



# Thinking Ahead

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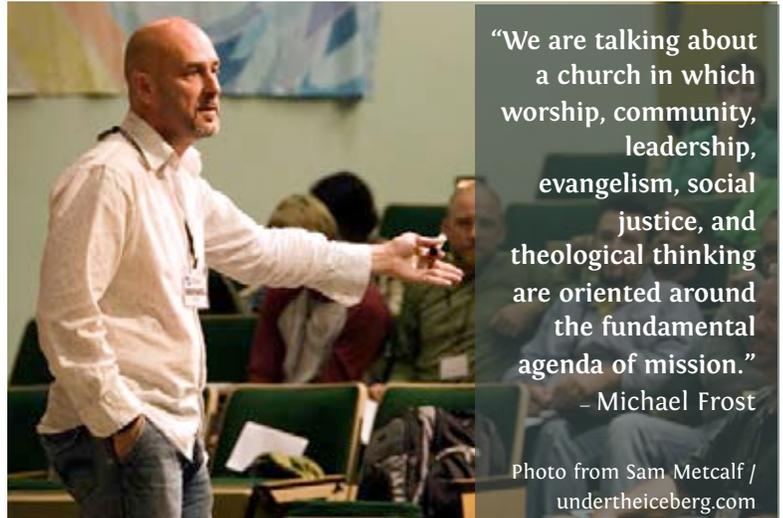
## Thinking Shrewdly IV Will Challenge and Encourage Church Leaders

by Sandra Reimer

**M**ICHAEL FROST, a mission specialist from Australia, will be the keynote speaker at Thinking Shrewdly IV – May 6 to 8th, 2010, in Waterloo, Ontario. The theme of the conference is “A Robust Faith in Dangerous Times: Finding and Giving Direction in a World Where Cultures, Faith and Values Clash.”

Jeremy Horne, a VMC staff member who is helping organize the conference, said they invited Frost as the keynote speaker because “he’s prophetic and he tells it like it is.” Horne knows that Frost will challenge all who attend Thinking Shrewdly IV. “His message is quite profound. The church exists for a purpose. What is it and what are you going to do about it?”

Horne believes Frost’s message will benefit leaders connected to the VMC network because Frost is a practitioner and one of the foremost Christian thinkers on what it means to be missional. “He has either done it or has travelled the world and seen it done.”



“We are talking about a church in which worship, community, leadership, evangelism, social justice, and theological thinking are oriented around the fundamental agenda of mission.”

– Michael Frost

Photo from Sam Metcalf / undertheiceberg.com

*Michael Frost is one of the most stirring speakers I have heard. He speaks of the Misseo Dei – the global ‘mission of God.’ John Stott, Christopher Wright and others argue that the mission of God is the meta-narrative of the Bible. Frost speaks of it in a way that sends shivers down your spine. To be part of God’s plan, His story, to join Him—history now. And he doesn’t just speak of it; Frost lives it. He has lived it for years, been used of God to lead others to join Him—the Almighty—in His mission, and lives it still. He may even tell a story of the part of the Misseo Dei that God allowed him, Frost, to be part of last week. The here and now. The past and the future. Let God speak powerfully to you through his servant Michael Frost.*

Nigel B., Director, MoveIn

In a YouTube video\* of Frost speaking about what it means to be missional, he said, “We don’t think that worship is the primary organizing principle. We don’t think the creation of Christian fellowship or community is the organizing principle. We don’t think even that the expression of evangelism is the primary or organizing principle. We are talking about a church in which worship, community, leadership, evangelism, social justice, and theological thinking are oriented around or organized around the fundamental agenda of mission.”

In addition to the four addresses given by Frost, attendees can choose two breakout sessions from a list of ten topics including: Embracing and Restoring Those Who Struggle, The Global Church and How to Engage, and A Generation Adrift.

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**More Flourishing Effective Churches**

# Nothing Really Changes—Unless God is Involved

by Jay Gurnett • [jay@vision-ministries.org](mailto:jay@vision-ministries.org)



For Christmas this year, one of the kids gave me a CD of the first Larry Norman album. I recollect when the original vinyl came out in 1969; by the time my copy hit the trash heap, it was mostly just scratches (despite the amount of music I consumed back then, I never was a real audiophile — I figured that dust, or the bends that developed when a record was left in the sun, just made the listening experience more “authentic.”)

It was good to hear all the oldies and goodies. This morning I’ve got “Nothing Really Changes” running through my head. Norman’s chorus says: *Everything remains the same/You are what you are till the day that you die.* (Not quite as cool as lyrics from the verse like: *Would Satan smoke menthol cigarettes?/Would Samson razor with Gillettes?* But those don’t help me make my point.)

On the second and third repetitions of the chorus, after *till the day that you die*, Larry added: *Unless you love the Lord and Unless JC sets you free.* Norman is saying that even though it seems like change is the only constant in the modern world, the fact is that people live the same mundane lives and do the same stupid, bad things as they always have. It’s just the background that has changed.

Unless God is involved.

All of that is an introduction to telling you that I’m changing my work days, which also means Marg and I shifting

our lives. After being a full-timer for the past five-and-a-half years, I’m now going to be spending about 60% of my time working with Vision Ministries. This allows me to do some tent-making work, flipping houses with my son-in-law Andrew, and frees me up to spend a day a week helping our little church-like group in London come together and move ahead.

Now Marg and I and kids have moved from place to place, and I’ve changed jobs, lots. But that doesn’t mean that I’ve changed—“you are what you are till the day that you die!” But I’ve come to the point where it seems to me that the great dialogue about new ways to do church requires some of us to actually get down to it. We can’t just talk about fresh ways to do things—we have to actually push ourselves, live incarnationally, develop new relationships and see whether new church-things are sustainable and reproducible.

As I’ve just barely begun to get out there with real people, I’ve had three healthy God-talks in the last two days—one of the best was 20 minutes long with the guy who did the eaves troughs on the places we’re flipping. Makes me feel like this might have been the right change for us.

So that’s what’s happening in our lives. We have the sense that this is what God wants us to do. We’re trusting that JC is the one who has set us free to do this—and that the changes won’t just be in the background, but in our way of doing church, and in our lives as well.

Prayer appreciated, of course. ◀

## What is *missional*? A short answer

Jesus told us to go into all the world and be his ambassadors, but many churches today have inadvertently changed the ‘go and be’ command to a ‘come and see’ appeal. We have grown attached to buildings, programs, staff and a wide variety of goods and services designed to attract and entertain people.

*Missional* is a helpful term used to describe what happens when you and I replace the ‘come to us’ invitations with a ‘go to them’ life. A life where ‘the way of Jesus’ informs and radically transforms our existence to one wholly focused on sacrificially living for him and others and where we adopt a missionary stance in relation to our culture. It speaks of the very nature of the Jesus follower.

— Rick Meigs

From <http://www.friendofmissional.org/>

Thinking Shrewdly IV » continued from page 1

And of course an important part of the conference is connecting with other leaders who are passionate about God and their missions. Horne says the conference is often “catalytic” as people share ideas about what is working in their context.

“Vision Ministries is all about coming alongside people who have dreams and asking how we can help,” said Horne. The Thinking Shrewdly conference is one more way that VMC helps leaders pursue their God-given dreams.

A conference brochure can be downloaded at [www.vision-ministries.org](http://www.vision-ministries.org) or a hard copy can be obtained by calling 1.877.509.5060. ◀

\*Link to YouTube video: <http://treadinggrain.com/2010/friday-morning-video-michael-frost-on-missional-church/>

# 2009 Ministry Highlights



In June 2008, we formalized a partnership with the Mennonite Brethren of Ontario and the Associated Gospel Churches of Canada. We believe that joint church planting efforts might be more successful in complex regions like the Greater Toronto Area. We hope to start four good projects

in our first two years. In 2009, we launched MoveIn and Farsi Christian Ministries (described below). Each project is supported by all three partners but is responsible to a primary partner.

### MoveIn

Last January, Nigel B. became the 12:12 Network's first jointly supported "planter." His objective was to find planters for high-needs communities where there was little or no Christian witness. He launched the [www.movein.to](http://www.movein.to) web site that same month and organized a mobilizing conference in May at People's Church. Since then 14 MoveIn teams have been formed with more to come. Members of the teams relocated to unreached neighbourhoods to pray and respond to God's direction for ministry in each community. Much more needs to be done in terms of the nature and direction of the teams, but it's a wonderful start. The Mennonite Brethren church is the primary 12:12 partner.



### Farsi Christian Ministries

In September, the 12:12 Network began to support Siamak Shafti-Keramat half-time to extend the reach of the Spirit of Truth Church. Keramat plans to find and train church planting interns to start additional congregations among the 200,000 Farsi speakers in the GTA. Although Spirit of Truth is small (40-50 adults attend on Sundays), we were encouraged that around 175 people came to each of the three outreach events they hosted this fall. We are looking forward to leadership training sessions in the New Year as well as a series of seminars that will appeal to the wider group of Farsi speakers. VMC is the primary 12:12 partner for this ministry.

### The Gathering at Trent

One of the interesting new congregations, with which we were involved this past fall, grew out of a campus club at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, under the covering of Auburn Bible Chapel. In addition to a public, Sunday-evening, large gathering on the campus, small groups meet in the homes of "established" members of the Auburn congregation. Jay Lehman and Jeff Pascoe of Auburn, along with an exceptional group of university-aged young people, lead this group that kicked off with 150 on its first night.



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*More Flourishing Effective Churches*

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**Thinking Ahead** is published four times per year in an effort to connect like-minded Christians and their local churches and encourage them to work cooperatively, especially in evangelism through church planting and church extension.

Subscriptions are free, but VMC encourages supporters to send \$15/year to help cover costs (no tax receipt given for subscriptions).

Spending of funds received by VMC is confined to board approved programs and purchases. Each gift designated toward an approved program will be used as designated with the understanding that when any given need has been met, designated gifts will be used where needed most. Gifts of \$20 or more are acknowledged with an official tax receipt.



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VMC is committed to financial accountability; all accounts are audited by an independent auditing firm; financial statements available on request.

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**Newsletter Editor:** Sandra Reimer,  
Reimer Reason Communications

## Priorities Stay the Same, Methods Change

For all of our talk about vision and thinking ahead, it's a lot easier to accurately report what has already happened!

Our goals and primary purposes have not changed at all. We continue to be committed to church planting, church leaders, emerging leaders and the churches of our networks.

But how we advance those primary causes is continually adjusting. It's clear that the focus of church planting has shifted. Flourishing churches are more interested in developing sub-congregations than in planting independent bodies. New Canadians are planting churches, often without support from anyone—but they are very appreciative of help and encouragement. Younger people are interested in more informal, highly relational and socially-conscious forms of ministry.

All of us face challenges related to our callings, competencies, relationships with peers and questions about what constitutes “ministry success.” Providing coaching and encouragement at critical points to established and emerging church leaders continues to be an important part of our ministry.

Leadership groups are always facing challenges, disappointments, conflicts and times of confusion. We continue to spend substantial amounts of time connecting and consulting with church leadership teams. It's in these settings that we most feel our need for wisdom from above.

We are blessed with a cohesive and courageous board and staff team. We are thankful for their faithfulnesses in their ministry roles.

Finances have been a little challenging but we ended our calendar year in the black and are very grateful for God's timely, abundant provision.

Thank you for being an important part of our work in 2009.

Gord Martin  
Executive Director

## President's Report

When I joined the board of Vision Ministries Canada in 1993, I could not have imagined either the extent or the diversity of a ministry that is doing so much to advance God's Kingdom. It's all about seeing people come to Christ and grow in their faith through the experience of new and healthy churches that are well led.

Gord has worked tirelessly. His decision to devote his efforts full time to VMC has been fruitful. Staff has grown. Jay Gurnett's role has morphed a couple of times. VMC's governance model has sharpened. Involvement with ethnic church groups has increased. Daring, potentially explosive initiatives have emerged.

The 12:12 Network represents an inter-denominational partnership with a Kingdom focus. It is no ecumenical compromise. It's a commitment to carry the light in ways that none of the groups could do alone. One exciting development is the bold Move In project that helps Christ-followers live out their faith as neighbours in unreached neighbourhoods.

This will be the last time I have the privilege of writing as President of VMC as I am leaving the board after 17 years. It has been a joy to serve. E.V. Hill once said, “The best is yet to come!” I believe that certainly applies to VMC. Thank you for being along on the journey. And thank you, Lord!

Bruce Fournier,  
President

## 2009 Ministry Highlights

» continued from page 3

### Connection at Nashville

In the fall of 2007, Ed Stetzer spoke at the Church Planting Canada congress in Ottawa. He later invited Gord Martin to participate in August and November gatherings of leaders responsible for church planting from a wide range of U.S. based evangelical denominations. Those present shared their resources, which has been a real plus for us!

### Renov8

About 40 of our VMC friends attended this every-other-year conference sponsored by Church Planting Canada that took place in Calgary in November. Many of our church planters, and others interested in related possibilities, attended helpful seminars and key-note addresses such as those given by Australian thinker Michael Frost (who will be the main speaker at Thinking Shrewdly IV, VMC's every-other-year conference for church leaders held in Waterloo).

### Whole Life Coaching

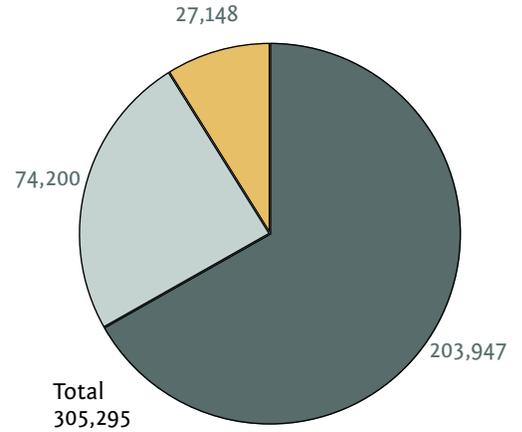
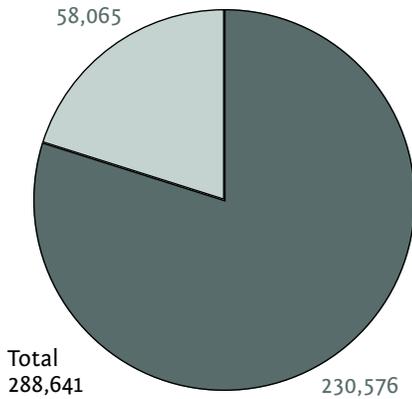
This year, on a part-time basis, Mark Anderson formally began offering personal coaching and support to VMC-related planters and pastors. He focuses on the person more than on the ministry and gives attention to the inner lives of the people he interacts with. Rather than telling them who they should be or how they should minister, he helps draw out the best of what God has planted within them. During 2009, Mark also began working with VMC as a part-time staff person, drawing together the network of our friends and associates in British Columbia.



Summary of Finances

# Revenue

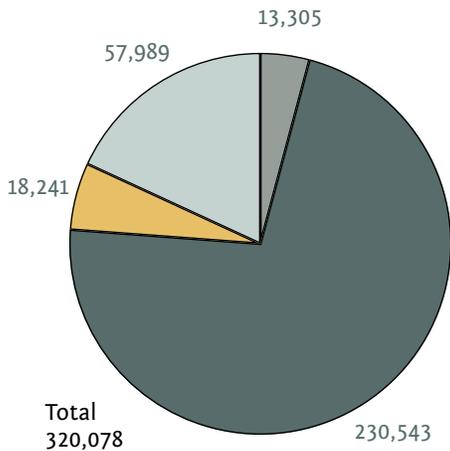
- Individuals and Corporations
- Churches
- Other



2008

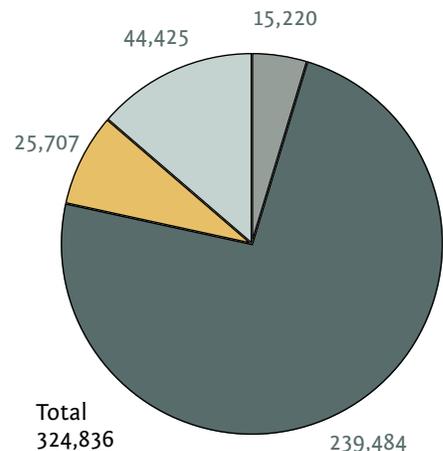
VMC  
General  
Fund

2009



# Expenses

- General Fund Projects
- Ministry Personnel
- Travel
- Administration



General Fund	2008	2009
Total Revenue	288,641	305,295
Total Expenses	320,078	324,836
Operating Deficit for the Year	31,437	19,541

### Funding For New Church Starts

In addition to the General Fund, VMC received and disbursed \$246,623 in the 2009 fiscal year to help new churches get started.

Note: the above numbers are before any gain or loss on investments. The pie charts show the sources of revenue and the categories of expenses related to the General Fund. **During the six months that ended December 31, 2009, the operating surplus was \$31,942.**

### VMC to Help Plant Inner-City Church Through 12:12 Network

In association with Urban Promise (UP), and in partnership with the 12:12 Network, Quincy and Duann Bergen will plant a church in Toronto among inner-city youth and families who have chosen to



follow Christ through UP over the last 11 years. Discipleship, through monthly corporate worship and teaching times as well as weekly home groups, will prepare the believers to reach out to others in their neighbourhoods.

### Job Opportunity: Pastor/Staff Elder

Emmanuel Christian Community in Richmond BC is an evangelical congregation of approximately 100 families that has roots in the Brethren Assemblies movement. We are seeking a pastor/staff elder with gifts including preaching/teaching, team leadership, pastoral care and equipping others for service. For more information please see [www.myecc.ca](http://www.myecc.ca) to view the job description and our profile. If interested, please send resume to [emmanuel.search@gmail.com](mailto:emmanuel.search@gmail.com).

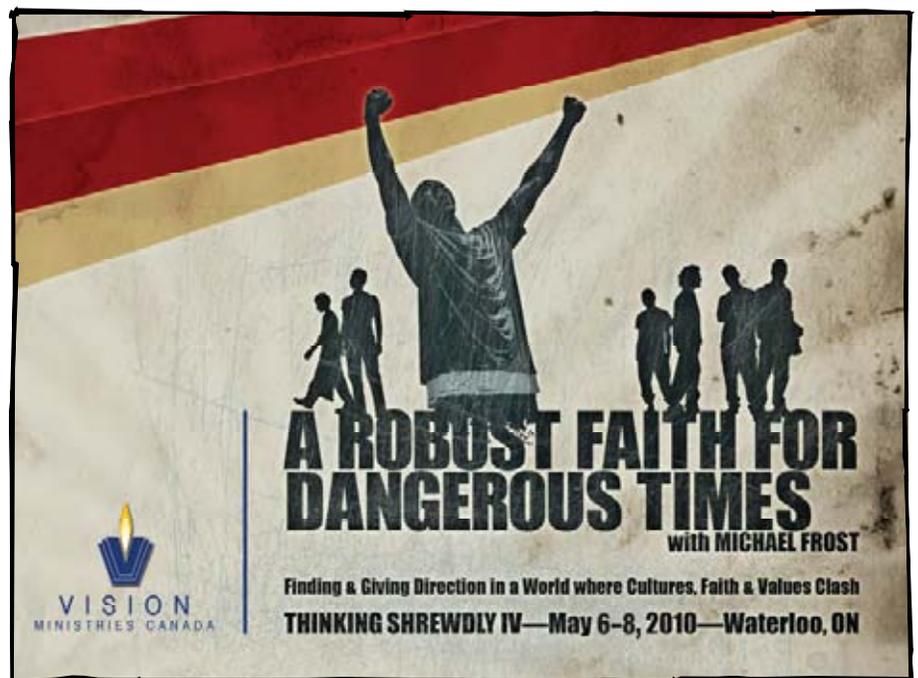


### MoveIn Buses to Urbana

225 young people attended the Urbana global missions conference December 27-31, 2009 with MoveIn. Scholarships were provided for those in need. The participants, mostly 18 to 22-year-olds, came from about 100 churches representing approximately 40 different denominations from all over Ontario, Montreal, and other parts of Canada. The team took the 16-hour trip on five buses from Toronto to Urbana, Illinois, where they joined 19,000 other Christian youth and young adults who were seeking God about involvement in ministry. "We came back with a shoebox full of contact info from interested young people from all over North America... Not only that, but many in our own group felt that God was calling them to 'move in,'" said MoveIn director Nigel B.

### Youngstown Gospel Chapel Celebrates 50 Years of Ministry

On October 10th and 11th, 2009, Youngstown Gospel Chapel celebrated 50 years of serving the Lord in the small southeastern Alberta village of Youngstown. The weekend began with a free community dinner and speeches from past Youngstown leaders, including Ted McKellar (Capilano Christian Assembly) and Keith Bidne (Westlock Gospel Chapel). The night concluded with live gospel music from Grand Ole Opry performer, Abe Zacharias. Tim McKellar challenged those gathered for worship on Sunday to be "rooted and relevant" as they continue to serve at Youngstown. The congregation celebrated with three men who were baptized during the service.



## Westview Encourages Congregation to Dream Big

by Sandra Reimer

When Westview Bible Church was planted on the West Island of Montreal in 1988, the visionary founders purchased five acres of land and made the back walls fairly easy to expand. They had big dreams for growth. Today the 750-seat sanctuary accommodates the 500 or so adults and 150 kids that attend this English-speaking church—which is large for an evangelical congregation in Quebec.

The tradition of listening to God's heart and envisioning new ministries continues at Westview. The leadership team and congregation have created an environment where people ask "What's my ministry?" rather than being church "consumers." According to Sam Watts, who has been on the Westview leadership team since 1997, "We have made sure that at a broad level at least 300 to 400 people can dream big and implement their dreams." Though the leaders are careful not to "go off in 87 different directions," and to do things with excellence, they do try to release and resource members for service. "We create a culture where anything is possible and any ministry is possible," Watts said.

One of the dreamers Westview said "Yes" to is 16-year-old Kaitlin Elvidge. Two years ago she was asked to start a dance ministry. "I was thrilled because I love to dance and was looking for a way to serve God using the gifts He's given me." She's been training as a hip-hop dancer for ten years and sometimes feels torn between her Christian faith and the hip-hop culture. "This was an opportunity to

bring my two worlds together and do the dancing I love for the God I love." Kaitlin, who was baptized in November 2009, loves to witness to people—especially her peers.

Some of the other ministry dreams that have become a reality at Westview include: a Green Team for those who feel called as good stewards of the earth; a Community Kitchen where people from the congregation and neighbourhood cook healthy, low-cost meals together once per month; and a ministry to those who are homeless in downtown Montreal.

Suzanne Bisailion and her husband Brent trained as missionaries and were planning to work in Cambodia long-term, but after a short stint there had to return to Canada. They were disappointed, but God had plans to fulfill their dream to impact Cambodia for Christ. Suzanne is the Missions Coordinator at Westview. "As a whole we are a very missions-oriented church and Brent and I have the privilege of overseeing all the various activities Westview runs."

They were pleased when Westview began funding an Orphanage in Cambodia through Asia's Hope. The church supports all 40 of the children that live in the orphanage through a sponsorship program that involves close to 80 donors from Westview. Suzanne acts as liaison between the orphanage staff and the congregation. Westview sends a team to Cambodia once or twice per year "with enough joy, games, gifts and letters to make sure they know we genuinely love them." The orphanage is just one more way that Westview fulfills its calling to "go and make disciples of all nations."

Watts is passionate about the ministry dreams that God is giving to the congregation and the work He is doing through them. "There is nothing like a local church getting the job done when they are submitted to the living God." ◀



"I love the sense of community at Westview. When I walk in, I know I am welcome, accepted and supported."

16-year-old Kaitlin Elvidge leads a dance ministry with ten teens at Westview.

## Torn Between the New and the Old

by Dave McClurkin • dave@vision-ministries.org



In Isaiah 43:19 God told the people, “For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness...” (NLT).

Over the years I have discovered that God constantly invites us to an adventure. He surprises us with directions to new places where we would never walk without the pressure of His directing hand. I can honestly say that the most exhilarating times of my life occurred when I was pushed outside my comfort zone and engaged in something new for the Kingdom of God.

On the other hand, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (NKJV). There is something comforting and reassuring about well-worn traditions. Whether we like it or not, the old and new will continue to coexist in our lives. How can we hold them in dynamic tension?

Last Sunday our worship team opened the service with an upbeat rendition of the Lord’s Prayer. I thought, “Those words are 2,000 years old yet they are just as dynamic and moving as ever.” Whenever we sing “Amazing Grace” my eyes moisten because the lyrics remind me that I have been showered with God’s grace. Alongside the old hymns, new songs are frequently introduced. Sometimes they are harder to sing because they are not familiar, but the words have impact just the same. The old and the new are valuable components of my personal worship experiences.

I never want to miss the excitement of God doing something new in my life or in the life of the church. If I reject the new, my walk with God could become stale and cloistered. I may become narrow, critical and judgmental, suspicious of anything unfamiliar. I may be less likely to entertain fresh ideas or new ways of thinking.

At VMC we are always trying to find new and improved ways to help churches bring the message of Jesus’ redeeming love to our generation.

There is a tension between the old and the new. Some think that the familiar has become stale and no longer has the bite it once had. They may be tempted to throw the baby out



with the bathwater. Others are suspicious of anything new and may reject ideas before they have had an opportunity to try them. We need to value both the old and the new.

What we tend to forget or refuse to acknowledge is that the past gives us identity. Our experiences, environment, upbringing and relationships contribute to who we are. To abandon the old is to place our identity in jeopardy. It explains why so many people search out their genealogy. They like to know where they fit in the mosaic of their family tree.

In addition, tried and true doctrines provide a foundation of security to our faith. We rest on them because they reflect the character and promises of God.

I suggest that we do two things. First, treat the past with respect. Refuse to see it as all bad and irrelevant. Bring forward or translate the elements of the past that have been helpful in making you and your congregation what you are today. Thank God for the journey.

I grew up in a deeply committed but restrictive environment and spent too many years frustrated by it. I failed to bring the good things of those years into the adventure of the new directions where God was leading me. I regret that. Now I see that there was so much value in those years that have given me tools for ministry today. I am grateful for all I have learned and feel better equipped to serve when I allow the past and the present to complement one another.

Second, refuse to treat all things that are unfamiliar as a threat, even though you may feel that they are. Discern what God may be teaching you in this “new thing” He is doing. Give it time. Embrace change as a stretching experience of faith and spiritual growth. Refuse to be insulated by the past so you don’t risk losing out on the joys of tomorrow.

When we embrace the new without discarding the old, we truly have the best of both worlds.

Someone once told me, “God reserves the right to use people that don’t agree with me.” Ain’t that the truth? ◀



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