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Regional gatherings connect around crucial issues

As Canadian culture and laws shift rapidly around us, the need for Canadian Christians to stay informed and discern together is very important. The EFC continues to address this need on the national level as we always have – and more recently also with Faith Matters workshops at the community level.

In the last two years we've held gatherings in Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Calgary, Ottawa, Barrie and Moncton. We've aimed to foster safe, faith-grounded spaces for Canadian Christians to engage constructively with critical and pressing issues.

EFC speakers offer a variety of topics that local believers can choose

from. For example, some opt for our expert presentation on different aspects of euthanasia (MAiD) while others opt for a presentation on the Christian formation roles of parents and grandparents alongside our churches.

Our regional gatherings inform and equip local believers with comprehensive public workshops tailored for a broad audience of local Christians. There's also the option to add on a strategic follow-up session specifically for church and ministry leaders, equipping them with the biblical insights and practical pastoral tools needed to guide their communities through societal changes with grace and truth.

What has profoundly touched our



hearts during these gatherings are the deeply moving personal connections, often revealing the sacrificial dedication of Canadian believers.

During one of our stops, as a severe Canadian winter storm rolled in, one woman refused to let the elements deter her. She drove nearly seven hours through a blizzard just to stand in the room, learn and join the conversation. Her commitment encouraged our entire team.

During one of the gatherings focused on MAiD, a participant approached us at breaktime visibly moved and relieved.

"I have felt so incredibly isolated holding these deep concerns by myself for so long," she said. "Coming here

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What you can do

- Pray for Faith Matters workshops in various communities: Lift up the EFC events team. Pray for traveling mercies, smooth logistics, open hearts and that these gatherings bring deep conversations and unity to local believers.
- Share the journey: Share specific upcoming events with your church network, small groups or on social media, or share the calendar at TheEFC.ca/Events.
- Host a regional event: Start a conversation about hosting a Faith Matters event to welcome the local Christians and the wider public into a crucial discussion. Email us at Events@TheEFC.ca.

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today and realizing I am surrounded by so many fellow believers – for the first time in a very long time, I don't feel alone. I feel like I finally have partners on this journey."

Moments like these remind us why we travel. The hunger for biblical truth, genuine community and mutual support among Canadian Evangelicals is stronger than ever.

The EFC is committed to keeping this vital momentum going, continuing the journey hand in hand with local churches as we carry these essential conversations to as many communities as our resources and partnerships allow. We believe the Church is at its strongest when we are informed, united and stepping forward together.

Our next regional community gathering is A Matter of Life & Death: MAiD Workshop, scheduled for October 3 in Vernon, B.C. This is yet another example of how local churches can stay informed, prayerful and proactive as the laws surrounding medical assistance in dying continue to evolve.

To see our full upcoming schedule and explore future topics, please visit TheEFC.ca/Events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

See TheEFC.ca/Calendar for details and to register

How to Cultivate a Vibrant Culture of Kingdom Prayer in Local Churches, webinar featuring EFC prayer catalyst Roger Helland, online, Sept. 24

Welcome Church Ministry Event, Halifax, N.S., Sept. 25–26

MAiD in Canada: A Matter of Life & Death: Continue the Critical Conversation, Vernon, B.C., Oct. 3

EFC Presidents Day: Gathering for Affiliate Leaders, Toronto, Oct. 22

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HOW MANY CHURCHES NEED PASTORS IN CANADA?

New pastoral needs study

How many churches need pastors in Canada?

What are barriers and opportunities to discerning pastoral vocations?

What are barriers and opportunities to sustaining current pastors?

These questions have inspired a new research project from the EFC Centre for Research on Church and Faith in collaboration with Northwest Seminary's Propel Lilly grant award. The study will explore pastoral calling, training and sustaining.

The study has two research tracks.

1. Needs analysis: Determine historic, current and future pastoral workforce needs in EFC-affiliated congregations based on data such as positions and vacancies, appointment terms, age, expected retirement and strategies for identifying and equipping candidates.

2. Barriers to entry and retention: A phased, qualitative and quantitative study with leaders in denominations, Christian higher education and churches and other key informants including current and potential pastors. This will explore the factors that inform how pastors discern a ministry vocation and how they preserve the vocation during ministry.

Partnership formation is an important part of all our research projects, and we've already begun consulting with EFC affiliate leaders across the nation to discuss how this study can meet their needs and answer their questions concerning pastoral vitality in the 21st century.

This research should help key stakeholders:

- Identify informal and contextual influences affecting pastoral vocational discernment,
- Understand what factors contribute to pastoral resiliency and longevity in ministry,
- Access accurate and verifiable benchmark projections for current and future pastoral needs,
- Address opportunities and barriers to pastoral identification and recruitment,
- Understand the relationships between denominations/churches and Christian higher education institutions,
- Develop pastoral candidates to meet current and future pastoral needs in churches.

Watch for more details at TheEFC.ca/CRCF.



A note from EFC Vice-President Rick Hiemstra

In 2015 the EFC partnered in a study of the missions engagement of local churches. We learned, among other things, that Evangelicals rely on trusted friends to help make sense of the overwhelming amount of information about missions.

Trusted friends are also needed in Canada's legal system, where the EFC has an excellent reputation as an intervener, a "friend of the court." The EFC has intervened in 33 Supreme Court cases and 37 lower court cases, and recently we filed our legal arguments in the *Vabulous vs. British Columbia* case. The courts see us as a trusted friend because we steward the collective voice of our affiliates to make reasoned, constructive, principled arguments based on biblical principles alongside our partner interveners. It is possible for us to be in the courts representing you because of your affiliation, financial support and prayers. Thank you.

Relationships that contribute to reconciliation

EFC supporters have for many years supported the priority of building and maintaining relationships with Indigenous Christian leaders. Through such relationships, EFC staff continue to receive invitations into additional friendships, learning events, working groups and initiatives supporting right relationship.

A new documentary project currently in the works demonstrates the long-term nature of this relationship building. Its roots go back to 1995 when Elijah Harper, an Indigenous MP from Manitoba, had a vision about the need for spiritual healing in Canadian reconciliation, expanding the focus of the time beyond legislation and political intervention.

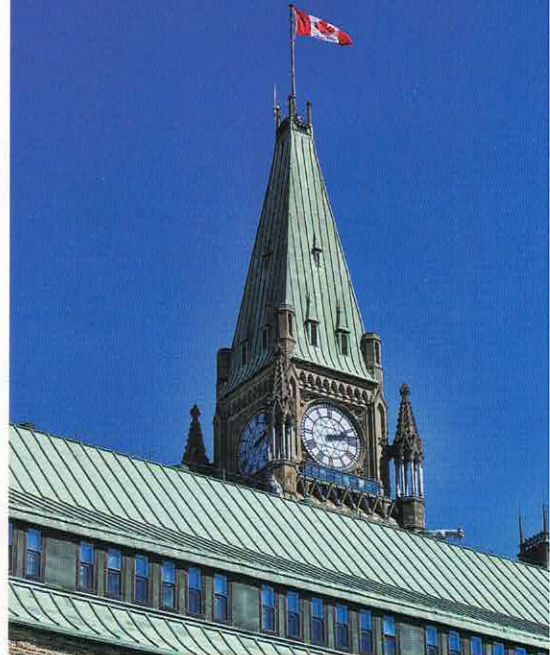
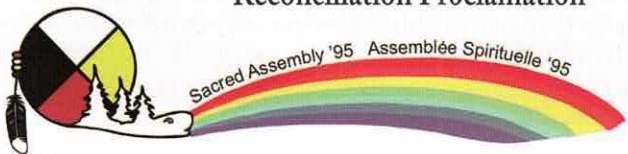
Harper invited members of many different faith traditions to a Sacred Assembly on Dec. 6–9, 1995 at the Palais des Congres in Gatineau, Quebec. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, national traditional leaders and representatives from the EFC were among those invited. The event helped inspire National Indigenous Peoples Day and the drafting of a document called the Reconciliation Proclamation.

Today, the EFC's Joel Gordon is working on a documentary recounting this historic event and EFC's role in it. He recently conducted interviews at the Congress Centre in Hull with Elijah Harper's daughter Holly and two of his granddaughters, Ana-Khesic and Kaye-Leigh.

The documentary production process is yet another opportunity to continue to grow important relationships, to re-learn, reflect and respond, and to witness and participate in stories of healing in the name of Jesus.

The EFC continues to work to create broader awareness about the Reconciliation Proclamation and its call to walk in a good way on this land we now call Canada. View the documentary trailer at [Vimeo.com/1190534498](https://vimeo.com/1190534498) or use this QR code.

Reconciliation Proclamation



Updating you on Canada's most immediate issues

■ **Pause of MAiD for mental illness?** A parliamentary committee studying MAiD for mental illness has recommended an indefinite pause on the expansion. This committee of MPs and senators heard from witnesses and in its June 17 report made this single recommendation. The EFC had urged, at minimum, an indefinite delay of MAiD for mental illness, if not a complete reversal of it, in a submission to the committee in April. The next step is for the government to determine whether it will adopt the recommendation, and to introduce legislation to implement it. Ask your local MP to support an indefinite pause of MAiD for mental illness, if not a complete repeal. Find helpful resources at TheEFC.ca/HaltMAiD.

■ **Bill C-218 to repeal MAiD expansion:** Bill C-218 is a bill that would reverse the law allowing MAiD for mental illness. Although initially expected to come up for more debate and a vote in early 2026, Bill C-218 is now expected to be debated in late September. See TheEFC.ca/C218 for information and tips for contacting your MP in support of the bill.

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■ **Hate crimes bill removes religious belief defence:** Bill C-9, the *Combating Hate Act*, passed on June 17, 2026. The bill created new criminal charges for hate crimes, such as obstruction and interference, in response to increasing antisemitic incidents. However, it also removed the religious belief defence from two hate speech offences. Although rarely used, and never successfully, the religious belief defence was a safeguard for religious expression. The EFC will monitor any impact of removal of the defence and continue to advocate for freedom of religion and expression.

■ **Supreme Court case:** The Supreme Court has granted intervener status to the EFC and the Canadian Centre for Christian Charities. The *Vabuolas* case addresses whether the state can compel religious communities to release confidential records about decision-making on purely religious matters. The EFC and CCCC will argue that *Charter* protections include the ability of faith communities to deliberate, pray and make decisions on purely spiritual matters with the expectation of confidentiality.

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

Abuse Prevention Network equips leaders

The EFC and five partner ministries founded the Abuse Awareness and Prevention Network (AAPN) in 2022. It gathers individuals from EFC affiliated denominations and ministries to equip leaders in faith-based communities. Together we can reduce risk through awareness, respond with care to those who have experienced abuse, uphold truth and work towards reconciliation and God's healing.

Elke Carlson, director of Safe Ministry at The Alliance (C&MA), says this collaborative partnership has enriched her work. "As I have overseen concerns related to misconduct and abuse within the C&MA, I've deeply valued learning from other denominational approaches to addressing abuse," says Carlson. "While our organizational structures may differ, we share a consistent commitment to people-centred care. The collaborative spirit and shared resources in the AAPN have made a meaningful contribution to the ongoing development, training and implementation of safe ministry practices in the C&MA."

EFC donors have allowed us to create and maintain this network to protect the vulnerable across Canada and uphold their dignity as people made in the image of God. Thank you! Learn more at TheEFC.ca/AAPN.

Belief defence for hate crime gone

Now that Bill C-9, the hate crimes bill, has become law, if a person is charged and found guilty of wilfully promoting hatred, there will no longer be a defence for 'good faith' religious belief.

The wilful promotion of hatred is a relatively rare charge in Canada. A person must intend, by their communication, to promote hatred against an identifiable group. To date, the courts have set a very high bar for this offence.

Scripture itself has never been found to wilfully promote hatred. Removal of the religious belief defence does not criminalize public reading or teaching from Scripture. The EFC advocated for the defence to be maintained, communicating with MPs, submitting written briefs to parliamentary committees and appearing before the Senate committee studying the bill.

Christians in Canada will keep preaching the gospel and speaking truth, clearly linking our words to Scripture, acting with love for our neighbour. The EFC will monitor the effects of Bill C-9 and continue to advocate for freedom of religion and belief.

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 **EFC** The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

275 Slater Street, Suite 810, Ottawa, ON K1P 5H9
Toll Free: 1.866.302.3362 • Email: EFC@TheEFC.ca
www.TheEFC.ca



The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (*Alliance évangélique du Canada*) is the national association "calling Evangelicals to greater visible unity in gospel witness." 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