Like many evangelical denominations, the C&MA is a sponsorship agreement holder (SAH), meaning it has an agreement with the federal government allowing it, primarily through local churches, to sponsor refugees.

Mennonite Central Committee and its five regional offices also have their hands full responding to requests from their affiliated churches. National migration and resettlement program co-ordinator Brian Dyck

says the offices are accustomed to getting only occasional queries about sponsoring refugees. Now they get up to ten a day. "And that's the case in all the provincial offices."

The wake-up call has also sparked an awareness of refugees from other parts of the world. In addition to bringing Syrians, church groups are also sponsoring people from Eritrea, Congo, Burma and other countries that have had protracted conflicts.

"People feel like they're being called to minister rather than responding to a crisis," says Dyck.

Canadian Mennonites have a long history with displaced peoples. Many came to Canada themselves as refugees from Europe in the 1920s and 1940s. And when the wave of Vietnamese "boat people" arrived in 1979–80, MCC sponsored some 6,000 of them.

The C&MA has now hired additional staff to co-ordinate sponsorship in an umbrella arrangement with three other denominations – Associated Gospel Churches, Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada and the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada.

The attention the current crisis has received is an opportunity to reach out to those in need, whether Christians or Muslims, says Richardson. "God has shaken up the world and given us the chance to demonstrate His love and kindness."

Besides sponsoring people to come to Canada, a long process that requires dedication and hard work, Canadian Evangelicals are also helping with the more immediate needs of food and other basic assistance to refugees overseas, especially in Lebanon and Jordan.

Some of the organizations working overseas to alleviate hunger and provide shelter are Canadian Foodgrains Bank, World Vision Canada, Samaritan's Purse and Food for the Hungry. —**DEBRA FIEGUTH**



Faith film purely Canadian

The story may be set in Michigan, but everything else is Canadian

SAULT STE. MARIE, ONT., known as one of the oldest settlements in North America, is also the film location for a new entirely Canadian-made faith film *The Masked Saint*.

Scheduled to be released to theatres in January, *The Masked Saint* stars Patrick McKenna (*The Red Green Show, Traders*), WWE Hall of Fame wrestler Roddy Piper, and Diahann Carroll (*White Collar, Grey's Anatomy*). The film is inspired by the life of pastor Chris Whaley and follows the story of Chris Samuels, a professional wrestler who becomes a pastor.

Sault Ste. Marie is the hometown of the movie's producer Cliff McDowell. One of the few Christian producers in Canada, he says it was an honour to bring a project of that size to the city. He also encouraged students from Sault College to be involved with production and hosted a workshop with them.

"I thought this was a great opportunity for them to get hands-on experience," says McDowell. "A lot of people don't get those opportunities, so when I film I try to get kids from school involved. The students helped out on a lot of aspects of the film, from playing background extras to other areas of production."

McDowell views his work as a full-time ministry, and has seen people witnessed to on every show he's produced.

Most of the actors in the movie are Canadian. "It snowed and rained during filming," McDowell says, "which really added to it and gave it some great character." He says he is excited to be partnered up with Cineplex on the project, and the movie will be released in 52 cities across Canada. **—ALLISON BARRON**



Inspiring ideas

Winter day camp
Working parents often struggle to find childcare when schools close for professional activity (PA) days. When PA days of local school boards coincide, Markham Bible Chapel opens its doors so parents can drop off their kids for a winter day camp. Organizers say it's a great way to help the community and stay connected with local kids who attend their summer day camp. www.markhambiblechapel.org

Urgent prayer bulletins
Justice Wall, a pro-life prayer ministry, recently updated their website so believers can sign up for prayer notices about women who are considering having an abortion. The "No Not This One" campaign is like an intercessory version of police Amber Alerts. The ministry receives tips from crisis pregnancy centres and (while respecting each woman's privacy) sends out a notice by email, text or tweet to believers willing to pray. www.justicewall.com

Growing tomatoes for the Kingdom
Ottawa's Britannia Baptist Church rents a local community garden plot in their neighbourhood, which struggles with poverty and high crime rates. Church members and leaders tend the garden, developing relationships and sharing the gospel with other local gardeners. As the harvest comes in, they share the fresh produce (mostly tomatoes) with families in need. www.spuottawa.com

A year as a nun
A new program offered by a Toronto-based Anglican monastic sisterhood gives Christian women ages 22–40 the chance to experience monastic life. Participants in the Companions on the Way program will live, serve, pray and study in the community, and can earn credits from Wycliffe College in Toronto. www.ssjd.ca **—CRAIG MACARTNEY**

Visit www.faithtoday.ca/inspiringideas for more. Does your church have great ideas to share? editor@faithtoday.ca



Waiting on justice

Art helps grieving family find forgiveness

AFTER THEIR DAUGHTER'S body was found tied up in a storage shed in January 1985, Cliff and Wilma Derksen lived under a dark cloud of mystery and suspicion for 22 years before the murderer was discovered. They turned to their faith, each other and to art to deal with the emotion and trauma.

Suspended is an upcoming documentary by Refuge 31 Films that focuses on the Derksens' art as a means to work through forgiveness and suffering.

Cliff turned to sculpturing to deal with his grief. His first few art shows were about tragedy and being under suspicion for the murder of his own daughter Candace. Wilma is a writer and has published several books, including *Have You Seen Candace?* (Amity, 2002) and *This Mortal Coil* (Amity, 2014), memoirs that recount her experiences with Candace's murder and dealing with the trial.

"The Derksens were able to express themselves in a positive way through their art," says Andrew Wall, founder of Refuge 31 Films. "It's a unique way [of] dealing with the emotion and trauma. Their art is a way to communicate what

happened, dealing with forgiveness, the emotion and the fallout."

Wall has a personal connection to their story because his sister was attending Candace's school at the time she was taken, and he attended school with Candace's sister Odia.

He says the 2007 discovery and 2011 conviction of the murderer, Mark Edward Grant, was a huge relief to the family because they didn't believe they would ever receive closure. They went through a process of justice and forgiveness reflected in their art, and even became friends with Grant's family. They are now moving past the grief to express other aspects of their faith through their creations, with a new art show coming up in the spring.

Grant is going back to a retrial, scheduled for January 2017, due to a cited error by the original trial judge. "I think everyone is wondering when it is going to end," says Wall, remarking on the Derksens' incredible patience with the 33-year process.

Refuge 31 Films is currently working on the documentary scheduled to be released in the spring of 2016. —**ALLISON BARRON**

ISMC reaches out to international students

Students find companionship – and sometimes Christ

WHEN VIVIAN FIRST came to Canada from China as an international student, she was filled with hope and excitement. But these feelings faded when language and cultural barriers made life difficult.

"I didn't have a friend – I felt so lonely," said Vivian. "I started to wonder why I even came to this country. It was the darkest time in my life."

Shortly after Christmas, Vivian learned about Focus Club, a meeting for international students hosted by International Student Ministries Canada (www.ismc.ca). She began attending for the free food, but soon met other international students – many who were in similar situations.

Working with international students and scholars at universities and colleges throughout Canada, ISMC has more than 110 staff and 450 volunteers in 30 cities across the country. ISMC's mission is to love international students unconditionally, partner with local churches in leading international students to discover Jesus through the Word of God, and prepare them to serve God wherever He leads them.

Along with Focus Clubs, ISMC staff serve by linking students with Canadian friendship partners, hosting international dinners and special events, offering Bible studies to students interested in learning about Christianity, offering airport pickups and connecting students to ESL classes. They also pray for international students and train them for godly, effective leadership.

Dr. Yaw Perbi, a trained medical doctor from Ghana, has provided leadership to the ministry since May 2013. According to Perbi, the heightened era of globalization and global migration (over 232 million migrants) has opened an unprecedented door for a new way for doing mission, especially to and through the 4.5 million students on the move globally.

"Reaching out to the over 300,000 international students who have come to Canada is statistically sensible, scripturally sound, stunningly simple and strategically smart," says Perbi.

Vivian was touched by the generosity of the Christians she met. "I didn't understand how they could give so much, and why people in this club were like brothers and sisters. I wanted to become a part of it."

She asked to become a Christian. "As I prayed some people placed their hands on my shoulder. Others came to give me a hug. These gestures meant a lot to me. It's like a terminally ill person finding a cure for an illness. For me, it was like finding a family." —**CINDY WINEGARDEN**



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NOTE WORTHY

MIXED MESSAGES

A church in Buffalo changed their sign's message after receiving complaints from around the world. The message read, "Jesus had 2 dads and he turned out just fine." Roy Herberger, the parish priest, says the sign was meant to encourage children who weren't living with both biological parents, but skeptics question how anyone could be oblivious to the sign's pro-gay activism. www.christiantoday.com

ABORTION IN THE PEWS

A recent poll conducted by LifeWay Research found 70 per cent of women who have an abortion profess to be Christians. While a slim majority of respondents said they attended church rarely or not at all, 20 per cent said at the time of their first abortion they attended church once a week. A further six per cent attended church twice a week or more. www.onenewsnow.com

VIRTUAL EVANGELISM GONE VIRAL

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association reached a major milestone with their Evangelism Online ministry. Since the online ministry's launch four years ago, they have helped 7 million people make decisions to become Christians. The new converts come from around the world, including nations where it is illegal to convert to Christianity. www.christianweek.org

A FAILING GRADE IN FUNDRAISING

A study of 92 Canadian Christian charities found that few Christian charities efficiently engage in online fundraising. The study evaluated all the charities affiliated with the Canadian Council of Christian Charities, making donations to each one and marking their website on 55 different criteria. Benjamin Johnson, executive director of Frontier Marketing, the organization that conducted the research, says their goal was to "hold a mirror up to Canadian Christian charities and show them where their strengths and weaknesses were." www.churchforvancouver.ca

—CRAIG MACARTNEY

Reaching victims of human trafficking

Church shines light on huge problem

AN ONTARIO CHURCH is shining a spotlight on human trafficking. The Meeting House in Newmarket, Ont., hosted its first Breaking the Chain event last year, featuring several speakers including a survivor's firsthand account of the dangers faced by victims.

The Meeting House, along with Valley View Alliance Church, recently held a second Breaking the Chain event to encourage further dialogue. The event included a panel discussion with the police and other organizations such as the York Region Anti-human Trafficking Committee, Women's Support Network, Bridge North and Victim Services of York Region.

"The prevention piece is huge. The more



[people] know, the more they can intervene or even recognize it for themselves and remove themselves from the situation. Knowledge is power," says Sarah Joy Herzog, compassion co-ordinator for The Meeting House congregation.

The two churches met again to assemble first response bags for victims of human trafficking.

Herzog encourages other

Canadian churches and organizations to get involved by contacting their local anti-human trafficking committee, getting educated on the issue and taking action. "I'm really excited to see where this goes. I think there's a lot of momentum building." —**JULIE FITZ-GERALD**

Church holds ellipticalathon in support of Iraqi refugee family

NORTH BURLINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH (NBBC) held an ellipticalathon at a health club to raise funds to bring a sponsored Iraqi refugee family, including an 11-year-old girl with lung cancer, to Canada.

The event, sponsored by New Balance Shoes, involved six participants using elliptical exercise machines for four consecutive hours to make up a total of 24 hours. The event raised approximately \$16,000. Combined with money already received through missions giving, the church is just shy of its \$25,000 goal.

"I think we're about \$4,000 short at this point, but the congregation gives every week, so we're getting closer and closer. The plan is to look at bringing a second family as well. We'd love to see this as a regular part of the rhythm and life of our congregation," says Merv Budd, senior minister at NBCC.

The current family of six – including

four children between the ages of four and 13 – is waiting in Beirut, Lebanon while details are finalized. With the 11-year-old daughter's health hanging in the balance, timing is crucial. Within 72 hours of landing here, she will go to The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Ont., to begin consultation and treatment. NBBC is hopeful the sponsored family will be in Canada by the end of October 2016.

"Because of the ellipticalathon, so many people from the community are on board," says Budd. "I'm hoping we can do some kind of 'Welcome to the City' event in which we might have a potluck or barbeque and invite people who have contributed to the ellipticalathon, along with the mayor and MP Mike Wallace, and have the family welcomed not only into the church community, but by the city itself."

—**JULIE FITZ-GERALD**



Lisa and Chris Harding, a Canadian combat veteran, enjoying their week at Samaritan Lodge, Alaska.

From attempted suicide to baptism in Christ

Samaritan's Purse offers Christ's compassion to hurting veterans

THE JOY OF being baptized to new life in Christ and the despair of an attempted suicide – Lisa and Chris Harding have experienced both. “We’ve officially accepted the Lord into our lives,” said Lisa after she and Chris underwent a baptismal ceremony in Lake Clark, near Samaritan Lodge in Alaska.

The Hardings and nine other married couples involved in the Canadian military were invited to the lodge to participate in Samaritan's Purse's Operation Heal Our Patriots (OHOP).

Through OHOP, Samaritan's Purse has hosted more than 500 wounded U.S. military veterans and their spouses in Alaska for a week of relaxation, recreation, marital enrichment and counselling, and spiritual encouragement.

This year for the first time, thanks to Canadian donations, a week was set aside for Canadians who have suffered physical or emotional wounds as a result of their service to Canada.

Contrast the Hardings' joyous baptism in Alaska with a horrible night in November 2009 at their home in Morinville, Alta. Back then, Chris had become so traumatized by his seven months in Afghanistan that he wanted to die. Lisa discovered Chris on a chair in the garage, seconds from hanging himself with a rope.

“I screamed and started fighting with Chris, trying to get him safely down,” Lisa recalled. “I was fighting for Chris' life.” She convinced him to return to their house, but remained terrified that he might try again to kill himself.

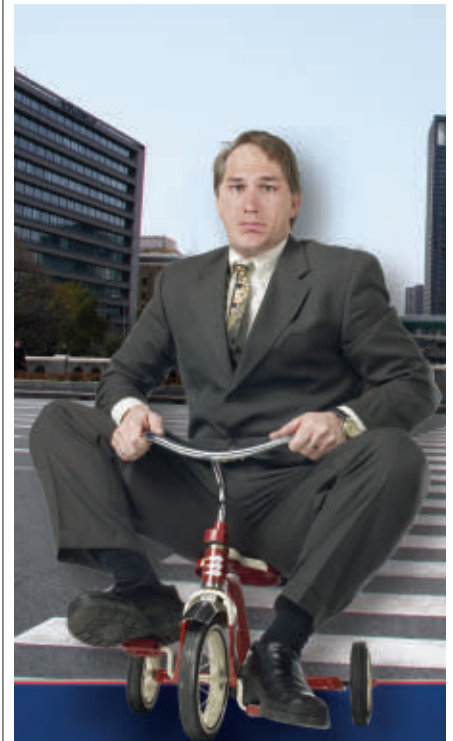
Chris' military career had come to a sad end 19 months earlier after an exhausting deployment to Afghanistan in 2007. Chris remembers a river of blood and body parts flying through the air when a Taliban bomb blew up a Canadian armoured vehicle. “That's what really did me in,” Chris said.

Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Chris was voluntarily released from the military in 2008. “I was angry all the time,” he said. “You get this adrenaline rush [from battle] that's so high, and you stay there for so long that you can't get back down. You're always ready to fight.”

A 2012 car accident, which left Chris unable to work full-time ever again, should've made things worse. But Chris and Lisa say their marriage began to strengthen after the accident. His nominal Christian faith became very real. So when Lisa learned about OHOP, she was thrilled to have Chris' support in applying and even more thrilled to be selected.

Their stay at Samaritan Lodge included a cabin for each couple, kayaking and salmon-fishing excursions, a floatplane trip to view grizzly bears, and workshops led by retired military chaplains.

“We're having time to spend with each other, time to spend with other people having problems, and knowing we're not the only ones with issues and difficulties,” said Chris. OHOP chaplains continue to maintain contact with Chris, Lisa and the other nine Canadian couples. —JEFF ADAMS



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How much do you trust?

A statistical snapshot from a 2013 Canada-wide survey by the Alberta-based Muttart Foundation



34

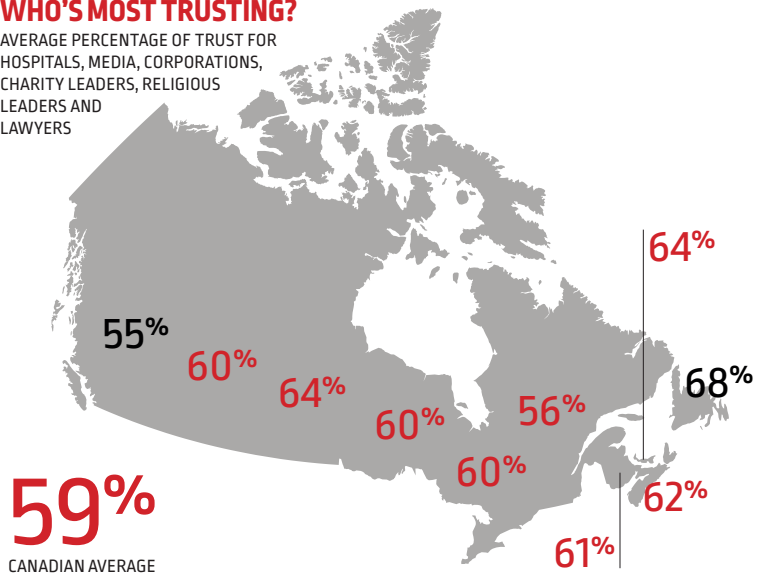
PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO BELIEVE CHARITIES ONLY ASK FOR MONEY WHEN THEY REALLY NEED IT.

47

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO FELT THAT WAY IN 2000

WHO'S MOST TRUSTING?

AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF TRUST FOR HOSPITALS, MEDIA, CORPORATIONS, CHARITY LEADERS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND LAWYERS



HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST POLITICIANS?

36% OF CANADIANS FIND PROVINCIAL POLITICIANS TRUSTWORTHY. 45% DID IN 2008

33% OF CANADIANS FIND FEDERAL POLITICIANS TRUSTWORTHY. 41% DID IN 2008



86

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO FIND HOSPITALS TRUSTWORTHY



71

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO FIND CHARITY LEADERS TRUSTWORTHY



63

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO FIND RELIGIOUS LEADERS TRUSTWORTHY. 78% DID IN 2008



62

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO FIND LAWYERS TRUSTWORTHY



53

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO FIND MEDIA (NEWSPAPERS, TV, RADIO) TRUSTWORTHY



41

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO FIND MAJOR CORPORATIONS TRUSTWORTHY

SOURCE: TALKING ABOUT CHARITIES 2013, A MUTTART FOUNDATION SURVEY OF 3,853 CANADIANS AGED 18 AND OVER.

Taking a stand against assisted suicide

Canadian religious leaders stand together in their call for better palliative care as euthanasia draws near in our country

Religious leaders as diverse as an imam from the Prairies to the president of Associated Gospel Churches have signed a *Declaration on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide*, presented on Parliament Hill in late October.

The declaration has been endorsed by over 30 Christian denominations, 20 Jewish and Muslim leaders, and a growing number of other Canadians who have signed it online (www.euthanasiadeclaration.ca).

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, along with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, initiated the statement in light of the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada to dismantle the laws against physician-assisted suicide.

The court decision “has brought this issue to the forefront of public discussion and compels each of us as Canadians to reflect upon our personal and societal response to

those who need our compassion and care,” states the declaration.

The joint statement insists Canada’s “health care systems must maintain a life-affirming ethos. Medical professionals are trained to restore and enhance life,” as “any action intended to end human life is morally and ethically wrong.”

The declaration urges legislators to improve access to quality home and palliative care across the country.

In November the EFC appeared before a federally appointed panel looking at legislative options. The Supreme Court gave Parliament one year to amend the *Criminal Code*.

The EFC, along with other groups opposed to euthanasia in Canada, called the government to ask the Supreme Court for an extension. A six-month extension has been requested to allow the government to consult with Canadians and parliamentarians on this issue. **/FT**

1,847

AT PRESS TIME, NUMBER OF CANADIANS WHO HAVE SIGNED THE DECLARATION ONLINE

“We, the undersigned, each from the basis of our sacred teachings and enduring traditions, affirm the sanctity of all human life, and the equal and inviolable dignity of every human being. This is an affirmation shared by societies and cultures around the world and throughout history.”

—Declaration on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

What can you do . . .

Visit the bilingual website www.euthanasiadeclaration.ca to add your name to the growing list of Canadians who have signed the document. Visit www.theEFC.ca/WebinarArchive to listen to EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger interviewed on euthanasia. Now is the perfect time to interact with your Member of Parliament on this issue. Brush up on your technique by reading “How to communicate with your MP” in this issue of *Faith Today*.

Please pray for the public policy work of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. You can also support it financially at www.theEFC.ca/donate or toll-free 1-866-302-3362. Read more of these columns at www.faithtoday.ca/AtIssue.



From sanctity of human life to individual autonomy

Understanding how Canada has changed can help us in the debate on euthanasia

Two Supreme Court rulings, in 1993 and 2015, made opposite conclusions on the permissibility of assisted suicide and euthanasia. What has changed to recast the debate?

In the 1993 *Rodriguez* case, the prevailing norm that informed the ruling was the sanctity of human life. In the remarkably similar *Carter* case in 2015, the prevailing norm has become individual autonomy.

The *Rodriguez* case was decided by the most narrow of margins – five to four. The majority concluded a complete ban on assisted suicide

was consistent with promoting the sanctity of human life.

The EFC and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops were the interveners who made the argument that the sanctity of human life was the principle that animated our health care and social welfare systems.

To allow assisted suicide, we argued, would undermine society’s commitment to the sanctity of human life. The majority accepted the argument, noting the sanctity of human life could be held as a secular principle as well as a religious one.

In its philosophical sense, autonomy presumes no prior and external authority to the self

Twenty-some years later in the *Carter* case, the Supreme Court still affirmed the sanctity of human life was “one of our most fundamental societal values” – but also concluded, nine to zero, that human autonomy should prevail. They agreed that in some circumstances the individual pursuit of autonomy trumped society’s commitment to the sanctity of human life.

In a recent essay in the *National Post*, Joseph Bream discusses this shift and how death will become a civil servant. “He will operate in the open, during business hours, with a budget and a boss. His work will be humanized and bureaucratized. Death will be licensed, regu-

News FROM THE EFC

Refugees webinar

The EFC gathered three experts to address practical questions about how your church can sponsor refugees and best respond to the largest refugee crisis the world has seen since the Second World War. Watch this December webinar at www.theEFC.ca/WebinarArchive.

leaders, pastors, teachers, youth experts and teens. Find out more and pass the news along to a youth pastor or teen you know. Details at www.theEFC.ca/LoveMovementLaunch.



is written and produced by youth, for youth. Read it online and encourage youth you know to check it out at www.LovelsMoving.ca.

Case favours TWU

Trinity Western University received a favourable judgment in December in the latest court case regarding its planned new law school. The EFC, which has intervened in several such cases in support of TWU, welcomed the decision. Similar cases in Ontario and Nova Scotia have been appealed. Get the latest news at www.theEFC.ca/TWUlaw.

Love casts out fear after terrorist attacks

After the terrorist attacks in France, the EFC called Canadians to pray and show respect and kindness to neighbours of all faiths. This call remains relevant after more recent attacks in California and elsewhere. Read it in English or en français at www.theEFC.ca/NovemberTerroristAttacks.

New EFC youth initiative

The EFC now includes an innovative youth initiative called the Love Movement, which offers a free video/print curriculum that encourages putting faith into action. Participating youth learn about expressing God’s love in Canada. The curriculum is regularly revised in collaboration with organizations, denomination

New EFC youth magazine

For the past two years, the EFC’s Love Movement initiative has published a youth magazine online. From now on *Love Is Moving* will be available in print format as well, distributed along with the EFC’s *Faith Today* magazine. *Love Is Moving*

Dear Minister of Justice

The EFC wrote to the minister of justice in November urging her to hold nationwide consultations on assisted suicide and in December to urge her to uphold Canada’s new prostitution laws. Details at www.theEFC.ca/letters.

lated and empowered by law to solve a public policy problem – the unacceptability to certain people of certain types of dying.”

Individual autonomy entails much more than individuality and individual freedom and responsibility (which are of course exercised in cultures, communities, families and institutions). In its philosophical sense, autonomy presumes no prior and external authority to the self. There is no community that defines us, only associations we choose to join.

All attachments that once were understood to comprise personhood are secondary and artificial – our identity is something we create by an exercise of our will. There is no normativity. Legitimacy is something we confer, not acknowledge.

Contrast this to the sanctity of human life, a norm that transcends the individual. It binds us together in the stewardship of all human life

and a sense of mutual responsibility. It makes our care for others more than a calculus of personal advantage – it is a duty, not a choice. It grounds rights and responsibilities in something greater than the individual, and can sustain norms and principles that guide our lives together in something other than self-interest.

It was also the animating factor behind the development of many of our social welfare and educational institutions, as well as universal medical care. Will a pre-eminent commitment to individual autonomy be able to sustain these?

The Supreme Court chose to shift the lens through which it interprets Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and its guarantee of life, liberty and security of the person. The result is that what was once held to be illegal to protect us all now becomes legal for the sake of a few.


In the absence of any broader

What was once held to be illegal to protect us all now becomes legal for the sake of a few

public forum that fosters dialogue and gives definition to our norms and values, the Supreme Court identifies the Charter values that shape their interpretation of the Charter.

Canadian society has been influenced by an ascendancy of individual autonomy over the past 50 years, and that influences the way we understand what is good and what we should expect from one another.

In the months to come there will be plenty of debate about assisted suicide and whether it will become a government service provided as an extension of health care. This should prompt a substantial reflection and dialogue among Canadians about the duty of care we owe one another, and how we care for people in the shadow of death. Are we as Canadians up to the challenge? /FT

 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 or toll-free 1-866-302-3362.

On the EFC blog

- “Join us to bless Canada in the name of Jesus: The EFC’s new mission statement” by Bruce Clemenger *[aussi disponible en français]*
- “Federal government options on assisted suicide” by Bruce Clemenger
- “The power and potential of partnerships” by Pierre Bergeron *[aussi disponible en français]*

Visit www.theEFC.ca/blog to read these and more recent posts.


Winter calendar


A Biblical Perspective on Marriage and Chronic Illness, Calgary, Jan. 15–16
Pentecostal Preaching and Ministry in Multicultural and Post-Christian Canada, Hamilton, Jan. 29



Missions Fest, Vancouver, Jan. 29–31
EFC Quebec Prayer Summit, Granby, Que., Feb. 8–10
Visit www.theEFC.ca/calendar to find out what else is new.



The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

 Find out about news stories like these and more at www.theEFC.ca/socialissues.

 Learn how to take action on the issues you care about at www.theEFC.ca/takeaction.

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

Meet the EFC Board: Geri Rodman

Over the past few issues, *Faith Today* has been introducing members of the board of directors of our publisher, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (listed at www.theEFC.ca/Board). We continue with Geri Rodman, president of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada.

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

GR: It’s an opportunity to have a national view of evangelical issues, as well as meeting and getting to know people who



are in touch with the national perspective.

FT: What do you think is the most important thing the EFC is doing these days?

GR: Advocacy for a variety of evangelical concerns and engaging with government policies.

FT: What’s the biggest challenge facing Canada right now?

GR: The lack of growth and engagement of evangelical church communities with the next generation.

FT: Thank you, Geri. /FT

Caring for international students



Yaw Perbi is president of International Student Ministries Canada, a ministry that focuses on international students and scholars at Canadian universities and colleges.

■ **What is the heart of ISMC's mission?**

We seek to love international students unconditionally, partner with local churches in leading international students to discover Jesus through the Word of God, and prepare them as leaders to serve God and mankind where He leads them, impacting the world through Jesus Christ.

■ **How do you view ISMC's role within the Canadian Church?**

As we speak there are over 330,000

international students in Canada, 70 per cent of them from the countries hardest to reach with the gospel. What an unprecedented missiological opportunity for the Canadian Church!

Our mission agency has grown by 60 per cent over the last two years, but no matter how much we scale up, we cannot do it alone. We need other agencies and the 20,000+ churches in Canada to catch the vision and collaborate to



8%

PERCENTAGE OF CANADA'S POST-SECONDARY POPULATION WHO ARE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

reach the world that has come right to our doorsteps and backyards.

■ **How do you care for yourself as a leader?**

I have a noncompromising stance when it comes to that daily time of prayer and Scripture reading. I still largely live by a slogan I picked up in my early high school days with the Scripture Union of Ghana – “No Bible, no breakfast.”

I keep my mind fresh by maintaining a healthy reading appetite, a good daily dose of inspirational music and a monthly accountability session with my best friend. I also have a couple of mentors who speak into my life. These days, with my amazing wife Anyele's help, I'm much more conscientious about what and when I eat (and how much) as well as physical exercise.

■ **What is your top leadership advice?**

Guard your intimacy with God. Unless we spend regular time with Him, we won't have His vision for our lives and the people we lead. And what is leadership without vision?

■ **Who are your heroes?**

At the risk of sounding corny or trite, I'll say the Lord Jesus Christ, first and foremost. My life's purpose statement is to love, live and lead like Him – a leader of leaders, a discipler of nations, just like Jesus. Then it would be my father, whose marketplace integrity and competence as he raised my three siblings and me in the fear of the Lord is simply stupendous. I've followed John Maxwell for a dozen or so years now as well, and will attribute a lot of my leadership journey successes to date to his mentorship. I own all my faults. /FT

▶ ISMC (www.ismc.ca) is an affiliate of the EFC (www.theEFC.ca/Affiliates). Find more Q&As at www.faithtoday.ca/QandA.



GO WITH GOD

CAROLYN ARENDS

The world is safe. It really is.

The good news is much better than the bad

There is a line in Dallas Willard’s book *The Divine Conspiracy* that stops me short. “Jesus brings us the assurance that the universe is a *perfectly safe place for us to be.*”

Even in a relatively secure place like Canada, such a statement seems hopelessly naïve. Scattered among the cat videos in my social media feed, I find cancer updates, terrorist activity reports, an exposé about police misconduct, local flood warnings and a video explaining how to use your belt to barricade your classroom door in the case of an active shooter.

The universe doesn’t feel safe at all.

I’m aware that one of the most-repeated phrases in Scripture is “Do not be afraid.” But in a fear-driven culture, it seems impossible (and dangerous) to shut off the part of my brain that reacts to potential threats. So how can I live in the real world and not be afraid?

Some fear is useful – it’s fear, after all, that makes us buckle our seatbelts and gives us the bolt of energy needed to run away should we encounter a bear. A cluster of neurons in the brain called the amygdala is responsible for taking in data and producing, as needed, a response of freeze, flight or fight. The amygdala is critical to survival.

However, the amygdala sometimes gets a bad rap for hijacking the more rational parts of the brain. We can be frozen by fear even when reason tells us we’re not in serious danger. Any of us who have been paralyzed by a harmless basement spider or zipline platform knows exactly what an amygdala hijack is like.

Complicating matters is the fact



If we believe God is indeed working all things together for good, it changes the nature of the threats we encounter.

that the amygdala responds not only to actual threats, but also to *anticipated* threats. Some of us become all amygdala – governed by irrational anxieties and anticipations of worst outcomes. Given the fact the amygdala works unconsciously, it’s easy to despair that our fear responses are beyond our control.

And here is where biblical counsel is powerful.

Scripture asks us to consider what it is we imagine, and to replace worst-case scenario thinking by anticipating the future God intends for His creation. The prophets tell us the universe is heading toward *shalom* – everything set aright and flourishing as it should. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11). “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

If we believe God is indeed working all things together for good, it changes the nature of the threats we encounter. The possibility of physical harm or even death no longer means the end of the story. The

probability of pain does not equal a meaningless march toward nothing.

Some of the most debilitating anxieties are the fears that we are alone, that our suffering is pointless, or our future is hopeless.

Those are the fears the Bible tells us – over and over again – we need not have. But we’ll only be free of that fear if we actively immerse ourselves in the way *God* sees the world, not just CNN. I’ve been experimenting with praying through the 23rd Psalm every time I feel anxious. It does not ask me to pretend there is no valley of the shadow of death. It reminds me God is with me even there – and that His goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And then some.

Though we’ve just put another celebration of the Christmas story behind us, we’d be wise to remember what the angels emphasize every time they show up to announce the arrival of Jesus: “Do not be afraid.”

Maybe those words de-escalate the amygdalae in Mary’s and Joseph’s and the shepherds’ heads. But there’s more to it. “Look at what’s happening here,” they seem to be saying. “Look at the lengths God will go to reach you with His love. You’re not alone, and you never will be. You don’t have to be afraid.”

If the Apostle Paul is right that nothing – neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor anything else – can separate us from the love of the one who holds the universe together, well, then, the universe is a perfectly safe place to be. **/FT**




2

MILLION

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF CAT VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

PHOTO: FERNANDO CORTES / SHUTTERSTOCK

 Carolyn Arends is a recording artist, author and director of education for Renovaré. www.CarolynArends.com.



The Canada fire

Methodists and revival in Upper Canada

In 1783 the British territory of Upper Canada – today the southern part of Ontario – was a vast, largely uninhabited wilderness covered with dense forests and impassable swamps. European diseases and wars had decimated or dispersed most of the Indigenous population. There were no roads to speak of, and the only worthwhile means of transport were the lakes and rivers.

During and after the American Revolutionary War, however, people known as Loyalists – those who had stayed loyal to the British Crown – fled into Upper Canada from the United States. They included a large number of white settlers, as well as the Six Nations Iroquois who had fought for the British. Gradually these settlers carved out homesteads and communities in the wilderness, mostly along the shores of Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence.

Scholars have speculated that the values of these Loyalists – including a love of “peace, order and good government,” respect for community and authority, and distrust of rebelliousness and individualism – have shaped the character of English Canada right from its “founding moment” to the present day.

However, the original Loyalists were soon joined by a flood of immigrants from the United States motivated not by their political loyalties, but a search for affordable farmland. By 1812, these so-called “late Loyalists” of recent American origin made up 60 per cent of the population of Upper Canada, outnumbering the original Loyalists and their descendants three to one.

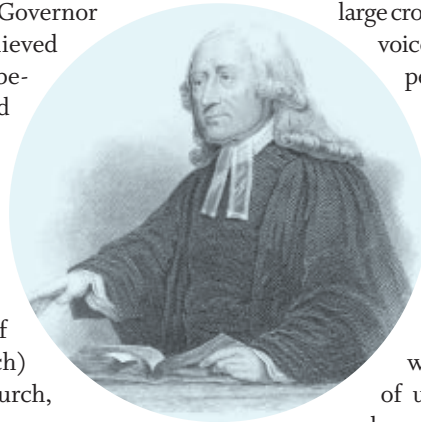
The governing authorities, led by

men such as Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, believed Upper Canada should become an orderly and hierarchical society patterned after England, and this American influx worried them. Part of their plan for influencing the population was to make the Church of England (Anglican Church) the official established church, financially supported by government land grants.

As late as 1812 there were still only six Anglican clergymen in the whole of Upper Canada, which had a population of more than 70,000. Obviously, they could not serve the whole province. To make matters worse not all of them took their duties particularly seriously. Who would serve the spiritual needs of the people?

Enter the Methodists. These fiercely committed evangelical followers of John Wesley began to send preachers from the United States to visit the far-flung villages of Upper Canada. Like Wesley himself these young men – many of them in their 20s – were willing to travel long distances through rough country and harsh weather, and endure much hostility and ridicule for the sake of the gospel.

Hezekiah Calvin Wooster was sent by the Methodists of New York as a missionary to the Kingston area in 1796. When he arrived after a difficult journey that included 21 nights spent sleeping in the wilderness, his preaching caused a major revival. A contemporary observer recorded that “the bold and pointed manner of his appeals” meant



These fiercely committed evangelical followers of John Wesley began to send preachers from the United States to visit the far-flung villages of Upper Canada.

60

PER CENT OF THE POPULATION OF UPPER CANADA IN 1812 WHO WERE OF RECENT AMERICAN ORIGIN

hearers “would either flee from the house, or, smitten with conviction, fall down and cry aloud for mercy.”

Wooster spent two years travelling in Upper Canada and fighting tuberculosis. He continued to preach to large crowds despite wearing out his voice, earning the name “Whispering Wooster.” In 1798 he returned to New York to die. He was 27.

There were many others like him who spent themselves in the wilderness to spread the gospel. Some of their teachings and practices would seem strange to many of us. They emphasized not only conversion, but also a subsequent powerfully emotional experience they called the Second Blessing. Their meetings typically involved not only singing, praying and crying, but also shouting, moaning, falling to the floor and writhing on the ground – rare scenes in most Canadian churches today.

These evangelists had a tremendous impact for the gospel in Upper Canada. Historian George Rawlyk concluded their message gave ordinary people guideposts to navigate a rapidly changing world that was “desperately searching for explicit boundaries and firm co-ordinates.”

In fact the Methodists, together with smaller evangelical groups such as the Baptists, won over so many people in Upper Canada that Rawlyk estimated by 1808 about 40 per cent of the population were Evangelicals. In a development that would have surprised Lieutenant Governor Simcoe, English Canada’s “founding moment” had come to include not only the Loyalists and their values, but also Evangelicals and the gospel they proclaimed. /FT



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.



Divestment in a modern economy

Christians who want to effect change by not investing in certain industries need to think carefully

Should Christians refrain from investing in industries such as tobacco, pornography, military equipment, weapons, fossil fuels and other activities we may find objectionable?

Proposals to sell off a current investment for moral reasons make the news when they involve large amounts of money at endowments, pension funds, universities, not-for-profits and church organizations.

Currently at least 11 universities including Dalhousie, McGill, UBC and Canadian Mennonite University (where I work), as well as several churches including the United Church of Canada and Mennonite Church Canada have seen stakeholders calling for such divestments.

Many people, especially Christians, understand our ethics and morals inform our decisions in all areas of life, including our investments. But even though divestment is appealing and has noble, Christ-honouring motives, it is not as effective as many people think.

Divestment can take various forms, each having different effects. Direct divestment is easy to carry out by either selling or not purchasing stocks and bonds issued by particular companies. But it gets more complicated when people say they don't want a single cent coming directly or indirectly from an entire industry.

This means not investing in any company that supplies any goods or services to the industry, or to its suppliers' suppliers, and so on to infinity. This infinite series is the fundamental problem. Consider this story of a business I know.

The business is a small manufacturer. The owners discovered some of their products had been used to

produce military equipment after a military manufacturer came looking for replacement parts. The problem was that the owners are devout pacifists.

They were distressed to learn their product had passed through several different companies before reaching the military equipment manufacturer. It was impossible to foresee this and almost impossible to stop it without stopping production.

But stopping production would have a negative impact on others who used the product for nonmilitary purposes. It turned out less than one per cent of their annual sales was going to military use. They decided to continue production.

If you were a shareholder in this company, would you divest? If you wanted nothing to do with the military, then you would have to.

Unfortunately, this example is closer to the norm than the exception in a modern economy, as no sector can be completely isolated from any other. This makes perfect divestment impossible.

Another divestment complication has to do with intentions. What is the intended effect of divestment and how do you measure its success?

While helping the investor to feel morally at peace might be sufficient to justify the divestment action, in most cases there is a desire to effect change in the industry. If so, who are we trying to affect?

If the target is other shareholders, the problem is that divestment does almost nothing to make a company a less profitable investment. A major divestment might lower share prices, but shareholders can defend

against this by purchasing more shares at the lower price, averaging out their investment cost and increasing their return.

Or perhaps the target is to affect the companies themselves by reducing their capital. This would be misguided, as it would have no significant result except perhaps when a company is issuing new shares in a public offering.

Another possible target group is executives, but divestment would only affect them financially if they rely on stock options as bonuses. And, frankly, a company can circumvent this attempt either by issuing the option at a lower strike price, structuring the bonuses on something other than stock price, or remunerating executives with something other than shares.

Overall, from a financial point of view, divestment is limited in its effectiveness as long as the target industry remains profitable, which is more affected by revenues than investment.

Is a divestment a success if the only result is we are reassured we are living out our ethics and morals in our investments? Perhaps. But if we truly desire to seek the good of the world where God has placed us, we need to be realistic about how much we can divest ourselves from an industry and how much we can effect change by doing so. It can be a highly visible public gesture, but it needs to be accompanied by other actions to bring real change in the marketplace. /FT

It gets more complicated when people say they don't want a single cent coming directly or indirectly from an entire industry.

 Craig Martin of Winnipeg is an assistant professor of business and co-ordinates the MBA program in the Redekop School of Business at Canadian Mennonite University. Find more of these columns at www.faithtoday.ca/BusinessMatters.



The Study Quran

What difference will a million words of commentary and a new translation make?

Most *Faith Today* readers will be familiar with study Bibles, in all their diversity and popularity. Given the enormous interest in Islam, is there an English guide to the Qur'an parallel to a Christian study Bible? The answer is yes.

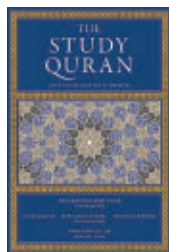
HarperCollins has just published *The Study Quran*, under the general editorship of Muslim scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr of George Washington University, in collaboration with four other Islamic scholars – Caner Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph Lombard and Mohammed Rustom, a professor at Carleton University in Ottawa.

The Study Quran (the spelling without the apostrophe is a common variation) provides a new translation and one million words of commentary. It was almost ten years in the making and is being hailed as the most comprehensive study of the Qur'an to date and perhaps the most important work done on the Islamic faith in the English language to date.

Reports at CNN have even suggested the new work (which also includes essays by other Muslim scholars including Ingrid Mattson of Western University in London, Ont., and Walid Saleh of the University of Toronto) will help curb terrorism.

Does *The Study Quran* live up to the billing? Most comprehensive, most important and a curb on terrorism? Yes, no and somewhat.

Yes, in its 2,000 pages, in its linking to 40 major Islamic commentators, in its use of both Sunni and Shia Muslim scholars, and in the deep learning expressed in the essays, this is indeed the most



comprehensive study in one volume in English.

Its status as most important must be denied, however, since it offers *only* Muslim interpretation. While this was an understandable choice, it means *The Study Quran* ignores critical analysis and expertise outside Islamic orthodoxy. For that, readers should consult Arthur Droge's one volume translation and commentary (Equinox, 2013).

As to curbing terrorism, the contributors do commendably re-

We should still see *The Study Quran* as a barrier to accurate information about the Qur'an, Islam and Muhammad, and an obstacle to Muslims hearing the gospel

sist jihadist and terrorist interpretations. *The Study Quran* even adopts a generously pluralistic stance on the salvation of non-Muslims, to the displeasure of traditionalists.

In the end, however, Christians and others should still see *The Study Quran* as a barrier to accurate information about the Qur'an, Islam and Muhammad, and an obstacle to Muslims hearing the gospel. Here are four reasons why.

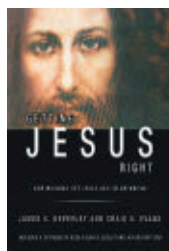
(1) *No amount of nuanced commentary can sanitize the exhortations to violence in the Qur'an* (see for example 5:33, 8:12, 9:5, 9:29, 9:111) or its nasty descriptions of Christians and Jews (2:65, 5:60, 5:64, 7:166). *The Study Quran* sometimes downplays the straightforward meaning of various disturbing passages, as Robert Spencer (www.jihadwatch.org) has shown. *The Study Quran* also fails to reject the command for husbands to beat

disobedient wives (4:34) or to offer serious moral objections about the earliest Muslim conquests after Muhammad's death.

(2) *The Study Quran often fails at providing true academic rigour*. Kevin Van Bladel, a great scholar of Islam, has shown the story in surah 18 about Dhu'l-Qarnayn (identified by most Muslims as Alexander the Great) is borrowed from a Syriac text. Van Bladel's work is not even mentioned. Likewise *The Study Quran* avoids any interaction with evidence the traditional biography of the prophet is historically unreliable, as presented for example by Robert Spencer (*Did Muhammad Exist?*), Tom Holland (*In the Shadow of the Sword*), Robert Hoyland (*In God's Path*) and Patricia Crone. Again, no mention.

(3) *In keeping with Muslim orthodoxy, this new work is not honest about serious failures on the part of Muhammad, even as told in Muslim sources*. For example, Muhammad took his adopted son's wife as his own, an act that disturbed the first followers of the prophet, but not the editors of *The Study Quran*. Likewise, there is no objection to Muhammad's use of slaves, sanction of the death of critics, ordering of the torture of a Jewish leader named Kinana, or occasional ordering of the death of those who leave Islam.

(4) *For Christians The Study Quran remains a tragic work since its authors miss the full identity of Jesus (as Son of God) and deny His death and resurrection*. Sadly, Muslims use one verse (4:157) to ignore the clear historical and biblical evidence that Jesus died on the cross. In the end, missing Calvary and Easter means Muslims are blind to the most important spiritual truths the world can ever know. /FT



FOR A HELPFUL STUDY ON ISLAM, CHECK OUT JAMES BEVERLEY AND CRAIG EVANS' BOOK *GETTING JESUS RIGHT: HOW MUSLIMS GET JESUS AND ISLAM WRONG* (CASTLE QUAY, 2015)

 James A. Beverley is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. Find more of these columns at www.faithtoday.ca/ReligionWatch.



GLOBAL MEETING EXAMINES PERSECUTION, APOLOGIZES

The world's major Christian bodies discussed persecution at a historic meeting in November in Albania and apologized for having persecuted each other.

About 75 leaders familiar with discrimination, persecution and martyrdom made presentations heard by 75 additional Christian leaders from other countries. Then the consultation discussed how the church at large should react to these painful realities.

A final document approved by participants includes a historic apology: "We repent of having at times persecuted each other and other religious communities in history, and ask forgiveness from each other and pray for new ways of following Christ together."

The consultation, co-ordinated by the Global Christian Forum, included top leaders from the World Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches.

Leaders from these four delegations spoke at the conclusion of the event, including Bishop Efraim Tendaro of the World Evangelical Alliance.

"We will do whatever possible," said Tendaro, "to help and train our people to overcome prejudices against other Christian traditions, and not to confuse things from the past with present realities."

"We will encourage our pastors and churches to do this [initiatives seeking inter-Christian healing and repentance] on a local level," he said.

—WWW.WORLDEA.ORG, WWW.BUCER.DE

CHRISTIANS TARGETED IN BANGLADESH

Christian persecution is increasing in Bangladesh, largely perpetrated by groups affiliated with Daesh, the terrorist organization also known as ISIS or ISIL, based in Syria and Iraq.

Although the government of Bangladesh claims Daesh is not active in



A family in Rajmahal, India, has gained new income from breeding goats as part of a World Relief Canada food security project also involving local partner, EFICOR, and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (www.foodgrainsbank.ca).

Bangladesh, Daesh has taken responsibility for numerous recent attacks.

Daesh and other Islamist organizations sent text messages to nearly 70 Christians warning that their "time in this world has run out" and "Through your blood we will save the Islamic world," according to a report from World Watch Monitor.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the recent attempted assassination of an Italian priest serving in Bangladesh. Another priest survived an attack during a home invasion in September.

Non-Muslims complain they are continually accused of practising witchcraft and harassed by local Muslims, and a riot recently torched the homes of four Catholic families. Neighbours managed to rescue the families from the fires. —WORLD WATCH MONITOR

CHRISTIAN LEADERS CO-OPERATE IN TURKEY

Basic Principles of Christianity, a new book explaining the Christian faith to Turkish Muslims, was written by an amazing diversity of leaders of Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian


Apostolic, Evangelical and Catholic churches.

Publisher Tamar Karasu, executive secretary of the Bible Society in Turkey, pointed all the way back to the First Council of Nicaea in AD 325 for a similar level of co-operation.

Participants gathered to celebrate the book's release last October in Istanbul, headquarters for Ecumenical Patriarch for Constantinople Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of the 14 branches of Eastern Orthodoxy.

Patriarch Bartholomew explained, "It is our duty to inform our Muslim brothers and sisters correctly about Christianity, whose presence in these lands goes back a long way."

The leaders who wrote the book initially came together in 2002, when the education ministry asked for help to clarify Christianity sections of school textbooks. After finishing that, the leaders continued to meet and in 2011 began writing this book, available in Turkish (*Temel İlkeleriyle Hristiyanlık*) at www.kitabimukaddes.com. —TODAY'S ZAMAN

 Craig Macartney is a freelance writer in Ottawa. See www.faithtoday.ca/GlobalVillage.

"In a world that is marked and marred by a culture of death, degeneration of moral values of God's reign, and corruption, minority communities, like salt, have the task to affirm and preserve life wherever life is under threat."

—Mor Geevarghese Coorilos, Syrian Orthodox bishop, at the third international conference on minority issues and mission in Tokyo, Japan, November 2015

FAITH TODAY

CANADA'S CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

CONTEST



Give your pastor a break!

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THE FINE PRINT: Retreat times to be arranged between the guest and the retreat centre. If desired, the pastor may bring a spouse, child or friend to share the experience. Travel costs to be covered by the pastor, or better yet, their church. Some retreat centres provide meals, others do not. Churches may wish to send their pastor with a meal stipend to really make things nice. If the pastor wishes, they may choose a \$100 gift card instead of the retreat prize. Maybe a nice dinner out?

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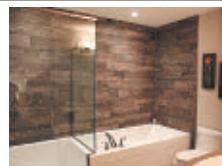
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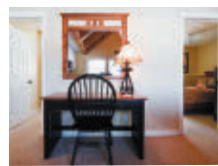
Manitoba

Kerith Pines Retreat Centre, East Braintree
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Ontario

Muskoka Bible Conference, Huntsville
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Capernwray Quebec, Chertsey
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Hampton Bible Camp, Hampton
www.hamptonbiblecamp.ca



Prince Edward Island

Healing Presence Christian Retreat, Point Pleasant
www.healingpresence.org



Newfoundland & Labrador

His Secret Place, St. Andrews
www.hissecretplace.ca



Nova Scotia

To be determined.

Yukon / NWT / Nunavut

To be determined.



DANIELLE STRICKLAND (www.daniellestrickland.com) is a Canadian Salvation Army officer launching a social justice strategy for The Salvation Army in the U.S. She is based in Los Angeles, but has served in projects fighting poverty in Edmonton, Vancouver and Australia. She is an author, advocate and speaker. In fact, she will be a keynote speaker at Missions Fest Vancouver in January.

*Her most recent book, **A Beautiful Mess: How God Re-Creates Our Lives** (Kregel, 2014), calls readers to live by God's expectations, and not their own. Strickland spoke to Faith Today about how we fight poverty (not always in the best way), how we might be an oppressor without even knowing it, and the great, amazing hope the Church can bring to a broken world.*

Faith Today: *It seems to us The Salvation Army does a great job at serving the downtrodden. It does mercy so well. You speak out strongly for advocacy. How do the two work together?*

Danielle Strickland: The Salvation Army has a natural bent to respond to human needs, and how that manifests itself for the most part is social service. We are fantastic at mercy. We do mercy very well.

Justice has a little bit more of a strategic emphasis on advocacy, and maybe digging a little deeper to the causes of poverty and need.

People say social justice is a new thing. Actually, I think it's our oldest thing. But it's like we're rediscovering it afresh for today's context. Issues like human trafficking, for example, have pushed us to

this place. We understand it's not enough to care about the trafficking issue, we have to do advocacy.

FT: *The Church seems better at offering mercy than doing advocacy.*

DS: I think justice is a deeper journey, and to go deeper requires more effort.

I remember reading a conversation Bono [lead singer of the band U2] had on a plane after he had witnessed a kid dying of malnutrition in Africa. He said something like, "Mercy made me cry and justice made me angry."

The question then became – not so much *Should children die?* – he knows the answer is no. But the other question is, *Why is this kid dying of hunger and my kid is throwing food out?* That's a harder ques-





tion. We have to look at our own habits, and then economics and policy, and why kids in Africa are starving when there's enough food.

Are we willing to keep peeling back the layers? It is almost like an onion – the more layers you peel off, the more potent it becomes.

On the journey to justice, there are times when you think it is too hard, too personal, it's not making me feel good anymore, it's making me feel bad.

FT: *We don't like to feel bad.*

DS: Entry-level mercy makes you feel good. Deeper into justice can make you feel bad. I think we all need to do more mercy all the time, but justice is an invitation to go deeper both inside and outside.

The shallow end of a pool is fun. You don't have to work to stay afloat. But once you go to the deep end, it takes more risk. You might go under. It's scary and exhilarating. But it's hard work.

FT: *How do we figure out how to move forward personally with mercy and justice?*

DS: I think it's listening to the call of God in our lives and what He has called us to do. I think of a couple who took over a work I started in Vancouver in the Downtown Eastside. They moved into that neighbourhood with their family, and now collectively live with a group of people in a house they all bought.

That's an extreme other way to live in our world. It's like an affront to us. We say, "What? You live with other people and share your house?" And they're living in *that neighbourhood* with children.

The dominant culture would think they'd lost their mind. They haven't.

They are literally a sign and a wonder. People are saying, "What is that about?"

Sometimes signs and wonders are a prophetic example of doing life differently. The Church is called to be a sign and wonder.

We forget how, in Acts, one of the greatest signs and wonders was this collective economic status. They crossed the boundaries of economic and gender divide. We forget the radical nature of what Christ called us to do.

There are other ways to be radical.

There is a couple in Edmonton who, by the grace of God, managed to get this massive house with an indoor pool, mostly for her health. There were two of them there. It seemed totally out of proportion.

Then they discovered this thing called the Journey that The Salvation Army does in Edmonton. We take women on retreat out of prostitution, where we can just love each other. Prostituted women never get a break.

It's one of the most beautiful things I've seen. The couple said, "Can you use our place?"

And I said, "You want us to use your home?"

And they said it would make their home make sense to them. They use that home as if it belongs to God and not them.

So, it's not that you have to sell your home in the suburbs and move to the inner city to be Jesus in the world, although some might. But can you open your home? Both are signs and wonders.

FT: *Is fear what holds us back from these actions that can feel radical, at least at first?*

DS: I think fear is the number one enemy of the Church and always has been. [God] says, "Do not fear" with almost every encounter He has in Scripture. It almost gets a little bit comical. I wonder if we'll ever get this message?

And what are we afraid of? I've been doing a study on Exodus. It dawned on me that fear is the way that we're oppressed, but it's also how we become oppressors.

We read the Exodus story identifying with the Israelites. I suggest we try to read it identifying with the Egyptians. Or think of the rich young ruler who comes to Jesus, and then walks away because He says you need to be liberated from your fear by walking away from your wealth that has become the boss of you.

Most people suggest it's not just economics, but the power that comes through it that we can't give up. We are afraid of being powerless.

We literally have an invitation to live a fearless life, which has so many ramifica-



tions. It protects and frees us from being oppressed. It's Good News for the poor. But it also frees us from being the oppressor.

We are afraid of paying more for our clothes, which keeps women and children enslaved in Bangladesh. Fear drives us as much as oppressors as it does the oppressed. Fear becomes this vicious cycle that chains us all.

We need to choose to not live in fear, but with love. And love is not an emotion, but an action.

FT: *You were very active with the human trafficking issue in Canada, and specifically the work around the new prostitution laws. How are you feeling about that work now that a little time has passed?*

DS: I was absolutely pleasantly surprised at the Church's involvement in that campaign. And I was really excited about Christians waking up to that reality. I thought that was a fantastic demonstration of how the Church could make a difference in the world if we responded.

But one of the troubles of being in the deep end is you have to keep kicking. There needs to be real strategy around implementation. This is true with any justice campaign. You win the legislative day, but now we have to win the culture war in terms of how we implement that not just legally, but also personally,

So that's where we have to have conversations in the Church and with the Church about buying sex and pornography.

FT: *You've worked to fight poverty in a lot of*

different settings, in different countries and cultures. Do you have some best practices you can share?

DS: All compassion is good. I congratulate people for the effort. I'm leery of being critical of people who are trying. But as you try you'll discover and learn best practices.

The number one thing I've learned that has revolutionized how I do it is relationship. That's how Jesus worked. That's how the Early Church advanced the cause of Christ in the world. That's how real transformation happens.

The drag is, relationship is the hardest thing to do especially when you have such a power imbalance between the have and have not. The temptation is for the have to say, "I have all the answers," but the reverse is usually true.

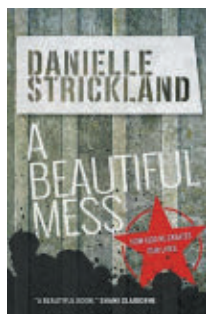
Those who need the help usually have the answers, and they are the best answers, but maybe not the easiest ones.

FT: *So, relationship over programs?*

DS: The way we construct churches and missions is to make programs the heart. Programs don't transform people, relationships do. Relationship should be the heart of everything we do, and program should be the outcome.

That is a radical shift in how we do almost everything we do. How do you keep relationship at the very centre of all you do? Even the difference between a soup line and a community meal is a good example. It's a much deeper place to live.

Often we just end at program, and then we wonder why our stuff isn't transformative. Transformation only happens





through relationship.

That's tricky business when you're dealing with need and limited resources. Jesus seemed to manage it okay. In my own experience, like the Journey where we take women away and just love them, it has had more transformative experience than years of talking to women on the street and giving them roses and buying them lunch. That one weekend of actual relationship building has so much more potency.

FT: *Do you think we doubt our power to change the world?*

DS: I think cynicism has really hurt the Church. The first time I read a book about how we could end extreme poverty on the earth, I thought, *I've never thought about this before.* The author wasn't even a Christian. I started to believe it was actually possible.

How ironic it was that I was part of a Church whose job it is to bring hope.

The way we construct churches and missions is to make programs the heart. Programs don't transform people, relationships do. Relationship should be the heart of everything we do, and program should be the outcome.

How did I never hear this growing up in the Church?

What a tragedy that we are the keepers of that prophetic hope and we haven't done a good job of believing that. We suffer from the oldest disease in the Church, gnosticism, where we separate our spirituality out of our life. It's a belief system divorced from actual incarnation. Paul just rails against this in the Early Church. We need people to rail against it again.

We need a combination of this joyful, optimistic, hope-filled word – that God intends to redeem the world – mixed with realistic, incarnated, strategic understand-

ing of oppression and how it happens.

It's not a "pie in the sky, all will be well, Hallmark transformation" story. It will be in the grit and everyday understanding of how oppression works, mixed with prophetic hope of a better world coming.

In my own church history, William Booth understood redemption would look like poverty demolished and people getting back to work. It was going to look real.

It was a radical hope mixed with "roll your sleeves up and get to work." And those postures are so important to hold together.

FT: *Thank you, Danielle. /FT*

April 19 CAMBRIDGE	April 20 TORONTO	April 21 REGINA	April 22 SASKATOON	May 24 WINNIPEG	May 25 CALGARY	May 26 EDMONTON	May 27 VANCOUVER	June 7 OTTAWA	June 8 MONTRÉAL	June 9 ST. JOHN'S	June 10 HALIFAX
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FOR THE LOVE OF THE CHURCH

MARK BUCHANAN writes a love letter to the Church, calling it – and himself – to a better place

Dear Church, I dreamed of you last night. We were both young. We had energy to burn, and a naïveté that made the impossible seem inevitable.

We laughed and cried with the least provocation. We gave things away with hardly a thought of the loss. We sang in the streets and didn't care who heard. Or no, we did care. We wanted our joy to be their joy, to be anyone's, everyone's.

I woke, and ached all over.

We're both older now. The naïveté's gone. What's replaced it is no improvement – shrewdness, jadedness, weariness and complaint. Sometimes it seems you think you need to coax or shame me into things – generosity, service, worship and love – with slogans and campaigns and sentimentality and, at times, anger.

And I don't blame you. I have grown reluctant and cynical. Things I once embraced as privilege I now avoid as burden. But I feel used sometimes, and – to be honest

– bored. My heart's not in it, and I wonder, *Is yours?* I wake most Sundays and wonder what else I could do, where else I could be.

We're not enjoying each other very much.

But then there are moments when it all comes back, and not just in my dreams. It doesn't much matter if the music is polished or sloppy, the preaching spellbinding or halting, the building glowing or shoddy. Something – *Someone* – is present within and beyond all that. A light breaks through. The Spirit hovers over the deep. The Voice calls, the Father runs, the Son welcomes. The old, old story rushes at me fresh and bright as daylight.

And everything in me wakes up, and I know I'm home, and I don't want to be anywhere else.

So I've been thinking about us, you and me, and about what might get us back there, and what might move us forward.



I got sour. In a few instances I was genuinely hurt by you, but only a few. Mostly I just

started grouching about things – petty things – that simply weren't to my liking. I developed a habit of faultfinding – with sermons, programs, music and people.

The funny thing about complaint is it self-perpetuates. Once you get a taste for it, you grow insatiable, and can never get enough. Blaming is as addictive as crack. I started using my energy, not to confess my own sins and offer my whole self to God, but to confess other people's sins and withhold myself from God.

I am so sorry.

I've been thinking a lot lately about Jesus' words at the very end of the Bible.

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the

free gift of the water of life (Revelation 22:16–17).

I lost my thirst. Or worse, I got thirsty for other things. None seemed particularly bad at the time – a love for comfort, for convenience, for my own opinion. But, slowly, they consumed more of me. Increasingly I consumed more of them. Now I'm bloated with them, but not satisfied. Empty, in fact.

And yet this. Jesus beckons me, still. He sends His Angel, His Spirit, His Bride – His Church – to say to me what He said to me the first day I met Him. “Come. Are you thirsty? Then come. It's free. It's all free. And this, only this, will satisfy.”

When first I heard that invitation, over 30 years ago now, I was dying of thirst. I came. And I drank. I was satisfied, beyond measure – in Him, in His Spirit, His Word.

And in you, His Bride.

Will I come again?

Don't think I don't notice that He sends you, Dear Church – He sends His beloved Bride – to make this invitation.

There is no man on earth worthy of being called husband who abides anyone who scorns his bride. I confess I forgot this. I confess I thought I could love Jesus and not His Bride. I wanted you – the Bride – to be radiant, pure, spotless and blameless *here, now*, on this fallen, broken earth, before any of us has been perfected, before all things created have been fully reconciled.

And because you were not yet perfect, I stopped serving you with pure affection and unwavering devotion. I stopped being like Shaash-gaz and Hegai, serving Esther to make her beautiful for her king. I just got bored. Jaded. Uninvolved.

I am truly sorry.

And now you send your Bride, of all people, to invite me back.



But, Dear Church, would you consider a few things? If I've at times forgotten who and whose you are, perhaps you've sometimes forgotten that too. Please don't try to be someone you're not, someone the Bridegroom never asked or wanted you to be.

I'm not thinking here of the usual complaints – that you've adopted business models, or made CEOs of your pastors, or created performance standards for the music. All that's beside the point, the gnats that we camels strain out. And there is no virtue in mediocrity, as though timid leadership and bad music are holier than the alternatives.

No, I'm thinking of other things. I'm thinking about Samaria. I'm thinking about the priesthood of all believers. I'm thinking about grace. And I'm thinking about heaven.

Let me explain.

Samaria, for instance. Jesus *had* to go through Samaria. Samaritans are those with whom we share land and history, but it's disputed land, and it's troubled history full of betrayals, failed promises, mutual bitterness, deep wariness. Samaritans might be the homeless, or the LGBT community, or Muslims.

Or First Nations people.

I confess that when I was a pastor, I steered the church around *that* Samaria for a long time (and still avoid many others). I had a thousand excuses and alibis. The problems were deep and complex, and not of my making. I didn't want

to expose myself to a spirituality I found strange. There seemed no doorway in, and no roadmap once there. On and on it went.

Then I finally went through Samaria. And I found a people kind, generous, funny, wise. They were willing to share in ways that exposed my own stinginess. They had a rich and earthy faith that revealed how shallow and cerebral my own is. They lived in a genuine community when I had just talked about it.

I have learned much from my friends. But increasingly I have wondered why, Dear Church, though you are sent to the nations, you avoid the one closest to you.

My simple plea is that you change that.



And I'm thinking about the priesthood, the kind Peter talks about – a royal priesthood in which all believers participate. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on His first disciples so they might bind and loose things in heaven and earth. He gave them the power to bestow – or withhold – His forgiveness. And He prayed the same power for all believers. He made us priests, every last one of us.

Of all the roles Jesus fulfilled – prophet, priest, king – it's His priesthood that He's made available to all His followers.

But most of us are happy just to watch, and the idea that any of us might play a priestly role, might

AND BECAUSE YOU WERE NOT YET PERFECT, I STOPPED SERVING YOU WITH PURE AFFECTION AND UNWAVERING DEVOTION.

represent God to people and people to God, seems foreign and puzzling to us.

And here's my concern. Dear Church, for the most part the whole system is designed to perpetuate this. When I look around the room, I see little that invites or requires my participation. I simply watch because that's about the only thing left to me.

Yet isn't every believer's priesthood the key to a thriving church? Isn't this at the heart of robust worship, evangelism, service and teaching – the whole life of discipleship? To know and believe and live out the truth God has put within us, each and all and altogether, the power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at God's right hand?

This power is available – abundantly, exceedingly, more than we can ask or imagine – to all believers, from least to greatest, male and female, young and old, rich and poor, from every tribe and tongue and nation. And this power empowers all. It fuels the entire thing we call church.

But looking around the room, I'm not sure anyone believes it. Or, if we do, that we're inclined to do much about it. Few ask or expect us to act in priestly wisdom and authority. My plea, Dear Church, is that you change that.

My plea is that you ask us to pray, with fresh hunger and faith, Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers, that the eyes of our hearts would be opened so we would see – and live out – the hope to which we have been called, and know the riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints – in us!



And I'm thinking about grace. Grace abounds everywhere, even – especially – where sin is

THE CHURCH IS WHERE THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE, ITS WILD AND VARIED PROFUSION, ITS SHEER CRAZY LAVISHNESS, IS MEANT TO BE TANGIBLE, VISCERAL AND VIRAL.

thickest. But the Church is the one place on earth where the abundance of grace, its wild and varied profusion, its sheer crazy lavishness, is meant to be tangible, visceral and viral. It's meant to overwhelm us, every time. It's meant to be as real and intimate as the open arms of God.

The Apostle Paul, trying to collect an offering from the Corinthians, doesn't resort to shame, guilt and threat. He reminds them of grace – the grace of a dirt-poor but ridiculously generous church in Macedonia, and especially the grace of Jesus, who became poor so they might become rich.

They were all beggars until the richest man ever showed up, and cashed out and gave them the whole bundle.

Paul awakens their memory and their experience of this. He knows that when any of us bask in the extravagance of grace, it changes us. Fools become wise. The angry become peaceful. Tightwads break open like piñatas and spill riches. Older brothers join the party and dance wild jigs.

Frankly, literally, I don't have it *in* me to be nice or good, not in a deep, real, lasting way. I can do it in spurts and patches, but to be a vessel and channel of goodness I need grace – amazing grace, abounding grace, grace for my failings, grace to overcome, grace to fill the vast gap between the man I am and the man I'm becoming.

And I don't have it *in* me to wrestle sin to the ground, to say no to

ungodliness, to live the victorious life. I need amazing, abounding grace for all this.

I'm simply pleading, Dear Church, that you never let a week go by without telling us this good Good News all over again.



And I'm thinking about heaven. I'm thinking about how little I hear about it in church. This is a significant change from past times. I don't think it's for the better.

Maybe once we talked too much about heaven, and the talk made us passive about hellish things on earth – girls and women and boys and men exploited in the sex trade and the porn industry, rampant and easily preventable global disease and hunger, the plundering of creation.

Maybe talk of heaven was the opiate of the people, to quote Karl Marx, numbing us into complacency, conformity, apathy. Maybe some people were too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good.

But aren't we seeing the exact reverse of this now? Most of us so earthly minded, we're of no use to heaven or earth?

We think about how to make our houses even better, and most of them are things of rare beauty already. We think about how to make our kids smarter, our marriages sexier, our vacations more exotic.

And thinking on these things so much, we're mostly anxious and often depressed. We keep suc-

ceeding in ways the world calls success, and end up feeling worse. Or failing in ways the world measures failure, and feel worthless.

Please tell us again, and tell us often, that the world is not enough, and was never meant to be.

Inflame us afresh with the hope of the eternal. Help us to become all a little more like Stephen, or Paul, or Peter, or the saints of old, for whom heaven was the prize, and all else sheer gift, or distraction. Every effective Christ follower who's ever lived was of earthly good precisely to the degree they were heavenly minded.

Help us to be like that. Tell us what waits.

I was thinking, when I woke up from the dream I told you about, how John wrote to seven churches. And Paul, by a weird coincidence (or not), also wrote to seven churches.

Not one of those churches was perfect. A few were close, but those ones struggled financially, or suffered brutal persecution, or were threatened with disunity, or heresy, or plain old discouragement.

But there's no number eight. There's no church, anywhere, at any time, that has been made perfect yet, that represents the fullness of Christ's presence and God's Kingdom without flaw or diminishment. All limp toward a reality that's not here yet. All see through a glass darkly. All carry the glory in clay jars.

So I decided to stop looking for number eight.

I'm going to my church this Sunday, with thanks and love, with humility, to bless and to be blessed, to give and to receive.

Thanks for reading this, my Dear Church. /FT



Mark Buchanan is an author and associate professor of pastoral theology at Ambrose Seminary in Calgary, Alta.

WHAT IT MEANS TO THRIVE AS A CHURCH IN CANADA

Five things healthy churches do well

BY JOEL THIESSEN



Thriving churches exist in Canada.

In connection with a newly formed Flourishing Congregations Institute at Ambrose University, I am at the outset of a three-year study with three colleagues to define and understand what flourishing congregations (Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant and conservative Protestant) look like in a uniquely Canadian context.

We will look at how local congregations may move toward and maintain a flourishing community culture. One of our goals is to develop and deliver specific applications of findings, analyses and recommendations to various Christian traditions.

From the literature on churches that thrive, five interrelated features stand out. Intentionality binds them together. Like cultivating any habit in life, congregations do not flourish, develop or thrive without intentionally seeking to do so.

1 Clear self-identity

Flourishing congregations have a clear sense of who they are – where they come from, where they are now and where they are going. They learn from other churches along the way, yet they understand their uniqueness and do not strive to be like the church next door or the latest megachurch in the United States.

Unlike Moses coming down from the mountain with a message, thriving churches involve many people and voices in the self-identity conversation. Leaders take time to listen to members in the congregation and act on the feedback they receive, prioritizing clear, concise and timely communication. The result is people who identify and buy into the congregation's identity, and rally around the group's goals and mission both in terms of financial and volunteer resources.

2 Leadership

Thriving churches equip and empower leaders to lead. Pastors are not all things to all people. They focus their responsibilities around their strengths and a congregation's particular needs, and they delegate lay leaders to play instrumental roles in the congregation's life – hopefully the right people with the right fit for the right positions, rather than taking any willing body to fill a need.

Flourishing congregations are generally set apart by pastors who stay a long time and take the time to build trust and rapport with members (research suggests this truly begins to set in after five years). Encompassing all areas of leadership, flourishing groups strike the right balance between structure and flexibility in setting out strategies, making decisions, sharing authority and so forth.

3 Culture that desires growth

Flourishing congregations have a cultural ethos that desires growth – they want to thrive, not merely survive. Toward this end they commit to excellence in all things from quality of preaching, music and programs, to treating people well. They encourage spiritual growth among members.

Leaders and the congregation alike value learning as a way to develop and broaden horizons toward effective ministry. These congregations are innovative and entrepreneurial, willing to take risks and make mistakes – however defined in their local context. Finally, thriving churches seek ongoing accountability and self-evaluation, with an eye toward improvement rather than living on past successes or failures.

4 Community

Churches that do well are known for inviting and welcoming people into a vibrant sense of belonging and participation. They create an environment where safety, love, acceptance, affirmation and forgiveness are hallmark features of community life – and these traits are frequently spoken of and modelled by congregational leaders. Out of this focus, ministries are relationship centred, and personal stories and testimonies are exchanged in different congregational gatherings.

When people feel part of the faith community, they are more likely to reciprocate with volunteering and financial resources – and the more that people attend and volunteer, the more likely they are to buy into the vision of that congregation.

5 Vibrant spiritual life

A commitment to a vibrant spiritual life is evident in flourishing congregations. This includes teaching, opportunities and resources that encourage members toward spiritual growth. Inspiring and engaging worship services are also common.

A congregational commitment to sound stewardship of time, finances, talents, relationships, possessions, health and knowledge is additionally key to churches that are doing well. They are indicators that individuals and congregations are generous toward others, rather than constantly self-serving (a common critique of churches).

Flourishing churches have a faith-based commitment to outreach and to serve those beyond the walls of their congregation. This entails an active evangelism focus, participation in various social justice initiatives and an intentional presence in the community at large.



This is not a “do these five things and your church will grow” formula.

The “build it and they will come” refrain should have been discarded a long time ago.

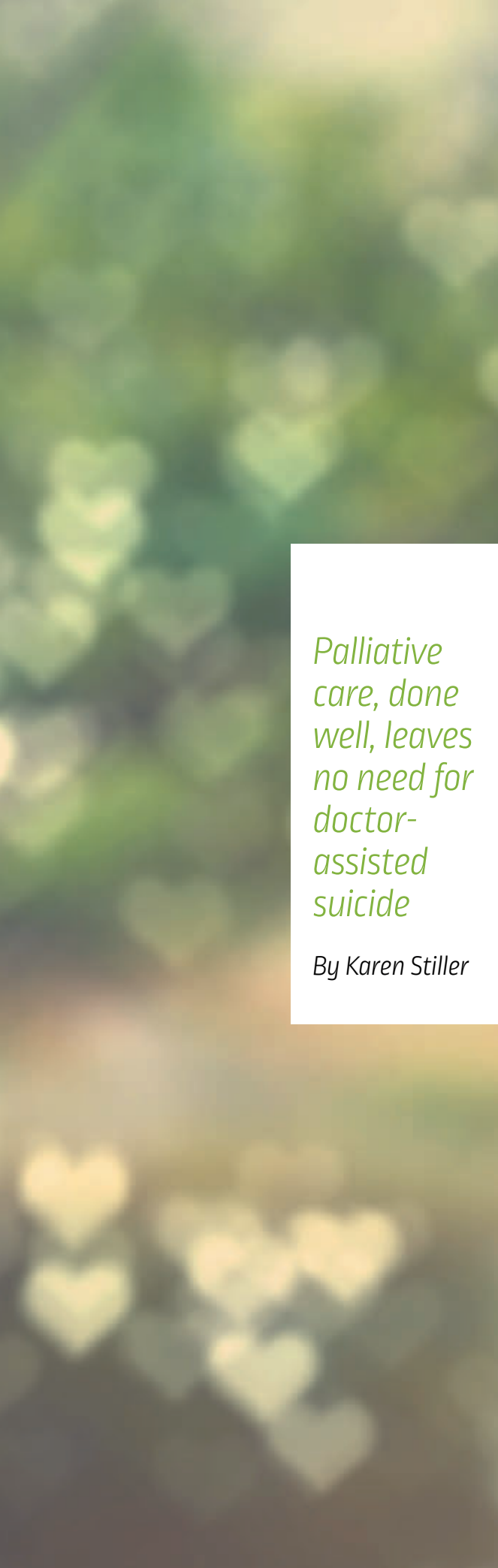
Your church may grow in response, but evidence suggests growth is most likely due to retaining those already attending your church or from transfer growth of some kind.

Still, within an extremely challenging Canadian cultural context, some churches are doing quite well. Those that are place a high priority on inviting, equipping and including members in the congregation to full participation in congregational life. /FT



Joel Thiessen is associate professor of sociology at Ambrose University in Calgary (www.joelthiessen.ca) and author of the newly released *The Meaning of Sunday: The Practice of Belief in a Secular Age* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

Gently into the arms of Jesus



Palliative care, done well, leaves no need for doctor-assisted suicide

By Karen Stiller

In one of the final photos taken of Lucetta Howard of Uxbridge, Ont., she perches on a wrought iron chair carried by two hardy-looking grandsons. The shot was taken at her granddaughter's wedding reception. Lucetta beams, as grandmothers do, clearly revelling in the moment and the attention of her grandsons who carried her – seated on this chair – wherever she wanted to go throughout this great family celebration.

Her life was about to end. She knew that. She died six weeks later, at 92, of bone cancer.

Lucetta loved birds and was a passionate gardener. The family set up a hospital bed in the living room, with a view of the birds and the flowers.

“My mom did not want to go to the hospital. She decided to stop all her meds. She died on a Tuesday morning,” remembers her daughter Cathy Bacon. She slipped away in the few moments it took for Bacon to step out of the room. “My prayer had been that she would go gently into the arms of Jesus,” says Bacon. And she did.

Lucetta died at home, cared for by Bacon and a caregiving team that included her doctor, nurses, community care workers and of course other family members who took turns and relieved her daughter from her bedside vigil.

The final weeks of Lucetta's life

were an expression of palliative care done well. Lucetta was able to die peacefully, almost pain-free, and the family received the support they needed from the broader medical and spiritual community.

My afternoon with Cathy Bacon is just weeks after the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the ban on physician-assisted suicide. I am curious what she thinks, having now walked beside both her parents in their dying days, at their bedside in their last moments.

Like many caring Canadians she finds the issue complicated. Perplexing. “I don't know that unless you're in it, that you can say it's wrong,” she admits. “As a Christian I know that's probably not the right thing to say,” she quickly adds.

I'm glad she is so honest.

This is a thoughtful woman trying to figure out this question of how we are to die in Canada – and what compassion in the last of our days looks like.

BACON IS not alone in her mixed feelings about the new reality of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide in Canada. In fact, 77 per cent of Canadians support physician-assisted death, according to the most recent poll.

The response from Canadian churches in general – and not surprisingly – has been strongly critical of the Supreme Court's move to

strike down the ban against physician-assisted suicide (see sidebar: Where we are with the law).

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), in partnership with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, recently responded with a *Declaration on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide*.

Along with the Christians who signed it are Jewish and Muslim leaders, all affirming the sanctity of life, and calling for the protection of the vulnerable and compassion for those near death. It presents a theology of protection, a passionate case for not killing people, even when they ask for it (www.euthanasiadeclaration.ca).

The EFC has also called for a national palliative care strategy to offer better and more consistent end-of-life care across our country, where only an estimated 16–30 per cent of Canadians have access to palliative care.

What is the connection between palliative care and physician-assisted suicide?

The vast majority of palliative care physicians in Canada are against physician-assisted suicide.

Dr. Michael Koke of Kitchener, Ont., is one of them.

“My first thought was terror,” Koke says of the moment he learned of the Supreme Court’s decision.

“It caught me off-guard. I thought I had joined a practice that was relatively safe. I thought euthanasia would come, but it would be years down the road.”

Koke, who splits his practice between oncology and palliative care, is especially troubled by the introduction of physician-assisted suicide when such a high percentage of Canadians are yet to have access to good palliative care.

“We’re offering physician-assisted suicide to people who have not received the gold standard of treatment in palliative care. It’s wrong to introduce something when the gold standard has not been optimized,” he says.

Most palliative care doctors, he says, “are against physician-assisted suicide. When it comes down to it, when I hear about 80 per cent of Canadians wanting physician-assisted suicide, what I hear is they don’t want pain and suffering when they die. If we address it with good palliative care, then I think it goes down to one or two per cent.”

Sharon Baxter is executive director of the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (www.chpca.net). Bringing good palliative care to more Canadians is what their organization is all about. *The Way Forward* is their latest initiative, a “roadmap for an integrated palliative approach to care.”

It opens with these lines: “Im-



Dr. Mike Harlos, medical director of adult and pediatric palliative care for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, says his specialty is “about living, not dying.”

agine a time when hospice palliative care is available to Canadians when and where they need it; where living well until death is the goal of care.”

Baxter concedes, “It would be a tragedy if Canadians signed up for it [physician-assisted death] without even having a consultation on pain management, on hospice. We want to make sure they have access to hospice palliative care, and have a pain consultation, and do all those things we think are necessary before anyone would proceed to that end.”

Baxter’s organization did not enter the physician-assisted suicide debate in Canada. “We thought it would be confusing to people who might think that physician-assisted death would be part of hospice. It won’t be.”

Baxter’s caution is an undercurrent that reverberates through the palliative care movement in Canada. Those who provide palliative care do not want to be categorized in anyone’s mind with physician-assisted suicide.

What is good palliative care?

Good palliative care, contrary to popular opinion, does not begin



AVERAGE AGE OF DEATH IN CANADA

WHERE WE ARE WITH THE LAW

In February 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the federal law prohibiting physician-assisted dying. The ruling applies to a competent adult who clearly consents to the termination of life and has a grievous and irremediable medical condition (including an illness, disease or disability) that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition.

The court gave governments one year to consider the development of new laws and practices for physician-assisted dying, and the government asked for a six-month extension beyond that deadline. —KS

with a death sentence and end on a deathbed.

It needs to start earlier, say the advocates – the moment the person is first diagnosed with a life-limiting condition. It is always multi-disciplinary – involving doctors, clergy or other spiritual support, community care and of course family and friends.

And if it's going to happen in Canada, it must involve training more doctors in more places to understand a life-affirming management of the end of life – especially when it comes to managing pain.

Clearly a fear of dying in excruciating pain lies beneath many people's tacit agreement with assisted death.

Dr. Mike Harlos is clinical team leader for the Canadian Virtual Hospice, an online resource for palliative care, loss and grief (www.virtualhospice.ca), and medical director of adult and pediatric palliative care for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. He is also professor and section head of palliative medicine at the University of Manitoba.

He says his speciality is “about living, not dying. We are about reclaiming living as you are dying.”

There is a man Harlos remembers who was in his early 70s and had cancer. “It was eroding his chest wall,” he says. “He was bed-ridden with pain. His physician didn't understand the complexity of his pain. He was in bed, waiting to die. After one visit, within five days he was up and doing things.”

The situation was straightforward for Harlos, trained in end-of-life pain management, but the man's doctor had not been trained in palliative care. “The man wrote me a letter thanking me for saving his life, and he died a month later.

“I didn't save a life,” says Harlos. “I saved his living.”

The heavy cost of palliative care shortages

Harlos worries about his doctor peers in remote parts of Canada, and how the introduction of physician-assisted suicide will impact them and the care they can offer.

“You go out of the main centres and you cannot find a palliative care expert. What this will ultimately result in is a legislated right to be killed to reduce suffering, but no legislated right to see an expert.

“You go up north and see someone with that horrible pain like the story I told, the whole conversation would be, ‘I can't keep living this way.’ And a doctor would say, ‘I've done all I can, but I can kill you.’

“We're not about death, we are about living. If you look at recent surveys of palliative care physicians, three-quarters of them don't think they should be involved, but

we fear it will be lumped in too.”

The bar for palliative care in Canada, says Harlos, is currently way too low, both for those who need care and those who give it.

It's time to demand more, he says.

“I would encourage people to inform themselves about what they should expect from their health care provider regarding palliative care and end-of-life care. They should raise the bar. You should expect your health care team to know what they are doing in regards to pain management, and to be available and attentive to your needs.”

Life and death in a residential hospice

Above the fireplace at the Red Deer Hospice in Red Deer, Alta., hangs a large print of vivid yellow sunflowers springing up from a field of muted greens.

There are sunflowers in other spots in this home away from home, captured in stained glass and in wall hangings that add colour and light. A large comfortable-looking armchair – the kind you find in Canadian family rooms everywhere – sits beside a hospital bed covered with a plaid blanket.



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PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO DIE IN HOSPITAL, ALTHOUGH MOST SAY THEY WANT TO DIE AT HOME

Good palliative care, contrary to popular opinion, does not begin with a death sentence and end on a deathbed.



The chair is ready for family and friends to visit whoever is living, and dying, at the hospice. This hospice has ten beds and admits on average 150 patients a year. The Red Deer Hospice is one of only approximately 76 residential hospices registered in Canada.

“We are a house of multiple losses,” explains Cheri Purpur, nurse manager. “People come here with the understanding this is the last stop.” The average length of stay is 31 days.

People enter a palliative residential hospice like this one to die. And to die well, surrounded by their family who are fully welcomed and included in the care.

“We do feel we admit the entire family when we admit a resident,” explains Purpur. “We have counsellors on staff five days a week. It’s their job to make connections with the resident and all family members, providing psychological-social care.”

The job of the hospice team, says Purpur, is to “provide as much physical comfort as we can, pain and symptom relief, and as much emotional comfort as they will allow us to provide.”

Purpur fears for what may happen to such families as euthanasia and assisted suicide become an option for the dying in Canada.

She worries about the family grief process if death is decided suddenly and then quickly scheduled. Purpur questions the idea of pain that cannot be controlled, something rare when people die in Canada with good palliative care available.

“If we have intractable pain or symptoms like nausea and vomiting that we cannot get under control – which is very rare, by the way – or extreme anxiety and emotional distress that cannot be resolved in the short time we have, there is an opportunity for that person to be



Cheri Purpur, nurse manager at Red Deer Hospice in Red Deer, Alberta, questions the idea of pain that cannot be controlled, provided that good palliative care is available.

rendered unconscious with sedation and allow their body to simply get on with the job of dying.”

This process allows the family and loved ones to “come to a place of acceptance and willingness to let go,” says Purpur. “When we do it suddenly and in a planned way, I think we may well be messing up a normal grieving process that allows a normal transition of life to take place for the loved ones left behind.”

Purpur, who was once a midwife, believes what makes euthanasia seem attractive to Canadians is “fear of the process of dying. They

are afraid of the pain they may experience, the symptoms, the general discomfort and strangeness. If we can assure people we have the ability to manage their pain – and if need be their consciousness, though we don’t do that often because it’s rarely necessary – then I think we’d have a different conversation going on. It’s the unknown they are afraid of.

“We are all going to die,” says Purpur. “None of us are going to get out of here alive. Every single dying human being deserves this kind of care at end of life.”

Enriching palliative care in Canada

Michael Koke loves his job. So does Mike Harlos. Cheri Purpur clearly does too.

They say caring for the dying has impacted their own living. “You have to be comfortable with your mortality to do palliative care,” ob-

“If we can assure people we have the ability to manage their pain, then I think we’d have a different conversation going on.”

serves Koke. “I’m hoping that the courage I’ve seen on the part of my patients will affect how I die too. It really normalizes things for me. This is a part of life.”

For Harlos it has to do with “the very foundation of reality. It is people in the worst situation they have ever been in, family and patient. You can cut through any kind of fluff and focus on just being there to help.”

It was actually in Canada where the term palliative care was born. Dr. Balfour Mount coined it – to palliate means to improve quality – after starting a new kind of care at Montreal’s Royal Victoria Hospital. It was a hospice-like ward – a palliative ward – dedicated to providing holistic care to the dying, inspired by a 1973 visit he made to study hospice care in England.

It was the first hospital wing of its kind in Canada.

Dr. Mount, known as the father of palliative care, did not feel well enough to be interviewed for this article. He has lived for years with the effects of heart problems and cancer of the esophagus.

The Globe and Mail interviewed Mount in 2013 and asked, “How are you going to die?”

This was his answer. “I have had a permanent tracheostomy for seven years. With each breath I take, I realize that I may not be able to take the next one because it takes a remarkably small amount of secretions to block the tube.

“I realize that when I become unable to care for myself, the question gets a lot more interesting. What I would never ask, even if the legislation changes, is for a doctor or anybody else to end my life intentionally... The goal isn’t to kill, but to improve quality. It is a palliative goal.” /FT

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PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO BELIEVE THAT A PALLIATIVE APPROACH TO CARE SHOULD BE AVAILABLE EARLY IN THE COURSE OF A DISEASE

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PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO SUPPORT HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE

KNOWING THE TERMS

Hospice palliative care: Care that aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life.

Integrated palliative approach to care (community-integrated palliative care): Care that focuses on meeting a person’s and family’s full range of needs – physical, psychosocial and spiritual – at all stages of a chronic progressive illness. It reinforces the person’s autonomy and right to be actively involved in his or her own care – and strives to give individuals and families a greater sense of control. It focuses on open and sensitive communication about the person’s prognosis and illness, advance care planning, psychosocial and spiritual support and pain/symptom management. As the person’s illness progresses, it includes regular opportunities to review the person’s goals and plan of care, and referrals, if required, to expert palliative care services.

Home care: Includes an array of services for people of all ages, provided in the home and community setting, that encompasses health promotion and teaching, curative intervention, end-of-life care, rehabilitation, support and maintenance, social adaptation and integration, and support for family caregivers.

Physician-assisted suicide: A physician knowingly and intentionally provides a person with the knowledge or means or both

required to end his or her own life, including counselling about lethal doses of drugs, prescribing such lethal doses or supplying the drugs. This is sometimes referred to as physician-assisted death.

Euthanasia: Knowingly and intentionally performing an act, with or without consent, that is explicitly intended to end another person’s life and that includes the following elements: the subject has an incurable illness; the agent knows about the person’s condition; commits the act with the primary intention of ending the life of that person; and the act is undertaken with empathy and compassion, and without personal gain.

Palliative sedation: The use of sedative medications for patients who are terminally ill with the intent of alleviating suffering and the management of symptoms. The intent is not to hasten death, although this may be a foreseeable but unintended consequence of the use of such medications. This is *not* euthanasia or physician-assisted death.

Withholding life-sustaining interventions: Withdrawing artificial ventilation, nutrition and similar interventions that are keeping a patient alive but are no longer wanted or indicated are *not* forms of euthanasia or physician-assisted death.

SOURCES: FIRST THREE DEFINITIONS FROM *THE WAY FORWARD NATIONAL FRAMEWORK: A ROADMAP FOR AN INTEGRATED PALLIATIVE APPROACH TO CARE* (WWW.HPCINTEGRATION.CA). LAST FOUR DEFINITIONS ADAPTED FROM THE CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, “EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED DEATH UPDATE 2014” WWW.CMA.CA



Do you want to live forever?

Contemplating death while caring for aging parents

BY RANDALL HOLM



In the last century few other sciences have surpassed the level of achievements seen in modern medicine. Penicillin, proper sanitation, improved hygiene, and advanced technologies have all worked together to raise life expectancy to bold new heights.

We have more to look forward to than most of our ancestors.

Yet here's the dirty little secret – as far as we push ahead with these medical miracles, we seem to be regressing in coping with the inevitable loss of life.

Death looms strangely larger than life in the 21st century.

When we do talk about life, we measure it in terms of quality, as if life must live up to a certain standard of best practice to be worthwhile.

But who decides what is worthwhile – the individual, the community or society at large? And what do you think about a life deemed no longer worthwhile or too costly for

our social systems to handle? What do you do?

Last May I helped my parents, now in their 80s, move from Southern Ontario to Winnipeg. They now live in assisted living housing across the street from us.

Assisted living, a surprisingly recent concept, enables seniors a significant degree of independence while also tending to many of the needs of living in bodies that are slowly falling apart.

It's an adjustment for all of us. For the better part of 38 years of my married life, my parents and I have been separated geographically by thousands of kilometres. Now they live a five-minute walk away.

But the biggest adjustment is coming, as I assume more and more of the responsibility for their affairs as they cope with mobility and memory issues.

Nothing really prepares you for this shift. Then again nothing really prepares us to get married or have children. But somehow we learn and adjust.

Call it what you may, death is an end that awaits us all. Religious convictions, moral persuasions and ethnic roots make no difference in the finiteness of our condition. We all die.

And to be honest, I suspect Christians don't cope with this reality any better than any other people group. Christians in my experience often seem to struggle with death more than others.

Many of us are trapped in a theological whirlpool of our own making. In plain text the story goes something like this.

God created Adam and Eve in all perfection – some Christians read that to mean immortal (I'll come back to this idea in a minute). Adam and Eve were given only one request – not to eat of the tree of good and evil. For if they did, death would ensue (Genesis 2:17).

When the unlucky first human pair succumbed to the wiles of a tempter, they were cast out of paradise and into a world of hardship and shame

of their own making.

At this point it makes little difference if you read this text with literal exactness or as a representation of what happens to every human being – death is the price of human disobedience.

But a closer reading raises some curious issues. While Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, death was not an immediate factor. When it did happen – recorded several chapters later – it was surprisingly anticlimactic. "Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died" (Genesis 5:5). That's all we get.

We may wonder what to make of 930 years, but when the end came, there was no lamenting its finality. A similar refrain is later played out in the deaths of the patriarchs. Missing is the angst presented by death in the modern context. Rather, death was often the opportunity to pass on a blessing to the next generation.

On this subject, I recently asked an audience if they

would choose immortality, if they could. No one raised a hand. To be fair the question was perhaps too blunt. The answer for most would be nuanced. To live forever under what circumstances? In what body? With what mind? In what company?

If truth be told, few of us really want to live forever, at least in this biosphere. As Woody Allen once quipped, “No one really wants to live forever, we just don’t want to be there when we die.”

Unfortunately few among us are dying well. The reasons are numerous. For some it is the fear of the unknown. It’s being caught between two forces – the fear of death and the fear of living in a degenerating body.

Modern medicine has complicated the question. Because a procedure can be done, should it be? At what cost to the individual? Society? Who is going to pay for it?

To use the well-worn story of the Good Samaritan, the reality is there is more than one needy or injured person on the way-side, and there simply are not enough good Samaritans or resources to tend to all of them. Choices resulting in death and life are made every day.

But what if physical death were always a natural process of creation? What if God, when He created the cosmos and declared it was very good, was referring (among other things) to a particular finite creation that moves through seasons of growth?

Might that include seasons where death is not just a thermodynamic necessity, but a swinging door that opens to new life on both sides of the divide? What if to remove “the

sting of death” as the Apostle Paul describes it (1 Corinthians 15:56), it is not death itself, but the human obsession to fight against it?


Some Christians try to reduce this sting by focusing on promises and rewards in a blissful kingdom to come. Tragically, this life then often becomes a time and place to endure until after death. Such a theology leaves little room for Jesus’ prayer for a “kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.”

For my parents a blessed hope awaits them both. In the meantime, from a modern viewpoint, their quality of life has diminished. Indeed in comparison to earlier times when my parents led active, adventurous lives, their ability to forge new horizons has virtually ended.

On most days I visit them in their modest new apartment. It is small by their standards. I listen to my father reminisce and repeat worn stories that do live in immortality. Fifty-eight years ago God gifted my parents with a round-headed baby boy. He was absolutely dependent on their caring hands. To hear them describe it, he was a gift despite the cost and many sleepless nights.

Today the circle is closing. Instead of them caring for me, I care for them. In due course they will cross a divide. But for now I cherish the moments we spend together.

As their quality of life ebbs, mine flows in this opportunity to care for their vulnerabilities. And something tells me God is looking on and smiling and saying, “Very good.” /FT

 Randall Holm is associate professor of biblical studies at Providence University College in Otterburne, Man.



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ARMENIAN REFUGEES

RESPONDING TO A REFUGEE CRISIS IN 1915





As our country responds to the Syrian refugee crisis, let's examine how we treated the Armenians fleeing Turkey exactly a century ago

By Peter Bush

As the city of Smyrna was aflame in mid-September 1922, Canadian nurse Sara Corning led groups of children through the streets to safety. Smyrna (present-day Izmir, Turkey) was the last refuge in Turkey for Armenians and others fleeing the systematized massacres and forced

exiles that began in Turkey in 1915. Corning had arrived in Smyrna aboard an American naval destroyer to run a clinic caring for the sick and wounded as the city fell to the Turkish army.

Her clinic had been overrun twice by the Turkish military, who ordered it closed. Corning and her colleagues then turned their efforts to getting the children, primarily Armenian and Greek girls, out of the local orphanage to safety.

Again and again, Corning and the two others with her led small groups of orphans through the burning streets – the fire basically destroyed the city – to boats on the beach. In the end, 5,000 children were rescued by American sailors from the destroyer anchored offshore and taken to safety.

When Corning got the children to Greece, she arranged them on the beach for a photograph spelling out the words “Second Corinthians 1:8–11,”

a message to the rest of the world. Those verses read:

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

Armenian refugees in Syria in 1915.

Corning, who grew up just outside Yarmouth, N.S., had

trained as a nurse in the United States. Feeling a call to the mission field, she joined the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and was sent to the Ottoman Empire (present-day Turkey).

Corning was not the only Canadian to join the ABCFM. Nearly 50 other Canadians served with the mission in the Ottoman Empire between 1879 and 1922. All would be witness to and impacted by the violence directed at Armenians and other Christians during this period.

HISTORY OF PERSECUTION

Armenia was the first nation in the world to adopt Christianity as its official religion (in AD 301), but by the 19th century was part of an Islamic empire. Armenians were concentrated in what we now call eastern Turkey, but were also a minority throughout the empire.

The persecution of the Armenians as an ethnic and religious minority began in 1878. At first, attacks were localized and unco-ordinated, and followed by periods of calm. By the late 1890s, the massacres

and oppression became more frequent and were supported by the military. Again, there were peaks of violence followed by lulls.

Among the first people to bring the plight of the Armenians to the attention of the Canadian public (four decades before Corning rescued the children of Smyrna) were William Nesbitt Chambers and his brother Robert, missionaries who grew up just south of Woodstock, Ont.

In 1880, a year after they arrived in Erzroum (now Erzurum, Turkey), they co-wrote with several other Canadians an open letter “To the Canadian Public” asking for financial aid to assist starving Armenians in eastern Turkey.

The letter received wide circulation in Canada thanks to George M. Grant, principal of Queen’s University, an ordained Presbyterian minister and one of the most influential Canadians of his day. (The Chambers brothers were also Presbyterian and had studied at Queen’s and later Princeton Seminary.)

Grant submitted the Chambers letter to the *Toronto Globe*,

along with an introduction of his own, arguing that Canadians needed to respond because “The only gleam of hope for the future of those lands [the Ottoman empire in particular and the Middle East in general] that we can discern in the confusion and present despair are in the mission churches, schools, and colleges.”

Later in the year the letter was republished in a variety of Christian periodicals.

Grant continued to support the Armenian cause, and he was joined by other prominent Canadians. Well-known author J. Castell Hopkins, a Toronto journalist and historian, published *The Sword of Islam, or, Suffering Armenia* in 1896, with a preface penned by the Anglican Archbishop of Toronto.

MASS IMMIGRATION REJECTED

During the violence of 1896–1897, Canadian citizens urged the government to open the doors to mass Armenian immigration in the same way the government had opened Canada’s doors to allow large numbers of Ukrainians and other Eastern European immi-

grants into Canada to settle the West.

But the government responded unfavourably to the suggestion. Armenians were regarded as Asians and not Europeans, and the government had placed strict limits on the number of Asians allowed into Canada.

Missionaries in Turkey continued working in schools and with congregations as the violence worsened, convinced the gospel was the hope of the world to bring salvation both spiritually and physically. They also sought to help displaced people as well as widows and orphans.

On April 14, 1909, the Chambers family were living in Adana, Turkey, when groups of soldiers and armed citizens rampaged through the Armenian section of the city.

The Chambers lived in a house with a walled garden, connected to a larger mission compound which included a school for girls. As the rampage grew, a teacher from the girls’ school led her students through the compound to the relative safety of the foreign missionary residence.

Meanwhile, as an armed mob bent on destruction came up the street, Nesbitt Chambers was ushering, sometimes literally dragging, Armenians from the street into the garden as fast as he could. An Armenian pastor was killed right in front of him as Chambers closed the garden gate to protect those already inside.

That night about a thousand people found safety in the Chambers’ house and garden as the massacre continued outside the walls.



William Nesbitt Chambers, circa 1880, an early advocate for the Armenian people; Armenian orphans in Syria, 1917.



PHOTOS (PREVIOUS SPREAD AND THIS PAGE): PUBLIC DOMAIN



Canadian missionary nurse Sara Corning led many Armenian orphans out of Smyrna to safety aboard an American destroyer in September 1922.

FIRST WORLD WAR

In the early 1910s, James A. Macdonald, editor of the *Toronto Globe* and a Presbyterian minister, used his position to educate Canadians about the conditions facing the Armenians and raise money to aid the refugees.

But the First World War broke out in 1914, and in Turkey the last bits of trust and tolerance for minorities disappeared. By 1915 the sporadic anti-Armenian violence became an ongoing push to exile, including conscriptions which often became death marches.

Estimates of the number of Armenians killed throughout the period range from a low of 800,000 to a high of 1.6 million. An additional 250,000 Assyrian Christians were also killed.

Many Canadian missionaries returned to Canada for the duration of the war. However, some stationed in eastern Tur-

key were forced to go with the exiled Armenians and became stuck behind military lines.

Ira Pierce was a Congregationalist missionary who had been educated at McGill University in Montreal. He and his wife Georgina had been at their missionary post in Harput (now Elazi, Turkey) only 17 months when government officials closed Euphrates College, which the ABCFM operated. This was November 1915. All foreign staff were ordered to leave.

Following “a most trying journey,” the Pierces and others arrived in Beirut, Lebanon, where they were forced to wait out the duration of the war. Upon his return to Canada, Ira Pierce became the secretary of the Canadian Armenian Relief Committee, a coalition of prominent Canadians including church leaders seeking

ways to respond to the needs of Armenians.

THE GEORGETOWN BOYS

The massacres and dislocations of the early 1920s left many Armenian children orphaned and with little chance of finding the stability they needed to survive and flourish.


The Canadian Armenian Relief Committee purchased a 200-acre orchard near Georgetown, Ont., and opened a farm for orphaned Armenian boys. All the committee’s political savvy was required to obtain an Order in Council from the federal cabinet to get the Armenians into Canada. At the farm the boys were housed, fed and cared for. They received an education and worked on farms in the area. The first group of 40 arrived on June 30, 1923. The number would grow to a total of 109 young men.

They became known as “The

Georgetown Boys.” A small number of girls were also brought to Canada and served as domestic help in homes in Georgetown and Toronto.

This initiative has been referred to as “Canada’s Noble Experiment.” A historical marker near the Cedarvale Farm stands as a testimony to this effort to make a difference.

As present-day Canadians consider how to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, the examples of Canadian Christians involved in the Armenian crisis are vividly relevant. What might we do to show generosity and welcome to displaced, persecuted and shattered people coming from the Middle East? **/FT**

 Peter Bush of Winnipeg is pastor of Westwood Presbyterian Church and editor of *Presbyterian History* (see its Fall 2015 issue at www.presbyterian.ca/ newsletters for more about Armenia and the Chambers family). He grew up in Lebanon and Iran with missionary parents.



HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR MP

A new government means new Members of Parliament – and a fresh opportunity to present what matters to you BY PATRICIA PADDEY

The pollsters called it, but it's fair to say the results of the 2015 federal election still came as a shock to many Canadians.

When Justin Trudeau's Liberals swept to power with a 184-seat majority government on October 19, the change they had promised to deliver began immediately.

Former Members of Parliament (MPs) shut down their official websites and cleaned out desks even as newly elected MPs began the process of hiring staff, securing accommodations in Ottawa, and establishing constituency offices. There would be travel and communications logistics to comprehend, parliamentary committee assignments to wrangle and briefings to attend.

Over and above all of that busyness, the new MPs began receiving

immediate requests for help from constituents, many of whom no doubt had high expectations and even higher hopes as a result of the "changing of the guard" in our nation's capital.

Stephen Woodworth was one of the election's many casualties. He represented the electoral district of Kitchener Centre in the House of Commons for the Conservative party from 2008 to 2015. He says it's both good and necessary for citizens to reach out to their Member of Parliament when they have an issue they are concerned about.

"In a democracy we have a stewardship obligation to be fully engaged citizens," he explains. Doing so means devoting a reasonable amount of time and effort to influencing public events and decision makers.

But it's important that the relationships citizens establish with

their representatives be constructive ones. Woodworth recommends that people temper their political communications by reminding themselves of the need for a loving approach to every issue and person.

"Political effort depends upon relationships," he says. "The voices of those with whom an MP has established a positive relationship will be heard above the voices of unknown persons."

Ensuring your voice is heard

How does a concerned citizen go about making sure their voice gets heard, that it rises above the cacophony of competing voices and demands that face each new MP?

Physical letters are one way. In this day of instant digital communications, sending an email might be tempting because it's both quick and easy to do, but former MPs say it's not unusual to get inundated

338

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ACROSS CANADA

197

NUMBER OF FIRST-TIME MPS IN THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT

88

NUMBER OF SEATS OCCUPIED BY WOMEN IN THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT

PHOTO: JULIEN HAUTCOEUR / SHUTTERSTOCK; STATS SOURCE: LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT



with electronic messages daily, whereas communications that arrive by Canada Post, courier or which are hand-delivered tend to stand out.

“Describe the situation [about which you are concerned] in detail,” says Joy Smith when asked what kinds of letters are most effective. She served in the Canadian House of Commons from 2004 to 2015 and in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba before that (from 1999 to 2003). Today she runs the Joy Smith Foundation, a charitable organization that works to end human trafficking.

“If you just send a letter that says, ‘I want to meet with you,’ you won’t get a meeting. But if you send a letter that describes the situation and explains why it’s of paramount importance, and that you’ll meet either with [the MP] or with their staff, then you will.”

Smith explains MPs spend a fair bit of time travelling, so if a concern is urgent, people need to be willing to deal with other staff members in the MPs office. “The staffer touches base with the Member of Parlia-

ment every day,” she says. “And they will keep them updated.”

Letters written by individuals are more effective than form letters, and concise letters are better than long or rambling ones. Finally, letters that avoid negative personal comments directed at the MP are more likely to be sympathetically received.



“In a democracy we have a stewardship obligation to be fully engaged citizens,” Stephen Woodworth explains.

Avoiding pitfalls

As for phone calls, both Woodworth and Smith describe their usefulness as limited. People can be “too easily distracted during phone calls,” Woodworth says. So, “Any important presentation should be made in person or in writing.”

“When you get multiple phone calls, they sort of get lost in the fray,” admits Smith.

Issues and concerns can also go amiss if they arrive on a new MP’s desk too soon after an election. The first three months in office is a time during which they are getting “their sea legs,” Smith says. “They’re often overwhelmed, they don’t know what all they’re supposed to do. They don’t even know the rules

of the House [of Commons] yet.”

Early morning is the best time of day to reach out to an MP. Gifts are not welcome – they are unnecessary and MPs are not allowed to accept anything of significant value. And if you feel you must arrive at your MP’s office without a scheduled meeting, go with a letter in hand that outlines your concern clearly.

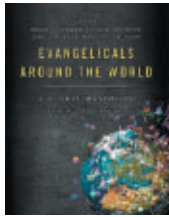
Finally, Woodworth says it’s important to remember MPs are people who face obstacles and temptations every day just like the rest of us. People of faith ought to pray for Members of Parliament, he says, from the prime minister on down.

“The primary obstacles that MPs face are spiritual ones,” he explains, including “the temptations of ambition, greed, envy, anger, self-indulgence, hatred, discouragement, factionalism, and undoubtedly many more. Spiritual armour is a special need, and so the great necessity for God’s grace is obvious. We should ask it for them.” /FT



Patricia Paddey of Mississauga, Ont., is a senior writer for *Faith Today*.

REVIEWS



Evangelicals Around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21st Century
 Editors:
 Brian C. Stiller,
 Todd M. Johnson,

Karen Stiller, Mark Hutchinson
 Thomas Nelson, 2015. 422 pages.
 \$32 [e-book \$20]

Energy pours off the pages – defiant, even frenetic efforts to succeed in evangelizing unreached peoples, awaken churches and reconcile bitterly divided brethren

HERE IS a handbook useful in many situations. Are you dealing with misunderstandings about Evangelicals? Or between them? Are you leading younger generations to hear their godly callings? Do you need inspiration from evangelical life histories, or contacts with evangelical networks in business or politics or the arts, right around the world?

Here’s certainly a good start, thanks to a highly qualified team of 45 authors and four editors led by Canadian Brian Stiller, global ambassador for the World Evangelical Alliance. Their 53 articles are organized thematically – from gender to social justice to prayer and religious liberty – and geographically.

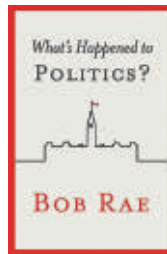
The whole matter of Evangelicals (including the book itself) has the glow of the miraculous around it. A globe-encompassing forest, emerging from mind-boggling diversity and still-raging fires of persecution and strife? Yet look! Here is a people that was not a people.

It makes for suspenseful history

and science worthy of a Hollywood blockbuster – indeed filmmakers ought to seek their hearts’ desires here too. Evangelical pioneers are epoch-making risk takers like Wycliffe, Tyndale, Carey, Zinzendorf and Wilberforce who inspired boldness on every continent down to today.

Energy pours off the pages – defiant, even frenetic efforts to succeed in evangelizing unreached peoples, awaken churches at home and reconcile bitterly divided brethren in new alliances.

Questions cry out too: What can be done for the world’s least evangelical continent, Europe (4 per cent)? What happened in Brazil and Nigeria to bring such growth in the number of Evangelicals between 1970 and 2010 (fivefold and sevenfold, respectively)? How do insider movements – where Jesus believers try to remain in their former faith communities – work? What does a Kingdom-of-God workplace look like? Complete answers are rarely given here, but good starts abound. —A. M. THOMAS



What’s Happened to Politics?

By Bob Rae
 Simon and Schuster, 2015.
 176 pages.
 \$25 [e-book \$14]

THIS IS a captivating look at the

current political scene in Canada. As Rae admits, it is “not a memoir or an exercise in nostalgia. It is a reflection on some lessons learned, many after defeats rather than victories. More than anything, it is meant to open a conversation, one which, as a country, we desperately need to have.”

In turn Rae considers developments in Canadian politics, leadership, policy, aboriginal affairs, democracy and Canada’s place in the world. He writes with a wide background in political affairs at the provincial and national levels, and with knowledge of both American and Canadian history, significant world leaders and international issues.

His references to former national leaders including Roosevelt, Churchill, John A. Macdonald, Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, Lester B. Pearson and Wilfrid Laurier are fascinating and timely. He makes penetrating comments about the claims of Aboriginal Peoples, the undue concentration of power in the Prime Minister’s Office, the need to raise the level of civility in the House of Commons, and to elevate the role and responsibility of Members of Parliament.

It is a thoughtful, searching book which will repay careful study. “It is a call to action to change the focus from rhetoric and spin to political decision making based on



Beloved Child of God
 By Chris Bray
 Independent, 2013.
 www.chrisbraymusic.com.
 \$13 [digital \$10]

WORSHIP LEADER, speaker and songwriter Chris Bray is one busy guy these days. A full-time travelling worship artist and speaker, he has an aggressive tour schedule that takes him all over North America in his efforts to unite Christians of various denominations as one Body in Christ, reach the unchurched and revive the lapsed.

Still, he finds the time to record. *Beloved Child of God*, his third album, has garnered

him numerous top 10 Canadian Christian radio hits and several Covenant award nominations from Canada’s Gospel Music Association.

A devout Catholic, Bray had a life-changing experience at a charismatic service at his home church while in his teens. His music and evangelical lyrics show deep faith and passion for ministry. While some people may see the elements of Catholicism and evangelism as con-

trasting, they actually work very well together in his ministry.

The contrast on this album exists not between religious traditions, but between music and lyrics. Bray’s songs are light and poppy with infectious, radio-friendly hooks that grab and don’t let go. It’s hard to resist moving your feet to his light rock, folk and country sounds. However, the words pack a surprisingly serious punch and say, “Hold on, you might want to

sit still and listen to this.”

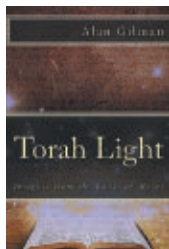
Bray’s lyrics are often introspective and deeply prayerful, yet at times also seem effortlessly relevant to individual listeners. In songs such as “I Surrender All,” “Seek the Things Above” and the title track, he’s writing about himself as much as he’s writing to his listeners. He has a light, folksy and very honest delivery that invites all to share and really commit to God.

—TERRY BURMAN

shared values, ideas and character,” as Phil Fontaine has said.

Following the recent election, it may well prove prophetic.

—ALLISON A. TRITES



Torah Light:
Insights From the
Books of Moses
By Alan Gilman
CreateSpace, 2014.
240 pages. \$20

DO YOU spend as much time reading the Old Testament as the New? Many Christians I know say the New Testament seems more relevant to them.

In this book, however, Messianic Jewish author Alan Gilman illustrates how the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, permeates and informs the rest of the Bible. These books are “foundational to the understanding of all Scripture,” he writes.

Without the Torah the rest of the Bible would be much weaker and more confusing – it undergirds morality, worship, sexual ethics, the doctrines of God and salvation, and much more.

Gilman, who lives in Ottawa, began writing short weekly commentaries on different parts of the Torah in the late 1990s on his website www.TorahBytes.org.

This book is his first printed compilation, containing 54 of his best writings, roughly an equal number from each of the five books from Genesis to Deuteronomy. Each message starts by providing some background and discussion on a passage and then moves to personal application.

The chapters on God’s holiness and omnipresence struck me as being sympathetic to Reformed theology.

The book is easy to read, practical and highly devotional.

—ROB ROBOTHAM

Canadian creatives



“In my Prayer Machines I like to use kinetic, hand-driven motion as a compositional element for the art. I challenge the viewer to engage in a tactile way to get the full effect. I want the work to be beautiful to look at, invite reflection, stimulate ideas, and then further spark the imagination when you touch it and it moves.”

Imagination Is My Carnival of Prayer
(steel wire, mixed media, wood base)
by James Paterson
www.jdpaterson.com

Reading THE BESTSELLERS



The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up
By Marie Kondo
Ten Speed Press, 2014.
224 pages.
\$19.99 (e-book \$11.99)

WHEN PICKING UP this book, you might be tempted to expect a how-to manual, but Marie Kondo’s inaugural work is more of a self-help manifesto. The book is centred on Kondo’s personal system of organization and the belief that tidying your home is the key to a happy life.

Her advice is predictably simple – get rid of anything that doesn’t bring you joy, and find a place for the rest. The book contains her argument for being tidy, practical suggestions for cleaning and organizing, and ends with the transformational results you should experience. Along the way there are a good deal of stories

and anecdotes from her childhood and clients.

Kondo writes that doing this will not only streamline your home, but also help you deal with your past, lose weight, enhance your beauty and give you a new start on life. The foundation for these beliefs comes from a hodgepodge of spiritual approaches, from thanking your items for their service to the notion that the energy of items given away will return to you.

Kondo’s message of finding happiness in simplicity is nothing new, but its popularity indicates it won’t be quieting down anytime soon. Her transformational claims often feel more outrageous than realistic, but her main point rings true – getting your house in order will dramatically change your atmosphere and lifestyle.

If that appeals to you, then this book is a good place to start. —SARAH VAN BEVEREN

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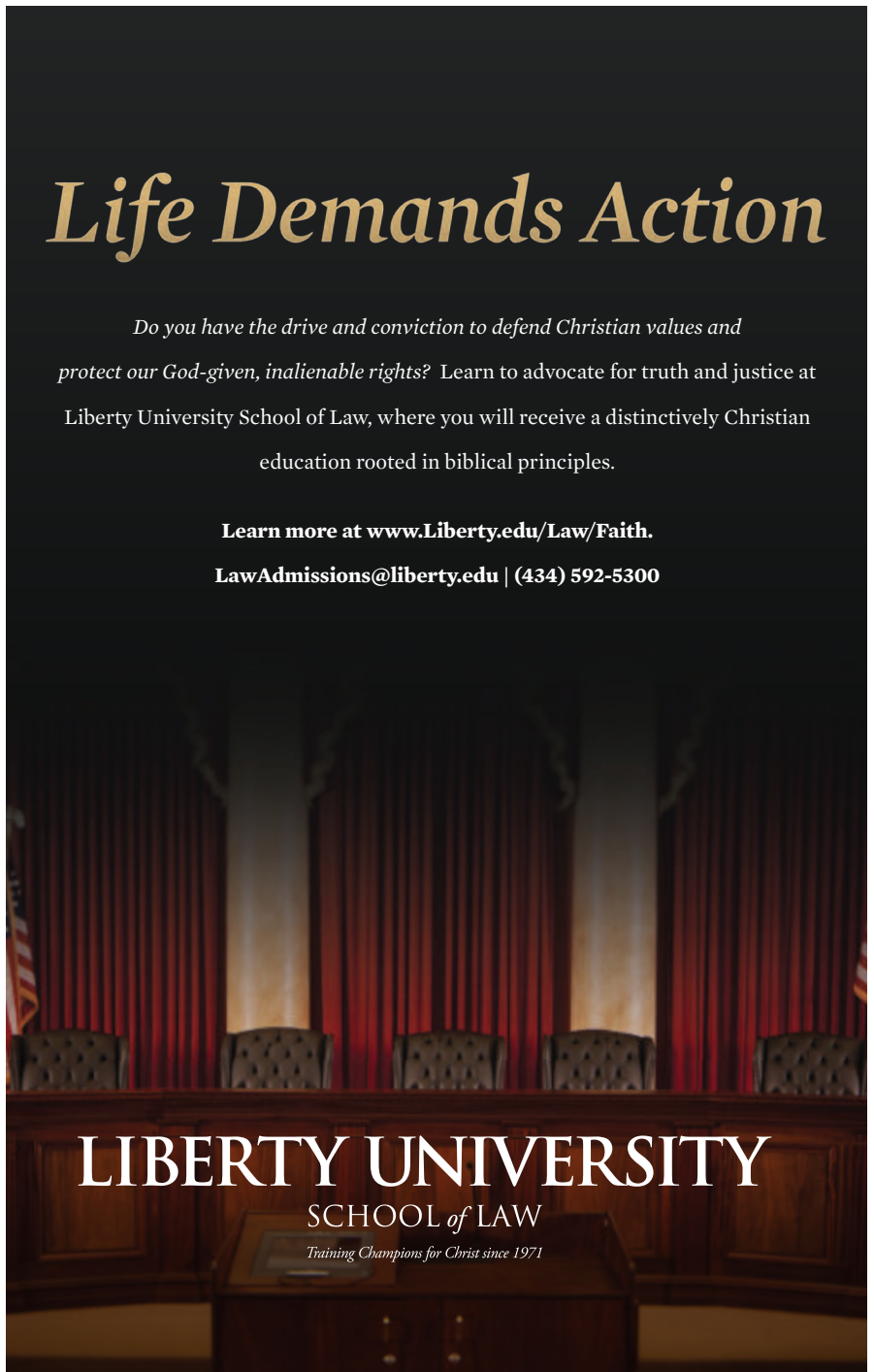
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international students at the Richmond Cultural Centre and Richmond Olympic Oval, TWU Richmond opened its own doors to the public at 5900 Minoru Boulevard, Richmond, in the fall of 2015.

"Without all those amazing instructors and the staff, I would have likely given up so many times," said Leslie. "Trinity Western and the students that I attended my classes with almost became an extension of my family. I cannot say enough good things about my experience at Trinity and I cannot thank them enough."

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Jerush Nava (BA Human Services – Social Work 2014) learned practical skills in her internship and now works as a youth worker and site supervisor alongside the Toronto District School Board. She creates programs that provide tutoring and mentoring to at-risk youth and low-income families.

Peter Adourian (BA History 2011) is a student-at-law, articling with Derfel Injury Law in North York. He is expected to obtain his full licence next summer. "I feel called to a career in advocacy, representing people who are in need," says Peter. "My career as a lawyer will always be built on that principle."

Renee Heemskerck (BA Business Administration – International Development 2015), has been instrumental in responding to the needs of HIV-positive children in India. As a project administrator for Partners International, Renee helped locals build a home where these children are cared for.

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Time to change

Has growing up with otherworldly parents made us too worldly?

Some of us Canadian Evangelicals need to stop congratulating ourselves on how impressively we have escaped from our conservative upbringings.

I, for instance, grew up among Plymouth Brethren in Northern Ontario, which is not a community renowned for its theological sophistication. “How far I’ve come,” I’m sometimes tempted to say.

Yes, I’ve come pretty far from those Christians’ focus on the Bible – their “sword drills” to teach kids where to find verses in Scripture; their overbearing expectations of Bible memorization; their home libraries full of elementary biblical reference works; their weekly Bible studies to which anyone, no matter how uneducated, would be encouraged to contribute; and their long (sometimes hilariously long, sometimes just teeth-grindingly long) Bible-based sermons.

Yes, I’ve come pretty far from those Christians’ worship practices – their weekly, hour-plus-long communion services before the main Sunday morning meeting; their singing of old-fashioned, multiverse hymns with archaic vocabularies, unnatural syntax and thick doctrine; their rolling prayers swirling from one obscure biblical allusion to another; and their silence, their willingness to sit, sometimes for uncomfortably long periods, in utter quietness before God and the symbols of His Son’s sacrifice for us.

Yes, I’ve come pretty far from their relentless emphasis on evangelism – the clever techniques to divert any conversation, no matter the subject, to spiritual matters; the simple formulas by which they

presented the gospel (with the appropriate proof texts at each stage); and the insistence that the imminent return of the Lord gave us no time to lose in witnessing to anyone we could.

That tradition taught me little about how to engage in business or the professions, to engage in politics or art, or to properly enjoy romance or leisure. It also made me suspicious of fellow Christians – Presbyterian, Anglican, United, Catholic – who doubtless loved Jesus and did His work in the world.

But if that community was narrow, it was also deep – deep in regard for Scripture, deep in commitment to prayer and worship, deep in concern for and mission to the lost, and deep in relationship with each other.

And a crucial difference between them and so many of us “graduates” is both simple and revealing – time on task.

We joke about how often they were in the church building – services, study groups, potluck meals, youth work and more. We’re liberated from all that obsessive and isolating churchgoing, to do what?

To worship more and better than they did? To form stronger relationships with other Christians than they did? To learn the Bible more soundly, to evangelize more effectively, to think more frequently and lovingly about the Lord Jesus than they did?

What chance does our faith have to grow, our minds to mature, our relationships to improve, and our effectiveness to increase if we spend less time, and even *far* less time, on spiritual things and in spiritual fellowship than did our forebears?

What chance does our faith have to grow if we spend less time on spiritual things than our forebears?

I fear some of us congratulate ourselves on nothing other than worldliness – on incurring less social scorn and feeling more connected with our culture than did those sectarian Christians simply because we live exactly as do our family-focused, sports-loving, shopping-mad, work-obsessed and commuting-exhausted neighbours.

What to do?

The first step, of course, is to recognize we have a problem. Where your treasure – and time – is, there shall your heart be also.

The second step is to start where we *can* start – with ourselves. It’s unlikely we can suddenly adopt a half dozen radical spiritual disciplines, so let’s begin with one or two.

The third step is to decide what, in our jam-packed schedules, will have to be reduced or removed to make time for these new or improved pursuits of prayer, study, worship, fellowship or mission. This is where “the cost of discipleship” will bite – not in adding one more thing to an already overcrowded life, but in reducing or even purging something we currently like that simply must be ... sacrificed.


A fourth step is to undertake this change in the company of others, even just a few, who also want to get more serious about a more serious Christian life.

And guess what? We can expect to be condemned as narrow and weird and even contemptible – even to other Christians. Just like the Methodists and Pietists and Puritans were.

And just like my beloved Plymouth Brethren forebears were.

Yes, to be more deeply Christian, maybe we’ll have to look more than a little odd.

It’s about time. /FT

 John Stackhouse teaches at Crandall University in Moncton, N.B. Visit www.faithtoday.ca/brethren to read some of his additional reflections on this topic.

J. I. PACKER

An Evangelical Life

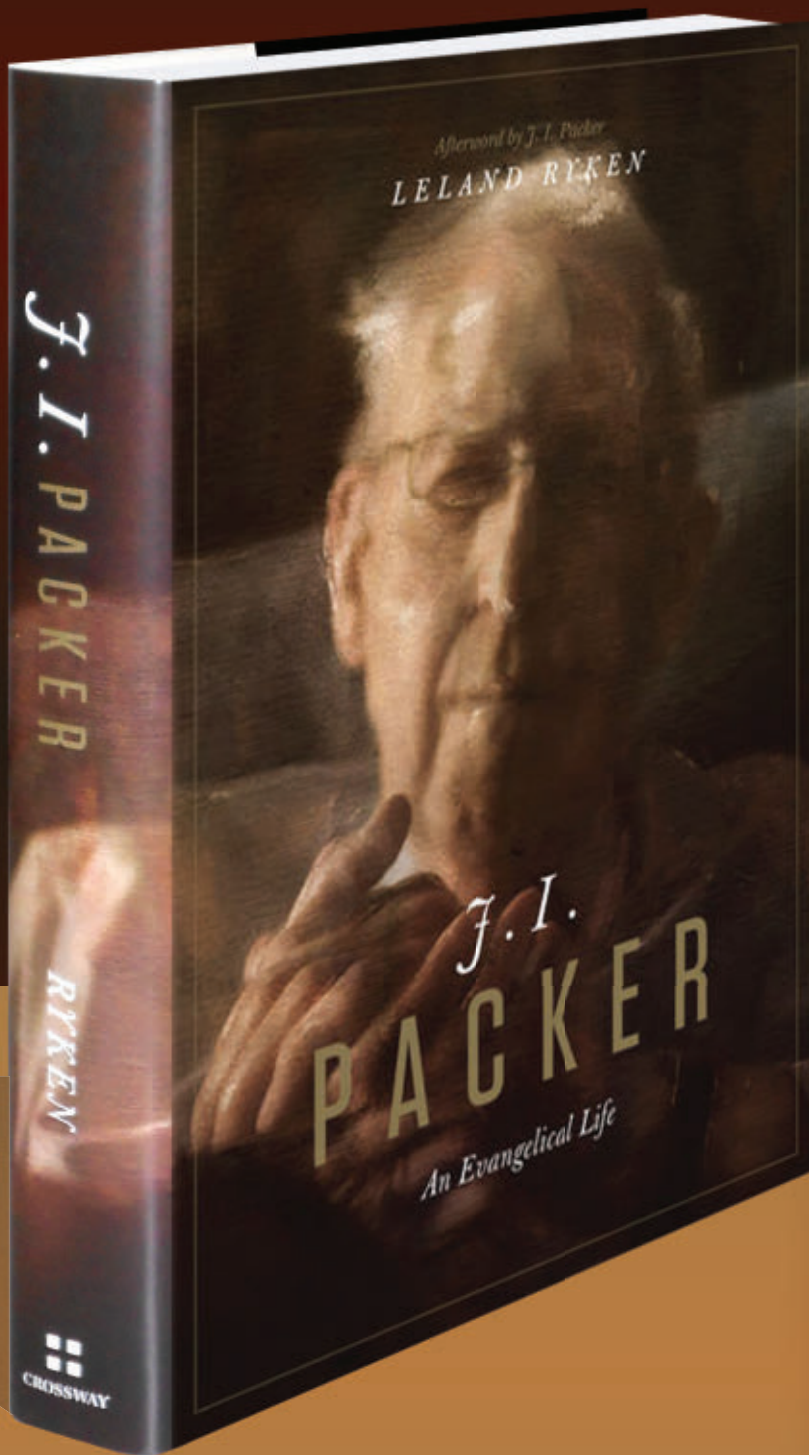
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J. I. Packer is a British-born Canadian Christian theologian in the low church Anglican and Reformed traditions. He currently serves as the Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C.



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WORDS FROM THE *Editor*

Welcome to *LOVE IS MOVING*, a magazine that exists to empower Christian youth across the nation to fearlessly live out God's love.

It is published by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and distributed along with the EFC's compelling magazine *Faith Today*. A new issue appears every two months.

In your hands is the first ever print edition, published after a two-year digital-only trial under the former name *Love In Action*.

We want to thank all of the participants, writers and dreamers who have been living out God's love in their daily lives through their gifting and love for God. If there's one thing we are confident in this New Year, it's that God is moving!

As members of the body of Christ, our job is to be the salt and light of this world, to love one another and dynamically enrich the kingdom of God. The vision and hope for LIM is to provide a platform where young Christians can showcase various ways they are actively living God's love in and outside of their community. It is a place where young Christians can submit articles or creative pieces to complement physical,

social, political and spiritual events that are stirring, concerning or indifferent to the population.

As you flip through the magazine, you will encounter creative pieces written and driven to reveal ways you can be encouraged to find Love this New Year – God's love. It is undeniably easy put most of our efforts into romantic relationships, or attaining material things. However, we encourage you to seek first His kingdom (Matthew 6:33) and His love, and as you do so, we assure you that everything else will fall into place.

If you, or someone you know would like to be a part of LIM magazine by writing, you can contact editor Crileidy Liriano directly at Crileidy@loveismoving.ca.

Love is Moving/LIM MAGAZINE

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WHAT IS LOVE IS MOVING?

LOVE IS MOVING magazine is part of a movement to empower Christian youth to a revived biblical understanding of God's love and to live it out in the world through their actions.

Over the last five years God has poured out His favour on this movement, resulting in co-operation from multiple national partners and the creation of booklets and DVDs, media resources, an app, a television series and a magazine.

Thanks to the creative work of volunteers in different parts of the country, the ministry has been able to reach thousands of young people, like you, via articles and poetry. The learning resources provide educational content on God's love and encourage participants to join the movement by physically going into their communities and living it out. The media materials offer inspiring content from remarkable Christian leaders including Bruxy Cavey, Sean McDowell, Sid Koop, James Penner, Ralph Winter, Andy Crouch, Peter Rollins and many more.

This past fall, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) brought the leaders of this movement into its network for expanded national ministry. The vision shared

by all involved is to unite Christian youth like you, in local churches across Canada, to revitalize all of our understanding of God's love, to help us all make a greater impact for the kingdom of God, and to help grow the future of the local church.

You are invited to join the movement, which is all about using the gifting and abilities of Christian youth in Canada to help encourage other Christian youth. We are always looking for volunteers who have a passion for God, who have a heart for others, and who want to influence Christian youth.

If you are between the ages of 13 and 24, have a love for writing and are looking for a way to motivate other Christian youth in Canada through your God-given gifting and abilities, we would love to hear from you.

Send us an email at info@loveismoving.ca or contact our senior editor at Crileidy@loveismoving.ca for more information on how you could get your writing in our magazine.

Co-founders
Benjamin Porter and Joel Gordon



Isaac Godwin and Amelia Jordan are featured on the cover of this issue.

Marital status: Engaged to be married on May 14, 2016

Occupation: Isaac – university student & sales representative, Amelia – retail manager

Isaac's career goal: Pastor or work in full-time ministry

Amelia's career goal: Midwife

Favourite Bible chapter: Romans 8

Cover design: Kelly Saunders

Cover photo: Erin Gordon

A New Year *NOT* on Netflix

By: Conor Sweetman

True passion is the be-all and end-all of human life. Passion gives us a reason to get out of bed when our minds are in the pleasant haze of sleep, and there is literally nothing more appealing than the thought of ten more minutes of dozing.

Passion provides the determination to persevere through a failed performance on stage, when the piano notes just don't flow effortlessly, or when our mind freezes in front of the crowd and the words catch in our throat, leaving us breathless and humiliated.

Passion allows us to work toward a goal and fall in love with something worthwhile – something that lights a fire in the chest and adds excitement to the ordinary.

In an era where binge-watching Netflix has become a social norm, where scrolling listlessly through Instagram is how we spend spare minutes, and the boredom of school melds mindlessly into boredom at home, it's no wonder life can feel dull and pointless. It makes complete sense that we crave the

passionate love portrayed in movies and listen to rappers who sing about how much work and “grind” they put into their craft.

In these moments, on the screen or through our earbuds, we get a glimpse into a mind that is on fire for something, it has a reason and a purpose which drives them forward and elevates life to a grand narrative.

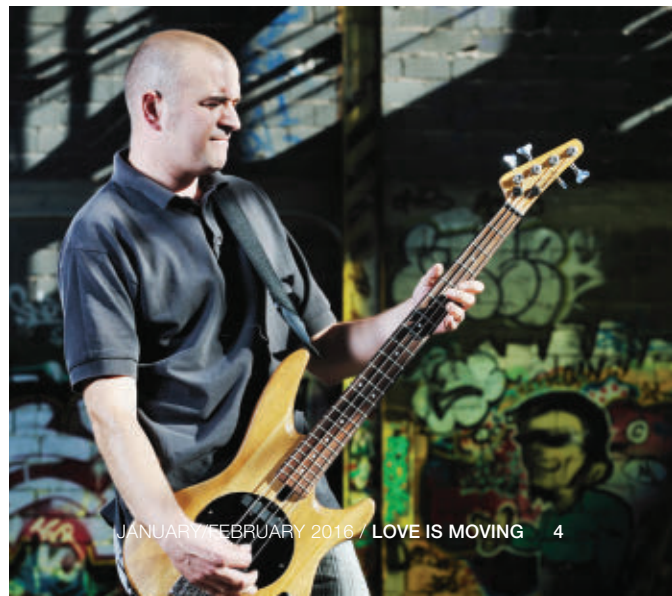
A mission tailored to your skills and personality

God has declared a mission that is extremely personal over each individual's life, tailored to his or her skills, personality and cultural context. It is important we recognize the moments in our day-to-day experience that catch our attention as something extraordinary – the holy mundane – and then take measures to capitalize on them.

Like Jesus described in the parable of the talents, we must make use of whatever God has gifted us. Life truly gains purpose, and even monotonous days become exciting, when dedication to God intersects with a specific, personal passion that enriches our life.

So we need to find the small joys, like solving a math problem, or writing poetry, or going on bike rides, or perfecting a guitar solo – whatever brings you a twang of contentment deep in your personhood – for these may be what God wants to magnify and implement in the ministry of your life.

It might seem sentimental to write in such emotional terms, but this stuff is of utmost importance. True joy is not found in bragging about the fact that you watched five seasons of *Suits* in a month. It's found in the moments where you glean gold in your spirit, realizing who God made you to be, and what He desires to bring to a broken world through you.



Creative God, Creative Minds

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

By: Mike Bonikowski

The safeguards were neglected
Although the risks were known
(The cost was prohibitive,
The research inconclusive),
And so it's been unprotected
That I go to spend my hours
With you, Reactor.

So make fast the seals behind me
That guard the outside world.
Ring me round and draw me down
Into your hermetic chambers
Past the lead-lined doors into
The glow of your great
And terrible heart.

If this is love, I am neither trained
Nor equipped to endure it.
For you blaze and are not consumed,
I am burnt but not made warm.
You radiate as I decay.
You will never reach your half-life,
But the cancer in me is already old.

So tell me your stories and I will laugh.
Sing me your songs and I will listen.
Ask me your questions and I will answer.
But show me your heart and I will reply,
I am not here to love or to befriend,
But only to wait and to watch
And to try not to die.



Identity

Finding Myself in My Father

Crisis

By: Emily Cook

When you're single, you often hear this line: "You have to be a whole person before you find a partner. God should be the One who completes you." Which is absolutely true, but it's not just about being whole before you find a romantic relationship, it's also about maintaining your identity while in the midst of a relationship.

The thing with identity is that it's a constantly changing, evolving thing. Sometimes the changes are for good, and sometimes for bad. Because your identity isn't something you reflect on all the time, it can be hard to notice when you've started defining it by the wrong things.

For Christians, identity means so much more than how we define ourselves, it's about how God sees us too. If we are Christians, then we should be striving to be more like Christ in everything we do. Our whole identity is meant to be centred on our worth as children of God and our desire to be more like Christ.

This isn't just a Sunday-School message that's meant to make us pray or read our Bible more; this finding identity in Christ is for our own good (as everything else written in the Bible is).

The danger that threatens our identity in a relationship is also the most beautiful part of a relationship – love. God created us to crave and seek out love. It's part of our nature. However, when in love it's easy to get our worth from the person we're in love with. They

validate us, they tell us we're beautiful, they make us feel safe, and they're a dedicated support in our life. If we aren't paying attention, we may suddenly find nothing matters more than that loved one's opinion of us.

**God created us
to crave and seek
out love.**

That's where the danger lies. There are a lot of people who get caught in abusive relationships, or ones where they just aren't happy, because they're scared to lose the validation and worth they get from being the "treasured" person in someone else's life.

God's love is nothing like that. God's love is never changing. It's not something we need to work for, and certainly not something we are even able to earn. It's not dependent upon how we look that day, or what season of life we're in. He won't let us down. He always wants the best for us and in His infinite wisdom knows how to bring the best out. In His love there is no pain, hurt or rejection. Our identity is completely and totally secure in His love.

That's why it's so important to be confident of our identity in Christ's love, because with that as our foundation, and that as the truth we centre our soul on, we can face relationships and breakups and in the end still come out whole – bruised maybe, but never broken.

People let us down. They always will, because it's in our nature. But when they do, it doesn't have to destroy us. It doesn't have to break our spirit. It doesn't have to steal our worth.

We are not defined by the love another human bestows on us. We are defined by the everlasting love proven when Christ sacrificed His life to give us life. This is our hope, and this is how we can stand firm through any relationship ahead in our life, no matter the outcome.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:7-9).



Jesus did more than

SWIPE RIGHT

By: Candace Maxymowich

We live in a world where people put their lives on display. Pictures of engagements, babies and marriages are posted on social media for everyone to see. Recently on my Facebook newsfeed I came across a friend's wedding photos and quickly immersed myself in scanning her page. There were the glamorous bridal portraits she had been so excited about, the countless tagged photos of the ceremony, and post after post of well-wishes. The sorrows of singleness are secretly reinforced in my soul when I see these status updates.

If you asked me a couple of years ago what "Tinder" is, I would have had no idea. For those who don't know, Tinder is a pretty big deal in the online dating world. It uses an algorithm of your Facebook friends, your interests and your location to match you with people nearby it thinks you might be interested in. It gives you the choice to anonymously "like" or "pass" on that match. If they "like" you too, then you can strike up a conversation with them in the app.

I was introduced to Tinder by a friend. It actually took a lot of persuasion to convince me to download the app. My past experience on Tinder had been fun, awkward and weird... mostly awkward and weird. At first, I spent hours swiping left and swiping right on hundreds of guys. I even had the confidence to start up a few conversations – most of which I'll admit were shallow.

When I first downloaded Tinder, it did a lot for my ego. I woke up in the morning with several matches in my inbox. There were guys that were interested in me... Me? A rush of a feeling I couldn't quite place hit me. Finding out someone thinks you're cute is incomparable – especially if you're like me and hate the way you look. Guys don't line-up for me in real life. What is this alternate universe

where guys are actually taking time to message me?

Jesus sees more than a selfie of me

The mere mention of this dating app can cause faces to blush, heads to turn and judgments to be handed down. Tinder carries with it an inherent amount of shame. Why is that? The issue lies in intention. For me, Tinder was a quick-fix for the burden of loneliness. It was a grab at satisfaction from yet another shallow source that I now remind myself ever so painfully isn't the Bread of Life. It was during one of my

left-right-left-right-left-right swipe-athons that I realized I was looking to fill this void in me with the wrong things. Since that moment, I've deleted Tinder. I'm focusing on something better.

Jesus wants to do more than message me cheesy pick up lines. He wants to love and lead me into His plans which are better than my own dreams. His death on the cross proves that God wants to give me the best and walk with me through the rest. Jesus sees more than some selfie of me. He sees and knows all of me. Jesus knows about the bad parts and the secrets that a few know about me. Jesus did more than swipe right for me. He laid down His life for me.



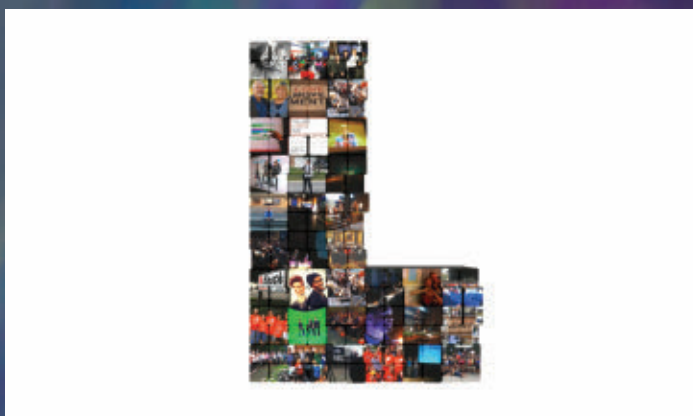
ART BY: RICHARD THOROGOOD MODEL: CHARLIE REYNOLDS

Creating the *Love Is Moving* APP & LOGO

The EFC is creating the LOVE IS MOVING app where youth can connect and encourage each other to put faith into action. To highlight the collaborative character of this initiative, we're building a new LOVE IS MOVING logo that will consist of thousands of individual pictures. Here's a one-minute video to give you the idea:

http://bit.ly/loveismoving_photos.

Please support this initiative by inviting other Christian youth and adults to upload photos to any public social media channel.



Artist Spotlight

LIM LOGO ANIMATOR RICHARD THOROGOOD

3D animator, artist, sculptor, singer, and innovator, Richard is always creating new ways to express the gifts God has given him. This spread highlights some of his artwork.

The LOVE IS MOVING team are pleased to work with him on our collaborative LIM animated logo. See screen shots of the logo animation to the right or view the animation at http://bit.ly/loveismoving_photos.

Add your photo! Upload your photo to any public social media channel and use the hashtag #loveismoving so that photos can be tracked and added into to this moving mosaic.

#LOVEISMOVING



WHY

was Judas

at the Table?

By: Jesse Hove

Judas was not a prostitute born into a broken social context. He was not a tax collector who simply needed a new lease on life. When we think of Judas, we don't think of the endearing brokenness often characterized in the writings of folks like Donald Miller and Anne Lamott. Judas' sin is at the level of unthinkability. When I think of Judas I think of pedophiles, serial killers and the global banking system.

When I think of Judas, I think of the kind of evil that requires Satan to enter your soul (Luke 22:3). This is the kind of sin where once you have committed it you feel your only option left for you is to end your own life (Matthew 27:5). And yet, despite the fact that the Devil himself has entered Judas, despite that the fact Jesus knows all that Judas plans on doing, Judas has his feet washed by Jesus, and shares in the final supper of his Lord and Saviour.

Why does Jesus do this? Judas has no redeeming quality here. He does not repent of his current and future actions and denies he is even involved, even when Jesus calls him out on it (Matthew 26:25). Judas betrays the one who gave all things life. When we ask questions

like *Would God forgive Hitler?* Judas is the first person who comes to my mind.

When thinking about Judas and his relationship to Jesus, I see Judas as a figure for all the great evil found in both Scripture and history. Judas represents the men who rape, beat and chop the unnamed woman in Judges 19 into little pieces; he is King David as he sends Bathsheba's husband into certain death (2 Samuel 11); he is the Rwandan genocide where fellow Christians rape and murder their brothers and sisters in the faith.

All we know is that Jesus loved him.

And Jesus, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the ultimate image of all that is good in the world, has the disturbing audacity to share his final meal with the man, to wash his feet and leave him to complete his evil purpose (John 13:27).

So why is Judas at the table? Why is he included in the final meal of Jesus' dearest and closest friends? The simplest answer is because Jesus loved

him. In spite of all Judas has and will do, Jesus loved him. We have no indication as to whether Judas ends up in heaven or hell. His ultimate destination remains in the knowledge of God alone. All we know is that Jesus loved him. Jesus washes his feet as his servant, and eats his final meal with him as he would with a brother and a friend.

This is the mystery of Jesus. In His death and resurrection, God's loving wrath is poured out on the sin and brokenness of all creation; God's justice and His grace are reconciled as one. The consequences of Judas' sin ripple into all reality, just as God's love for all creation extends into the very depths of hell (Romans 8:39).

It is important for to us remember that the call of the Christian life is not to declare who is the sinner and who is the saved. The Christian life is not primarily about human holiness (though it is certainly a by-product), but it's about recognizing God's unending and undeserved love for us, and going out into the world as messengers for this love.

My Phone Addiction is

RUINING MY LIFE!

By: Crileidy Liriano

I know I have an addiction. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest – I love them all. But they are ruining my love life with God – something that is so important and precious to me.

There have been times when I come home, tell myself I want to spend quality time with God, but also tell myself I can do it “later” before bed time. Somehow my addiction leads me to spend hours upon hours on my phone without even realizing it. The next thing you know I’m, “too tired” to spend time with God.

I tell myself, “tomorrow morning I will wake up early and do it. *Sorry God.*”

The world doesn’t shut off at any point during the night, so I wake up to a lineup of notifications. I quickly forget my promise to God and binge right into it before both eyes are even fully open. I know it’s not healthy. I know that if I want to have a healthy relationship with God, I have to figure out ways to stop.



2

Take a break!

Put your phone in another room or away on silent. When your phone lights up, it’s really tempting to pick it up and check out the notification. If it’s away from you, it’s easier not to touch it.

MAKE IT STOP!

Shut off the world. Take time away from your phone to take back the things you used to love to do, like spend time with God.

1

Reduce Anxiety!

Don’t respond right away. If it’s not an emergency give yourself a time restriction around how quickly you will respond to a message. Feeling like you have to respond right away builds anxiety.

3

Build internal peace!

Set aside a time frame that you will dedicate to reading your Bible, pray or listen to music. When you block out a time slot, it’s easier to accomplish your goal. Soon, it will become a habit.



HOW TO FIND TRUE Love in the New Year

By: Crileidy Liriano

There's nothing worse than falling in love with someone to then have it not "work out."

Your heart is broken, you find yourself in a pile of tears skimming through pictures of memories, or monitoring every move they make on social media.

Sound familiar? Here's a question for you: *What if you were never really in love? What if we were in love with the idea of love?*

There have been many times when people have gotten into a relationship without first understanding the real meaning of love: God's love.

The world has a very persuasive way to advertise the idea of love, but what ever happened to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7?

How much time do we spend with God talking to Him so He can actually have prayers to answer for us?

Learning to fall in love with God first before anyone else is the key to helping sustain all other relationships. We have to want to spend time with God, like a date, in order for Him to speak to us, direct us, and ultimately lead us.

I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.
— Jeremiah 31:3





IT STINKS WHEN A RELATIONSHIP FALLS APART!

Falling in love with God first will help you love yourself. He teaches you that you are valuable, and that indeed you were created to be loved and be great. When you build a strong relationship with Him, and when you learn to love who He has created you to be, you are forming the foundation for you to love someone else. Just as He has loved you.

3 WAYS TO HELP YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH GOD FIRST!

1) WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO YOU WANT?

Decide what kind of relationship you want with God and stick with it. If you want God to listen to you, you need to do your part in the relationship. A relationship is a two-way street. You give, He gives. You take time to talk to Him. He takes time to talk to you. We can't expect God to listen to us if we aren't speaking to Him.

2) GET TO KNOW GOD THROUGH YOUR BIBLE

Your Bible is not a punishment. It's there to help you get to know the One who created you.

Why is it so easy to read hours of people statuses online, but so difficult to pick up your Bible and read a chapter? Well, it's because Satan doesn't want you to get to know your Creator, as he knows that you will fall in love with Him. Reading your Bible will help you get to know the Kind of God we serve. He's funny, sensitive, romantic, and extremely loving, but the only way you're going to get to know that is by reading it for yourself. As you read, He will reveal Himself to you.

3) WHY SO SERIOUS?

Don't be so serious all the time; God is not a drill sergeant.

We often have the misconception that we have to speak to God very properly with perfect manners in order for us to grab His attention. It's not true. God knows your thoughts before they are conceived in your brain. He knows everything about you, and He wants you to be yourself. You can have small talk, laugh, cry, sing, or sit still in His presence. He doesn't expect us to be robots.





INTERVIEW WITH
Isaac & Amelia

By: Rosemond Ennin

Being engaged, what value do you find in knowing even trivial things about Isaac?

Amelia: It's an extension of love if you know trivial stuff about your fiancé like knowing if he likes coffee or tea. Knowing little stuff like that makes a difference in the relationship. Knowing somebody well builds trust.

What motivated you to stay committed to each other?

Amelia: Well, he's cute! It's true, but besides that it was having friends and family members around us supporting us to be accountable through rough times.

Marriage is a decision to stay around and choose to love continually

Why did you decide to get married?

Isaac: A lot of couples will say, "The difference between you and me is that we just don't have the paper, we're still committed to each other."

I respond by thinking I will be making a vow and I will declare my loyalty and commitment to Amelia. Those unmarried still have the choice to go and come as you please.

Amelia: There's a lack of commitment and people are pushing off marriage. They're young and they want to live their life. They don't realize that you can do all things you want to do with your partner.

Isaac: Some guys will think that they don't want to be stuck with one

woman all their life. They want to be young and free.

Amelia: I've had people come up to me and say, "Oh, you're really young to get married!" I tell them that yes, I am young, but that doesn't mean that I can't be sure that I want to spend the rest of my life with one man, or that being married stops me from doing things I love! Isaac and I are going towards the same goals together.

Isaac, how did you propose to Amelia?

Isaac: It was on an island near Vancouver. I spoke to her mom and dad and got their approval. My family knew about the engagement and they were on the island with us. One day, we decided to take family pictures. She didn't want it to be too public, but wanted it to happen in a beautiful place so I used the family photo session to cover for my engagement proposal. About four or five photos in, I went down on one knee and before I could ask her to marry me she jumped up and hugged me. I said, "I love you, I've always loved you, I'll continue to love you. Will you marry me?"

What advice do you have for people who are dating and thinking about marriage?

Amelia and Isaac: Love is a choice. You can choose to stick around or you can choose to leave. Guys and girls think very differently so you should learn as a dude to sometimes bite your tongue even if you think she's wrong. Always remember to choose love.

PHOTO: NATALIE GODWIN

LOVE IS MOVING

FOR GROUPS OR PERSONAL REFLECTION

LOVE IS MOVING Study Guide & Journal is designed to revive a biblical understanding and expression of love. This resource tool empowers small groups to grow in their love for God and their love for others. Journey with others across the nation in exploring God's love through building relationships, engaging in mission and committing to reflecting the love of Jesus in everyday life. As you prepare to learn more about what love is, remember to pray and ask God to lead you closer to him and deeper in his truths.

PART I POP CULTURE & LOVE

Many people spend their lives in search of love. From the dawn of the written word until now, there is one topic that has captivated the hearts and minds of poets, teachers, preachers, songwriters, playwrights, and filmmakers alike. That topic is love.

Many media influences encourage an understanding of love that is self-focused. When you look at your favorite music videos, lyrics, movies, TV shows, clothing lines,

websites, commercials, ads, and so on, you see that not only does sex sell, but you are being told that if you want to be accepted, liked, have friends or receive attention, you must buy something to make you better. You must buy something to be loved.

A selfish understanding of love is unhealthy. Popular media influences often lead us to believe that love is a self-serving, sexual, pleasure-driven feeling. Psych-

ologists and other experts in human behavior and health have researched and found that this understanding of love is unhealthy. Not only do psychologists believe that selfishness is unhealthy, but God's Word also teaches that love is not self-seeking in 1 Corinthians 13:5. The Bible describes love as being others focused and it is through knowing and loving God that we learn to love others.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

How do you define love?

Write down a few words that you might use to describe love.

What are some words you would use to describe God? For example,

- A nice old man
- A mean stepfather
- A magical person far away
- Someone who loves you
- Someone who knows you

How do major influences, like parents, friends, and social media shape your understanding of love?

What ideas do your favourite movies and songs associate with love?

HERE'S A SAMPLE OF THE SMALL GROUP RESOURCE WE'RE DEVELOPING. THERE ARE 6 PARTS IN THE ENTIRE RESOURCE. COLLECT ALL 6 ISSUES OF LIM IN 2016 TO PREVIEW SOME OF THE TAKE ACTION APP CONTENT.

Use #loveismoving to share what you have learned.

INTRODUCTION

As you journey through this portion of the journal, we encourage you to be in prayer for what God wants to reveal to you. Through prayer and being in His Word, God will show you how to live out your faith. Take courage to live it out. After you do this, praise Him for using you and make a commitment to reading the Bible, being in prayer and showing love everyday.

James 1:22: But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.

JOURNAL

In this section, spend time reflecting on God. Day-by-day throughout your week, thank God for how awesome He is. He is the God who created you in His image and He is the God who cares deeply for you.

After the fall, when sin entered the world, people have been, and are born into brokenness. We are born into sin. God created us for relationship, but because of our sin we are separated from Him. Jesus made a

way for us to be in relationship with God, through His death and resurrection. In order to truly love others, we must repent of our sins to be in right relationship with God. This needs to happen in order to truly love others.

DAY 1

1 JOHN 4:19
We love each other because He loved us first

TAKE ACTION:

Spend time in prayer thanking God for His love and what He has done for you. Write some thoughts below, acknowledging God's abundant love for you.

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JOURNAL ENTRY

Use #loveismoving to share ideas for putting God's love in action.

DAY 2

DEUT 6:5

Love the Lord your God with all your heart

TAKE ACTION:

Spend some time praying, thanking God for loving you. In prayer, ask God to show you if there is someone in your life that you have not been kind to. Confess to God

if there is a specific person in your life who you have not shown God's love to. Also, ask God to give you opportunities to do something kind to that person. After praying, write some thoughts about what you could do.

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JOURNAL ENTRY

DAY 3

ROM 8:38-39

Nothing can ever separate us from God's love

TAKE ACTION:

Know, that no matter what you have done, God loves you. He wants you to have a heart that surrenders to Him and has love for others, as He loves you. Share

this thought with someone today. Write about what it means to you to be eternally connected to God's love as a Christian. You may also choose to write about how it felt to share this verse with someone today.

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JOURNAL ENTRY

DAY 4

ROM 5:8

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us

TAKE ACTION:

Spend time in prayer thanking God for his love for you, for sending His son Jesus to teach, die, and defeat sin and death.

Write some ideas about how you could show sacrificial and caring love to someone today.

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Use #loveismoving to share ideas for putting God's love in action.

JOURNAL ENTRY

DAY 5

MATT 5:23 - 24

Be reconciled

TAKE ACTION:

It will be hard, but when someone hurts you do not let it bother you because God loves you. If your friends are making fun of another person, stand up for that person

and encourage them. Write about an experience that you had where you encouraged a friend or even someone you didn't like. What impact did it have on them? Take some time to pray for your friends and your enemies today.

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JOURNAL ENTRY

DAY 6

I COR 13:4

Love is patient and kind, not jealous or proud

TAKE ACTION:

Find yourself wishing you had more money, friends, or stuff? Do you look at other people and think they are better than you or wish you could be them? Spend

time thanking God for what He has given you and tell Him how you feel. Then, find ways to help someone without taking any credit. Think of ways you can help someone today! Write your ideas below.

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JOURNAL ENTRY

DAY 7

I JOHN 4:18

Perfect love expels fear

TAKE ACTION:

Have you ever had an opportunity to do something for someone, but fear held you back? Below, write what would you do next time, knowing that God's love is

perfect and we don't have to be afraid to love others.

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JOURNAL ENTRY Use #loveismoving to share ideas for putting God's love in action.

LIVING

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

By: Shawn LaVie

How often do you reevaluate your relationship with Jesus Christ? Whatever your answer – even if it’s “never” – I’d like to plant a seed in your heart for the Holy Spirit to water.

Christians are called to stop living for ourselves, which opens us up to start living for and with Jesus Christ simultaneously. Galatians 2:20 says, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

This is the relationship that Jesus wants for each and every one of us. This relationship is both singular – your personal relationship – as well as collective – the relationship Jesus has with the people who make up the Church. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 says, “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, . . . so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

I personally do not believe that idle hands are the devil’s playground – instead it’s complacency. The definition of complacency is “a feeling of smug or uncritical satisfaction with oneself or one’s achievements.” We find it sometimes easier to trust in what we feel and know – simple pleasures – than in God and His plan for us.

Chemically and biologically we are the exact same person we were before we died in Christ. But spiritually we are filled with a desire to be united with our Lord Jesus Christ. We face the challenge of keeping one eye on the day-to-day joys of living and loving here on earth and the other eye on heaven.

But if we only ask to have our heart set on fire, we will be surprised what the Holy Spirit does to our worldly eyes and our complacency.



This isn’t a time to kick our legs up on the Lazy-Boy, have a hot drink and consider ourselves saved. We need self-awareness, self-sacrifice and investment in the spiritual foundation of our house, because the flood is coming, the flood that will ruin houses built on sand but will not shake houses built on rock. Jesus’ parable of the weak and strong foundations (in Luke 46) reminds us we are here for a limited time during which Jesus wants us to build ourselves a strong foundation that will withstand a flood.

We find it sometimes easier to trust in what we feel and know, than in God and His plan for us.

He gave us the brick and mortar as well as the tools to build. These are all contained in the Bible. We are called to fast, pray unceasingly, do good deeds, repent and ask for forgiveness, spread His message, partake in the Eucharist, follow His commandments, but most importantly to love.

As the Apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:12-15: “Therefore, as God’s

chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another. . . . And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

My favourite line in this passage is that we must “put on love.” To put on love is to put on Christ, because Christ is love. This is the greatest way we can honour and glorify Jesus Christ: fill our hearts with His love and live it out.

Every time a friend does something kind for you and you feel your heart become warm and fuzzy, every time your spouse does something sweet and you feel your heart could burst with love, you are experiencing God. Believers, non-believers, all religions of the world all experience this together.

The act of love takes care of every commandment, is the driving force for repentance, and is the blueprint for laying out what is behind a contrite heart. With love in our hearts we will start to have life experiences with people that are much more deeply enriched in this life and in the next.

I wish you much happiness in your life, and that you live the love of Christ.



T R I N I T Y
F A S H I O N

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THE STYLE OF LOVE

Josie La Corte & Armaane Testoni



insta: @live.to.aspire - @armaane

In the 21st century, the love of style and personal image has taken over, at least in our generation. Artists and musicians influence our culture, fashion and language to the point where it is hard to discover who we are. It seems as if we're just born with expectations of how we should be. In the midst of the latest trends, and the next contour video, we have to discover and uncover who we really are.

Winter is a season when we bundle up and cover up to stay warm. We wear layers not only as a fashion statement, but to protect us from the weather. The cold affects us more than just physically. When we are in a season where we can't feel God, it's almost like being cold in the spirit.

When we are in a place of unfamiliarity, it may seem like we're out of season, almost like wearing shorts in the winter, it just doesn't feel right. But God is taking this season to shape us and prepare us for the destiny he has already placed inside of us.

Our purpose isn't complicated. It was implanted in our very being before God created us. Our purpose is deeper than our DNA. It's the very reason for our existence. It's a gap in the world that only we can fill.

Fashion is just one of languages that allow us to express who we are to the world. It speaks to people before we open our mouths, and it represents who we are in Christ – bold women and men of God who are not afraid to be strong, yet submissive. Loud in the declaration of what we stand for, yet quick to help and pray for someone in need.

Hard times strengthen and prepare us even when we feel isolated. It's like

when we go to the gym. We isolate a group of muscles to work on, to gain a measurable outcome. We put our body under physical strain to strengthen that muscle. But really we tear it down to repair it, making it stronger.

Do you know the saying, You have to build your dream summer body in the winter? I'm confident that applies to the spirit as well. God once gave me a revelation, "Josie, the army will be built in the winter." I had a vision of army jackets hanging in mid-air as if they were hanging on the pole of a closet – an endless amount of army jackets, as far as the eye can see, with little snowflakes falling on them.

We are called to be game changers! By being ourselves, we'll inspire others to be themselves.

As I have grown in God, He has continued to shape my understanding regarding what I saw. We are his soldiers, and we can't entangle ourselves with the ways of the world, or we'll miss the purpose He has created for us! So as His army of passionate, creative creators we will be built!

Not necessarily when the weather is cold, but when we feel like our season is dry or wet or abandoned. That's when He's shaping us. That's when we're getting tested. That's when we're being put through the furnace, but we'll come out like gold once the season is over.

God is maturing us, taking us places only He can take us. And yes, growing pains hurt, but it'll all be worth it

Clothing is also a representation of growth. We can look back to when we were children, and make fun of our little outfits. It works the same with our walk in the spirit. As we grow in God, what used to hurt us before doesn't affect us anymore. God spoke to us one way at the beginning of our relationship with Him, now He speaks to us in new ways. We can't allow ourselves to get caught up in a routine – God wants to meet us in a new way. Let's continue to walk and see the power of God in our life. Let's not give up.

With time, we'll become the person we always knew was inside. Let's allow ourselves to shine onto the world through whom God made us to be! If that means stepping out of the box, step out. If that means dress differently, then do so!

Let's be content with who we are in everything we do! That's the only way we'll become who we always knew we were inside. Forget about what everyone else thinks, we are a new creation in Christ. Therefore what matters is what God says and thinks about us.

We are called to be game changers! By being ourselves, we'll inspire others to be themselves. We'll declare to the world that we know the person God created us to be. And that's attractive! We'll discover our purpose by truly being ourselves. That's not hard, is it?

That's the style of love.

– Signed jla & Maane



A Ring DOESN'T CHANGE A THING

By: Rosemond Ennin

Here's a little insight on how Facebook works. By far, one of the most important statuses someone can ever update is their relationship status. The moment a status changes from "single" to "in a relationship" or better yet to "engaged" or "married," it's one of the most significant social media moments where they've got our attention and "likes."

It seems like relationships are always trending on the minds of young people. People will even go to the extent of lying about being in a relationship to feel important – it's crazy! We live in a society that promotes "how to get a man in 10 days," "how to dress on fleek for your crush to notice," and creates weekly celebrations of "Man Crush Mondays (MCM) and Woman Crush Wednesdays (WCW)." So it makes sense that young people want to rush into a relationship.

But a recent conversation I had with a friend who is newly married showed me that love isn't something to rush into. He told me straight out, "The ring doesn't change anything!"

Many times we rush into romantic

relationships thinking everything is going to change, that somehow the temptations we've faced and the struggles we've had all end once we're in a relationship with somebody.

A ring may give you the opportunity to change your Facebook status and your last name, but it doesn't change who you are as a person (your character, strengths or weaknesses), because that comes from within you.

A ring doesn't change anything, but my relationship with God does

You can say the same thing about school. In most cases, the type of student you are can follow you throughout your education. The studious, high achieving Grade 8 student is usually the high achiever in Grade 12 and into post-secondary.

Our personalities, self-esteem and character are built in us and make up whom we are. And we may need to remind ourselves that who we are in relationship to God is more important than any Facebook status or any human relationship.

My relationship with God allows for His love to reveal who I am. As I recognize who He is, I recognize who I am. God is the best and truest mirror out there, because He reflects a truthful image of who I am.

A ring doesn't change anything, but my relationship with God does. It allows me to see my weaknesses and my strengths. As a result, I am more equipped to deal with my character, strengths and weaknesses wisely when I am in Christ. If I don't know me, I can't expect others to.

Before you start singing "you can put a ring on it" or looking to have a relationship with that guy or girl you think is cute, consider these questions and answer them honestly:

GENUINE RELATIONSHIP

Do I have a genuine mutual relationship with God? Or is my relationship with God solely based on what I can get?

WEAKNESSES & STRENGTHS

What are at least three weaknesses and strengths I have? What can they teach me about getting into relationships?

TEMPTATIONS

What easily tempts me to stray away from God? How does God's Word help to overcome it?

STAGE OF LIFE

What season/stage of life am I currently in? What does God's Word say about this stage?

DO I HAVE IDOLS?

Have I ever made anything outside of God an idol in my life? How can I avoid having a relationship as an idol?

You'll notice that all of these questions require you to sit and think it through with God. He alone knows us well enough to uncover the deep truths about who we are (Jeremiah 1:5; 29:11).

When we rush into a relationship, we can forfeit knowing who we are and the intimacy of knowing Christ. Life is more than just changing your Facebook status and getting likes. Your relationship with God will help reveal that there's more to life than superficial social media satisfaction



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Fresh Ink Runner Up

By: Demarisse Blizzard

This past July I had the privilege of being a runner up in the Fresh Ink Awards. I had entered this writing contest back in January, thinking that it would be cool if I got to attend the awards and the related annual conference, called Write Canada. Little did I know God had bigger plans.

My poem "The World They Were Given" was selected as runner up in the student division. This poem was personal and difficult to share. At first I didn't want to submit my writing, because I am a very private person. But I did feel called through the encouragement of my brother and my mom to share my writing, because maybe it could be used to glorify God.

My poem is about my testimony and

some things I have gone through. I suffered depression from Grade 10 to my first year of university. I had the honour of attending Liberty University where I encountered the healing power and love of Christ, which compelled me to write this poem. The poem was also a comparison between my struggles and the pain that Christ endured on the cross.

The grace of God is so profound

The Write Canada conference was in itself an incredible blessing. I met many talented and encouraging writers as well as making some great friends. I was able to meet a published Harlequin author and discuss my writing goals

and doubts with her. Her encouragement helped me address some of the concerns I faced in my own writing.

It was unforgettable. The grace of God is so profound – who would have thought I could be chosen and used to inspire others through the way in which He has blessed me? What a humbling and encouraging experience. I recommend all those who consider writing or who enjoy writing to try a Christian writing conference because it is a truly unforgettable experience. The main three-day conference I attended is held each June in Toronto, and organizers also hold one-day satellite conferences at other times across Canada. Visit www.thewordguild.com for details.



ADVICE TO THE CHURCH

a teenage perspective

By: Holly Stiller

Advice columns and articles about keeping youth in the church pass through my newsfeed regularly. Confused parents and pastors keep trying to figure teenagers out. Well, here's my inside scoop on what the church should do to keep teenagers like myself in the church.

Stop trying so hard. You are not the reason I'm at church. I am here because of God, and the work that He has done

in my life. The differences that people at church share are blessings, not things that need to be bridged.

Teens don't need a cool, hip preacher in order for us to hear from God. In fact, seeing a 50-year old in skinny jeans trying to relate to us about the Kardashians makes me really uncomfortable.

We don't want you to pretend to have the same interests as us, because you

don't. We are at different places in life, and that's okay. I don't have grandkids, and you're (probably) not taking Driver's Ed. That's what's so great about the Christian community; it's a mix of people who wouldn't normally be with each other coming together to do the work of God. If I wanted to hang out with people who were just like me, then I wouldn't be at church at 10 a.m. on a Sunday morning. I'd be hanging out with my friends – or just in my bed at home.

TOP 4 tips for churches from my teenage perspective:

WE LIKE HYMNS

1. We're not afraid of hymns. There's something beautiful about hearing a song that's been sung by generations of Christians. We don't need the hottest hits from 99.9 FM to be engaged in worship.

WE'RE NOT ALL GREAT BABYSITTERS

2. As cute as your kids may be, we don't always want to be stuck babysitting. Just like you guys, all teenagers have different gifts and aren't the same. We'd love to get involved in ministry. Give us a chance to really be a part of the body of Christ.

WE ARE INTELLIGENT

3. Don't dumb down the sermons. Don't feel the need to protect us from being confused. Faith isn't simple, being a Christian in high school has already taught us that. We want to be able to talk about the big stuff, whether you know the answers or not.

COMMUNITY IS IMPORTANT

4. We may do things differently. Help us make it possible, even if we're doing it differently than you would. Yeah, we'll probably pick pizza over egg salad sandwiches, and we may even get a little rowdy for your liking, but that's okay.

One of the greatest parts of being in the church community is the wisdom and relationships that you can build with people who are in different places in life.

Intergenerational relationships are so important, and we do like it when older people in the church want to invest in us. We want to get to know you – we're just a little more awkward and moody about it. We know you like us, and we like you too.

Thanks!

Blood Crying Out

HOW AN ANCIENT STORY CAN HELP US RESPOND TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS

- By Lindsay Haraburda

When we take a moment to reflect on the current global mood, it is grim and unsettling. Death, war, and terror plague the news with images of people in immense suffering and displacement. Refugees flee their homes and live in camps or on the streets in strange towns.

What is God's heart in the midst of death, war and terrorism? The expression, God's heart, is used to describe all that God cares for most. The phrase can be found directly in His word (John 1:1).

Let's look at the lives of Cain and Abel. The story told in Genesis 4 of two brothers is familiar to many. The children of Adam and Eve, the second generation, seek to live in good relationship with God. So at harvest, Cain, a farmer and Abel, a shepherd, present their offerings to God. One gift is accepted and one gift is rejected.

It all goes downhill quickly. Cain is rejected and angry, his face

hangs low. You could be thinking: "Of course he is! God just rejected him." But, the conversation doesn't end here. God does not leave Cain abandoned. He actually wants to have a talk with him. He does not ignore Cain's anger. God asks him about it. God includes clear instruction that Cain will be accepted if he chooses to do what is right (Gen. 4:7).

God is listening and actively working for the good of all.

This leads us to the hear wrenching part of the story. Cain is taken over by anger towards God and envy of his brother. He sets a trap for Abel. Cain leads Abel out to a field and kills his brother. The Lord is completely aware that this has happened. He is not silent. He comes to Cain after, and simply says: "Where is Abel your brother?" (Gen. 4:9).

God knows. But He offers Cain the opportunity to be honest. He is giving him the gift of confessing his trespasses. He is hoping that Cain will use this chance to do what is right!

Cain boldly responds: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9).

I imagine God having the biggest face-palm gesture, here because of so much frustration, shock, exasperation and unrest from this response. Cain is saying: "What? Am I responsible for his life? Am I responsible for what he does and where he goes? Don't look at me. He can take care of himself, or maybe that's your job, God."

Still, God chooses to continue the conversation and shine truth on the matter. The Lord plainly says to Cain: "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10).

We can see one thing here very clearly: God cares deeply about shed blood. Even our blood speaks to our Maker – it cries out to God. God asks Cain to reflect on his actions and consider the crime he just committed. God cares deeply for innocent bloodshed and does not cease to listen to the victims of murder.

The story of Cain and Abel contrasts the stubborn arrogance of humans with the merciful steadfast love of God. As the world debates the refugee crisis, and war and terrorism prompts fear, the lives of these brothers can offer insight. Here are a few things we can learn from Cain and Abel:



1) We have the authority to rule over sin, and need to: After Cain became angry, God points out the desire for hatred, revenge and other sin to overcome Cain (Gen. 4:7). As Christ's followers, we need to be aware of our motive? Are we acting out of love or are our intentions corrupt?

2) God reveals the truth: Cain consistently chooses to hold back the truth from God and ignores the truth God offers. When his offering is rejected, he became angry at God instead of considering what was not good about his gift. When God asked Cain where Abel was, he lied. Cain seemed unmoved by his actions until God directly spoke of the murder. When we engage in conversation with God, we will always encounter truth: Whether or not we receive it is another thing.

3) God advocates for life: In the midst of death and decay, God is still present and fighting on our behalf. He fights to protect us, even when we do not deserve it. We have seen this in the greatest sacrifice: the death of His son Jesus Christ on the cross to pay the penalty for sin. Jesus rose from the grave to give us eternal life in union with God. This is the love of our Heavenly Father. So, when we consider Cain's question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" the answer is most definitely: Yes! Yes, you are an advocate for life. Yes, you are a voice for the voiceless. Yes, you are responsible for the wellbeing of others. Yes, you are your sibling's keeper. Let us take responsibility, advocating for each refugee like we would our own brother and sister, because the truth is, they are family.

4) We are invited to take action: The story of Cain and Abel is one of action. In the midst of blood crying out, God is listening and actively working for the good of all. He continues to give opportunities to turn from evil ways and extends invitations to do what is good.

As initiatives emerge to aid in the global refugee crisis, there are many different ways for you to become an active participant. Some ideas include: have an information session at your church or school, join a current neighborhood/church refugee committee, have your youth group host a fundraiser for a local refugee sponsorship fund, volunteer at a refugee fundraiser, or start a club at school to advocate and welcome refugee youth. It's important to remember that engagement with refugees will vary, but all actions are valuable.

DON'T LET THE INTERNET interfere with your calling!

How much time do you spend on the Internet on a daily basis?

- a. 0-2 hours
- b. 2-4 hours
- c. 4-6 hours
- d. 6+

How much time do you spend with God?

- a. 0-2 hours
- b. 2-4 hours
- c. 4-6 hours
- d. 6+

vs

How often do you have your phone in your hand?

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Never
- d. I don't have a phone

How often do you have your Bible in your hand?

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Never
- d. I don't have a Bible

SPECTRE

JAMES BOND 2015

THE DEAD ARE ALIVE

By: Steve Norton

The dead are alive.

Those ominous words are what first greet you in *Spectre*, the latest entry into the world of Bond, James Bond.

And they are definitely intentional.

Directed once again by Oscar winner Sam Mendes, *Spectre* picks up the action soon after the events of 2012's *Skyfall*.

Bond (Daniel Craig), driven by a mysterious message from his beloved former boss (Judi Dench), sets out on a mission he doesn't fully understand. But he soon learns of an evil criminal organization called Spectre, led by the villainous Fritz Oberhausen (Christoph Waltz).

With revenge on his mind, Bond works to unravel how far this crime syndicate stretches. At the same time, he must protect the beautiful Madeline Swan (Lea Seydoux).

The two Mendes entries into the Bond canon stand out for their focus on seeing growth within 007. Whereas *Skyfall* looks at the ravages of time on our hero (and the franchise), *Spectre* seems intent on delivering the opposite: where do we find new life?

Tin which Craig portrays Bond also on a darker, more serious tone than

From the spectacular opening long take, viewers see a Bond who has fully immersed himself in the role of an assassin. His heart hardened by the losses he has suffered (M, Vesper Lynd) and the villains he has left in his

wake (LeChiffre, Silva), Bond seems to have accepted his role as a trained killer (and, as Craig's portrayal reminds us, misogynist).

However, through his encounters with Madeline Swan, Bond begins to wonder if he's missing something.

"What would you do if you weren't an assassin?" she pushes.

"I don't know," Bond replies.

Bond has become so immersed in his brokenness that he can't imagine life without it. While he remains effective, he has lost his way, unwilling to let go of the guilt and shame of his past, relying on alcohol, sex and violence to cope. Even Oberhausen mentions that he has lost his soul.

Is it possible that 007 is having an identity crisis?

Scripture tells us
without God's
life we are not
as healthy as we
think we are

Whereas Bond may be suffering from being shaken (not stirred) both emotionally and spiritually, regrettably *Spectre* isn't quite sure what the solution is to his problem. By the end of the film it appears Bond may just have needed to lighten up or take a vacation. Somehow he regains a sense of control over his life, which does bring a sense of fun back to the character.

But is driving off into the sunset with a beautiful woman enough to bring the dead to life, to free Bond from the deathly part of himself?

Bond's struggles ring truer than the solution. Though our world proclaims that we can find life in what we do and who we're with, Scripture tells us without God's life we are not as healthy as we think we are. As God says in Revelation 3:3: "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead."

Yes, a kind of life can be found in the arms of a woman or in taking a vacation. But ultimately they don't offer the depth of healing we need. We need something – no, Someone – more powerful.

The Apostle Paul speaks to this when he says, "When you were dead in your sins . . . God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins" (Colossians 2:13).

Because of Christ, we can actually receive new life, forgiven of what we've done. Because of Christ, we really can be free of our past and begin again.

Because of Christ, the dead are alive.

In *Spectre*, Bond may have accepted his role as a deathly assassin, but Swan helps him recognize he's missing something. Ultimately though, the solutions he tries can't realistically fill the void he – and we – so desperately seek to satisfy.



A LETTER FROM
your
Valentine

By: Brittany Pettinger

Valentine's day is just around the corner, and I'm sure many of you have been thinking a lot about love. I myself have never been a big fan of Valentine's Day, nor have I ever enjoyed romantic movies. However, I do love love. God created love, He is love, and He has shown me His love through various events and situations.

It is said St. Valentine was a priest in Rome when an emperor named Claudius was persecuting the church. During that time, soldiers were not allowed to marry because it was thought they fought better unmarried. Valentine secretly married them in the Christian Church because of that.

He was eventually caught, imprisoned and tortured for performing marriage ceremonies against the command of the emperor. Legend reports that while in prison, Valentine healed a young girl of her blindness, which ended up leading her father to Christ.

On February 14 (in AD 269) Valentine was sentenced to a three-part execution of beating, stoning and decapitation. It is said his last words were in a letter he wrote to the girl he healed, signing it "From your Valentine."

Over the years, such stories have been abandoned or forgotten, and

many people have narrowed the meaning of love. But love does not have to be romantic; it can be as simple as loving a friend, or loving a group of people. Last winter, I was in Lebanon with Youth With a Mission (YWAM) working with Syrian refugees. I fell in love with Lebanon, and I fell in love with the Syrian people.

They treated me with so much kindness and compassion, and I grew to love them as my family. God showed me so much through my time in the Middle East. He showed me that love does not fall under one category. Love can be towards a significant other, a friend, a country and even an enemy. And because God created it, it is infinite.

Currently, I am in Ireland staffing a DTS (Discipleship Training School) with YWAM. I have lately been asking people my own age what they think love is. One girl said, "Love is taking someone's needs and putting them before yours in everyday situations."

Another student said, "Love is selflessness, and it is putting others before you. It is caring more about the other person's needs before your own, with a desire to build them up and show them their value. Love is an intimacy that expands everyday."

Both of these answers touch on

one thing: selflessness. When we love someone, we put his or her needs before our own. We do whatever we can to prove that we love them and to prove that they are worth loving.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He had the power to take Himself down. He could have ended it all right then and there, but He didn't. The fact that He didn't proves He loves us with everything He has. He suffered pain, humiliation and death in the name of love so that we could live. There is no love greater than the love of Christ, and we must continue what He started by loving others.

This Valentine's Day, tell your best friend you love them, maybe challenge them with the story of St. Valentine, and take time out of your day to receive God's love and love Him back.

Happy Valentine's Day!



THE MASKED SAINT

IT'S CANADIAN, AND IT'S GOOD!
By: Dagmar Morgan

The Masked Saint is a depiction of pastor and wrestler Chris Whaley's true life story, based on Whaley's book of the same name.

Viewers travel along with Pastor Chris Samuels (Brett Granstaff) as he moves his family to pastor in a new, unwelcoming neighbourhood that is (unknown to Samuels) divided and disenchanted by the community church.

The movie, shot entirely in Northern Ontario, basically chronicles this new pastor's struggles dealing with church politics, finances and the brokenness in his community – not to mention in himself.

helps us laugh at ourselves and find compassion for the broken

At first Pastor Samuels attempts to bring the church and the community back together by his own means through his own brand of justice, but it soon turns out God has another plan.

Pastor Chris' imperfect journey to redemption, and eventually acceptance, gives a realistic look at how God's gifts will make room for us, and how we make a mess of things when we try to do it on our own.

The film is marked by quirky, engaging characters and heartfelt performances, most notably Brett Granstaff as Pastor Samuels, Diahann Carroll as the tough but loving Ms. Edna, and the late Rowdy Roddy Piper as the overbearing wrestling promoter Nicky Stone (this also happens to be his last feature per-



formance). In addition, young actor T. J. McGibbon (Carrie Samuels) should also be noted for her presence and comedic timing.

With *The Masked Saint*, director Warren P. Sonoda and producer Cliff McDowell demonstrate that faith films don't always have to tie up with a neat little bow at the end. They can be as complex as the faith journey we walk every day.

Touching on many relevant subjects that face the church today, *The Masked Saint* helps us laugh at ourselves and find compassion for the broken.

It also encourages us to find that unique gift God has given us and to use it to do His work. This film is worth the watch.

For more information on how to bring this movie to your church or community or to access resources such as the accompanying discussion guide and devotional, check out www.themaskedsaint.com.

***The Masked Saint* is released on
January 22, 2016!**



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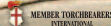
Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Life!

TRAINING for Full Time Christian Service
Regardless of Occupation!

LEADERSHIP Through Servanthood by Christ's
Indwelling, Resurrection Life.

PRACTICAL Bible Teaching Genesis to Revelation:
Christ Revealed in the Written Word.

- Bible School • Conferences • Outdoor Education
- Private Retreats • Personal Getaways



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