

EMCCTOGETHER

The Newsletter of the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada

Discipling the Next Generation

“Those who walk alongside the next generation need to be men and women of faith, working intentionally to become better listeners and first-responders to Jesus and accessing his grace by faith themselves.”



How to Keep Your Youth from Leaving Church

Equipping and Empowering Artists in the Church

The Type of Leader that Will Impact the Next Generation

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Evangelical Missionary
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THE TYPE OF LEADER THAT WILL IMPACT THE NEXT GENERATION

Marty Bennett, Connections Pastor at Cross Connection Church Chilliwack, BC

When I think of helping the next generation get future-ready I think of preparing them to be better listeners and first-responders—to Jesus first and foremost, and then to the needs around them. I want them to be the generation who sing, “the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace” as loudly as “I surrender all.”

When I was younger, and the topic of the Lord’s Return came up, a common response was, “I hope Jesus doesn’t return until after I can drive, or get married, or have sex, or have kids, or have a successful career or have grandkids or, or, or!” Our lives are so full of distractions; many of them are good things that can easily become god things causing us to forget who we are and why we’re really here.

As I continue to journey with this next generation I see and hear in them a longing for more! If there were many voices to deal with while I grew up, today the voices seem to be in stereo. And yet, this generation longs for a deep connection and a desire to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

**They want to be called up,
not called out.**

So how do we do this? How do we call them up? How can we get them future-ready? I believe those who walk alongside the next generation need to be men and women of faith, working intentionally to become better listeners and first-responders to Jesus and accessing his grace by faith themselves. Then, as we are deliberate





about this journey, we give the next generation access to our lives, so they can see how our authentic faith in God impacts every aspect of our lives. They need to see us listening, trusting, and obeying God in all of life, not just on Sunday morning or during a midweek meeting. Let them see our struggles, our questions, and mistakes. They need to see that we still need grace as well. We need to give them a front-row seat to how Jesus is continuing to impact our lives.

Here's the truth, unless we intentionally give this next generation access to our lives and build authentic relationships with them, we will fail to have a significant place to speak into their lives.

What if they ask me questions I don't have the answers to? Go on a discovery journey together! The beauty of this approach is that we don't need all the answers. In the Gospels, Jesus was asked 183 questions, and only answered 3. Why did He feel compelled to leave 180 of these unanswered? Maybe they weren't the right questions. Maybe He was too busy refocusing their hearts and minds on the true nature of His Father's kingdom by asking them 307 questions.

Like Jesus, we too need to be good at asking the right questions, good at listening, and really good at helping the next generation combine what they know about God with action.

Here are three questions we can continually ask the

next generation to help them become future ready:

- 1. How is God getting your attention (through His Word, trials, blessings, sermons, life)?**
- 2. What do you think God is saying to you?**
- 3. What are you going to do about what He is saying to you?**

True faith is not just knowledge, it's belief in action, and a big part of our pastoral responsibility to the next generation is to help them hear the voice of God and then remind, encourage and challenge them until they believe it's true and it shows up in their daily life.

Jesus is coming back and I want my life of faith to result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed! I believe a life well-lived like this will always make an impact on the next generations who come behind us. ■



Marty Bennett
Connections Pastor at
Cross Connection Church
Chilliwack, BC

HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN BE A TRAINING GROUND FOR YOUNG LEADERS

Jayne Duldner, Children's Ministry Director, Bethany Community Church, St. Catharines, ON

Editor's note: Jayne Duldner is the Children's Ministry Director at Bethany, St. Catharines, a congregation of approximately 1500; about 250 of them children. With a thriving, multi-faceted children's ministry, it is heartening to hear that along with those faithfully serving from other generations, more than half (61%) of their Sunday volunteer team, and all of their Summer staff team is made up of teens and young adults. As we, in our own churches, lean into what it means for us to be 'future ready', let's read Jayne's account of the blessing and value of training up younger generations, giving them opportunities to grow and contribute.

Paul had it right when he said to Timothy, *"Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith and your purity."* (1 Timothy 4:12)

Our volunteers are the heartbeat of our Kids Ministry! Without them it would be impossible to create the type of quality programs and make the deep relational connections we want for kids and their families!

SERVING AS TRAINING

You could say that serving is a great training place for young people to learn leadership abilities, relational skills, and responsibility (as they work alongside more experienced volunteers). Our young volunteers are strong Christ-followers who serve out of their love for Jesus. They care deeply for kids, they use their gifts, imaginations and energy to create the quality environments that welcome many kids each week and throughout the summer. And I have to admit, I learn so much from them!

FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANT TO COMMITTED SMALL GROUP LEADER

I'd like to introduce you to Lauren. Lauren attended our kids programs as a child. When she was old enough, she

began volunteering! Lauren is a fantastic small group leader who loves her kids and always looks for ways to improve what we are doing! Since 2018, she studied Early Childhood and Family Studies in Toronto at university, but she came home every weekend to serve in KidZone. The last three summers, Lauren has worked for the Mennonite Central Committee in Newcomer engagement, specifically with the children of refugees, creating and running programming for newcomer children and youth. Even during Covid, Lauren has not missed a Sunday whether in-person or online!



Over and over, we are seeing kids grow up in our program, and then return to lead in it as invaluable volunteers or summer staff members! I am very thankful for these amazing role models, like Lauren, who our kids can look up to and emulate.

PONDER POINTS

1.

If we do not have leadership opportunities for youth built into our children's programs, where can we create them? What could this look like?

2.

In what ways could children and teens take an active part in church services and during other times when the church family gathers?

3.

Do we, as adults in the church, encourage the volunteer efforts of children and teens? How can we show our support?



Jayne Duldner
Children's Ministry
Director at Bethany
Community Church,
St. Catharines, ON





SUPPORTING & CONNECTING WITH REFUGEE BELIEVERS

Jean Winker

Full of faith and enthusiasm, David Benjamin boarded a train and headed to Bhutan to do ministry at seventeen years old. Two months later, he was back home in India feeling like a failure. The problem? “I was ill-prepared, in a totally new place. I didn’t understand the language, culture, and so many things. I left there so disappointed.” It was in Calgary, 30 years later, when God used this short, disheartening episode to begin something new; helping refugees bridge communication and relationships between cultures.

“It was in 2008 that a friend from Bible School days asked if we could visit Bhutan together. We met some pastors from the underground church in Bhutan, who referred some refugees to me who had just arrived in Calgary. We started doing ministry with them.”

“We soon realized that the youth and young adults were facing immediate issues because faith practices and spiritual challenges here are so different from what they are used to.

They needed help figuring out how to apply their faith in a new context.”

“Just like me 30 years earlier, they were not prepared,” says David.

Out of this need, came the first Fusion Conference in 2014 for South Asians living in Calgary. The conference organizers are passionate about Christ and work among youth and adults, encouraging them to seek Christ in community. Discipleship must be at the core of such a community that can grow together and serve together. Along with this, the conference organizers delve into topics like exploring cultural conflicts in relationships including marriage. Some young refugees have lived their whole lives in camps, and have had little opportunity to learn decision-making or how to look after money, for example. Fusion assists with some of these practical needs too. “We want to help them on their journey in Canada.”

The conferences were held annually at River's Edge Conference Centre. However, they offered mini-series on ZOOM several times during the last two years. FCC is an initiative of Yeshu Mandli (where David Benjamin is pastor), with partners including *Inter Varsity, uTurn Project, East Edge, Centre Street Church, Rock Pointe Alliance Church, and Calgary Kingdom Network.*

Participants must be recommended by a local church. At each themed conference participants come together to worship, listen to inspirational speakers, practise applying Scriptures, attend practical hands-on workshops and have fun during team building activities and games. It is a time intended to spark interest, challenge thinking, awaken, encourage, and inspire. Along with this, some are given opportunity for skill-building by taking part in leading and planning aspects of the conference. A few have gone on to organize conferences where they are. "We hope our participants will leave the Fusion conferences having gained collaboration and networking skills – new people they can journey with. And that they will be challenged to look for how they can bless others and invite others to follow Jesus."

In 2015 they began providing additional sessions for adults. With online capabilities they have seen the

potential for providing Fusion conferences abroad.

Nicole Jones-Qandah, Director of EMCC World Partners, participated as a facilitator at the 2021 Fusion Conference held on Zoom. Here is what Nicole says about her experience with these conferences:

"It was a unique privilege to share online alongside theologians, teachers, and practitioners across Southeast Asia. Perhaps more unique was to personally connect with young professionals across India and Bhutan who were asking key questions about how to use their talents, create community, and live in cities and contexts where faith in Jesus is unknown. It was encouraging to discuss, pray, and discern together what an integral gospel approach can offer amidst the questions, challenges, and opportunities brought up throughout the conference." ■



David Benjamin
Pastor at Yeshu Mandli (Jesus Gathering), Calgary, AB. David holds a masters in Global Leadership from Fuller Theological Seminary.

PRAYER SUMMIT FOR WORLD REFUGEE WEEK

June 17, 2022, 9:00-10:15am MST / 11:00am-12:15pm EST

Join us as we pray with and for each other and collectively discern how God is inviting us to engage with diaspora and displaced people in our neighbourhoods, region, country, and around the world.

Register at emcc.ca/connected to join the conversation.

EMCC Connected is EMCC's online space for mutual learning, meaningful connection, dialogue and exchange of ideas across the EMCC family.

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NEXTGEN HUDDLES: MINISTRY SUPPORT BASE FOR NEXT GEN LEADERS

Jean Winker

"There's something about following Jesus that gets way better when you do it with other people."

- Kristen Webb

EMCC huddles are small discipleship groups of Jesus followers engaged in similar ministries who meet together regularly with a leader for connection, encouragement, and accountability. The intent is for huddle participants to start huddles of their own, using and adapting the skills and discipleship format they've learned to suit their own particular contexts.

The above comment from a huddle participant sums up the huddle experience. Participants in the following Q&A report that, along with the opportunities to acquire practical discipleship tools and skills, they are growing spiritually and benefitting from the encouragement and

the growing relationship with their peers.

The enthusiastic responses in this article all come from participants in current EMCC huddles for leaders who love working with Next Gen. Marty Bennett, Connections Pastor at Cross Connection Church, Chilliwack, BC leads one of these huddles, and Martin Nieuwets, Pastor of Family Life at Bethany, St. Catharines, ON, leads the other.

In October 2021 the huddles began meeting by Zoom every other week, for 60-90 minutes. Among the variety of things they cover and discuss, they always answer these questions as they read Scripture together: 1) What is one thing God is saying to you? 2) How are you going to respond to God? 3) How did it go?



WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE PURPOSES OF THE HUDDLE?

Accountability. It's an intentional relationship. We are practicing what a disciple is. We are kind with one another. When someone plans to do something, and it doesn't happen we help each other. We ask, 'What stopped you?' We take time to reflect. We ask, 'How do you think you can address this?' 'What could be next steps?' We have become friends.

- **Maria Esperanza Sztrimbely**

Learning to follow Jesus together. For us to be discipled so that we can go out and make disciples who will go on and make more. It's a safe place where you can be yourself and do life together.

- **Kristen Webb**

Support and encouragement. It works because it is small and regular and there is trust that opens intimacy with one another. We are able to share resources and pray for each other. We have formed a connection. Even though a teaching tool might not be new to us, it is a good reminder to let it sink in again and to look for opportunities to use it in our own ministries.

- **Spencer Smith**

Learning to listen to the Spirit, to push each other to grow, to become vulnerable to one another, and challenge ourselves. I came with my brokenness and humanity and found the guys accepting, good people to bounce ideas off.

- **Matt Lockhart**

Connecting with other pastors journeying through the exact same things. You come with what your week has been, and other pastors can pour into it. Marty has been able to pour into us as young dads and young pastors.

- **Dave Gibson**



INTRODUCING THE HUDDLE PARTICIPANTS

Dave Gibson is Youth & Young Adults Pastor at Bethany CC, St. Catharines. "Martin Nieuwets signed me up. I didn't know much about it going in. I don't enjoy Zoom, but I thought I'd give it a go."



Kristen Webb is the Youth and Children's Pastor and Secretary at Chesley Community Church in Chesley, Ontario. "I was invited to the huddle by Martin. I was really happy and honoured to be invited. I was also excited about learning how to do a huddle."



Maria Esperanza Sztrimbely attends Grace Church, Port Hope and has worked with next gen in Sunday School, leadership of mid-week program, and VBS. "I met Martin on an EMCC Connected Zoom call for Next Gen leaders and said, 'I know I need this.'"



Matt Lockhart is the Children and Family Director at Emmanuel Missionary Church in Elmira, Ontario. He says, "I met Marty on an EMCC Connected Zoom call. I jumped at the opportunity."



Spencer Smith is the Youth Pastor at Zion EMC in Didsbury, Alberta. He says, "Someone passed my name to Marty and he invited me. I said, 'Sounds amazing. I'd love to be a part of that.'"

WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT BEING IN A HUDDLE?

That something like this was happening and that I could be a part of it. I am grateful to be with people who share the same goals.

- Maria Esperanza Sztrimbely

How much it has helped my relationship with God. The first question we each answer every time we meet and look at scripture together is, 'What is God saying to you?' This spills over into other times when we aren't together. Teaches you always to be going back to Jesus about everything you struggle with or have questions about.

- Kristen Webb

I hoped for a level of connectedness and support but wasn't sure it would be there. I thought at the very least it would be informational, but the relational connection formed deeply and so quickly. I think that was because Marty modeled vulnerability. He took the first risk, and the rest of us jumped in.

- Spencer Smith

The comraderie; the connection we made so quickly. We barely knew one another when we started. I think it happened because we recognized we needed people who were going through the same things (Covid). We trusted each other.

- Matt Lockhart

I don't enjoy sitting in these kinds of environments. I thought it would be lecture-style and boring, but it very much wasn't. I didn't do well in school but this was genuine, authentic time for personal connection that I didn't expect to get. Sometimes I don't have time, but these turn out to be the best times.

- Dave Gibson



WHEN YOUR GROUP IS NO LONGER MEETING IN A HUDDLE, WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE NEXT?

I'm part of a group of leaders from small churches. We equip each other. We encourage others to become leaders and make disciples. We are listening to each other, sharing the struggles, like we are doing in huddles.

- Maria Esperanza Sztrimbely

Plans for 12 women in leadership to start something on Zoom every other week. We will study Soul Care, by Dr. Rob Reimer, divide into huddles and use the huddle questions.

This will be a safe place for leaders to be known and cared for. We will hold each accountable as we go along.

- Kristen Webb

Even during times when we aren't in the huddle we've reached out to one another for prayer. Maybe we'll move to a once a month model. The challenge is there for each of us to start our own huddle with pastors in our area, or within the EMCC.

- Spencer Smith

I would like to be able to offer a huddle experience to other youth pastor friends, or other children's directors in the area, or perhaps with youth leaders at a later point.

- Matt Lockhart

We will be encouraged to start our own huddles to disciple others, and help them learn to disciple others too.

- Dave Gibson

IS BEING IN A HUDDLE AFFECTING OR CHANGING YOUR APPROACH TO DISCIPLESHIP?

Yes. One of the things I learned is the intentional relationship--when we are listening to one another, being very kind, selecting the wording carefully. Our response to one another is deep--no clichés.

- Maria Esperanza Sztrimbely

There's a real benefit to doing this with other people. We are meant to live in community. There's something about following Jesus that gets way better when you do it with other people.

- Kristen Webb

Yes, you can be on-fire about a tool you hear about, but then it is easy to slip back into old patterns after a while. But when you are in a huddle, these keep coming up over and over so you don't forget about it and start using it with others. Based on my positive experience in this, I will model the same huddle format going forward.

- Spencer Smith

Yes. The huddle has given me better instruction, and I've

moved from discipleship as a theory to hands-on tools to help me be able to do it with others.

- Matt Lockhart

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OTHERS WHO ARE CONSIDERING SAYING 'YES' TO AN INVITATION TO JOIN A HUDDLE?

The huddle becomes your tribe. I'm extremely grateful. I have become stronger. They care for you and who you are and what God has for you.

- Maria Esperanza Sztrimbely

Say 'yes,' as soon as possible! Don't wait! It is an amazing experience where you can be yourself and experience community.

- Kristen Webb

I cannot recommend it enough. The encouragement, support and challenge they will receive will feed them so they will have far more energy to invest in their ministry. I was invited a couple of years ago, but I thought I didn't have time, and so I said no. I had no idea how much being in a huddle would invest in me.

- Spencer Smith

It's totally worth the emotional output; you'll grow exponentially once you jump into it. I've grown emotionally, and spiritually beyond what I'd imagined. Ministry is hard. Others can build you up to keep going.

- Matt Lockhart

They are not as intimidating as they seem. Go in with an open mind. It's a great opportunity to journey with people who do what you do, build you up, lift you up.

- Dave Gibson

If you are a pastor, leader, or volunteer who works with Next Gen in an EMCC setting and you'd like to join a Next Gen huddle, please reach out to the Next Gen Team at nextgen@emcc.ca for information.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR YOUTH FROM LEAVING CHURCH

Marty Bennett,
Connections Pastor at Cross Connection Church, Chilliwack, BC



Intergenerational Relationships are one of our values at Cross Connection. We think of ourselves as a family and we value every generation investing in one another. The blessing flows both ways.

HELPING THEM CHOOSE TO STAY

A few years ago a report was released that revealed why so many young adults were leaving the church. A top reason given why teenagers stayed connected to their church after graduation was because of the relationships they had formed with other adults in the church.

The study showed that when a young person had 3-5 strong relational ties with older people in their church family this greatly increased the likelihood of them staying connected to that church family.

OUR CHURCH RESPONDS

We formed a Family Gathering Team. They prayerfully and strategically create an annual rhythm of larger family gatherings to help build healthy relationships between the generations. I believe there is great benefit for the youth to have their own time, but it is also extremely important to have family gatherings that will equally bless each generation.

With this in mind we sometimes invite different generations to join the youth for various activities. Together they've enjoyed Charis Camp Kick offs, summer picnics,

game nights, and car rallies to name a few.

We learn as we experiment. We began youth potlucks once a month. The idea was to take a night to hear stories from youth about how God was working in their lives. It didn't take long to notice something was missing. Two things actually. First--good food. Youth potlucks tend to attract chips and cookies. Second--we were missing the larger church family. I wanted the stories the youth were sharing to be heard by parents and others in the church, and for the older and more mature people in the faith to share their stories with the youth.

I would not be where I am today without the love, care, support, encouragement, and belief of older believers in my life.

We look for ways to be intergenerational on Sunday



mornings, too. We see the blessing that flows when we get into groups of all ages to pray.

MORE REASONS TO BE INTERGENERATIONAL

Besides the survey results, here are a few more reasons why we think this blending of the generations is so important:

1. God is a family! Before the world began there was a family and He made us in His image.

2. The Bible is all about God restoring all things and we see God working through generations to accomplish this.

3. Passing the Faith to the next generation. Deuteronomy 4:9 says *"Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen, and so that they do not slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and grandchildren."*

4. It really does take a village. We need others! In biblical times the Jewish people would live with their "Oikos" households. These households were more than just blood families. It included aunts, uncles, children, and anyone else who would have been invested in the family business. The purpose of the household was to help with provision and protection.

At Cross Connection we understand we were never meant to journey alone. We love to gather as a family to worship, play and grow. ■



Marty Bennett

Connections Pastor at
Cross Connection Church
Chilliwack, BC



PONDER POINTS

1

What new thing could we do to strengthen inter-generational relationships at our church?

2

What are we already doing in this regard? How could we make this even better?

3

If we consider intergenerational relationships to be important at church, how do we make sure this is continually 'built-in' and 'lived out' within our church family?



SERVING ACROSS THE STREET: HOW ONE CHURCH IS REACHING A NEW GENERATION IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Jean Winker

Hope Chapel is an EMC church in Collingwood, Ontario, first established in 1897, now at its current location since 1957. When Jane Peck stepped into the pastor role in July 2020, the small congregation had been struggling to stay on its feet for a number of years. Many had left to worship elsewhere, but new people had also joined during that same time. By summer of 2020, there were no attendees who had been there for more than 5 years, save one. "God was preparing us to start something new," says Pastor Jane.

Noting that the church was no longer viewed as being a needed part of the neighbourhood, having become focused on attempts to just stay afloat, Jane felt a rising burden to see this change. "We have to stop focusing on survival," she told the congregation. "We need to focus on service." It wasn't necessary to look very far for a place to begin.

IF THIS ISN'T THE WAY LORD, PUT ON THE BRAKES!

Hope Chapel stands directly across the street from a

high school with a student population of 1600. "I get big ideas, and I ask the Lord to put the brakes on if I'm not going in the right way," says Pastor Jane. "I felt we needed to provide a safe space for students to come to relax, have a bite to eat, and hang out during lunch break, and sometimes after school." The congregation of approximately 40 adults is geographically spread out, and don't all live in Collingwood. When they first heard this idea they were willing to try, but uncertain how to make it happen. "I was committed to it, so I decided to show them."

At the beginning of the new school year, Pastor Jane and a handful of other willing volunteers were out at the end of the street with a table set up with homemade cookies and a variety of drinks. "Hi. Come and have a cookie and a drink...they're free!" This was the beginning of a ministry that is growing and is a welcome part of the day for many students. Always with at least two adult volunteers, they soon began inviting the students inside. "We learn their names, make them feel welcome, and engage them at their level of comfort."

STRONGER TOGETHER

The staff of Youth for Christ had joined together with Pastor Jane in this daily connection with the students, but they knew they would need more partner volunteers. The congregation couldn't do it alone but they have been united in prayer and support of this work with students. The partnership with Youth for Christ has been made possible through the provision of office space in the church building, which has facilitated their involvement since the outset. Hope Chapel is part of a local ministerial with other area churches and three of these jumped onboard to help.

THE SHAPE OF SERVICE AT HOPE CHAPEL

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays the church is open for an hour at lunch. The students bring their lunches and the church provides a free cookie and drink and a comfortable place to sit. "Nothing is nailed down in our space," says Pastor Jane. "If you need to use it, you've got to be able to move it." Valuing accountability to the church board, Pastor Jane came to them with her request to move sofas into half of the sanctuary. The other half is set up with tables and chairs. There is even a microwave. Taking service even a step further, the volunteers prepare and serve a free hot dog lunch every Wednesday.

Hope Chapel also provides Community Service hours for students after school. The church has a Community Cupboard where food, clothing, toiletries, cleaning supplies and small household items are stored, to be given to anyone with a need who drops by. Keeping the donations sorted and organized is one way to earn Community Service hours. Baking cookies with Pastor Jane after school for use during the lunch hours is another. One student has asked to help each day during lunch as a server and he is the beginning of students serving students.

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

Although some just pick up their food and leave, many others are regulars who stay, and Pastor Jane has heard,

"Why are you doing this? Why are you so nice?" Her response points to her high value for developing caring relationships and being open about her motivations. "I've explained that when I was their age, if someone had done this for me, I would have loved it, and I mention that it says in the Bible that we should treat others the way we want to be treated."

The volunteers field questions about faith and God as they come up; however, this is not the starting point. Pastor Jane describes it like this, "Any time you are building a relationship, you don't start off by getting married." We get to know them, remember details like how they take their coffee, have fun with them, play games. We let them initiate conversations. For students with expressed questions, the plan is to offer a once a week small group to explore these together. Dreaming big, Pastor Jane says, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if the students themselves someday become the catalysts for a youth church?"

BLESSED TO GIVE

The shift from surviving to serving has been life-giving for the Hope Chapel congregation that is seeing God provide in so many ways: in volunteers, in finances as they chose to give a percentage of the money from the sale of their parsonage to this ministry, and as random donations come in from people who have seen what is happening and want to be a part of it.



LOVING GOD BY OUR SERVICE

"We can say we have all the faith in the world," says Pastor Jane, "but if we aren't serving, He will say, I didn't know you. God tells us we need to love our neighbour, which is how we show we love Him. God is serious about calling us to serve."

Pastor Jane bubbles over with enthusiasm as we talk. "What brings you joy, Jane?" "All of it. Seeing needs met; the encouragement it is for people. We can't serve all of

Collingwood, but we can certainly help all who come in through our doors." ■



Jane Peck pastors at Hope Chapel, Collingwood, ON

PONDER POINTS

Is your church considering a new ministry to youth in your area? There were many questions to consider and answer along the way for Pastor Jane and the other leaders. The following is a sampling gleaned from our conversation, just to get you thinking.

THE VOLUNTEER PARTNERS

1. Are there churches or organizations you already partner with for special events and have a current relationship with?
2. "Christian" is a big umbrella. Working together requires acknowledgement that none of us has all the answers. Partnership requires an element of grace and a commitment to make it work.
3. Due diligence is vital when accepting volunteers. Churches must require volunteers to be trained and screened for abuse prevention to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
4. It is good for volunteers from different denominations or organizations to serve together. Our ministry to others is only made richer when we develop relationships among volunteers, too.

THE BUILDING

1. Sometimes things get damaged or broken. It is important to answer the question, "Who owns the building, us or God?" So what if a little coffee hits the floor? How can that possibly compare to providing space where relationships can grow and where we can show the love of God to others?
2. When opening your building and inviting the students in, you must work to make it a safe place. Know how you will accomplish this. Don't make available more space than can be monitored well.

THE STUDENTS

1. Get to know them. Let them initiate conversation topics. Have some 'casual conversation' starters for those awkward starts.
2. The students must know the clear parameters you have set for behaviour in your facility. These must be applied consistently and fairly. They will read 'favouritism' into interactions if your response to one student is different from another.
3. Issues must be addressed when they come up. The students must be held accountable but in a way that doesn't burn the bridge to relationship. Always be respectful, even when the need for correction arises.



EQUIPPING & EMPOWERING ARTISTS IN OUR CHURCHES

Val Lieske, Founder and Managing Artistic Director of Fire Exit Theatre

“Culture is what we make of the world. Culture is, first of all, the name for our relentless, restless human effort to take the world as it’s given to use and make something else. This is the original insight of the writer of Genesis when he says that human beings were made in God’s image: just like the original Creator, we are creators.”

Andy Crouch, Governing Board of Fuller Theological Seminary, Executive Editor of Christianity Today 2012-16

There isn’t a church in North America that doesn’t have as part of its mission statement something around making an impact in the world, transforming their communities, and/or reaching unchurched people groups.

The church has made great strides in many of these areas, such as supporting single moms or coming alongside people living with addictions or going through divorce or are new immigrants.

POWER OF STORY

A group that has been glaringly absent is the artists. I don’t mean just the bass players on the worship band but the dancers and filmmakers and social media content creators and sculptors and actors and playwrights.

Although pastors, politicians and parents are speaking

into the culture, most certainly the greatest impact is being had by the storytellers.

Digital marketing experts estimate that North Americans see between 4,000 and 10,000 advertisements a day. There are 210 million Netflix users (37 million added in 2020) and we consume 10 billion (yes, that’s a B) hours of content a month. Disney+ just hit 118 million viewers. These stories, sometimes delivered as novels or films or advertisements or 22-minute sitcoms, are telling us what to wear, how to smell, where to vacation, who to love and what to think about God, money, beauty, and sex.

MADE IN HIS CREATIVE IMAGE

The first five words in the Bible are, “In the beginning God created.” It’s the very first way that God defines



Himself to us; as a Creator. Not as a saviour or redeemer or king, but as an artist. The pinnacle of His creation comes in verse 27; “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.” We are created in the image of a creator, which I believe, makes us all creative. If this is the character of our God, it might be wise to invest in developing creativity in our young people.



So why aren't we? Why aren't parents eager for their children to train as artists and go out and change the cultural landscape? To be an influencer amongst the influencers? To bring the gospel to a group of people as ignorant of our God as the most remote people groups in Africa or Bangladesh.

WHY AREN'T WE EQUIPPING ARTISTS?

Some of the reasons I've heard include the assumption that the arts are so secular.



I was a banker for 13 years and saw an equal amount of promiscuity and adultery in corporate Canada. And wait, isn't the whole point of the gospel to reach the people most in need of Christ? I speak regularly with parents who are very concerned about what their kids might be exposed to in the arts. However, unless the plan is for your child to live in the rainforest with no internet access, they have been and will continue to be “exposed” to art and the world. This is a good thing. Instead of keeping our kids from the world, let's equip them and strengthen their faith and send them out into it.

Isn't the whole point of the gospel to reach the people most in need of Christ?

I've also been told that art is not a “real” job.



“How will my kid be able to afford a house?” Nowhere in the bible is there a guarantee of home ownership, job security, or the promise you'll be able to contribute regularly to your RSPs. Quite the opposite. Jesus says, follow me and there's a good chance you'll be persecuted, maybe put in jail, maybe not have a roof over your head. This can be the cost of bringing light to

the darkness. The cost is not too high. It is a privilege to sacrifice comfort for calling.

CELEBRATE THE CHOICE TO PURSUE A LIFE IN THE ARTS

The Bible, the dominant means through which God communicates his truth, is a book full of dramatic stories, systematic theology, doctrinal catechism, and rational argument. A survey of the Scriptures reveals that roughly 30 percent of the Bible is expressed through rational propositional truth and laws, while 70 percent of the Bible is story, vision, symbol and narrative. Matthew says that Jesus spoke almost entirely in parable/story (Matthew 13).

We should be alarmed and dismayed that the opportunity for artists of faith to train at a Christian post-secondary is now, almost non-existent, with the closure of the theatre programs at both Redeemer University and Trinity Western University. I believe it is vitally important to learn how to put your faith in your art and your art in your faith. If we do not advocate and support our Christian schools to do this, we have no one to blame but ourselves for the secularization of the arts. My hope is to see the local church and parents filled with as much pride when a young person decides to pursue a life in the arts as they would be if they were to be a Bible translator or youth pastor.

The artists control the narrative of our culture. If we want better stories, we need better storytellers. ■

PONDER POINTS

1. How can we help change the mindset that discounts the arts as a worthy life choice, to a mindset that esteems and celebrates the development of the creativity placed within by our Creator God?
2. We recognize the undeniable influence of the arts on today's culture. How can Jesus followers speak into it and be heard?
3. Practically speaking, how can we, as parents, and as churches, encourage our youth to develop and use their artistic talents and gifts?
4. How can we ground the next generation in the strength and power of the gospel and encourage them to put their calling in the kingdom of God before the promises of riches in the world?
5. What can we do to celebrate a youth's choice of a career in the arts?



Val Lieske is the founder and Managing Artistic Director of Fire Exit Theatre. She has a BA in Theatre & Speech from Trinity Guild (UK) and along with Barrett Hileman brought Theatre to Ambrose University in Calgary. Val freelances as a speaker, educator, writer and spoken word artist. Writing credits include the plays *Duty to Warn*, *God's Attention*, *Sunny Side Up*, *Absence*, and co-authored the book *Coffee Talk – How to Break Free from the Daily Grind*. Directing credits include *Sacrament*, *Nativity in the City*, *God's Man in Texas* and *Eleemosynary*. She has taught her class *How to Tell a Good Story with Your Life* to CEO's, drama teachers, Executive Directors, pastors and stay at home moms. She is a Certified Minister with The EMCC (Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada). Val is a Chaplain to the arts community and enjoys nothing more than drinking strong coffee with creative people.

CELEBRATING OUR NEWLY CREDENTIALLED MINISTERS

Jean Winker

We are pleased to present those in our EMCC church family who have recently been approved for EMCC credentials. Our congratulations to each one.



KRISTA BENNETT

Approved for Licensed Minister, April 1, 2022

"I am passionate about leaders authentically following Jesus in a way relevant to the world around us and that fulfills the great commission and the great commandment."

A member of the EMCC National Team, Krista is excited as she begins a new role as National Coach for Leader Development. She previously served as EMCC's Resource Manager. Now, her primary responsibility will be to support our female pastors and connect with future leaders who are sensing a call to future expressions of the church. As a Certified Life Coach with a decade of experience and spiritual gifts of leadership, intercession, evangelism, administration, and prophecy, Krista brings much to her role. She has served within EMCC since 2000, first as a Youth Director, then as a member of the National Board, in local church ministry, and in camp ministry.

Krista is married to Marty Bennett and is the mother of two sons, Tucker (15) and Riley (13). The family lives in Chilliwack, BC where Marty and Krista are a pastoral couple at Cross Connection Church.

Krista was born in Edmonton, Alberta. The family experienced a number of challenges and Krista wondered at an early age what was the purpose of life which led her to start asking questions about Jesus. When she was 15, a new girl moved to town. "I knew I needed to be her friend," even though Krista's partying buddies weren't interested in accepting her. With the friendship came sleepovers. During one of these nights, Krista's new friend asked if she could read the Bible to Krista. Nobody at home read to her, so this was very special. When her friend decided to be baptized, she invited Krista, who made it clear she wasn't interested in going to church. Her friend replied, 'good friends go to a friend's baptism.' As her friend went into the waters of baptism, Krista erupted in unexpected tears and felt cleansed. A woman sitting nearby saw her and took her aside, explained the good news and told her Jesus wanted a relationship with her. "I said, 'this is what I've been looking for. What do I do?' I was ready the minute she shared the gospel." Transformation of several lifestyle areas was an immediate result. Four months after meeting Jesus, Krista also met Marty, and they started to date. But they were in different places spiritually, with Krista wanting to grow and Marty in the midst of a Christian rebellion. Although Marty was convinced Krista was his future wife, they broke up.

After high school, Krista spent a year travelling in Europe

figuring out what she really wanted. "I had a lingering past, but I knew I was fully committed to follow Jesus even though it was going to mean disappointment and confusion for my unbelieving family. "I didn't know what my next steps were. I was driving when I experienced a loud, strong thought, so real that I had to pull over. 'Go to Bible College. You are going to be a missionary.'" Still digesting this, she later met a 'random' guy in a 'random' location who invited her to a Christmas banquet at a Bible College. The banquet was in December and she enrolled there at North American Bible College in Edmonton, Alberta, in January 1997. She graduated with a Bachelor of Christian Studies in 2000. Marty returned to Jesus during this time, and Krista and Marty rekindled their relationship and got married while Krista was still in Bible College.

"Marty and I served as youth directors after College, and we were encouraged to apply for EMCC credentials. Marty started through the process, but I wasn't interested. I was a pastor's wife in the next years, served on the National Board, and did contract work

for EMCC. When I was about 33, I heard a specific call to leaders in the EMCC. This surprised me because I've always thought quite differently than the local church often does, yet the denomination welcomed the voice God has given me. This has been a prayerful journey of discovering who God has made me and finding the courage to live authentically in His calling."

Again, Krista was encouraged to go through credentialing; this time, she could see the benefit of the many aspects involved in preparing a credentialing application. "It was a great process of revisiting what I believe and why, 20 years after Bible College." She now knows from experience what is being asked of people as they embark on the credentialing process. She feels having this understanding will help her relate as she coaches future leaders in their Kingdom calling.

Among her aspirations for her new role as National Coach for Leader Development, Krista says, "I long to see leaders flourish in their relationship with Jesus, with themselves, and others."



JOHN ESTABROOKS

Approved for Recognition of Previous Ordination, February 22, 2022

In October 2021, John became Lead Pastor at Bonavista Church in Calgary. He began in ministry with Crossroads CC, an Associated Gospel congregation in Calgary, where he served for 20 years. After stepping down in 2018, he did 3 years of transitional work with 3 different denominations. A mutual friend gave his name to Bonavista's search committee. They were seeking a

transitional pastor following the retirement of long-term pastor Murray Swalm. John sent his resume, but the timing was wrong; he couldn't be available for another year. Intrigued by what they read in his resume and sensing that he might be the right fit for Bonavista, they asked if he would be interested in applying for a full-time position when his transitional work ended. This past spring, the conversation resumed and, after finishing his transitional role in Lethbridge, John was installed on Thanksgiving Sunday.

John and Jennifer are the parents of two grown children, Stephen and Rachel. John was born in Saskatchewan while his father studied at Briercrest Bible College. Faith was always an important aspect of John's life, as both his dad and grandfather were pastors. When John was six, a visiting Vacation Bible Club leader said to him, "You know you don't get to go to heaven just because your dad is a pastor, right?" It clicked that he needed his own relationship with Jesus, and he prayed right then and there on the steps of First Baptist Church, Red Deer.

God used a dramatic instance of his healing power to set John on a new course when he was 16. Several years earlier, his parents had divorced, leaving John "angry at God, angry at Christians." Nevertheless, he was at a youth retreat, and his dad was there too. While playing a boisterous game in the pool, trying to topple others from their perch on their partner's shoulders, suddenly a popping noise came from John's dad's neck. He suffered an appalling, visible injury to his neck muscles on the left side down to his shoulder, and his head slumped into the water, and he couldn't lift it. "We didn't know what to do. Someone ran for help, and somebody said, 'We should pray.'" They laid hands on him and did just that. When they opened their eyes, he was turning his neck and lifting his head. John recalls, "We were probably

more freaked out by the healing than the injury!" Later that afternoon, God continued His work during a time of communion. "In a physical, tangible way, the Holy Spirit breathed in the room, and people were weeping, seeking forgiveness. It was an overwhelming experience. I heard the Lord say to me, 'I want you to go to school. I have work for you to do.'" John already had a career in mind but said, "I will go to school, and we'll see. 'God, if you want me to stay there, you'll have to change my heart'... and He did."

As Lead Pastor at Bonavista, John works closely with the elders, supporting and encouraging the staff and ministry leaders while getting to know the congregation and overseeing the pulpit ministry. "It's my job to equip the body of Christ to do the work of ministry." He and Jennifer love hospitality and are resuming this as restrictions relax. "I love spending time with people and hearing their stories of God at work in their lives." John also sets high value on community engagement. "When I step out of our building and into the community, I must be deeply involved and willing to set the pace. I deeply enjoy this aspect of ministry and enjoy 'surprising' people when they learn who I am. Modelling and teaching the importance of this missional way of existing is one of the most important and valuable things I can do."



SPENCER SMITH

Approved for Ordained Minister,
February 24, 2022

them mature in Him."

When Spencer was just 16 years old, he heard God's call to someday work with teenagers. He was at a camp retreat and at the time, had been leaning towards a future as a carpenter. But the calling was quite clear. After grade 12 he left Vancouver, where he grew up,

"I love Jesus. I love teenagers and I love seeing

to attend Peace River Bible Institute in Grande Prairie, Alberta. He graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Religious Education. Of his decision to choose PRBI, instead of choosing something local, he said, "It was a step of faith for me to head out on my own and let Him be my support."

His first position was the Youth Pastor at McDougal Chapel in Sundre, Alberta, where he served for four years. Spencer and his wife, Kelsey and their two children, Addison and Jacob, moved to Didsbury, Alberta, in October 2015 when he accepted an invitation to serve on staff as Youth Pastor at Zion EMC. A full-time position, Spencer's ministries include Youth Group leadership,

facilitating a senior high prayer time, co-leading a Heroes program in the local public middle school, and some community events. He has been at Zion long enough to see some in Grade 6 when he first came, now graduate. It brings him joy to have this opportunity to walk with students all through their teenage years.

"I love to see students find abundant life in Jesus, whether they are experiencing this for the first time or whether they are developing Christian maturity over the years. I want to help them discover that temptations and struggles can't match up to Jesus. He is the greatest thing they can have from now through forever."



KAPIL SUNDARALINGAM

Approved for Certified Minister,
February 28, 2022

"I encourage people towards faith. I want to see the lost won to Jesus and grow in the Lord."

Kapil has attended Christian Family Worship Centre for about 15 years and is married to Tharshy. His volunteer ministry position at the church is Caregiver/Leader. Christian Family Worship Centre is a church that serves upwards of 300 people of all age groups. Services are offered in Tamil and in English, and the church is home to those from numerous backgrounds.

Kapil was born in Switzerland and moved with his family to Canada in 1997 for educational purposes. Growing up,

his Christian mother took him with her to church, but he did not understand the need for a personal relationship with Jesus and thought of it more as a ritual to perform. When he was about 18, his choices and actions landed him out of the house with no place to go. Phone calls to friends didn't resolve his immediate problem of no roof over his head. In desperation, he reached out to God in prayer, and to his surprise, he had an encounter with Jesus. "I realized that He was always there for me. He was the only one." After this experience, Kapil wanted to be more committed to Jesus. He started attending church more often, and Pastor Solomon Arumainayagam, Sr Pastor at CFWC, spent time with him, helping him grow in his new relationship with Jesus. "I also started to pray more and began experiencing answered prayer."

"I had a desire to do more for the Lord, to serve Him, and I sensed a calling to ministry." He enrolled in the Christian Ministry and Leadership 2-year diploma

program at World Impact Bible Institute in Toronto and graduated in 2014. This provided him with tools for practical ministry and a theological foundation. He would like to be a pastor in the future.

As a caregiver/Leader at CFWC, he is responsible for caring for a few families -- praying for them, counsel. He also assists Pastor Solomon, and his Certified Minister credential will allow him to take on further responsibility if called upon. He is active with NextGen, teaching, counselling and spending time with them. He uses his gift of evangelism to share Christ with homeless people

he encounters in the community.

Throughout the years at CFWC, he has helped in the church wherever needed; everything from stacking chairs to ushering to greeting. Slowly the responsibilities have increased. Sometimes he leads worship and has also been given opportunities to do Bible teaching and preaching.

"I spend quite a lot of time at church. I love to serve the Lord."



VINCE VANDERVEEN

Approved for Licensed Minister,
February 24, 2022

"I believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the best news and is what every human heart is longing to hear. I love proclaiming it and proclaiming the power that comes through the gospel."

On January 3, 2022, Vince began serving as Pastor at Chestermere Christian Fellowship in Chestermere, Alberta.

Vince grew up in Brantford, Ontario and was raised in a Christian home. He attended church as a child and teenager and went to a Christian school. He never left the church and always believed in God, but when he was in his early 20s he felt a conviction of sin and his need

for a Saviour, and his commitment to Jesus became personal.

God's call to pastoral ministry came gradually. Right out of high school, he enrolled at Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario. He became a Canadian Naval Officer and eventually left this career to earn a teaching certificate from Redeemer University in Hamilton, Ontario. He taught at Christian high schools in British Columbia and Ontario. Although he loves to teach, Vince soon realized that he really wanted to give spiritual instruction more than teach the students French or Literature. "Spiritual instruction feels natural to me, and I began to feel a call to spiritual leadership." He is also passionate about mentoring and discipleship. Exploring this leading further, he enrolled at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. He earned a Master's degree in Theological Studies and graduated in 2016.

"I looked into the possibility of becoming a university chaplain. While doing so, I came across other opportunities - pastor positions. I came on this

unexpectedly, but I could see myself being a pastor even back when leaving the Navy. It was always in my heart. Maybe someday." As Vince reflects on his life, he is aware that God has called him to lead and believes that God has used his education and previous careers to prepare him for pastoral ministry. He served an independent community church in Orangeville, Ontario, for a while and continued to look for a permanent pastoral position.

After connecting with the Search Committee at Chestermere, he flew out to meet them in Sept 2021

to preach and discern with them if this was the Lord's call. After a second visit in November, they invited him to come as pastor. Vince's primary responsibilities are preaching, teaching, discipling and pastoral care. When asked what he loves most about his position, Vince says, "Being in the Lord's will. I'm where God has called me to be. I'm looking to him for the equipping part. It is a privilege to preach the Word of God. And to pray for someone and see God work. I truly believe that Jesus is the answer for every problem, every difficulty we face."



RECENTLY RETIRED EMCC MINISTERS


Jean Winker



HARRY FRIESS, OM, RETIRED APRIL 2021

Harry was ordained in 1978 by the Evangelical Church of Canada and began pastoral ministry that same year at the Evangelical Church in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. From there, in 1983 he served a Baptist Church in Golden Prairie until 1986 and then on to a congregation in Lethbridge from 1986-89. From 1989-1994 he served at Forest Lawn, an independent church in Calgary. This was the last time he served as a church pastor and these were discouraging and dark years for him, full of turmoil. When he left this church he went back to university. In 1996 he graduated with a degree in Social Work from the University of Calgary.

He learned that the Salvation Army Community Services Calgary was starting a program to help homeless people. They wanted a chaplain. He applied, was accepted and thus began twenty years of fulfilling Christian ministry serving hurting people. "I was there to be the presence of the Lord and to explore the spirituality of the person, and to be available to help them through times of spiritual or faith crises." On any given day he could be called upon to answer questions about meaning and purpose, and to deal with people struggling with a plethora of personal problems. He listened to the stories of those feeling bad, guilty, unlovely, abandoned. "My



main mandate was to address their immediate felt need. Only after this might it be possible to share Jesus. I got to plant seeds in people.”

He served for a time as Chaplain with The Salvation Army Community Centre of Hope, a facility where 300 homeless men slept each night.

“I connected with them when they came in and built relationships. It was my goal to listen to their needs and connect them with Jesus. I hosted a weekly Bible study for those interested.”

Harry later became director of chaplaincy at Centre of Hope where they served upwards of 400 people, including a daily soup line that fed 200 people.

Seeing the aftermath of wrong choices repeated is challenging and heart-wrenching. Of his work Harry says, “On the one hand I’d experience tremendous hope and thankfulness; on the other hand there was also great sorrow. Inwardly I’d grieve and pray, and I’d tell them God loves them and, ‘you have a choice today. You have options.’”

Harry’s biggest joy was when someone who was in the shelter system left, established life in the community, and then came back to see him and shared how they had grown spiritually.

Now retired, Harry and Patty continue to live in Calgary and attend Centre Street Church. They are empty-nesters and enjoy the time they spend with their two adult children and grandchild. They like cooking together, being with friends, and occasional travel. Harry also relishes the additional time he now has to spend in the Word, listening to the Lord. He leads a men’s bible study group, connects with a few men who were living in the shelter system and are now in the community, and is also involved discipling others.

QUESTIONS FOR HARRY

1. WHAT LEADERSHIP OR MINISTRY LESSON WAS HARD BUT IMPORTANT TO LEARN?

Dealing with controversy. When working with people who have strong views of how something should be done, it is important to learn how to incorporate their ideas without letting them overwhelm you. Find a way to make it a team effort.

2. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO TODAY’S YOUNG PASTORS?

We all started with faith in Jesus. Maintain it at all costs. Rejoice in the ministry God has given you.