

CanadaWatch

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EFC work on MAID continues

The law allowing Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) for people with mental illness was set to take effect in March 2023.

The government has announced it will seek a delay of this expansion to give medical practitioners time to prepare for it. The justice minister has made it clear they plan to go ahead with the expansion, without legislating any additional safeguards. At time of publication, it's not known how long a delay the government will propose.

The EFC is grateful for the Canadian Christians – including *Canada Watch* readers – who expressed their concerns to their MPs in response to multiple EFC calls for engagement. We believe it is making a difference.

Many Canadian Christians were galvanized to action by media reports of citizens applying for MAID because they can't afford to live or can't access care.

Poverty and the fear of homelessness are driving some people with disabilities to request hastened death. It has become easier for people to access MAID than the care and supports they need to live.

A statement signed by many EFC affiliate leaders declares, "As followers of Jesus, we share a deep and profound commitment to the sanctity of all human life. Human life is being devalued and discarded when people in vulnerable situations among us are not being supported to live, but facilitated to die."

Even as we are encouraged there will be a delay in expansion, we know we must continue to act. Prayer is central. Let's ask God to intervene, to change hearts and minds, to give us wisdom on how to act and how to love our neighbours, to bless our efforts and our country.



Alongside Christian leaders, we can commit to:

- demonstrate the love of God in the lives of those feeling abandoned and without hope;
- mobilize our churches and communities to care for those in their communities who are suffering and alone;
- ensure people with disability, chronic illness and mental health struggles are welcomed into full belonging in our churches and communities.

More interaction with MPs can help. Please send in the postcard enclosed **and** call your MP's office. Let your MP and their office staff know, "I just mailed a postcard. I'm very concerned. Please stop the expansion of MAID." Give the

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How you can help

- Send the enclosed postcard to your Member of Parliament. Follow up with a phone call. Such simple acts do make a difference.
- Download *Life Together: Disability and Belonging in the Church* from the EFC website, read it and share it with others.
- Please continue to pray and support our shared mission to bless Canada in the name of Jesus.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



SANCTITY OF LIFE



CHURCH & MISSION



FAMILY & COMMUNITY



CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE

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second postcard to a friend and share these concerns with them.

Find your MP's contact information at ourcommons.ca/members.

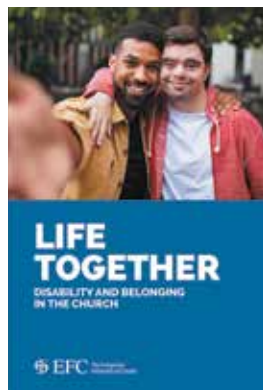
New EFC Resource on Disability and Belonging

The EFC is happy to announce the release of a new resource: *Life Together: Disability and Belonging in the Church*. It centres the voices and gifts of people with disabilities in line with a central tenet in the disability community – “Nothing about us without us.” In the resource advocates and leaders in the disability community help identify ableism in churches and suggest where we can begin to make changes. It is the support of EFC donors that enable our team to create important and timely resources like this one.

As the EFC has tracked the cultural shift toward more extreme expressions of ableism such as hastened death for people with disabilities, we have realized that we need to consider our attitudes and approaches to people with disabilities, to identify ableism and barriers in our church communities.

As Christians and as local churches, we need to ensure people with diverse abilities can participate fully in the life of the community. We are all part of the Body of Christ, each with unique gifts that enrich the community of believers, regardless of age, ability, health or social condition. We can foster awareness and further understanding of disability and become stronger communities of belonging for all Christians.

Download at
TheEFC.ca/DisabilityAndBelonging



Understanding the Value of the Small Evangelical Church in Canada

Significant Church: Study on small churches released

When we set out to study the small church, we wanted to learn from pastors how the small church can flourish and succeed. We learned pastors have to navigate varying definitions and attitudes toward success, dominated by ones oriented toward numerical growth. So, when a church is not growing numerically, how does a small church pastor feel a sense of success?

Small church pastors often feel successful by looking at things that cannot be counted, budgeted or measured. Some mark success by their ability to see how congregants demonstrate spiritual growth over time. Other pastors think investing in the community and seeing their perceptions toward Christians change is a mark of success. Still, others experience success when they can use their gifts to walk with people in their suffering.

Pastors do not seem to have a problem seeing the significance of ministry in the small church. But when we glanced at popular church literature, conferences and even denomination statistical reports, we noticed those things tend to frame success in terms

of numbers, giving and stature. Churches that fit those definitions of success were celebrated and deemed worthy of attention and imitation.

The partnership for the Canadian Evangelical Small Church Study decided to name their final public report *Significant Church: Understanding the Value of the Small Evangelical Church in Canada*. This title signals to the small church pastors who informed the body of findings that we heard them, care for them and want them to know we see their value.

The title also serves as a signal to the rest of the church community that small churches contribute meaningfully to the Body of Christ. Most evangelical churches in Canada are small, and we risk *significant* effects on the Church if we do not value them appropriately.

To learn more visit www.TheEFC.ca/SignificantChurch



Meet the EFC's new president David Guretzki

David Guretzki is the EFC's new president and CEO as of February 1, after serving as executive vice-president and resident theologian since 2017. He lives in Ottawa, is married to Maureen, and they have three adult children (2 married). He has a PhD in theology and taught at Briercrest College & Seminary for many years, and he's

also an amateur astrophotographer (see his pictures of stars and planets at DavidGuretzki.ca). We asked him four questions to help get to know him even better.

1. One of your titles at the EFC is resident theologian. How will theology impact your work as president?

Most of the crises we've faced as the Church in the past few years relate to our understanding of what the Scriptures teach. We seek to live out God's command to love our neighbours, but how do we do that when they don't necessarily share our Christian perspective? We know Christ prayed that believers would be united in the Holy Spirit, but what do we do when they have differing convictions on matters we believe Scripture addresses? And how do we relate to governments and officials whom God has put in place even when they often seem not to share or hear a Christian view on policies we believe are morally harmful or will have negative public effects? The EFC board has called me to this position to think deeply and theologically about these issues and so my role as a theologian will play right into that task.

2. What are you looking forward to the most in your new role?

Although I've already met many of our affiliate leaders over the years, I'm looking forward to more intentional and extended face-to-face collaboration. My first-year goal is to listen well to our affiliate leaders and hopefully to better support them to face the challenges they have in leading denominations, organizations, schools and congregations.

3. How do you view the role of donors and friends of the EFC who contribute financially and prayerfully to its mission?

Donors and friends are people who, by God's grace, have come to understand the role of the EFC as a collaborative voice of Evangelicals and sacrificially use their God-given gifts to support the ministry. Like the apostle Paul viewed the Philippians, I see our supporters as co-labourers in the gospel who are being used by God to carry out His good work (Philippians 1:5-6). Without their prayer and financial support, the EFC could do nothing.

4. What message do you want to send right now to Canadians who partner with the EFC?

I sense God is calling us to a renewed urgency to pray and fast as we haven't in a long time. I would be thrilled if the EFC played a small role together with our affiliates in seeing such prayer ignited across our nation.

"My first-year goal is to listen well to our affiliate leaders and hopefully to better support them to face the challenges they have in leading denominations, organizations, schools and congregations."



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Declare and resolve statement:** The EFC is coordinating a statement lamenting hastened death that is being signed by the heads of many Christian organizations. "As followers of Jesus, we share a deep and profound commitment to the sanctity of all human life. Human life is being devalued and discarded when people in vulnerable situations among us are not being supported to live, but facilitated to die. How then will we respond?" Signatories also commit to ensuring people with disability, chronic illness and mental health struggles are welcomed into full participation in churches and communities.

■ **Protecting patients and medical staff:** The EFC asked the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to ensure discussions about MAID are initiated by patients, not doctors. "Doctors are in a position of authority. Raising MAID as an option suggests to a patient that the clinician sees their life as not worth living, or that ending their life is something worth considering." The EFC asked the College to protect doctors' conscience rights and to ask for MAID to be included on death certificates as the cause of death.

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■ **Religious freedom, exploitation and life:** A UN committee is reviewing human rights in Canada. The EFC's brief to the committee will urge Canada to address sexual exploitation by ending demand, protect children and youth from harmful sexual images online, meet its international commitments to people with disabilities, change the laws on assisted dying and meet the urgent need for conscience protection in Canadian law, particularly for medical practitioners.

■ **Bill to clarify wording on child abuse and exploitation:** A private member's bill to clarify the wording on child abuse and exploitation in criminal laws is in the House of Commons. The EFC supports Bill C-291, which is at its final stage of debate and votes. If it passes in the Commons, it will proceed to the Senate for the same process. Use our sample letter to email your MP at TheEFC.ca/C-291.

■ **Bill to protect youth from sexually explicit material:** A bill to protect youth from online pornography is moving through the Senate. Bill S-210 would make it an offence to make sexually explicit material available, for a commercial purpose, to minors online. The EFC submitted a supportive brief to a committee and has a sample MP letter at TheEFC.ca/S-210.

EFC partners in Ignite prayer gatherings

The EFC and four other ministry organizations are co-sponsoring evening worship and prayer summits in four cities this spring. Each summit will be preceded by an afternoon prayer seminar for pastors and ministry leaders on strengthening a culture of prayer in the local church.

Ignite gatherings held in partnership with local churches will take place in **Ottawa (April 14), Calgary (April 20), Kelowna (April 28) and Regina (May 5)**. Co-sponsors include the EFC, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Canada, National House of Prayer, Peace and Reconciliation Network, and Vineyard Canada.

Together, we will pray for unity and the spiritual awakening of our churches and communities, the needs of our country and the blessing of God on our land. Thanks to the generosity of the partnership, there is no registration fee for the seminar and a related dinner as well as no fee for the evening summit. There are no barriers to your participation. Let us worship and pray together. **Learn more at TheEFC.ca/Ignite.**



Faith Today TV launching soon

Canadians – and EFC donors in particular – have relied on *Faith Today* magazine for 40 years as a trusted source of news and ideas for Christians. This year, readers new and old can begin to experience some of the best of *Faith Today* journalism brought to life on video.

Faith Today TV will take viewers directly to the people doing the ministry we're reporting on – churches spanning dozens of denominations and traditions who are making a difference in their communities with creative acts of service. It will also bring you some of the thinkers, theologians, poets and pastors helping shape the Church in Canada.


We'll explore how Canadian Christians are applying biblical values to some of Canada's most pressing social issues. There are so many good stories to tell. And now a new way for the EFC and *Faith Today* to tell them. **Find out more at FaithToday.ca.**

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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.

