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Why EFC research matters – and the role donors play

EFC researcher Lindsay Callaway takes *Canada Watch* readers behind the scenes of research that serves the Canadian Church.

When you think about the job of a researcher, you might think of someone wearing a lab coat who makes observations behind a two-way mirror, or interviews panelists in a stiff tone. But ministry research doesn't happen in a laboratory. It's impossible to be distant and disinterested when research questions align with our own concerns about the Church in Canada.

Both the recent *Parenting Faith* and *Significant Church* studies began with literature reviews. That means I spend hours reading foundational publications. That reading helps inform the questions we ask interview respondents.

As I read, I'm aware of being a parent, wife and church member. Often, I'm

reading in my son's room where my work space is located, and I'm not only making physical notes to inform a literature review document, but I'm making a mental note to share an insight with my husband or the young woman I'm mentoring.

I recently finished a book that provided a prescient cultural analysis of the Canadian context, and I thought to do this." Then I begin to think how I will summarize and share the findings so pastors, leaders and practitioners can benefit from the content immediately through a podcast or a presentation – even as it will help shape the research.

Research, the way we do it, is as

much about building trust as it is about collecting data. For example, in our work on family faith formation I often found myself telling respondents I am a fellow parent. I could sense a shift in their willingness to open up to me once they knew I resonate with their worries and struggles. Respondents share their experiences more openly when they sense being treated not like a lab rat but like a fellow disciple figuring out the cruciform life. In the end, that means I gather more accurate data – and the research findings are strengthened.

Now that the reports are published I'm presenting findings to groups of leaders and practitioners. In the same way interviewees share more openly when they know I'm on their side, presentation

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How you can help

- Let people in your circles know about the Centre for Research on Church and Faith and recent research projects like *Parenting Faith* and *Significant Church*.
- Please keep praying for each of the three EFC centres and the work you enable us to do in Canada.
- Know that we are thankful for the EFC donors who offer prayer and support.



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audiences are more receptive when they know I'm interested and invested in the findings myself.

For example, as I'm speaking about our small church study and share that I'm a pastor's wife, the room relaxes because they know I understand some of the unique challenges associated with ministry life. This type of engagement increases the likelihood the findings will be shared and applied in meaningful ways.

The model we can adopt at the EFC's Centre for Research on Church and Faith, because of generous donors, allows for relationships to form and trust to be built because we're doing research with Evangelicals, for Evangelicals, as Evangelicals. Conducting research in partnerships over several years might not be the easiest or fastest way to do research, but it means the people we serve help us shape a research study that is relevant and useful to them.

We are not just conducting research to publish numbers as if they are last night's scores from the hockey game, but we're monitoring signs of church life as those who are committed to seeing the Church thrive in Canada in the name of Jesus. I'm so thankful donors believe in this model of research.



Abuse Awareness and Prevention Network

The support of EFC donors is helping to address a crucial issue in the Canadian Church. A partnership convened by the EFC consulted with Christian leaders across multiple sectors on the barriers they face in abuse prevention and awareness of abuse.

It was clear that procedures and practices have improved over recent years. But also, clearly, there is still work to do.

Outdated policies, lack of accessible, varied Canadian resources, and no singular hub organizations that people can turn to for trusted information were some of the current challenges that were identified.

Without proper support, "anybody in a position of trust is susceptible to misusing power," says Jaymie Friesen, who works in abuse prevention for Mennonite Central Committee in Manitoba. "A critical need for pastors and ministry leaders is to receive a thorough education on understanding vulnerability, ethics, healthy boundaries and what it means to hold and steward power well."

The Abuse Awareness and Prevention Network, founded by the EFC and five partner ministries, claims to strategically fill in some of these gaps. It will provide a private online hub where organizations can explore policies and share learning together. "The goal is to help people respond courageously, with compassion, and in ways that align with solid policies, practices, laws and legislation," says Steve Snider, another member of the Network's advisory team who works for Christian Horizons.

The Network also has a training focus. The website offers a growing inventory of resources on different types of abuse and will house a terminology page with a shared language to help with clarity and communication.

President on listening tour

EFC President and CEO David Guretzki is embarking on a listening tour with the heads of the denominational affiliates of the EFC. In the first year of his role, Dr. Guretzki will visit 46 leaders across the country to better understand how the EFC can serve them, the distinctive of each denomination and their concerns for the future. "I want to build even stronger relationship between the EFC and the denominations who have joined with us," explains Guretzki. **"I'm looking forward to some deep listening that will shape how we serve in the coming months and years."**

To learn more visit, www.AbuseAwareness.net



A note from EFC President David Guretzki

The EFC is an extremely productive and fruitful organization. I always knew that but as president and CEO I am seeing the work from a different vantage point. I assure you this work is incredibly valuable to the Canadian Church and the society we are attempting to bless and serve. As I make time in the months to meet face-to-face

with denominational heads, my priority is to listen well to the leaders who are helping to serve Christ in a complex time and culture. It is you, the faithful donors and prayer supporters of the EFC, who are the backbone of all the work we do. You will hear it from me time and time again, but never enough – Thank you.



EFC speaks to human rights in Canada

Canadian laws have an influence internationally. Other countries may see what's happening in Canada as an example to follow, such as the prostitution laws that ban buying sex, or as a cautionary tale, such as the laws allowing euthanasia and assisted suicide.

International experts have expressed concern about the impact of Canada's medical assistance in dying (MAiD) laws on people with disabilities. These laws pose a real and significant threat to the lives of people with disabilities.

The EFC and the World Evangelical Alliance made a submission on human rights concerns in Canada, touching on euthanasia, sexual exploitation and religious freedom. This brief (TheEFC.ca/UPR2023) is part of the UN Universal Periodic Review of human rights in Canada.

"Canada has made international commitments to respect the rights of people with disabilities, to fight sexual exploitation and to support religious freedom," says Julia Beazley, EFC director of public policy. "We are asking the international community to point out the gaps between those commitments and the situation on the ground. Canada needs to take action to protect people in their vulnerable moments."

Canada's prostitution laws align with its international commitments to eliminate sexual exploitation. These laws play a critical role in protecting women's rights and combating sexual exploitation. It is deeply troubling to suggest they may be repealed, as a parliamentary review of the laws implied. The EFC and World Evangelical Alliance recommend to the international community that Canada uphold and defend its prostitution laws, which aim to reduce demand for sexual services and maintain a victim-oriented approach to addressing sexual exploitation.

The EFC's brief points to a growing anti-religious climate in Canada, including a belief that religion should be privatized and kept out of the public square. Through this international forum, we ask the Canadian government to ensure that each person and organization can exercise their religious freedom. "We're very thankful to our donors who help make this work possible," says Beazley.



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Human trafficking:** The EFC's brief to a parliamentary committee studying human trafficking pointed out that prostitution is the most common endpoint of trafficking in Canada. It is the demand for paid sex that fuels sex trafficking. The EFC recommended that Canada scale up its efforts to identify and assist victims of human trafficking. It also called for Canada to maintain the current prostitution laws that reduce the demand for paid sex that fuels sex trafficking.

The EFC is preparing a brief in support of a bill that would improve the law against human trafficking. Bill S-224 would remove the requirement that a person in the victim's circumstances would fear for their safety or the safety of someone they know. As a private member's bill that began in the Senate, Bill S-224 has passed in the Senate and is now being reviewed in the House of Commons.

[TheEFC.ca/Human Trafficking](http://TheEFC.ca/Human%20Trafficking)

■ **Human rights:** The EFC joined with the World Evangelical Alliance to recommend to the international community ways that Canada should improve its care of vulnerable citizens. In the submission, the EFC raised the

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impact of euthanasia/assisted suicide laws on people with disabilities, sexual exploitation issues, as well as the need for laws to provide conscience protection. This was the EFC's second time participating in a UN Universal Periodic Review. TheEFC.ca/UPR2023

■ **Euthanasia/assisted suicide:** Two new brochures are available from the EFC to inform and equip Canadian Christians. The brochures, *Euthanasia and Mental Illness* and *Euthanasia for Youth*, briefly explain changes in the law and what you can do. They are available online in English and French at TheEFC.ca/TakeActionOnMAID and in print copy by request.

■ **Protecting pregnant women:** A private member's bill up for debate in the House of Commons would make the abuse and harm of a pregnant woman an aggravating factor for judges to consider in sentencing. This change would signal that harming a pregnant woman is a serious crime and may be given a longer sentence. The EFC supports Bill C-311, introduced by MP Cathay Wagantall. See our letter of support and sample MP letter at TheEFC.ca/C311.

UPDATES ON THE ISSUES
are always available on
our website www.TheEFC.ca

Faith Today TV goes live

F *aith Today's* print magazines, blogs and podcasts have now been joined by Faith Today TV, a growing video stream that adds new dimensions to our articles and podcasts – and will introduce our journalism to new audiences.

One of the first highlights is a series of Church in Community videos sharing uplifting stories about the outreach activities of Canadian congregations – based on a page with the same name in our print magazines. Another initial highlight is The Take Away Show, which consists of short interview clips with Canadian Christian leaders, thinkers and authors.

"The first handful of videos are a good appetizer for what's coming," explains Bill Fledderus, a senior editor of *Faith Today* and cohost of the Faith Today Podcast. "As we celebrate our 40th year of publication, we're excited to start presenting stories in this way for the digital age. Viewers can watch content at FaithToday.ca/TV and at YouTube.com/@FaithTodayCanada.



FAITH TODAY TV
Canada's Christian conversation

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Warm words from donors

We appreciate your warm words and encouragement. We pray for you regularly, and we thank you for praying for the work and mission of the EFC.

We gratefully received this message recently from an EFC donor:

"Dear Friends at EFC,

You are all so faithful in the work you do on behalf of all of us who treasure our freedom of beliefs and the values God places on our lives. I hope and pray that God will supply your needs to keep doing what you do. I know He is able to do abundantly above what we ask or think. His storehouses are never empty."

– A RECENT DONOR

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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.



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