



# **A MISSIONS** **MOSAIC**

The Changing Landscape in Canada

Donna M. Wilson

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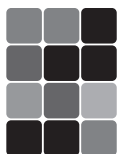
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# A Missions Mosaic

*The Changing Landscape in Canada*

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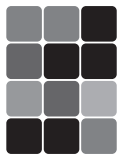
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*The Changing Landscape in Canada*

by

Donna M. Wilson



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# Dedication

The author and the Canada Central District  
NMI (Nazarene Missions International)  
would like to dedicate this book to the  
memory of Mr. Jim Ellsworth, NMI president  
at Lakeside Community Church of the  
Nazarene, who passed away suddenly while  
this book was being written. He had a heart  
for missions and was helping his church  
board reach out to the local community.



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# About the Author

Donna Wilson, an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene, has served as pastor of a ReStart congregation, Erie Street Community Church in Ontario, Canada, since 2005. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada; Master of Divinity in Pastoral Studies from Briercrest Seminary, Canada; and is studying for a Master of Arts in Leadership and Management at Briercrest Seminary. She partners with local and county leaders to lead collective community impact in the South Georgian Bay area. Donna serves on the Central Canada District in these roles: Board of Ministry; NMI council—Mission Call, Camping Ministries, and serves as founder and director of the Georgian Bay Ministerial Development Center. She also serves the USA/Canada Clergy Development Women Clergy Council as the Ambrose/Canada educational zone representative.

She is married to Darryl and they have three children, Laura, Peter, and Lisa, and a recent son-in-law, Aaron. As a family, the Wilsons have served on two short-term overseas mission trips to Romania, and Donna has visited the Canada Central District—Cuba partnership with district teams on three visits.







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## *Missions Mosaic at Home—Canada*

Canada, known fondly as the Great White North, has a population of 35.9 million people. It is a land filled with increasingly diverse people, so multiculturalism and religious pluralism are common. This landscape is continually evolving due to a generous influx of immigrants, averaging 225,000 per year since 1990 ([www.immigrationwatchcanada.org](http://www.immigrationwatchcanada.org)).

Newcomers who make Canada their home, primarily settle in metropolitan areas, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Montreal, Quebec, and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Ontario.

The population of the Toronto area alone is nearing six million people. On a global scale, the influx of immigrants has made it an amazingly multicultural city. According to 2011 demographic stats, international immigrants born outside of Canada make up almost 50 percent of the population. Canada's intake of immigrants is the highest per capita in the world.

As multiculturalism grows, the resulting diversity of people form a beautiful mosaic across the land. This mosaic also offers new missions opportunities for the Church of the Nazarene in Canada to make disciples in the nations both near and far, as they include the people who have come to them.

Currently the national church and its five districts are under the leadership of Dr. Clair MacMillan, national director of Canada and district superintendent of Canada Atlantic; Rev. Ian Fitzpatrick, district superintendent of Quebec and Canada Central; Dr. Larry Dahl, district superintendent of Canada West; and Rev. Earl R. Wood, district superintendent of Canada Pacific.

God has been faithful to the mission in Canada. While Canada has frequently sent Nazarene global missionaries over the years, Canada's open immigration policy has opened the door for missions opportunities to come into the country for years. It has even allowed "missionary pastors" to come into Canada from other lands.

On the Canada Central District alone, approximately one third of the ordained pastors are international immigrants. Each pastoral family has a story of how God led them to their new home in Canada and how they joined the mission of making disciples in the nations in their new homeland. Let's meet three of these "missionary pastors" who serve in the GTA and who currently lead and serve on Canada Central District.

## **Rev. Pedro and Rev. Belkis (BEL-kis) Fernandez**

*Toronto Spanish Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene and  
Woodbridge Spanish Church of the Nazarene*

Pedro visited Canada in 1981 from his homeland, Dominican Republic. For nine months he helped in a Spanish church, working with youth, Sunday School, and as a teacher in a Bible institute. He returned to the Dominican Republic in 1982.

In 1995, Pedro visited Canada again. By this time he was married to Belkis and had three children. He was visiting a home of a Dominican family that was attending a dinner meeting with the Spanish committee of the non-Nazarene church where they were members.



*Pedro and Rev. Belkis Fernandez*

Pedro and Belkis joined the group for dinner, but stepped out during the committee's meeting. After the gathering, the meeting coordinator asked Pedro many questions about himself. Pedro and Belkis returned to the Dominican Republic and a week later received an offer to immigrate to Canada to work with that church in North York, Ontario.

In February 1996, Pedro began working with that church as assistant pastor. Things did not work out as agreed and the relationship with that denomination ended in October 1996.

Just as that relationship ended, Pedro was invited to apply for a vacancy in the Toronto Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene.

Pedro met with then District Superintendent Ron Fry, was introduced to the church, and preached for two Sundays. In November 1996, the church voted unanimously for Pedro to be the pastor.

Pedro and his family started pastoring at the Iglesia Hispana del Nazareno Emanuel (Emmanuel Spanish Church of the Nazarene) in December 1996. His two eldest children are married, and all three have graduated from university. Pedro and Belkis have three grandchildren, and their youngest son is a youth pastor. The entire family is involved in the church.

The Toronto Emmanuel Spanish congregation led by Pastor Pedro and his staff has grown to include more than 400 members, and the church has planted several Spanish churches across Ontario—including Woodbridge Church of the Nazarene. The Woodbridge Church was planted by Pedro's wife, Pastor Belkis, meets in a new facility, and averages more than 100 attendees.

Toronto Woodbridge is following in the footsteps of its mother church by planting a church in Bradford, Ontario. Belkis, along with the Emmanuel Spanish Church, founded Manantial (man-AN-chel) Neighbourhood Services, which has been recognized by community leaders for the social assistance it provides.

God's love is continually being poured out through His faithful servants, Pastor Pedro, Pastor Belkis, and their family.

## **Rev. Steve and Patricia Ottley (AHT-lee)**

*Assistant District Superintendent, Canada Central District*

In the summer of 1982, Steve rolled into Toronto in his 1974 Ford Pinto station wagon. He had driven from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA, where he was attending Bethany Nazarene College (now Southern Nazarene University), to visit his fiancé, Pat, and her family.

Both Pat and Steve grew up in the Central American country of Belize. Steve left Belize to attend university in 1980, and the following year, Pat and her family migrated to Canada. Now that Pat and Steve were getting married, they needed to decide where they would live.



*Patricia and Steve Ottley*

Steve was impressed with the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Toronto. He saw people from every corner of the planet with white, black, and brown skin; ladies dressed in saris and men with turbans. It was an incredible sight, and an eye-opener for this young man whose only world references at the time consisted of Bethany, Oklahoma, and Belize—an ethnically-diverse country, but offering nowhere near the variety he experienced that summer afternoon.

At the end of that two-week visit, the young couple knew Toronto was the place for them to settle down. They travelled to Belize to get married in the summer of 1983,

then Steve migrated to Canada, to the city he had fallen in love with a year earlier.

The Church of the Nazarene had entered Belize in 1934 when God gave a vision to Nazarene missionaries in next-door Guatemala to cross the border to share the good news of full salvation. Charles Ottley became a Nazarene pastor in the early 1950s. He encouraged his son, Oliver Ottley, to attend the newly formed Nazarene Fitkin Memorial Bible College in Benque (BEN-kay) Viejo del Carmen, Belize.

After fully surrendering his life to Christ at Bible college, Oliver experienced a call to ministry. Following graduation, Oliver and his wife, Norma, served on the Belize District as pastor, church planter, teacher, principal, and district superintendent, for more than 50 years.

In 1980, Oliver and Norma sent their son, Steve, to Southern Nazarene University, where he studied business.

In 1990, Steve sensed a call to vocational ministry, and he and Pat responded to that call, attending Ambrose University—Calgary, Canada (Canada Nazarene University College at the time), and Nazarene Theological College—Manchester in England.

Steve served as associate pastor at Toronto Rosewood Church of the Nazarene (1992-1999) with Pat at his side before the two planted the Whitby Gateway Church of the Nazarene in 2000. In 2013, Steve was asked to serve as the

assistant district superintendent for the Canada Central and Canada Quebec districts, where he oversees church planting, leadership development, and church health.

Nazarene Global Missions has come full circle as the child raised in an area that was once a mission field has found his own mission field.

### **Rev. Ian and Pat Fitzpatrick**

*Ian—District Superintendent of the Canada Central and Quebec Districts; Pat—Administrative Assistant for the Canada Central District*

In 1975, God saved Pat and Ian Fitzpatrick in Lurgan (LUHR-gin), Northern Ireland. Pat was raised in a Nazarene parsonage, the daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Raymond Spence, and Ian was the son of Methodist laity, Tommy and May Fitzpatrick. Ian was saved as the result of a traumatic health issue and began attending the local Nazarene church where he met the pastor's daughter.

Pat and Ian were married on September 17, 1977. Soon after this, Rev. Samuel Doctorian held revival services at the Lurgan Church of the Nazarene, and the Fitzpatricks both gave themselves completely to the Lord. They were not sure what this would mean in their lives; however, within eight months they ended up en route to Beirut, Lebanon, a country embroiled in civil war, to serve as Nazarene short-term missionaries in an orphanage. Though they were far away from home, they were confident that God had called them to help people who could not help themselves.

After three years the conflict had deteriorated and the Fitzpatricks were required to leave the country. So in 1981, wanting to prepare themselves properly for the task ahead, Ian and Pat headed to Nazarene Bible College in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA. They were again far from home, but knew they were in the centre of God's will. Three years later they graduated and sought God's will for a place of ministry.



*Pat and Ian Fitzpatrick*

That place was Canada; more specifically, the Canada Central District and the city of Mississauga (MIS-i-SAW-gah). They came to Bethel Church of the Nazarene in 1984 and remained there until 1989. They then ministered in Target Toronto, a USA/Canada missions emphasis, followed by 12 years of ministry at Toronto's Em-

manuel Church of the Nazarene.

After pastoring on the district for 20 years, Ian was elected superintendent of Canada Central District. Through all their years of various responsibilities in differing locations and circumstances, Ian and Pat testify they have learned to trust in Jesus and have surrendered themselves to God's service. God continues to use their surrendered lives for His glory, in district and global leadership in the Church of the Nazarene.



God is providing workers for His harvest fields, including the mission fields of Canada. Although Canada continues to deploy missionaries through Global Mission in the Church of the Nazarene, these stories testify that the Holy Spirit has also sent “missionary pastors” to help lead missions in Canada, and come alongside Canadians who are answering God’s call in their homeland.

The stories of God’s work in Canada are still unfolding, and more will be woven together in years ahead as God faithfully provides workers for His harvest field and equips them for the mission.

Sociologist Dr. Joel Thiessen (TEE-sin), associate professor of sociology at Ambrose University, who has extensively studied religion in Canada wrote:

[There is] a downward trajectory in individual levels of religiosity, which is a consequence of societal secularization that started half a century ago in Canada. Simply put, at least in Canada, religion has, is, and will be on the decline. Religion plays less of a role in Canadian society today than when my parents or grandparents grew up, religious beliefs and practices are less salient today among individual Canadians than in the past, and these trends are likely to continue into the foreseeable future. Like several other modern Western nations, Canada is holding on to its seat at the secularization table. (Thiessen 2015: 176)

While adherence to the Christian faith is declining in Canada, God and His people remain faithful.

The evidence of Christ's power and presence is here, in the midst of religious pluralism and an increasingly secular society in Canada. God is indeed revealing His glory.



## *The Mission Harvest*

Just how ripe the Canadian field is for harvest became a reality to my husband, Darryl, and me a few years ago, after we'd already answered God's call to ministry. Our family had moved from Markdale, Ontario, to Caronport, Saskatchewan, Canada, for three years, while I attended seminary. After three years, we felt the Lord lead us to return to our home area. Following a student internship, I was appointed to lead what our Canadian Nazarene leaders called a "mission status" ReStart ministry in Collingwood, Ontario. Darryl continued to farm near Ravenna (Ra-VEN-nah), Ontario, on the family land down the road from a small country church, Kolapore (kawl-ah-POHR) Calvary Church of the Nazarene, which we had attended when God called us into ministry.

At this time, we lived in the parsonage of the church, formerly called Collingwood Church of the Nazarene (now Erie Street Community Church of the Nazarene). The parsonage was actually an apartment on the second floor of

the church. One quiet, spring afternoon, our family was at home when the phone rang. A farmer eagerly told Darryl, “There is a winter wheat crop growing on the fields you sub-let to me.”

“I am not sure what you mean,” Darryl responded. “I harvested it last summer, let it rest, and it is ready to be replanted.”

The farmer insisted, “There is a full crop of winter wheat growing on your field. If you want to keep it, I will not plow it up and will let you keep the fields for another year.”

When Darryl arrived at the farm 20 minutes later, indeed, 70 acres of wheat that he had not planted were growing as thick as any good crop of wheat would be. It was harvested the following summer and sold for approximately 12,000 CAD (approximately US\$9,000). With grateful hearts, we gave God the glory for His provision on the farm and felt His assurance as we continued to work in our new harvest field, His harvest field, in Collingwood, Ontario.

We first felt called to harvest in God’s field in 1996. We had a young family and were farming in the community where Darryl was raised. While we served as lay leaders in a rural church, the Lord spoke to us through Luke 10:1-24 about entering full-time service. Being folks familiar with farming, verse 2 was especially lasered on our hearts: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

As young adults, we enjoyed serving on the church board and worship team and leading the growing youth ministry that had connected new families to the church. We loved the Lord and were eager to serve Him, but this sense of calling to full-time Christian service was different. We felt an overwhelming sense of being asked to commit our entire lives and livelihood to the Lord, and this thought was beyond our comprehension.

We did not tell anyone what we were hearing from the Lord, and several years passed before we fully responded to God's call.

We attended the Kolapore Church, located on the Niagara Escarpment, an internationally recognized landform that is the cornerstone of Ontario's Greenbelt. It is a 20-minute drive from Collingwood on Georgian Bay Missional Zone on the Canada Central District.



*Rev. Donna Wilson and her family during their early years at Erie Street Community Church of the Nazarene.*

In 1999, Rev. Elaine Bumstead and I attended the Canada Central NMI Convention as delegates for the Kolapore Church. Darryl stayed home with our young children and worked as a labourer on a dairy farm owned by Elaine and

her husband, Dennis. Neither of our families knew at the time that the Lord was calling us into full-time service.

On the day of the NMI Convention, I sensed the Lord's presence in a way I never had before. The Lord reminded me of His words from Luke 10:2, which had spoken to us in 1996, and I felt Him saying this would be the day I would respond to His call.

I argued with the Lord about how our family already faithfully served in the local church. "How can we go into full-time ministry when we are farmers—not to mention that I am a busy wife and mother!"

I was not familiar with women clergy for none existed in the Nazarene churches in our area, which were 100-year-old ministries, established as church plants by Rev. Frank Goff during the Gospel Workers' holiness movement in the early 1900s. During those early years, I later learned, women preachers had eagerly led local ministries, but I had not seen women serving as full-time pastors or evangelists in our area.

As I argued, I felt the Lord respond to my thoughts as I opened the Bible to Joel 2:28-29: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."

"Lord, if You are really calling me, then I will go," I said.

I felt elated and frightened as I listened to the charge from District NMI President Betty Zita. When the altar call was given, I consecrated my life to the Lord for His service in a new way.

I still had questions: “Lord, where will you ask us to go?” and “What will Darryl say when I tell him I have told God I will go anywhere?”

These thoughts went through my mind, but I was at peace as I committed myself to service in the Church of the Nazarene.

As I travelled home with Elaine, I told her how I had surrendered to God’s call. She too told me that the Lord had been speaking to her about being available to serve Him. When I got home and told Darryl about how I felt God was directing us, he simply responded, “I know.” He knew God was speaking, and together we prayed and continued to follow God’s leading.

Time and many circumstances have passed since Elaine and I received calls to full-time ministry in the field of missions. Many years later, Rev. Elaine Bumstead, as an ordained deacon, through her work with Canadian Foodgrains Bank of Canada, a Canadian response to world hunger, would be greatly involved in the growing missions work in Bangladesh, and she continues to serve as executive director of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM) Canada. Today, we both serve as women clergy in full-time service in the Church of the Nazarene.

God still calls, and His people respond. The mission fields are still ripe for the harvest in Canada.



### 3

## *Crossing Cultures in the Neighbourhood*

The fall evening was warm as I drove towards Collingwood from Thornbury, Ontario, where we lived. (We had not yet moved our family to the Erie Street parsonage.) Erie Street Community Church of the Nazarene was a small church nestled in an increasingly secular community. Although a higher number of people likely professed faith in God, only 3 percent of the population regularly attended church on any given Sunday.

The Nazarene congregation established at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was resilient. However, in recent years, attendance had declined, falling in line with the trend of dropping attendance in other churches around the community.

The history of our area's settlement is young compared to many western communities. Situated on a two-hour drive northwest of Toronto, the area towns emerged before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on a land known as the Queen's Bush, which hugged the southern shores of Georgian Bay,



a large mass of fresh water shouldering the north end of Lake Huron.

Industry towns rose along its shores in the mid-1800s and were supported primarily by limestone quarries, logging, farming, and a vast shipbuilding industry in Collingwood.

The area was seen as a mission field at the time. In the late 1800s, Rev. Frank Goff, founder of the Gospel Workers of Canada holiness movement, sensed a call from the Lord to leave his home area of Gananoque (GAN-an-AW-quay), Ontario, and move to the Georgian Bay area to establish a holiness church. One of his granddaughters, Joanne Jolley, says her grandfather testified he was standing in a field one day, when he distinctly heard an unfamiliar name, “Meaford (MEE-fuhrd),” from the Lord.

Although Goff had never been there, he learned Meaford, Ontario was a new settlement on the southern shore of Georgian Bay.

In 1889, he landed in Meaford, where, according to historians, he had an unquestionable work ethic as he sought to hold revival services and camp meetings, start congregations, and direct the building of church facilities. The periodical he edited, *The Holiness Worker*, was filled with articles talking about “the blessing” and testifying to faith healings, the glory coming down in meetings, practical teachings on sanctification, and the theological foundation for their practice of ordaining women.

Rev. Goff taught his followers a missions focus. He emphasized the need for believers who were entirely sanctified to receive the blessing to be empowered to win souls for

Christ, citing Matthew 3:11 and Acts 1:8. He urged his people that if they were lacking in power, to ask for it, and Jesus would freely give it.

In the early years as the holiness movement gained momentum, the Georgian Bay congregations became known as the Valley Circuit, supported mainly by the holiness movement of Ottawa, Ontario. Ministers and evangelists came to assist with the new works' needs and to hold special meetings.

The Gospel Workers of Canada established the Collingwood Church of the Nazarene in 1905. In 2005, during its centennial year, the district designated the Collingwood Church as a ReStart ministry because of declining attendance.

ReStart is the intervention in churches that are preparing to close. ReStart churches are led through a process of closure, healing, and establishing a new work in the community under a new vision.

With district support early in the year, the Collingwood ReStart held an inaugural service, officiated by a pastor from Markdale Church of the Nazarene, Rev. Dennis Hubert. With the support of his congregation, he held a weekly Sunday afternoon worship service, following Markdale's morning worship service.

The church continued to hold services on Sunday afternoons. When our family was called to serve there, and I was appointed by the district as its missions pastor in August 2005, the average Sunday worship service attendance was 13—with our family, it grew to 18. On our first Sunday,

very warm, faithful attendees welcomed their new pastoral family with open arms.

As I approached Collingwood on this fall evening, I passed the shore of Georgian Bay. Along the highway, the bay waters shimmered to the left, and the hills of Blue Mountain loomed 300 meters (1,000 feet) high on the right.

I had hoped to make a good impression during our first week in Collingwood. I believed God had placed us in this community to serve, build bridges, and help reestablish the holiness work; and I was prepared to extend a hand wherever needed. But right after we arrived, I entered a difficult situation that had come to our attention the day before.

Over the six-foot fence to the east of the church facility was a mid-size 30-unit apartment building. And a social housing complex was within a five-minute walk! The new neighbourhood our family was now planted in seemed to be highly populated with both young families and seniors. In fact, when our family moved into the parsonage above the church facility, we often heard children playing below as they crossed through the church property or travelled the path through the woods at the back to the complex.

It was an ideal neighbourhood in which to be a “missionary pastor,”—a ministry concept I had studied in seminary and I truly had come to believe was needed in Canada. In my studies, I learned a missionary pastor is encouraged to study the context of his or her ministry, where it is situated, and to know the people so he or she can be more effective

in winning souls. From the first days of our ministry on Erie Street, our greatest desire was to reach the children at risk, along with their parents, and offer them new hope in Christ.

While Pastor Dennis was overseeing the ReStart, he led the current board through a series of Bible lessons, encouraging them to find new opportunities to build bridges into the community. The board was coming to a new understanding of being missions-minded in their own neighbourhood.

About this time, some men approached the church about allowing them to use the facilities to host a Monday game night for community children each week. The members welcomed this new outreach opportunity. They felt it was a tangible way to put the new vision of the newly established ReStart ministry at Erie Street into action.

When I agreed to take over the pastorate, I learned about the weekly games night. It was not Caravan, the children's curriculum offered in many Nazarene churches, but it was an opportunity to build relationships with the leaders and with the children and parents who would attend.

Pastor Dennis found the current leaders of the program to be very friendly. They arrived each week and set up several tables for strategy gaming—involving many figurines, boards, and rulebooks. They invited local children to sign up and encouraged them to manage their own collections of figurines and participate in the board games.

But then my husband found a gaming magazine the Monday night children's leaders had left behind. The cover was dark and featured hideous creatures. As we looked over the contents, we found the magazine was a maze of dark

rituals and beliefs woven into a storyline through which evil overcame good.

We were thankful this came to our attention early in our pastorate at Collingwood, but now we faced the hard task of addressing the problem. The community leaders were guiding the children into activities that were profoundly against the Christian faith and held a witchcraft element. So Pastor Dennis and I had asked the community group to stop holding their children's program at our facility on only a day's notice.

I was concerned about how the community would perceive this situation. The possible fallout from the decision would not create the good impression I had hoped to make during our first week in Collingwood!

Two men were waiting in the parking lot with aggravated expressions when I arrived.

"We called all the kids and told them the church cancelled their program without notice. We still cannot believe you have done this. How can you shut down a quality program for children? We came tonight to let you know we have done everything you have asked. We called off the program this evening; and since we did not have a final night to make arrangements with the kids, we came in case any children arrived who did not receive the message in time."

"I am sorry you feel this way. I am disappointed this has happened, but some aspects of your gaming do not fit with our Christian beliefs," I confessed.

"Well, this is a terrible thing you have done to the children in our community," one of the men implored. The

two men kept exchanging angry looks and insisting that I was wrong.

I knew I would not win them over. Nor did I want to offend them more than I already had by interrupting their program, so I kept quiet.

As the awkwardness of the situation continued, I inwardly prayed that either the parking lot would swallow me, or the leaders would choose to leave the church's property. Suddenly, I heard voices. Children appeared out of nowhere, skipping up and down the street. "Pastor Donna! Pastor Donna! Hi, Pastor Donna!"

Along with Pastor Dennis, we had recently hosted a five-day Vacation Bible School (VBS) day camp, which had coincided with our first week in Collingwood. It was a much-needed Christian outreach to the neighbourhood children. At this opportune time, many of the neighbourhood children who had attended the VBS decided to greet the new pastor!

As the men continued to stand in our driveway and mutter, children skipped and jumped up and down Erie Street, affirming our new place in the community.

While I turned and greeted each child by name, the disgruntled men left. I did not see them again. Where the enemy had tried to gain ground, the Lord was the Victor.

A few weeks later, we moved into the parsonage, and settled into our new neighbourhood mission field in Collingwood, along with our three children, Laura, Peter, and Lisa.



## *I Can Only Imagine*

*Let the Church of the Nazarene be true to its commission; not great and elegant buildings; but to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and wipe away the tears of sorrowing, and gather jewels for His diadem. —Phineas F. Bresee*

Erie Street Community Church of the Nazarene initiated a follow-up program to Vacation Bible School in the fall of 2005. Kidz Time was an after-school outreach program for neighbourhood children. Through this program, the church continued to build relationships with low-income families who lived near the church, including in the apartment building next door.

Before long the program averaged 30 kids, a good number for a new procedure in a small church. One young boy who came every week had a never-ending grin and boundless energy. When his mom, Kat, dropped him off and

picked him up, she showed the same exuberance and was eager to chat with the pastor and workers.

On one of her first visits to the church, she thanked the workers for starting Kidz Time and exclaimed that Erie Street Community Church was known for offering programs to the community! As the new pastor, this surprised me as we only held an afternoon service on Sundays at 3 p.m., and the only time the door was open during the week was when the local Weight Watchers chapter rented the facility on Thursday afternoons.

Our outreach efforts didn't appear to amount to much, but I did not want to dampen her enthusiasm and I was pleased that our ministry was viewed in the community in this way. I was also thankful that new neighbourhood people were attending.

We built lasting relationships with several families through Kidz Time, including Kat and her husband, Kirk. Both were cancer survivors and lived on disability pensions, while raising their eight year-old son, Thomas, and their three-month-old daughter, Alexis.

They encountered daily physical challenges as they cared for their children and faced other challenges from living on a fixed income and in social housing. Fortunately, Kat could work a few part-time hours managing a local gas bar (gas station) to help provide additional income. I continued to reach out to Kat through Kidz Time, but she was busy, and the family could not often attend church. Our sons, who were the same age, became inseparable. We often joked about our "other" son, as we cared for each other's boy. It



was the picture of the saying, “It takes a neighbourhood to raise a child.”

On Christmas Eve during the first winter our family lived in the parsonage, the boys were playing in the snow while I prepared for the Christmas Eve candlelight service. The doorbell rang, and I opened the door to find Thomas and Peter in the doorway, with blood trickling down both sides of Thomas’s face!

The boys had decided to throw a loose brick on the roof of the church and watch it slide down the roof, pushing the snow as it came down. Thomas had thrown the brick, misjudged where it would land, and it came back down on his head! Besides being concerned for Thomas, I again worried about the impression we were making on the families in our new neighbourhood. What would Thomas’s mother think?

I put a cloth on his head, asked him to apply pressure to the wound, and phoned her.

Kat quickly came over, looked at her son, and said, “Oh, he is very accident prone. Did I forget to tell you?”

She laughed. I was relieved. No hard feelings after all, even though they spent the next several hours at the local emergency room. As Kat and her family became more involved in the church, we realized she had a very big heart, especially for struggling young moms.

Through Kidz Time, we often met children who came from difficult family situations. We attended to situations of neglect, abuse, and came alongside parents who dealt with addictions. We often felt under-qualified to assist and

blundered as we tried to find practical ways to care for the families in need.

For instance, after Kidz Time each week, a sweet little 10-year-old asked to use the phone. Every week, she called home, but her mother did not answer. We came to believe that her mother was possibly a cocaine addict who was probably at home, but not answering the phone. We reluctantly would send the child across the ball field to her family's townhouse on a nearby street. As we had opportunity, we reached out to her mom and offered help.

One Sunday morning, the mom phoned us to see if we could help with groceries. Following Sunday morning service, I went to the grocery store and picked up several bags of staples. Kat and I went to the little girl's home to deliver the groceries; we walked into a barren room without one piece of furniture. We realized the sweet little girl who attended Kidz Time was living in a crack house, just a street away from the church.

Both Kat's and my eyes were opened to the immense poverty and depravity lying beneath the surface of our tourist area, often known as Toronto's Playground, two hours from the city. It was an area of beaches, ski hills, and golf greens, but was also filled with neglect, suffering, and poverty.

We extended a caring hand with non-judgmental eyes. Although we did what we could to alleviate the needs on the surface, before long the child protection services stepped in. The family soon moved away, and we did not see them again.

Kat also had the opportunity to mentor young women through her work at the local gas station. She often met parents who were struggling with addictions. She offered them work and, with her big heart, would go the extra mile to help them.

With this intention, she hired Jill (name has been changed), the mother of two beautiful young children. Jill was struggling to kick an addiction to oxytocin, a derivative of heroin. Jill went to great lengths to cover the addiction, especially at her workplace, but didn't succeed. Jill's boss gave her numerous chances, despite poor choices.

As Kat began to mentor Jill, Kat was concerned about the environment the children were living in, yet it seemed Jill went to great lengths to care for her children. Kat grew especially fond of Jill and her children.

As Kat reached out to Jill, our church supported her efforts. At Christmas time, we made sure Jill and the children received a big hamper of food, and she was so grateful. Over the span of a couple of years, low points and high points happened as Jill took steps to recover, only to slip back into the depths of addiction.

During Christmas of 2010, Kat invited Jill and her children to attend the annual community outreach and dinner sponsored by Erie Street and several other churches and businesses. This was the first year the outreach evening had offered a prayer room. During the evening, Jill went to the prayer room and gave her heart to Jesus.

We did not hear from Jill in the following months. However, with Kat's support, she sought help for her addiction

and participated in a meth program. She was on track with kicking her addiction to oxytocin and was becoming clean.

The meth program was new to our rural area; and to be able to continue, Jill needed rides to various clinics several days a week, one being 90 kilometres (56 miles) from Collingwood. Kat faithfully gave Jill rides for months.

One day as they left Collingwood, they knew they were driving into a blizzard and were concerned. They had to go, even in these extreme conditions, as the patient must attend clinic on the days required to remain in the program. About 20 minutes from town, they narrowly missed being in a car pileup on the highway.

As their car stopped right behind another car involved in the accident, Kat turned to Jill and said, "Now do you believe?"

They both testified that the Lord saved their lives that day. They pulled off the road and waited in a restaurant until the weather cleared.

As summer approached, Kat invited Jill and her children, who were eight and ten, to attend Riverview Family Camp on the Canada Central District with some of us from Erie Street Church. Coincidentally, at a spring community outreach dinner, Jill had won a tent package. She was excited because she would be able to take her kids camping and use their new equipment!

Jill, like most addicts, hung around a vastly different crowd than most camp attendees, and the environment would be foreign to her. However, she agreed to go and soon caught some of Kat's enthusiasm! As a church, we also

prepared to welcome this little family because Kat would be away part of the camp week due to work. Jill and the children camped out next to our family's tent trailer for the week.

On Monday after Jill arrived at the camp, she was overcome by the friendliness of the people. During the evening service, Jill surprised all of us when she responded to the altar call. As she went forward, I offered to pray with her.

She remembered the commitment she had made in the prayer room at Christmas but admitted she had been distant from the church because she didn't know how to live as a Christian. This day, she wanted to renew her commitment to Jesus and to make it known that she wanted support to be able to follow Jesus in the coming months.

I assured her that she could live for Jesus with the power of His Spirit in her and that we would support her.

The next morning Kat and Jill went for a walk around the grounds. A groundskeeper said, "I want you to know how proud I was of you when you went to the altar last night."

With the lifestyle Jill had just stepped out of, some of her natural tendencies remained a little rough around the edges. She was so amazed that this man would offer encouragement that she turned to Kat and expressed her feelings about how kind everyone was at the camp—adding a string of off-coloured words!

Kat gently reminded her of their surroundings but was pleased that Jill had felt the genuine love of God and His people.

On Wednesday evening, the Erie Street folk who attended camp gathered for the service near the front of the tabernacle. I walked in and sat near the end of the row but did not see Jill. I asked our friends if they had seen Jill. Just then, further down the row, Jill leaned forward to show she was with us. Her face was beaming, and she was clearly happy to be in worship.

Jill participated in worship with the exuberance of her new faith. Once again, when the altar call was given, Jill leaped forward, even though she knew her mentor, Kat, would not be with her at the altar. Again I followed her, and as I knelt with her, I asked Jill if she would pray.

I encouraged her to pour her heart out to the Lord, and she did. She surrendered her life to the Lord. After she prayed, I asked her if she would help Erie Street launch a recovery program for addicts in the fall. She was ecstatic, thinking about the opportunity to lead others through a process of recovery from life's hurts, habits, and hang-ups although she was still in recovery herself.

Since Kat had gone back to Collingwood to work for a few days, I wanted to make sure Jill remained comfortable at camp. We got to know each other better, began a discipleship process, and talked about plans for her return to Collingwood as a changed person. We decided to set aside some time on Friday for an initial planning session to launch the recovery ministry.

Thursday afternoon we attended a ladies' tea hosted by Alice and Bill Kimmerer (KIM-uhr-uhr) in the camp dining hall. Jill had never been to a ladies' tea. She enjoyed it

as the camp women welcomed her with open arms. After a while, her daughter came in from outside, anxiously awaiting a ride to the beach. She sat on her mom's lap, and we assured her that we would go to the beach soon. Even with Jill's personal battles and family struggles, the love between the children and their mom was very strong.

A while later, as we drove to the beach, we listened to the song on the radio, "I Can Only Imagine" by Mercy Me. Jill had never heard this song in which the musician sang about someday meeting Jesus in person.

When the song ended, Jill asked if I could help her download music like this since she had no idea where to find it. We arrived at the beach and enjoyed visiting with other camp friends while the children played nearby. Jill talked with another couple that had also come out of a life of addictions and had found freedom in their new relationship with the Lord.

On the way back to camp we purchased some treats at a store, then we returned to our campsite. Later that night, as we were going to sleep, I listened to Jill and her children settle down for the night in their tent nearby.

I awoke early in the morning and prepared to go to the tabernacle for 7:30 a.m. prayer. At about 7:15 a.m., I heard thunder. I looked out the window and saw a dark cloud move quickly over the campgrounds. I wrestled with whether or not I should wake our folks up and ask them to take shelter in a safer place.

*It would be foolish if we all got up and then the storm headed in a different direction,* I decided. The rain began

pouring and lightning hit near a tree, right on our campsite.

I heard Jill's children crying and thought they were frightened by the storm. They ran through torrential rain to the trailer, and I gathered them inside.

"Something's wrong with Mommy!" They exclaimed that their mom was not responding and couldn't breathe.

I ran into Jill's tent and realized we needed to find help quickly. I called 911, jumped in the van, and drove to the tabernacle where District Superintendent Ian Fitzpatrick and campers were praying. One man who regularly attended the prayer meeting was a retired fireman. He jumped in the car with the district superintendent and went to perform CPR while I waited at the camp entrance for the ambulance to arrive.

As we followed emergency procedures and cared for Jill's children, we received the grim news that Jill had gone home to be with the Lord at age 33. Her struggles on this earth were over.

Her hopes and dreams of becoming clean and of mentoring others through recovery in her community, known for its pockets of poverty and addicts, would not happen. She no longer needed a mentor for her spiritual walk or help finding praise and worship music. Jill was in the presence of the Lord.

Jill's moment of joy was earth's sorrow. Everyone at the camp responded with love as the children were tucked safely in a cottage. The police met with the district superintendent as I stood nearby.



We had let the first responders know Jill was in recovery. As the officers took notes, one asked me, “Where is her meth stored?”

As part of Jill’s recovery program, she had needed special permission to leave her home area and to miss her almost daily appointments at the clinic. She had been allowed to keep her prescribed meth in a locked container and take it with supervision as required through the week. Without thinking, I had offered to keep it at our campsite instead of asking the camp nurse to care for it. Who would have thought I would now be in front of officers and my district superintendent, all awaiting the answer to this question?

“It’s in my refrigerator,” I answered. Rev. Fitzpatrick looked up in surprise. The Wilsons weren’t known to carry narcotics, let alone to church camp. I got the locked box for the officers to take with them.

Kat, hearing about the tragedy, quickly returned to camp. She was distraught to learn about her employee and friend. She jumped out of her car and hugged Jill’s children, assuring them they would be OK, then she received permission from the children’s protection services to take them to their grandma.

The people on the grounds mourned as family camp attendees processed the loss of a dear mom and a new friend. They gave thanks for her life and for the small window of time in which they saw the transformation of a life from the depths of sin and darkness, to being filled with joy and abundance in the Lord.

Several days later we held a memorial service for Jill's acquaintances in Collingwood. The church was filled with people who still needed to know about Jesus, and the tribute to Jill's life was a beautiful testimony of her newfound life in Christ and her resting place in His arms. Missions is all about crossing cultural, if not physical, boundaries; in reaching out to Jill, we had certainly reached into a new mission field.

We cannot explain the lasting effects Jill's life has had on Erie Street Community Church, as well as on the ministries at the camp and on the district. Through these sad circumstances, we witnessed the Lord's abiding presence. Our faith in the Lord and in His mighty power increased. Leaders and laity drew closer together as we gained a greater understanding of the depths of God's love for all people, especially ones deemed unlovable at times. Through Jill, He revealed His glory to us and reminded us of the work that is still to be done here on earth.

It was difficult to say good-bye to Jill, but it was evident the Lord drew her to himself, filled her with His power, and welcomed her home in the presence of her witnesses, her new church family. She is now present with the Lord without blemishes and has taken her place in our cloud of witnesses, cheering us on to the finish line.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

(Hebrews 12:1)



## 5 *The Missions Intersection*

Erie Street Community Church of the Nazarene continued to respond to the mission needs of the neighbourhood people, while maintaining its identity as a Christ-centered ministry.

As an eager young mission pastor anxious to lead the congregation in this direction, I often found myself in unpredictable circumstances as I responded to needs and met people where they were—and not where we wanted them to be. With the church's support, as well from my own pocket, I provided food or grocery coupons, small amounts of cash, and transportation as people requested.

Although this is not unusual, at Erie Street, we responded at a higher level of care than the church had in previous years. We desired to gain greater influence in our neighbourhood, increase visibility as a ministry, and build a bridge of trust between those inside the church and the many outside of it.

One day, while I prepared for our evening service with Nazarene missionaries who were visiting us, the phone rang. A homeless lady had come to our area in a rundown van, without any plan for housing or food. The Salvation Army had put her in a motel nearby, but she needed groceries. I offered to take her some basic supplies and asked if she would like to join us for the missionary service. She said she would love to join us.

Our family had supper with the missionaries in the church parsonage, then I drove to the edge of town where the lady was staying and picked her up for church. I soon realized she was not alone. She brought a bunny, which she held and spoke to as if it were her baby. In fact at the church, she asked if she could rock her “baby” in the nursery rocking chair! Although it seemed odd to have a bunny visit church, the children were thrilled! As the service began, the lady and the bunny settled on a back pew.

The service went a little longer than usual, and the visitor and the bunny became restless. The woman let go of the animal. The children noticed the creature hopping under the pews and wanted to catch the bunny to help the new lady.

The visiting missionaries continued to talk while the children walked up and down between the rows. Each time they got near the rabbit, it hopped under the pew to a different row. We finally closed the service in prayer, rounded up the bunny, and returned our visitors to the motel.

Over the next couple of days, I assisted the same lady with various needs, including taking her to an impound lot

where her van had been towed, and paying so she could repossess her personal items, which had also been impounded. The lady tearfully asked if I would help because the boxes, which contained her library, also held her only picture of her mom.

I was not sure where she would keep her possessions as she did not have a home and now her van was not roadworthy. After transferring about 25 boxes of books to my van, I realized we had a mutual hobby of collecting books!

I did not understand all of her needs, but it was true that in the midst of hundreds of books was a framed picture of her mom. And although I was out quite a few dollars, I was glad I had helped.

Through our interactions over the next few days, I realized my new friend probably suffered from an untreated mental illness—and at one point I felt my safety and well-being were threatened.

Through this situation and others, I realized we could not be all things to all people. Although we wanted to extend a hand to all, perhaps there were better ways to help vulnerable people. We started building partnerships in the community with faith organizations and social service agencies.

Sometimes on a district, churches become labeled as difficult places to serve, for reasons such as location or existing leadership. As I examined the culture and demographics surrounding the Collingwood Church more closely, I came to believe the struggle was not solely a *local* church problem.

The reason the congregation was small was not because the leaders had erred from not achieving the right vision statement or had not received support from the district. They had a good vision statement and had received ample support from the district in recent years.

Erie Street Community Church existed in a community that was broken and was fractured spiritually. As the new pastor, I felt we needed to better understand the community we were reaching, and I believed God was asking His people to come together and tackle the mission.

Collingwood was not “just another difficult place to serve” on the district, but was a community greatly in need of Christ’s light. The spiritual darkness sometimes associated with places in other countries’ mission fields was becoming more evident at “home.” The faithful few who remained were discouraged, beleaguered from the battle, and perhaps needed some guidance to understand the demographics, spiritual climate, and culture around them.

In a June 2013 article on Christianity.com, researcher and missiologist Ed Stetzer wrote, “Missiology is accomplished at the intersection of gospel, culture, and the church. It is a multi-disciplinary study that incorporates theology, anthropology/sociology, and ecclesiology.”

Until this time, the Church of the Nazarene in Collingwood might have been in danger of misinterpreting the times in regards to mission. The area was once saturated by Methodism, primarily through work of approximately 25 denominations that planted and cared for more than 40 congregations.

Because of this background, there was an underlying myth that our area was “evangelized.” The church facilities remained, but they were now more a remnant of history rather than a reality of devoutness to faith. Fewer and fewer residents associated with a church. On any given residential street on a Sunday morning, one family might leave their driveway to attend church.

Spiritual alignment to the Christian faith is in decline in Canada. The rise of the “nones,” those who do not profess any faith, is taking hold, especially among younger generations. We need to understand that the church must respond as if this were any mission field. Otherwise, there is a danger that pastors and lay people will grow weary tackling surface issues such as low attendance, youth leaving the church, and minimal response to invitations sent to the neighbourhood.

From this perspective, Erie Street Community Church began to partner with Christ-centered ministries to reach the mission field in our community.

There was also little connection between the area churches for a foundation to work together. So several ministers from sister denominations felt the church could share an outreach focus. We shared the same mission—a desire to reach the lost for Christ and to be Christ’s light in our community. Perhaps by working more together, we could show our enemy, the encroaching darkness, and the community that we were a united front through Christ’s power.

So the Collingwood faith community initiated One Community, a group of area churches that shared a

Christ-centered ministry of caring for others, so we could build bridges to our community and reach the lost for Christ.

The leaders of One Community wanted to raise the church's visibility and to provide avenues for local families to again look to the church as a helpful resource and a place where they could be nurtured in the Christian faith if they desired.

One Community initiated shared events including an annual outreach Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas outreach dinner and toy give-away, clothing drives, several free fun zones on holiday weekends, shared VBS programming for children, and outreach youth groups in new neighbourhoods. Erie Street Community Church initiated a weekly soup kitchen, Souper Tuesdays, for people who were alone or in need.

Through these programs, One Community built a bridge to the social housing areas in town, earning the trust of the residents, and gaining respect from agencies and town officials—which opened new avenues of service and ministry.

Families and individual lives have been touched through these efforts. We had opportunities to pray with people, as with our friend Jill, and to walk alongside families as they connected with a local ministry or as we simply saw them in the area. One of the side blessings was that some participants volunteered and are now serving their own neighbourhoods.



The Lord opened doors for Erie Street to partner with social agencies that cared for the underprivileged and did it far better and with greater resources than those of us at a local church like Erie Street could on our own.

Over time, I had the opportunity to extend a hand to local councils and agencies. In 2010, I began serving on the board for the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity South Georgian Bay. I connected with people who were eager to serve the underprivileged, but most lived in upscale homes and did not have the connection we had with the people we served. We helped them better understand the people they were serving and building homes for.

In 2011, I was asked to serve on a council for the United Way South Georgian Bay. This work would be another missions bridge from the church to the community. As I met with several agencies, I saw other leaders in our community who were acting as the “hands and feet of Jesus.” There were good people doing great things in our community. We wondered how we as the church, a redeemed people, could come alongside these agencies and do what Christ’s love compels us to do in Matthew 25:35, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in...”

We continued to increase our partnerships and Christian presence in town, participating in housing and food security councils. As we assisted families, we learned how to navigate the family court system and advocate for those in need of support.

After a time, the local child protection agency recognized our support to area families. At one point in a meeting, a worker asked, "What is it you do that makes such a difference? I have been involved in this person's life for 20 years and have never seen her take steps forward until now!"

I smiled and gave praise to the Lord, knowing the Spirit of Christ was at work in the life of the lady we were assisting.

As we reached out in practical ways, Jesus made a difference in the lives of the people in our community, and this was a witness of God's presence, even to government workers. Some people we assisted came to faith. We chose to help all, not knowing if they would respond to their spiritual need or not.

As our advocacy involvement increased, I regularly attended family meetings at the child protection office, and the workers joked about setting up a desk for us there! I believe the Lord ordained me to be there one particular day. While I attended a family meeting, a lady lost consciousness in another office area. A worker called for a first aid responder or a doctor, while others frantically called 911. I ran to the woman and mentioned I was trained in first aid.

Initially the prognosis did not look promising. The lady appeared to be taking her final breaths. Her coworkers gathered around her, distraught, and I prayed to God to know what to say. All of the coworkers supporting the lady were very capable people, used to being in control of difficult situations. But now they were at the mercy of something greater. I pondered if this was the right place to pray aloud.

Putting my qualms aside, I laid hands on the lady and asked God, in Jesus' name, to help her.

Although I prayed in faith, inwardly I thought these might be the final words the woman would hear. As we awaited the emergency medical service (EMS), I continued to pray, while checking the status of her airway, knowing we would have to initiate CPR as her breath halted.

While I was praying I noticed she was taking a little breath, then another. She began to breathe more deeply and was semi-conscious when the EMS arrived.

Later in the day, I visited the local emergency room to see if the woman was admitted and if she had recovered. As I went to her bed, where she was fully awake, I introduced myself to her and her husband.

"What happened?" she asked me.

I was surprised that the doctors had not explained her circumstances to her yet.

I told her I was at her workplace when the emergency occurred, likely a severe seizure had stopped her breathing, and I had prayed with her.

She and her husband teared up. I was surprised when she told me that she and her husband had started attending church recently. Medically speaking, only the Lord knows what occurred, but I believe the Lord revealed His presence and power in a very timely way and it came through our commitment to offer His presence in unlikely places in our community.

Although our congregation is still small, the ministry of Erie Street Community Church has matured from being a

small outpost of faithful members doing all they can to keep the doors open to a ministry steadily gaining influence and regularly called upon to assist the community. Local social service agencies, the mayor, other municipal councillors (COUN-sel-lohrs), and the Member of Parliament for the federal government have contacted the church while it has maintained a stand for Christ and the biblical principles we follow.

As the church prepares to “reevangelize” areas where we may have lost ground, let’s remember that God does not change. His power and presence is still with us. As we look to Him and faithfully serve, He will work through us and will reveal His glory around us.



## 6

# *Work & Witness Near Home*

Erie Street Community Church continued to reach out to the neighbourhood. Local groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers, used the facility for community programming. We had an ongoing need to update the facility on a limited budget and make it more welcoming. Although the building was mortgage free—a blessing received from the faithfulness of God’s people in the past—it was challenging to care for a facility that had originally been built for a much larger congregation. As we invested time and finances into these efforts, we recognized other area Nazarene churches were in similar circumstances.

We were familiar with Work & Witness projects overseas and wondered if a similar program could be offered in our area. On our own, we upgraded our facility little by little, adding color to the whitewashed walls and changing some of the ’70s décor, making it more visually palatable for members of our church and community. We had thought

at one time what a great help it would have been to have a Work & Witness team join us. It opened our eyes to the need for Work & Witness at home.

In 2009, Darryl and I and our children travelled to Orlando, Florida, USA, to attend the General Assembly for the Church of the Nazarene, where I served as a NMI delegate for the Canada Central District. While we were there, we attended a seminar hosted by Work & Witness, which encouraged teams to serve in Canada and the USA.

I was encouraged by this focus, as it had been on my heart before General Assembly. When we entered the room, we recognized a new pastor, Rev. Larry Leonard from Georgian Bay Zone, near home!

We sat together; and as we listened to the Work & Witness presenter and the Canada NMI Global representative, Pastor Larry asked if it was possible for a team to come to their church. Darryl leaned forward and told Larry we would come!

At home, the Nazarene churches we pastored were on the same zone and geographically about 90 kilometres (56 miles) apart. Now in a room in Orlando, Collingwood was arranging to take a team to Owen Sound, Ontario. Larry testified later that this was an answer to prayer as his small congregation had begun to fix the crumbling foundation and damp basement in a 150-year-old structure. They were overwhelmed by the amount of work and cost of the repairs.

A few months later, in Fall 2009, we took the first team from Collingwood to Owen Sound and assisted with

renovations. We took another team the following March and again in the fall of 2010.

Although our local churches were not used to helping another local church in this way, nor was the receiving church familiar with hosting a team, it proved beneficial to both congregations. Both were blessed by the giving and receiving, as meals were shared and new friendships were formed.

Pastor Larry testified to the Lord working in more miraculous ways as the tasks were completed. When the church ordered a new sign to improve the appearance of the grounds, Larry mentioned to Darryl that they needed an electrician, but funds were low. Darryl relayed the need to an electrician, Ken Parkin, who was a member of the Markdale Church of the Nazarene, but did not mention the conversation to Larry.

One day Larry was on the phone with the stonemason who had constructed the beautiful new church sign. Larry was praying that God would send an electrician because the sign could not be finished until it was wired properly. While Larry was on the phone, feeling anxious about not having an electrician, he walked out the door to look at the sign, and standing on the front steps was Ken Parkin! Ken volunteered many hours and became an important member of the local Work & Witness team.

Another miracle was the new kitchen. Five donors provided appliances and cupboards. Despite an unusual floor layout and uneven ceiling heights, everything fit perfectly, as if it had been measured for a customized kitchen.

The roof of the Owen Sound Church also badly needed repair. Once again, God had a plan for the little church. Pastor Larry and his family were driving home after church one Sunday when a car crossed the highway median in front of them. The car spun and abruptly stopped in the ditch. Larry had immediately slammed on his breaks to avoid a collision. A truck behind them stopped to ensure that the Leonards and occupants of the car in the ditch were fine. Larry introduced himself to the truck driver.

“Your church is the one that needs a new roof!” the stranger replied.

Surprised, Larry agreed. The man was a roofer; and from this chance meeting in the Lord’s timing, the roofer offered his company’s services. A few months later while Pastor Larry was away at a zone pastors’ meeting, he received a phone call. The roofer had brought his crew and replaced the plywood and shingles on part of the steep roof at no cost.

Along with God’s provision for their facility, Pastor Larry testifies that the Owen Sound Church has witnessed miracles within its congregation since he was called there. He does not understand why their church families, including his own, have battled against the enemy like he has not seen in 35 years of previous ministry. However, the Lord has been faithful, and through His remarkable touch on their lives, many families in their growing church have testified to experiencing the Lord’s power in a personal way.

The testimony of the Owen Sound Church is a reminder to God’s people, He is present in our midst.



*For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth  
to strengthen those whose hearts  
are fully committed to him . . . .*  
(2 Chronicles 16:9a)



## *Ephraim's Place*

*Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene*

*—Toronto, Ontario*

By Rev. Bill Sunberg

The fence is gone. And that is a big deal. You have no idea how big. Simply put, the missing fence is a testimony to the transforming power of God's grace. It is a testimony to the obedience and faith of God's people. It is a statement to the world around us that "all are welcome here."

The day the fence came down, I cried. I wasn't there when the fence was put up. But I am sure I would have cried then too.

Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene was once called St. Clair Church of the Nazarene. We were a city church on a busy street. If "location, location, location" really is important, we had it made.

But in 1966, St. Clair Church of the Nazarene moved out of the city to the suburbs, like many other churches in cities across North America. Our new location was not

much more than an empty field on the edge of town. With the change of location, we became Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene. Various reasons were given for the move. But all that matters now is that we left the city and all its issues—good and bad.

But the city came to us.

The empty fields were quickly filled with high apartment buildings and busy streets. Today, we are in one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in Toronto. Our immediate community is the most culturally diverse in a city known for its cultural diversity.

At some point a few decades ago, leadership decided that if Emmanuel could not put distance between the issues of the city around us and the church, we could at least put a fence between the city and the church.

So we built a fence. Eight feet high. All around the property. And it stood for years, dividing us from the people God had called us to serve.

When I arrived as the new pastor of Emmanuel Church of the Nazarene on January 2, 2005, the fence was still there. It had been cut in half. Now only a four-foot fence separated us from our neighbours. But the message was still the same: City on one side, church on the other.

I began to pray for God to tear down the fence. Both fences really. The one on our property...and the one in our hearts. Little did I know the magnitude of the events that would follow.

July 22, 2007, was the day everything changed. It was a Sunday morning and, as usual, my family was the first to arrive at church. But this time it was different. Police cars were parked in front of the church, and yellow police tape marked off areas across the street.

I opened the church door and turned off the alarm. My family members started setting up for church.

I went outside and introduced myself to an officer who was sitting in his car and writing a report. I asked him what was going on. He could not give many details, but he told me an 11-year-old boy was killed the night before while attending a birthday party.

I felt as if I had been kicked in the stomach.

*Surely not an 11-year-old boy. Surely not across the street from the church.*

When I went back to my office, my wife asked what I found out. I started to tell her but I couldn't form the words. I could only weep.

Everyone who arrived had the same questions, "Why the police? Why the yellow police tape?"

You could not get to our parking lot without seeing what was happening on our doorstep, just outside the fence.

It was an emotional Sunday for all of us. We had a guest speaker, Dr. Clair MacMillan, the national director for the Church of the Nazarene, Canada. His message was exactly what we needed to hear.

While I listened, I could not stop the tears from streaming down my cheeks. Toward the end of the message, an

usher handed me a note from a member. It simply said, “I think we need to be outside.”

I knew that person was right.

When Dr. MacMillan finished his message and called on me to close the service, I gave these simple instructions: “Today we are going to pray our final prayer outside. I invite everyone who will join me out to the street corner for our final prayer. Let’s stand on the sidewalk and hold hands and pray. No one will pray out loud. Let’s all just bow our heads and pray silently. You can pray for 2 minutes or 20 minutes. That is up to you. But God is calling us to the streets.”

So we walked out of the building, through the fence, and onto the street corner.

The traffic on our busy street stopped. There was a quiet hush of God’s presence poured out on His people. And the fence started coming down—in our hearts.

As we held hands and prayed, neighbours came out of their homes, crossed the street, and held hands with us. We prayed together for the first time. The church and the city. God’s people and the ones we are called to serve.

The changes began to happen. Even as we stood on the street, one of our senior members said, “I know now this is right where God wants us to be.”

This was one of the same men who had most resisted our community involvement. God was tearing down fences. The next day, we delivered food to our grieving neighbours.

Two days later at a scheduled meeting, our board voted to launch a new program for the youth in our community. It is currently led by dedicated leaders who grew up in the

Emmanuel Church family: Kevin Motiram (MOH-tah-rim) and John Toufankjian (too-FRANK-jin).

We have not looked back since. A community centre has taken root.

If you came to Emmanuel today, you would not recognize the place from before. It has become a hub of activity in our community. Here are some of the programs that have taken place in our community centre:

- **Role Model Moms.** A general equivalency diploma (GED) program for moms who dropped out of high school or who have immigrated to Canada and need to upgrade their education. About 20 moms meet at the centre 5 days a week with a full-time teacher and child-care provided as they prepare to take their GEDs at the end of each semester.
- **Youth Basketball.** Through this program that runs each winter and spring, coaches teach basketball and life skills to public school youth and mentor the players.
- **Adopt a Block.** This program runs in spring, summer, and fall and reaches 200–300 homes each week. A group of people knock on community doors every Saturday morning to ask how they can serve the people doing work around the house or in the yard.
- **Project HeartCore.** A high school leadership development program that teaches the youth leadership skills. As part of the program, every student plans a community development event designed to meet needs of the surrounding community.

- **FEAT.** This after-school program is for children and youth who have a family member who is or has been incarcerated. The program provides everything from fun activities to homework assistance to the emotional support they need.
- **Refresh.** A program involving neighbours helping neighbours by painting their home interiors then working together to meet other community needs. The program started in our neighbourhood and has grown. In 2015, Refresh expanded to six communities throughout the Greater Toronto Area. Refresh has a powerful transformational effect on every host neighbourhood.

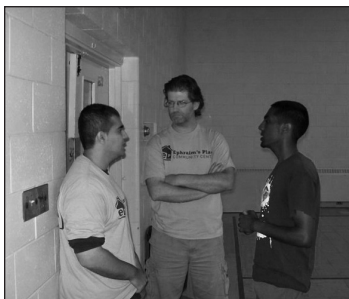
Motiram, the director of the community centre, Ephraim's Place, tells about one missions experience during Refresh when the church was painting in the Toronto Flemingdon Park neighbourhood.

I was amazed at how such a culturally diverse community was so open to a church group. I thought it was probably the most receptive neighbourhood we have ever painted in, even though it was one of the most diverse culturally. We were meeting families of all faiths and backgrounds who showed great kindness to us. One family of a Middle Eastern faith in particular stood out to me. This family knew the group painting their home was from a Nazarene church. When we were done the oldest daughter thanked us and said, 'I wish there were more Christians who did stuff like this.' Our

project was not about paint, but about changing lives. The process of becoming more like Christ is a wonderful journey to be on.

- **Other programs:** summer day camps, after-school drop-in centre, other after-school programs, employment services support, and whatever else we can do to reach across the cultural boundaries in missions.

Our community centre is an active place. It was incorporated as a separate organization in 2009. After much discussion, we named our community centre Ephraim's Place for two reasons. First, Ephraim (EF-rim) Brown was the name of the 11-year-old boy who died the day we stood on the street corner and prayed. We wanted to remember the day we started holding hands with our neighbours and to make sure Ephraim was not forgotten.



*John Toufankjian, Bill Sunberg,  
and Kevin Motiram in  
Ephraim's Place.*

Second, Ephraim was one of the two sons born to Joseph while in Egypt (Genesis 48). New life was born out of captivity. The name Ephraim means “blessing from adversity.” And that is what our community centre has been.

One of the things that makes Ephraim's Place Community Centre (EPCC) possible is the variety of partnerships we enjoy with organizations in our community. The perfect



example is our gym. In 2014, our gym was renovated by the Labourers International Union of North America (LIUNA), Local 506. The gym hadn't been renovated since it was built in 1966. Same floor. Same basketball hoops. Same storage. Same kitchen. And it was falling apart. Floor tiles often came loose while kids played basketball or volleyball. The kitchen was old and barely functional.

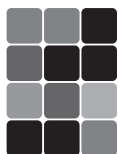
But our city councillor is one of our big supporters. She started a series of events that brought Local 506 into our building. They completely gutted the gym and kitchen and rebuilt it from the ground up—well over \$100,000 in investment at no cost to us. This is an example of the kinds of partnerships God has blessed us with—from corporations to unions to politicians to other charitable organizations.

About the fence.

On Saturday, April 18, 2015, part of our Faith Promise weekend was to spend the afternoon serving our community. We knocked on doors and asked people if we could serve them. We raked leaves. We carried furniture to the dumpsters. We cleaned. We washed windows. We did whatever people needed us to do.

Then when we finished working in the community, we came back to the church—and removed the fence. People from the church and community worked together to remove the chain links. It came down without much fanfare. Mostly because the fences in our hearts had already been long gone. It had been a long journey.

The day the fence came down, I cried. Blessing has truly come from adversity.



8

## *LAMP: Canada Pacific Mentoring Leaders for Future Generations*

By Rev. Lorna Bartram

It all began one Saturday morning at 6:00 a.m.

I couldn't believe it. Not only was it Saturday, it was also 6:00 a.m., and one of those rare Saturdays when I had nothing in particular on the day's agenda. Simply put, it was the wrong time of day on the wrong day of the week for anything to invade my mind, roll around, and park itself there—much less an idea, dream, vision that I sensed was coming directly from the Lord.

Despite my efforts to quiet the thoughts tumbling around in my head and go back to sleep, I finally got up, scoured the house for the largest piece of paper I could find—the back of a giant monthly desk calendar—and started to write the thoughts that kept coming.

After two hours of writing, charting, and graphing, I had a rather large framework for what we now call LAMP

(Leadership And Mentoring Program) on the Canada Pacific District.

As the statistics show us, in Canada young people are leaving the church. As our current members age and are not able to do the same activities they did when they were younger, this brings a concern for the future of missions. We must build the church so it is able to carry out missions tasks near and far. And to build the church up for missions, we need to mentor not only other adults, but also younger people.

That's where LAMP comes in—as a mentoring tool.

The LAMP framework was, and is, being built upon an intergenerational foundation with its essential purpose being to preserve our “generations” for Christ and His church. To that end, we have engaged in a number of intentional ministry programs to develop leaders and to assist our children, preteens, teens, young adults, and adults—of all ages and stages—to understand that each of them is a uniquely gifted individual and is, in fact, a leader, because everybody leads somebody sometime.

The idea that each of us influences another is one of the pillars of LAMP. Our leadership team believes in individuals understanding the scope of their influence and being aware of their unique strengths, built upon a foundation of commitment and obedience to Christ. As a result, they will feel a natural, God-ordained desire to be an essential part of the church. This desire will include fulfilling whatever role, capacity, or place of service the Lord calls them to—within and outside the body of believers—and to do so with great faith and faithfulness.

It is important to note that the Lord gave us a *framework* for LAMP, as opposed to a step-by-step ministry plan. LAMP is not a plan, method, or model that is superimposed on a group, local church, or at the district level. In fact, we have resisted forming that type of plan. We exist to serve the Lord and the church and to meet the needs that are unique to our context and situation. This means we deliberately wait on the Lord to fill in the next steps, to open the road before us, and to build this ministry under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes that process has taken us through deep water, and we have had to discern the positive insights we can gain through a particular situation or experience.

But on this journey, we have also gained amazing insights, particularly in our work with teens and young adults. One of those insights has led us to develop what we call “Faith First,” an intentional front-end presentation of the gospel at all LAMP gatherings, borne out of “on the ground” experience.

We have sensed that a type of spiritual vacuum has been developing over many years in the lives of some of the youth involved in our churches, and therefore on our district. There seems to be a great need to solidify their understanding of essential biblical concepts, scripture, and foundational elements of faith. This has led us to lower the participation age in the LAMP program to the preteen level in order to more fully engage in the mentoring and spiritual guiding process.

While, as I mentioned, LAMP is driven by different ministry needs in different areas and is reactive to the needs

of those to whom we minister, as of the summer of 2015 the LAMP ministry has included:

- **Prayer Partners**—individuals across the district commit to pray for LAMP. We encourage this foundational necessity every chance we get.
- **LAMP Girls**—an annual weekend focusing on what we call small “m” mentoring versus what we would call large “M” mentoring, which is formal and structured. Relationship-building is key, and the fundamental questions are explored: “Who am I, and who defines me?” The idea is to help young women define themselves with God as their central focus; we are there to support our young women, their families, and their local churches, seeking to help them navigate the challenging waters of adolescence.
- **LAMP Base**—a space to call home for the LAMP ministry. Physical space where people can gather fosters identity and increases the ability to make and build connections. There is great potential in having an accessible, convenient place that supports the purposes of a given ministry. The LAMP Base allows for assessment, review, development, prayer, and planning. This space was made possible through the collective support of local and district ministries. I think this is important to note: Be encouraged by the potential ministry development that is within your grasp when partnering together toward a common goal.

- **Ministry Festival 2015**—We invited Dr. Joel Thiessen (TEE-sin), associate professor of sociology at Ambrose University, Calgary, Canada, and Helen Webster Thies-sen, our Canadian NYI field representative, to help us learn how to better pass on the faith.
- **LAMP@Charis**—This weekend focuses on individual spiritual well-being. The goal for this weekend is two-fold—to present a clear message of the gospel to participants and to encourage them to respond to God’s call on their lives. The weekend training also prepares workers for service in summer ministry programs. LAMP leaders work with teens, their parents, and pastors to place individuals in church and district summer ministry programs.

As we contemplate the changing missions landscape in Canada, I’ve discovered the book *Lost and Found*, written by Canadian National Director Clair MacMillan to be timely and helpful. In the book, he highlights a portion of the life story of Velma and Henry Adams between the years 1911 to 1944. Those were pretty tough years in society and in the fledgling days of the Church of the Nazarene in Canada. They were full of challenge with a shifting cultural and church landscape, something we often note today. He addresses several spiritual matters in the book that are as relevant today as we pursue mission as they were then.

1. The incredible impact that interpersonal relationships have on our lives, including chance meetings and apparent life “coincidences.”
2. The impact of early life experiences and the potential of what appear to be small, incidental, or happenstance choices in life that turn or set direction we never anticipated.
3. The impact of emotional scars—especially hurt, bitterness, and anger—and their power on faith and faithfulness to Christ and His church as we journey through life’s sorrows, losses, failures, and more.
4. The common cry and fundamental need of every person to belong, to be loved, and to matter.
5. The necessity of choosing “whom you will serve”—this never gets old.
6. The pressure to conform to the crowd for the sake of acceptance, inclusion, and even personal advancement.
7. Putting trust to the test—something actually changes in us when reality strikes and we are put to the test. Do we remain faithful?

I was struck by these essential realities and how common they are to all of us, regardless of the generation, the decade, or the century in which we live. There are spiritual turning points in everyone’s life, and there are essential spiritual questions that clearly transcend history. This fundamental truth should encourage us as we navigate what appears to be an increasingly secular cultural landscape.

On our district, one of the avenues through which we address these transcendent spiritual questions is through the LAMP ministry. We are called to enter into these opportunities with our children, teens, and young adults. If we stop and look below the surface at the essential needs of each person's heart, we are reminded that regardless of the period in history and regardless of the culture or the barriers or the changes that engulf us, there are common spiritual matters that can and must be our focus as we minister.

You don't have to follow a model, method, or program to minister. First and foremost be obedient and seek to share Christ's love with others as the Lord leads. Too often we seem to have a murky grasp of what discipleship means, but be encouraged to follow where you are led. Keep the faith and pass it on.

Be cautious that the method and the means of ministry do not become the message—do not become stuck there. Get stuck on listening to the Spirit's voice. Get stuck on obedience. Get stuck on doing what that means for you. Align your thoughts and actions with scripture; pray, listen, use all of the tools available; and vet your sense of calling with others.

If you aren't totally sure but you think maybe you are supposed to do something, and it's a good thing, then go forward. You don't need to fit into someone else's method or model before you minister. Don't fall prey to that crippling idea. The *message* is the key, and you may very well be the one to unlock the door that leads someone to the Lord and helps keep him or her there.



Ultimately you and I only answer to the Lord. We *can* move beyond ourselves; we *can* move forward; we *can* take steps of faith by using what's in our own hands and hearts. You have something to offer others and the Lord, so do it, because you never know what will happen on a Saturday morning when you least expect it.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

(Romans 12:1-2)



## 9

# *The Challenge of the Changing Landscape*

How will the church respond to sharing the gospel in our communities today in an increasingly secularized society while confronted with spiritual pluralism? How do we fulfill the Great Commission in fields both near and far?

On the USA/Canada Region, districts and pastors are fulfilling the Great Commission, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

We respond in faith. In churches, both large and small, NewStarts and ReStarts, God’s power and presence is here. We know this by the testimonies of our people. God is writing His story through our lives, and we are beacons in the darkness, shining and leading people to Jesus. We can

move forward expectantly in the power of Christ into our mission fields.

As we take hold of this truth, the church must be challenged to raise people who will lead the church into the future. Rev. Kathy Mowry (MOHR-ee), a professor of intercultural studies (missiology) and Christian education at Trevecca Nazarene University, USA, challenged Nazarene Missions International district leaders to provide opportunities for our young people to serve. The young people are not apathetic to missions; on the contrary, they are eager to participate in missions when they are challenged.

Make space for youth on local and district councils, and let them build the vision of how to make disciples in the nations. Let their ideas take root, and run with them. If we don't do this, they may turn to other opportunities of service. Let's raise a new generation of leaders by involving our youth and young adults in mission work at home and abroad. Let's give them meaningful and creative ways to serve people in the name of Christ. As we involve them, God will give them a heart for missions at home and abroad.

At Erie Street Community Church, Thomas, the young lad who came to Kidz Time with boundless energy and giggles, came to faith along with his parents. Through the years, he has, along with others his age from our church, taken a public stand for Christ in his schools and community. Now between the ages of 18-20, these young adults all serve the local church in various roles. In summer 2015, Thomas went on a Swaziland Go Team, a missions trip with Canada Central District, and is preparing to go again. He also helps

lead the outreach youth ministry in the neighbourhood on Erie Street.

Youth and young adults are being matched with mentors to develop leadership skills and become effective partners in the mission both near and far, through an initiative on the Canada Pacific District.

Let us be faithful answering God's call to missions by crossing cultures with His gospel and to make disciples, both near and far.

# Act On It

- As some cultures become increasingly secularized, many people and churches are tempted to abandon any efforts for reaching their neighborhoods and world for Christ. What steps can you, as an individual, take to help your church share the gospel?
- In the book, we are encouraged to fulfill the Great Commission in fields both near and far. Perhaps that means assuring the needs of cultures other than your own are met. Have you, as an individual or a church, done this?
- Are there “fences” (whether tangible or “of the heart”) that need to be torn down? Consider how the presence of these obstacles causes others to be unwilling to see how Jesus can make a difference in their lives. Pray, asking God to show you what those fences are and how best they can be removed.
- As an individual, be obedient and seek to share Christ’s love with others as the Lord leads.
- As your church serves your community, be sure your message outshines your method. Align your thoughts and actions with scripture; pray, listen, use all of the tools available; and vet your sense of calling with others.
- God is writing His story through our lives. How can you as an individual or as a church, respond in faith within the context of your community.

- The author mentions that we should raise people who will lead the church into the future by providing opportunities for young people to serve. How can you help involve young people in the mission of God? Do you affirm children and youth in and around your church? Do you ask their opinions and use their ideas, giving them creative ways to serve people in the name of Christ? Does your church match youth and young adults with mentors to develop leadership skills and become effective partners in the mission both near and far?

While Canada has frequently sent Nazarene missionaries abroad, the country's open immigration policy has created an influx of new opportunities for ministry at home. According to 2011 demographic statistics, international immigrants born outside Canada make up almost 50 percent of the population.

As Canada becomes more diverse, the result is a beautiful mosaic across the land. This mosaic offers new disciple-making opportunities for the Church of the Nazarene in Canada, both near and far.



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