
IMAGINE

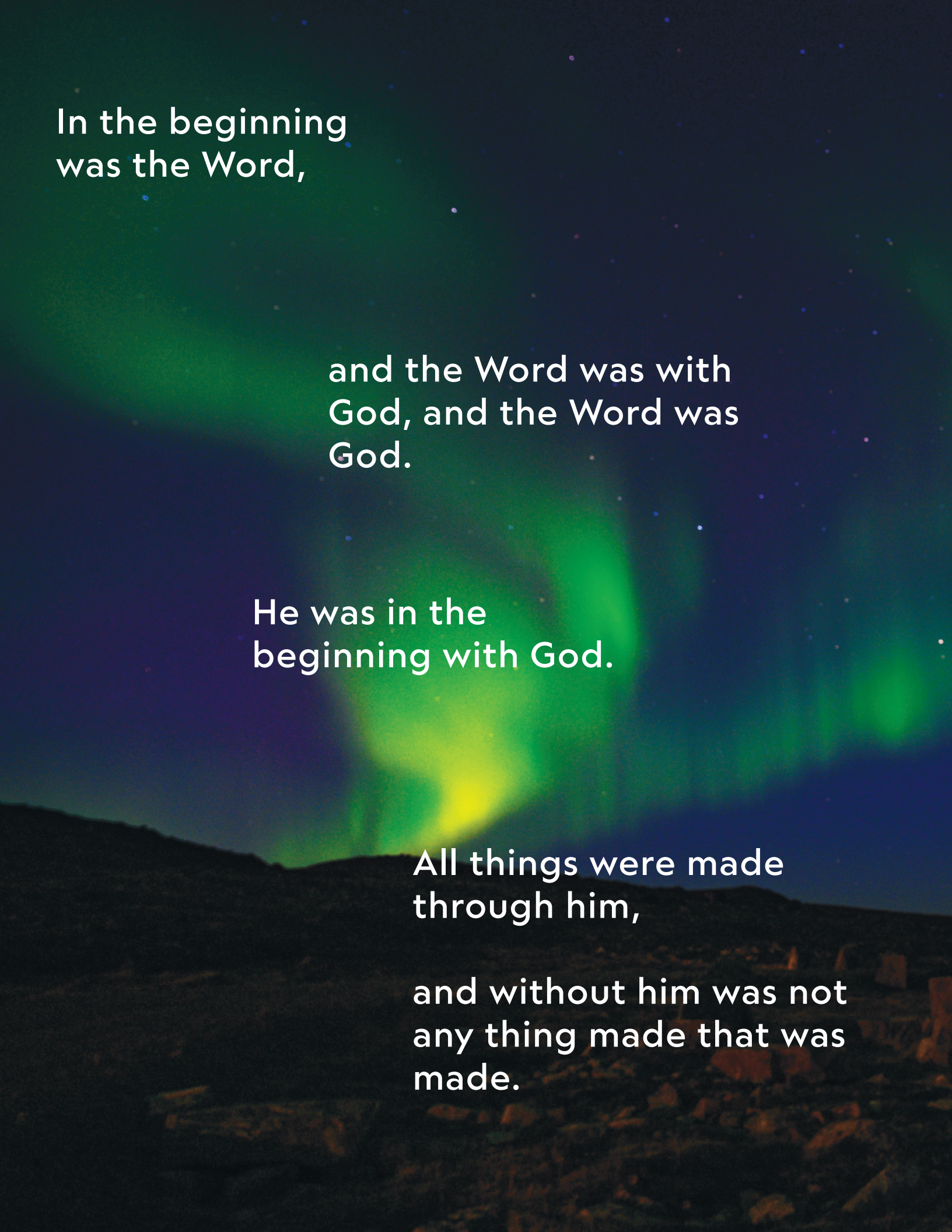
Insights & Inspiration for Canadian Ministry Leaders



A CALL TO SCRIPTURE

The Primacy of the Bible for Public Worship

Scripture Engagement for a Post-Christian Canada
Church as a Collaboration of Holiness
Signs of Hope in Cuba




In the beginning
was the Word,

and the Word was with
God, and the Word was
God.

He was in the
beginning with God.

All things were made
through him,

and without him was not
any thing made that was
made.



In him was life, and the
life was the light of
men.

The light
shines in the
darkness,

and the darkness has
not overcome it.

JOHN 1:1-5

IMAGINE

MINISTRY LEADERS EDITION

ISSUE TWO | 2025

*IMAGINE a future where everyone can hear God's voice.
With dedicated partners, the Canadian Bible Society is realizing the vision of making the Bible accessible
in the languages closest to people's hearts, in a format easy for them to use, and with help to understand it for themselves.
Together, we are fulfilling God's call to unite people of every nation, tribe and language.*



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Ann Chow is a Toronto-based event and project management consultant. She has collaborated with global NGOs such as InterVarsity's Urbana conference, the World Evangelical Alliance, the Lausanne Movement, designing initiatives that align diverse voices and inspire action. Her expertise in leadership, cultural intelligence, and systemic transformation empowers leaders to thrive in complex environments.



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Mike Janzen is a Toronto-based jazz pianist and singer-songwriter whose career took a profound spiritual turn after a 2016 concussion led him to find healing in Scripture. A JUNO-nominated artist and Gospel Music Association award winner, Janzen uses his music to bring hope to others through his faith-centred compositions.

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Andrew Ollerton is a British Bible scholar, pastor, and author known for making complex theological ideas accessible to a broad audience. Andrew works with the British and Foreign Bible Society and is involved in writing, lecturing, and speaking in the UK and overseas. He is the creator of The Bible Course, a popular small group resource used by churches around the world.



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Karen Stiller is the author of several inspirational books, including “Holiness Here: Searching for God in the Ordinary Events of Everyday Life” and “The Minister’s Wife: a memoir of faith, doubt, friendship, loneliness, forgiveness and more.” Her writing has appeared in various publications, including Reader’s Digest and Christianity Today. For 22 years, she served as an editor of the Canadian magazine Faith Today and hosted the Faith Today Podcast.



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Andrew Stirling is a widely-respected preacher, author, and lecturer, who serves as Ambassador for the Canadian Bible Society. Previously, he served as the Senior Minister of Timothy Eaton Memorial United Church in Toronto for over two decades. He holds a Doctor of Ministry in preaching from Acadia Divinity College and has been recognized with an honorary degree and several awards for preaching.



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Ken Shigematsu is the Senior Pastor of Tenth Church in Vancouver, one of Canada’s largest and most diverse city-center churches. He is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal and the bestselling author of “God in My Everything,” “Survival Guide for the Soul,” and “Now I Become Myself.” Before entering pastoral ministry, Ken worked for Sony Corporation in Tokyo. His work focuses on spiritual formation and integrating faith into everyday life.



HENRY VANDERSPEK

Henry VanderSpek is a Toronto-based photographer with a passion for capturing the essence of people and community. His work has been featured in media outlets such as CBC Radio, CBC TV, and the Toronto Star. Additionally, his photographs have been showcased in the CONTACT Photo and DesignTO Festivals. Henry has also provided photography services for several nonprofit organizations, including The Institute for Canadian Citizenship, The Scott Mission and World Vision.



Letter from Rupen

Dear Friend,

In today's world of constant notifications and distractions, our souls crave the clarity and peace that come from hearing God's voice through Scripture. This issue of *Imagine: Ministry Leaders Edition* explores Biblical engagement and literacy at a time when many Canadians are finding their way back to the Bible, yet often lack the tools or community to fully embrace it.

An essay from Cardus president Brian Dijkema explores this trend of increasing openness to faith alongside widespread Biblical illiteracy. We also feature an article from Andrew Ollerton, creator of *The Bible Course*, who notes that many spiritual seekers today are approaching Scripture not with hostility but genuine curiosity—requiring a shift in posture from debate to hospitable guidance.

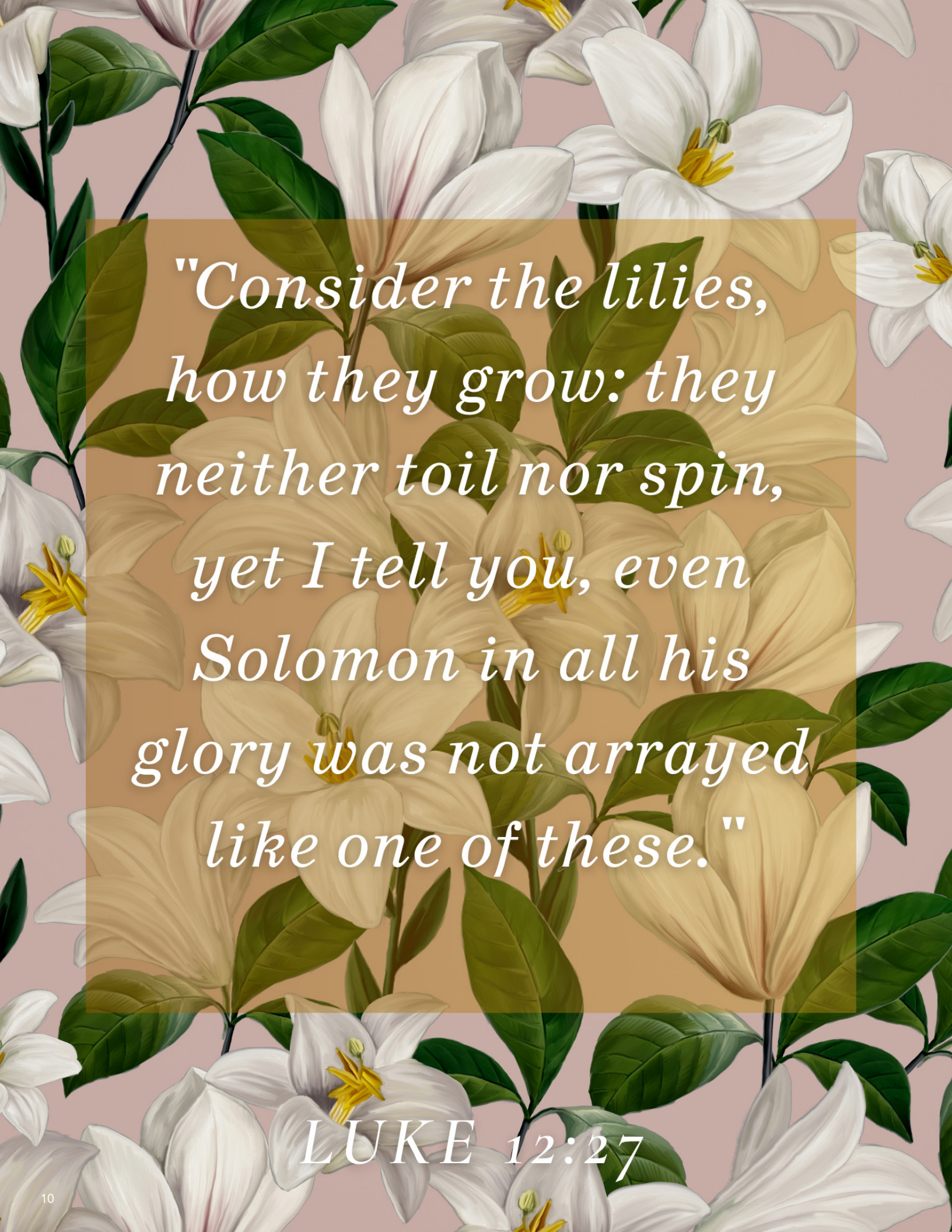
In this issue you will also find wisdom and encouragement from a diverse range of Canadian Christian leaders. Andrew Stirling, Canadian Bible Society's Ambassador, shares insights on how our preaching seminars are equipping pastors, particularly those from diaspora communities. You'll also learn about our expanding ministry to diaspora churches, practical advice on using digital Bible tools, and Ken Shigematsu's advice for spiritual formation amid the demands of life and ministry.

The Canadian Bible Society remains committed to helping people hear God speak through His Word. My prayer is that this issue will inspire you to deepen your own engagement with the Bible and join us in making God's Word accessible to all who seek it.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rupen Das', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Dr. Rupen Das
President, Canadian Bible Society



*"Consider the lilies,
how they grow: they
neither toil nor spin,
yet I tell you, even
Solomon in all his
glory was not arrayed
like one of these."*

LUKE 12:27

INSIGHT

ISSUE TWO

IMAGINE

2025



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- 12. THE BIBLE IS TRENDING...HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?
 - 18. HIDING GOD'S WORD IN MY HEART
 - 20. DIGITAL TOOLS AND BIBLE ENGAGEMENT
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ever, were rebellious in their
Ps. 81:12
nk down in their iniquity.
ess He looked upon their dis-
heard their cry: Judg. 3:9, 6:7
remembered His covenant for
ake, [Lev. 26:42]; Ps. 105:8
ited according to the great-
f His lovingkindness, *was sorry*
ade them 'objects of compas-
Ezra 9:9; Neh. 1:11; Jer. 42:12
sence of all their captors.

D LORD our God, 1 Chr. 16:35f.
er us from among the nations,
hanks to Thy holy name,
in Thy praise. *hous*
e the LORD, the God of Israel,
lasting even to everlasting.
the people say, "Amen."
LORD! *Hallelujah!*

BOOK 5

PSALM 107

Satisfies the Longing Soul

inks to the LORD, for He is
1 Chr. 16:34 • Ezra 3:11; Ps. 100:5
ovingkindness is everlasting,
eemed of the LORD say so,
has redeemed from the hand
adversary, Ps. 75:42; 106:10
ered from the lands, Deut. 30:3
east and from the west,
north and from the south.

dered in the wilderness in a
region; Num. 14:33 • *scante*
not find a way to an inhabited
Ps. 107:7, 9b
hungry and thirsty; *also*
fainted within them. Ps. 77:3
cried out to the LORD in their
Ps. 50:15, 107:13, 19, 28
red them out of their dis-

em also by a straight way,
in inhabited city.
give thanks to the LORD for
ovingkindness, Ps. 107:15, 21, 31
His wonders to the sons of
wonderful acts
is satisfied the thirsty soul,
ungry soul He has filled with
s good. [Matt. 5:6; Luke 1:53]

re those who dwelt in dark-
nd in the shadow of death,
in misery and chains,

all their wisdom was swallowed up

11 Because they had rebelled against the
words of God, Ps. 78:40; 106:7
And spurned the counsel of the Most
High. Prov. 1:25; Is. 5:24 • [Ps. 73:24]
12 Therefore He humbled their heart with
labor;
They stumbled and there was none to
help. [Ps. 22:11; 72:12]
13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their
trouble. Ps. 107:6
He saved them out of their distresses,
14 He brought them out of darkness and
the shadow of death, Ps. 86:13; 107:10
And broke their bands apart. Luke 13:16
15 Let them give thanks to the LORD for
His lovingkindness, Ps. 107:8, 21, 31
And for His wonders to the sons of
men! *wonderful acts*
16 For He has shattered gates of bronze,
And cut bars of iron asunder.

17 Fools, because of their rebellious way,
And because of their iniquities, were
afflicted. [Is. 65:6, 7; Jer. 30:14, 15]
18 Their soul abhorred all kinds of food;
And they drew near to the gates of
death. Job 33:23; Ps. 88:3
19 Then they cried out to the LORD in their
trouble.

He saved them out of their distresses.
20 He sent His word and healed them,
And delivered them from their ¹⁸³de-
structions. Job 33:28, 30; Ps. 90:3; 49:15
21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for
His lovingkindness, Ps. 107:8, 15, 31
And for His wonders to the sons of
men! *wonderful acts*
22 Let them also offer sacrifices of
thanksgiving. Lev. 7:12; Ps. 50:14
And tell of His works with joyful sing-
ing. Ps. 9:11; 73:28; 118:17

23 Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters;
24 They have seen the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
25 For He spoke and raised up a stormy
wind, Ps. 105:31, 34
Which lifted up the waves of the sea.

26 They rose up to the heavens, they went
down to the depths;
Their soul melted away in their misery.
27 They reeled and staggered like a
drunken man, Job 12:25; Is. 24:20
And ¹⁸⁴were at their wits' end.
28 Then they cried to the LORD in their
trouble,
And He brought them out of their dis-
tresses.
29 He caused the storm to be still, Ps. 65:7
So that the waves of the sea were
hushed. *of it*
30 Then they were glad because they were
quiet;
So He guided them to their desired ha-
ven.

31 Let them give thanks to the LORD for
His lovingkindness, Ps. 107:8, 15, 21
And for His wonders to the sons of
men! *wonderful acts* • Ps. 78:4; 111:4
32 Let them extol Him also in the congrega-
tion of the people, Ps. 34:3; 99:5
And praise Him at the seat of the el-
ders. Ps. 35:18
33 He ¹⁸⁵changes rivers into a wilderness,
And springs of water into a thirsty
ground;
34 A fruitful land into a salt waste,
Because of the wickedness of those
who dwell in it.
35 He changes a wilderness into a pool of
water, *turns* • [Is. 35:6, 7] • *desert*
And a dry land into springs of water;
36 And there He makes the hungry to
dwell,
So that they may establish an inhab-
ited city, *a habitable city* • Ps. 107:4, 7
37 And sow fields, and plant vineyards,
And gather a fruitful harvest.
38 Also He blesses them and they multi-
ply greatly; Gen. 12:2; 17:20; Ex. 1:7
And He does not let their cattle de-
crease. [Deut. 7:14]

39 When they are diminished and bowed
down 2 Kin. 10:32; Ezek. 5:11, 29:15
Through oppression, misery, and sor-
row,
40 He pours contempt upon princes,
And makes them wander in a pathless
waste. Job 12:24 • Deut. 32:10
41 But He sets the needy securely on high
away from affliction, 1 Sam. 2:8
And makes his families like a flock.
42 The upright see it, and are glad;
But all unrighteousness shuts its
mouth. Job 5:16; Ps. 63:11; [Rom. 3:19]
43 Who is wise? Let him give heed to
these things; Jer. 9:12; [Hos. 14:9]
And consider the lovingkindnesses of
the LORD. Ps. 107:1

PSALM 108

Awake Early and Praise the Lord

A Song, a Psalm of David.

MY heart is steadfast, O God;
I will sing, I will sing praises, even with
my soul. *glory*
2 Awake, harp and lyre;
I will awaken the dawn!
3 I will give thanks to Thee, O LORD,
among the peoples;
And I will sing praises to Thee among
the nations.
4 For Thy lovingkindness is great above
the heavens; Num. 14:18; Deut. 7:9
And Thy truth reaches to the skies.
5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
And Thy glory above all the earth.
6 That Thy beloved may be delivered,

Save with Thy right hand, and answer
me!

7 God has spoken in His holiness:
"I will exult, I will portion out Shechem,
And measure out the valley of Succoth.
8 Gilead is Mine, Manasseh is Mine;
Ephraim also is the helmet of My head;
Judah is My scepter. [Gen. 49:10]
9 Moab is My washbowl;
Over Edom I shall throw My shoe;
Over Philistia I will shout aloud."
10 Who will bring me into the besieged
city? Ps. 60:9
Who will lead me to Edom? *has led*
11 Hast not Thou Thyself, O God, rejected
us? Ps. 44:9
And wilt Thou not go forth with our
armies, O God?
12 Oh give us help against the adversary,
For deliverance by man is in vain. *of*
13 Through God we shall do valiantly;
And 'tis He who will tread down our
adversaries. In • Is. 60:12; 63:1-4

PSALM 109

Song of the Slandered

For the choir director.
A Psalm of David.

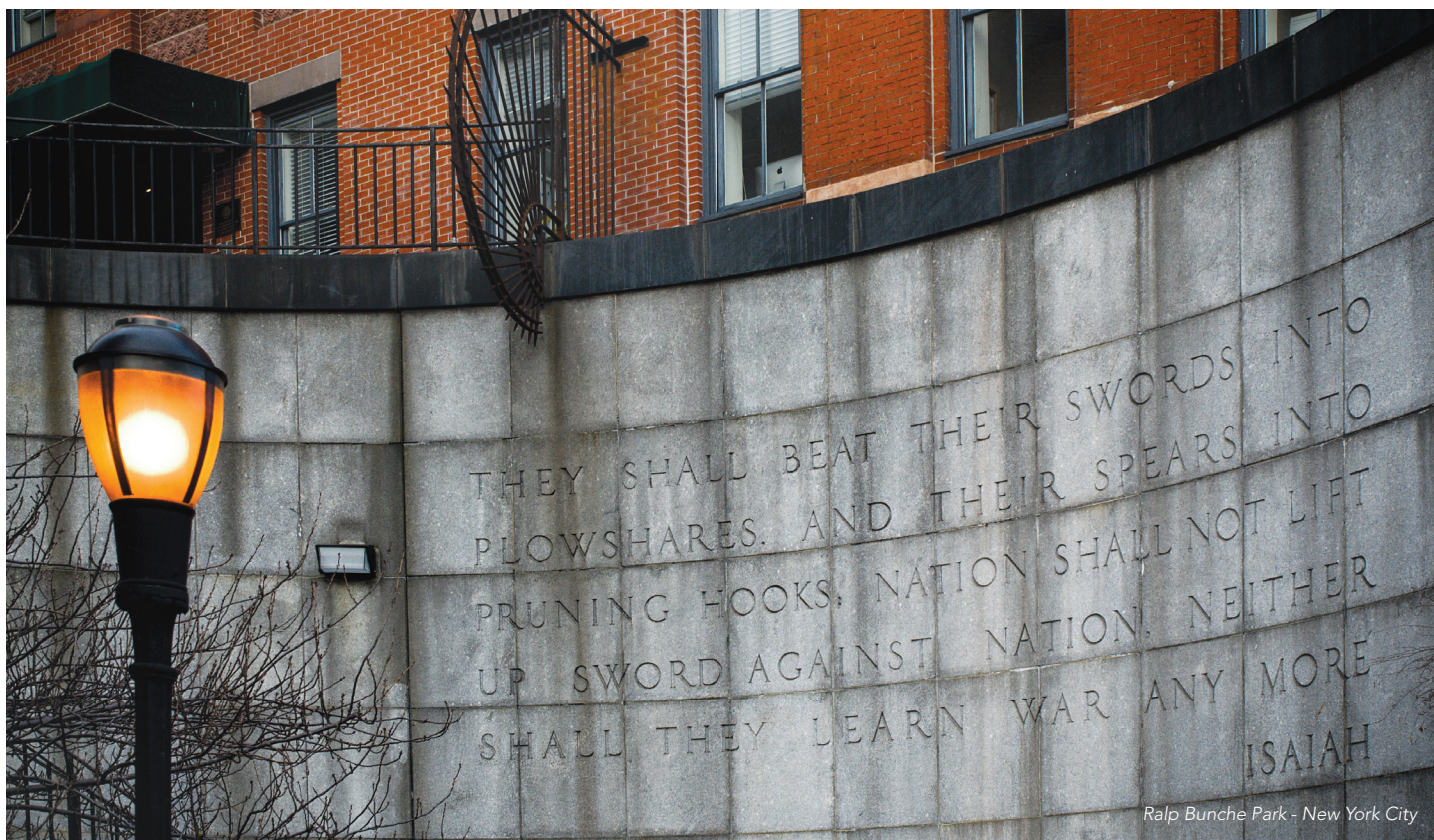
O GOD of my praise, Deut. 10:21
Do not be silent! Ps. 28:1; 83:1
2 For they have opened the wicked and
deceitful mouth against me; Ps. 10:7
They have spoken against me with a
lying tongue. *with* • Ps. 120:2
3 They have also surrounded me with
words of hatred, John 15:23-25
And fought against me without cause.
4 In return for my love they act as my
accusers; Ps. 38:20
But I am in prayer. Ps. 69:13; 141:5
5 Thus they have repaid me evil for
good, *laid upon me* • Ps. 35:12; 38:20
And hatred for my love. [John 7:7; 10:32]
6 Appoint a wicked man over him;
And let an accuser stand at his right
hand. *adversary, Satan* • Zech. 3:1
7 When he is judged, let him come forth
guilty; Ps. 1:5
And let his prayer become sin.
8 Let his days be few; [Ps. 55:23]
Let another take his office. Acts 1:20
9 Let his children be fatherless, Ex. 22:24
And his wife a widow. Jer. 18:21
10 Let his children wander about and beg;
And let them seek sustenance far from
their ruined homes. Ps. 37:25
11 Let the creditor seize all that he has;
And let strangers plunder the product
of his labor. Is. 1:7; Lam. 5:2; Ezek. 7:21

¹⁸³ Or, turns rivers into a desert
¹⁸⁴ Or, sanctuary ¹⁸⁵ Or, lawgiver

The Bible Is Trending ...

How Should We Respond?

by Andrew Ollerton



Ralp Bunche Park - New York City

The Bible is trending in Canada and many other countries, increasingly showing up in various media, political discourse, and cultural expressions. Several factors are playing into this moment. Some of it is coming out of the meaning crisis that secularism has resulted in. Frankly, secularism has exhausted itself—partly because it’s parasitical by nature. It does not have a positive worldview to put forward in replacement of Christianity, but it has fed off Christianity and exhausted itself to the point of decay.

The result is that there is a meaning crisis, and we also see this expressed in the mental health crisis—people fundamentally feeling that there is no hope. One of the main concerns a young person has is: “Is it all gonna be okay?” People look forward with a sense of foreboding and trembling, rather than with conviction that the future is hopeful.

Yet alongside this crisis, there’s also something positive going on. There’s a return to the Christian story—the Judeo-Christian Scriptures—and a recognition that these Scriptures are still with us two thousand years on from their completion. Why is that? Why does it have such depth

and endurance? Why is it still able to provide a sense of meaning and wisdom in an age that doesn’t have much of that, even though it’s two thousand years removed culturally?

This shift in attitudes is beautifully illustrated in a recent experience: My son—one of his friends at school just had their birthday. The friend, when asked what he would like for his birthday—this friend plays football with him, he’s fifteen, a typical young guy—he said, “I’d like one of those New Testaments that you’ve talked about.” He literally wrapped up a copy of the New Testament, gave it to him, and he was delighted.

We see this renewed interest everywhere. In Canada, Jordan Peterson is a very clear voice—controversial, but clear—in arguing that the Christian Scriptures have a real role to play, and many young men have found that the antidote to the meaning crisis comes from the kinds of ideas that he is putting forward. The Chosen has had viral influence. Bear Grylls is talking through the Jesus story. The conversation with Joe Rogan—both with Wes Huff, then subsequently with others—those kinds of conversations are both creating culture and reflecting it. Through the Joe Rogan podcast, millions of people who may have previously dismissed the textual credibility of the New Testament were exposed to compelling evidence for its reliability.

However, this renewed interest brings its own challenges. All of these trends seem so positive, it's easy to then assume the Bible will sweep the board. As soon as everyone in society is positive about the Bible, case closed. But I don't see it that way at all. What happens when something returns to value, is that people will always want to possess it for their own ends. The fact that the Bible is now of increasing cultural value means it's more likely to get caught in the political domain. This becomes a fight of contested meaning—a fight to get the Bible to seem like it endorses your view. The Scriptures have always transcended anyone's particular party or purpose. But they can also be weaponized.

The challenges we face are evolving. I also anticipate there will be a resurgence of hostile voices toward the Bible. Precisely because the Bible is getting a more positive hearing, other online influencers and sceptics are keen to highlight problems with it - either the historical problems

“The fact that the Bible is now of increasing cultural value means it's more likely to get caught in the political domain.”

and apparent contradictions or ethical issues related to the Bible's teaching. We shouldn't think for a minute that if everyone gets interested in the Bible again, we win the day. The Bible is not always an easy text to understand and it can easily be misconstrued and made to sound offensive or unreliable. We will need to learn how to defend the credibility of the Scriptures when they are politicised or misrepresented in the public domain.

The nature of the critique has also shifted. There is growing awareness of the way that Scripture has warfare and violence seemingly committed in God's name. You find others targeting the Bible's legacy in the era of slavery. These attacks are less focused on textual reliability and more focused on the moral plausibility of the Bible. These aren't casual criticisms—they strike at the heart of contemporary ethical concerns.

So how should we respond to this moment? I believe the story of Philip and his conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch speaks powerfully to our cultural



moment. The Ethiopian eunuch—as far as we know—had no business reading Isaiah. Here was a wealthy, successful VIP in the ancient world, yet we find him reading a portion of the Bible, the prophet Isaiah, on his way home. This ancient story mirrors the contemporary phenomenon we’re witnessing right now: people we would never expect are engaging with the Scriptures. Just as the Ethiopian eunuch was perhaps not the person Philip would have expected to find delving into the prophet Isaiah, today we see Joe Rogan and other cultural influencers expressing genuine interest in the Bible.

What’s happening in our context is that people who are not like us—people who don’t talk like us, they don’t use our language, they’re not ticking our boxes or familiar with our religious traditions—are looking into the Scriptures. And I see in Philip a huge generosity of trust, a huge openness to the stranger. There would have been so many reasons why Philip could have kept his distance, thinking, “I shouldn’t be associating with someone like that, let alone sitting next to him, reading the Scriptures with him.”

The implications for us are clear. In the culture wars that we’re experiencing, it’s so easy for us to be caught up with judgment issues that have nothing to do with us, as God’s people, whether someone is conservative or liberal, whether someone is male or female, whether someone is wealthy or poor. This is none of our business. Our only business is to share the message of hope that we find in the Scriptures that centers on Jesus. This is crucial because what God is doing in our culture right now is not going to feel familiar. We are so used to a Christendom model of Christian influence. We’ve lost that. But what God seems to be doing is

“We need a new approach to Biblical literacy. At the moment, we are not set up to disciple Bible-confident believers.”

bringing strangers to us—it’s not going to feel familiar. And if our churches are not open to the stranger, we could miss out on tremendous opportunities for evangelism and discipleship.

This requires a fundamental shift in our approach. We are so used to an approach to apologetics that envisions our opponent being a hardened skeptic or atheist. We have learned how to speak to people who are hostile toward us, and how to show them how they’re wrong about us and what we believe. But what you find with the story of the Ethiopian eunuch is that he wants the Bible to be true. He’s not approaching the Bible with skepticism—he would like it to make sense, but he’s just stuck. He asks Philip, “How can I understand this unless someone explains it to me?”

This is where we find ourselves today—with many more open seekers who genuinely would like to find that there is meaning and purpose to life. They would like to find that the Scriptures are actually true because it would resolve so many issues related to the crisis of meaning that they are experiencing. But they’re stuck.



Jeonju Jeondong Catholic Church - Jeonju, Korea



They're stuck either on how to navigate the Bible as a complex library of ancient books, or they're stuck on more apologetic issues—"Why am I reading in the Bible about laws about holding slaves in the Old Testament? What about this violence and warfare? And what about the issue of sex and gender?" They're asking these questions from an honest, open stance. Therefore, we need to adjust our tone. We must not think that these questions are something we have to defeat, as if we're in some kind of sparring debate. We're not sparring with them—they're genuine seekers. So our hearts and our posture have to change.

One of the concerns I have is that the church is not ready for the new openness to the Bible that is expressing itself in our societies.

For many years, we've risked relying on a pattern of "Read a bit of the Bible on your own each day, come to small group during the week, and turn up at church on Sunday, and that should be good for you." That's not going to cut it with the people who are asking these serious questions.

We need a new approach to Biblical literacy. At the moment, we are not set up to disciple Bible-confident believers. So often, many of the sermons that are preached in today's churches are light on Scripture, and as a result, they send a message that you don't really need to know very much about the Bible to be part of the conversation. If you look back through church history—whenever there's been a problem with Biblical literacy, churches have introduced things like Sunday school for adults. We need more of this kind of church-based Bible instruction today.

Looking ahead, we need to get a clear sense of confidence back into the church, because there's a big conversation happening in culture, and part of what it means to be God's people is preparing ourselves to play our part in that conversation and to help our friends and family and neighbors on their spiritual journeys. We need to equip the everyday Christian to know the Bible as a big story from Genesis to Revelation and see how all the different parts fit together.

The stakes are high. If we miss this opportunity, we will lose people—not because they reject Scripture—but because we failed to meet them with the same generosity Philip showed the Ethiopian seeker. Our job is not to judge, but to offer hope and explain the good news of Jesus through the Scriptures. Just as our culture is rediscovering the Bible's relevance and value, we must cultivate a culture of deep Biblical engagement in our churches. The time for preparation is now. If we don't ready ourselves—both in knowledge and in posture—we may find the church unable to join the very conversation about Scripture that God is stirring in our culture.

Wouldn't that be a shame?

Scan the QR code below to hear Andrew Ollerton on the Scripture Untangled podcast:



Hiding God's Word in My Heart

Reflections on Scripture, Spiritual Formation and Ministry

by Ken Shigematsu

Pastoring is a very demanding vocation. Management guru Peter Drucker once said that the four most difficult jobs in the world are President of the United States, president of a university, CEO of a hospital, and local church pastor—but not necessarily in that order.

Pastors across Canada are feeling the demands of their work, and many are depleted and tired. If we don't turn off phone notifications, technology alerts us countless times throughout the day. Richard Foster once wrote, "Superficiality is the curse of our age," but he recently revised that to say, "Distraction is now the curse of our age." This constant switching of attention creates a unique kind of fatigue and fragments our very being.

In response to the unique challenges of modern life, many pastors I know are being drawn into ancient spiritual practices that can provide strength, restoration, and renewal. These practices include honouring



the Sabbath—ideally, as a twenty-four-hour period that Abraham Joshua Heschel describes as a ‘palace in time’—to delight in God, life itself, and the most important people in their lives.

My mind by nature is very busy, like 132 monkeys jumping around at any given moment. I begin each morning, not by checking messages (which will get my mind racing) but by opening a Scripture meditation app on my phone. Recently, I meditated on Paul’s prayer in Philippians: “It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil 1:9-11, ESV).

I find that having time in silence before Scripture softens my heart’s soil, making me more receptive. Scripture, in turn, enables me to savour God’s presence in silence with a quieter mind. As A.W. Tozer said, “The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men [and women] to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God.”

Spiritual Formation Before Sermon Preparation

One reason reading Scripture for teaching and reading Scripture for personal edification often gets divorced is that pastors and leaders often begin their sermon prep too close to the time they’ll be preaching or teaching. I once visited my former professor of preaching, Haddon Robinson, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and asked him, “Professor Robinson, what are you learning about preaching these days?” He said, “I’ve learned that our creative window typically opens ten days before we deliver a sermon.”

This insight changed my approach to sermon preparation. Now, instead of preparing on the Thursday before a Sunday service, I start preparing two Thursdays before. If I can get into the text that far in advance, I can first read it not only for meaning but also to hear what God is speaking to me about my life. The truth of the Bible comes to me first, then through me. When my preparation window is too short, I find myself just pushing the text for some homiletical idea rather than asking what it actually means and how God is speaking through it.

The Power of Scripture Memorization

Years ago, I had the opportunity to spend time with the renowned late philosopher and author Dallas Willard. I asked him, “Dallas, you’ve written a lot about spiritual disciplines. Which discipline has been most helpful to you personally?” He said that as a new follower of Jesus, it was silence and solitude, but more recently, it had been Scripture memory. Up until that point, I had assumed Scripture memory was more of a practice for children to win prizes in Sunday school. I was deeply moved that someone of his spiritual maturity and wisdom found it to be his most helpful practice.

Recently, I memorized Paul’s profound prayer in Ephesians: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Eph 3:16-19, NIV). Memorizing this passage helped me awaken to a greater sense of God’s love for me,

encompassing its vast width, breadth, and depth.

During a recent season of insomnia, one thing that helped me was reciting Scripture at night, which calmed my mind and allowed me to sleep. When I memorize a passage of the Bible, it becomes part of me—it bounces around in my psyche, my soul, and my heart—it colours more of who I am. I don’t memorize Scripture primarily for preaching, but during a message, a memorized passage sometimes comes to mind unexpectedly. I’ve also found it helpful to memorize passages from the Psalms, as they were Jesus’ own prayer book. It can be particularly meaningful to pray passages from the Psalms over people.

Finding Freedom in God’s Love

When a pastor is young (and it can happen later as well), there can be a conscious or unconscious drive to achieve, often out of a desire to prove that they’re “enough.” Hopefully, we move along a continuum where we serve more out of gratitude for what God has done for us and a healthy desire to use our gifts to make a difference. One way we move along that path is by embracing practices that awaken us to God’s deep love for us. When we recognize God’s delight in us, we can shift from trying to prove our worth to living from a secure sense of acceptance.

At the end of my time in silence each morning, I personalize what the Father said to Jesus at His baptism, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22, ESV). I say, “Ken, you are my beloved son, in whom I delight.” I take a deep breath and let that sink in, then repeat it two more times. Beginning the day with this sense of being loved by God creates a secure base from which I can serve more freely—without being driven by insecurity—and it makes a real difference.

Digital Tools and Bible Engagement

The Risks and Rewards of Using Technology to Connect with Scripture

by Ann Chow



In a world increasingly tethered to screens, it was a physical Bible that changed everything for Sarah. “I used to be a New Age guru until just a few weeks ago when I read my late mother’s Bible,” she told me one evening at Alpha. Though she initially resisted opening it after her mother’s passing, the Bible’s presence in her home became impossible to ignore. When she finally began reading, the words pierced through years of spiritual searching. She confessed to weeping on her bed when confronted with what she believed to be true in God’s word, ultimately giving her life to Christ. Riding the Spadina streetcar days later, Sarah noticed our church, looked us up online, and walked through our doors. I rejoiced with her as she received her first communion and began her journey of faith.

The way that Sarah did a Google search on our church as she rode the streetcar is so common that we don’t even think about it. As pastors and church leaders in Canada, it’s hard to miss the growing screen time for average Canadians. We choose our devices over talking to trusted friends and family to help navigate even significant decisions, such as finding a theologically solid church home. This shift toward digital solutions for spiritual questions presents both opportunities and challenges for ministry in today’s context.

As we grapple with our own relationship with technology, how do we wisely guide those in our churches and organizations? There are a plethora of social media accounts, podcasts, Bible apps, audio Bible commentaries, and digital churches. The options can be overwhelming.

A growing number of ministries around the world are helping us reimagine evangelism—meeting our friends and families where they already are: online and in virtual spaces. The recent Lausanne Congress in Korea

gathered many of these ministries working at the intersection of faith and technology. I reached out to some of the leaders who were in attendance for their advice on how pastors and church leaders can wisely guide their congregations in their use of digital Scripture resources.

Andrew Noble, host of the “What Would Jesus Tech” podcast, said “Be intentional. Digital tools can help, but we need to continue meeting in person and joining Bible studies to read Scripture in community.”

“Young people are being drawn to the Bible in both digital and physical form.”

Jonah Jala, a missionary with Indigitous Manila, recommends evaluating various resources so you can knowledgeably guide someone to the right tool for their spiritual needs. Her gentle reminder is to lead by example as we utilize technology. One helpful website is Faith.tools, a terrific asset with 550+ apps and services to help Christians love God and others.

Back to the story of Sarah and her journey of spiritual growth. While she shares the same priorities as her generation of digital natives, she sometimes chooses to go ‘old school’ using analog media and print books. She has been looking for ways to disengage from an unhealthy dependence on technology. Many young people like Sarah who have grown up surrounded by digital connectivity find

the authenticity and value of spending time together in real life increasingly valuable.

In 2024, there was a 24% upswing in sales of the Bibles in the U.S. Combined with growing popularity of Scripture-oriented social media content and surveys indicating growing interest in Scripture amongst Gen Z, there are indications that young people are being drawn to the Bible in both digital and physical form for their personal devotions. Sarah happily joined my small group where we studied the Bible together, following the manuscript Bible study method. This inductive technique removes all footnotes, chapter and verse numbers, leaving only the text of Scripture to observe, discover and respond to as a group. This practice of reading Scripture in a community context reflects a deeper spiritual hunger that digital tools alone cannot satisfy.

Digital tools undoubtedly open robust new pathways to Scripture engagement and are here to stay. They allow Scripture to be rapidly adapted to different formats and contexts, reaching previously unreached communities and meeting people in the virtual spaces in which they increasingly spend their time. Yet Sarah’s story reminds us of an essential truth: sometimes, the most profound spiritual encounters happen when we close our apps and open a physical Bible, when we set aside our solitary scrolling to gather in community around God’s word.

As church leaders, our challenge isn’t choosing between digital and traditional approaches—it’s wisely integrating both. We must harness technology’s reach while preserving the irreplaceable experience of embodied faith communities engaging Scripture together. In this balance, we create space for God to speak through His word, trusting that the power lies not in the medium but in the message itself.

Re-Engaging a Post-Christian Canada

Insights on Faith, Culture, and the Church from the President of Canada's Leading Christian Think Tank

by Brian Dijkema



At Cardus, one of our roles is to discover and read data that help us make sense of the time we live in. What we've found is encouraging: I do think there's an openness to faith today that didn't exist about twelve years ago. When I started at Cardus, religion was still often seen as a conversation stopper. Today, that is shifting.

People are realizing that liberalism—in the philosophical sense—didn't deliver all it promised. They're searching for meaning, for a broader context to understand suffering, loneliness, and the desire for community. There's a sense of transcendence people want to explore. While that can be good, it comes with both positives and negatives. Some seek meaning in nationalism or raw will-to-power, and that's the negative side. But, positively, more and more people are searching for meaning, for an encounter with something beyond them, for something, someone, who transcends them. And we are beginning to see openings to Christianity in places that appeared shut. This presents a unique moment for the Canadian church.

Biblical Illiteracy: A Challenge and a Calling

One of the biggest challenges, and perhaps greatest opportunities, stems from widespread Biblical illiteracy. We see this in studies like "Still Christian" and "The Bible and Us," which we conducted in partnership with the Canadian Bible Society. My colleague Brad East observes that we live in a society that is both illiterate and Biblically illiterate. People aren't aware of their own historical sources and often lack knowledge of Scripture. They might know the name Moses but not the fullness of what his leadership and the exodus story mean, or how Jesus is the second Moses. And they certainly aren't aware of the influence of Christianity on our society today.

Some lament this Biblical illiteracy, and I do as well. Yet it's also a huge opportunity for pastors. Scripture is revelation, unveiling God's character and revealing wisdom. It addresses the whole range of human emotions and experience—read the Psalms and you find hope

for the lonely, hungry, or disenfranchised. People sense there's "something here." And that "something" is what church leaders are called to reveal.

In the Canadian context, this takes on a particular nuance. There is real hostility toward organized religion, but there are also situations where the old baggage of the 1980s and '90s has fallen away. I'm cautious about calling this "virgin soil," because Christianity is woven into our cultural DNA. We're not 500 A.D. Europe, and we've also seen how Christian roots spread worldwide. Consider, for example, how Ethiopia has had an unbroken church since the time of Acts.

Still, I see opportunity. If someone says, "I care about the poor," I can ask, "Why?" Those who left the faith generations ago may never have passed on the story behind these values. This is where we come in. Pastors and churches can step into that space, inviting people to see how central Christ's teachings are to the dignity of every person.

Navigating Moral Shifts and Cultural Memory

This invitation is crucial, especially as we navigate significant moral shifts in Canadian society. Things like euthanasia in Canada highlight stark differences between those who say, "We should care for the disabled," and those who endorse practices like ending lives prematurely. In some places, people claim to have eradicated Down Syndrome in the name of progress, yet they've simply aborted babies diagnosed with it. We see two moral perspectives at odds.

After World War II, there was an assumed Christian consensus. Over time, though, fewer people truly believed. In places like Quebec, secularism rose sharply in the 1960s, but that wave eventually crested. Now many discover they have no deep grounding for why they believe in values like compassion. Our data show that people often live off cultural memory without knowing its source. Our task is to help them rediscover that source.

Resisting the Will-to-Power, Embracing Faithful Witness

However, we must be mindful of how we engage. It's important to acknowledge that legal and cultural hostility toward religion is real. In Canada, we've seen the Trinity Western case, and in the U.S., there was an incident several years ago when the federal government sued the Little Sisters of the Poor. These incidents reflect aggressive efforts against Christian institutions and the working out of our faith.

Sometimes Christians respond with a will-to-power approach: "They hit us, so let's hit them back." That mindset feels like retribution rather than a faithful witness. Christianity doesn't see power as inherently bad; we're given agency by God. But our tradition teaches that power must be restrained and made to work toward justice and guided by love. Historically, whenever the church used power solely to dominate, some courageous Christian voice would protest, "This isn't right." We need to remember that deeper Biblical vision, especially in our current cultural climate.

A Call to Deeper Discipleship

I believe Christians should be involved in public life. Yet we must be faithful and not simply mimic the world's tactics. Consider the example of Pastor Wang Yi in China: he speaks openly against Xi Jinping's oppressive policies, calls out sin, and endures imprisonment, all so the church can preach and serve freely. His witness challenges us to consider what faithful engagement looks like.

When people encounter Jesus in Scripture, everything changes. Look at the Twelve: Simon the Zealot wanted revolution; Matthew was a tax collector who collaborated with the authorities; others were fishermen. They each encountered Christ and were transformed.

The question for us is whether we truly know the Christian tradition of justice, love, and neighborliness. In Canada, many call themselves "Christian" yet may not hold

to the depth of our faith. Christian can be a label devoid of real faith. We need to reclaim Scripture's depth, so that our public engagement reflects Jesus rather than tribal impulses.

Recovering Scripture, Renewing Our Hearts

So how do we do this? For ministry leaders, I suggest recovering Scripture as a unified narrative, rather than a collection of proof texts. There's a big difference between using the Bible like a map app—merely asking for a quick direction—and immersing ourselves in the grand storyline of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation.

We should let the Bible speak to us rather than ask "How does it confirm what I already believe?" Before delving into social or political applications, we should see how a passage reveals God's character. If the church doesn't first shape itself around Christ, how can we bring His kingdom vision into public life? And if we neglect the teachings of those who have wrestled with these questions before we did, in their contexts, we are throwing away the experiences of the faithful before us. This is not wise.

Prayer also matters. We can use the Psalms, *Lectio Divina*, or simply read a text while asking, "God, who are You here?" This shapes our hearts. And it connects us to a long history of faithful witness. We're not the first generation to face social confusion. Over two millennia, figures like Augustine, Irenaeus, Basil, and Athanasius grappled with similar tensions, leaving a rich tradition that can point us back to Christ.

Ultimately, this holistic approach—wrestling with Scripture and our history—enables us to navigate the new openness of our post-Christian context with humility, clarity, and hope. It is a call to deeper discipleship, a renewed understanding of our role in public life, and a confident proclamation of the Gospel in a searching world.



Rev. Dr. Andrew Stirling serves as ambassador for the Canadian Bible Society following 23 years as senior minister of Timothy Eaton Memorial Church. His extensive experience in Biblical teaching, where his sermons were regularly broadcast and published, has given him unique insight into the challenges and opportunities of Scripture ministry in Canada.

In February 2024, Cardus published “Still Christian?”—a groundbreaking study in partnership with the Angus Reid Institute and the Canadian Bible Society, examining the beliefs and practices of Canadian Christians. The findings provide context for Dr. Stirling’s current work with the Canadian Bible Society, focused on strengthening Biblical literacy among church leaders and congregations.

“We’re living in a society where Christians are bombarded with many different influences,” he says in discussing the study’s findings in a recent podcast. Research revealed that on the whole, Canadian Christians engage in very little independent Bible reading. “Many of them reduce their knowledge of the Word to what they hear and see within the context of worship,” he observes. “If they don’t hear the Bible in the worship context, they may not hear it at all.”

This reality, Dr. Stirling emphasizes, means that churches have a critical role to play in promoting Scripture engagement. With his leadership and extensive experience, Canadian Bible Society has developed several key initiatives to support church leaders across the country. “The first priority is advocating for the place of the Bible in worship itself,” he explains. “The public reading of full passages of Scripture, in context, not just excerpts.”

A Call to Scripture

Insights from the Canadian Bible Society’s Ambassador on how to strengthen Biblical literacy in Canada’s churches

by Amanuel Mengistu

This foundational step ensures congregations receive Scripture in its proper context.

At the heart of these initiatives are the CBS Preaching Seminars, which Dr. Stirling co-leads with Rev. Matthew Francis. “We are working with pastors and preachers across the country, helping them to preach more Biblically,” he says. These seminars focus on using the lectionary—a collection of Biblical readings organized for Christian worship—as a powerful tool for Scripture engagement.

“The first priority is advocating for the place of the Bible in worship.”

The program helps pastors “to be confident to go into the Word without fear” while fostering a community of spiritual friendship around the ministry of the Word.

The CBS Preaching Seminars welcome practitioners from all Christian traditions and denominations, including both seasoned lectionary preachers and those new to this approach. Participants will explore how the seasons of the Christian year offer rich opportunities to deepen congregational Scripture engagement. Through guided presentations and small group discussions, ministers will discover how to connect their preaching ministry more effectively to community needs while helping their congregations encounter Jesus Christ through the Word.

The impact of these seminars has been particularly meaningful within diaspora communities, where some clergy who lack formal seminary training and work bi-vocationally can now access theological education at no cost. The program’s influence continues to expand beyond its initial scope, with Roman Catholic bishops now seeking this training for their priests and growing interest from other denominational leaders.

Beyond the preaching seminars, the Canadian Bible Society’s initiatives reach every corner of Christian life. “We are producing resources for young families, for young children, for people in prison, for those who are experiencing stress in their lives, and grief,” Dr. Stirling notes. “We are providing a means for them to engage the Scriptures in whatever state of life that they are in.”

Looking to the future, he emphasizes that church leaders bear a particular responsibility for strengthening Biblical literacy in their congregations. “What we do now in this generation will determine the Christian faith in this country and beyond for generations to come,” he says. “It is always dependent on each generation to share the faith and to pass it on to the next generation. This is a Biblical mandate. It is there in the Old Testament. It is there in the New Testament.”

With these initiatives already showing promising results in strengthening Biblical preaching and Scripture engagement across denominations, Dr. Stirling maintains an optimistic outlook. “If we can help with the proclamation of the Gospel, if we can share it in the language of people so they can read it and make it accessible,” he concludes, “then I think there is a sign of hope, and I do want to hold out this hope here.”

Scripture Resources from CBS

The Canadian Bible Society offers a diverse range of Bible materials to support your church or ministry. Below are just a few examples, including resources for adults, children, leaders, and groups.

The Bible Course

Ideal for small groups or larger gatherings, this eight-session course by Andrew Ollerton helps people grow in their understanding of the Bible.

Caring for the Wounded Heart

A Bible-based trauma healing small group program that helps participants identify their pain, share their suffering, and receive healing from Jesus.

Still Christian(?)

Based on a 2024 survey conducted by Cardus and the Angus Reid Institute, this report provides current insights on Canadian Christian beliefs and practices.

Use the QR code below to find many more CBS Scripture Resources, or visit: biblesociety.ca/resources





*"The flowers appear
on the earth, the
time of singing has
come, and the voice
of the turtledove is
heard in our land."*

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:12

IMPACT

ISSUE TWO

IMAGINE

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**SIGNS
OF
HOPE
IN
CUBA**

Bible Societies are helping Cuba's Deaf community bring Scripture alive in the language of their heart



For Cuba's estimated 57,000 Deaf people, the Canadian Bible Society's support of the Cuban Sign Language Bible translation project represents more than just accessibility—it's about spiritual connection, dignity, and belonging. As a member of the United Bible Societies (UBS) fellowship of over 140 Bible Societies worldwide, CBS is committed to ensuring everyone has access to Scripture in their heart language, including the approximately 70 million globally who use sign language as their primary form of communication.

Although there are over 690 written Scripture translations, most Deaf people cannot fully understand them. There are more than 400 distinct sign languages worldwide, and 90% of them have no Scripture translation. Thus, the Deaf collectively make up the third-largest people group in the world that has yet to be reached with the Bible. Through collaborative projects like the Cuban Sign Language Bible initiative, CBS is working to change this reality.

The Cuban Context

Cuba's religious landscape is complex. Roman Catholicism has deep roots from Spanish colonial influence, while Protestant denominations, and Santería (a syncretic religion combining West African Yoruba beliefs with Catholicism) also maintain a significant presence. Evangelical house churches have also become vital, operating in private residences due to restrictions on building new church facilities.

Within this environment, the Deaf community faces unique challenges. Most rely on interpreters for church services—a dependency that can leave them feeling marginalized even within the church. Without access to Scripture in sign language—the language of their hearts—the spiritual growth of this community is hampered.

A young Deaf Cuban man's testimony captures this isolation: "Many years ago, when I was a little boy, my mother and father took me to church. My family [and others] would talk to me about church, but I did not know its meaning. I didn't understand and didn't learn. When I turned 16 years old, I stopped going to church. I had love, but there was no help."

His story reflects the experience of many Deaf Cubans—a spiritual disconnect borne not from lack of interest but lack of access. But his testimony doesn't end there. He continues: "Now with the help of interpreters and the gospel of Luke, I am very excited, and I love to learn this way."





Distributing sign language Bible portions on USB drives

A Journey of Translation

The Cuban Sign Language Bible Translation project began in 2011 with modest goals. Three pilot projects launched by SIL provided the necessary foundation and experience. These projects focused on translating Bible stories, such as the creation story in Genesis, along with commentaries and songs.

By 2022, these preliminary efforts culminated in the completion of the Gospel of Luke. This gospel translation was produced in video format and distributed on USB drives to Deaf Christians across Cuba. With continued support from the Canadian Bible Society, the team is now translating the Book of Acts.

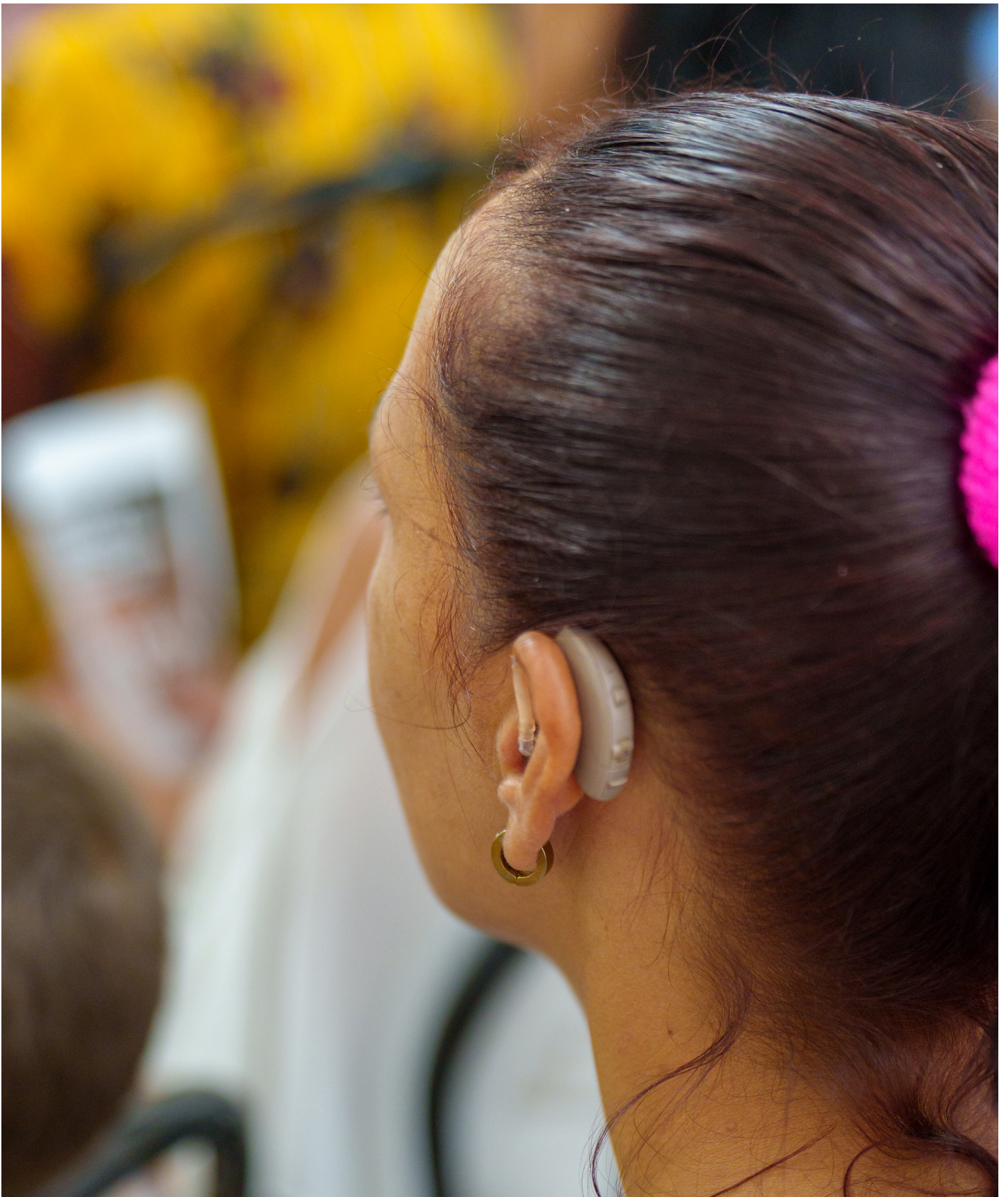
Yaily Valdés, a project assistant with the Cuban Bible Society, was transformed by her involvement with the translation team. Though trained as a lawyer, she discovered a new calling in Bible translation. “I came to the project and was involved from the beginning,” she says. “I understood that the Great Commission [includes the Deaf] because the Lord, in His infinite love, has thought of each one of us.”

For Yaily, working with the Deaf community has been a truly spiritually transformative experience: “From them, I have learned, beyond sign language, the sovereign grace of God over our lives.”





Participants after the launch event for the Gospel of Luke in Cuban Sign Language



Overcoming Unique Challenges

Translation is never simple, but sign-language Bible translation presents unique obstacles. The process includes visualizing Bible texts, drafting videos, exegetical checks, feedback from the Deaf community, re-recording, editing, and production. Cuba's technological limitations amplify these challenges. The translation team worked with limited technological resources to set up a small studio for filming videos. Internet connectivity issues have hampered their ability to use the Sign Language Translation Tool (specialized translation software designed for Deaf people). Despite these challenges, the Cuban Bible Society, under the leadership of Rev. Alain Montano, continues exploring solutions to these technological barriers.

Reaching the Unreached

The completed Gospel of Luke continues to be distributed through strategic channels in Cuba. Since the Deaf community is geographically dispersed throughout the country, the Cuban Bible Society organized a delivery ceremony inviting churches with active Deaf ministries from the country's Eastern and Western areas. This distribution network spans 14 regions in Cuba and includes more than 60 ministries working with Deaf communities. The Cuban Bible Commission coordinates with 16 Provincial Coordinators to ensure local distribution, working in alliance with Deaf community representatives in each province.

These efforts have not gone unnoticed within the Deaf community. As Yaily Valdés notes: "I cannot end this testimony without mentioning the gratitude of the Deaf community in Cuba, not only those who are Christians but also their relatives, because they recognize that this is a work done by them and for them."

Looking Forward

With support from the Canadian Bible Society, this project is making steady progress toward clear milestones. The team anticipates completing filming of 36 stories from the book of Acts soon, with a dedication event



The Gospel of Luke in sign language on USB drives

planned in Havana. By December 2025, they plan to integrate the first eight chapters of Acts.

Even with just a portion of Scripture available, the impact has been significant, showing the immense value of continuing this work. Looking further ahead, the team projects that chapters 9 through 19 of Acts will be integrated by December 2026 and the remaining chapters (20-28) completed by September 2027. The culmination of this phase will be celebrated with a delivery ceremony of the complete book of Acts to Deaf Christians throughout Cuba.

The Ripple Effect

Through the Canadian Bible Society's participation in the United Bible Societies global fellowship, we are bringing God's

Word to those who communicate in a unique visual language.

As we continue to support the Cuban Bible Society in this vital work, the vision of Scripture access for all people in their heart language moves steadily forward—creating pathways for Deaf communities to encounter God's Word in a language that speaks directly to them.

Use the QR code below to learn how you can support sign language Bible translation in Cuba:



A New Dawn for Punjabi Believers

How CBS is helping Canadian diaspora churches in the mission to create an accurate Punjabi Bible translation

by Amanuel Mengistu



Punjabi is the 10th most spoken language in the world, with over 200 million speakers across India, Pakistan, and the global diaspora. In Canada, it is the fourth most spoken language after English, French and Mandarin. Despite this large population, the Punjabi Christian community has until recently remained one of the least reached groups with an accurate, modern translation of the Bible.

In 2017, a group of Punjabi church leaders in Alberta approached the Canadian Bible Society (CBS) with a heartfelt plea: revise the Punjabi Common Language Bible. The existing translation, created decades ago, needed attention on several fronts. There were portions of text that had been omitted in previous editions, and the language itself needed updating to reflect contemporary Punjabi usage. For a growing community of Punjabi Christians in Canada and beyond, having Scripture that accurately and clearly communicated in contemporary Punjabi was essential for spiritual growth and evangelism.

Now, years later, their dream is becoming reality. CBS, in partnership with the Punjabi Christian community and the Bible Society of India, has been working tirelessly to bring a more accurate, accessible translation of Scripture to Punjabi-speaking believers. The four Gospels were completed by 2021, the New Testament was finalized in 2023, and the full Bible is on track for completion by 2031.

A Long-Awaited Answer to Prayer
For Pastor Balwant Bedi, a leader in the Punjabi Christian community in Calgary, this project has

been a deeply personal journey. “We are so thankful to God that there is something happening with the Punjabi Bible revision,” he shares. “For years, we have been trying to do this, but it never happened—until now.”

The need for a revised Bible became apparent to Pastor Balwant years ago when he realized how difficult it was to find a reliable Punjabi translation. “There were so many errors,” he explains. “Half of a verse was missing. When I was preaching, I had to cross-reference different versions just to give my congregation the full meaning of a passage.”

For many years, Punjabi pastors in Canada sought help for this important work. Despite numerous attempts, progress was elusive, but the need remained clear. Eventually, the Canadian Bible Society was approached with this need. Recognizing the deep hunger for God’s Word, CBS partnered with the Bible Society of India to initiate the revision project.

“This has been an innovative cross-border partnership,” notes Dr. Jeff Green, Vice President of Scripture Translation at CBS. “We worked closely with the Bible Society of India, who gave us permission for the revision while maintaining their review rights and distribution capabilities in India. Our translation team has included members from Alberta, British Columbia’s lower mainland, Ontario, and even Michigan, California, and India.”

A Language That Speaks to the Heart

When Scripture is translated into one’s mother tongue, it speaks with unmatched clarity and emotional resonance—but issues with translation can obscure critical meaning, as some Punjabi believers discovered.

One believer recalls the challenges of studying Scripture before the revision: “John 8:24—Jesus says, ‘If you don’t believe who I am, you will die in your sins.’ But in the old version, it just said, ‘You will die.’ It left out the most important part!”

Such omissions highlight why this translation project is so crucial. It has become a spiritual lifeline for the Punjabi Christians who have received the Scriptures in this newly understandable format. “When I read the Bible in Punjabi, it’s like a heart-to-heart relationship with God,” one Punjabi believer shares. “Having a Bible in my own language allows me to truly understand what God is saying to me.”

A Global Impact

The revised Punjabi Bible is already transforming lives. Pastor Balwant and his congregation have gone door to door distributing the Gospel of John throughout their community,

helping many people to read portions of Scripture in their heart language for the first time.

The revision isn’t just for Canada—it’s for the entire Punjabi-speaking world. The diaspora stretches across the UK, the US, Australia, and beyond. With the Scriptures now available digitally and soon in audio formats, even more people will have access to God’s Word in their heart language.

For CBS, this project is about more than just translation; it’s about transformation. “This new Bible will impact Punjabi speakers for generations,” says Michael Joos, the revision project’s manager. “It will change how the Christian faith is communicated and deepen discipleship worldwide.”

The Road Ahead

While the New Testament is now complete, there is still much work to do. The Old Testament is in progress, with CBS continuing to seek support for expanding digital and audio resources to make the Scriptures even more accessible.

“The completion of the New Testament is a significant milestone, but it’s just part of our commitment to the Punjabi Christian community,” says Dr. Jeff Green, Vice President of Scripture Translation at CBS. “God’s Word has the power to change lives, and with this revised translation, we’re removing obstacles that have stood in the way of Punjabis encountering the good news of Jesus in their heart language.”

The dream that began with a small group of pastors in Alberta is now a global mission. As more accurate translations become available, Punjabi believers are experiencing deeper connections with Scripture and sharing their faith with renewed confidence.

For the Punjabi Christian community, the Bible represents God’s voice calling them into deeper faith in Christ. And now, thanks to the dedication of CBS and its partners, that voice is clearer than ever.

Use the QR code below to learn more about the Punjabi Bible translation program:



Building Cross-Cultural Bridges for Ministry

The Canadian Bible Society's Growing
Outreach to Diaspora Churches

by Majd Alajji



Last June, in a quiet restaurant in Halifax, a moment captured the heart of our ministry. I met an Ethiopian pastor, a bi-vocational minister who also works as a rideshare driver. He had to park his Uber to come meet with me. The moment he walked in and we exchanged greetings, his first question was, “Do you have Bibles in my language?” When I said yes, he asked, “Can I hug you?” He embraced me, saying he had been waiting decades for this moment, the possibility of finally providing Bibles to his congregation.

A Ministry Nurtured by Personal Experience

I am originally from Syria, born in Aleppo, and my journey has taken me through Lebanon before bringing me to Canada. As a pastor’s kid, I grew up in Lebanon, where my parents were in ministry, before we returned to Syria, where they planted a church. Later, I attended seminary in Lebanon and worked among refugees in Beirut, which gave me more insight into the life of the displaced. After moving to Canada about ten years ago, I initially worked in refugee sponsorship before joining the Canadian Bible Society seven years ago to oversee diaspora ministries.

Hidden Communities

When I started this role, I asked myself: How many diaspora churches could there be? My initial research in Calgary alone revealed over 150 churches worshipping in languages other than English or French—and that was just within city limits, not counting the surrounding areas, Red Deer, or Edmonton. This discovery would set the stage for a ministry far larger than I had imagined.

Building Trust Takes Time

The heart of our work is relationship-building, but this proved challenging at first. Without pre-existing relationships of trust, cold calls and emails were ineffective. Messages went unanswered; doors remained

closed. In one memorable instance at a large church, someone barely cracked open the door to take my business card before closing it again.

I realized we needed to find key people within these communities who could help build trust and open doors. Though it took over a year and a half to establish meaningful relationships—a time when there was little visible fruit from our efforts—the patience of the Bible Society leadership allowed this trust to develop. Now, I am barely keeping up with the relationships we have, but we are eager to continue responding to the growing partnerships we have with these churches.

Bridging the Gap

What many may find surprising is that in Canada, people still lack access to the Bible. I met an Ethiopian pastor in Montreal who had been leading his church for thirteen years without adequate access to Bibles for his congregation. I thought I would go through English-speaking churches because they are more prominent and established, but I was very surprised to find that many of them know very little about the diaspora churches around them.

The Canadian Bible Society has always had a heart for serving the diaspora churches, and now we are making it a clear ministry priority. While we have always carried foreign language Bibles, we are now taking a more proactive approach—dedicating a team member to connect with churches, build relationships, and ensure we meet their needs in a strategic and intentional way.

Creating Spaces for Dialogue

One of our most significant initiatives has been creating spaces for dialogue and learning through our Intergenerational Diaspora Seminars. These workshops address the critical challenges faced by nearly every diaspora church. Led by diaspora ministry experts, these CBS-hosted seminars address the critical

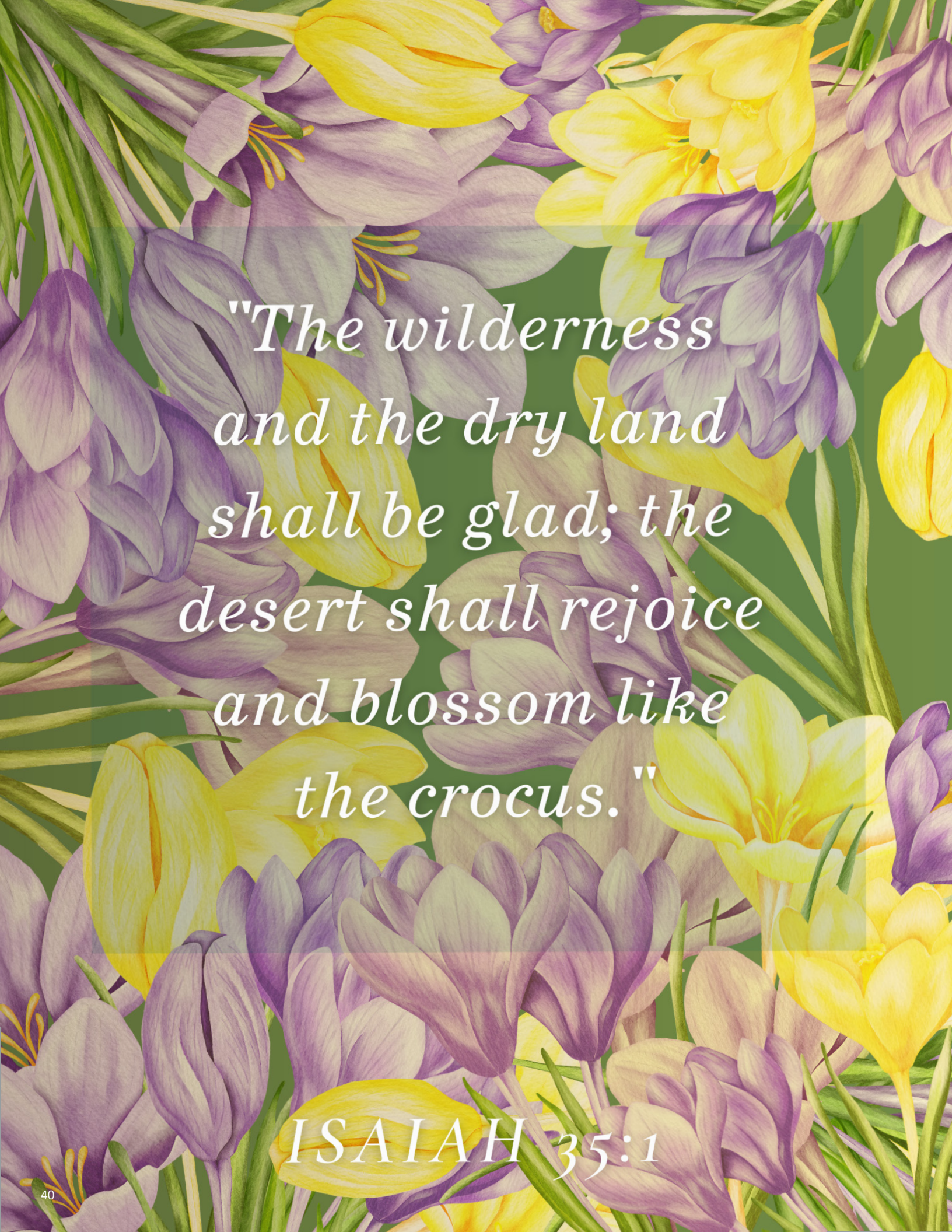
challenge of passing faith on to second-generation members, providing a safe space to navigate generational and cultural tensions, celebrate ministry opportunities, and foster deeper engagement with Scripture. In these gatherings, you might see an Eritrean pastor sitting with a Colombian pastor, a Syrian pastor, and a Chinese pastor, all discussing the same challenges because while they speak different languages, their children share the similar challenges in navigating the tensions between their parents’ culture and Canadian culture.

We don’t claim to have all the answers. We approach this with a listening and learning posture, embracing the opportunity to grow and understand together. We create safe spaces where leaders can discuss challenges openly. These discussions involve sensitive subjects such as leadership, culture, language barriers, and power dynamics within the church. Engaging in these topics requires the level of trust we’ve established over the years. The impact of these gatherings has been profound, creating connections across cultural and denominational lines that strengthen the entire Christian community.

As we continue this work, we see evidence of positive change with each Bible placed in someone’s hands and each new partnership formed. While challenges remain, the growing response to our ministry suggests a future where bridges replace barriers in the Canadian church.

Use the QR code below to learn more about Canadian Bible Society’s diaspora church ministry programs:



A vibrant field of crocuses in shades of purple and yellow, with green leaves and stems. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, creating a rich, textured background. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text.

*"The wilderness
and the dry land
shall be glad; the
desert shall rejoice
and blossom like
the crocus."*

ISAIAH 35:1

INSPIRATION

ISSUE TWO

IMAGINE

2025



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FINDING

HOPE

IN THE

DARKEST

VALLEY

by Mike Janzen

After a debilitating injury left musician Mike Janzen unable to work or perform, reading the Psalms became a spiritual lifeline

One April night in 2016, I wasn't feeling too well. I got out of bed and went to get a drink of water. Suddenly, I fainted and fell face-first onto the floor. My wife rushed to my side and asked if I was okay. "I think so," I replied, then I stumbled back to bed.

The next day, I woke up, and everything looked strange. I looked out the window—it was blurry. My computer screen looked really strange, and my daughter's voice seemed like glass. I knew that something was off. So I phoned up a friend who had suffered multiple concussions. I described my symptoms and asked, "Hey, what do you think?" Her response was direct, "Yes, you have a concussion."

Just weeks before, my life had been at its peak. I felt like my career was finally taking off after a decade and a half of working on my music. I'd just released an album that got nominated for a Juno award. I was doing symphonic arrangements and touring with orchestras, and I was deeply involved in the Toronto jazz scene. I was getting ready to record a new album that I thought would do really well on the radio. And on top of this, I was preparing to be a dad for the second time. Life was as good as it could get.

When my friend told me the concussion could last a couple of weeks, I said, "A couple of weeks? I can't do that. I'm a self-employed musician. I have to make my income from music. I have a bunch of gigs coming up." She said, "Well, you need to rest up."

Some friends began doing gigs for me and sending me cheques, which was a great gift. But after three or four weeks, I was doing worse than at the beginning. I was stuck in the basement most of the day long, in the dark. I couldn't listen to music, couldn't put on the radio, couldn't reply to emails. I couldn't even have conversations with my wife.

It felt very dark. It felt scary. I had based so much of my identity around being the guy who could do a lot. I was

partly defined by what I was good at. Now I was helpless, feeling like I couldn't do anything. I was left with my thoughts, which weren't always very good thoughts. I began to become quite desperate.

For a long time I was hanging out on our bed in a very dark basement. Eventually, I moved to a couch. I couldn't walk without getting extremely dizzy. I couldn't do anything without getting nauseous. I couldn't hold down conversations. So if friends came, they would have to stay for a few minutes. I couldn't take my daughter to the park. I couldn't really be a dad. I couldn't be a husband. It was a very isolating time.

"I really had nothing to say to God, but the Psalms gave me words."

During this dark season reading the Psalms became a lifeline for me. I had nothing to pray at that point. I really had nothing to say to God, but the Psalms gave me words, gave me emotions, and reminded me who I was. I was reminded that I was loved, that God was close to the brokenhearted.

I started out by just taking my phone—I couldn't look at screens for very long because they made me very dizzy—and squinting with one eye to focus enough, I started at Psalm 1. I literally tried to find two or three verses that I could quickly look at before getting too nauseous, then just close my eyes and spend half an hour breathing and thinking through those verses.

When you're suffering from a concussion or mental illness, there's this fight or flight response. To battle that, you need to fill your mind with the right things and breathe the right way in order to not be anxious. The Psalms were the perfect thing to fill my mind with. One of the first ones I was led to was Psalm 42. There's a verse in there: "By day the Lord directs his love; at night his song is with me." I spent hours breathing those verses in because I felt so much anxiety about not getting better, about how my life was going to turn out because of this injury. These verses became a huge help to remind me that God was with me. There were signs all around me—my kids bringing me snacks, having a place to rest, and the people who ended up supporting our family for about four years so I didn't

Inspiration





have to work. These were helpful things that reminded me that God was near.

Eventually, my doctor recommended that I get back into music. I started out by being able to play for two minutes at a time, and that turned into five, then ten, fifteen, twenty. Every day, I would go to my studio, sit down on the couch, pull up my phone for a few minutes, get the next verse from the Psalms, and just close my eyes and see if any music came to me. Slowly, little bits of music would come, little melodies to accompany the words.

I had my keyboard set up—not the piano because it was too loud—and I'd have the volume at two or three out of ten. I would just lightly play, trying not to get too dizzy. After doing this for a couple of years, I had thousands of voice recordings on my phone. As I started feeling better, I began to send some of these messages to friends, asking, "Are these songs any good?" As I went through them and weeded a lot of the bad ones out, I found a bunch that really meant a lot to me. I started working on them, filling out the lyrics and going back to the Bible to make sure the songs reflected more of what the passage was actually talking about.

I spent several years reading through the Psalms in this way. I sometimes almost felt guilty for going so slow. My wife was reading through the Bible in one year, and everyone else seemed to have their Bible reading plans. Meanwhile, I was literally reading just one or two verses of a Psalm at a time. Now I realize that process really allowed me to sink deep into the Psalms, to spend a lot of time meditating on what the verses meant. It got me to a depth I would have never gotten to reading at a faster pace.

The gift of having this injury was like a forced sabbatical. I was forced to just sit there and absorb God's kindness and care for me. I also received the gift of Christ's presence in suffering. I felt such a closeness to Jesus being there and taking care of me. The long season I experienced in the valley clearly showed me that God is close to those who cry out to Him. He is near to those in the margins who are vulnerable, who can't even get off the couch.

Many of the ancient Psalms were written during deep times of trauma, suffering, loneliness and isolation. That's

why they resonated so strongly with my story. And the Psalms actually resonate with everyone's story. We all can read the Psalms and feel that connection, because they have every human emotion in there.

I've now released three Psalms albums. I didn't set out with a clever plan. It just came out of necessity and desperation. Since the albums have been released I've heard from many people who have been going through hard times who play these albums on repeat—people with cancer, serious injuries, or those who are on their last days on this earth. The number one thing this music does is give hope to folks who are really struggling.

*“God
definitely
used the holy
days of my
struggle for
His glory.”*

Looking back to that conversation with my friend nine years ago—when he suggested I explore the Psalms and I said I was too busy—I never could have imagined that just a month later, everything would change. I now know that none of this project would have come out if I hadn't gone through what I went through.

I'm not someone who has to have reasons for why everything bad happens. I'm okay with the holy mystery of God—how God can allow things to happen, however He often uses the really hard things of this broken world to show us He's near. Regardless of why it all happened God definitely used the holy days of my struggle for His glory.

The Psalms were always meant to be sung, to move from head to heart through melody. God has used them for centuries to reach the broken and struggling. And that's exactly what happened to me—one verse at a time, one note at a time, one prayer at a time—until music broke through the silence, and hope broke through the darkness.

Use the QR code below to listen to Mike Janzen share more of his story on the Scripture Untangled podcast:



A Collaboration of Holiness

by Karen Stiller



On a quiet midweek afternoon, standing there with my dog, I was blessed by an old woman who lived alone in her room at a local senior residence. She was the widow of a minister, so we had the clergy life in common, along with a nagging sense of almost continually missing the mark, which amused us to chat about. One day I told her I was moving, and I wouldn't be able to visit her anymore as a volunteer therapy-dog team, along with Dewey. So Millicent raised her cardigan-clad arm

and blessed me from where she sat in the corner. She raised her arm slowly, slowly, moving it up and then down, and then made a cross, gently, gently, so that it almost hung in the air in front of me. I felt the holy. A few years later, when I received word from her daughter that Millicent had died, I could still close my eyes and feel the shape of that moment, warm and full in front of me.

We know when we are on holy ground, whether we're standing on a rug in an old lady's apartment or on a pub floor tacky

with spilled beer. We recognize holiness coming our way from someone else as it unfolds and wraps around our shoulders.

The day of Millicent's blessing I broke into a light jog, which I rarely ever do, to make it home before I forgot any details. At the time I was writing a book about being a minister's wife, and I knew I had been blessed in a godly way, yes, but also blessed as a writer with a scene for my work. Stories are like that. We're hungry hounds. I wrote about Millicent and her raised arm and the connection I felt to her and God.

She blessed me. I was blessed. I held the holy in my cupped and grateful hands.

Months passed. I chose that passage to read to my writing class, who met one night for the purpose of reading out loud to each other in a packed pub. Because I am a chicken, I waited until the end to do my reading, when the crowd's attention had firmly turned toward platters of poutine and pitchers of cold beer.

I blathered on about Millicent and me, then set the microphone down on the chair for the next sucker. I made my way through the crowded pub toward the door and the warm summer air. I couldn't wait to breathe in the relief of being done. A woman from my class, the same one who had been kind to me and asked me to tour her through our wedding chapel, stepped out of the shadows and grabbed my arm.

"Bless me," she said. "Bless me like that woman blessed you."

And so I did, of course. "The Lord bless you and keep you," I spoke into her ear. "The Lord make his face shine upon you and give you peace. Amen." And I gave her a little squeeze.

Blessed are those who stand in a pub late at night, longing for a blessing and finding the courage to ask. They will be blessed.

We churchy people take blessings for granted. We fling them around as if they were ordinary. We forget how extraordinary it is to speak holiness and love over another human. Blessings are a burst of God's love, attention, and intentions to us and for us, through us and with us. A blessing is a reminder of who God is, who we are, and all we can be. Blessings always speak of bounty and abundance. They remind us of what is and what might happen, even in a world that can turn on us more quickly than we could ever imagine. That day with Millicent and that night in the pub, in

both the blessing I offered and the one I received, I glimpsed again the unique and sometimes strained beauty of the church. It was brought back to me how much we have to offer because of how much we have received.

A worship service organizes our holiness like books on a shelf. It sets holiness straight out in front of us, then spells it out clearly for those of us slow to learn. Going to church gathers us together and lines us up and sits us down neatly for an hour and a bit once or twice a week so that we can be holy together. So much of what we are asked to do and to be happens best together, with those big splashes of encouragement we need to try to be holy.

Church is a collaboration of holiness... that makes everyone stronger and better and more beautiful.

Church is a collaboration of holiness, a knitting together of loose threads and balls of yarn that makes everyone stronger and better and more beautiful.

This doesn't mean it's easy. It means it can be good.


My friend Deborah and I sat in Le Charlotte Café-Bistro in Mont Tremblant, Quebec, eating eggs Benedict and complaining, in church-lady fashion, about people who don't go to church. Between us, over five or six refills of coffee, we cobbled together a list of Bible

study pals, neighbors, family members, seminary buddies, and old friends who have surprised us by dropping out of church. We were on a roll, talking.

Then Deborah said, "I need church. Sometimes I need to just sit in the sanctuary. I need to hear Scripture read from up front. I need Communion." This isn't because Deborah's so strong—it's because she's so weak, like me. Just another church person on the way, bumbling along and occasionally having gleaming moments of clarity and calling. People do not attend church because they think they're so great; it's surely because they know they are not. They know they need God's mercy and the body to hold them in it, to haul them back up on the life raft when they slip off, and to remind them, again and again, that they are holy and that they get to act that way. You are in this boat with us.

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful," says the writer of Hebrews. "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Church is a kind nurse and a stern doctor. She wraps us in bandages, sets our brokenness for healing, and then pushes us back out into the world to keep living in a way that, to do well, means we will have to stretch a bit. It's okay to be stretched.



Excerpted from:
*"Holiness Here:
Searching for God in the
Ordinary Events
of Everyday Life."*

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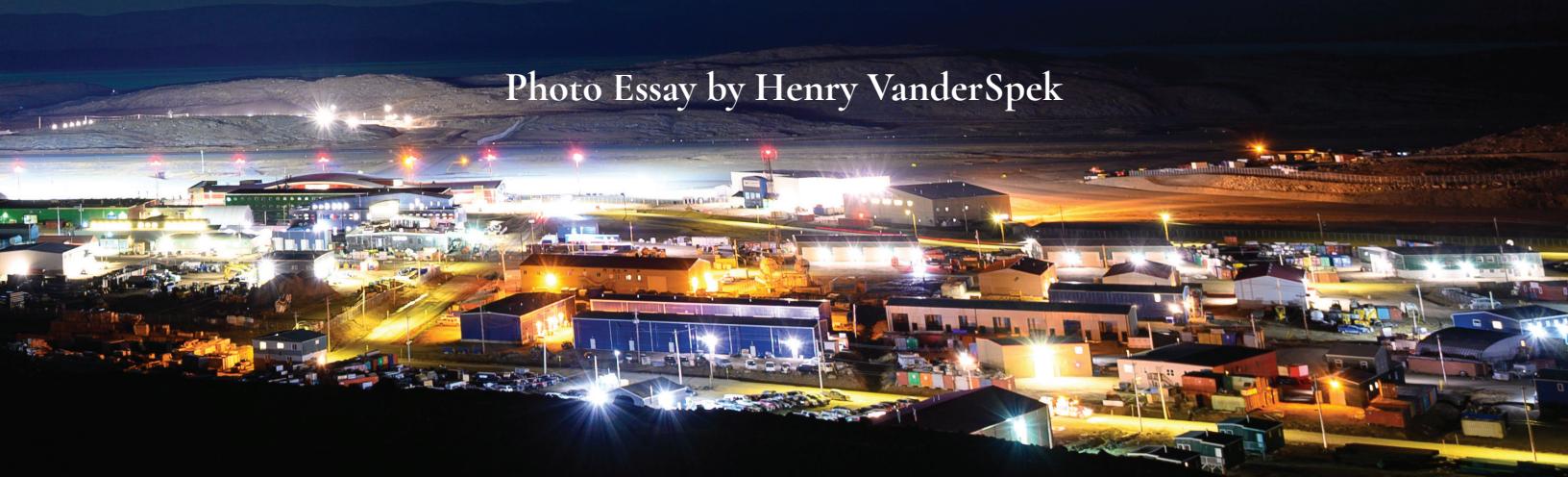


The Northern Lights over Iqaluit

THE LIGHT OF THE WORD IN IQALUIT

Canadian Bible Society supports several Indigenous translation efforts across the country, including a project focused on bringing the Scriptures to the Inuit language in Nunavut's capital.

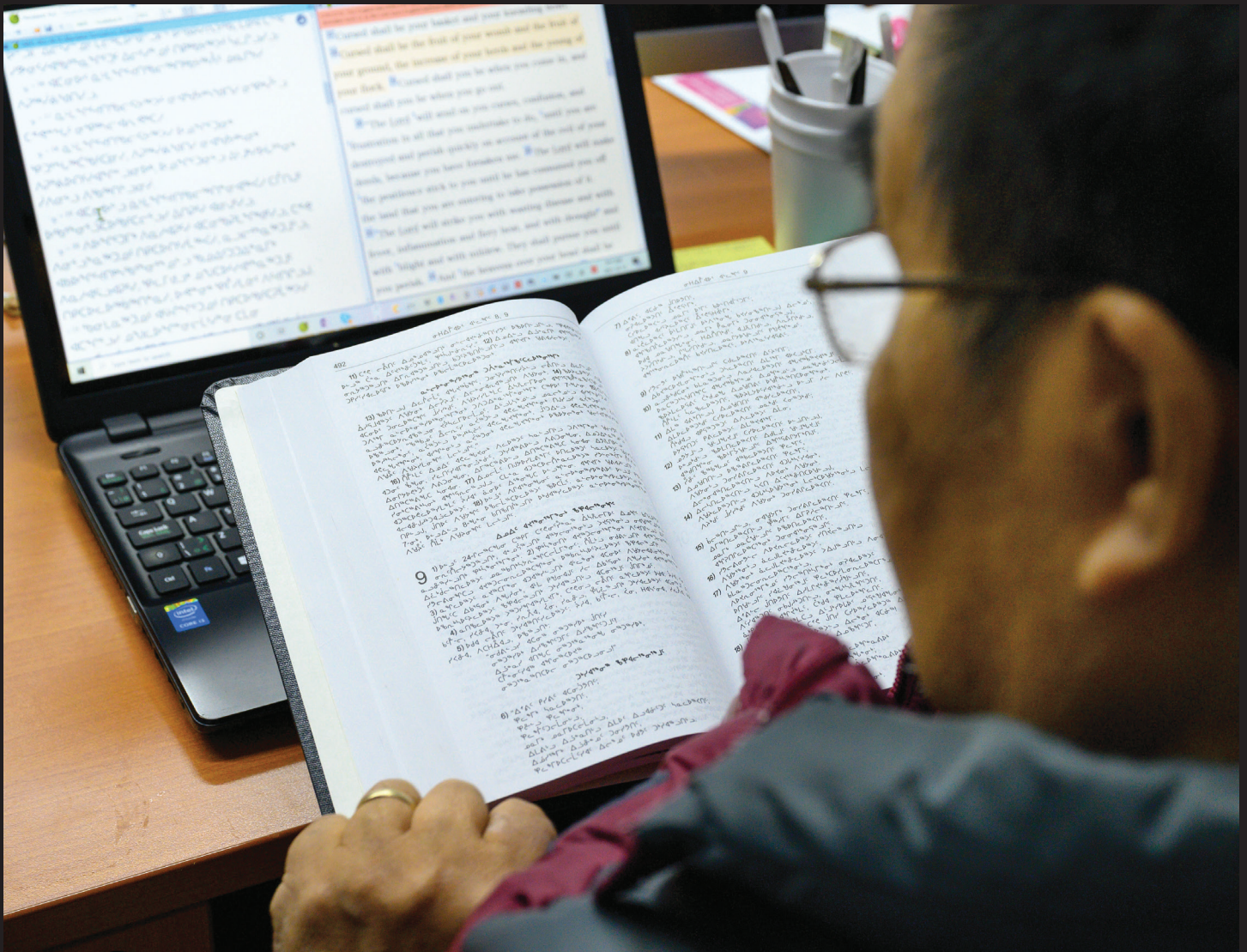
Photo Essay by Henry VanderSpek





St. Jude's Cathedral in Iqaluit is a very significant church in the community. The sanctuary, which is built to resemble an igloo, was dedicated by Queen Elizabeth II in 1970.





Jonas Allooloo has been translating Scripture into Inuktitut since 1978. He is the former dean of St. Jude's Cathedral and one of the lead translators of the first Inuktitut Bible.





The cross at the top of St. Jude's distinctive igloo-shaped dome



Joanasie Akumalik, a warden at St. Jude's Cathedral, regularly uses the revised Inuktitut New Testament.

Use the QR code below to learn more about Canadian Bible Society's Indigenous Bible translation projects:





“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “Those who come to me will never be hungry; those who believe in me will never be thirsty.”

Now, I told you that you have seen me but will not believe. Everyone whom my Father gives me will come to me. I will never turn away anyone who comes to me, because I have come down from heaven to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

And it is the will of him who sent me that I should not lose any of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them all to life on the last day.

For what my Father wants is that all who see the Son and believe in him should have eternal life. And I will raise them to life on the last day.”

John 6:35-40



"THEREFORE, MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, STAND FIRM. LET NOTHING MOVE YOU. ALWAYS GIVE YOURSELVES FULLY TO THE WORK OF THE LORD, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT YOUR LABOR IN THE LORD IS NOT IN VAIN."

1 Corinthians 15:58



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