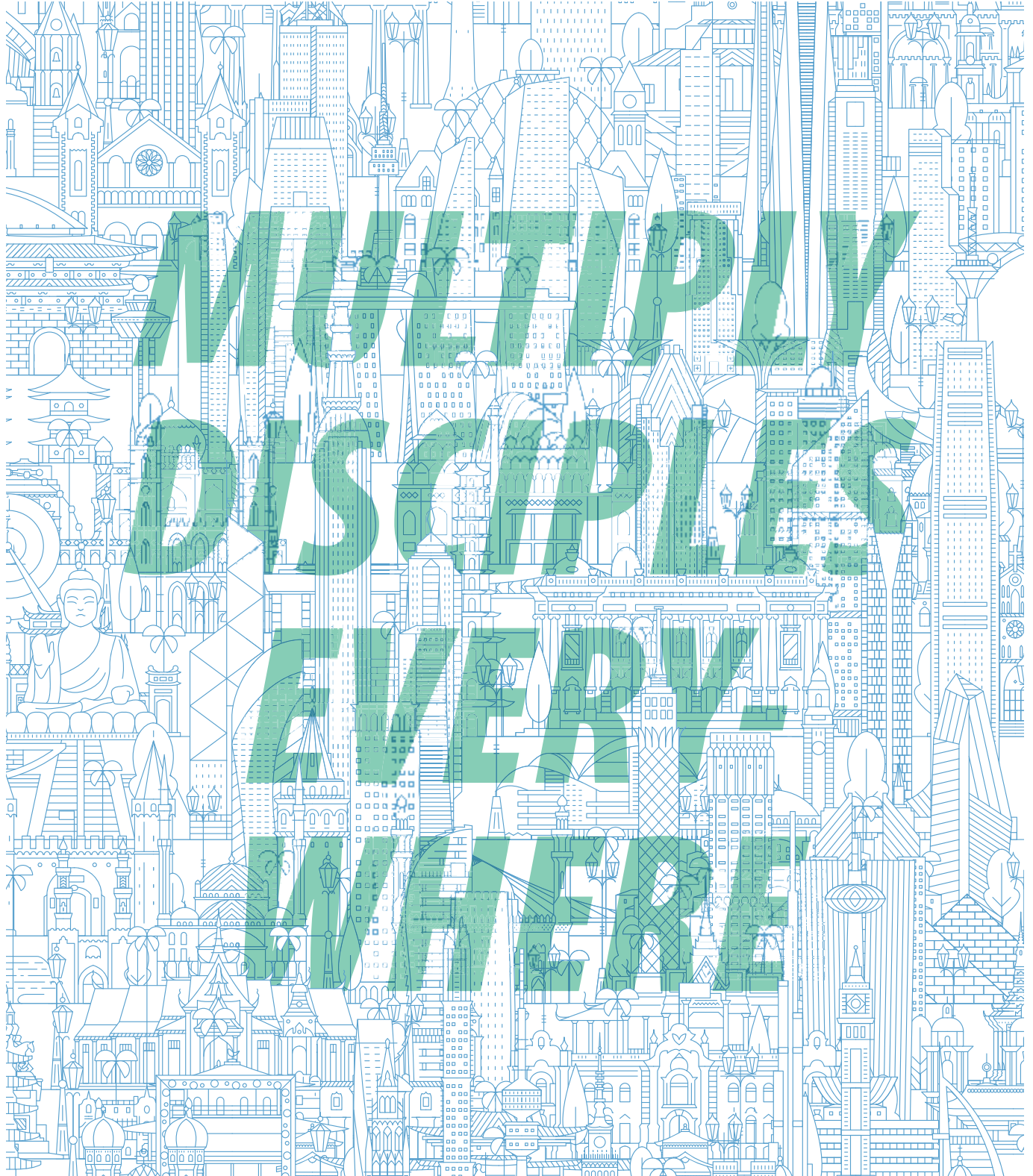


A L L I A N C E

Fall 2024

Connection



ALLIANCE *Connection*

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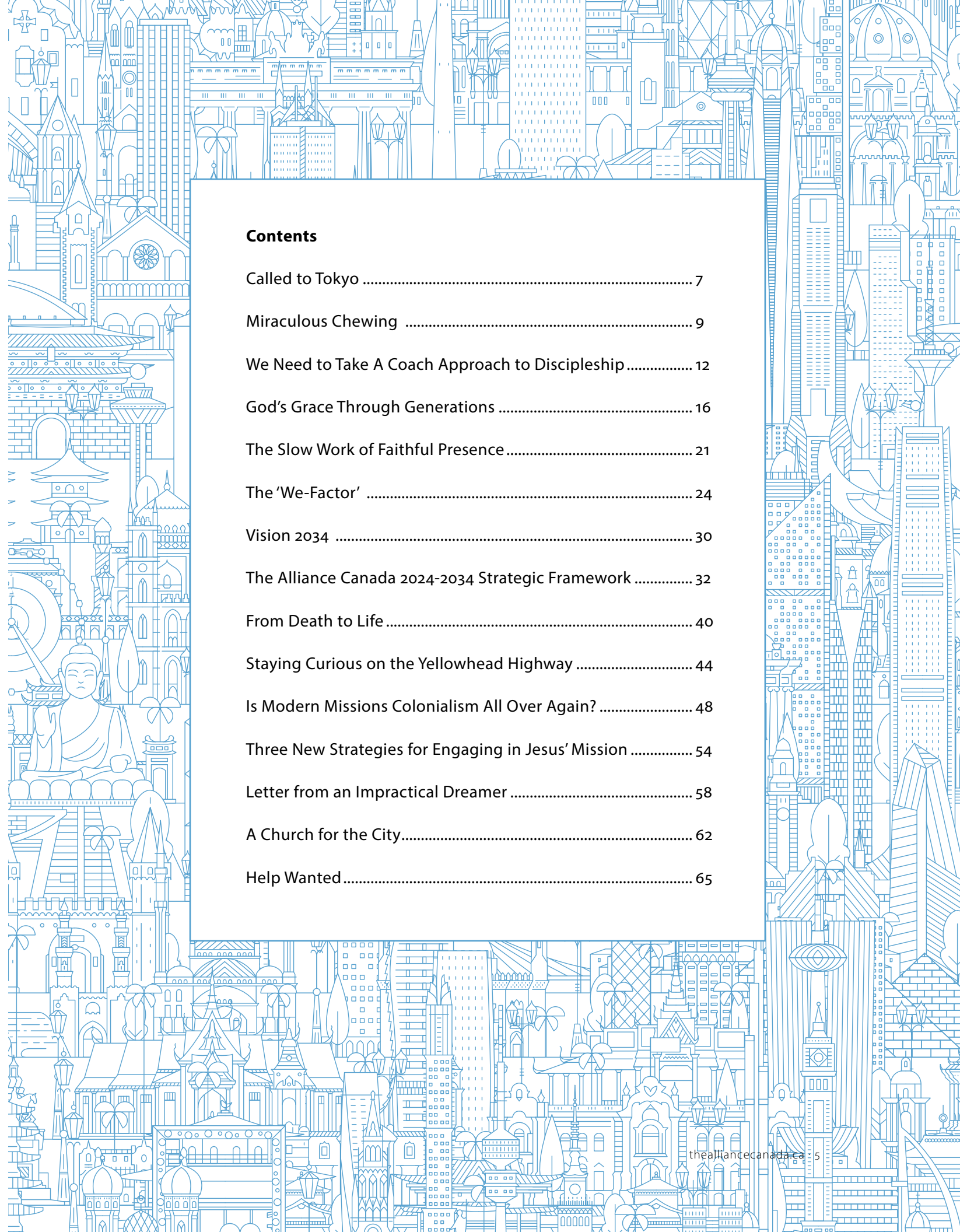
**O God, with all our hearts, we long for You.
Come, transform us to be Christ-centred,
Spirit-empowered,
Mission-focused people,
multiplying disciples everywhere.**

Vision Prayer





THREE NEW STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING IN JESUS' MISSION | pg 54



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Called to Tokyo

Katsaire Zee

If you asked me ten years ago what I would imagine myself doing today, the answer definitely wouldn't have been living halfway across the world in the Land of the Rising Sun. My calling to cross-cultural missions didn't happen in an instant. It took the planting of many seeds in my heart throughout the seasons of my life, over the span of about ten years.

My calling to cross-cultural missions didn't happen in an instant. It took the planting of many seeds in my heart throughout the seasons of my life

Even after sensing the Lord's leading into cross-cultural mission, I still had a lot of questions. What could God use me for? I didn't fit into the "normal" international worker route. In fact, I felt like I had nothing to offer. As I wrestled with God, He reminded me of a passage in 1 Samuel 15. God does not delight in what I bring to the table, or what I can give Him; He simply desires my obedience. I stopped asking whether or not He had called me to missions; He calls all of us to make disciples of all nations. The question was whether or not I was willing to obey Him, even if that meant allowing Him to lead me half way across the world.

渋谷区

Shibuya, Japan

Photo courtesy of Katsaire Zee

I had no clarity with regard to a people group or type of ministry, so I embarked on a two-year apprenticeship with the Alliance, trusting Him to lead me to the answers I needed. I visited three teams doing three very different types of work over those two years. In the process, I learned more about how God has wired me, and how the experiences I've had were all ways He was preparing me. I first thought He might call me to cross-cultural work in a developing country, helping the poor within a Muslim context. This seemed to be the trend of the missions movement at the time. Through my apprenticeship God opened my eyes to see that He calls us to the spiritually poor, not just the materially poor. God has gifted each one of us differently, and He helped me realize that I didn't have to fit in with whatever cross-cultural mission trend I had imagined.

Tokyo was one of the places I visited during my apprenticeship. I'd visited Japan a few times for vacation before, and I would have never thought God would call me there. As I spent time in Tokyo, the Lord began to open my eyes to see the spiritual need. I had the opportunity to share a bit about my own journey with some Japanese believers, and it was encouraging to see that they found my experiences relatable.

Growing up as a first-generation Chinese Canadian, I wasn't taught or given space to verbalize emotions. It wasn't until walking through Deeper Life material in my district that I realized I had been carrying a lot of unresolved hurt and pain. The Japanese culture is similar in that people are often encouraged to suppress their emotions. They are taught not to stand out in order to maintain harmony. As I learned more about their culture, I felt the Lord was asking me to be His vessel here in Tokyo to create a safe space for people to process emotions and access the healing and freedom offered to us through Christ. I'd received access to the Father's healing

in my own life, and He invited me to come and share that gift with the Japanese here.

The Lord also opened many doors for me to make friends in Tokyo. In most cases, I am their first, and perhaps only, Christian friend. Tokyo is a busy city and the greater metropolitan area has a population of about 37 million (nearly the population of all of Canada). In such a highly populated area, there is so little Christian presence. The Japanese are the second most unreached people group in the world, and there are still many who have not heard the Good News.

Though they are few in number, God allowed me to see a glimpse of what He was doing through small pockets of Christ-followers during my apprenticeship. Our Heavenly Father has not forgotten about the Japanese. I never imagined I'd wind up serving Him in Japan, but I count it a privilege to join Him in what He is doing here. †

Kat is an International Worker in Japan. She enjoys eating, hiking, running, exploring new places, and recently picked up freediving while living in Southeast Asia. She has tasted the goodness of the Father's feast and desires to invite others to that table, to receive the abundance that Jesus offers.

Visit thealliancecanada.ca/gift/kat/ to prayerfully and financially partner with Katsaire Zee.



Miraculous Chewing

Nikki Howell

“This is incredible! I just can't believe it! God is miraculously at work!”

My colleague's voice quivered with emotion on the video recording. As a doctor in West Africa for more than a decade, she had seen plenty of tough cases. She had asked me to consult on a patient as a Speech Language Pathologist. What had my colleague so ecstatic? Our nine-year-old patient was... chewing.

A school-aged child performing a simple motor skill typically learned before the first year of age isn't usually noteworthy, let alone miraculous. However, my colleague and I understood the context. He had suffered a massive stroke six months prior, and he lost many motor, sensory, and cognitive functions as a result. When I visited him three months after the stroke he was on a liquid diet, he was severely undernourished, and he was at risk of aspiration (food entering his airway instead of his esophagus). Furthermore, he was bed-ridden. He couldn't stand independently, or even take a single step.

His heartwarming half-smile won me over instantly. I gave his parents some tips on how to safely feed their son, and I tried to encourage them. I could see how much they were selflessly serving and sacrificing for the sake of their disabled son. We prayed over him for his healing in Jesus' name.

The next time I visited, several months later, I was shocked to see the young boy swiftly walking around their shared yard, his uneven gait hardly slowing him down. But even more significant for me was the progress in his oral-motor abilities.

In other words... chewing. This is because I not only knew the context; I also knew the stakes.

The ability to chew opens the door for so much progress in feeding. If he could chew, he could move on to solid foods and self-feeding, both of which have an impact on nutrition and independence, as well as protection from aspiration. His continued improvement this far out from a stroke also gave me hope that he might learn to communicate again, even though he was currently unable to speak. Can you see why we were so excited about the simple act of chewing?

God is teaching me to be content with doing the work he has placed in front of me at his pace, and trusting that in his eyes, it is significant.

When we think about our work as Christ followers, and more specifically, our role as international workers in Senegal, to 'multiply disciples everywhere,' we can easily get caught up in the size and speed of the task. It's understandable. We are well aware of the scale and urgency of the mission, and we long for seismic movements toward Christ. Our history includes massive revivals, but these are

not always how disciples are multiplied. The speed and size of the movement are not the only reasons to exclaim, "Incredible! Miraculous!"

God understands the context, and He knows the stakes. We may dismiss one conversation, act of service, or prayer as insignificant, but God sees deeper than we do. Just as my informed perspective allowed me to get excited about chewing progress, God, from his perfect perspective, knows full well how significant it was for this Fulani family (an unreached people group that

is 0.01% Christian) to be prayed over in Jesus' name. Even now they are witnessing the astounding, progressive healing of their son.

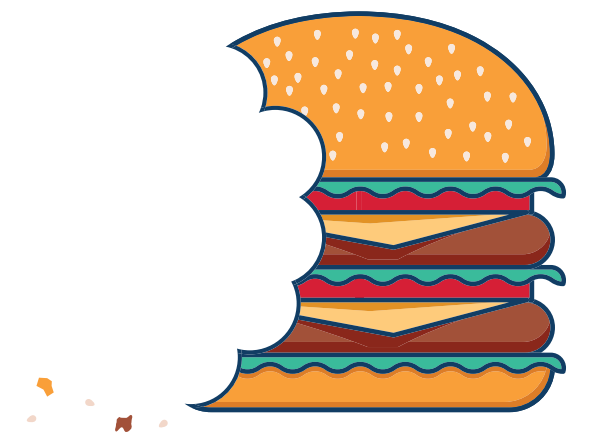
Even in other areas of my life where I feel like my impact is so small, the Holy Spirit reminds me of the context and the stakes. A group of women living in an impoverished fishing village attended weekly literacy classes, and learned for the first time how to write their own names. Might that be their first step toward knowing their true identity in Christ? Hearing-impaired students attend a Christian school for the deaf. Can the hard work of distinguishing between 'buh' and 'puh' move them toward an encounter with the God who sees (and hears) them?

Kingdom work, especially in the remaining unreached parts of the world, may not be marked by what we consider incredible or miraculous. Sometimes, it looks a lot more like... chewing. It might appear to be insignificant or mundane. But having a divine perspective of the context and the stakes helps us see more clearly, with eternity in mind. After all, as God reminded his servant sent to anoint a king, "the LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). In the gospels, Jesus emphasized a determining factor of who are ultimately welcomed by the Father to receive their eternal inheritance: whether or not they served the "least of these" in his name (Matthew 25). This kind of work is not flashy. It's not big and it's not swift. God is teaching me to be content with doing the work he has placed in front of me at his pace, and trusting that in his eyes, it is significant.

On a recent trip to Barcelona with my husband, I saw many of the works of Antoni Gaudí, a famous architect from the region, including the Sagrada Família. It is an enormous basilica still under construction to this day, almost one hundred years after Gaudí's death. When asked by his colleague if he was bothered that the project would not be finished in his lifetime, Gaudí responded that he was not. He knew that value would be added to his work by the collaboration of artists and masons not yet born, but even more importantly he knew who he was really working for. And, to quote Gaudí, "my client is not in a hurry."

Does knowing that God is not in a hurry inform how might you pray for the ongoing work among the hardest, least-reached places of the world? In what areas of your life do you see progress that might look like 'chewing?' Ask God to give you his divine perspective on the context and stakes that can transform your perspective. In all things give him the glory! ☩

Nikki Howell is an international worker in Senegal, West Africa. She and her husband, Mike, have lived there since 2021 with their three young sons: Todd, Oliver, and Pascal. They serve in Church Development and work primarily with the least-reached Wolof people group. You can support them by visiting: <https://thealliancecanada.ca/gift/mike-and-nikki/>



We Need to Take A Coach Approach to Discipleship

Kris Corbin

All I really need to know is what I learned in Sunday School. Or was that kindergarten? I grew up in a generation that still attended Sunday School. Long before I ever attended Bible College, small groups, or even church summer camp, I was being discipled. Flannelgraphs and Veggie Tales were foundational to the early years of my discipleship journey. I'm so incredibly thankful for the impact all these things had on my life.

I also had Sunday School teachers and youth leaders who believed in me. When I was young, they faithfully taught me the stories of Moses, David, and Jesus. As I matured, the lessons turned to more in-depth understanding of books like Song of Songs and Revelation (Yes, we were THAT youth group). That discipleship prepared me to go on short-term mission trips, to Bible College, and to eventually step into vocational ministry.

I stepped into camp ministry (and then pastoral ministry) in order to build into the next generation of disciples by passing on the good things I had received. I love sharing my affinity for the unique and often overlooked stories in the scriptures, like Elisha's bones raising a dead man to life (2 Kings 13). I also long for the next generation to know that God has called and uniquely gifted them to be disciples that make disciples – whether that's one day in full-time ministry, serving as international workers, or just being great

followers of Jesus in their schools, communities, places of work, and churches!

As we seek to disciple the next generations, we face a challenge. According to a recent parenting faith study from the EFC (Hiemstra & Callaway, 2023)¹, parents want to give their children a different experience of faith formation than what they received from their own parents. Christian parents are less inclined to “push” faith on their kids, opting to let them discover and explore faith on their own terms. They also attend church on a less regular basis. Meanwhile, the Barna Group reports that the next generation is spiritually open and questioning whether they can be leaders (Barna Group, 2022)².

We don't have to look very far to see that the ways we discipled previous generations won't cut it for future generations of disciples. Don't hear what I'm not saying. Sunday school, youth group, VBS, church camps, bible quizzing: All these things can and should still play a pivotal role in the discipleship journey of the next generation. But

¹ Hiemstra, R. & Callaway, L. (2023) Parenting Faith: Parental Faith Formation of Children in the Home. <https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/ParentingFaith>

² Barna Group. (2022). How Teens Around The World Can Make an Impact. The Open Generation. <https://www.barna.com/the-open-generation/open-to-impact/>



our approach to discipling the next generation in our churches needs to shift.

We often view discipleship as primarily the transfer of information. We love to quote Paul when he says, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV). We pass down our wisdom and experience in hopes that the person being discipled will look like the person doing the discipling. The person being discipled is sometimes seen as a project that is only complete when they look, think, and act just like the person doing the discipling.

What would happen if we stopped expecting the disciple-maker to make exact copies, and started encouraging them to see what's already inside the person they're discipling, coming alongside them, and drawing out their best as they follow Jesus? What if Paul's exhortation is a call to play the role of coach and mentor, rather than just a gatekeeper of right theology and a conduit for theological information transfer?

Practices like coaching and mentoring have been around for a long time in sports, and they continue to gain popularity in other areas of life, culture, and even business. What if we took a coach/mentor approach (coach approach) to discipling the next generation?”

I believe this approach to discipleship will be effective over the long-term for a few important reasons.

Firstly, taking a coach approach doesn't mean that we never share our wisdom or experiences (when appropriate). It means we believe that those we are leading have within themselves the capacity to steward their own discipleship journey.

By taking a coach approach, we help others through listening and asking questions to help give clarity and direction. Listening and asking questions is a posture modelled for us by Jesus himself. In the gospels, Jesus listened more than he talked. He asked 307 questions and he was asked 183 questions. He answered only 3.

The next generation has access to more information than they can consume in a lifetime. They don't lack information, but they need someone who can help them make sense of that information. Asking questions can help them think critically and biblically about what they are learning and how they are growing. Lasting change is more likely to happen when people take ownership. Why would this not be true of their own spiritual growth and development?

Secondly, coaching helps young leaders discover and apply their abilities. The coach approach does not rely solely on the disciple-maker to hear God on behalf of the disciple. Coaches come

alongside, ask questions, offer suggestions, and help discern what these leaders may be hearing. Then they help the disciple unpack where God is leading them.

They don't lack information, but they need someone who can help them make sense of that information.

The beauty of this approach is that it removes all the pressure from the coach/mentor/leader to do all the work, and from having to be an expert. A coach does not need to have all the answers. While it may seem faster and more effective to tell people what they need to do, the next generation of leaders is looking for people who will accompany them on the journey, pouring into them, and encouraging them as they grow as disciples.

Proverbs 20:5 captures this beautifully: “The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.”

As I consider the discipleship opportunities that a coach approach provides, I'm excited by the Envision Greenhouse Mentoring initiative. The program aims to provide diverse, young, Alliance leaders (18-28) with meaningful mentoring relationships, fostering growth and collaboration beyond the local context.

Greenhouse has two components. On the one side, we partner young leaders with experienced

mentors from our Alliance family for 12 weeks of one-on-one mentoring. Sometimes these mentors are Pastors and sometimes they are International Workers. The other part of the program is connecting these young leaders to peers from across Canada for online gatherings. These gatherings focus on relevant teaching and practical exercises related to our cohort competencies, and give space for these leaders to learn together.

Our next cohort launches in Fall 2024. If you are an experienced leader looking to build into the next generation of leaders, why not register as a mentor? Or maybe you know some young leaders (18-28) that could benefit from someone mentoring them. Why not encourage them to apply?

If God has placed someone in your life to disciple, consider taking a coach approach. Come alongside them, help them hear from God, and trust God to lead you both through the journey of discipleship. ☞

Kris is the National Coordinator for Envision Canada. Serving with the Alliance Canada for more than 15 years, he is passionate about equipping the next generation of leaders for ministry, whether locally or globally. In his downtime, you can find him enjoying coffee, reading, and spending time with his wife Amanda and their four kids. Learn more about Envision at envisioncanada.org



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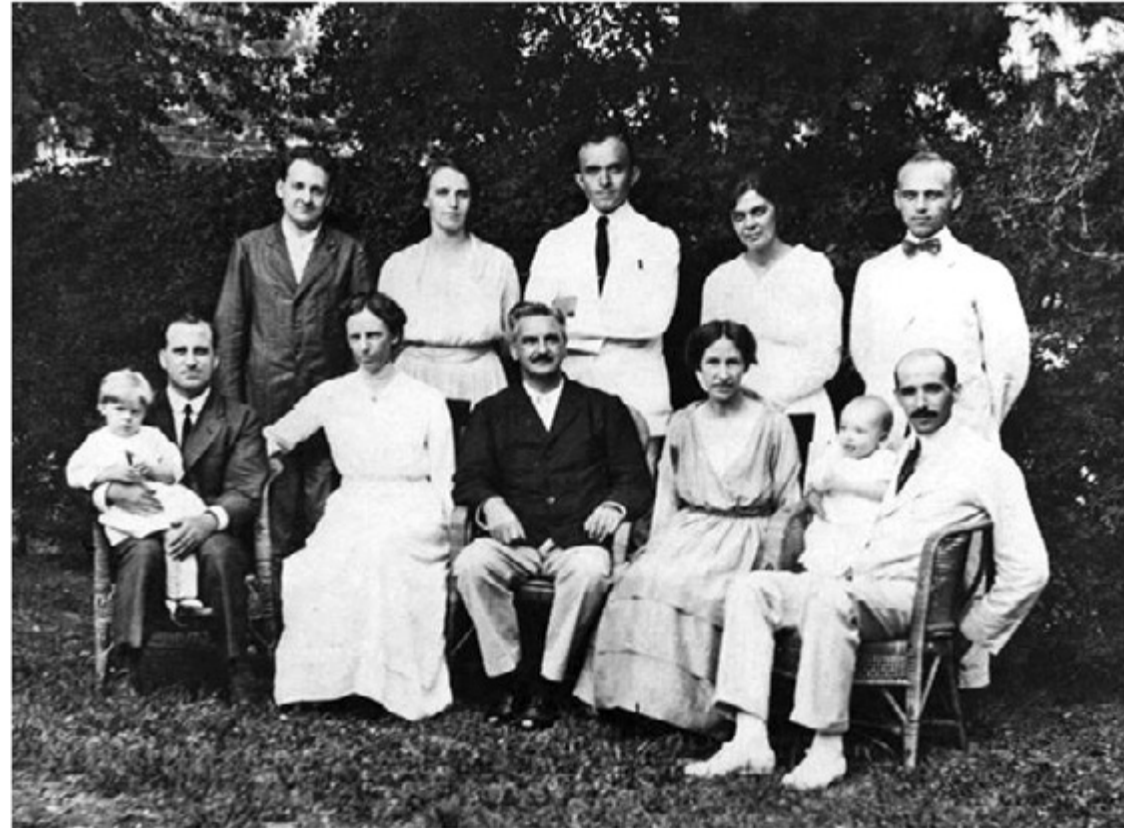
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God's Grace Through Generations

Bonnie Burnett



▲ The Irwins are on the right, in the front row. Dr. Jaffray is in the middle of the front row. Date unknown. Courtesy Bonnie Burnett.



Franklin and George Irwin, date unknown. Courtesy Bonnie Burnett. ▶



▲ Tin-Lanh Church in Saigon, 2005. Courtesy Wilson Kaan.

STORY 1: In 1928, the French Government begrudgingly allowed Alliance missionaries Frank and Marie Irwin to carry out missionary activities in Danang, North Vietnam, but they were expressly forbidden from going outside the city.

The Irwins began sharing the gospel and discipling new believers in Danang, teaching new believers to share their faith with others. Every Sunday after church, the believers routinely went out to the countryside villages around Danang to tell people the good news about Jesus.

One day, a man walked into the city looking for the church, declaring that he wanted to follow this Jesus he had heard about and be baptized. The Irwins gladly welcomed and baptized him. However, the people in his village tried to stop him. “Why are you doing this?” they cried. “You are going to bring hardship on our village! The spirits won’t like that you have followed a different god!”

The man replied, “You don’t understand. This God LOVES us SO much!”

After a few years of faithfully following the Lord, the man went blind. The other villagers pointed at him and said, “SEE! We TOLD you so!”

The man said, “I’m blind, it’s true. But you don’t understand. This God is with me and He loves me SO much!”

Each week, the man walked to Danang to worship with the Vietnamese believers. The walk took him an entire day. He walked to town Saturday, worshipped on Sunday, and then walked home on

Monday. Even after he went blind, he faithfully attended church every week.

And God blessed him with a gift. Anything he planted, flourished. If he planted vegetables, they sprouted everywhere. If he planted fruit, the trees were laden. The other villagers asked him to come and plant whatever they were putting into the ground, knowing that it would thrive if he did.

Then, one Sunday, the blind man didn't show up for church. Some of the believers went to his village to inquire after him. His family said, "He was sitting in the other room one day and we heard him talking. He said, 'Lord, is it time for me to come home now?' and then we heard a thump. When we ran into the other room, he had died."

We don't know for sure the impact of this man's life on his village, but today the churches in this area are some of the strongest in Vietnam!

Story 1 Summary: One hundred years ago, the Alliance Family sent missionaries like the Irwins into countries with no witness for Christ, and from the beginning He was calling people to Himself.

STORY 2: In 1976, Frank & Marie's daughter, Helen, and her husband, Dave Douglas were reassigned to the Philippines. They worked with

Ron & June McKinnon among the southern Blaan tribe. Their ministry took them into mountain villages made of bamboo homes on stilts. In one village, Maan, the chief declared, "Our people need a religion. If you will teach us a religion in our language, we will follow it!" Ron called Rev. Ansang, a Filipino pastor, to help him visit these villages and preach to them every week. After about 3 months he challenged them, "I have told you all about Jesus and His way. Now it's up to you. Do you want to follow the old way or the new way?" In village after village the people declared, "We want the new way."



E.F. Irwin, I.R. Stebbins, Marie Irwin, date unknown. Courtesy Edwin Irwin.

But how do you disciple that many believers at once? The Lord gave Ron the idea to start The Lay Preacher's Institute. Each village chose a few people as representatives to come into the city for two weeks at a time and study the Bible with Ron, Dave and Rev. Ansang. They learned how to live out what they studied, then returned

home to teach all they had learned to the rest of the village. In this way, the Blaan Church grew from 4 churches to 30 in just four years. By the time Dave & Helen retired, the Blaan tribe had over 100 churches. Today the number is over 180!

Many years later, Helen Douglas met a woman from California who asked her, "Do you know anything about the Blaan people?" She told Helen, "A missionary mentioned them once in church and the Lord laid a great burden for them on my heart. I have been praying for them every

day for 20 years!" With great joy Mrs. Douglas told her of the thousands that had come to Christ.

Story 2 Summary: At least one woman prayed. And though she didn't have any news for 20 years or know of anyone working there, she kept lifting up what God had laid on her heart. When we stand before Him in glory we will see thousands of Filipinos standing there because of her faithfulness. Throughout the years, God has answered the prayers of Alliance people (particularly our Alliance women) to bring hundreds of thousands of people to Himself.

STORY 3: Dave and Helen's daughter, Bonnie, is a 3rd generation missionary. She and her husband, Derek Burnett have served among the Buddhists in Thailand for 22 years. About three years ago, the Lord moved them to lead a team sharing the gospel in the predominantly Muslim South. One of their teammates tell this story...

Fatima (name changed) came to our games night. She stood out from the others because she had many friends. She didn't come to meet people. Rather, she came to our event because she was so curious about Christianity. She had never met a Christian in her entire life, and when she learned there were Christians on campus, she wanted to find out more.

She ended up coming to our home where she asked so many good questions. "Do Christians have to pray 5 times a day? Do you fast? Do you read the Bible?" We began reading the book of Mark with her and she was so intrigued. She even came to church with us!

When she was about to graduate and move home, we took a chance and watched the JESUS Film with her. We prayed so hard! We know some scenes – the crucifixion, Christ's death and resurrection – are very different from what many Muslims have been taught. We prayed that she would not be offended.

At the end of the movie we asked her what she thought about the life of Jesus. She said, "I now know that Isa Al Masih, the Messiah, has come. But my family, my community, my people are still waiting for the Messiah. They are waiting for the Al Masih."

Story 3 Summary: Our passion is to go to the least-reached peoples of the earth; places like Southern Thailand, where they have little access Jesus. For over 100 years He has worked through our prayers, through our giving and through our willingness to go, but the task is not finished yet. May His grace continue to use us mightily through the next generations, until the day of His return. ☺

Bonnie grew up in South East Asia, born in Vietnam to C&MA missionary parents, but did her schooling in Philippines (after Vietnam fell) and Malaysia. She can't remember a day when she didn't believe in God, but she didn't know God like the way her parents did, until she was a freshman at Canadian Bible College when God met her in a significant way.

Derek and Bonnie met at CBC and have been married since 1993. They have three kids, Carlin, Jesse, and Jemma and have served in Thailand since 1999.

Visit thealliancecanada.ca/gift/derek-and-bonnie-burnett/ to support Bonnie and Derek's ministry



The Slow Work of Faithful Presence

Bernard Tam

“Faithful presence names the reality that God is present in the world and that he uses a people faithful to his presence to make himself concrete and real amid the world’s struggles and pain. When the church is this faithful presence, God’s kingdom becomes visible, and the world is invited to join with God. Faithful presence is not only essential for our lives as Christians, it’s how God has chosen to change the world.” (David Fitch, Faithful Presence)

As I look around the neighbourhoods in Toronto, it is hard not to be drawn into the rush of the societal pace. In my community, we are accustomed to 10,000+ people living in close proximity and the sounds of construction all around. It is here that we have been learning to be the church. The prophet Elijah, as he met with God (1 Kings 19), did not find God in the violent wind, the earthquake, or the raging fire. Instead, it was in the stillness and the quiet that God’s presence was revealed to Elijah. More and more, I’m trying to learn how to be faithful, not in the loud noises, but in the quiet and mundane spaces.

I am often captivated by the word “Selah” in the scriptures. We don’t talk about it much, but it appears 71 times throughout the scriptures. Selah is word that is hard to define, but it indicates a pause, a time to take a breath. It is found in the Psalms, perhaps as an invitation to take a breath, pause, and reflect. I wonder if the practice of Selah can help us engage our neighbours as a faithful presence of Christ? I believe, if we practice Selah faithfully, we will receive a new imagination, and begin to see how God works in those silent and still spaces.

What if Selah is a posture into which God is inviting us? How might it shape the way we approach forming relationships in the neighbourhood?

I met Johnny in our neighbourhood when he first moved into the community. It happened during the heightened caution of the COVID lockdowns, when we were unable to really connect. But we had a series of simple, pleasant encounters with each other.

Once the lockdowns eased and the neighbourhood began returning to a degree of normalcy, we started bumping into

each other more regularly. One day we met at the neighbourhood park when Johnny and I were both taking our kids to enjoy the outdoors. That day we began talking about our lives.

Another time we bumped into each other outside of the housing complex, and our chat about life deepened. He asked me about my studies and discovered that I had been pursuing a theological degree. This prompted him to share about his deep wrestling since becoming a father, wondering about life’s purpose, questions, and the Divine. That sacred moment of pause led to a friendship in life and faith. Since that first encounter we have met regularly, working through the scriptures and what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus.

God speaks in the pauses. He invites us in the pauses. And the culmination of these little pauses leads to openness and deeper awareness of the Spirit’s presence.

As we think about being God’s faithful presence in our neighbourhood, let us recognize where we have margin and space for the Spirit to move. What if, instead of our rigid schedules, we created space to discern and tend to God’s presence around us? What if we intentionally placed ourselves in spaces where we could engage with holy disruptions in our daily lives? What if we kept learning to listen to the movement of the Spirit in our neighbourhoods?

More and more, I’m trying to learn how to be faithful, not in the loud noises, but in the quiet and mundane spaces.

I contend that the mission of the church does not rest with strategies, methods, and models. The world’s social imaginations have informed how we organize, structure, and form church and mission. What if we entered into God’s faithful presence through the mundane, small, and

simple pauses, and allowed the reservoir of God’s grace to flood the neighbourhood through the movement of the Spirit in those moments?

Tara Beth Leach, in Radiant Church, writes, “I believe the church has something to offer that the world doesn’t have... Not because we as people are so great and such do-gooders—sadly, all too often we are far from that—but because Jesus’ kingdom is coming and is readily available to all who gather for the feast. When we gather in his name, strangers have something to celebrate, enemies are reconciled, and celebrations last into the night because God’s team wins. If we get this right, those watching from a distance will fear missing out; they will be drawn in, captivated, and attracted to the Kingdom readily available to all.” This captivating power of the church is the result of the faithful presence that disrupts our lives and our neighbourhoods. †

Bernard Tam lives with his family in the heart of Midtown Toronto. Currently, he is a co-pastor at The Living Room Church seeking to be a community that lives to embody the faithful presence of Christ. At the same time, he is also part of the New Ventures team focusing on seeing new leaders and new churches in Toronto. Bernard is also a Doctoral student at Northern Seminary. He is also a major coffee geek; exploring and making new friends in all sorts of coffee shops.

S E L A H

The 'We-Factor'

Rev. Kathryn Klassen

If you were to ask any evangelical church in the western world if they are committed to discipleship, they would say yes. However, recent findings from the March 2020 'National Study on Disciple Making in USA Churches' tell a different story. One thousand interviews with senior/lead pastors of Protestant churches were conducted in September 2019, in a variety of denominations, church sizes, and geographical locations.¹ One sobering finding from this report was that while many Protestant pastors were making substantial claims about their church's disciple-making activities and priorities, they did not have the numerical evidence to back it up.² The study did not infer that church leaders were deliberately hiding the truth, but instead suggested that perhaps these leaders perceived what they wanted to see instead of what was actually happening. The study suggested that part of this disparity might be due to differing definitions of disciple making and it concluded that by inadvertently over-estimating disciple making efforts, churches risk perpetuating an illusion of progress inconsistent with statistics.³

¹ *National Study on Disciple Making in USA Churches*, by Grey Matter Research & Consulting in partnership with 24 other organizations. <https://exponential.org/product/national-study-on-disciple-making-in-usa-churches/> pg.4 It is important to note that this research was collected during COVID where churches were not meeting in person. However, I suspect their statistics would most likely reflect their pre-COVID reality.

² Ibid, pg. 8

³ Ibid, pg. 11

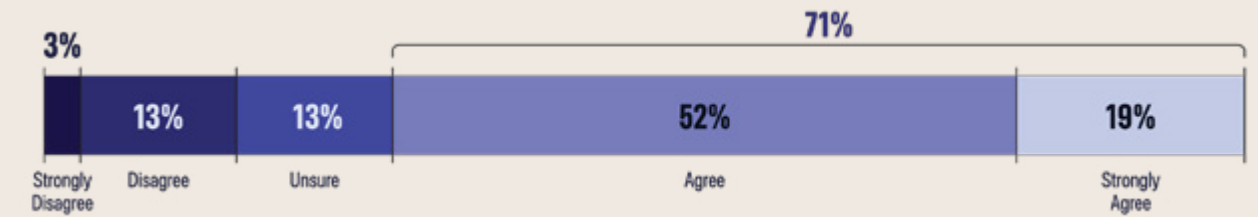
A similar Canadian study was conducted by Alpha Canada and Flourishing Congregations in 2021, and repeated in 2024. The focus was not on disciple-making per se, but on how church leaders perceived and practiced evangelism. The purpose of the study was to look intently at the evolving Canadian landscape of evangelism, shaped by cultural shifts, changing perceptions and societal dynamics. Their present-day findings—based on Canadian government statistics—identified approximately 12.6 million Canadians (over 30% of the population) who reported no religious affiliation, double the number from 20 years ago. Despite these odds, 70% of leaders across Canada saw an increase in spiritual curiosity in their communities from 2021 to, including an unexplainable increase in spiritual hunger, a greater intentionality on the part of the church, and a renewed focus on the role of prayer.⁴ I suspect increased prayer, along with COVID-19, contributed to the increased spiritual hunger.

⁴ *Reigniting Hope* – Conducted by Alpha Canada and Flourishing Congregations, <https://alphacanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/REIGNITING-HOPE-REPORT-KEY-FINDINGS-Final.pdf> pg. 13.

Page 13 of *Reigniting Hope* courtesy Alpha Canada and Flourishing Congregations. Read the report at <https://alphacanada.org/reignitinghope/>

"Compared to three years ago, I have witnessed the following among those I believe to be lapsed/non-Christians in the surrounding neighbourhood/community near my congregation/parish:"

Increased spiritual curiosity



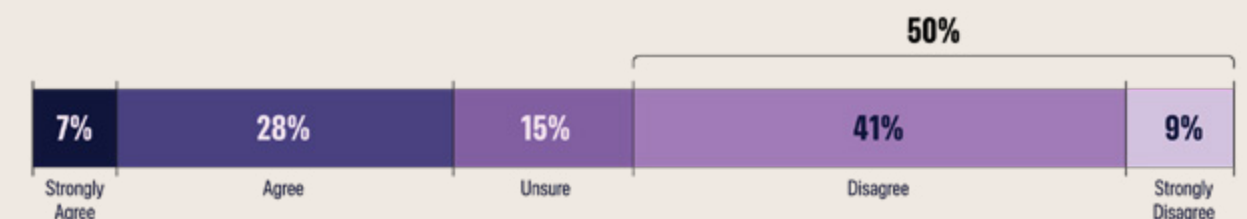
Increased likelihood to enter a church building



Increased openness toward the Christian gospel message



Increased animosity towards conversations around the Christian faith



Over the Spring I took a sabbatical to do some research into ‘The Role of Spiritual Nurture in Disciple Making.’ My research convinced me that we need a perspective shift around disciple making, in addition to the above call to renew our focus on prayer and intentionality.

Disciple making in a western context often conjures an image of two people sitting in a coffee shop with a Bible—often termed, one-on-one discipleship. While that might be part of it, as we look at Jesus’ disciple making, we see much more. Jesus doesn’t disciple the twelve on His own. He brings them into His relationship with the Holy Spirit and with His Father, who incidentally is the one that directed him to these twelve in the first place. In John 17, we see Jesus giving His Father a performance appraisal on His 3-year ministry. There are no numbers in His review. He doesn’t talk of the crowds, or the healings, or the sermons; He refers only to the ‘ones you gave me’ (John 17:2). ‘This is what I passed on to them and this is what they are doing with it.’⁵ How might our disciple making change if every church leader and lay person had to give an account for those God has given them to disciple?

Jesus also gathered them as a group. Yes, they got front row seats at all his meetings, enjoying his teaching and witnessing major healings. They also got many invitations to dinners and received unscheduled personal tutoring as questions arose. Hanging out 24/7 allowed for these spontaneous moments.

⁵ An exegetical study into John 17 will reveal the word give/gave/given showing up 16 times – and correlates with the above suggested summary of Jesus dialogue with his Father around his discipling the twelve.

Part of my research included interviewing young moms on their role as nurturers. One mother commented that, as a youth pastor, she prioritized ‘Kairos God conversations’ with her youth as the real work. After raising her own children she realized the real work was in the day-to-day ‘with-ness.’ Being with them all the time allowed the Kairos moments to come without striving or pressure.

Jesus also disciplined not only in community but through community. He didn’t protect his twelve from the raw iron-sharpening-iron moments between them. Instead, he used those as teaching moments. He also didn’t wait to recruit them into mission. They became his prayer team, even though they were novices. Jesus did not minister to them through a program, but a life-on-life, highly relational commission.

As part of my research, I interviewed 15 different people across different generations, genders and ethnicities, inquiring about their spiritual nurture. Those that came to Christ in other countries talked of being disciplined in community. When they immigrated to Canada however, they had trouble finding community in the church. Instead, for many, their spiritual formation was reduced to programs and events. Relationships were transactional, not covenantal. Their comments were quite sobering!

‘In my home country we would go every day and had a lot more connecting. Here in Canada, we meet less, and our visits are less intense.’
- South American

In Canada no one does anything extra. People don’t bring you into their circle of friendships. It is just programmatic. It is all up to you.’
- Southeast Asian

‘I brought a lot of fire with me, but I found Canada as a huge vacuum spiritually. I missed the communal context that kept me in the group.’
- African

The comparison between the western world and the eastern world only holds water when you consider that in the eastern world, disciple making movements abound.⁶ What do they have that we don’t? One of the predominant forces that stunts our disciple making is our individualism. According to German Theologian Johannes Hartl, modernity has not so much abolished God as it has deified self.⁷ While it is easy to point the finger outside, we must also admit that western individualism has crept into the church. We are guilty of this idolatry, and it is most visible in our disciple making. Our individualism can subtly put our lifestyle and career ambitions ahead of our gospel commission. Our individualistic pursuits become the ‘thorny soil’ that choke the seed, keeping it from maturing (Luke 8:15).

What the global south has that the western world doesn’t is the ‘we factor.’ The ‘we-factor’ often includes multi-generational relating, meaning multiple layers of maturity, including peers, plus those a few years older, and some a few years

⁶ National Discipleship Study, pg. 13.

⁷ Leadership Conference 2024 – London, England; Dr. Johannes Hartl – May 6, 2024

younger.⁸ In short, family! In the GTA our parks are packed with immigrant families having picnics. The whole family is included. Despite many living in high-rises and longing to be outside, there is an innate compulsion to gather. It saddens me to think that coming to Canada, families may be at risk of losing that.

In the Trinity we also find the ‘we-factor,’ one God communing as three. We even see a multi-generational father-son relationship. Jesus will always be His Father’s son, and the Father will always be Jesus’ father. As Imago Dei, should we not mirror God’s oneness, His three-ness, and his multigenerational-ness? It seems western individualism has squelched these aspects of the Imago Dei, and by so doing adversely affected our disciple making.

So where do we go from here? As has been recorded, prayer is a great starting place. It is hard to confess what we can’t see, as David says in Psalm 19:22, ‘Who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.’ We need to invite God to show us where we are deifying self in our lives and ministries, and convict us of our need to change. Then, in humility, let us invite the Spirit to re-parent us from our ‘I’ orientation into a ‘We’ orientation—something a lot more like family.

Throughout the New Testament we see family imagery present in the kingdom. When Jesus taught his disciples to minister to the poor and imprisoned, he called the ‘least of these’ his siblings, ‘brothers and sisters of mine’ (Matthew 25:40b). The Apostle Paul, though single, not only identifies as a spiritual father but also as a mother.

⁸ Life Model Works, online course, Lesson 4, Michael Hendricks

‘Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well... For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children...’ (1 Thess. 2:7b-8,11)

All of us, whether we have kids or not, are called to be spiritual mothers and fathers. The interviews I conducted asked questions first about familial nurture, and then spiritual nurture. Of the fifteen people I interviewed, all fifteen have landed on their feet and are following hard after Jesus. The sampling included individuals ranging across three generations. Some came from Christian homes; others did not. My interview participants represented seven different countries of origin. Out of those fifteen, only one referenced both parents as loving and present. The rest either came from broken homes or experienced one parent alienating them in some way, either through absence, illness, or anger, etc. or they were parented in a community that included grandparents and servants. When it came to spiritual nurture, only 1.3% talked of curriculum or programs that assisted in their spiritual formation. All of them spoke of the ‘we-factor:’ their mentors, peers, youth groups, cultural family, and community. Many achieved spiritual formation after being drawn to those who offered the nurture they missed out on in their upbringing.

*Throughout the
New Testament we
see family imagery
present in the
kingdom*

Imagine the wounds in the many who haven’t landed on their feet. Despite their age, they long for a father and/or mother figure to nurture them. There is much fathering and mothering and sistering and brothering to do. The church is supposed to be the family of God, making up for the deficits in our families of origin. Is this not the gospel? Could this be the ‘we-factor’ of disciple making? The beauty of this parenting image for disciple making is that you don’t parent the masses; you just pour into those the Father has given you, usually one at a time.

I am grateful to be part of a denomination that is committed to multiplying disciples everywhere. I am excited about the nations coming to Canada, many of whom are coming to reach us. Let us be open to learning from them. With a little bit of spiritual tweaking, this might be more doable than we think! ☪

Rev. Kathryn Klassen is the Eastern Canadian District Director of Renewal and Leader Formation. Her passion is to contagiously chase after God with every ounce of her being such that others are drawn into the abundant life Jesus promised them. She brings a global awareness, having grown up in East Africa and lived out much of her ministry experience in the multicultural city of Toronto. Her 35 years in disciple making have included ministering to university students, businesspeople, seniors, and everyone in between. She is a catalyst for the deeper life helping others journey from disillusionment, disengagement and distraction into becoming their very best selves.



ENVISIONCANADA.ORG

MENTORING, INTERNSHIPS, AND MISSION-ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
FOR YOUNG LEADERS TO DEVELOP AND GROW



Vision 2034

Darren Herbold, President

Imagine The Alliance Canada doubling our reach, internationally and nationally. This was the main focus during General Assembly 2024.

For some people, doubling sounds incredibly exciting! For others, including me at times, doubling our reach seems impossible and yet the Lord's leading at General Assembly was very clear...even palpable as Jesus was in the room with us.

One of the questions we carefully explored together at Assembly was, "With the 2000-year anniversary of Jesus Christ's resurrection quickly approaching, what God-sized vision does He have for The Alliance Canada to focus on for His glory? We dreamed and imagined together; we spent time unpacking John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing". Then we prayed together with a listening posture.

During this discussion, a spontaneous motion came from the Assembly floor as we were discerning the adoption of the strategic framework. The delegates spent time in reflective prayer, carefully considering and discerning God's will, and then they voted overwhelmingly in favour of the strategic framework to double our reach with the following resolution: "We, the delegates to General Assembly 2024, in dependence on the Holy Spirit to the best of our ability, commit ourselves to ensure that our local churches and ministries engage in all aspects of the Strategic Plan, and commit ourselves to making the necessary

sacrifices to share the love of Jesus with our broken world in efforts to double our reach by 2034."

Together, we submitted ourselves afresh to Jesus as we affirmed God's direction for the next decade. We have landed on four strategic drivers for the next 3-5 years:

- Prayer
- Leaders
- Ministries
- Stewardship and Effectiveness

It is important to declare that we do not want to simply do more; we want to courageously ask Jesus, individually, as local churches, and as a movement in Canada, "What does courageous faithfulness look like with this kind of discerned, God-given vision, direction and desire?" Doubling our reach by 2034 requires faithfulness and an unwavering commitment to prayer and unity as we trust the Lord's creativity and imagination, as Ephesians 3:20 reminds us that he can "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine."

This strategic framework presented in the following pages is robust, but also simple enough to scale so it can work for individuals, official and international workers, local churches, districts, and national networks alike. Each strategy looks different when implemented at various levels, but together they are a common framework for how we live out The Great Commission. The strategy is not about doing more and trying harder; it's about being faithful and unified in prayer. This is a call to intentionally raise up leaders who are already in our spheres of influence. It is a call to align our ministries to our core values—both nationally and internationally—and it's about stewarding our resources well.

Watch the President's Report Recap video and try not to get excited about doubling our reach by 2034



thealliancecanada.ca/vision/

We are convinced that if we are faithful to Jesus in these areas, He will provide the fruitfulness. As we look forward for the next 10 years, we want to see an ever-increasing number of leaders empowered and equipped. We want to see a dramatic increase in people set free from exploitation. We want a double portion of the Spirit to fill and fuel us so that, Lord willing, exponentially more people will encounter the saving power of Jesus. Our goal is that Jesus will be magnified and we will become less; that He will become more and the Father would be glorified. Lord, let it be so! All for the name and fame of Jesus! ✠

Rev. Darren Herbold has a passion to see The Alliance Canada thrive as a Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered, and Mission-focused movement. He has served The Alliance Canada for over 15 years. In July 2022, The Alliance Canada appointed Rev. Darren Herbold to serve as President of The Alliance Canada.



President Herbold presenting the strategic framework at General Assembly 2024

The Alliance Canada 2024-2034 Strategic Framework

Committed to deep abiding with Jesus (John 15:5) and to his courageous imagination (Ephesians 3:20) working in and through us for his name and fame.

Vision prayer

O God, with all our hearts we long for you. Come, transform us to be Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused people, multiplying disciples everywhere.

Ten-year faith goal:

In 2034, imagine The Alliance Canada doubling our reach, internationally and nationally.

3–5 year focus for National and International

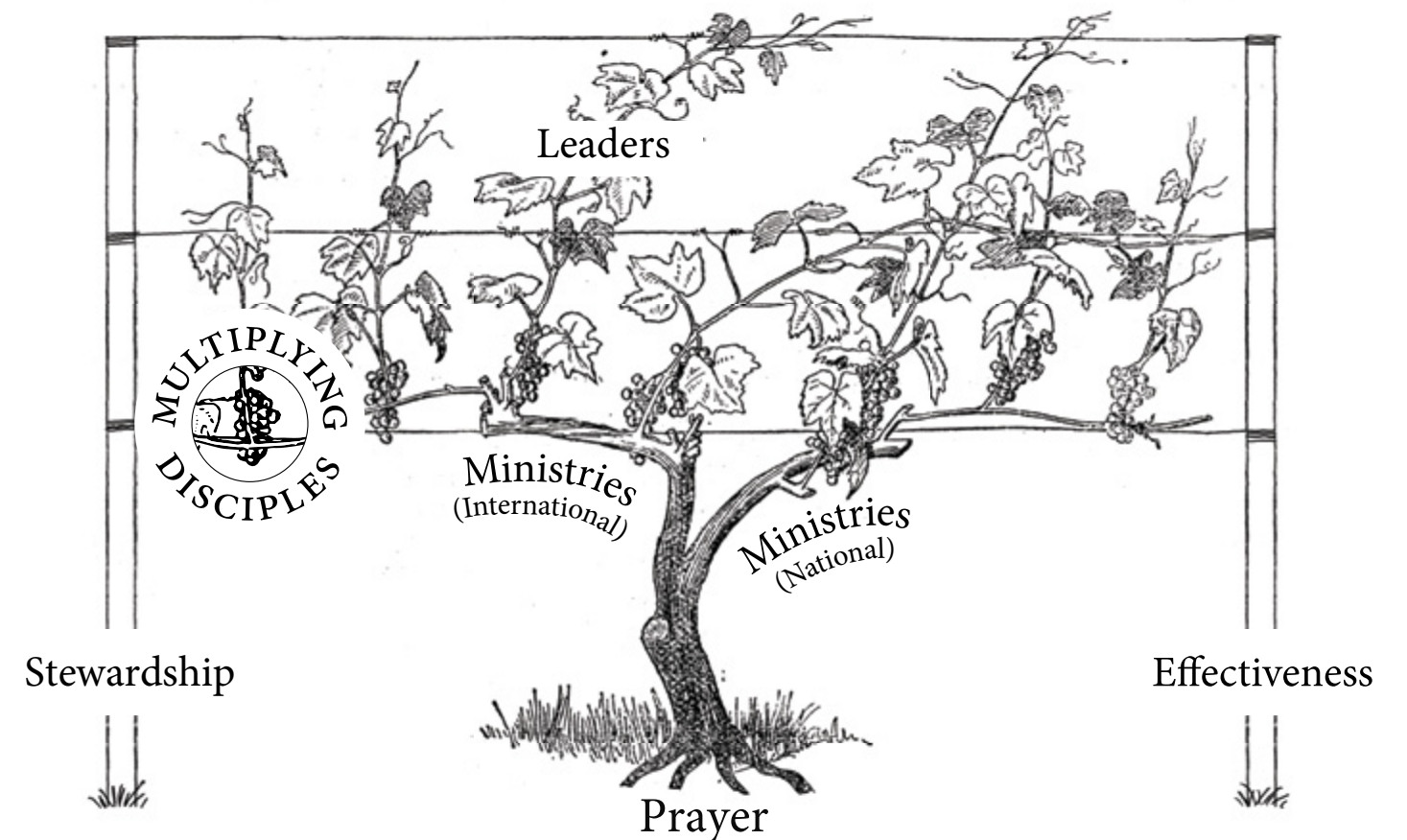
- Unified Prayer
- Deepened Alliance DNA
- Leader Development
- Stewardship and Effectiveness
- Next Gen
- Cultural Engagement
- Church Health and Multiplication
- Global Partnerships

Growth drivers

Growth drivers

We will multiply disciples everywhere as we follow Christ by focusing on:

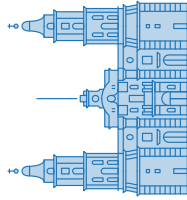
Prayer	Unified and focused in prayer
Leaders	Equip and influence thousands of leaders through our ministries
Ministries	Minister in the hardest and darkest places where Christ is not preached Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered, Mission-focused churches
Stewardship and Effectiveness	Sharing systems and processes to expand mission effectiveness



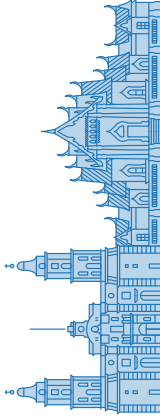
I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15: 5

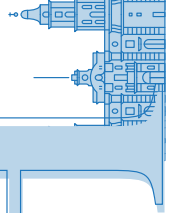

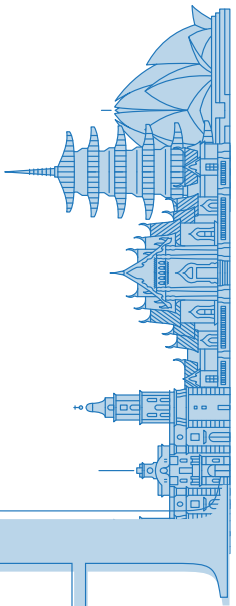
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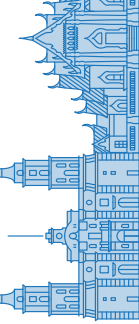

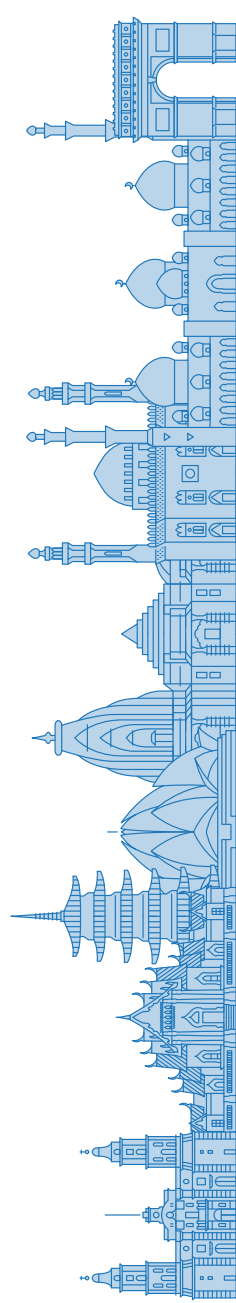
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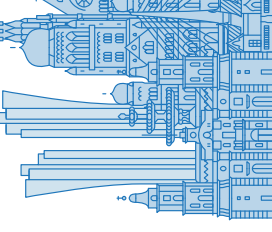

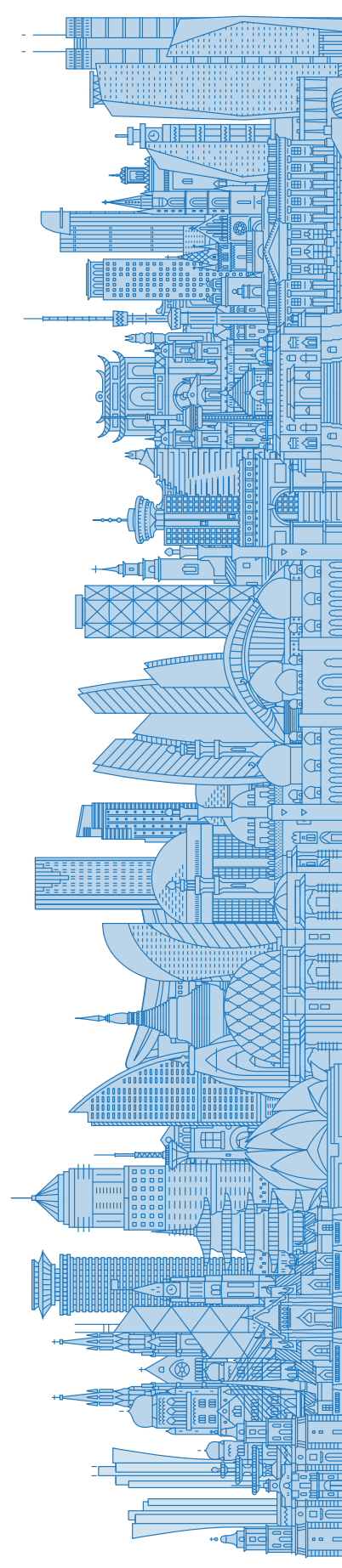
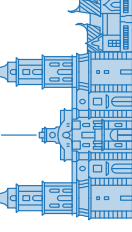

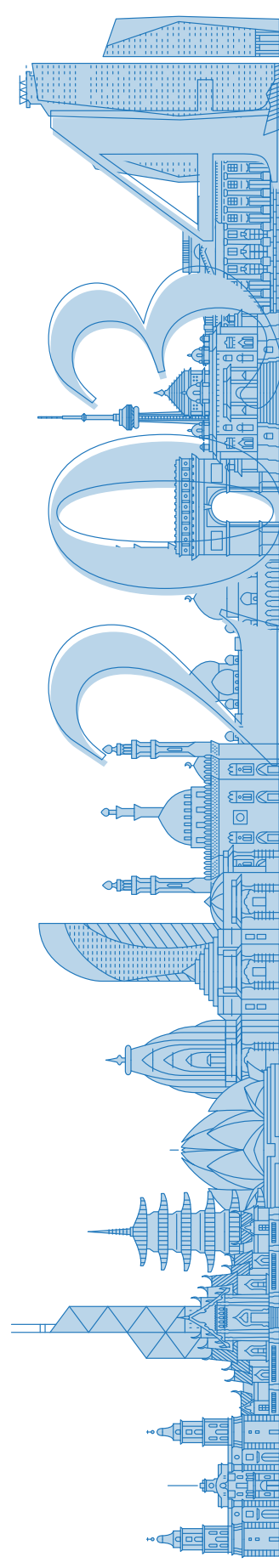
REACH



BY



2034



We, the delegates to General Assembly 2024, in dependence on the Holy Spirit to the best of our ability, commit ourselves to ensure that our local churches and ministries engage in all aspects of the Strategic Plan, and commit ourselves to making the necessary sacrifices to share the love of Jesus with our broken world in efforts to double our reach by 2034.

Growth drivers and strategic areas

This 10-year strategy will require us to engage in ambition priorities.

Prayer

United Prayer

- Foster grass-root prayer groups: disciple-making, leadership prayer shields, missional, and strategic teams
- Share simple and reproducible prayer and disciple-making tools

Transformational Encounter

- Foster a culture of expectancy for divine encounter
- Increase corporate prayer and pursuit of God's presence
- Integration of deeper life and disciple-making

Mentoring Next Gen

- Identify, equip, and release spiritual mentors
- Provide opportunities to learn alongside seasoned intercessors

Leaders

New Leaders: Next Gen and Next Era

- Adapt leader on-ramps and pathways
- Strengthen theological formation
- Invest in Next Gen opportunities and development

Existing Leaders: Licensed and Lay

- Standardized licensing and ordination
- Reflecting diversity of communities
- On-board and develop new workers in first five years
- Strengthen member care and support
- Ongoing professional development for all workers

All Leaders

- Strengthen Alliance DNA
- Invite partnership in prayer, disciple-making, and global mission

Ministries

NATIONAL

New Ventures and Churches

- Increase new churches, sites, and congregations
- Increase New Ventures, discernment communities, and apprenticeships
- Increase hospitality to new immigrants
- Identify and reach least-churched and under-resourced areas for Gospel witness

Existing Churches

- Strengthen alignment with The Alliance
- Strengthen culture of prayer and missional engagement
- Local church revitalization
- Increased collaboration and support for networks and cultural associations
- Cultivate a safe environment without barriers to meeting and experiencing Jesus

INTERNATIONAL

Church Development

- Empower reproducing local fellowships among least-reached
- Identify, equip, and release local believers that lead faith communities
- Strengthen indigenous and expatriate Christian communities
- Increase participation with Alliance World Fellowship

Relief & Development

- Incarnate the Gospel by responding to natural and man-made disasters
- Serve local communities through intervention

Marketplace

- Develop sustainable business for Gospel presence among least-reached
- Develop globally-minded strategic entrepreneurs
- Focus on spiritual transformation, profit, social impact, and creation care
- Make and mobilize disciples who become disciple-makers
- Send marketplace workers from the nations to the nations

Stewardship and Effectiveness

Systems

- Optimize resources and systems
- Integrated tools and Database
- Common Dashboard

Financial Health

- Strengthen communications and contributions
- Develop new revenue models

Land and Property

- Support churches in property optimization, redevelopment strategies, and facility revitalization

Safe Ministries and Management

- Safe Ministries: case management and training
- Shared resources and services

In all of these strategic areas, we will collaborate and partner with like-minded ministries, organizations, and the global Church

1

Global Gathering

Join us at Global Gathering in Chaing Mai, Thailand, March 1–6 for the first ever Global Gathering of international workers in one place. Global gathering will focus on God’s global mission throughout the world, including vision for the future of missions with a unique emphasis on the next generation and leader development. This event is for our Canadian Alliance churches (constituents, pastors, elders, etc.) and all our International Workers to be encouraged and challenged to walk faithfully as we trust Jesus for a doubling of our reach.



2

Become a monthly donor

Would you prayerfully consider partner together in our shared mission to proclaim Jesus here in Canada and around the world? As we boldly and faithfully enter into our 2034 strategic framework where we are trusting the Lord to double our reach, we need to do new things. We are praying from Ephesians 3 where the word tells us that Jesus can do immeasurable more than we ask or imagine. The Spirit has given us a bold vision and it also requires faithful and bold generosity. This generosity will provide seed funding for new initiatives into the year ahead. This year, as you ask for the Spirit's leading of where you might give, I would ask you to consider a generous gift to the Global Advance fund.

Partner with us at thealliancecanada.ca/GAF/



3

Pray bold prayers

We aren’t just looking for angel investors, we desperately need partners who will pray for the mission and ministries of The Alliance. John 15 tells us that we can do nothing with abiding in the vine—Christ. As we move forward, we want to sensitive to the Spirit as we pray boldly for God to move and make disciples everywhere.

Would you sign up for our prayer news letter and cover this movement in prayer?

thealliancecanada.ca/newsletter-signup/



Three Next Steps

From Death to Life

Amanda Corbin

New Ventures gives space for new leaders and new expressions of Church to grow, flourish and multiply disciples. We walk alongside and support those who feel moved to do ministry in fresh new ways across the country. We help the local church embrace Canada as a mission field and respond with compassion, hope, and curiosity. Our desire is to see new leaders, in new places, leading new expressions of church across Canada.

This is New Ventures.

It's not a one-size-fits-all space; it's an open-handed posture of partnering with what God is already doing in our communities. It might look like a network of house churches, a youth drop-in centre, or even an online gaming platform sharing the hope of Jesus in the digital world. It's the rebirth of a church that had closed its doors, an international student campus ministry offering support and community to those far from home, or an ethnic community worshipping and discipling others in their native language.

New Ventures also creates space to discern, individually and in community, for those who think God is leading them into ministry via a non-traditional route. This space, in partnership with churches, mentors, coaches, and district-led retreats, allows for the investment of time and energy into listening to the voice of God, and following where the Spirit is leading.

The Eastern Canadian District currently has 24 New Ventures in various spaces and stages, growing the Kingdom of God in 9 different languages, in partnership with 17 local ECD Alliance churches. Praise God! His Church continues to grow!

New Venture Pastor Brant relays the following testimony:

A family that recently came to faith through our new venture introduced me to their dying father. He was not a believer and wanted nothing to do with the faith his family has embraced.

Last week he woke up in the morning and asked his son if I would visit with him... I told them I would come the next day. A few hours before leaving to go visit, the father cancelled. Knowing this was a matter of the Spirit, I ignored the cancellation and showed up anyway. His wife convinced him to see me.

This man had wanted to die for the last year or more. When I walked into his bedroom I sensed death in the room. His wife brought a chair for me, and I asked if I could talk to her husband. She agreed. He surprised me and asked if I would sit next to him. He then put out his hand and I took it.

I asked what I could do for him. His eyes were rolling in the back of his head and he could barely breathe. It was heartbreaking. He asked if I would pray that God would take him. I told him I couldn't ask for that.



Baptisms in Lake Ontario with Whitby Chinese New Venture and Toronto Evergreen New Venture. Supported by the Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association (CCACA).



Tigrayan Fellowship New Venture meeting at Toronto Community Alliance Church, their Lead Church support.

Instead, I asked the man a question: If God did take him, where would he be going? He answered, "I hope, heaven."

That was my open door. I spent the next 5 minutes explaining the gospel and the assurance of following Jesus. To be honest, he was in such bad shape that I didn't know if any of it was sticking. I'm sure he'd heard some of the message from his family before. But when I finished, he slowly told me that he had confessed his sins to Jesus that very morning.

I prayed that our God would be near and bring peace and hope to this man. I told him that as a follower of our selfless Saviour, he might best reflect this selflessness by giving a gift to his family. He asked what that might be. I told him it would bless his family if he would go to the hospital for the care his body so desperately needed. I told him it would also be a gift to himself, as they could help with his pain and suffering.

He sat still for about three minutes. I sat in silence praying. I wasn't sure if he was asleep or even listening.

Finally, he broke the silence with, "Will you bring me to a doctor?" The man needed more than a doctor; he needed an ambulance and a team of doctors. Amazingly, he asked me, "Will you call the ambulance?"

I left the room and told his family. They were overcome with tears. The ambulance came and they followed him to the hospital.

Get this. He was released a week later with a new lease on life! Doctors said he wouldn't have made it another twenty-four hours. His blood had been extremely acidic and his organs were failing.

Each of his family members has texted me separately, saying he is a new man. He's asked me to come visit and share more about Jesus!

From death to life! Our God is a life-giving God!

Stepping into a New Venture space isn't always an easy thing. There are often more questions than answers, more 'I don't knows,' than plans. And yet, God! God uses our open hands and open hearts and invites us into spaces just like pastor Brandt. He gives us vision, discernment, and creative solutions that stretch and strengthen our trust in his faithfulness. He is constantly inviting us into these rooms, shadowed by death, so that we can shine the light and life of Jesus. He invites us to the table with our neighbours to live in community, and bring the hope of Jesus with us into every conversation.

The New Venture expression of church may look completely different than what we've ever known of church. And yet, God! He is still at work multiplying disciples everywhere through our willingness to partner with him in creative, hope-filled, curious, and compassionate ways. He continues to build his Kingdom in and through us. †

Rev. Amanda Corbin is the Eastern Canadian District Director of New Ventures & Mobilization. Amanda and her husband Kris have served in the Alliance across Canada for 17 years. Together with their 4 kids they have served in 7 different Alliance ministries and absolutely love the local and global Alliance family.



PARTNER WITH JESUS IN NEW WAYS AND NEW SPACES

We've developed a space in which leaders can figure out answers to big questions and discern their next steps in ministry.

New Ventures creates the pathways and environment in which new leaders and churches can develop to reach the mission field of Canada.

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Staying Curious on the Yellowhead Highway

David Enns

I think it's important to embrace the church in Canada with curiosity, hope, and wonder. I keep it in mind when entering new situations, seasons of dramatic change, or even when driving the highways of Canada. Staying curious helps me challenge my assumptions and previous biases. It turns me into a learner, listening to what Jesus may be saying to me.

When I have the opportunity to visit a new community, to feed curiosity, I try to ask the following questions: What is Jesus doing here? How is the church responding in this community? What opportunities exist? What is unique about this community? Who lives here and why?

Growing up in Western Canada, I developed a love for the open road. Spending the last 30 years driving the 401 has somewhat diminished that love, but I digress.

Canada's communities are largely built on rivers and highways. In Western Canada, the Yellowhead Highway, or Trans-Canada Highway 16, runs from Portage la Prairie to Prince Rupert. I grew up close to the start of this historic route, named for its low elevation that facilitated easy movement for Indigenous peoples, fur trappers, railways, and explorers. The Yellowhead

is steeped in history, named after a fair-haired Métis-Iroquois freeman known as Bostonais.¹

I recently witnessed disciple-making happening throughout churches in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, all within reach of the Yellowhead Highway.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellowhead_Highway



Neepawa, Manitoba

Driving through Neepawa, home to a campus of Prairie Alliance Church, I discovered a community significantly shaped by Filipino immigration. This cultural blend enriches the town, bringing diverse perspectives and traditions. The new faith community in partnership with Prairie Alliance reflects and responds to Neepawa's growth.

Dauphin, Manitoba

In Dauphin (not technically on the Yellowhead, but within reach) I grabbed an americano at a local coffee shop/flower shop. This business was started by an individual who intentionally moved to Dauphin to be part of the core team for a new venture—a beautiful picture of leadership stepping into something new.

Russell, Manitoba

In Russell I learned about the history of Russell Alliance Church, which was started by two women who taught Sunday School. Today, the church draws 10% of the community's population on a Sunday morning, which is a testament to faithful leadership.

Yorkton, Saskatchewan

In Yorkton I met Pastor Freddie, an enthusiastic pastor from Korea who loves Saskatchewan, prairie life, and hot dogs. Freddie's heart for evangelism and reconciliation was evident during our visit.

North Battleford, Saskatchewan

In North Battleford I experienced the story of Territorial Drive Youth Services. This church ministry provides valuable support and restorative justice opportunities for youth in the area. The love of the staff team for this community was encouraging and inspirational.

Warman, Saskatchewan

Sitting down with Odie Tancongo in Warman reminded me of the gift of the Filipino Church in Canada. Motivated by a love for Jesus, a willingness to lead, and a sense of Kingdom purpose, new Filipino Canadians continue to start churches and enrich the Canadian Church at large.

Stay curious, be hopeful, and take time to wonder.

Driving the Yellowhead Highway through Manitoba and Saskatchewan, exploring these vibrant communities, reminded me of the beauty of the local church. It also challenged some assumptions and previous biases as I experienced beautiful nature, growing communities, and a changing demographic. It gave me the opportunity to see Jesus at work.

The best drives in Canada are not just about the roads themselves but about the stories, people, and experiences you encounter along the way. Make your drive meaningful—stay curious, be hopeful, and take time to wonder. ☺

David Enns is the Church Multiplication Developer for The Alliance Canada

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Watch a few short stories about what God is doing in Saskatchewan



◀ Odie Tancongo
Senior Pastor

Inter-Cities New Life Alliance
Fellowship in Warman, SK



Owen & Amanda Scott
Campus Pastors ▶

Prairie Alliance Church:
Dauphin in Dauphin, MB



◀ Rev. Kirby James
Senior Pastor

New Life Fellowship
in Prince Albert, SK



Is Modern Missions Colonialism All Over Again?

Historical view of a station of the Hudson's Bay Company.
Wood engraving, published in 1899.

Lisa M. Rohrick

A pastor friend of mine in a large Canadian city was recently asked by a long-time congregant, “Isn’t Christian mission just colonialism all over again?”

Before we can answer this question, we must first define colonialism. My dictionary defines it as, “Domination of a people or area by a foreign state or nation; the practice of extending and maintaining a nation’s political and economic control over another people or area.”

The most well-known examples of colonialism include England, France, Spain, and other European countries “discovering” the Americas in the 15th century and claiming portions of those continents for themselves. These explorers were not the heroes I was led to believe while colouring maps in grade school! While their exploits may have been courageous, their deplorable treatment of indigenous peoples can’t be overlooked.

Similar stories can be told about Africa, India, Australia, and much of Asia.

Not only did colonial powers claim land as their own, but they typically imposed their own languages, laws, taxes, and religion on the indigenous peoples of the countries they colonized.

Sadly, missionaries often opened the doors that colonial powers walked through. Having learned local languages,



Eine Station der Hudsonbai-Compagnie.

they acted as translators and established diplomatic relations between colonizers and local leaders, often sharing the colonizers' beliefs that European culture was "better" than others.

We cannot deny that missionary work has been associated with colonialism—in Canada and around the world. Yet, flawed as it has been, the Church's global outreach has done much good. Around the world, millions of lives have been transformed by faith in the Saviour who loves them. We are ashamed of the sin and abuse in our past but, like the Apostle Paul, we must not be ashamed of the Gospel (Romans 1:16).

What Right do We Have?

The question remains: What right do Christians have going to other cultures and critiquing their religions in of Christianity?

Simply put, reaching the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ is at the centre of the biblical message.

In Genesis chapter 12, God called Abram (whose name was changed to Abraham), promising to make him into a great nation and to bless him. "And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3). This wasn't a one-time promise; it's repeated multiple times throughout Scripture (Genesis 22:17-18; 26:2-4, Deuteronomy 1:10, Jeremiah 33:22, Galatians 3:16). God's intention from the beginning was to use His people to bless all the peoples of earth.

There are many ways that God blesses people, but the greatest, most far-reaching blessing was sending His own Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of the world. Jesus was a direct descendant of Abraham, the one who was promised to him

in Genesis 22:18. "Through your offspring all the nations on earth will be blessed."

The Apostle Paul takes the guesswork out of this interpretation for us. In speaking of Gentiles being saved through faith in Jesus Christ, he wrote, "Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'" (Galatians 3:8).

What right do Christians have going to other cultures and critiquing their religions in favour of Christianity?

What right do we have to go to other cultures and introduce them to Jesus? Jesus Himself gave us that command. After His death and resurrection, just before returning to His Father, Jesus gathered His disciples and told them, "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" (Matthew 28:18-20). We have the right, and responsibility, to take the gospel to the nations because the one who has all authority has commanded us to do it. But we must do it with humility, recognizing that we are prone to sin, including arrogance and blindness to our own cultural bias.

Biblical Mission vs. Colonialism

What, then, is the difference between biblical mission and colonialism?

The first distinction is that colonialism destroys cultures, assimilating them into the culture of the colonizers; biblical mission respects cultures. Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations. The word translated 'nations' is, in Greek, *ethne*, from which we get the English word 'ethnic.' This is not about geopolitical countries (of which there are currently 195 in the world), but about people groups (of which there are over 17,000 in the world), distinguished by things such as language, ethnicity, culture and religion.

We can be confident that this mission will be successful. In his beautiful vision of the throne room of heaven, the Apostle John reports seeing, "A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). Heaven is not a giant melting pot where all people lose their languages and cultural distinctives. Every "nation" will be represented; every language will be spoken.

Throughout history, colonialists imposed their languages on the regions they colonized. While some missionaries do work through translators, large numbers of them learn the language of their host culture. Most workers sent out with the Alliance Canada spend their first two years in their

country of service studying the language and culture of the people they are working amongst.

God is not interested in merging all people into one culture! Biblical mission does not elevate one culture over another.

A second difference between colonialism and biblical mission is that colonialism imposes its culture, values and religion on others. Biblical mission only extends an invitation.

We believe that people deserve to hear the story of God's word and of salvation in Jesus Christ in order to decide for themselves who they will follow. But we will not force them to believe or to adopt our religious customs, as some other religions do.

We must do it with humility, recognizing that we are prone to sin, including arrogance and blindness to our own cultural bias.

Even Jesus let people walk away. On one occasion, a wealthy man asked Him what he needed to do to be saved. "Jesus looked at him and loved him" (Mark 10:21) and proceeded to tell him he needed to sell everything, give his money away

and follow Him. Hearing this, "the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth" (10:22). There was no coercion or bargaining; the man had made his choice. After all, Jesus wants devotion in the hearts of His followers, not just a display of outward submission.

A final difference between colonialism and biblical mission is that colonialism is about economic gain at the expense of the colonized. In contrast to this, biblical mission is about giving

what we have freely received—spiritually and physically (Matthew 10:8). This often includes contributing to the local economy.

Biblical mission is about sharing the Good News that Jesus commanded us to share with the world; it is not about the extension of political or economic control. It is quite different—in both motivation and practice—from colonialism.

Reckoning with Our Past; Moving Ahead

Where do we go from here? A friend of mind from the Caribbean nation of Antigua told me that he is grateful for missionaries who went to his country, without whom he and his family would not know Jesus. It's important to remember the shortcomings, but also the successes, in the history of our movement.

While biblical mission is not colonial, we must acknowledge that there were times in our past when the mission movement appeared to value the cultures and prejudices of its sending countries than it did the biblical mandate. Acknowledgment is a good start, but it doesn't necessarily lead to correction. One author suggests that in order to course correct, "We must partner with the very people we say we long to serve." A West African proverb says the one who lives in a house knows where the roof leaks. We need to be very careful not to assume that we understand the challenges in our host countries, or that we know the best way forward in a given ministry. We need to listen to locals and seek ways to empower them to lead.

Further, we will be less likely to fall into past errors as we recruit a more diverse force of international workers. Very encouraging steps are being taken

through the Alliance World Fellowship as more and more partnerships are being established. I believe there is still a role for the Western Church to play in making disciples of the nations, but in many cases, we are no longer the lead partner. In recent years, we have increased our support of the Church in the Global South as they take the lead in various initiatives worldwide.

We need to correct, but not over-correct and abandon our assignment. We have been given a task from our Master, the one with all authority. He has commanded us to make disciples of all people groups on earth. With humility and a desire to learn, we must carry on.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations [people groups], and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). ◀

*We must partner
with the very
people we say we
long to serve.*

After twenty years with the C&MA in West Africa, Lisa M. Rohrick joined the Pacific Canadian District team in 2019.

Lisa has a heart for the local church and for the unreached peoples of the nations. She loves to tell the stories of what God is doing worldwide and to inspire others to expand and deepen their involvement in missional activities. Her role includes training, coaching, and supporting a wide variety of leaders, to increase the focus and impact of our missional efforts.

Lisa enjoys photography (and visiting pretty places in which to take pictures!), knitting, swimming and riding her bike.



Church Development: Establish, grow, and strengthen reproducing faith communities among those with little or no access to the message of Jesus.

Three New Strategies for Engaging in Jesus' Mission

Damien Lee, International Vice President

We have three new strategies for engaging Jesus' mission in International. Each strategy represents communities transformed by the Gospel, new churches planted, and unreached people encountering Jesus. These three strategies bring alignment and clarity to our work as we partner in our shared global mission: Church Development, Relief & Development, and Marketplace.

We will go, as we always have, to the hard places in the world—the untilled soil—where Jesus isn't yet known. The strategies might have shifted over the years, but the core is unchanged: we are God's agents of light amidst darkness, hope amidst despair, and healing amidst brokenness. We are the very presence of Jesus in places that need him most. I am deeply thankful for God's continued provision and guidance as we engage God's mission of multiplying disciples in the "hard and dark" places of the world.

International Strategies Summary

We want our ministry to be as effective as possible. Rather than defining our workers by geographic region alone, we're building alignment around expertise and skillsets. Marshalling our work with an eye toward the following strategies will allow for more cross-pollination, innovation, and expertise between international workers in different regions, as we labour together to make Jesus known.

Church Development

Church Development exists for places and people groups among whom there are no believers and the "church" has not yet emerged—or where there are very few believers, and the church is just beginning to emerge. We establish faith communities among least-reached people groups because a viable church can effectively and intentionally reach people with the Gospel.

We facilitate gatherings to bring about the birth, development, growth, and multiplication of viable churches where few have ever heard the name of Jesus. We aim to establish self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting communities that can effectively and intentionally reach their own people and beyond. International churches are an important part of this strategy, as they catalyze global mission mobilization through discipleship of transnational migrants in the global diaspora.

Relief & Development

Across the world, vulnerable communities are battered by man-made and natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, drought and war. The Alliance Canada is committed to enter these spaces as emissaries of the good news, providing relief and support in the name of Jesus. Through the



Relief & Development: Participate in God's mission of holistic transformation, proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel as we walk with the poor and vulnerable, and address short-term crises and long-term needs.



Marketplace: Engage people with your vocational skills as ambassadors of Christ in cross-cultural contexts and receive care, community, and coaching from Alliance teams.

Relief & Development strategy, we demonstrate the Gospel by responding to both short-term crises and long-term needs, especially among the poor and vulnerable. In partnership with The Alliance World Fellowship (AWF), churches, non-government organizations, and others, we engage in relief efforts for the victims of disasters. Our goal is not to do development ‘to’ people but ‘with’ people. As such, we work in concert with local partners in project preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Community Development is a key factor in serving vulnerable communities, within and beyond the scope of a short-term crisis. As such, we seek to develop relationships with partners in line with our integral mission principles.

Marketplace

The Marketplace strategy engages Christians who are not professional ministers, whether they go as professionals or entrepreneurs starting businesses.

We mobilize Marketplace international workers as ambassadors of Christ to enter cross-cultural contexts through their profession. They carry the Gospel wherever they go, making disciples among the least-reached and the global diaspora.

Among their local and international co-workers, and in the neighbourhoods where they live, Marketplace international workers will make disciples who become disciple-makers, mobilizing them to carry the Gospel to other countries. The seeds will be scattered as they repatriate, or continue their work in new places.

Business for Transformation (B4T) is an important partnership of entrepreneurs and investors

within the Marketplace strategy. Business For Transformation maximizes social, economic, environmental, and spiritual transformations in communities through sustainable, kingdom-impact businesses, especially within vulnerable sectors. To begin or become involved with a Business For Transformation venture, entrepreneurial business start-ups will fall somewhere on a continuum. Some projects lean toward community development, while others are more clearly oriented to be for-profit businesses. That being the case, we will bring clarity to where on the continuum a venture lands, and then articulate the implications of that clarity.

Mobilization and partnership undergirds everything we do; in each of these strategic drivers we will collaborate and partner with like-minded ministries, organizations, and the global Church to mobilize local believers, faith communities, and national churches to make Jesus known in the hardest and darkest places.

To the regions beyond

A.B Simpson paraphrased Romans 15:20 when he said: “[Our] movement stands for a commitment to reach the most-neglected field...to avoid the beaten tracks of other labourers...to press on to the regions beyond...to preach the Gospel where Christ has not been named.”

We will, as we always have, multiply disciples everywhere as we fulfill The Great Commission. ✞

Rev. Dr. Damien Siew Hing Lee is passionate about developing and empowering leaders of diverse backgrounds who are committed to advancing the Kingdom in the hardest and darkest regions of the world.



Letter from an Impractical Dreamer

Kim Peters

“You’re a dreamer.” I can still feel the sting of those words so many years ago, when I realized that some considered my view of the world unrealistic. Not sensible. Impractical. Useless. Stupid. That label stuck hard, and to some extent still lurks in my soul’s shadow.

The first time I felt a deep call from God to paint, I wondered if I was just being a dreamer. I’d never really painted before, except maybe in art class. I came from an artistic family, sure, but how on earth could I be called to paint? Was God actually calling me to be an artist? Did he do that kind of thing? And if so, how could he possibly use it practically for His Kingdom? So, I did what I always do in moments of heaviness and uncertainty: I called my mom. “You want to know if God is calling you to paint? Paint and see what happens.”

I knew from that first brushstroke that I was meant to paint. I felt an urgent desire to push forward into art ministry, but I also doubted how clearly I was hearing God. Was I just dreaming again? I had a young family, and no guarantee of what the future might hold. We decided to choose passion over paycheck; to choose the unknown, the dream, over what we could see.

Fast forward a few years and I’m a painter living and working in Spain, living the dream.

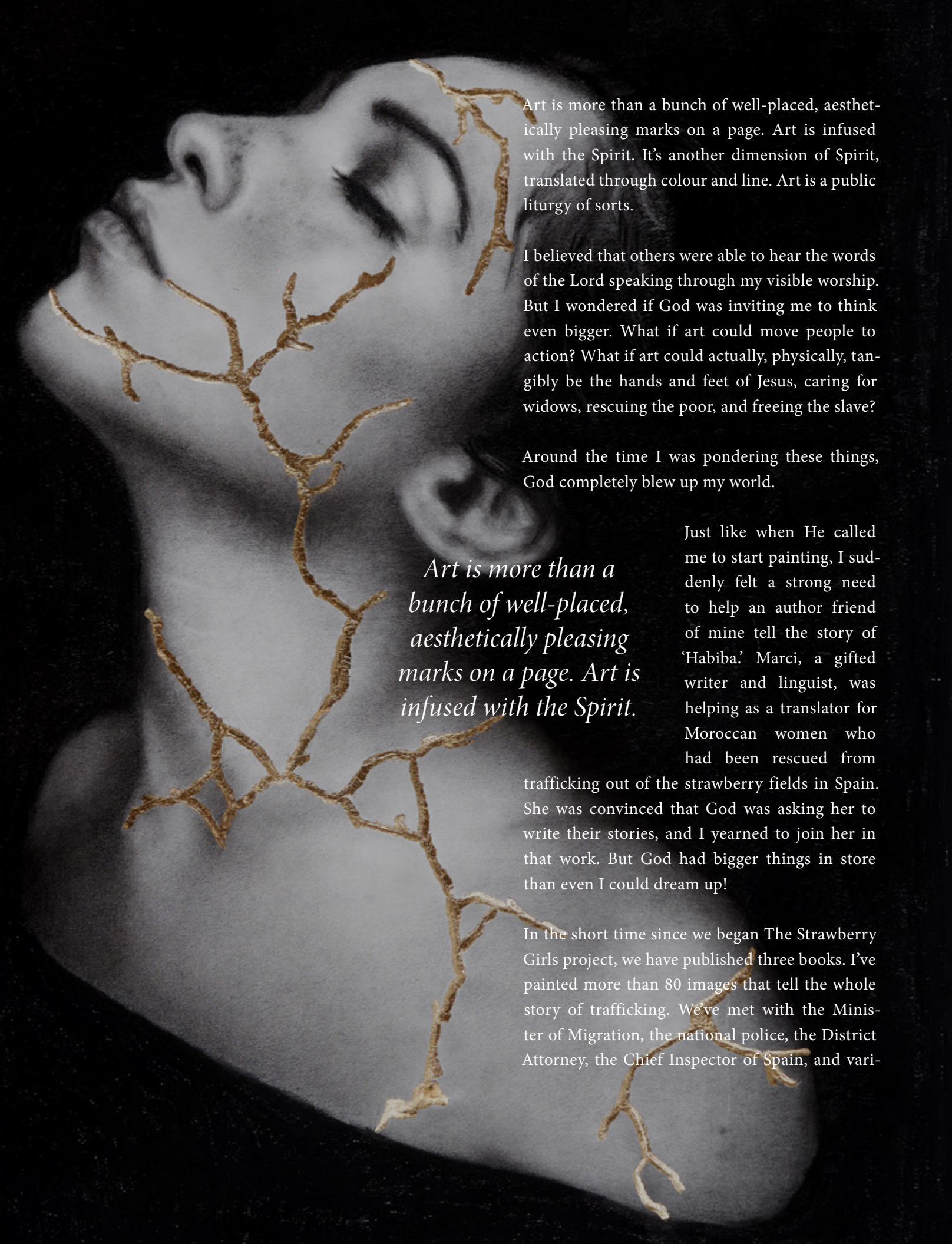
A woman once visited the studio and told me I was in a ‘Joseph moment.’ I didn’t know whether to say ‘thank you’ or repent.



Joseph was an annoying dreamer who drove everyone nuts. That sounded like me. Joseph spoke without thinking and constantly got himself into trouble. Again, I could relate. Joseph’s siblings nearly killed him. My family was pretty gracious, although I’m sure murderous thoughts crossed my brother’s mind from time to time. I’m glad he didn’t sell me off and lie to my parents about it.

What if a ‘Joseph moment’ had something to do with being chosen as a dreamer?

Little whispers ran through my mind. Maybe being a dreamer isn’t wrong. Maybe I was made this way on purpose. Maybe I’m not broken. Maybe I was created on purpose, for this present moment. Slowly I realized that my deepest pleasure in life was obeying His calling to create. And it was also His deepest pleasure in me. To be an artist meant that I was made in His image, patterned after the First Artist. What a humbling privilege it was to embrace that dream.



Art is more than a bunch of well-placed, aesthetically pleasing marks on a page. Art is infused with the Spirit. It's another dimension of Spirit, translated through colour and line. Art is a public liturgy of sorts.

I believed that others were able to hear the words of the Lord speaking through my visible worship. But I wondered if God was inviting me to think even bigger. What if art could move people to action? What if art could actually, physically, tangibly be the hands and feet of Jesus, caring for widows, rescuing the poor, and freeing the slave?

Around the time I was pondering these things, God completely blew up my world.

Art is more than a bunch of well-placed, aesthetically pleasing marks on a page. Art is infused with the Spirit.

Just like when He called me to start painting, I suddenly felt a strong need to help an author friend of mine tell the story of 'Habiba.' Marci, a gifted writer and linguist, was helping as a translator for Moroccan women who had been rescued from

trafficking out of the strawberry fields in Spain. She was convinced that God was asking her to write their stories, and I yearned to join her in that work. But God had bigger things in store than even I could dream up!

In the short time since we began The Strawberry Girls project, we have published three books. I've painted more than 80 images that tell the whole story of trafficking. We've met with the Minister of Migration, the national police, the District Attorney, the Chief Inspector of Spain, and vari-

ous NGOs who help fight trafficking. We take our show on the road all over Spain, into town halls and universities. We have been interviewed by the press and radio. There is even a documentary being made about Habiba's story. Our ministry has grown into a call for cultural change, sparking an abolitionist movement.

Art is taking on a mafia. Art meets with the powers that lead the country. Art is the tangible hands and feet of Jesus. One of the great joys of my life is teaching art to rescued women.

It sparks conversation. It impacts hearts and minds in a way that only God can engineer.

The road we walk is not easy. It is intense, difficult, and fraught with long hours. Sometimes I have to remind myself that I was chosen for this, especially when I am so exhausted I can hardly put two words together. When I fear the dangers inherent in fighting evil, or the criticism that inevitably comes with being a public figure, I reflect back onto how clearly God directed my steps to this place, for this moment.



Dreams are not impractical. We all carry the divine DNA, so we all have God-given art on the inside of us. That gift can have a tremendous impact on people. Like Joseph, His grace in us can save a whole nation.

"I think that all things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth, the imagination not least." — C.S. Lewis †

Kim Peters was born in Calgary, married to Kurt, and together they raised three kids, all born abroad in Mexico. Now the co-founder of an activist NGO called The Strawberry Girls, she works as an artist to raise awareness and bring an end to human trafficking in Spain.

Visit strawberrygirls.org to learn more or donate on their project page at: thealliancecanada.ca/gift/strawberry-girls/



A Church for the City

Milissa Ewing

When my husband, Jay, and I arrived at Redwood Park Church for our candidating weekend almost four years ago, one of the first things that caught our eye in the foyer was a large poster featuring the Sleeping Giant, a local landmark, with words superimposed on top: “Church for the City.”

As we met the staff and board, we could see that this was not just a nice slogan: it was the heart-beat of the church. Given that we had a similar heart for the local church to be on local mission, when the church offered us positions we said “yes.” I accepted the role of Lead Pastor, and Jay served as the Pastor of Spiritual Formation. We knew God was in it.

Two years later, as we came out of the pandemic and could meet fully in person again, we launched a new sermon series, “Church for the City,” in which we explored how the Jewish exiles in the Old Testament served God and blessed their city—even when they were in cities that did not yet know God. The series ended with a sermon from Nehemiah 1.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king in Susa and got word that the walls of Jerusalem were broken, the gates burned, and the returned exiles disgraced. An ancient city without walls and gates was vulnerable. Nehemiah’s heart was broken for his people and he responded with fasting and prayer. A time for action would come, but first he needed to seek the Lord.

In Nehemiah’s prayer, he reminds God of God’s past deeds. He implores God not to forget his covenant people, and he asks God to give him favour when the time for action comes. He also does something unexpected: he confesses his personal and family sins, as well as the sins of the nation.

“... ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.” (Nehemiah 1:6-7)

This confessional portion of the prayer was essential because God had big plans for Nehemiah and Jerusalem. If Nehemiah and the people could not own up to how they had walked away from God, they were likely to do it again. If they could not throw themselves at God’s feet in a posture of humility and dependence, they might remain prideful, and become a stumbling block in God’s big plans for Jerusalem. The more their hearts were aligned with God, the more God could work in and through them.

At the end of the sermon I posed a question to our community: “How is God breaking your heart for the things that break His?” Knowing that God could speak to us collectively through our broken hearts, we gathered the answers and looked for commonalities. We determined the four biggest things breaking Redwood’s collective heart were as follows:

1. Personal sin patterns that people could not shake.
2. Past church sin that resulted in people walking away from church or Jesus.
3. Loved ones who are far from God.
4. Overwhelming issues that plague Northwestern Ontario, that can only be solved with a God-sized plan.

This led us to a second question: “What do we need to confess, and of what do we need to repent, before God will invite us into His plans for our loved ones and our city?” Thus, we entered into an intentional season of repentance.

The Gospel of Mark record Jesus’ first words as he began his public ministry:

“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15)

To repent is to turn towards Jesus and, therefore, turn away from the things in our lives that lead us away from him. The Greek word for “repentance” in this passage is “metanoia,” which means a changed mind and a transformed heart. Embedded within repentance is an acknowledgement of

the things in our lives that are not in alignment with Jesus and His Kingdom. We must confess our sins. In our Redwood context, confession and repentance became a beautiful invitation from God: “I am coming near! The Kingdom is about to break out in your city! Repent and believe the Good News!”

Over the past few years, many individuals have confessed personal sins and we have corporately confessed the collective sins of Redwood. The more we have done this, the more we have seen the Holy Spirit showing up. Our sins break, rather than build up, our lives, our church, and our city. Every time we individually and collectively throw off and renounce these sins, the Holy Spirit replaces them with more of Himself.

In all of my years of ministry I have never seen the Holy Spirit move as profoundly and powerfully as He has in our church over the last year. God is doing holy and sacred work, person by person, and these are not my stories to tell. But I can say that the Holy Spirit is being poured out and the Fruit of Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25 – the evidence of a Spirit-filled life), is growing at Redwood. People are meeting Jesus for the first time and others are re-dedicating their lives to Him. Confession and repentance are now a core practice in our community because we do not want anything standing between us and Jesus.

Like Nehemiah after his repentance prayer, we know it is time for more intentional action in Northwestern Ontario. To that end, we are looking forward to adding a Pastor of Missional Engagement to our team this Fall. God has a dream for Northwestern Ontario and we count it a blessing that He has invited us to participate in His good work.

“The kingdom of God has come near [to Thunder Bay]. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15)

Let it be so! ☞

Millisa is the Lead Pastor at Redwood Park Church in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where she serves alongside her husband Jay, the Pastor of Spiritual Formation. Together, Jay and Millisa have two teenage daughters and they all love exploring God’s creation and discovering good local restaurants and coffee shops. Millisa is committed to God’s ministry of reconciliation and is passionate about seeing men & women grow into the people God made them to be, fully participating in God’s vision to see Thunder Bay become one of the best places to live in Canada for all people.

How is God breaking your heart for the things that break His?

Read Nehemiah 1 and prayerfully consider:

1. How has God broken your heart for what breaks His?
2. What might you need to confess and repent of before you can participate in God’s plan?
3. What does being a “Church for the city” look like in your local context?



Don Orr

Seeing potential in others is key to the expansion of the kingdom of God.

I met Tim when I served at the international church in Warsaw. I asked this young international worker what he dreamed of doing, and Tim told me he wanted to see an English-speaking church right in the heart of the city. I gave him two years to make his dream a reality. Tim had never even preached a sermon, but 27 months later, City Church was planted—right in the heart of the city!

I think my impact on Tim and the church he established came simply from believing in him.

I believed in Tim before he believed in himself. Jesus took a ragtag group of twelve and transformed the world. Paul traveled to a city, shared the gospel and established a church, turning it over to untested elders and trusting God’s Spirit to lead them.

We need to believe in others.

As we look to “double our reach” in the next 10 years, it will require trusting untested people to do amazing things. If we want to multiply disciples everywhere, we need help.

When I served in Poland I sent out a prayer letter photo with the words “Help Wanted.” This led to the first of our Ambrose interns joining us in Poland. She and her husband had a lasting impact on the youth of our Polish church, including our daughter. Another intern, Jonathan, began a student church with Norwegian medical students that met in our home. He later went on to serve in Germany and then central Asia.

While at the international church in Warsaw, we invested in a number of young people and helped train them to serve. Most of the current leadership of the church came out of that group of young people.

*We need to believe
in others.*

Perhaps that is the best word to use: “invested.” A pastor heading overseas invested in me as a teenager, leading to the first message I ever delivered at the age of 15. That was a transforming event. Time and again I have seen other examples of how the investment of time and prayer have changed lives and expanded the kingdom.

So how can you invest in others? Be open to the Spirit’s leading, take time to pray and then to engage with the person God has led you to. Believe in them more than they believe in themselves. Equip, encourage and release them to serve.

One young Arab man I disciplined had to flee because of persecution. We were able to connect him with a local church in his new location where

they too saw God’s hand in this man’s life. They invested in him and gave him opportunities to serve. Now he is serving the Lord faithfully, along with his new wife. He has completed training with another organization as a cross-cultural worker.

Another couple spent years with us but needed to leave their overseas assignment to care for an aging parent. They recently moved to a new part of their community in Canada in order to better connect with refugees whose language they learned overseas.

As my wife and I draw near to retirement, and in our role as area directors, I am committed to doubling my reach for Christ. That means identifying and investing in others who can go to places I cannot go, who can do things impossible for me to do, and who can be effective ambassadors for Jesus. In Canada and around the world, there are opportunities for each of us to invest in the growth of others, and transformation of the world.

How about you? The Help Wanted sign is still posted. Inquire within. ☞

Don and his wife Betty have served with the Alliance since 1994. First as church planters in Saskatchewan, then 20 years in Poland and 5 in the Middle East. Today they reside in Central Asia and serve as area directors (ADs) for The Alliance Canada.

Visit thealliancecanada.ca/gift/don-and-betty/ to financially partner with Don and Betty.

Explore the process of becoming
an international worker
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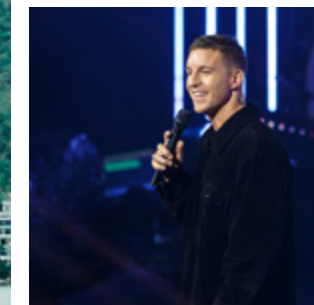
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CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

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