

# CanadaWatch

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## How do Christians live out our witness in this new context?

By David Guretzki, executive vice-president and resident theologian of the EFC

After a recent speaking event, I chatted with a person dismayed by the loss of Trinity Western University's Supreme Court case. I affirmed her dismay but also reminded her of signs that religious freedom is still being protected. For example, weeks earlier the same court, in the *Wall* case, protected a church in making a disciplinary decision.

But we aren't surprised Canada is increasingly moving toward what many call a post-Christian society. Discouraging, yes, but it's vital to discern that we are that much closer to the conditions that existed for the first-century church.

In the decades after Christ's ascension, the Way as it was called (e.g., Acts 9:2, 19:9,

24:14, etc.) was strange sounding and sometimes threatening to the society in which it appeared. Christians in Canada are still getting used to the idea that we aren't perceived as positively as once we were.

How should we live out our witness in this new context?

Some influential Christian thinkers advocate the Church disengaging from cultural, legal, political and social institutions. The Church should refocus on equipping Christians to teach our children, care for our elderly, sick and weak, while ministering to one another without reliance on the services of the State and broader culture.



Such goals are laudable, but disengagement might remove whatever salt and light remains. While there are deep ideological changes afoot, we mustn't forget there is no place on earth that is beyond Jesus' lordship. Jesus cares about and is present in courts, legislatures, health and social care systems, and schools and educational institutions.

Others advocate a more aggressive agenda where the Church storms the powers and seeks to win back lost territory. We must strategically place Christians in positions of influence in education, politics, law and medicine, they argue, if we are going to see a culture return to the ways of God.

These goals are laudable also, but aggressive maneuvering can mistakenly assume that societal

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### What you can do:

- If you're feeling discouraged right now, know you aren't alone. Find someone to pray with for our country. We are strengthened when we kneel together.
- Keep up to date at [www.TheEFC.ca](http://www.TheEFC.ca) on the issues the EFC, with your help, is engaged with.
- Dig into your neighbourhood life as a faithful witness. That is something we can all do always to keep the light of Christ shining in Canada.

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changes are made through political and ideological power plays, rather than through the leading and strength of our Spirit-filled witness to Jesus.

What then should we do?

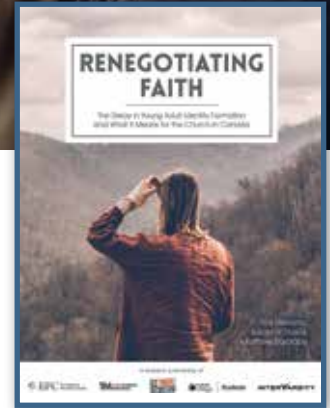
The early Church's cultural strategy isn't always easy to discern. That's because the Church at its best is led by the Holy Spirit whose direction, like the wind, cannot always be predicted (John 3:8).

In some cases, being led by the Spirit meant appealing directly to the political powers (as Paul did in Acts 25:11) or engaging in the marketplace of ideas as one voice among many (as Paul did at Athens in Acts 17). And sometimes it meant enduring persecution, even to the point of death (Stephen in Acts 7).

The Church in Canada must be ready (first) to be led by the Spirit and then (second) to be prepared patiently, humbly, sacrificially and courageously to engage or withdraw as we discern the Spirit's leading. A one-size fits all strategy doesn't necessarily align with King Jesus' sovereign ways.

This means the Church need not despair in these days when we are increasingly pushed to the margins. Rather, faithful Christians should take comfort that the Spirit of Jesus is at work even today, as in the first century, leading and guiding the Church in carrying out her mission – provided that we have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. And then the courage to do it.

At the EFC it is our prayer that we would follow the strategy of being led by the Spirit. Sometimes we are called upon to speak before Parliament or the courts, and we pray that we will be faithful in doing so. Other times, we bring our denominational and organizational affiliates together to research, respond and facilitate ministry in Canada's rapidly changing context. Whatever the case, will you pray with us that we all – you and we together – would use the resources God has stewarded to us, and that we would do it with faithfulness, courage and in the power of the Holy Spirit?



## Renegotiating Faith is now available

**T**he report on Young Adult Transition Research that you have been hearing about for months has now been released. The EFC and its partners want this research to be a gift to the Church. Download your free PDF copy at [www.RenegotiatingFaith.ca](http://www.RenegotiatingFaith.ca).

"It is ministry research. It is cross-disciplinary, as all ministry is," explains lead researcher Rick Hiemstra. "It is part sociology, part theological reflection, part psychology, part media theory, part philosophy and part ministry application." Hiemstra describes the project as research for the Church and for those who minister to youth and young adults. "Everyone connected to this project cares deeply about removing barriers to faith for youth and young adults and helping them to mature and grow their Christian faith."

*Renegotiating Faith: The Delay in Young Adult Identity Formation and What It*

**"It is part sociology, part theological reflection, part psychology, part media theory, part philosophy and part ministry application."**

*Means for the Church in Canada* is the fruit of a research partnership between Power to Change—Students, InterVarsity, Youth for Christ, Truth Matters Ministries and the EFC. Readers of the report will learn about the status of emerging adulthood for Canadian youth, reasons why youth who move away from home can end up leaving the Church, and reasons why they stay.

Readers will also hear firsthand from many of the youth interviewed for the research and will be encouraged to explore some of the simple ways churches can work together to nurture the faith of the youth they care so much about.

**You can hear Rick Hiemstra explain the research even more in a 25-minute interview at [www.TheEFC.ca/Podcasts](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Podcasts). Or watch our 45-minute webinar featuring key members of the research team, recorded in early October ([www.TheEFC.ca/Webinars](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Webinars)).**



## Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

Thank you for your ongoing and faithful support of the work and mission of the EFC. I have a question for you. Is there someone in your circle to whom you could introduce the work of the EFC? We believe the work we do together is more relevant than ever – including our work on Parliament Hill, *Faith*

*Today*, and our work in resourcing Canadian Christians and churches with initiatives and research like the just released *Renegotiating Faith* report. We think there are more Canadian Evangelicals out there who would benefit from being invited into this work, and we'd love if you would help us with it. If you will, please give that some thought. The EFC is as fully engaged as we have ever been, and changing conditions in Canada indicate this work is as necessary as it has ever been.

## Palliative Care Toolkit is being used by Canadian churches

When the EFC released its most recent resource for church and small group study, the *Palliative Care Toolkit*, we also invited Canadians who had experienced palliative care in their lives as caregivers to send us their stories. We were amazed at the response. Stories slipped in almost weekly, and they were moving testimonies of the love, care and hard work associated with providing palliative care to those we love. Read them at [www.TheEFC.ca/Your-Palliative-Care-Stories](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Your-Palliative-Care-Stories).



The EFC received a phone call recently requesting 40 copies of the booklet to be used in a discussion group at a local church. "That fits our vision for the booklet exactly," explains Beth Hiemstra, editor of the resource. "We hope that churches will request copies and have these important conversations about our faith and palliative care, and learn what they can do in their own communities to better care for friends, family and neighbours nearing the end of their lives."

The booklet is divided into four sections: Understanding Palliative Care, Why Palliative Care Matters, Ways Canadians are Engaged in Palliative Care, and Getting Involved. Each section includes stories, tips, facts and resources to help Canadians on this journey.



You can view the booklet online at [www.TheEFC.ca/PalliativeToolkit](http://www.TheEFC.ca/PalliativeToolkit) or request your own copies toll-free at 1-866-302-3362.



## Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Canada Summer Jobs** In a meeting with EFC staff and representatives from other faith groups, Employment Minister Patty Hajdu indicated she is planning changes to the problematic attestation for next year's Canada Summer Jobs program. Release of the 2019 guidelines and application period are expected later this fall.

Several legal challenges of the new attestation have been launched by Christian organizations, including two EFC affiliates, as well as several non-profits and small businesses. The timing of these hearings is still in process. The EFC plans to intervene in one or more of these cases. [www.TheEFC.ca/SummerJobs](http://www.TheEFC.ca/SummerJobs)

■ **Human Trafficking** The federal government is developing a new national strategy to combat human trafficking, set to be released in winter 2019. The EFC's Public Policy Director Julia Beazley has participated in Public Safety Canada's consultations on what should be included in a new national strategy. [www.TheEFC.ca/HumanTrafficking](http://www.TheEFC.ca/HumanTrafficking)

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■ **Criminal Justice** A new bill which proposes many changes to Canada's *Criminal Code* and criminal justice system would also make it possible for several serious offences related to human trafficking, assaulting clergy and infanticide to be considered as less serious summary offences. In a written submission made in September, the EFC has asked the House of Commons' Justice Committee to make changes to Bill C-75. EFC staff are expected to appear before the Justice Committee this fall to further explain our concerns. [www.TheEFC.ca/c75](http://www.TheEFC.ca/c75)

**NOTE:**

If Canada Post does go on strike, please consider making your gifts to the EFC online. It's easy and efficient at [www.TheEFC.ca/donate](http://www.TheEFC.ca/donate).

If you'd like to call us for any assistance, we are happy to help. Please call 1-866-302-3362. Thank you!

## Film screening opportunity for EFC affiliates

**B**ecause of *Grácia* is a "must-see" film for youth groups, churches and schools, says Joel Gordon, creative director for the EFC. The film's "strong production value, compelling story, and thought-provoking companion study guide" make it a great community conversation starter, he says.

The EFC is making a special invitation to Canadian churches and ministry affiliates to host ticketed screening events of this film, which has already had a theatrical release in the United States. (The directors are from Saskatchewan.)

For a church, school or ministry organization to host a movie screening is simple, explains Gordon. There is no cost to the host, and a DVD and promotional material are sent directly to the screening organizers.

The film shines an entertaining, insightful and heart-warming light on issues surrounding teen dating and freedom of religion. It presents an opportunity to unearth biblical perspectives and to spark conversations with youth, young adults, parents and church leaders about timely issues facing teens in Canada today.

After premiering in Saskatoon in April 2018, the first two screening events are scheduled for **Toronto at Willowdale Baptist Church, Oct. 13, 2018** and in **Ottawa at The Metropolitan Bible Church, Oct. 20, 2018**.

If your church chooses to join the tour schedule, the EFC will list your screening on a free community calendar and help create awareness for all the screening events across Canada.

For more information about how to host visit [www.TheEFC.ca/movietour](http://www.TheEFC.ca/movietour)

To find out more about the film visit [www.becauseofgracia.com](http://www.becauseofgracia.com).



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The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (*Alliance évangélique du Canada*) is the national association "uniting Evangelicals to bless Canada in the name of Jesus." Since 1964 the EFC has provided a national forum for Evangelicals, fostered ministry partnerships, conducted research on religious and social trends and provided a constructive voice for biblical principles in life and society.

