

# CanadaWatch

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## A Presence in the Pandemic: The EFC Responds

**T**he EFC has spent recent weeks responding in various ways to the COVID-19 crisis, on behalf of and in partnership with other Canadian Christian organizations, faith partners and church communities.

Most recently, the EFC wrote a brief to the parliamentary Finance Committee and recommended the federal government provide a matching grant for donations to charities during the pandemic, in addition to the wage subsidy already provided.

The EFC worked with partners such as the Canadian Council of Christian Charities and the Canadian Council of Churches on ways the government could initially assist the charitable sector and advocated for increased wage subsidies and higher tax credits, along

with clarity around facility use.

Our curated collection of resources for churches at [www.TheEFC.ca/COVID-19](http://www.TheEFC.ca/COVID-19) has included submissions from churches and individuals, ranging from articles and event notifications to stories of what was working well for them during the pandemic lockdown.

One big event early in the pandemic was a global day of prayer and fasting. The EFC joined with our brothers and sisters across the World Evangelical Alliance for this event. Our resource page continues to highlight other prayer initiatives.

Our magazines and podcasts also responded. The EFC Podcast interviewed Canadian Christians about their COVID-19 response, providing a steady stream of stories.



**Meanwhile, the regular EFC work of public engagement on crucial issues in our parliamentary and judicial systems continues.**

The EFC is asking the House of Commons Health Committee to support palliative care providers and institutions by recommending strong, clear conscience protection. We're also asking the committee to keep the distinction between euthanasia and life-affirming palliative care.

Many Canadian physicians, including palliative care doctors, are feeling intense pressure to participate in euthanasia against their deeply held beliefs. A news release by Physicians Alliance Against Euthanasia earlier this year reports physicians increasingly feel

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### How you can help:

- Please continue to share how your church is responding to COVID-19, so we can all learn from each other. Email [editor@faithtoday.ca](mailto:editor@faithtoday.ca)
- MPs are still working on issues of concern. Please contact your representatives and ask them to support palliative care providers and institutions by recommending strong, clear conscience protection, and keep the distinction between euthanasia and life-affirming palliative care.

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pressured and bullied to participate in medical assistance in dying.

"Compelling doctors and hospices to participate in euthanasia creates a poisoned environment which reduces the quality of care available," says Julia Beazley. "It is essential to ensure that no one is forced to participate in euthanasia."

There are health care providers within many fields, such as doctors, nurses, PSWs, pharmacists and administrators, who have deeply held beliefs that prevent them from participating in ending the lives of others. Objections to euthanasia may be rooted in religious belief or philosophy of care or they may relate to a particular patient and their circumstances.

Facilities, including hospices, are also under pressure to fundamentally change their philosophy of care by providing euthanasia within their institutions. One high-profile example is the Irene Thomas Hospice, which is operated by the Delta Hospice Society. The Fraser Health Authority in B.C. will close down the hospice in 2021 if it does not begin to offer euthanasia on its premises.

The EFC is also urging the committee to recognize that palliative care is distinct from medical assistance in dying in its approach, definition and philosophy. The goal of palliative care is to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life. It helps a person to live fully until natural death. Medical assistance in dying responds to suffering by intentionally ending a person's life.



## ONLINE CHURCH MINISTRY

**"In losing the ability to gather, small church ministry is not negated, it is needed."**

# Small Church Study Offers COVID-19 Insights

**W**e were deep into an EFC research project on small churches in Canada when the pandemic hit, but our preliminary findings are still relevant to small churches as they figure out their path forward in the current situation.

Our research shows that a flourishing church culture starts with understanding the strengths of the church, and a small church's strengths lie in close, family-like relationships.

COVID-19 has thrown small churches into unfamiliar territory, however. Decentralized gatherings, like online worship services, mean losing the relational lifeblood of small church ministry. Moreover, small churches may not have the technological resources

to set up a quality livestream. Small church pastors are also having to make executive decisions on behalf of their congregations, a structure foreign to small churches. The potential for frustration and misunderstanding is real.

Although livestream services are now available from many sources, small churches have something other Christian communities sometimes struggle to offer: a pastor who knows the people. This is crucial for remembering vulnerable and lonely congregants, mobilizing the congregation to help one another, but it's also a safeguard against burnout. Small church pastors are freed to be personal.

Our research leads us to believe what we intuitively know, namely that small church pastors may be particularly well equipped and entrusted to care for their congregation in this season. In losing the ability to gather, small church ministry is not negated, it is needed.

## Religious leaders' joint response on the pandemic

More than 80 religious leaders across Canada, including EFC President Bruce Clemenger and more than 30 EFC affiliate leaders, signed *Hope, Gratitude and Solidarity: A Message to Canadians from Religious Leaders in Canada in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*. The message was initiated by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus with assistance and support from the EFC, the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Interfaith Conversation. [www.TheEFC.ca/ReligiousLeadersCOVID](http://www.TheEFC.ca/ReligiousLeadersCOVID)

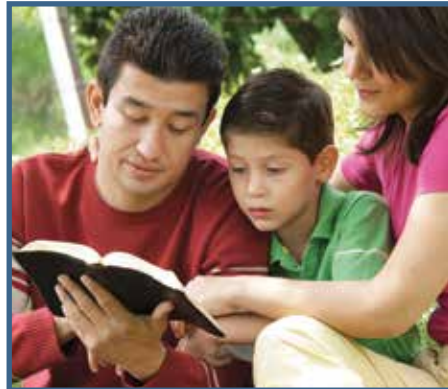
To learn more, [www.TheEFC.ca](http://www.TheEFC.ca)



## Message from the President, Bruce J. Clemenger

We are all in this together. These words have never been as true in both life and ministry in Canada as they are right now. The pandemic forced every church, school, denomination and ministry organization to reorganize and respond almost immediately to rapidly changing and deeply challenging

contexts. The Canadian Church has been creative and responded well. We have stood together, shared resources, worked in partnerships and helped each other, from figuring out the best ways to livestream services to working tirelessly to make sure Christian charities were on the radar of the government. It is not over yet. Together, we are stronger and have a greater impact. Thank you for your support that makes this possible.



## New Work on Family Faith Formation

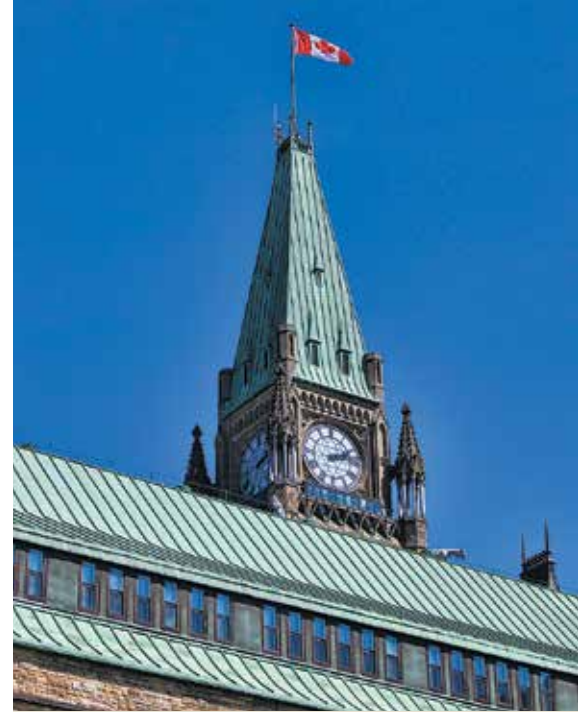
"Discipleship isn't happening in the home." This was the growing concern among ministry leaders who came together last October to talk about the state of family faith formation in Canada. As more efforts and innovations were shared, the room of concerned leaders quieted, and there came a sobering realization: parents don't have a resource problem.

We need to know what parents are thinking and experiencing. What is keeping them from training their children in the faith? Are they distracted by the flurry of school activities and extracurricular sports? Are phones and social media shaping the way children learn and behave? Are secular ideals about success shaping how parents choose to prepare their children for adulthood?

These are questions a research partnership made up of EFC affiliates is hoping to answer as they launch into the preliminary stages of a study on family faith formation – the discipleship of children in the home. We want to go to the source – parents – and ask them what they are doing and what they need to disciple the next generation of believers. Your support of the EFC makes research like the Family Faith Formation project possible. Thank you.

## Faith Today Now Free in Canada

Since 1983 *Faith Today* magazine has told the story of Canadian Evangelicals and been a key resource produced by the EFC. The EFC is making an important shift in how the magazine is offered to Canadians by removing any monetary subscription barriers and welcoming subscribers to simply request the magazine. An annual campaign will invite readers to donate to the help offset the costs of the bi-monthly, award-winning magazine known affectionately as "Canada's Christian magazine." Canadian residents not already getting the magazine can sign up, and international readers can still buy a paid subscription, at [www.FaithToday.ca/Subscribe](http://www.FaithToday.ca/Subscribe).



## Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

- **Support for charities:** The EFC has asked the federal government to support charities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Letters to the prime minister and the minister of families, children and social development are posted on our website. [www.TheEFC.ca/Letters](http://www.TheEFC.ca/Letters)
- **Euthanasia:** The federal government introduced Bill C-7 at the end of February. This bill would open the door to euthanasia for individuals with a serious illness or disability and remove other key safeguards. The EFC has written to the justice minister, asking him to change Bill C-7 to reintroduce an end-of-life requirement for euthanasia and not to remove safeguards from the law, such as a 10 day reflection period and the ability to consent at the time of hastened death. The EFC is preparing a written submission for the parliamentary study of the bill. Read our analysis at [www.TheEFC.ca/C-7](http://www.TheEFC.ca/C-7). Postcards to send to MPs are available upon request.
- **Conversion therapy ban:** The Justice Minister introduced Bill C-8 in March to amend the *Criminal Code* to ban conversion therapy. This bill defines conversion therapy broadly, including not just efforts to change a

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person's sexual orientation but also practices to reduce sexual behaviour. Coercive or involuntary efforts to change sexual orientation or gender identity have no place in our communities. However, the EFC has serious concerns with the legislation as worded. The EFC is seeking assurances that religious instruction, parental guidance and supportive services for individuals wishing to order their sexual lives in accordance with their religious conscience, faith identity and personal convictions will not be captured. Read our analysis at [www.TheEFC.ca/C-8](http://www.TheEFC.ca/C-8). The EFC is preparing a brief for the parliamentary committee that will study the bill.

■ **Religious freedom case:** The EFC has asked to be an intervener as the Supreme Court considers whether to hear an appeal case about the role of the state in disputes between members of a church and its bishop on theological and disciplinary decisions. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Canada is challenging an Ontario Court of Appeal decision that conflicts with a previous Supreme Court decision that ruled the courts will not "become the arbiter of religious dogma" and that ecclesiastical decisions about membership and discipline are outside the scope of judicial review. [www.TheEFC.ca/ReligiousFreedomCanada](http://www.TheEFC.ca/ReligiousFreedomCanada)

## Heart and hands

*My name is Joel Gordon and I serve as the Creative Director at the EFC. I also lead the team at Love Is Moving, which is our magazine for young adults, written by young adults. Magazine production, similar to the film and television world I come from, requires teamwork, collaboration and guided participation. I'm fascinated by the process of bringing together a diverse group of people with unique gifts to focus on a common goal.*



I am beginning a new role soon as Director of Partnering and Ministry resources. For over 30 years Aileen Van Ginkel has provided leadership in facilitating partnerships at the EFC. Aileen is a gifted facilitator, thought leader and expert in guiding communal discernment. Throughout 2020 I am blessed to have the opportunity to be mentored by Aileen. As she transitions into a new role in the fall of 2020, I will continue to facilitate some of the partnership work she has skillfully guided over the years.

In my new role I will be leaning deeper into the heart of Jesus' prayer for unity. Prayer will be essential as I help to steer partnerships and create new resources to bless Canada in the name of Jesus.

We see collaboration around us in many ways at the EFC. We're thankful for the partnerships we have with generous donors. United in prayer, our supporters help to advance our work and bless Canada. We partner with legal experts, as matters impacting our religious freedom unfold in the courts. Under the EFC umbrella, academics, ministry leaders and pastors convene to carry out thoughtful research that helps us serve Christians and Canadians well.

Our guiding statement at the EFC is to unite Evangelicals to bless Canada in the name of Jesus. Partnering and collaboration is central to who we are and what we do.

Your prayers and gifts are greatly appreciated as we journey together, all for Jesus, walking in step with the unity that he models perfectly for us.




Visit [www.TheEFC.ca](http://www.TheEFC.ca) for updates on the issues that the EFC is currently involved with.

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



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



SANCTITY OF LIFE



CHURCH & MISSION



FAMILY & COMMUNITY



CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE