

EMCCTOGETHER

The Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada Family Stories

2023

Future Ready

Answering God's call to do what it takes—
Our Vision, Our Stories

CAMPFIRES: KEEPING DISCIPLE- MAKING SIMPLE

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Stories matter

BY WAI-LAM LIU

In my first meeting with our Regional Minister, Lynn Dietz, he told me that stories make what we do come alive and have meaning for others. In my previous role at a university, during the annual town halls, time and space were given to students to share their “success” stories—how they were on suspension, to the point of no hope, and after talking to a counsellor or attending a workshop, they were pulled from their depths of hopelessness onto a brighter path leading to graduation and a successful career. These transformational stories brought tears and joy and gave the staff the strength and encouragement to continue to do the work that they were doing. As Jesus Followers, how much more do we need the space to share our transformational stories? Stories of our Heavenly Father at work impacting our communities across Canada and the world through EMCC churches, pastors, leaders, and global workers.

This year, our leadership discerned that God is leading the EMCC with a theme called “Future Ready.” In this first issue of the EMCC Together magazine, we asked our pastors, leaders and global workers to share what God is doing in their ministries, churches, communities, or personal lives relating to “Future Ready.”

As you read the stories, I pray you will be encouraged and discover how God is already doing something “Future Ready” in your ministry and personal life.

If you have a story to share that relates to the theme of the year and can be an encouragement to others, contact communications@emcc.ca.

Wai-Lam Liu is the Communications Manager of the EMCC.



Evangelical Missionary
Church of Canada

EMCC TOGETHER 2023

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Future Ready



Preparing for a fresh movement of God

BY JOHN CRESSMAN

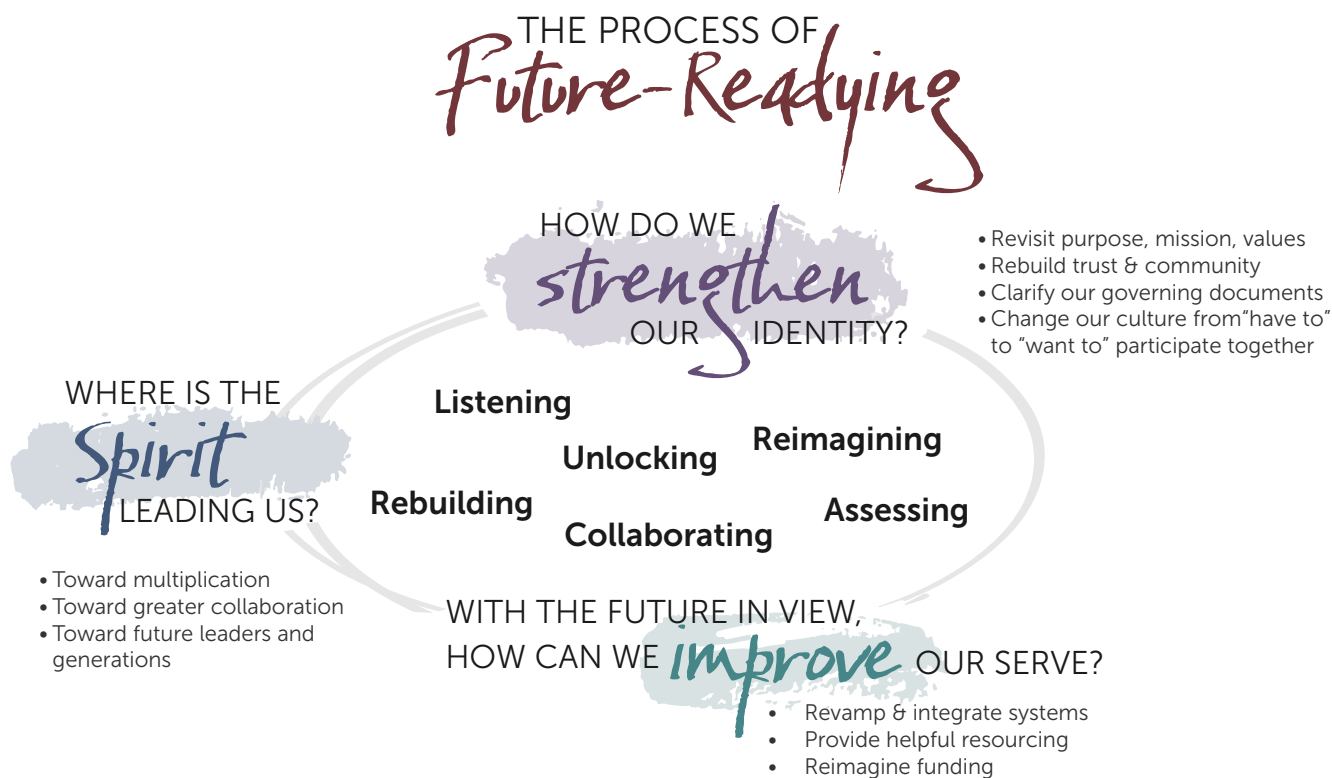
President of the EMCC

Perhaps it's this season of my life, but my thoughts and planning are drawn toward the future these days. "Old men will dream dreams." By the way, I'm not "that" old. It could also be the joy and prayers of a grandparent—watching the next generation play at my feet. I want Jesus' best for them. As a leader in the church, I am conscious that decisions made today will impact our tomorrow. Jesus said, "Don't worry about tomorrow," but He also had a lot to say about being prepared. He spent much of His ministry life "future-readying" His disciples for the day He would no longer be with them. He taught them to see beyond themselves, to make disciples who would make disciples, who would make disciples—and to invest in future leaders, like Paul did with young Timothy.

What we do know for sure is this: The world was unprepared for the recent pandemic. Our tendencies bend toward unpreparedness. We ramp up efforts when there is a serious threat or crisis, then quickly relax and return to normal. This is the dangerous cycle of panic and neglect. Fix and forget. React and relax. While navigating the pandemic and waiting on the Lord, we as a denomination have collectively heard and affirmed the instructions to “prepare the way

for the Lord.” We are to ready ourselves for a fresh movement of God that will impact future generations. Movements seem to spread rapidly, but they are preceded by tributaries of prayer and planning to prepare the way.

And so, beginning and continuing with listening to the Spirit and each other, we have taken up future-readying work (as outlined in the diagram). We’re scrutinizing the structures and systems that



brought us here but may not carry us well into the future. We’re unlocking resources for future ministry and service and collaborating to explore new solutions and opportunities. Reimagining new ways to be the church while remaining faithful to the ways of Jesus. Consistently we are asking three questions: How do we strengthen our identity? How can we improve our serve? Where is the Spirit leading us?

One thing is clear. Now is not a passive moment for the church of Jesus Christ. It is time to

prepare. We invite everyone to engage in this future-readying process with anticipation.

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:19). ●

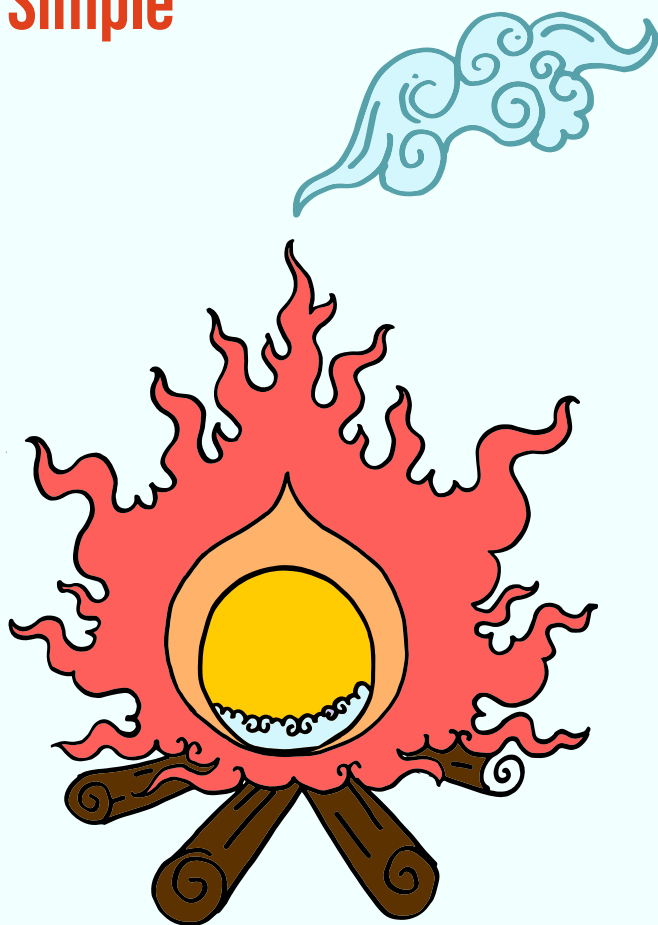


John Cressman is the President of the EMCC. He and his wife, Melanie, experience joy from grandparenting, supporting the local Junior-level hockey team, and walking together.

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CAMPFIRE:

Keeping Disciple-Making Simple



BY JEDEDIAH GORHAM

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WAI-LAM LIU

From Thailand to campfire—
my future-ready journey... so far.


One of the turning points in my journey with Jesus came in 1999 when I was in my early 20s. I participated in a six-week missionary trip/cultural exchange to Chiang Mai, Thailand. While there, almost as far away as you can get from Canada, I learned how important discipleship is in building the church. I caught a glimpse of the need for humility, flexibility, and imagination that I see as crucial in being future ready. And so, I look for what I can learn from others and adapt to suit where God has placed me.

Since then, my wife Sjana and I have been taking note of those who inspire us because they live out their faith in ways that show up in their attitudes, behaviour, and character. No matter their culture or family life or circumstances they bear these unmistakable marks of a disciple of Jesus.

We learn so much from followers of Jesus around the world, for many of them already know what it is to live in a culture where Christianity is not the favoured religion. We have seen some special families who live as teams of followers of Jesus on mission to the world, and we want to emulate that in our family.

I put some of these philosophies and practices together as I sought the Lord's direction for the Summer of 2022. I had been making short YouTube videos as if having a fireside chat in my basement next to my wood-burning furnace. Generally, people connect with the warmth and comfort a fire can bring. Yet a fire somehow seems to also stir the imagination. I began to ask, why not have campfire chats, but with a little more? The idea gained traction as I thought about how these chats could become discipleship moments. I began to pray and ask more questions.

- What have I seen and experienced with others that could help shape this type of gathering?
- Would Jesus or the early church engage in such an activity?
- Would the global church do gatherings of this sort?
- What would happen if the participants would one day be willing and able to lead these sorts of gatherings on their own?



Our Sunday Evening Campfire gatherings have come from those times of prayer, thought and reflection. Our gatherings are simple and easily replicated, which is part of the point. Anyone who is a disciple of Jesus can do this. We rotate hosts among those with a desire to share their fire pit.



We keep prayer simple and to the point.

We take turns reading portions of Mark to spark the imagination and allow time for observations and questions.

A few disciples who can play guitar or ukulele lead us as we sing a couple of songs.

Lastly, someone asks the simple two-part question: How has the Lord been working in your life, or how has He been speaking to you?

Sharing is optional, and young and old get to participate and be heard. Sometimes the Holy Spirit prompts a different question like “What are you grateful for today?” and we get to hear about some of God’s blessings in the lives of our children and disciples. While people share their stories, we break out the marshmallows and S’mores. In this comfortable, family-friendly atmosphere, we have built stronger relationships. I am often astounded by the observations of those newly familiar with the story of Jesus or by how much my own children have been growing on their journeys. We take a moment to pray over some of the stories and observations shared. We ask Jesus to use what we learned together to help others as we go on our way.

Sometimes people think that to be future ready, we must be prepared to use new technology or learn new methods of engaging with others. I am not against this, but you don’t have to be limited to being up to date; a campfire is one of the oldest ways to provide heat, energy, and a communal experience. What if we stop trying to give all the answers and just learn to observe?

To me, being future-ready means being humble, flexible and ready to use my imagination to help equip people as they ask, “What can I learn from others and adapt to suit where God has placed me?”

By the time you read this article, campfire season may be a distant memory in your part of the country. Here’s an opportunity to apply that flexibility and imagination. The simple format is easily transferable. Only the setting needs to change. And what better way to serve some in your congregation who have mobility limitations in inclement weather? In the past, I have held cooking classes with a Bible study, aiming to teach how to feed the body and the soul. At our church, we have started a Sunday evening movie night with popcorn and snacks. We are watching *The Chosen** and then talk about the episode and some of the Scriptures used. Seeing how God can take something so simple and make it a growth opportunity is a blessing. Listening for opportunities and leaning in with flexibility are what I see as the way forward. ●



Jedediah Gorham is the lead pastor of Eau Claire Evangelical Missionary Church, Mattawa, Ontario.

*Executive Producers, Derral Eves, Matthew Faraci (season 1) Dallas Jenkins, Ryan Swanson, Tyler Thompson. Original release: December 24, 2017-present. *The Chosen* [TV series]. Production companies: Loaves & Fishes Productions, Angel Studios, Out of Order Studios.



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(EASTRIDGE CHURCH)

2023 GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



EARLY BIRD
(Feb 1 - Mar 17)

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AFTER
MARCH 17

\$300

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REGISTRATION OPENS FEBRUARY 1, 2023



WHEN 2 CONGREGATIONS BECOME 1

Q&A WITH
**CONRAD NEUDORF &
CHARDON CANONAYON**

BY JEAN WINKER



Bear Creek Church and Lifehouse Church, in Surrey, BC, met separately for the last time on June 12, 2022—the day each congregation gathered to vote. 100% of the members of each congregation voted in favour of a future together. Nova Church is the name of the newly merged EMCC congregation. We thank Nova's Pastors, Conrad Neudorf and Chardon Canonayon, for telling us how it came about and why.

Why did you choose Nova as the new name for your church?

Chardon: Nova means “to make new” in Latin and “a bright light” in astronomy. Together it means “a new bright light,” which perfectly describes who we are.”

Tell us about Bear Creek EMC and your time there before the merger.

Conrad: We were about 50-60 people, and we were growing. Our congregation tended towards an older demographic. We have a building, and our sanctuary seats 300. We shared our facilities with another congregation that rented space from us. We were predominantly Caucasian but with a mixture of East Indian and Indo-Canadian. We were quite

diverse, and that was fabulous. My background was with the C&MA (The Christian & Missionary Alliance). My assignment with Bear Creek was transitional. We were about to move on, but the church asked me to stay, and I pastored the congregation since 2010.

Tell us a little about Lifehouse Church and your time there before the merger.

Chardon: We were a non-denominational church plant. We first met in my living room and later in a high school. When the pandemic forced us out of our place to meet, we were a congregation of about 50 people. We had two couples with kids; the rest were young adults or seniors. We were predominantly a Filipino Church.

THE PASTORS OF NOVA CHURCH



Conrad Neudorf
(pastor of former
Bear Creek EMC)



Chardon Canonayon
(pastor of former
Lifehouse Church)

I was ordained with the Independent Baptists and pastored elsewhere for a few years before launching the Lifehouse in 2019.

How did you eventually find your way to Bear Creek?

Chardon: When people could start gathering again, we began making calls. We phoned every school, hotel, banquet hall and church, trying to find a place to rent. Everybody said ‘no.’ Out of the dozens of places we called, Bear Creek was the only one that said, “We’d like to meet you first. So, I came in, and that’s when I first met Pastor Con.

How did the first meeting go?

Conrad: We hit it off right away. We had the same goals, same direction, same dreams. As we prayed together, it solidified. After they left, my admin person Stacey and I looked at each other; and I said, “This is a group I believe God is calling us to pursue.” We offered them rental space, and they began with us in July 2021.

How did you progress with the partnership idea?

Conrad: I chatted with Chardon and said, “Let’s do a fall event together.” It was a barbeque and event on a Sunday morning. It was a great time. We bonded a little and started to feel closer. But I still had no idea we were going to merge.

Chardon: They invited us to their Christmas 2021 banquet and asked me to share the devotional (2021). Then he asked me to preach for Bear Creek when he was away.

What led you to begin wondering if you’d be better together?

Conrad: Some Sundays, I would stay and watch their service. I thought, “They are doing the same things we are doing.” I liked how he spoke and his casual approach. In December, I was starting to think, “Maybe this is going to be something God is going to do in the future, but it would really take a miracle.”

What happened when you finally talked about a possible merger?

Conrad: It was the end of January 2022. My wife, Deb and I prayed for a week ahead. I was nervous, but we’d had a good prayer time, and I felt peace. “It’s up to the Lord. I’ll just put it out there,” I said to myself. So I called Chardon in for a meeting and asked, “What do you think about merging? Is this something you’d be interested in?”

Chardon: He’d thought about this three months before asking me. I didn’t know anything about what would need to happen—anything about the denomination. I had so many questions. Some fears too.

Conrad: We decided to meet once a week to go over specific issues. We’d look at the denomination, theological questions, what do the congregations think about this or that?

Planning for future-ready—what were you thinking?

Conrad: We laid the groundwork. We knew the foundation had to be strong. We prepared for almost anything. You have to think ahead. What if this happens? What if that happens? How are we going to handle it? We were constantly in that framework, looking

ahead, what's the next step, what's the strategy? How can we be as transparent as possible so the decision can be well-done and made with our eyes wide open?

The Vote to Merge

Chardon: We met on June 12, 2021, in our separate spaces, and each congregation voted. It was our last time meeting separately. The vote was 100% in favour of the merger in both congregations.

Conrad: On July 1, 2022, we had our 1st service together as one church.

How is your recent merger helping Nova be a future-ready church?

Conrad: There is a new enthusiasm, excitement.

Chardon: People are excited to bring friends. A larger Indo-Canadian group is coming. We have a sense of momentum. Kids ministry is up to 20+ kids. We each had about 3 or 4 previously.

Chardon: People of other ethnicities have started coming. We're becoming more diverse together. We have a few more young adults and more couples.

Conrad: With young people coming in, there is a definite shift to using more tech—social media. We couldn't do this before from our side.

Chardon: Much of our evangelism and church growth comes from social media.

What else are you doing to be a future-ready church?

Chardon: We are participating in the future when, by our physical presence, our social media presence, and by being out in the community, we have an opportunity to be a lighthouse. The world is becoming crazier. People are searching for truth. We want people to know, "Hey, that church will tell you the truth." We want people to know we are a Bible church.

Conrad: We are preparing for the growth that is to come. I believe God is sending us now the right people we need to center that base. We want to preach the solid gospel and have a good children's ministry in place. We want discipleship in place to be prepared for when God brings us those people so they don't fall by the wayside.

Chardon: we're praying for slow, consistent growth.

Conrad: We have increased resources to work with—people and financial. We can do more with our finances together than when we were apart.

How is the merger helping you be more effective future-ready pastors?

Conrad: We can work more in our areas of gifting. It's nice to share the load with Chardon and Kristine [Chardon's spouse and Executive Administrator at Nova Church].

Chardon: We can focus on talking to people and preparing our sermons and not be so tied up with paperwork. Hiring Kristine really helped. Everything filters through her.

Conrad: Now, I can sometimes greet people as they come in and have a little chat. I never could do that before. Sometimes, when Chardon is preaching, I can go down to the children's ministry and do puppets. I can be with the kids, and before, I couldn't.

Chardon: Conrad is a great mentor to me. I need someone ahead of me who can help and guide me and who has

gone through challenges that I could face in the future.

Conrad: We have great mutual respect.

What are your top priorities as you continue to get future-ready?

Chardon: We are completing the legal matters so we can gear into local outreach.

Conrad: We are trying to get solidified within our own camp—like when you get married, and want to get to know one another better for a while before you start having kids.

Chardon: We are getting our systems in place. We are helping the church get used to how we do things so that everybody will know what to do when we gear up for more evangelistic outreaches. Our community impact is 'in the works.' ●

People of other ethnicities have started coming. We're becoming more diverse together.



future readying

Three Recognitions

BY SCOTT CLUBINE

Over the past year, the National Board of Directors has been intrigued to explore what it truly means to be a “future-ready” denomination. It has created sober self-evaluation of our functioning as a Board. It urged us to ensure that future-ready conversations were a part of our regular focus. Having engaged in this, part of our journey as a National Board has involved three recognitions about being future ready that I believe might be helpful for others to learn:

1. Being future ready requires a critical and discerning eye toward what presently “is.”

Scripture urges us to walk “circumspectly” to understand the Lord’s will (Ephesians 5:15-17). A good evaluation of what currently “is” helps us identify strengths and weaknesses within our denomination and more deeply sense how the Spirit of God is leading us forward. Let me encourage you with my firm conviction that God is indeed leading us forward as the EMCC. We’ve learned this process is not about decrying what is or what was because preparing for the future is not a negative comment on what has come before.

Instead, we’ve learned to celebrate that which has come before us, identifying it all as crucial

in our development as a denomination while simultaneously recognizing that some of it must change if we are to be future ready. When our third child was on the way, my wife and I researched and purchased a van, not because our smaller vehicle was “bad,” nor because a van was “good,” but because the future required a new, different vehicle. It took a bit of time to become a van person, but it was truly what the future required. Denominationally, we may also need a new vehicle for what God is birthing in us. We ease change when we do so without developing overly critical and negative narratives about the past. It may take some time for us to become future-ready people, but that’s part of the process. As we’ve wrestled with how to ensure that our bylaws, policies, organizational structure and other realities permit us to be future ready, such a perspective has helped us remain focussed, motivated and hopeful.

2. Being future ready requires a profound “other” focus.

One of the strong inklings of our present board is that none of us may fully reap the benefit from the work we are doing now to become future ready. Many of the preparations we are making, including some of the changes and alterations to bylaws and board functioning, will only completely be realized when most

of us are no longer serving on the National Board. So, although we might presently function in a messy in-between, we make our future-ready preparations with the benefit of others (future boards, future leaders, and future denominational realities) firmly in mind. We've learned that this requires a lot of humility and patience, something we've found God has blessed us with as we've journeyed this road together.

3. Being future ready requires a willingness to ask for help.

None of us know what the future will hold, but we serve One who sovereignly controls the passing of time and knows all there is to know about what is to come. When we ask for God's wisdom, He gives it "generously to all without finding fault" (James 1:5). We've found that this wisdom is often corporately sourced. It comes from within the body of Christ, which is why a team approach is crucial to the ability to become future ready. It's a compelling reason behind our desire to see the effective development of teams within the EMCC, teams that encourage conversation with a heavy emphasis on listening. Often, our world emphasizes that effectiveness comes through efficient decision-making. Though this is sometimes quite true, we're learning the value of a more methodical, conversational approach.

This insight about teams is why we are so interested in the ongoing work of our EMCC Conversation Facilitation Team and the

Theology Commission. These teams are helping us understand the postures and means necessary for effectively hearing from those who are part of the EMCC, paving the way for us to be even more future ready. We are looking to the Conversation Facilitation Team to help us create a new pattern for denominational listening and to our Theology Commission to help us establish a clear articulation of our denominational convictions.

We know that we have not arrived at a future-ready position as a National Board but that we are always to be engaged in future readying. We can do so confidently since we serve the one "who is, and who was, and who is to come" (Revelation 1:4). Future readying is, at the same time, exciting, exhausting, exhilarating and excruciating, captivating and challenging, inspiring and seemingly impossible. I would ask for your prayers for us, your EMCC National Board, but also for the EMCC National Team, President John and all those tasked with one form of leadership or another within the EMCC. As we've learned, future readying is a corporate task. We invite you to join us in this endeavour to ultimately see God's will done on earth as in heaven. ●



Scott Clubine is the Moderator of the EMCC National Board of Directors and lead pastor at Hillside Church, Mount Albert, Ontario.



REACHING HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY WORKERS
IN BOW VALLEY:

Who will go?

BY BOB MCGAW

A couple of years ago a good friend made a benign comment that has not left me since. “Bow Valley needs a guide like you; someone who can ski alongside them and share Jesus,” he said. I’ve thought about this a lot since. Why is it in my heart? Why won’t it go away?

In my estimation, there are as many as 10,000 hospitality workers in the Bow Valley (Banff/Canmore/Lake Louise). Some are believers, but many, if not most will have never heard the gospel. Even for those inclined, the schedules normal in the hospitality industry make attendance at Sunday church services impossible. This is an unreached people group and an untapped resource for the church of the future.

As God has laid this on my heart, I am praying that He will raise up disciple-makers and an expression of the Church that will allow people to be introduced to Him, be discipled and then become disciplers themselves. I am in an embryonic stage with this, listening to the Lord and His leading. The outcomes are in His hands.

I am looking for like-minded people to assist. I need a network of individuals to extend my limited reach. People with a desire to mentor and disciple others and walk with them. People with a passion for the lost and who are motivated by an urgency that others need to hear about Jesus. And, of course, people with a heart for those working in the variety of jobs in the hospitality industry, maybe because of a similar work history or skills, but not necessarily. I'm envisioning people coming to the Lord through one-to-one relationships, and then being funneled into micro expressions of church, a network of small home settings, to learn the basics and be discipled. Places to experience church life in places other than church.

Before coming to Red Deer and taking the job I now have, I was a pastor in full-time ministry for 15 years. I love to teach and encourage others. I am passionate about discipleship and possess a strong desire to help people improve their Biblical literacy. My wife Tara and I live in Red Deer, but we own a home in Canmore and are feeling a tug to return there. Perhaps this is linking to what God has in store. As I think about this leading of God I have to say I'm 'scared-cited.' Here in Red Deer I have a good job with benefits, vacation days—we're comfortable. We could move back to Canmore and just enjoy all life there has to offer, but then I think, "What about all those people who need to hear about Jesus?" Who will go? Maybe I am the catalyst. Maybe I'll lead the first small group. The harvest is up to Him.

There is no timeline in place, but I am preparing my own life so I can pour into others. I'm going through EMCC's Way of Jesus training with Lynn Dietz, Regional Minister. It resonates with me because it reflects the Biblical model of what a disciple is. While continuing my full time job I am putting aside funds for courses so I can become a self-employed professional. This will enable me to choose the hours I work, freeing up ministry time. Prayer is a crucial part of this, and I am grateful to resourceful supporters at CrossRoads Church where we attend. They are my cheerleaders. As I talk about this opportunity with others, feedback has been positive and some are praying along with me asking the Lord what He intends.

What I need most is to hear from God what's next and how to do it. He has always provided everything my wife and I have needed. I feel 100% dependent on the Lord. I have nothing to go on, nobody in place—all I have is an idea.

I like to tell people I'm in 'Noah mode.' He didn't know when the flood was coming. He just started to get ready.

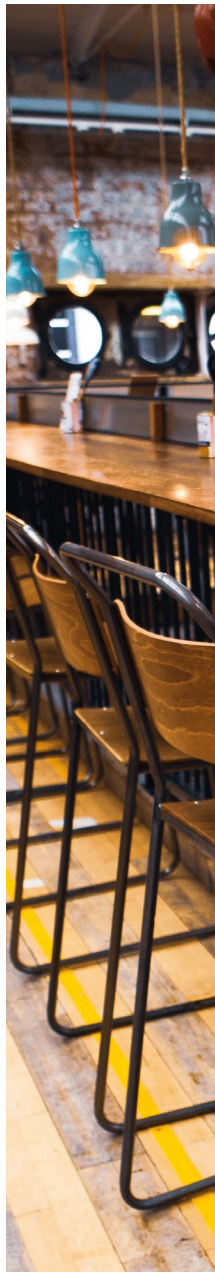
God's Word is a lamp and a light. I'm getting ready and need just enough light for the next step when it is time. ●



Bob McGaw and his wife Tara served in full-time pastoral ministry in the U.S. for 15 years. In 2006 they relocated back to Canada where they are involved at CrossRoads Church in Red Deer, AB.



If this future ministry opportunity in the Bow Valley resonates with you and you would like to hear more about it, you may reach out to Bob at bmcgaw74@gmail.com.



THE CO-PASTOR MODEL

A win for pastors, congregation and community

BY JEAN WINKER

AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF CO-PASTORS, CERENA BROWNE AND JAKE BURSEY

The congregation at Trinity EMC, Waterloo, ON welcomed their new co-pastors, Cerena Browne and Jake Bursey via Zoom on March 20, 2020, the first Sunday their church building was closed in response to the pandemic. Cerena and Jake greeted their new congregation and began to serve in six-month, half-time interim roles, while the search committee looked for a lead pastor. During a contract extension, the committee discerned that the female/male co-pastor approach was a good fit for the church and recommended Cerena and Jake stay. We've asked Cerena and Jake to share observations and insights about this ministry model and their experience of it, first as co-pastors and then, specifically as a female/male co-pastor team.



CO-PASTOR
CERENA BROWN

CO-PASTOR
JAKE BURSEY



shall come to pass, if they say
Whither shall we go forth?
h as are for death, to death;
as are for the sword, to the
such as are for the famine, to
and such as are for the cap-
tivity.
ill appoint over them four
he LORD: the sword to slay,
to tear, and the fowls of the
the beasts of the earth, to
destroy.
cause them to be removed
ns of the earth, because of
son of Hez-e-ki'ah king of
which he did in Jerusa-
I have pity upon thee, O
o shall bemoan thee?

Jeremiah 14-16
fore we will enemy to entreat thee well in t
et made all evil and in the time of afflictio
12 Shall iron break the north
and the steel?
13 Thy substance and thy t
will I give to the spoil without p
that for all thy sins, even in all t
ders.
14 And I will make thee to pas
thine enemies into a land to pas
knowest not: for a fire is kindled in
anger, which shall burn upon you.
15 O LORD, thou knowest: reme
me, and visit me, and revenge me o
persecutors; take me not away in
longsuffering: know that for thy sa
have suffered rebuke.
16 Thy words were found, and I did
them; and thy word was unto me the
and rejoicing of mine heart: for th
called by thy name, O LORD God of th
17 I sat not in the assembly of m
mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone i
cause of thy hand: for thou hast fill
with indignation.
18 Why is my pain perpetual, and
wound incurable, which refuseth to
healed? wilt thou be altogether unt
as a liar, and as waters that fail?
19 Therefore thus saith the LORD
thou return, then shall thou sh
thou sh

How do you feel about your experience as part of a co-pastor team?

Jake: This is my first ministry role and I wonder how people pastor alone—carrying so much responsibility, so many tasks. I strongly recommend a co-pastor or multi-leader model. It seems to me it's in the best interests of both the church and the pastors to not burn them out.

Cerena: This is my second ministry role, but first in a leadership position. My experience in a co-pastor team has been surprisingly good. It offers me a challenge to fully embrace and operate in my gifts and to develop the ones that need to be honed. Scripture says as iron sharpens iron, so does one person sharpen another, and I am living this out in my new role. I am grateful that the load and the fun is shared, and I am not serving in isolation. God opened a door and Jake and I said yes to Him and walked through the door.

What would be the most important things to consider for a church thinking of hiring co-pastors?

Cerena: It would be beneficial and prudent to determine the spiritual gifts each candidate is bringing to the table, the needs of the congregation, similar doctrinal beliefs, and how well both candidates complement each other and challenge each other. I suppose equally yoked co-pastoral leadership is important not just for the pastors but for the church as well. Hence, because the congregation has a voice and vote in this matter, the congregation has to love and embrace both pastors.

Jake: Are their visions of ministry the same? See what areas each will focus on. What is each one's philosophy of ministry? It is fine to have different passions, but both need the same love of Jesus and desire to pursue Jesus.

As co-pastors, how do you divide up the responsibilities?

Cerena: God has gifted us uniquely and growing in our leadership skill has given us personal clarity on our gifting. There are some overlaps as we share the preaching and teaching and congregational care. We both love preaching and teaching and because we equally share this role, we both get to use this gift without feeling that one is getting more speaking time than the other. It's important that we are aware of the bigger picture because when one of us is on vacation, the other must be prepared to serve and delegate.

Jake: We each have our own ministry portfolio which outlines specific ministries that we take the lead on based on our gifts and passions. Since we are a multi-leader church, we also look to empower our elders and deacons to take on ministries and responsibilities as well. We try to share the load as widely as possible.

Why do you see the co-pastor model as worthy of consideration?

Jake: It is Scriptural—early churches were often governed by a group of elders, rather than one person. It is supportive. We bounce ideas off of each other and put our minds together when something comes up. This ensures that any decisions we make are well thought out.

Cerena: The co-pastor model really takes the stress off. I am not pressured to have all the answers and Pastor Jake and I rely on each and the elders for support, guidance, and wisdom. Because we are different with different experiences, giftings and skill set, God uses us to bless others in various ways.

If a church makes the decision to hire two, what can they do to promote good working relationships between their pastors?

Cerena: Effective communication is key in any team, so I believe that the church can promote a good working relationship by ensuring that communication is ongoing as it relates to issues that are big and small, comfortable

and uncomfortable. Pastors can each be assigned with a mentor. Shared ministry can be challenging so the church must ensure that the vision and goals are clear for both pastors.

Jake: In our case it feels like a big collective team of people working together. We have been blessed with a good group of elders who all genuinely desire to follow God's leading. I think having a leadership team with this kind of character helps pastors feel supported and valued in their ministries.

Do you have a process to follow if you can't come to agreement on a decision?

Cerena: Pastor Jake and I have the utmost respect for each other. Our mindset is to obey God's call on our life, to love God and his people first and to serve. We have a difference of opinions at times, but we discuss the issues, listening to each other's point of view and reason. We discuss it with the Elders and weigh the answers according to scripture, then agree on a decision. At the end of it all, what brings Glory to God is what is important and on this big thing, Jake and I agree.

Jake: I agree with Cerena. We rarely struggle with this because our elders and deacons are mutually submitted to one another, and our times together are heavily focused on prayer and seeking God's will. If one person has a differing opinion than the majority, they will usually submit to the collective decision of the group.

In addition to benefits of co-pastoring mentioned above, what do you see as future-ready benefits of having specifically a woman and a man as co-pastors?

Cerena: Jake and I are unique because not only are we a male/female team, we are also diverse because of our races and culture. In our case, with having both gender and races represented it leads to a well-rounded church with a diversity of voices that offer representation for a variety of people, especially people who come from

different cultural backgrounds, those who are broken, or are hurt. I feel, as a female/male team we are better equipped and resilient to handle the challenges of the world.

Jake: I've noticed that men and women often have very different perspectives on issues. I think it is good to have the input of both. This is helpful in addressing a conflict or something that involves men and women.

How might having female/male co-pastors improve community impact?

Cerena: We model working as a team/children of God in our diversity. I think, in a world or in the EMCC where you wouldn't typically see this, it can help engage a multicultural community because both gender and races are represented. ●



ABOUT CERENA AND JAKE

Cerena and Jake had met a couple of times before being jointly hired on contract at Trinity EMC in Waterloo, Ontario. Previous to her current co-pastor role, Cerena was Children's Pastor for a year at Bethany EMC, Kitchener. Cerena's spiritual gifts are preaching, teaching and pastoring and her spiritual passion is seeing people come to know and accept Jesus as Lord. Jake was an outreach worker for three years at St. John's Kitchen in Kitchener before coming to Trinity. Jake's spiritual gifts are administration, teaching and pastoring, and he is passionate about seeing people come to know Jesus and come into relationship with the Holy Spirit.



Want to *Support* the EMCC?

Your donation supports the mission entrusted to us.

There are several ways to support workers,
projects and programs in the EMCC:

- Our National Team
- Our Global Workers
- Our Global Projects & Immersion Learning Experiences
- The Development of Our Leaders
- Our Future Initiatives
- Emergency Care

Thank you for considering this opportunity to help us make a difference.

For more information, visit our website at

emcc.ca/give



2022 Summer Programs RECAP

Most of the students were from unchurched families - more seeds planted!

AVG.

3

MAX.

9

WEEKS OF PROGRAMMING

In September, we sent a survey to EMCC churches and partners to see what God did over the summer 2022 in the lives of our next generation through our summer programs for children and youth.

141

PROGRAM STAFF

Many of our staff were impacted by the experience!

28

EMCC CHURCHES/
CAMPS RESPONDED

Creator God was once again faithful and provided for all our needs as we were able to bless our campers, their families, staff and community members.

This is our first time running a summer Bible camp program in years, so we are building our relationships with the community pretty much from scratch. We had children from agnostic, Buddhist, and Hindu families attend and it was their first time ever in a Bible-based teaching environment!

582

VOLUNTEERS

Our summer program gave others a chance to use and hone their gifts and interests.



267

CAMPERS

GAVE THEIR LIVES TO JESUS!

The large majority of kids we reached are not from our church. Some came from other churches in the area, including a large number of Catholic families.

* min. number as some programs did not track this data.

This was our largest camp year yet. Our volunteer club & Sunday teams have grown as a result of camp!

3198

CAMPERS

We have had at least one family start coming to our church because of VBS! That is a big deal because we only have one family with kids to start with so we doubled our families attending!

Many thanks to:

Albright Church (Winnipeg, MB), Bethany Community Church (St. Catharines, ON), Bethany EMC (Kitchener, ON), Bethel Church (Lindsay, ON), Bethel EMC (Carstairs, AB), Bethel EMC (New Dundee, ON), Bonavista EMC (Calgary, AB), Bowden EMC (Bowden, AB), Callander Bay Church (Callander, ON), Camp Mishewah (Killaloe, ON), Centre Street Church (Calgary, AB), Country Hills Church (Kitchener, ON), Chesley Community Church (Chesley, ON), EastRidge Church (Stouffville, ON), Eau Claire EMC (Mattawa, ON), Faith EMC (Wasaga Beach, ON), Foothills Community Church (Okotoks, AB), Harvest New Life Christian Fellowship (Edmonton, AB), Hillside EMC (Mount Albert, ON), Hope Chapel (Collingwood, ON), Oyen EMC (Oyen, AB), Pinaaz-i Zibi Maamawi (Golden Lake, ON), Plattsville Church (Plattsville, ON), Sarnia EMC (Sarnia, ON), South Shore EMC (Callander, ON), Triumph Chinese EMC (Toronto, ON), Upper Thames Missionary Church (Mitchell, ON), Wilmot Centre Church (Petersburg, ON)

WALKING ALONGSIDE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN GLOBAL MISSION

Participation in an Evolving Missions Landscape

BY NICOLE JONES-QANDAH

“Today, the average Christian is female, a person of colour, and living in Africa or Asia.”¹ Theologian Stephen Bevans shares these words to ground his readers in the reality of the astonishing growth of world Christianity. I believe we, as leaders within the EMCC, should praise God for this growth. For indeed, “[the] true story of history is that of God pursuing reconciled relationships with all creation, and our identity as Jesus’ followers is that we are participants in His mission.”² How can we respond and prepare for the changing landscape of global Christianity that Bevans is pointing to? How is God calling us to be future-ready?

THE INVITATION

I feel privileged to ponder these questions with you and lean into the invitation God is calling us into alongside the global church. The question is whether we will respond to this invitation, trusting His all-sufficient nature, as we take steps into this next era of participation in His mission.

World Partners has shared in recent years that things are changing in global mission. The call from our friends across the Global South is for a new kind of relationship with those of us in Canada. They are not so much seeking our help but our friendship, not directing but drawing alongside. They modelled this during the COVID lockdowns, as they remained in unceasing prayer for EMCC, reminding us of the nature of the Triune God, who sustains and empowers us through all things. We can discover how to walk in mutual love with brothers and sisters from across the globe by graciously following the example set by Jesus. He humbly received and gave throughout his ministry.

THE CHALLENGE

This posture of giving and receiving can profoundly impact how we approach service to the globe and our own neighbourhoods. As people continue to relocate for economic, socio-political and other reasons, what new and exciting opportunities exist for the EMCC and the Canadian church? World Partners’





mission statement is to ‘learn with, connect, and mobilize people to adaptively participate in Jesus’ mission everywhere.’³ That “everywhere” includes our neighbourhoods and anywhere we have disciple-making communities. Jesus was willing to sit at the table with everyone, affirming the dignity and value of all, but particularly those whom society and culture considered unworthy.

During our April 2021 visit to the Ethiopia Kale Heywet Church, members asked us how we are receiving this call, both globally and locally. Dr. Tefera Taloche, Chair of the Ethiopia Kale Heywet Church Development Commission, said, “The holistic development and care for the poor is the church’s main responsibility. Understanding this purpose cannot happen unless seeds fall on good soil.”

May we, as individuals and as a part of EMCC as a broader movement, be good soil as we prepare for the future and discern the opportunities around us to demonstrate, in word and deed, the characteristics of Jesus and the opportunity to partner in transformation.

“
[Our friends
across the Global
South] are not
so much seeking
our help but
our friendship,
not directing
but drawing
alongside.



NEXT STEPS

Being future-ready for World Partners means responding to both the invitation and the challenge in equal measure by updating systems and structures through listening and consulting with global workers, partners, and EMCC leaders. We seek to create places of meaningful connection and opportunities for mission mobilization alongside you, our EMCC leaders and churches.

If reading this has inspired curiosity or prompted questions, feel free to schedule a consultation (emcc.ca/world-partners/consultations) with us. We want to hear how God is prompting you to participate in mission and assist in any way we can.

I am grateful to be on the journey together, listening, trusting, and obeying Jesus in the ways He invites us to co-participate with Him and the global church. ●



Nicole Jones-Qandah is the Director of the World Partners (Global Missions Arm of EMCC). Nicole lives in Calgary with her husband, Phil and their standard poodle, Ferguson.

RESPONDING TO THE INVITATION

Here are some of the ways
World Partners can help you:

First, contact us (emcc.ca/world-partners/partner) about facilitating an immersion learning experience or exploratory trip, where you can learn with and from our global partners and workers in their contexts to build relationships and glean meaningful insight for your neighbourhood or community.

Second, sign up for our mailing list (emcc.ca/world-partners/sign-up) to read stories of how followers of Jesus and friends in the Global South are being obedient to His Spirit in various contexts.

Third, consider connecting and supporting our workers and partners. See our directory (emcc.ca/world-partners/workers) of global workers and partners, with photos of individuals, couples, and partners intentionally linked with the EMCC. Following the directory is our integral development page, where we seek to listen to and assist Global Partners in their goals, as defined by them, in developing a disciple-making focus and addressing their community development needs.

¹ Kim, Grace Ji-Sun and Graham Hill. 2018. Healing our Broken Humanity: Practices for Revitalizing the Church and Renewing the World. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

² EMCC WP, A Theology of Integral Mission, pg 7, Accessed at https://emccenrich.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/EMCC_Theology_of_Integral_Mission.pdf.

³ EMCC WP, Strategic Direction Booklet, Accessed at https://www.emcc.ca/files/emccadmin/WP/strategic_direction_booklet.pdf.



Breaking THE Cycle

Partners working together toward a
better future in Gens de Nantes, Haiti

BY JEAN WINKER

Thanks to Herlynda Philogene, Hernso Philogene and Marilyn McIlroy for helping tell this story of the difference that occurs when you use what you've got in the best possible way.

A lack of financial resources due to chronically insecure income means many parents in rural Gen de Nantes (GDN), Haiti, cannot reliably feed their families, pay school tuition fees and purchase school supplies for their children. Malnutrition is prevalent, even among many of the pupils who are enrolled, which decreases learning capacity. Without the means for good nutrition and solid education for the young, the cycle of poverty perpetuates.



ASSESSING PROBLEMS & RESOURCES

EMCC World Partners has worked with the AEM – the Missionary Church in Haiti for many years and collaborates with the GDN Health Care Centre, assisting with building projects and the school [which belongs to the AEM]. In response to requests from AEM in GDN for help in the area of education, a community leaders retreat group was formed and met in November 2019. With representation from World Partners, Albright Church, the GDN church, health centre, school and agriculture friends, they discussed the challenges and identified existing resources. Land was pinpointed as an available yet underdeveloped resource. Typically, poor farming techniques are used and crops lacking in nutrition are grown. These harvests are primarily sold to help financially support a family, and do little to alleviate hunger and promote health within the family.

A PROJECT TAKES SHAPE

As a result of the community engagement, a project plan was developed, but with the onset of the pandemic, it got off to a slow start while the inability to purchase food ramped up along with malnutrition.

Sister and brother Herlynda and Hernso Philogene grew up in GDN. They were key contributors and co-leaders in the retreat. They, and others who work on and support this project are dedicated to doing what they can to help the people of GDN be future ready—able to consistently provide for their families in a sustainable way. Herlynda studied Business Administration and became an agent for EMCC World Partners in 2018. She is responsible for financial reporting, ensuring funds are used appropriately according to the project plan. Hernso, who studied Agriculture in Cape Haitian, answered the call to travel to Port au Prince, where he trained to teach others the Farming God's Way [FGW] principles. World Partners recruited him to work alongside the new initiative—Haiti: Education, Food Security and Community Mobilization (RD146).

The project intends to reduce malnutrition among students and their families by helping the families grow nutritional food in quantities sufficient to sustain their own households with surplus to sell to improve income. The project rollout was in January 2021, and involves 50 children and their families. Many of the children never attended the church-operated Jr. Kindergarten to Gr 9 school. Others had been enrolled, but parents couldn't keep up with tuition. Without the burden of school tuition, books and backpacks—all provided free to the participating children—the parents have a little cash to spare to feed them before or after school, improving their ability to learn. Of the 50 students, the ones in grades 7-9 learn specifically about Farming God's Way and prepare their own gardens.

WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR?

Hernso has trained the 50 participating families [each has one child in the program], students in grades 7-9, and teachers at the AEM school in GDN. He has helped families plant demonstration “gardens of faithfulness,” 1m x 2m gardens planted in their yards. Seeds and plants were given to them. Biblical principles that describe God's way of living have also been taught. The families are learning the benefits of the Farming God's Way (FGW) methods. Teachers have been trained to help supervise the family gardens. Some families have already benefitted from eating produce grown in their own gardens.

EDUCATIONAL GAINS

The project provides funding for the school to hire teachers. They are seeing improved outcomes at the end of the year (more students passing into the following grades) because of the consistency of school teachers, actual teaching days, and better overall school functioning. All of the students in the GDN AEM school benefit because the teachers are present and teach regularly. Several participating children are in each of the classes, from preschool to Grade 9.

TYPICAL, BUT NOT OPTIMAL

Before implementing FGW methods, typical crops grown were peanuts, soup beans, corn [to be dried for cornmeal], plantain, okra, manioc and rice in wet areas. Although an excellent protein source, peanuts are a cash crop, sold to buy less-nutritious but inexpensive food like spaghetti and other goods like shoes and clothes. Other traditional crops provide only starch that fills the stomach but has little nutritional value. Crops are not rotated, no natural fertilizers are used, and crops are not resistant to drought or excess rainfall. Poor farming methods lead to poor harvest outcomes.

NEW WAYS, NEW CROPS

People are learning how to space seeds and plants and use compost, natural fertilizers and God's blanket (covering the soil to retain moisture). They are being taught to plant fruit-bearing vegetables (like beans and peppers), root vegetables such as carrots and beets, and green leafy vegetables like Swiss Chard. Once these crops have been harvested, they learn the importance of rotating them to increase soil health. There have been some results with the small gardens.

MOBILIZING OTHERS

Teachers prepared five model 1x2m gardens by the school. These show the community and the families of non-participant students the benefits of this gardening method. The idea is to mobilize more families to put these techniques into practice as they see improvements. Anyone can become involved, form a group and receive training from the FGW coordinator. During a recent refresher, neighbours and community leaders joined and received training. Neighbours asking questions of neighbours with a garden is another excellent way to attract others to learn the techniques and reap the benefits.

REPEAT

Not all families will become self-sustaining – especially when working with a population who are not literate

or have no education. Some learn after one or two practical experiences; many others need the training repeated several times to finally capture what is being taught. This method requires a change in mindset, and encouragement to try something new. Refreshers are essential. On August 23-25, 2022, an extensive training seminar in partnership with FARM Haiti Pignon reinforced what Hernso has been teaching.

HELP GENS DE NANTES BECOME FUTURE READY

This three-year project initiative shows great promise. As people get used to the new methods and crops they can apply their learnings to their larger garden plots for larger harvests—more income to sustain their families and educate their children. Learning how to plant and care for the gardens is a benefit that lasts a lifetime. For this project to succeed, multiply, and mobilize the community, assistance is needed from people who care. People who will pray for the project and the gardens, leaders, teachers, and participating families. And people who will give. Donations to the project go towards monthly expenses for FGW Coordinator Hernso, Administrator Herlynda, 50 families receiving training and garden seeds and equipment, children of the 50 families receiving education, books and backpacks, teachers and school administration. To see more, or donate: Haiti: Education, Food Security, and Community Mobilization (emcc.ca/world-partners/what-we-do/integrating-development/haiti-gens-de-nantes-education-and-agriculture).

This initiative is a pilot process in pursuing a fresh direction with the partnership between the EMCC and AEM leaders in GDN. EMCC looks forward to continuing dialogue and updating work plans in response to the vision and reality of AEM leaders in GDN.



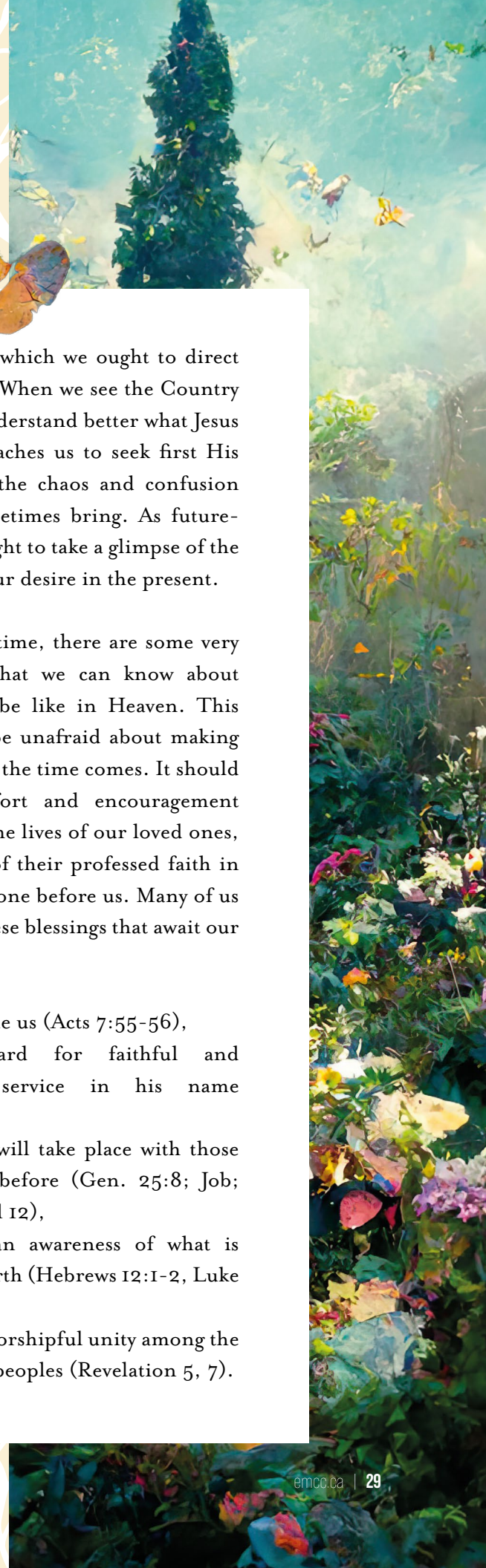

Ambassadors OF A Distant Country

How glimpsing heaven
inspires future-ready living

BY DEVE PERSAD

When I was eight or nine, my sister and I had the special experience of visiting in the Ottawa home of the Ambassador to Trinidad, our native land. More than once we went along with our father, and the memories linger still. By my child's reckoning the home was a mansion and I recall being lost inside, counting the bathrooms. Six, seven? And the outdoor patio led to the most beautiful garden I had ever seen, carpeted with soft grass and teeming with colourful flowers and plants mostly unfamiliar to me. A walkway wound through the garden, and past the last stone there opened a huge yard, also the biggest I'd ever seen. Way down at the end mature climbing trees beckoned, and there were fruit trees for picking in their season.

The ambassador had a clear purpose in mind, and the entire experience emphasized it for me. These were not just social visits. The purpose was to help us strengthen our connection to our native land. The ambassador gave a good report of the nation as a whole, and he made it personal by bringing my father up-to-date on the latest developments in the regions of his upbringing. He provided contact info for others from our home country, and made my father aware of local events where others from our home country would



connect. These events would give opportunity to rekindle memories, and to introduce those less familiar to the distinctives of our home country, and even to talk of a return at some future point.

I don't remember much about the ambassador himself, but I've never forgotten his message, re-enforced by the mansion, beautiful garden, how he graciously welcomed us, and enthusiastically helped others remember and identify with their amazing, far away home.

AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST

As Christian leaders we are called to be 'Ambassadors of Christ.' As we seek to help others be 'future-ready', let's take a good look at just what it means to be Christ's ambassadors and how this will shape us and our kingdom work with others.


Early on, in the gospel of Matthew, we read of the example that Jesus gives us in prayer: "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." At the conclusion of the gospel, we receive Jesus' commission, "to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations." The concept of being ambassador was designed by Jesus and designated by the Apostle Paul.

If we are ambassadors of the distant heavenly country, then what are the characteristics

of that Country to which we ought to direct people's attention? When we see the Country more clearly, we understand better what Jesus means when He teaches us to seek first His Kingdom; despite the chaos and confusion our world can sometimes bring. As future-ready leaders we ought to take a glimpse of the future to quicken our desire in the present.

In this in between time, there are some very important things that we can know about what our life will be like in Heaven. This should help us to be unafraid about making the transition when the time comes. It should also provide comfort and encouragement when we consider the lives of our loved ones, who, on the basis of their professed faith in Jesus Christ, have gone before us. Many of us are familiar with these blessings that await our arrival in heaven:

- Jesus will welcome us (Acts 7:55-56),
- There is reward for faithful and compassionate service in his name (Matthew 25),
- Joyful reunions will take place with those who have gone before (Gen. 25:8; Job; David – 2 Samuel 12),
- There will be an awareness of what is happening on earth (Hebrews 12:1-2, Luke 15, Rev. 6:10-11)
- There will be a worshipful unity among the rich diversity of peoples (Revelation 5, 7).



Moreover, the promises of eternity are even greater as we look beyond heaven, past the return of our Saviour, through the millennial rule and the final defeat of Satan and evil. There will be the establishment of the distant Country—the New Heavens and New Earth!! That which God initiated in Genesis 1 and 2 is fulfilled in Revelation 22, and there are glimpses in the pages in between:

- A place of welcome, prepared for us (Matthew 25:34; John 14:6)
- A place where we will work meaningfully, using the full capacity of the creativity that reflects the Creator God, in whose image we are made (Genesis 1 & 2; Isaiah 60; Isaiah 65; Matthew 25:34)
- A shalom within, and peace among people (2 Peter 3:11-13)
- A growing understanding of God's character: sovereign, holy, true
- A place of indescribable beauty
- A place of restoration and wholeness, physically, relationally, and environmentally
- The vibrant place you've always longed for and that our present circumstances can never fulfill ("The land of living" – Psalm 27; Hebrews 11:10; 14)

Understanding some of these chief characteristics of the distant Country can inform the motives and habits of our daily lives, and increase our desire to help others identify with that Country within the rhythm of their daily lives. In so doing, we bring fulfillment to both the prayer and commission of Jesus. We become ambassadors, commissioned to use the resources and time we've been given

to connect with others, redirect their focus and lovingly compel them toward the merits of our distant Country. In his parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), Jesus reminds us of the importance of faithfully using the resources that God has given to each one of us. Our commitment in this stewardship gives us incentive day by day, and anticipates our welcome into the Kingdom to come. For each one those resources will be different, and include the use of all He has graciously entrusted to us.

THE COMMUNITY GARDEN

A few years ago, the Sarnia EMC started a community garden. It was initiated and is sustained through a group of people who love Jesus, have a passion for the outdoors or gardening, and a concern about those living without adequate nutritional food in our community. They work with the resources that God has given them.

Recently, Melissa Greening, the director of Réseau Femmes de Sud Ouest L'Ontario, gave an interview to the French language CBC Radio*. The subject of the interview was the flourishing that she has been witnessing in the lives of some of the women that she works with. Some of them are newcomers to Canada and our region. Some with difficult challenges, all whose first language is French. Many of them come with needs, feeling as outsiders in an English-speaking, Euro-centric, economically prosperous community like ours.

Having heard of our community garden, she contacted the SEMC to see if we would give these women some of the produce from our garden. To



which we said, “No.” But it didn’t end there.

We communicated to her that while we wouldn’t just give the produce away, we would welcome their participation with us in caring for the garden. In turn, they would be welcome to harvest vegetables for themselves and their families as the season progressed. They have done that, and the women and people from SEMC work side by side, two mornings a week.

Friendships are blossoming as everyone is involved in the common purpose of tending a garden.

The SEMC people are functioning as ambassadors for Jesus Christ in our community: they welcome, they share stories, they come together for a greater purpose—one that reflects the characteristics of our distant Country.

Over the season, friendships are blossoming as everyone is involved in the common purpose of tending a garden. There is a growing understanding of God’s goodness, who cares not only for their needs but, through the bounty, enables them to contribute to the needs of others with food insecurity in the community.

Our garden is flourishing at a yield more than anticipated, even though some of the produce is going home to families. People are flourishing as well. May the Lord continue to bring healing and help to their families according to His Kingdom purposes.

As we look to be future-ready, may the Lord help us to use all the resources we are given in the daily/weekly rhythm of our lives to welcome, connect and redirect others to the distant Country from which we find our citizenship through Jesus Christ. ●



Devo Persad is the lead pastor of Sarnia Evangelical Missionary Church, Sarnia, Ontario, and a Regional Minister (Ontario) of the EMCC. He and his wife, Amanda have two adult children, Jarrett and Aynsley. Together they share a love for food and football.

Reflection

1

What are the gifts/talents/resources God has entrusted to you?

2

In light of the characteristics of the distant Country awaiting us, how does it inform your actions and relationships within your daily/weekly rhythms?

3

In what way is the Lord preparing you to be Future-Ready?



* Matins Sans Frontières (2022, August 18). Jardins communautaires du Réseau-Femmes du Sud-Ouest with interviewee Melissa Greening [Radio Interview]. <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/ohdio/premiere/emissions/matins-sans-frontieres/episodes/648573/rattrapage-du-jeudi-18-aout-2022/3>

Extensive fire damage at Bonavista Church

Amidst an outpouring of encouragement and help, the congregation embraces new ways of doing what they do.

BY JOHN ESTABROOKS

"Pastor John. It's Lori Glass. Our church is on fire. I think you should come."

Phone calls at 3:24 in the morning rarely turn out to be good news. This one, on August 12, 2022, certainly was no exception.

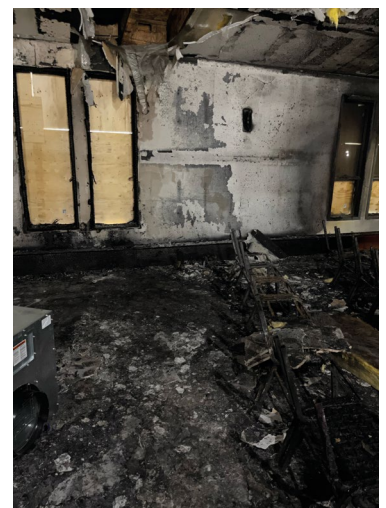
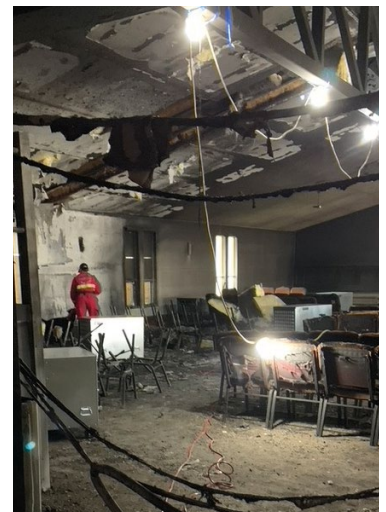
After rousing myself and racing south to stand with our facility manager, Bob Glass and his wife, Lori, I watched busy firefighters while also staring into the unknown at the same time. How did this happen? How much damage will there be? What will we do on Sunday? How good is our insurance?

The questions kept coming and coming. The lone answer that I had—and shared over and over that day with staff, elders, congregants and reporters alike—was that we were going to be ok. If we believe God can bring dead things back to life and make broken things whole...then all will be well, even if, in this moment, we don't know what that will look like. The

challenge for us was (and remains) to model that belief to our congregation and community through a posture of low anxiety and high trust. In other words, we need to practice what we preach.

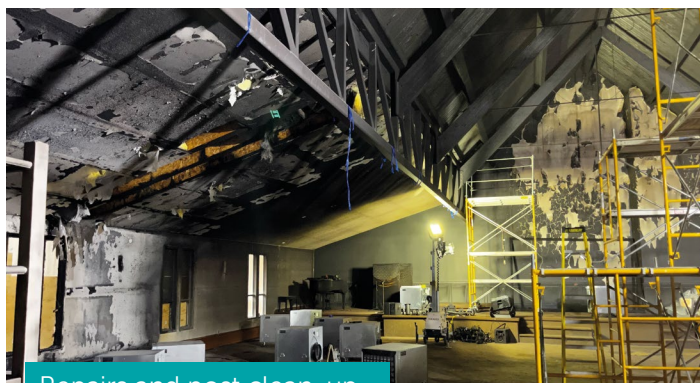
Weeks later, that same challenge remains, even as we face a new slew of questions: Who will we hire to rebuild our church? How long will we be displaced? Where will our Griefshare ministry gather in the meantime? And youth group—what will it need to look like?

Thankfully, encouragement has arrived just as often as the questions. Bonavista Baptist Church has provided us with an office and use of their building on Saturday nights. The Community Association has provided us with free space for some of our gatherings, while also making the booking procedure more streamlined. And the Roman Catholic congregation in our neighbourhood sent a letter promising to pray, along with a cheque for \$10,000.



BLESSED IN COUNTLESS WAYS

But not all support has come from the neighbourhood. Southview Alliance Church (in a neighbourhood south of us) is hosting our 50th anniversary event in October and loaning us a portable baptistry. Two local bands are hosting a fund-raising concert at Foothills Alliance Church (30 minutes away) in November. Summit Church (in Edmonton, 3 hours away) is providing a few meals to feed our worship teams before our services. Regional Minister Lynn Dietz joined us for one of our first Saturday services to encourage us, pray for us, and remind us that we are part of a family who is



Repairs and post clean-up.



looking out for us—which was proved in a powerful way when EastRidge EMC in Stouffville, Ontario reached out with a donation to assist with our anniversary event and fire response! We even heard from a widow whose husband I interned with in 1995, saying she saw me on the news and wanted to send \$100 to help us rebuild. We have been blessed in countless ways since that early morning call, and we await with anticipation what the Father will do in and through this situation for His glory and the good of others.

In late September, we were given a few more pieces of this puzzle that is slowly (so slowly!) forming in front of us. While we still await a final structural report and another outlining the total extent of the damages, we now know that a significant portion of our sanctuary

roof will need to be torn down and replaced. We also learned that nearly all the carpeting, drywall, ceiling panels and contents in the building will need to be replaced due to the toxic nature of the fire, meaning it is likely we will not be returning 'home' before next summer.

This time of displacement has certainly reminded us that the 'what' is more important than the 'how'...or even 'where.' While we long to be back in our own space, in our own little corner of the city, I am encouraged by the flexibility we are developing. Our Seniors' ministry has resumed, now meeting at the Community Hall. Youth is moving to a small group model, and we are excited about that. Griefshare is meeting at the Baptist Church. Staff are establishing a new work rhythm. Elders are holding meetings in their homes. Tech decisions are being screened by the need for greater flexibility, agility, and portability. Even Christmas Eve is receiving a review to see how we can be more present in the community.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for Bonavista Church. Some difficulties push people apart, while others—such as this fire—pull people together. Pray that this present sense of unity will abide as we tackle the challenging matters of where and when we will gather for the duration of our displacement. Pray that in the reality of this fire we will be able to speak and demonstrate the power of God's forgiveness and grace. Pray that our plans to revitalize BEMC's relationship with the Bonavista Downs Community Association and neighbours—which has been kicked into high gear because of the fire—would enjoy God's favour. Finally, pray that we might all have the stamina to run this leg of the race with excellence. ●



John Estabrooks is the lead pastor of Bonavista Church, Calgary, Alberta.



Visit bonavistachurch.ca for updates and how you can support Bonavista Church in their fire response.

OUR VALUES

We follow Jesus

We value His ways, His words and His life as our example.

Have this same attitude in yourselves that was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5)

Therefore, God elevated Him to a place of highest honour and gave Him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord.

(Philippians 2:9-11)

We depend on the Holy Spirit

We value listening to the voice of the Spirit. We seek to walk in the power of the Spirit.

There is fellowship together in the Spirit.
(Philippians 2:1 paraphrase)

We genuinely care

We value relationships. We strive to live as the family of God.
We seek to compassionately care.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition...rather, in humility, value others above yourselves.
(Philippians 2:3)

We humbly serve

Like Jesus, we value humility and servant-leadership.

Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He emptied Himself and took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on the cross.
(Philippians 2:6-8)

We collaborate together

We value being together, learning together, working together and being on mission together.
We value the multiplication of disciples, leaders and churches.

Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, loving one another and working together with one mind and purpose.
(Philippians 2:2)



2022 NEWLY CREDENTIALLED MINISTERS*

L	Krista Bennett	EMCC	Chilliwack, BC
O	Bradley Broadhead	Oyen EM Church	Oyen, AB
O	Cerena Browne	Trinity EM Church	Waterloo, ON
L	Jakob Bursey	Trinity EM Church	Waterloo, ON
O	Michael Deibert	Hillcrest EM Church	Medicine Hat, AB
L	Alisha Durksen	Hillcrest EM Church	Medicine Hat, AB
O	John Estabrooks	Bonavista EM Church	Calgary, AB
O	Jedediah Gorham	Eau Claire EM Church	Mattawa, ON
O	James Graham	Whitewood EM Church	Whitewood, SK
L	Shiloh Nott	Bethel EM Church	Three Hills, AB
O	James Phaniel	Gospel Fire Evangelical Church	Lethbridge, AB
O	Jamie Reimer	Bethany Community Church	St. Catharines, ON
L	Sharon (Shari) Scott	Centre Street Church	Calgary, AB
O	Spencer Smith	Zion EM Church	Didsbury, Alberta
C	Kapil Sundaralingam	Christian Family Worship Centre	Toronto, ON
L	Zachary Thornton	Paisley Missionary Church	Paisley, ON
L	Patrick Turvey	Sarnia EM Church	Sarnia, ON
L	Vincent Vanderveen	Chestermere Christian Fellowship	Calgary, AB
O	Taylor Woodburn	Centre Street Church	Calgary, AB

O Ordained Minister

L Licensed Minister

C Certified Minister

* As of December 8, 2022.



Retired Ordained Minister
January 15, 2022

MARK CHESTER

Mark entered pastoral ministry with EMCC in 1978 serving as youth pastor at Lincoln Heights EMC, Waterloo, ON, alongside Rev. Harvey Fretz. It has been his privilege to serve as a “third generation” pastor following in the footsteps of his father, Rev. Edward Chester and his grandfather, Rev. W. J. Purdy, all serving in the EMCC.

Mark has served in pastoral leadership in several Ontario churches: Colborne, North Bay, Sarnia, Paisley, Port Elgin, Stratford and then a second time at North Bay. He served six months as interim pastor at Gormley and Lion's Head, ON and as a six month interim Regional Minister. In the early years, Mark served 6 years on the Canada East District Board of Directors and on the committee for Evangelism and Church Extension.

In the late 80s he was recruited by the Canadian Revival Fellowship to serve as an affiliate Revivalist and preached in churches throughout Canada and the USA. During those 10 years he was also granted EMCC status as a denominational evangelist along with being a pastor. He preached revival sermons in 28 EMCC

churches in Ontario and Medicine Hat, Alberta. On the US side there were a few opportunities in Ohio and Michigan.

As a Revivalist and Evangelist, Mark was blessed with opportunities to speak at Stayner Camp and Camp Mishewah.

His last place of service was at Lakeshore EMC in North Bay, ON until he was forced into early retirement due to kidney failure and serious health issues that placed him on a dialysis routine for 2 1/2 years. On June 27, 2022 Mark had a kidney transplant surgery and is currently in recovery mode.

He has been granted “Active Retirement” status from EMCC. Mark hopes to begin preaching and serving through the open door opportunities God provides. He has been richly blessed with his wife, Edith Faye, four wonderful children and their spouses: Dan and Jessica Chester, Tim and Sarah Chester, Tim and Vanje Watson and Zach Chester; along with 10 grandchildren adding to the fabric of their family.

Mark and Edith Faye presently reside in North Bay, ON.



Retired Ordained Minister
January 2022

GEORGE GRIERSON

George has been navigating deep waters and retirement came sooner than planned. “I would have loved to have made 40 years. I hope to help pastors and churches with transitions and changes in 2023. It will depend on my health, but I will always be a pastor, whether I have a position, or not.”

George began pastoral ministry in 1983 as Assistant Pastor at Banfield (now Wellspring) Church in Toronto. Subsequently he pastored at Sheridan Hills (Oakville), Bethel (Lion’s Head) and Emmanuel (Elmira). He also served as Director at Stayner Bible Conference Grounds. In 2015 he became Lead Pastor at Elgin (Stratford).

In 2016 tests revealed Infective Endocarditis. Open heart surgery followed, and, later a diagnosis of Carcinoid cancer requiring abdominal surgery. The cancer turned out not to be cancer, and he continued in ministry until 2021. In January 2022, a very bad seizure led to a quick retirement.

“It has been difficult, and there were times I was angry with God, but He is restoring me slowly. I believe God will care for my needs. He has never let me down yet, and my faith is strong.”

George enjoys travel with wife Sue and time with his adult children and their families. Meaning also comes from casual conversations, often with people of no faith, or no hope. These keep coming, and he is on the lookout for them.

To young pastors George offers: “Build resilience in your relationships with your spouse and your kids. You are not indispensable. Place yourself into an accountability relationship with someone of the same gender.”

And for those close to retirement: “Plan for your transition. Bow out gracefully. Focus on mentoring those coming behind you.”

“My biggest joy in ministry has always been to see people experience the Lord. I’m just a bystander, watching Him at work.”



Retired Ordained Minister
June 15, 2022

MARILYN RUSHTON

"I felt it was time to step down and make room for the next generation to have the opportunity. Now I am in God's waiting room. I want to do whatever is ahead within God's will for His glory—to be where He wants me to be."

Before coming to Bethany EMC in Kitchener, Ontario, in 2009, Marilyn served two other denominations and provided grief support in three communities for funeral homes. She served as a Stephen Minister at Bethany before becoming Associate Pastor in 2010. Marilyn says of her 42 years of ministry, "My variety of assignments helped me stay the course. I followed the Lord from place to place. My biggest joy has been connecting with people and working with staff."

To women pastors just starting out, she offers this: "Be assured of your calling and rest in it, because then God is with you, and you need to move within that calling."

And to pastors considering retirement: "Think of it 3 or 4 years in advance to ease the transition. There is grief involved in leaving something you love. Give the congregation plenty of notice, and train your successor when possible."

Marilyn is looking to find her new rhythm. "At first, I was hearing God say, 'Be still & know that I am God'; now, it's, 'Find out who you are, and be content with it.' I'm learning I don't have to do, do, do and have an agenda all the time. Instead, I can 'be'. Marilyn continues to find meaning in connections and looks forward to more time with family and friends."



Retired Ordained Minister
July 16, 2022

MURRAY SWALM

"My greatest joy in ministry has always been seeing people come to faith, growing, lives turning around, becoming alive and new."

Murray served two years as Associate Pastor at Bonavista EMC in Calgary, and then remained as Lead Pastor for thirty-four more. Murray has sensed God saying, "Just because you are finished at Bonavista doesn't mean you are finished. Keep serving, and you'll see people grow. Your neighbours need Me too."

Murray strove to keep his calling firmly in place. "My biggest challenge was to keep reminding myself that God had called me to be the pastor of the church, not the CEO of an organization. I was there to assist the Body of Christ gathered to worship, not create a consumer-based structure." Murray also placed high value on building strong relationships with church boards. "I looked at them as partners, individuals. It was important to love them and trust them."

Murray and Lorrie have been helping pastors and pastoral couples for twenty years. While visiting mission fields in 2002 they sat with missionaries and pastors who just 'poured their hearts out.' They began doing this with pastors and spouses in Canada. Four pastors at a time stay in their home for 3 days. "We feed and care for them, and help them talk about who they are, character issues, struggles of listening to God - the hard parts of ministry."

In retirement, Murray is involved in EMCC projects, and they also volunteer with Focus on the Family at the Kerith Retreat Centre near Calgary.

They love being with their grown son and daughter and seven grandchildren. Lorrie popped in and said, "We consider it our task to help speak God-given destiny into the lives of our grandchildren." Murray works on his 1948 Chevy, does projects around the house, plays hockey and is an avid mountain biker. To date, Murray has led seven tour groups to the Holy Land.



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emccenrich.ca

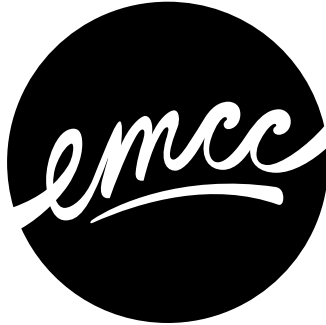


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