

THE ESL LINK

UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CHURCH

A mobile mission field that is unprecedented in the history of the church lies before believers in Canada. For the church seeking to engage this mobile mission field, it is critical to understand the changing landscape into which newcomers arrive. The trajectory of government policies regarding entry pathways for newcomers and the direction of resources in an increasingly austere economy for supporting the settlement and integration needs of migrants present the church with a profound opportunity.

Since 2008, because of an omnibus legislation package, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism can announce and implement policy changes without the encumbrance of debate or legislative processes in the House of Commons. Since the passing of that bill, the speed and frequency of policy changes around immigrant types, immigration targets and funding levels has been dizzying. We have seen two profound changes that shape the context of mission for churches seeking to bring the life-changing message of Jesus to immigrants, for example, through ESL programs.

First of all, in 2011, Canada granted more temporary visas than permanent visas to immigrants. The 2012 Report to Parliament indicates that

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A SEASON OF LIGHTS



Isaiah prophesied it; Matthew affirmed it: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light has arisen.* Christmas is indeed a “season of lights” during some of the darkest days of winter in Canada and perhaps also personal dark days in the lives of some.

For Isaiah that prophecy preceded a few verses, the wonderful and well-known “Christmas verses”:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

And for Matthew, the citation of Isaiah follows the account of the wilderness testing of Jesus by Satan and leads immediately to Jesus’ public ministry of preaching, inaugurated by the message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Such promises! Such hope! Such a call to come to the light, indeed to the One who is The Light of the World... with humility and courage and confidence that “our God reigns”. The One born of the Virgin Mary is now enthroned with all authority in heaven and on earth. And He has commissioned us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that He commanded.

It’s not difficult to understand; nor is it difficult for us to find “the nations”, for they are our neighbors, at our doorsteps, and in our ESL classes. Nor will it be diffi-

cult to find the way, for He is the Way, and He is Immanuel—God with us. Since He is the Good Shepherd, He will lead you in paths of righteousness, for His name’s sake (Psa 23), paths which are “like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.” (Prov. 4:18) As Isaiah said, “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

May you be refreshed this Christmas Season with the joy of the Lord, that joy which is your strength (Neh. 8:10). The angel announced to the shepherds: “I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people.” Good news! Great joy! For all the people! And, of course, for you too!

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”



TEACHING CANADIAN CULTURE



For those of us who were born and raised in Canada, it is sometimes difficult to define Canadian culture. Other than hockey and maple syrup, there aren’t a lot of things that distinguish us as a culture. However, people from other cultures don’t seem to have that problem. When I asked a group of students from various countries how they would

define Canadian culture, without hesitation they began to talk about our culture in terms of how they saw us as people. With a whiteboard full of adjectives and longer descriptions, I summarized their words with four adjectives/adjective phrases: friendly, gentle, polite and respectful of privacy. I took each of these and thought about how we

could teach newcomers to Canada about these qualities – what we expect of them and how they can feel accepted in our society.

The first characteristic they identified was friendliness. When I asked what made them see us as friendly people, they said we smiled and initiated conversation with them. It was often about the weath-

TEACHING CANADIAN CULTURE cont'd

er. Newcomers to Canada need to understand the importance of "small talk". They need to understand that we use small talk to not only be friendly but also to assess how friendly others are and if they are safe people. An excellent exercise is teaching them how to comment on the weather and respond when comments are made to them. I have them make a list of weather words and with a partner comment on the weather. Their partner must respond in a friendly manner. The whole class can also assess how friendly they think they are. The same can be done with traffic, time waiting in line, etc.

Closely connected with friendliness is the characteristic of gentleness. They told me that Canadians were soft people - neither aggressive nor abrasive. That led me to think about the importance of teaching people from other cultures about language pillows. There are many ways to soften language. Expressions such as "could you please" or "I was wondering" are softeners when asking for something. "I'm sorry, he's not home right now" is a much softer way of responding on the telephone than "He's not here".

Words like "quite", "just", etc. are small words that soften speech that is too direct. Students always love this lesson.

The third quality they identified in Canadians was their politeness. Lessons on "Please", "Thank you", "Excuse me" and "Sorry" and when we use them and expect others to use them are always helpful. For example, we use "Excuse me" to get someone's attention, to pass by people in a line-up or interrupt a conversation, etc. and "Sorry" on the telephone when someone isn't home, when you can't hear someone or when you bump someone, etc.

Finally, they told me that Canadians were very respectful of one another's privacy. There are some questions they should never ask a Canadian, the most important of which relates to money. How much money do you make? What did you pay for that? How much do you give to charity? Of course, the government and the bank have a right to know. Questions about one's marital status are also not received well for a variety of reasons. Asking whether someone is single, divorced or widowed can be uncomfortable or even

painful for many. Questions about age, weight, height, pregnancy, etc. are also unacceptable, unless you are visiting your doctor. They need to know that considering the feelings of others is all about. This invariably brings up the question of religion and if it is acceptable to ask someone about their religion. I like to use this question to talk about Canada as a country that practises freedom of religion and that we are comfortable with other religions. If someone presses you beyond your comfort level, this can be another great lesson on how to express feelings tactfully using language pillows and keeping the relationship friendly.

In summary, people from other cultures see us as friendly, gentle, polite and respectful of privacy. For each of these qualities, there are great lessons to be taught which are useful in helping newcomers integrate into Canadian society.

-Mary Hogan

ESL Ministry at Knox Presbyterian Church

Dr. Zhang was a Chinese medical researcher who needed to brush up on his language skills. He found that the relaxed conversational classes offered by Knox Presbyterian Church were helpful practice in real communication. Through the conversations, and later the ESL Bible studies, he became curious about Christianity. He began reading the Bible for an hour each day. Two years ago he was baptized, giving a marvelous testimony of how God had touched him through scripture.

Knox is located practically within the downtown campus

of the University of Toronto, and they have had an ESL ministry for over ten years. Not surprisingly, at least half the people with whom they work are international students and staff from U. of T. The director, Samantha, 'Sam', Harding, states that the program's purpose is to share the love of Christ by serving people new to Canada. Meeting language needs develops deeper friendships, which in turn provides the means to share faith. The ministry has also served church members by giving them the opportunity to engage in cross-cultural 'global' ministry right in their own backyard.

The main class is held on

Monday nights and includes dinner at 6:00 for a nominal fee. Around 6:45 Sam takes the microphone and makes announcements. New students are invited up to introduce themselves, which is followed by welcoming applause. Then one of the teachers leads the whole class in their song for the week. At 7:00 teachers take their small groups through the worksheets of the day until just before 9:00. Volunteers with ESL experience have developed curriculum packages over the years for each level for the 10 - 12 week semester. Volunteers also do student registration, which includes a language

ESL RESOURCE CORNER

Free graded stories for beginners to low intermediate students!

I recently came across an excellent website that has over 100 graded stories for beginners to low intermediate students. Each story has exercises to go with it. There is also an excellent teacher's guide that suggests additional activities. Themes include Canada, holidays, safety, recipes, sports. It is all beautifully illustrated with pictures and photos, and free to print and use: <http://bestofthereader.ca/>

Free online resources for ESL teachers

Tutela.ca is a new national online repository of ESL and FSL resources. It is a federal and provincial government initiative. We can find resources such as lesson plans, worksheets, teacher training resources, curriculum guidelines, policy documents and more. It is also an online community where we can share resources, open discussion forums, and post events and jobs. It is free but we need to sign up to become a user. Simply go to <http://tutela.ca> and follow the sign up procedure.

"Do you have helpful resources to share with others? Send them to eslministries@gmail.com and we'll include them in our next Newsletter."

Contact Us:

eslministries@gmail.com

We're on the WEB:
www.eslministries.org

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needs assessment. Sam says that registration staff are a foundation of the ministry, making people feel welcome and taking on a major administrative role.

Besides the Monday night program, there are other opportunities to study English through ESL Bible Studies on Sunday morning and Wednesday evenings. These Bible studies are promoted in the regular Monday night classes, and many of the participants at intermediate level and above take advantage of these opportunities. The church also seeks to draw people into the congregation through special activities such as the upcoming Christmas hospitality program where students are invited into homes.

One student I spoke to said that she has made new friends through the class. She loves being able to practice English without worrying about making mistakes, a testimony to the safe atmosphere of the class. In this woman's life, the goal of building relationships while meeting language needs appears to have been met.

—Marion Chang

Unprecedented Opportunities

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the largest migrant category in 2011 was temporary foreign workers—over 190,000 (up from 179,000 in 2010). The total of permanent visas for economic class migrants was much lower: just over 156,000 (down from close to 187,000 in 2010). These temporary workers, as well as other student visa holders and “SuperVisa” holders (family members, mainly parents and grandparents, of residents who are allowed multiple extended entries to Canada over ten years), are not eligible for services and supports granted to permanent visa holders. They cannot register for language classes such as LINC. They cannot receive support from federally funded professionals who assist other newcomers in addressing various needs. These needs range from housing, bettering their employment options to understanding and completing complex applications such as for the new Canadian Experience Class, a new immigration category that opens the door for select temporary visa holders to apply for permanent status after one or two years.

Secondly, coupled with this proportional change in service-eligible newcomers is a trend to reduce funding levels for services to eligible newcomers. So while, for instance, the government of Canada now requires all applicants for citizenship to demonstrate a particular language acquisition level, spe-

A Report from Gathering IX

October 27, 2012 was a rainy day in the city, but the precipitation could not dampen the spirits of the 74 participants of Gathering IX, the annual conference of the Southern Ontario Cooperative of ESL Ministries.



They came from places like London in the west, Oakville in the south, Stouffville in the north and Oshawa in the east. Altogether 22 different localities and 32 different churches were represented; the church that sent the largest group was East Ridge Missionary Church in Stouffville. Of the 74 in attendance, approximately one third were first time participants.



Instead of the more modern and spacious suburban venues we have used in the past, this year we met in Leaside Bible Chapel, a 60-year-old building on a busy city street. Although parking was a bit of a challenge, especially on a rainy day, no one got lost in the building and the intimate setting fostered great fellowship and productive discussions. These took place in the workshops as well as more informally over lunch. One participant put it this way, “There was a lovely spirit present, and a delightful range of opportunities to learn from others who are passionate and experienced in the field.”

With workshops on topics ranging from teaching about Canadian holidays and Canadian politeness, to teaching English idioms, grammar and pronunciation, participants have lots to mull over for the coming months. We know of at least one group who had met after the Gathering to share what they learnt. One participant described the conference in these terms, “An excellent and well-organized conference that inspires and challenges me.” Another said, “The day passed very quickly... The first time I looked at my watch it was 1:30!”



Our keynote address by Darcy MacCallum was very well received. One person summarized it in this way, “[it] provided food for thought and was very educational. He made me realize what an important role ESL ministry can play in the lives of newcomers who may not have access to Government resources.”

In short, if you missed the Gathering this year, be sure to attend in 2013!

cifically, CLB 4, they are reducing funding for settlement services including language programs. There is clearly no interest in spending federal dollars to support temporary visa holders—even those hoping to make Canada their permanent home. Rather, the expectation is that businesses and charitable organizations will rise to the occasion. So while wait lists for citizenship-mandated language level classes are exploding in regions like York and Durham, no investment in these much needed programs is foreseeable. After an 8% reduction in funding levels in 2011-12, it is anticipated that further cuts are in the offing. Regional offices are given guidelines to consider when making funding decisions for the next three years, but all programming is in a precarious position. It is

anticipated that agencies will continue to find reduced levels of funding and be forced to make difficult decisions about which programs will be made available to newcomers.

For churches offering ESL classes (and/or considering other services to newcomers), the opportunity to find a unique niche in service delivery has never been greater. There are countless people outside your doors looking for language programs, for guidance and for counseling regarding the adjustment to life in Canada and the prospect of settling here permanently. How can we best serve the needs of those who are not eligible for, or cannot get into, government funded programs? What will your church do?

- Darcy MacCallum



Fun stuff



The Truth riddle

This works well as an opener with students discussing it in groups:

What is greater than God,
More evil than the devil,
The poor have it,
The rich don't need it,
And if you eat it, you'll die?

(Answer is found at the bottom of the page)

Did I read that right?

Office bathroom

Toilet out of order. Please use floor below

In an office:

Would the person who took the step ladder yesterday please bring it back or further steps will be taken

Outside a secondhand shop:

We exchange anything - bicycles, washing machines, etc. Why not bring your wife along and get a wonderful bargain?

Spotted in a safari park:

Elephants please stay in your car

Notice in a farmer's field:

The farmer allows walkers to cross the field for free, but the bull charges

Pennsylvanian Dutch Wisdom

- ◇ You get too soon old, and too late smart!
- ◇ Jacob went to the train to saw off uncle Amos.
- ◇ Throw the cow over the fence some hay.
- ◇ Let's go the hill over and the road a little up.
- ◇ Amos stung his toe with a bee.

PARAPROSDOKIANS



Paraprosdokians are figures of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently humorous.

(Winston Churchill loved them)

- 1) Where there's a will, I want to be in it.
- 2) The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.
- 3) Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- 4) If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
- 5) We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.
- 6) War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
- 7) Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
- 8) They begin the evening news with 'Good Evening,' then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
- 9) To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
- 10) Buses stop in bus stations. Trains stop in train stations. On my desk is a work station.
- 11) I thought I wanted a career. Turns out I just wanted pay checks.
- 12) In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of emergency, notify:' I put 'DOCTOR.'
- 13) I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.
- 14) A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.
- 15) You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.
- 16) Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.
- 17) There's a fine line between cuddling and holding someone down so they can't get away.
- 18) I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.
- 19) You're never too old to learn something stupid.
- 20) To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.
- 21) Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
- 22) Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
- 23) Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
- 24) Where there's a will, there are relatives.

The answer to the riddle is "nothing."
 Nothing is greater than God.
 Nothing is more evil than the Devil.
 The poor have nothing.
 The rich need nothing.
 And if you eat nothing, you'll die.