

EMCCTOGETHER

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada

Posture Matters

"The current pandemic can positively impact our world for the gospel and the lives of our congregations and our denominational family."

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GUARDING OUR POSTURE DURING THE PANDEMIC

by Matthew Parker

I've never thought of myself as a potential living, breathing biohazard. Only in the light of the current pandemic and concerns about asymptomatic transmission of Covid has that quirky thought even entered my mind.

We are living through events that have not occurred before in our lifetime. Covid-19 has altered many of the conventions of day-to-day living. Things that we've taken for granted - the simple pleasure of meeting face to face with dear friends, or of worshipping in public, unfettered by masks and layers of safety protocols - these are real stressors now. What was normal for our whole lives is, for now, just not possible.

Even benign things like daily travel to and from home that, I'm now realizing, was an unnoticed, but very helpful way to disengage from ministry at church in order to refocus on family - all these normal activities have been disrupted by the modern plague we are living through.

And many of us have been dealing with loss - I'm personally feeling the effects from the sheer number of funerals, none Covid-related yet, of people I've been close to. Some of our pastors have been dealing directly with Covid-related suffering and death.

Of course this takes a toll. This impacts our posture. This strange time also gives us more opportunity to reflect on life and ministry, on what it means to follow the way of Jesus, and on how the current pandemic can positively impact our world for the gospel and the lives of our congregations and our denominational family.

We serve a God who has given us a historical record of the ways in which His people have suffered and also triumphed over adversity.

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When we experience adversity such as loss, disappointment, grief or trauma, we can do one of two things. We can "run in" to who we are, or we can "run away" from who we are.

We can cleave to God in faith, trusting that though we might feel like we are flailing in the wind, He nevertheless has us by both hands in an eternal grip that He has the power and the love and the will to sustain.

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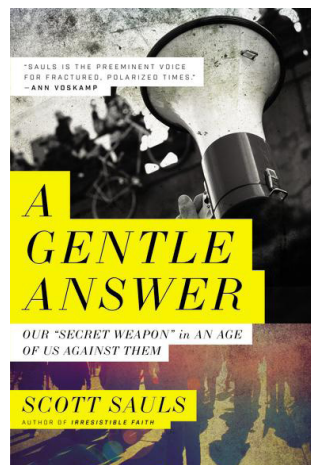
Note here that our survival, our thriving, has less to do with the strength of our cleaving, and more to do with the fact that God has got us, no matter what. Please, please take that personally. God has got you, no matter what.

Alternatively, we can also "run away" from who we are. It appears to be quite possible for us to assess our current reality and then to complain bitterly to God, like Jonah did, about our assignment.

Or, like Job's wife, we can look at what is happening with traumatized eyes, and our 'best thinking', in that distressed moment, might be to walk away from God, even to curse God for not behaving in the way we think He should behave. We can do that subtly of course. We pray and read His Word less, with less fervency, with less confidence that God hears and speaks to us. We may drift into a sort of numb neutral. That is a terrible place to dwell.

May we make the choice to "run into" God when we face hardship, fear and overwhelming anxiety. May we hear Jesus speak to us with these words: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Matthew Parker is pastor of Church at the Mission in downtown Toronto, ON ■



Recommended Resource:

A Gentle Answer by Scott Sauls speaks to a particular 'Posture' we are to take as followers of Jesus in our world that is in a season of rage and injustice.

BUN RUNS

Jean Winker

Imagine the pleasure of adding a basket of piping-hot, golden-brown yeast buns to your dinner table to-night.

Looking for a way to connect with their congregation throughout the pandemic, Pastor Rich and Inge Kopanke decided to roll up their sleeves and do some baking. And they kept on doing it. Over the course of several months, this pastoral couple from Faith EMC, Kitchener has been making dough, shaping it into balls, and tucking them into pans. They began making twice a week deliveries of oven-ready buns, eventually to all of the church families. Armed with extras, they were often able to share a pan with nearby neighbors at the same time. What a lovely surprise to answer your doorbell and find someone standing there with a smile and a delicious gift. God has blessed this labour of love.

"It has been an awesome opportunity for ministry actually," says Pastor Rich, who noted that they often arrived at a perfect time. "Once during a porch visit I was able to pray for someone going for surgery and I wouldn't have known about it had I not arrived when I did." This family were not frequent attenders and had not thought to call the church for prayer. In addition to being a chance for impromptu social distance porch visiting, people have shared issues and concerns and they've stood and prayed together.

During the hot days of summer, the Kopankes quit baking in favour of hosting small groupings for backyard barbeques to build community. "We mixed people together, giving people from the congregation a chance to get to know some they didn't know well while enjoying a meal together."

Summer behind us now for a few months, Bun Runs will soon resume. ■



READING THE POWERFUL WORD OF GOD

Jean Winker

Last March, Leina met two women in her neighbourhood. Before they could meet a second time, COVID had hit. With most people adhering to the stay-at-home message, it seemed like an impossible time to build a relationship with a couple of strangers. But God had plans, reminding us that even during a pandemic, there is much we can do.

Feeling a nudge from the Holy Spirit, Leina made a phone call to each of the women and asked if they'd like to read the Bible with her every day. "I felt awkward, and I was surprised when they both said, 'yes', with no hesitation. The effect was so powerful. One of them accepted Jesus and has grown so much by reading the Bible and doing a devotional every day that she has become a committed Christian." This new believer shared the Good News with her daughter who has also become a Christ follower. Leina was able to drop off a New Testament for her. Leina had never done anything like this before and so she didn't have a prepared plan to draw from. "I prayed and asked God about it. I wanted something interesting because I wanted them to know the Bible is not boring. We are very diligent. One of the ladies has never missed a day. She loves reading her Bible." Leina has observed that many people are involved in ministries and attend all manner of fellowship opportunities but they don't read their Bible at home. "That is the most important part," stresses Leina.

As the three women continued to read the scriptures together Leina quickly realized she needed to teach them to be independent learners. At the very beginning they used a devotional guidebook. Then they graduated to reading the Bible directly and Leina posted questions for them to think about, meditate on, or talk to God about. First they read Jonah, then Esther, and eventually they read the Gospel of Mark, and several short NT books.

"After a while I explained to them that using a guide, or even with me posting the questions is like eating something someone else has already digested for you." She told them, "We don't want that. We want first hand hearing from God!" She impressed upon them the importance of opening their Bibles every day and of learning not to rely on her. "If they don't do it, or if they only do it because I send them the verse – then it is no use." I am training them to be independent and successful Christians. Now we are reading Ecclesiastes and sharing what we are each hearing from God."

Leina Choi is a believer at Markham Missionary Church in Markham, Ontario. She is pursuing her MTh at Tyndale University in Toronto. Leina is at school purely to know more about God. "We don't all have to be a pastor. To love God is a ministry for everyone. I love God so much that I decided to know Him more." ■

CLOTHED IN LOVE

Jean Winker

As volunteers arrived at Plattsville EMC twenty minutes before the doors would open for Clothed in Love, a clothing giveaway, 50 people already lined the sidewalk waiting to get in. For the past four years, in spring and fall, the Plattsville church has been the place to go in the small rural community to pick up season-specific, gently-used, sometimes new clothing for the whole family. "It is hard for some to understand that they don't have to give something to get something, but that's the whole point. It's absolutely free," says Pastor Tim Clayton.

"The two-hour event was started by the church Deacons who launched it as a way to serve the community by meeting needs and simply blessing people in Jesus' name" says Associate Pastor Libby Peters. It has caught on and gained momentum so that when the call for clothing donations goes out, the church receives so many garments and baby items that they eventually cannot take any more. The community is solidly on board and as much as 90% of the donated clothing and children's toys now comes from outside the church. Catching the spirit of generosity people are donating clothes to the drive that they could just as easily sell online. Instead they are choosing to help others by giving.

"...a way to serve the community by meeting needs and simply blessing people in Jesus' name."

The church's Youth Group came Thursday night to set up tables and haul in the bags of clothing. Friday's volunteers sorted the mountains of clothing by size, or by age for kids, and displayed everything on wardrobe racks and tables. The final group of volunteers packed up everything left to be stored for another time or donated elsewhere.

Clothed in Love is advertised through Facebook and word of mouth. Eighty-eight people went through this time around. With the pandemic, it required all the usual precautions to



safely host. People waited patiently, while social distancing in the church's large foyer, and came into the gym in family groups as directed. They gave their names for contact tracing, followed the markings on the floor and wore masks. Trying on clothing couldn't happen, but everyone was encouraged to simply take it if they liked it, and if it turned out not to suit - to just pass it forward.

Most of those who came through were strangers to the church volunteers. A person from the community has commented to Pastor Tim that coming into the church building, and walking around, has made the church seem more accessible now. "It's been nothing but a positive experience. We've made some great connections and one year it led to a person finding Jesus," says Pastor Tim.

Pastor Libby stood by the door greeting people as they left, and offered her card and assurance that the congregation is there to help when there is a need.

The clothing drive behind them, now it's time to think of their next opportunity to bless others in Jesus' name - their 3rd annual Christmas Turkey Drive (everything needed to prepare a great Christmas Dinner for a number of families). ■





EMPOWERING A CONVICTION TO SERVE BENOIT

Nicole Jones-Qandah and Marilyn McIlroy

This year has made each of us more adaptable, flexible and open-handed with every aspect of our lives. Inevitably, we have all journeyed through disappointment at what could not be, and toward a different understanding of what remains possible.

For Elva and fellow nurses in Saskatchewan, their opportunity to return and continue to work alongside Haitian health care workers was disrupted first by 2018 political unrest, and then the onslaught of a global pandemic. While the opportunity to visit was closed, the opportunity to partner continued.

The initial plan was to work alongside medical students and professionals alike from Gens de Nantes (GDN) and others connected to the AEM (EMCC's sister denomination) to serve the community of Benoit in the Department of the Nippes in southern Haiti. This clinic outpost is a result of previous investment from Canada and partnership with the AEM to see health care more accessible to this remote area. Previous weeklong clinics in Benoit, with Canadian and Haitian health care professionals working together had a variety of foci and an overwhelming response from Benoit and surrounding rural

communities. Elva, and the others she recruited with great passion, were eager for a next chance to visit and participate in-person together.

CONVICTED TO WAIT NO LONGER...

In the North-East Department in Haiti, the community of medical students and professionals from Gens de Nantes (GDN) were sensing the Lord's leading to return to Benoit and offer much anticipated medical care to that remote community. Their desire to return was undeterred, even as the pandemic continued, and political unrest rose in Port au Prince, directly in their travel path. Gary Augustine, one of the nurses remarked,

"Before going, I asked God to use me [and] the team as his ears and eyes and hands to help the people in Benoit."

This fall, Elva and others in Canada joined Gary's prayers and God's heart by releasing a portion of the funds for their cancelled trip to enable the Haitian health care professionals to go and facilitate a clinic in Benoit. Elva shares,

"God just spoke to me and said these are His funds, and I have faith that we will be able to raise money in the oppor-

tunity to go again. By letting the funds go down for the Haitian doctors and nurses, we could enable them to care.... They are professionals in their field in their country, so if we can support them, it was a good idea.... They live in their country, understand their culture, and they are very capable."

This sacrificial giving enabled a group of doctors and nurses to travel to Benoit in mid-October where they facilitated a clinic over the course of five days.

The following is an account from those who served the community, starting with Herlynda Philogene, EMCC's global partner who also serves as a representative of the AEM.



"God was with us on the long journey to Benoit, and even though there were difficulties God made it possible for us to go and return safely. [The team] was able to see 322 patients in those 5 days. I want to thank everyone from EMCC who prayed for us during this week of clinics in Benoit. Thank you to everyone who thought about us and who sent their support. God will bless you for this gesture. As it says in Matthew 25:40, every time you do something for a person who is in need, you are doing it for me."

Dr Telsie gave care to many patients, from infants to the elderly. She shares,

"When we [can] go frequently, those who are ill find immediate treatment and their health improves quickly. [For example], a little 15 month old child had a large abscess associated with an impetigo infection. It had been at least a month, but the family did not have any money to take the child to the hospital. I was able to clean and dress the wound. When they returned in two days for me to check the area again, there was already significant healing. The mother was very happy for the care given to her little one."

Soeur Gertha, a nurse from Ti Gwaw where Elva and her team had previously worked, joined the team in Benoit and shared,

"I am always very happy when I receive the call to join the team to Benoit. I also appreciate that even when the Canadi-



an team cannot come that you send the Haitian team. That brings great pleasure to the people of Benoit."

The dream for Benoit rests in the heart of Herlynda, who shares that

"The people of Benoit are really in need of the medical care that can be provided by this clinic facility. We will continue to pray that God will make a way for the clinic to remain open for the community."

The hearts of these health care professionals join with friends in Canada who both continually pray for ways in which God can continue to work in the community of Benoit.

Elva shares her prayer that

"...Haitian leaders would be invested in that clinic to run on a semi-routine basis, and that their hearts would be drawn by God to serve that community specifically."

We praise God for the way in which His heart for mission rests in each of us as followers of Jesus. How beautifully that partnership between EMCC and the global church continues to evolve as He makes His faithfulness and all-sufficiency known to each of us, in Regina as in Benoit. ■

SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THIS INFORMATION?



1. REFLECT

How can we learn from the resilient faith of those friends in Saskatchewan and our Haitian brothers and sisters and apply it to our participation in Jesus' mission?

How does this story provide a unique way to consider what partnership looks like and how it continues to change over time?



2. INVITE US INTO YOUR JOURNEY

World Partners would love to journey with you as you consider how God might be nudging you and those around you to connect with the global church and the communities nearest you.



SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL WITH YOUR COFFEE

Jean Winker

For 12 years Café la Mosaïque in Lévis, Quebec has been more than a coffee shop for many who come through its doors. They have found community, a place where they belong.

"We want to create a place of mutual help, serving others, caring for their well-being," says café coordinator, Catherine Tremblay. Inclusion is a strong value and as such, marginalized people come to them and find welcome, grace, and the love that Jesus offers.

Catherine and spouse Jerome are no strangers to EMCC and have been newly recognized with World Partners as Disciple-Making Leaders, involved in Community Development and Mentoring. They are a valued connection between EMCC and Quebec. Internships will be offered at the café. Applicants for this experience must be willing to spend up to three months living in Lévis. They will serve in the café for 15 hours/week, see and participate in disciple-making as a way of life, all while being immersed in Quebec culture. This life-shaping internship will be announced for the Fall of 2021. Those interested can check <https://www.emcc.ca/world-partners/get-involved/mobilize/serve-with-us/intern/> for more information as it becomes available.

Although anyone can come to the Café simply to enjoy delicious local, organic food and a great cup of fair trade coffee, there is much more than that going on. "We're kind of like a big family," says Catherine. With room to seat 50 people and total space of 2000 square feet, including a 'family room', the café also offers scheduled activities for moms with babies, and practical workshops like 'how to do simple repairs.' And then there is painting, meditation, music. Once a week people can sign up to be part of 'Caffeine for the Soul', two hours given to open activity followed by discussion on themes like spirituality, faith, and how do we incarnate those values. "It is our goal to create a space where people can sit and reflect about where they are at and what they want their life to be." Both people who are without a faith background, and people who have walked away from traditional church have found

that this is where they can express their spirituality, and ask their questions. It is also a place for people to exercise their gifts in service to one another.

During the pandemic the café has been unable to operate as usual, but, as Catherine says, "God created people to be part of a community," and community continues despite the pandemic. Although physically closed for three months, relationship is always happening. Catherine and Jerome intentionally live in the neighbourhood because they want to bump into café regulars and continue the connections. During lockdown, café volunteers phoned patrons, just to keep in touch, helping to keep loneliness at bay; and a great assist for those struggling with mental health. Again this year they are hand-writing Christmas cards, reminding people that they belong, and are not forgotten.

"It is possible to build meaningful community in any context," asserts Catherine. "It is simply a matter of blessing neighbours, being there to give a hand when people need it. The source of love and grace is God. Living in community is a beautiful way of showing what the Kingdom of God is." ■



CONNECTING & EQUIPPING NEXT GEN LEADERS

Jean Winker

EMCC's Next Gen Team is passionate about seeing an increasing number of Next Gen leaders reach their full kingdom potential, personally, and in their work with kids, teens and young adults (under 25). The team has developed a plan to create strong connections among Next Gen leaders and to equip them to thrive in our rapidly shifting culture.

They've chosen the **Huddle discipleship model** as the best way to connect, equip and resource leaders. By fall 2021, the goal is to have each team member launch their own huddle to invest in a group of leaders, who, in turn, will have the opportunity to invest in a group of leaders. This is about disciples, making disciples, who make disciples.



Coming Soon

A social media Group Chat platform where next gen leaders can ask questions, connect and resource one another.

An Enrich page for next gen leaders, a place to go for help from facilitators and access to recommended books, videos and podcasts.



For Your Calendar

January 17 - Next Gen Check-In, an EMCC Connected Zoom call for all Next Gen leaders, anyone in the EMCC that ministers to those 25 and under

Here's a chance to share how you are doing, how others can celebrate with you, what challenges you are going through, how others can pray for you. A facilitated conversation, with breakout rooms. More info to come.

February 25 - "Re-imagine Church: a Family of Families," an EMCC Connected Zoom call for everyone.

An introduction and guided conversation about the current church model. To get us thinking about what we are doing with next gen and is it what we should be doing? An opportunity to wonder and imagine together what else this could look like. More info to come.

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Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada
Following Jesus Together



THE SIMPLE GIFT is about sharing out of the resources God gives us all, great or small. In this way, we celebrate that everyone makes a contribution in God's economy. Every thought, prayer, and investment of time, treasure or talent that shares God's blessing and enables people to experience the goodness of Jesus is beautiful in God's sight.

Thank you for how your simple gifts have supported the work of Jesus in your community, our National Church, our Workers and Partners, their Projects, and among people made vulnerable, as an EMCC and World Partners family in 2020. If you are inclined to add to this today, simply give.

See all opportunities to give at emcc.ca/simplegift

