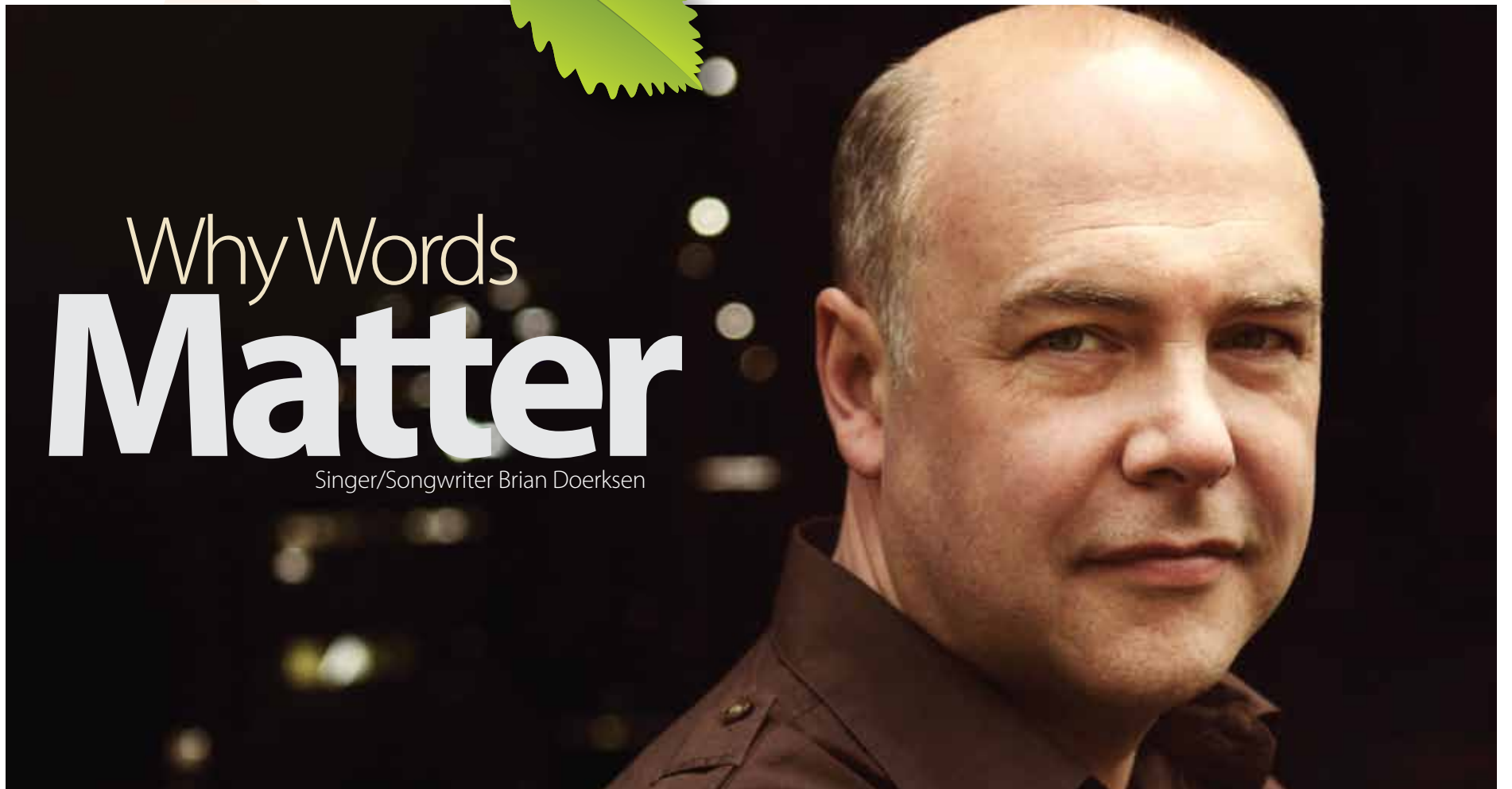




# kolbetimes

Faith, Arts & Justice



## Why Words Matter

Singer/Songwriter Brian Doerksen

Why Words Matter  
By Brian Doerksen

Words have power. They make us erupt with laughter or cause our heart to break. Most of you will know the words to the song 'Yesterday'. The reason you know these words is not simply because they are part of our culture's soundtrack. When words are wedded to melody they get lodged in a part of our brain that functions as 'God's back up hard drive for humans.' When we need to access those words, they're there because of how

music works on us and in us, and because of the power of one additional tool of language that we lyricists use to great effect: rhyme. Sing the lines 'Why she had to go I don't know, she wouldn't say. I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday.' Decades after my first hearing of this amazing song I have no problem recalling the words. They still speak. The first line I quoted speaks of the power of words withheld. Even unspoken, words have power. The second line speaks of the collective human experience of broken hearts and regret. If words didn't

matter we could say cruel things to each other and nothing would change. But we all know what happens when hurtful words get spoken. People get hurt. Things change.

Words matter because words have power.

Those of us from the community of faith believe that words got the whole cosmos rolling in the first place. The opening chapters of Genesis poetically describe the creation of the world through the

means of God-spoken words like 'Let there be light'. These words, because of their inherent power and the power of the One who spoke them, bring about the reality we find ourselves in the middle of. This was my inspiration for the words I wrote in Creation Calls.

*I have felt the wind blow, whispering your name.  
I have seen your tears fall when I watch the rain.  
How could I say there is no God when all around creation calls...*

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Check out page 7  
for our new contest!

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#### The Power of Words

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## Journey Through Dementia: My Mother's Words

Journey through Dementia:  
My Mother's Words  
by Faye Hall

My mother, Helen Goertzen, was a loving, caring nurse for most of her life, looking after my father who had a heart condition and died far too soon. Upon her retirement and the loss of my Dad, she slowly descended into a paranoid form of dementia. I helped care for her for over 20 years.

Like many people in my position, I found it difficult to explain my feelings to others. Mom could be sitting right beside me, yet I missed her terribly. Then there's the guilt about feeling shackled to this person, even though you love them. Life seems to be passing you by.

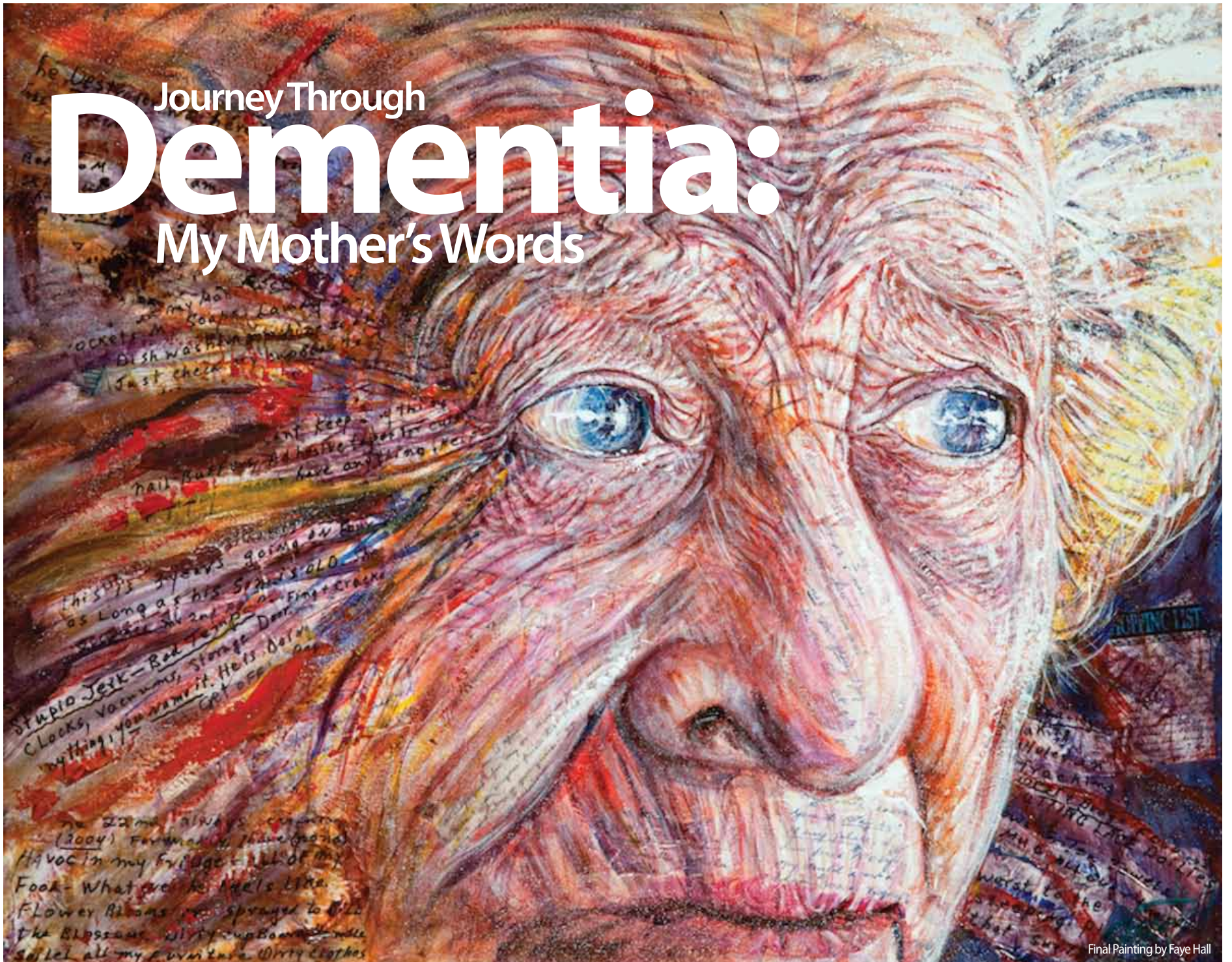
My mother passed away suddenly in 2012 from heart failure. Her last emergency day in the hospital was not pleasant, as her form of dementia often included acute

fear. She had been brought in for tests after a fainting spell. She was very frightened, and when we wanted to take her back to the care home, she literally fought us like a desperate child, thinking the ambulance attendants wanted to kill her. She died the next day.

Some time later, the time came to clean out some files in my studio, and I came upon a reminder of her suffering – little notes that she had written in her confused state of

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Journey Through  
**Dementia:**  
My Mother's Words

Final Painting by Faye Hall



Faye Hall - Ebonie Klassen Photography

mind while still living on her own. I had gathered them up and put them in a file when we moved her from her apartment into the care home. Mom often misplaced personal items, and unable to admit her forgetfulness, her mind made up stories about other people intruding into her sanctuary. When paranoia takes root, reason decreases, and imagination increases dramatically.

She told me about the people who insinuated themselves into her home to eat her food, steal small items and move things around – even rearranging her drawers, cupboards and purse. At the worst stages, she imagined that these folks had moved into the apartment above her, coming down to her kitchen for breakfast.

Sometimes, “those people” brought their children along with them, allowing the children to scratch her piano bench, pick the leaves off her floral arrangements, and cut the edges of doilies. She insisted that a man used a rope and harness to climb

onto her balcony at night, and then sit in her living room and listen to her radio.

The notes I had tucked away in my filing cabinet were addressed to these “visitors”, or “destroyers” as she sometimes called them. She told them she couldn’t afford to feed them, and that they should “get a job!”

I knew that I needed to do something with all these little notes. Throwing them away seemed like a disregard for her distress, so I decided to work them into a painting about dementia. I would attempt to put myself into her world and try to understand what she had felt.

I found a photo that I had taken of her in her favourite restaurant, shortly before her passing, and sketched the face on the canvas.

What is it like to live in constant fear - where one’s imagination goes wild, and everyone is “looking at you” and judging you? My hands shook and I started to

weep as I tore the edges from all of the notes and made them into smaller pieces to attach to the canvas.

During the journey of helping and caring for my Mom, I had become a widow, and was dealing with desperate feelings of my own. My mother was immersed in her helpless little world, unable to comfort me. This brought on self-condemnation for wanting a mother back, to console me. I was angry that I had to be the parent and not the child. Fortunately, with the love and support of family, friends and church network, I received much prayer and support to help wade through the muck of my grief and loss.

While creating this painting, I studied the face of my Mom, noticing every wrinkle, shadow and highlight as an insight into what she was feeling at the time. Every stroke of the brush seemed to ease and release – something.

I can never hope to fully understand her anxiety and desperation, but somehow it

felt good to make use of those nasty little notes that had been taking up space in my files. They are now in a place of reminder that we need to show a bit more patience and love to those living in the prison of their anxieties.

To quote Bette Davis, “growing old ain’t for sissies. . .”

*Faye Hall works by day in the Winnipeg office of singer/songwriter Steve Bell. Her art has been largely influenced by his music, photography and the poetry of Malcolm Guite of the UK (a co-collaborator with Bell.) Faye is releasing a book of her art in the fall of 2015 called “ART begets ART - One Artist’s Inspiration”, which shows many of the paintings influenced by Bell and Guite, and tells some of the stories behind her work. See her blog for details at [www.fayehall.com](http://www.fayehall.com). Facebook at The Art of Faye Hall.*





## Why Words Matter continued



The SHIYR Poets

Brian Doerksen

The words that we think and speak are powerful and important, but perhaps most powerful of all are the words we sing. These words are not thoughtlessly uttered and then forgotten, but deeply engraved in our memory. It's these words that help us in times of trouble. For me the writing of songs has been one of the main ways that I've responded to the various storms that have blown through my life. Hearing stories of how the words to these songs have subsequently helped people in distress is one of my greatest motivators to keep on writing. I was stunned when I heard about people in a shipwreck clinging to debris in the ocean singing 'Faithful One' for hours as they awaited rescue, or my recent meeting with a woman who was about to commit suicide. At the last minute she discovered one of my least known songs on YouTube called 'Enter the Rest of God'. Instead of ending her life and abandoning her then 2-year-old son, she gave her burdens to God and since then, every night she and her now 5-year-old son sing these words over each other. 'Are you tired, worn out and empty? Is your soul weary... I am the rest you need. I am the Prince of peace. Enter the rest of God.'

Several years ago I went through a prolonged season of disorientation and darkness initiated by relational conflict in a church I had helped plant. The result – I lost my words. (A bit of a problem when you make your living with words as a songwriter.) After 2 years of not writing any new songs I rediscovered the power of the ancient words from the Book of Psalms. Since then I've become part of a new band made up of old friends. We are 'The SHIYR Poets' (Pronounced 'Sheer') and we are creating new inspirational folk rock settings of the Psalms. We sing the dark and difficult lament Psalms too, because we relate to them. Our first album 'Songs for the Journey Volume One' contains Psalms 1 to 10 and we are almost finished Volume Two which contains Psalms 11 to 20. These ancient words have helped keep me alive.

My other prime focus in this season is to mentor and encourage the next generation to write words in song. My hope in doing so is this; when they are in trouble – and suffering will mark each of their young lives eventually – they will have songs in their musical mother tongue to help them remember. I'm doing this at Prairie College in Three Hills, Alberta.

Words help us build a relationship with our Maker and those around us. They help us express who we are and what we are going through. Let's keep on singing the words that matter the most, engraving them into our memory.

And let's ensure that phrases like 'I love you,' 'You are amazing,' and 'Will you forgive me?' are often on our lips as we interact with people who need to experience the power of words in a life-giving way.

*Brian Doerksen is a JUNO award winning recording artist, writer of songs like 'Come, now is the time to worship,' 'Faithful One' and 'Refiner's fire'; member of 'The SHIYR Poets'; and a professor teaching songwriting in the Music & Worship Arts program at Prairie College in Three Hills. He's been married to Joyce for 30 years and they have six children, including three with special needs. Visit [www.briandoerksen.com](http://www.briandoerksen.com)*

*To see videos of Brian Doerksen and The SHIYR Poets, visit [www.kolbetimes.com](http://www.kolbetimes.com)*



## Musings from the Editor's Desk



Laura Locke

Musings from the Editor's Desk  
By Laura Locke  
[lauralocke@shaw.ca](mailto:lauralocke@shaw.ca)

It's interesting how certain conversations stick in our minds long after they take place – especially stressful ones. Cognitive researchers have identified something called the "negativity bias", which means that we remember interactions of an unhappy or negative nature best of all. I certainly have a few stark personal examples, such as a nervous 'boyfriend' in high school, staring at his shoes while muttering "Maybe we should just be friends from now on." I remember that blood-curdling moment as if it were yesterday! Song lyrics tend to stick in our minds, too – especially the ones from our childhood or teenage years. I once volunteered in a music

therapy group for seniors with Alzheimer's, and never ceased to be amazed at how they sang along to jazz tunes from the 1940's and 50's with such impressive gusto. As singer/songwriter Brian Doerksen suggests in our cover story, rhyme is a great memory tool. All of which attests to the power of words, both good and bad – the theme of this issue.

Jesus knew all about the power of words. He was one of history's greatest storytellers. His "source material" came from the things right in front of him: birds, children, women sweeping, farmers, trees, tenants grumbling, sheep, rich landlords, faithful servants. Rather than preaching a systematic theology, Jesus knew that concrete examples and anecdotes would cling in our memories,

and would lead us eventually to those profound "aha!" moments.

The late Rod Cameron, a priest and poet who worked for much of his life among the Aboriginal people of Australia, wrote, "If human hope is like a bird in flight, then story is the air. It's where we live. Story fuels the fire of the mind, because when we find our theme, we find ourselves. It is God who speaks into the story of our lives, for God is the meaning-maker of the world."

We hope you enjoy this issue of Kolbe Times, as we present a parade of stories, and explore how words lost, words found, words given, words painted, words sung, words spoken, words read and words written can fuel the fire of our minds and spirits.





## Words of Healing Words of Hope



Olga Sacatoomani in Southern Peru



A group of women attending a church service in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, burst into delighted laughter after hearing a Bible story in their native language, Nyanga.

Words of Healing, Words of Hope  
By Doug Lockhart  
Photos by Wycliffe Canada / Alan Hood

*'They're still able to smile.'* The thought startled me, knowing that most of the 20 refugees assembled that evening at a spiritual retreat centre in the Democratic Republic of Congo had probably witnessed unspeakable cruelty.

Darkness had fallen on the city of Goma, and inside the dimly-lit dining room one could even hear occasional laughter rising above the subdued conversations around us. It was the spring of 2011 and I had just arrived with a photographer colleague from Word Alive, the magazine of Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada. I was going to interview victims of trauma to discover how they were processing their pain with guidance from Scriptures translated into their mother tongues.

As survivors of the country's brutal civil war, the Congolese church leaders who had gathered at the retreat centre had few reasons to smile or laugh.

"They've lost everything," a workshop organizer told me later. "They're living here in Goma as displaced people with no rights, no money—it's just very, very hard."

The next day, a few of them shared their stories with us during breaks from the workshop.

"In one village," said Moise Mamlaka from the Chitembo language group, "about 100 people were killed. Several people had their arms cut off and I have a family member that doesn't have legs anymore."

Hearing such stories and observing the pain etched in their faces, I wondered if healing was even possible. Surely any joy they once knew had been forever ripped away, replaced by haunting images and the echoing screams of suffering friends, neighbours and family members. In the days following, I glimpsed something remarkable as God used His Word, translated into their heart languages, to renew hope among the 19 men and a lone woman attending the workshop. Whether it was read, spoken or sung to sacred melodies, passages from the Bible began to touch deep places in their hearts. With them came the Lord's assurance that He had never forsaken them, and there was a place of healing that transcended their pain.

During the workshop, participants were given slips of paper and instructed to write some key words describing their trauma. They were then encouraged to come forward and nail the papers to a cross at the

front of the room. The exercise was a powerful and moving reminder that Christ had forgiven them, and He would empower them to forgive their enemies. Another day, we visited the office and surgery of Dr. Ahuka Longombe, a Christian physician who specializes in reconstructive surgery for women who have been brutally raped. At the end of our interview, Dr. Longombe put into words what I had been struggling to express.

"We can care for these women in a medical way," he told us, "but we cannot heal. The One who can heal is God, and the instrument we have for that is His Word. Without the Word of God, you cannot come to true healing."

Across the world in Southern Peru, God's Word is transforming lives in a different way. We met Olga Sacatoomani this past November, at her home high in the Andes Mountains.

"Our lives had many difficulties," Olga told us as we sipped warm milk outside her small adobe house.

Her husband used to drink heavily and the entire family struggled with poor health. Around that time, Olga heard about literacy classes being hosted by a local church. As she began attending the classes and as she learned to read the Cusco Quechua Bible, Olga discovered that God cared for her and her family. Through His Word, she realized Christ had forgiven her sin and she could come to Him with her pain, as well as her hopes and dreams. As her relationship with Christ grew, Olga felt a growing desire to share the life-changing Scriptures with other Quechua women.

Through a Christian ministry called ATEK ("the association that shines the gospel to the Quechua-speaking world"), Olga learned how to effectively teach others. As

an overseer of women's groups in 12 area churches, she now travels regularly by horseback or on foot to lead Bible studies and hold teacher-training workshops.

Olga's worldview shifted when she began to read and understand the Bible. Through the translated Scriptures, she perceived that God valued her and had a place for her in building His kingdom. Thousands more Quechua people are discovering Christ's love through His Word, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Bible is teaching trauma victims that the key to true healing is found through forgiveness.

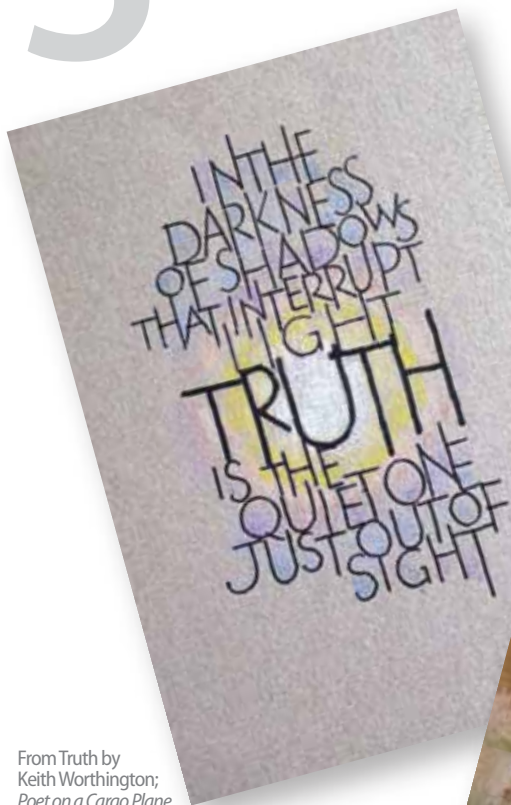
"All Scripture is inspired by God," the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives" (2 Timothy 3:16, NLT). Paul's statement is as true today as it was some 2,000 years ago. Today, people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation are finding hope and healing from the pages of God's Word, when it is read and understood in their own language.

Doug Lockhart is the senior staff writer for Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada. To learn more about Wycliffe's work in Bible translation and how you can be involved, visit [www.wycliffe.ca](http://www.wycliffe.ca).



Doug Lockhart





From Truth by Keith Worthington; Poet on a Cargo Plane



From At the Family Home, After the Funeral; Poet on a Cargo Plane



From Dangerous Poems; Puffs of Breath



From Intruders; Puffs of Breath

## A Beautiful Synergy: Words, Art and Life



Keith & Renate Worthington

A Beautiful Synergy: Words, Art and Life  
By Laura Locke

Synergy is defined as the combined power of two, coming together to create something greater than the parts. Keith and Renate Worthington embody that expression, not only in their marriage and life together, but also in their art. Poetry and calligraphy – a match made in heaven.

Keith was born and raised in Calgary and Renate grew up north of Grand Prairie. They met when both were teaching Language Arts at a Calgary Junior High School, soon were married, and now have two grown daughters. Keith is the author of three poetry books: *Puffs of Breath* (2007), *Poet on a Cargo Plane* (2010) and *After the Flood: Hockey Poems* (2013). Nature is an important source of inspiration for his poems, as are memories of growing up and his insightful reflections on life's lessons. Keith's latest book is a celebration of his life-long passion for hockey.

"I've always enjoyed writing," says Keith, "but I really started getting into poetry as I encouraged my students to write. Teachers/writers Ralph Fletcher and Nancy Atwell, who believed in treating kids like writers, inspired me. They wanted students to live with eyes wide open. That has become an important idea for me as well."

Calligraphy has been an integral part of Renate's life since 1980. She is very involved with the Bow Valley Calligraphy Guild, and is a well-known calligraphy teacher, putting on countless workshops through the years for local organizations including St. Mary's University, where she recently taught a Foundations of Calligraphy course in their Sacred Arts Program. She also creates commissioned works. Her calligraphy is displayed in many private collections, schools and other public institutions. Last year Renate restored a large, faded commemorative scroll from WWI for St. Paul's Cathedral in Kamloops, B.C. – a huge project that she calls "an amazing experience".

In their collaborative efforts, one sees a special joy from these two creative spirits. Keith's poetry provides Renate with opportunities to create new artwork suggested by his words. The results can be seen throughout his three books of poetry, and also displayed in art shows and in various collections.

"I'm intensely proud of the books that we've done together," says Renate. "It's been a great experience to contribute to something together and then see it through – even sharing the frustrations of the proofreading and printing process."

They both appreciate the power and significance of words. Renate's enthusiasm as a calligrapher is evident as she talks about capturing and expressing the layers of meaning in words, and how various alphabet styles have different "personalities".

As a writer, Keith adds his own perspective.

"The more poetry you write," says Keith, "the more you come to appreciate how word choice has such an effect on the way something will be interpreted. And the structure of the words in a poem is important, as well as the white space – the places where there aren't words."

Keith relates how Renate has become very skilled at identifying key words that are important to the theme of a poem, and using calligraphy techniques to highlight them or create a special emphasis.

"Words are the tools of the trade for a poet," says Keith, "and Renate's creativity adds a new dimension. We have some great discussions about my poems, which is exactly what you want to happen."

Check out their website for more examples of Renate's calligraphy, Keith's poetry, and information related to their books at [www.languageartstudio.ca](http://www.languageartstudio.ca)

*At the Family Home, After the Funeral*  
By Keith Worthington

*Memories are piled so high  
I can't get out the door:  
letters, books, and photographs  
in heaps upon the floor.*

*I know if I stop among them,  
they'll swallow me whole again:  
the world outside this silent house  
smaller than the world within.*

From *Poet on a Cargo Plane*

*Dangerous Poems*  
By Keith Worthington

*I like dangerous poems.  
When you get too close,  
they burn you  
or cause your heart to miss a beat.*

*I like poems that take you to the edge,  
throw you over, and then save you,  
just before you hit rock bottom.*

*I like poems that put into words  
crimes you know you have committed,  
but won't confess to.  
I like dangerous poems.*

From *Puffs of Breath*





## Dialogue: True Openness, Steadfast Convictions

Farpi Vignoli sculptor

Dialogue: True Openness, Steadfast Convictions  
By Deacon Adrian Martens

I was recently at lunch with a Christian family who are moving back into full-time ministry as missionaries in Eastern Europe. The lunch was fun, cordial and relaxing. There were many similarities we shared: the husband had married a woman from Eastern Europe, as I had; both the husband and wife were involved in ministry, like my wife and I; they had interesting experiences with Immigration Canada due to the wife's background, like us. After this small talk about our common experiences, I raised the idea of connecting them with some of the Catholic ministries and Dioceses in the region of Europe they were moving back to. The husband's response, however, caught me off guard. Even though we had been talking about our shared belief

in the essentials of Christianity, he said that he was very hesitant to work with Catholics who might be tied to expressions of faith that differed from those of his denomination. Getting into the car after lunch I had to admit that I was little frustrated. It had been a long time since someone had so clearly stressed parameters around possible work we could do together as fellow Christians.

But then I asked myself, "Have I, as a Catholic, set parameters around some of my Christian or non-Christian ministry contacts?" I remembered an offhand comment I had made about Ash Wednesday to the Calgary Council of Churches. Yes, I set parameters, too. I had little grounds for judging my new friend. Pope Francis, in *The Joy of the Gospel*, speaks of the importance in maintaining dialogue which cannot and will not play down the parameters: "True openness

involves remaining steadfast in one's deepest convictions, clear and joyful in one's own identity, while at the same time being open to understanding those of the other party... "It is my encounter with my new friend that trust grew, that enrichment already happened, and that perhaps an even greater closeness existed since we truly knew where both stood.

Another passage in *The Joy of the Gospel* describes the importance of determining what we see as essential truths of the Christian faith: "If we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly towards common expressions of proclamation, service and witness."

Jesus uses the very simple analogy of two men who build houses: one man builds his house on the rock (which is "everyone

who hears these words of mine and acts on them"), and the other builds his house on sand (which is "everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them"). For the man who acts on Christ's words, "the rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock." But for the foolish man who built his house on sand, "the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!" (Mt 7: 25-27).

As Christians, with this principle as our centre, my friend and I can continue our shared ministry as we endeavour to discover what Christ-rootedness would mean in "expressions of proclamation, service and witness." For we indeed both claim this to be our starting point (though I am sure we would all claim to fall short individually, and to some extent, corporately). I think we would be surprised where we might end up, as we start at the bottom and have courage to climb together.



Deacon Adrian Martens

Deacon Adrian Martens works as the Coordinator of Social Justice, Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary, and is also President of the Calgary Council of Churches and co-chair of Abraham's Tent (Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue). He loves to spend his spare time in Chaplaincy work at the Calgary Airport, and with his wife Maira and their new daughter Hannah.

## Film Review: Letters to Father Jacob

KAARINA HAZARD

HEIKKI NOUSIAINEN



Film Review: Letters to Father Jacob  
By Bill Locke

She's an ex-con, angry and ready to explode. He's a retired, blind, elderly priest, unaware of much around him. Put these very dissimilar characters together, and watch what happens. That's the set-up for the 2009 Finnish film *Letters to Father Jacob*, directed by Klaus Härö and available on Amazon.

How does it play out? It could have been a comedy, or perhaps even a horror movie. Instead, this is a quiet but strangely compelling drama, set in the countryside of Finland.

*Letters* is the story of Leila, convicted of murdering a family member, who as the film begins is pardoned after 12 years in jail. There are not a lot of jobs out there for middle-aged women newly released from prison, so she reluctantly takes a position offered to her as assistant to Fr. Jacob. Her main duty is reading aloud his daily mail – prayer requests from needy, lonely people. Fr. Jacob lives for his role as intercessor for his scattered flock. Based on a story by Jaana Makkonen, *Letters* takes us stage-by-stage through Leila's metamorphosis, from sullen pragmatist, grudgingly bulldozing her way through one letter after another for her blind boss, into a compassionate champion of the old man. After a number of humiliating turns in his life and ministry, Fr. Jacob undergoes a dark night of the soul. In a surprising turn of events, Leila is the one who helps him crawl his way out of hopelessness.

*Letters* brings its protagonists together at a critical time in their lives. In a curiously poignant way, they are made for each other, as they both come to grips with the difficult cards they've been dealt in life. He,

though blind, is alert to the light of love. She, though sighted, is blind to the possibility of joy. The power of prayer, the meaning of friendship, the lessons that can be found in both helplessness and selflessness – all these themes come together, captured in simple but lovingly presented scenes.

It's not a film I wanted to enjoy. Watching it is not entertaining in the usual sense of going to the movies. There are no thrilling action scenes or special effects, no big name actors. The story moves slowly, with an emphasis on the sounds in Fr. Jacob's blind world – whistling teakettles, rain pattering on the window, creaking floorboards in his old wooden house. But I found it terribly moving, like a quiet interlude in prayerful contemplation of what is important in life.

In a way, this is a film that endorses the "slow" movement. It reminds us of the significance of ordinary actions, like sitting down and having a cup of tea with the people we care about, instead of always rushing around and making a lot of noise that signifies nothing. *Letters* sets our speed dial back a couple of notches to help us advance on a deeper level, which much of the time we try very hard to avoid.

Bill Locke is a former documentary filmmaker. He is President of Capacity Builders Inc., a consulting company that serves community organizations, and is co-author of *The Nurturing Leader*.

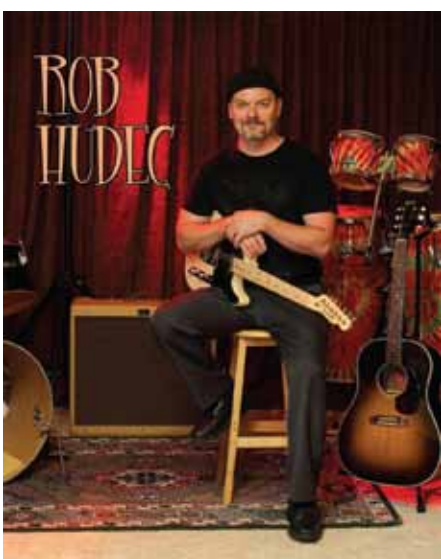


Bill Locke





## Featured Artist Rob Hudec



Featured Artist: Rob Hudec

Rob Hudec was born in Leader, Saskatchewan – the eighth child in a family of ten children. Music played a big part in the family's life. As Rob puts it, "We weren't the von Trapp family or anything like that, but there was always music around the house."

Rob took up the guitar at the age of eight. He remembers well how it all started.

"My brother, who is five years older than me, was learning to play an Eagles' song, Lyin' Eyes, on a friend's guitar one night in our basement. I was supposed to be asleep, but when I heard my brother, I knew I wanted to learn to play. The next day my father gave me a chord book and the small guitar we had in the house, and I started practicing."

Rob has lived in Medicine Hat since 2000, and is a popular, well-known fixture on the music scene there. His masterful guitar-playing and rich, soulful voice can be heard almost any weekend in Medicine Hat, Swift Current or other nearby spots – whether playing solo or with friends, or hosting jam sessions. Though his passion has always been the sheer joy of playing live music to a crowd, in recent years Rob has been touring less and focusing more on writing songs and recording albums.

"I feel so blessed to be able to play my music and stay pretty close to home," says Rob. "I love working in my yard and on numerous projects. In those "whistling while I work" moments a song melody

usually pops in my head and I'll hum it into my little pocket recorder. Or if a little "hook" line I hear or see inspires me, I'll write it down. Eventually a song transpires from that. It's like putting a puzzle together."

Rob's first album, *Lost and Found*, came out in 1998 – a collection of original songs that he'd composed during his ramblings the previous ten years. His prowess as a blues guitarist/singer was front and centre in his 2005 album, *The Absynthe Sessions*, featuring the Rob Hudec Trio. A gorgeous homage to the blues, the album covers songs by the likes of Willie Dixon and John Lee Hooker. In 2010, Rob released *Dandelion*, an engaging eclectic mix of original tunes, with threads of jazz, folk, reggae and R&B woven into his natural blues-driven sensibilities.

Rob's latest album, *The Narrow Road*, is a gift of 13 gospel songs. Familiar melodies, such as *Go Tell It On the Mountain* are lovingly presented in a roots/acoustic style. Rob chose songs that have always touched his heart, and invited his musical friends and family to join him. In fact, the talents of 26 singers and musicians from the Medicine Hat area are featured in the album – including Rob's son, his niece and even his parents, who sing a lovely rendition of *I Come to the Garden*, accompanying themselves on piano and clarinet.

Visit Rob's website at [www.robhudec.com](http://www.robhudec.com).  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/rob.hudec.3](http://www.facebook.com/rob.hudec.3).

All his albums can be purchased on his website or from iTunes. Watch videos of Rob and his music at [www.kolbetimes.com](http://www.kolbetimes.com)



## Enter Our photo contest!

Send us one or two of your photos that best capture the theme of our next issue: "Power Beyond Words". Email your photos to [lauralocke@shaw.ca](mailto:lauralocke@shaw.ca). (Files of each photo should be high resolution.)

**Deadline for entries is June 15, 2015.**

The top five entries will be published in our fall issue, and the first-prize winner, chosen by our panel of judges, will enjoy one free night for two people at the award-winning High Country Inn, located in beautiful Banff, Alberta.

**Congratulations to Vicki Keung, who won two tickets to the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra in our last issue's contest.**

## We'd love to hear from you!

Drop us a line if you'd like to comment on anything you've read or seen in these pages – or if you have a story idea for a future issue. Contact us at 403-816-0322 or email [lauralocke@shaw.ca](mailto:lauralocke@shaw.ca)

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# Poetry

*Valentine for Ernest Mann*  
By Naomi Shihab Nye

*You can't order a poem like you order a taco.  
Walk up to the counter, say, "I'll take two"  
and expect it to be handed back to you  
on a shiny plate.*

*Still, I like your spirit.  
Anyone who says, "Here's my address,  
write me a poem," deserves something in reply.  
So I'll tell a secret instead:  
poems hide. In the bottoms of our shoes,  
they are sleeping. They are the shadows  
drifting across our ceilings the moment  
before we wake up. What we have to do  
is live in a way that lets us find them.*

*Once I knew a man who gave his wife  
two skunks for a valentine.  
He couldn't understand why she was crying.  
"I thought they had such beautiful eyes."  
And he was serious. He was a serious man  
who lived in a serious way. Nothing was ugly  
just because the world said so. He really  
liked those skunks. So, he re-invented them  
as valentines and they became beautiful.  
At least, to him. And the poems that had been hiding  
in the eyes of skunks for centuries  
crawled out and curled up at his feet.*

*Maybe if we re-invent whatever our lives give us  
we find poems. Check your garage, the odd sock  
in your drawer, the person you almost like,  
but not quite.  
And let me know.*

Reprinted with the kind permission of  
Naomi Shihab Nye

To watch a video of Ms. Nye reading this poem  
and discussing the inspiration behind it,  
visit [www.kolbetimes.com](http://www.kolbetimes.com)







# I am immigrant

Photo by Juan Monino

"I Am Immigrant"  
By Katarzyna Czyz

*"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." -Ludwig Wittgenstein*

Olga from Ukraine is a psychiatrist. Afshin from Iran is a civil engineer. Thao from Vietnam is a priest. Ricardo from Colombia is an architect. Parminder from India has a PhD in microbiology. Huang, a math teacher, was a high school principal in Korea.

They have one thing in common: they don't speak English.

A person who immigrates to Canada without or with little knowledge of English finds himself or herself in an extremely difficult situation. In the first years of living in a strange country, most adult immigrants experience culture shock that is associated with adjusting to different weather conditions, different food, different customs, and missing family back home, to name a few. However, the most trying thing is losing the power of words. The perfect knowledge of the language you have spoken for your entire life proves to be completely useless in your new life as an immigrant. Communication with others that used to be an enjoyable, effortless activity becomes a stressful, and sometimes ineffective, chore. Tasks as simple as answering the phone, buying groceries, asking for directions, talking to a doctor, talking to your child's teacher, etc. suddenly pose immense challenges.

This is how the ESL students that I work with describe their experiences: "At the airport I couldn't say good sentences. I said only words and moved my hands"; "I couldn't talk because I was afraid of making mistakes"; "Sometimes I laughed when they laughed, and they thought I understood"; "I couldn't express myself fully while talking to my Canadian doctor about my pregnancy and pains"; "I got a phone call from my bank and I didn't know what they were asking me." They recall feeling stupid, frightened, embarrassed, frustrated, sad, misunderstood and confused.

Consequently, being unable to fully express yourself has a significant influence on the person's perception of who you really are. The language problem becomes the source of an identity crisis, and your self-esteem suffers greatly. You discover that the ability to speak the language is the most defining factor of who you are as a human being. My ESL students recall: "When I arrived in Canada, I felt like a baby or a doll who couldn't speak, only look around"; "I couldn't go to my kids' school because I wasn't able to talk with the teacher. I felt useless because I couldn't help my children"; "I was afraid to go outside by myself. I felt like a deaf-mute; like a handicapped person"; "I was frustrated because I couldn't be assertive. I lost all my confidence." One of my students, not being able to express what he felt was one of his most important personality traits, simply said, "You know, I am really funny."

I myself experienced this rocky journey of being a new immigrant to Canada, when I moved here from Poland 26 years ago. I remember these same feelings that my students are experiencing. You desperately want to be recognized and known for who you really are: a sensitive, cultured, intelligent person with high values. You are afraid of creating a bad impression to English speakers, or offending them by the wrong choice of words.

When a person functions like this for a prolonged period of time, they may become impatient and angry with themselves. This is a dangerous moment where you can fall into clinical depression. One student, a teacher from Eritrea, described feeling disconnected, helpless and vulnerable in a dangerous world, where communication is "the centre of everything". She said, "Silence and sadness becomes a big part of your life." A Korean businessman wrote in my intermediate ESL class, "I used to be a handsome, cheerful, extrovert, sensitive, very creative person, but now I am ugly, introvert, unhappy, sad person. I am immigrant."

Learning a new language is a long process. Even if you reach an intermediate level and are able to "survive" in English, it is not enough to give you a job in your profession. Many immigrants are not able to study English full time because they need to work, usually in low-level jobs, to support their families. The lack of time to study poses an additional challenge. Imagine working eight hours washing dishes in a restaurant, and then coming to an evening class to study a new language – not for pleasure but for survival.

You might ask: "Why do people who do not speak English immigrate to Canada then?" Well, this is a whole different topic, related to economic and political situations elsewhere in the world. But thankfully, there are many Canadians who welcome and come alongside new immigrants, and respectfully give them practical and caring help. I certainly experienced that myself.


Most ESL speakers are able to master English with time, and get good jobs.

Our country is still a haven for brave and ambitious people who courageously overcome the language gap and regain the power of words.



Katarzyna Czyz

*Katarzyna Czyz is an ESL instructor in Calgary, who is greatly inspired by her students and their stories.*



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# 9 Books my life



This is the third article in our series, in which we ask leaders in our faith community to discuss important books in their lives. Past contributors have been Bishop Frederick Henry and Dr. Gerry Turcotte, President of St. Mary's University.

Books that Changed My Life  
Dr. Gordon T. Smith

I grew up within an evangelical spiritual and theological tradition and religious sub-culture that was deeply ambivalent if not actually "anti" the sacraments. If we did anything at all that even looked sacramental, we insisted that it was merely an "ordinance" – that is, "just a symbol"; as we were wont to say – and we further insisted that it had no redeeming value, no grace for the Christian.

Well, a series of books – both fiction and non-fiction – led me to a change of heart and mind, and into a deep appreciation of the sacramental life of the church.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* was influential in my life in so many ways, including the rather intriguing suggestion that each time the community of faith gathers at Table they do so with the Risen Christ as their host. And, further, that the church is actually formed by the simple act of eating together in the presence of Christ.

Then there is the priest – typically referred to as the "whiskey priest" in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* – who is on the run for his life from Mexican authorities at a time that the church and religious were illegal in Mexico. Whenever he comes to a point of potential escape, crossing a state line, he feels compelled to stop and preside at the Eucharist. And for one coming from my background, I was amazed that the "table" would matter so much – that it would mean so much to one who was called into religious leadership.

Lesslie Newbigin was also an essential voice in my formation as a young adult, and he continues to be as significant a voice as any in my understanding of the church. His book, *The Household of God*, remains in my life as one of the most formative books when it comes to my appreciation of the vital place of the sacraments and especially the Lord's Supper in the life and witness of the church. Newbigin is another voice that insisted for me and to me that what makes the church the church is that it gathers at table.

The above books were read in my twenties and thirties. But then, later in life – by then into my forties – I came across the exquisite book, the capstone of them all for me: *For the Life of the World*, by Alexander Schmemmann, a Russian Orthodox priest

who was for many years the Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary north of New York City. Schmemmann writes with winsome power about the efficacy of God in the sacramental actions of the church and of the joy that is found in and through our participation in the Eucharist. Yes, that is precisely the word – joy! My upbringing seemed to assume that the saddest moment of all was this rather sober and solemn approach to the Lord's Supper that we tacked on to our worship events once a month on the first Sunday of the month. It was an occasional event – not weekly; but more it was not in any way a happy event. No one looked forward to it; everyone viewed it as necessary, perhaps – because Christ had commanded it – but it was hardly a time when we felt any measure of joy! And here I am reading Schmemmann who not only speaks of joy as indispensable to human life but also of the Table – the Lord's Supper – as the very means by which we are being drawn up into the joy of God. I read the book in one sitting.

Since then, several other authors have contributed more insight into the meaning of the Eucharist for me. I have even myself gone on to write a book on the Lord's Supper (*A Holy Meal*, Baker Publishers, 2005). But my gratitude to these authors is not merely that I came to write a book on the Eucharist, leaning on their insights, but the way in which they each, in different ways, helped me come to a greater appreciation of Table in the life and witness of the Church. In time I learned that all of this was part of John Wesley's theology and practice, as is evident in his delightful sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion." And I began to see references to the sacraments and to the Lord's Supper in particular in A.W. Tozer, who was so formative in my own tradition.

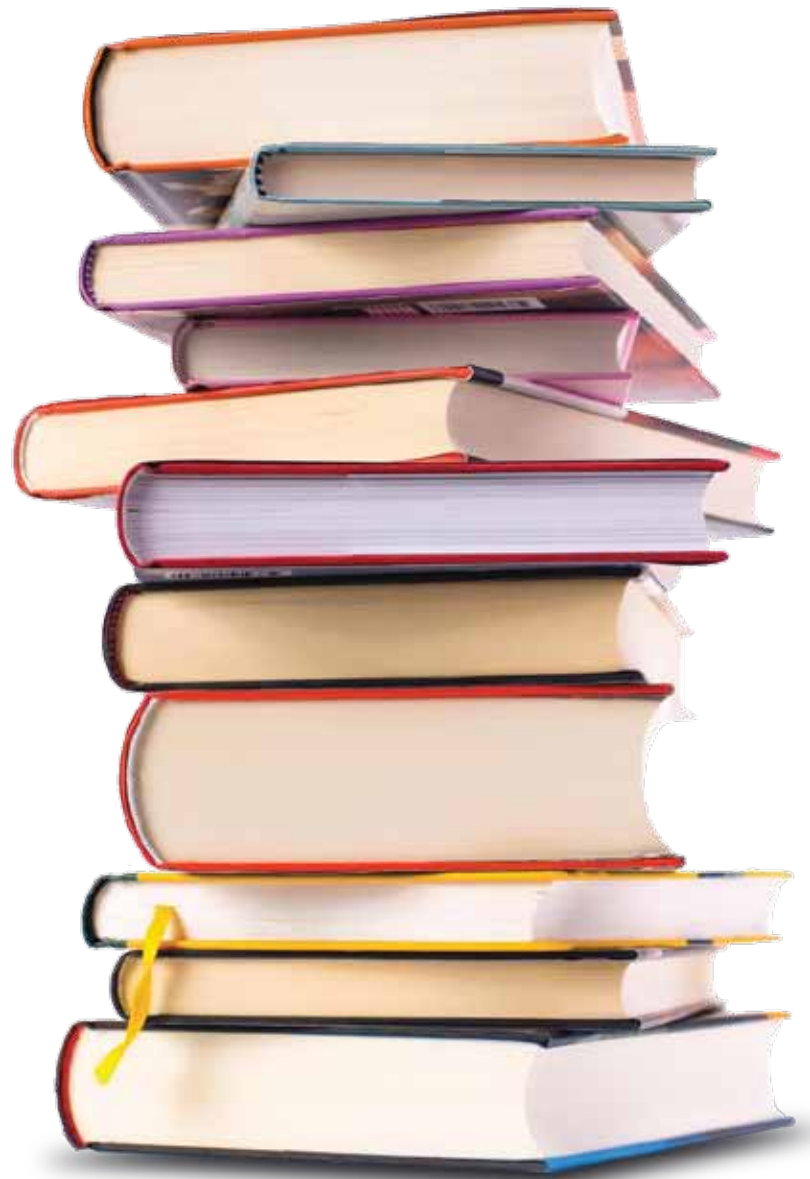
But that sequence – from Bonhoeffer, to Greene, to Newbigin and eventually to Schmemmann – had a deeply formative impact on my life.

Gordon T. Smith (Rev), Ph.D. is the president of Ambrose University, in Calgary, where he is also professor of systematic and spiritual theology. He is the author of a number of publications, including, more recently, *Called to Be Saints: An Invitation to Christian Maturity* (IVPress, 2014), and *Transforming Conversion: Re-thinking the language and contours of Christian initiation* (Baker, 2010). He is married to Joella; together they have two grown sons.



Dr. Gordon Smith

## that changed



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## The Language of Grief

The Language of Grief  
By Bob Glasgow



A friend has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Someone we know commits suicide. How do we give support to people in profound grief?

Many of us search for words. The right words. Words that will diminish the griever's pain and ours. Those words seem elusive and awkward. Even the writers of condolence cards don't capture what we want to say. And so, instead of bringing a meal or making an offer to help with practical needs, we don't even call or visit the sufferer.

When we realize there are no "right" words, then we can offer our compassionate, listening presence, and support starts to happen.

A widow stood to give a tribute at her husband's memorial service. She commenced by saying, "At times like this we need words." This edition of Kolbe Times is about the power of words. The widow's words that day were powerful, as early on in her grief (sudden loss) she found the strength to speak of her husband's living and dying.

The words that are spoken from the heart of a person in times of crisis can be very illuminating. Those words can help one start to find oneself in the midst of the chaos. The words a comforter speaks to a suffering soul are often very impotent in diminishing pain. Rather than focusing on speaking right words, we listen to the words of the griever in order to bring support.

I have a saying in the front of my day timer: "If I speak what my heart feels, then what I speak will save me. If I do not speak what my heart feels, then what I do not speak will destroy me." If these statements are true, then in times of suffering it raises the importance of finding a person or a community where the griever can speak and be heard. A mom came to one of our bereaved parents' groups and held up a

picture of her son who had died ten years previously. She told the facilitators and the other parents that her family had removed all his pictures from view and stopped talking about him - it was too painful. But the unexpressed grief was overwhelming her even more. She found community with other bereaved parents who were all struggling together to speak their grief.

Both the cognitive and emotional impact need expression. People seek meaning, and begin that process by trying to have their questions heard and honoured. They need to explore their spiritual beliefs and understanding of life. They might need to express at times the excruciating details of their loved one's death. As they do this, they begin to thaw from the immobilization that trauma can induce. If this is what they need to say at that time, can we find the strength to listen?

What about the wide range of struggling emotions that must be expressed in order to massage pain out of the human spirit? Emotions are a precious part of all of us but the emotions during grief are not pleasant. Supporters must be able to listen to these deep feelings such as guilt, anger and anxiety without shutting down this very important healing catharsis.

When grievors are speaking their depth of sadness, we listen to the heart of grief. Some of the emotions can pass quickly, but never sorrow for a loving relationship. Sadness and sorrow are probably the deepest and most genuine emotions of all. They are present in the human spirit because one has loved. We give a gift when we do not rush the journey of sadness; mostly we listen to encourage reminiscing. Henri Nouwen once said, "One of the mysteries of life is that memory can often bring us closer to each other than can physical presence." Scott Sullender, author of *Grief and Growth*, writes, "The ultimate goal of grieving is to remember without pain."

When Job's friends came to be with him, they sat on the ground in silence because they were so moved by the depth of his grief. After a week they could not sustain just sitting with his suffering any longer, but when they tried to speak words to help him they actually added to his anguish. Are you the kind of friend/supporter who can sit with another in the throes of abject suffering, when words will not soothe but a loving presence will? We listen with our hearts and follow in behind the grieving person's own process and pace.

There is power in the words a grieving person speaks about the impact of their grief. There is power in our loving, listening presence.

And the power is for healing and growth.

*Bob Glasgow is an ordained minister, who pastored churches in Edmonton and Montreal. His personal history with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis birthed a desire to support those going through the losses and grief of a chronic illness.*

*A gifted teacher and inspirational speaker, Bob also founded the Alberta Health Services' Grief Support Program and served as the first non-denominational chaplain at Calgary's Rockyview Hospital. Bob is currently a private counsellor out of the FCJ Centre, a chaplain at Wellspring Calgary, and a bereavement trainer for STARS Ambulance. Visit his website at [www.soulconsolation.com](http://www.soulconsolation.com)*

## Publication Information

Kolbe Times is a Christian media ministry that offers print and online content focused on faith, the arts and social justice initiatives. Published by Merry Dancer Media, it is a meeting place for artists, writers and social innovators to share their ideas. Our goal is to celebrate beauty and compassion, with a vision of spiritual renewal and unity in the Body of Christ.

St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941) is the patron saint of journalists. His faith, courage and use of media to communicate God's love are the inspiration that shapes Kolbe Times.

### Editor:

Laura Locke OFS  
lauralocke@shaw.ca  
403-816-0322

### Art Director/Design:

Angus McIntyre  
McIntyre Communications  
403-668-4552  
[www.mcintyrecommunications.ca](http://www.mcintyrecommunications.ca)

### Business Manager/Ad Sales:

Bill Locke OFS  
billocke@shaw.ca  
403-874-1814



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## Theatre Review: The Miracle Worker



Brynn Linsey and Jenny Daigle  
in Rosebud Theatre's *The Miracle Worker*

Theatre Review: *The Miracle Worker*  
Rosebud Theatre  
By Meg Konditi

A deaf, blind girl trapped alone in darkness and silence until a young teacher miraculously breaks through. This is the true story of Hellen Keller, unable to communicate with or comprehend the world around her. Her fiery young governess, Annie Sullivan, battles the Keller family's palpable hopelessness to provide Helen with the gift of language.

In her 1903 essay entitled 'Optimism', Helen Keller describes the freedom that words brought her and the transformation that they wrought not only in her circumstances but also in her soul: "Once I knew only darkness and stillness... my life was without past or future... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and my heart leaped to the rapture of living."

Like Helen Keller we all find ourselves lost in a darkness and silence that is the inevitable human condition. We are born into a world – a cosmos – already spinning and we must find our place and our purpose. Author David Jeffrey manages to capture this human plight with the phrase "inextricably muddled". Not only do we find ourselves "muddled" in the story of our own lives, but also caught in the sticky throws of history unable to see where it's all leading. Like Helen, we clutch at emptiness trying to find the meaning of our lives. Just as Helen found vision through the power of words, so too we can discover our true selves in words. God's Word is the answer to our deafness and blindness – the only satisfying answer to the question of our existence. Through God's Word we see our past, our future and the language in which to understand our place and purpose. All things were created through Him and for Him (Col 1:16): the glorious relief from our darkness and silence.

Rosebud Theatre has powerfully brought this miraculous story of how Annie Sullivan unshackled Helen Keller's life in their production of *The Miracle Worker*. The production tells the captivating story with an array of characters, all trying to love Helen in their own broken way. Although the play centers around Helen, (brought to life with a reckless abandon by Jenny Daigle) we also follow the winding journey of Annie Sullivan, her teacher, played by Brynn Linsey. Supported by a fabulous cast, Linsey manages to embody not only the child-like fervor of Annie Sullivan, but also her selfless discipline and devotion. *The Miracle Worker* portrays a gripping message but manages to maintain the characteristic charming feel of every Rosebud play. Professional but not presumptuous - showing that fearless and humble can coexist onstage. The play is a very physical one, with Helen lost in a wild untamed state, seemingly unreachable in a world all her own. Annie and Helen are constantly battling wills in very well orchestrated fight scenes. Yet the cast manages to maintain the poise and grace of the story's era without taming the bold characters that make this story so powerful.

The words formed in Helen's palm eventually shine light into her darkness, in this well-known story of Annie Sullivan's struggle to convey that words have meaning. On stage we watch Helen, desperate to participate in something beyond her own survival, awakening from her dark and confused existence. We cannot help but to see ourselves, clutching and yearning for the same. Words birthed new life to Helen Keller, just as God's Word brings us new life in Him.

*Meg Konditi lives in Calgary and loves her Saviour Jesus, her husband Tim and her puns intended. She is a theatre enthusiast and has acted in Calgary's community theatre scene. Meg had a wonderful time visiting Rosebud and watching their production of *The Miracle Worker*. For more information, visit [www.rosebudtheatre.com](http://www.rosebudtheatre.com)*

## Gathered Wisdom

Gathered Wisdom  
By Laura Locke

Okay, I'll admit it. I'm kind of a quotations freak.

When I was a classroom teacher, I started writing funny or provocative quotations on the whiteboard every Monday morning. My students seemed to really enjoy it, and many would provide me with interesting quotes that they'd encountered. Later, when I was at home with my own children in their baby/toddler years, I kept my sanity by indulging my love of reading...and searching for great quotes. I remember one year I set a goal of reading every Charles Dickens novel, and then moved on to Jane Austen, George Elliot, Thomas Hardy and the Bronte sisters. My outer existence during those years was largely distinguished by baby food, diapers and walks to the playground, but my inner life was filled with exhilarating literary adventures. I also started exploring the works of some wonderful Christian authors such as C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Irma Zaleski, Richard Rohr, Anne Lamott, Ron Rolheiser... I could go on and on. They have made my life richer in every way.

One day I started a journal of favourite quotations, out of a desire to capture the sentences that somehow touched me deeply, or gave me an insight into a particular struggle in my life, or simply gave me a shiver of delight. It's a habit I've kept up ever since. I've now filled up two journals with quotations, and have recently embarked on my third.

It's fun to read over my old journals once in a while – they are almost like travel logs through different phases in my life, and remind me of what I was reading and learning and thinking about. Those journals have become like old friends.

Here's a few gems of "gathered wisdom" from my journals:

C.S. Lewis:

*"Pain removes the veil. It plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul."*

When my youngest son started suffering from a number of severe neurological disorders, this quote sparked some serious self-reflection on my part. I realized that I felt angry and depressed because I liked being in control of my life...and I definitely wasn't in control anymore. The "flag of truth" for me was all about letting go and truly trusting in God's merciful love.

St. Thomas Aquinas:

*"There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good."*

When I am overwhelmed by the "bad news" stories in the media, St. Thomas encourages me to keep my antennae up for touches of God's grace – and also to pay attention to the people who reach out and help others in the midst of the distress around them.

Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Jesuits, after suffering a debilitating stroke:

*"More than ever, I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth! But now there is a difference; the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in God's hands."*

When my Mom's Alzheimer's disease became very advanced, I started to worry that perhaps Alzheimer's was in my future as well. This quote reminds me that there are opportunities for beauty, joy and spiritual growth in every arena of human experience. Pedro Arrupe's great insight was that by embracing our vulnerability we open the door to a deeper communion with God, and with each other.

*Laura Locke is the editor of Kolbe Times.*

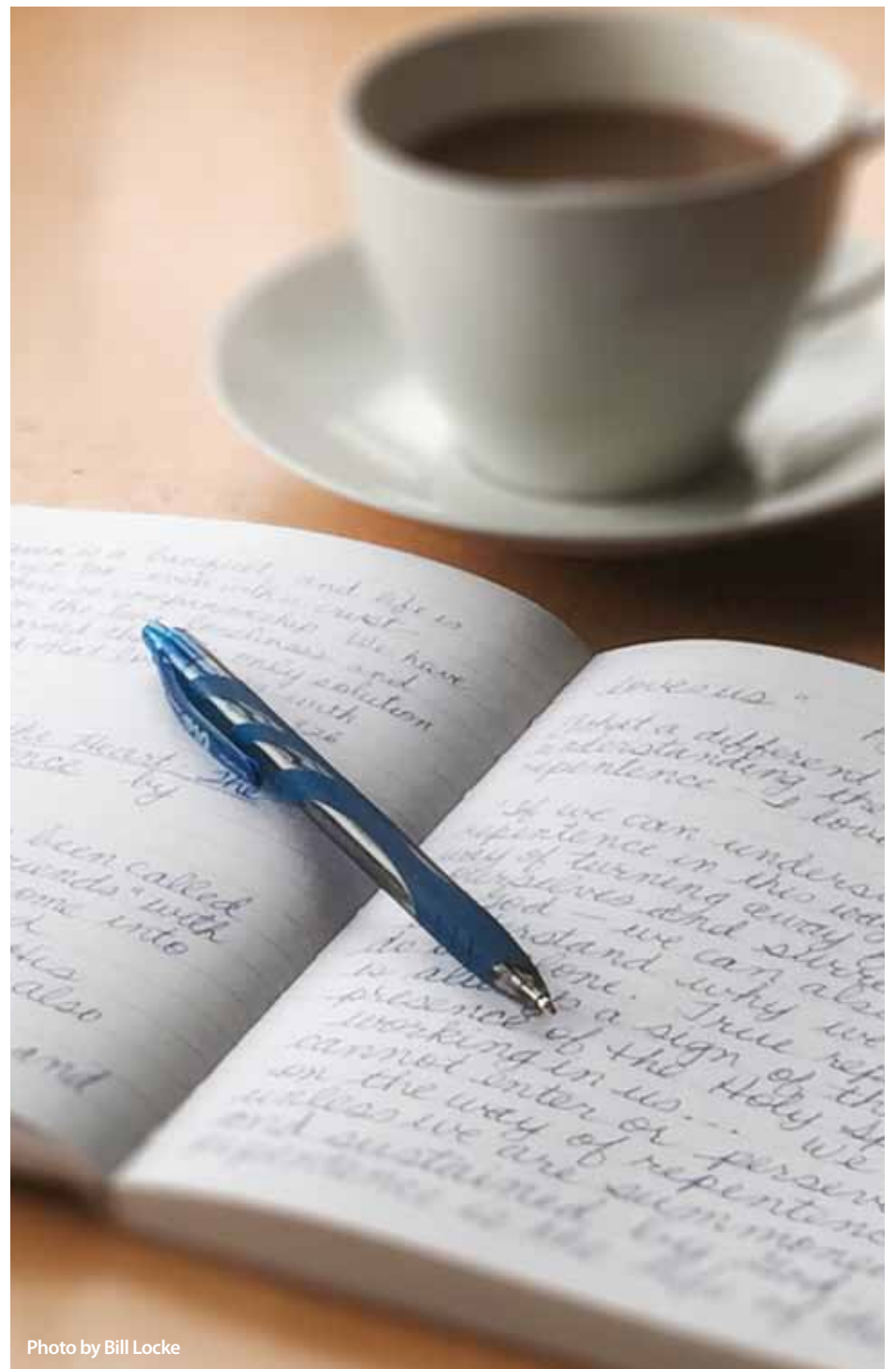


Photo by Bill Locke





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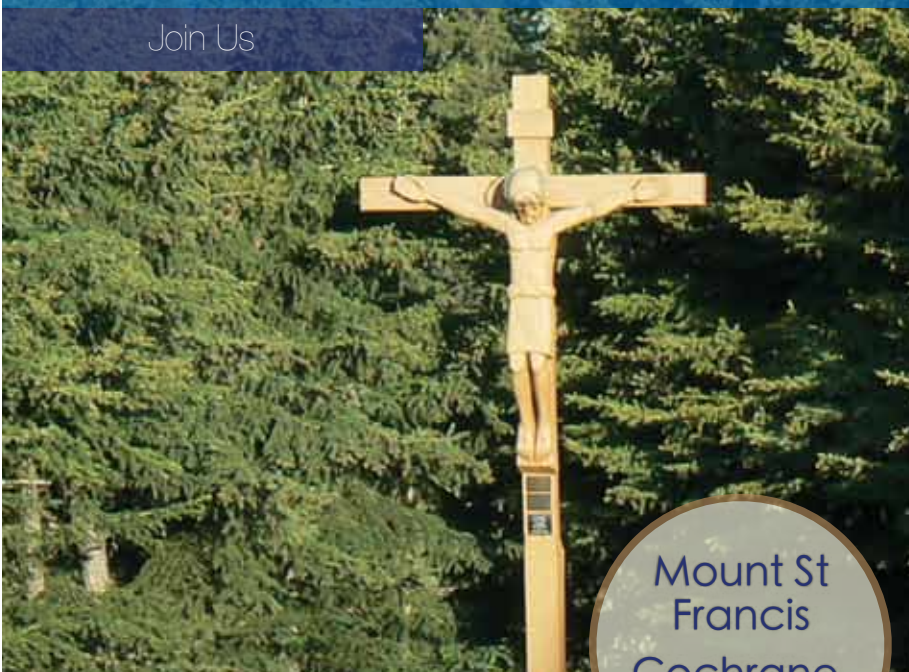
*“The mystery of people with disabilities is that they long for authentic and loving relationships more than for power. They are not obsessed with being well situated in a group that offers acclaim and promotion. They are crying out for what matters most: love. And God hears their cry because in some way they respond to the cry of God, which is to give love.” ~ Jean Vanier*

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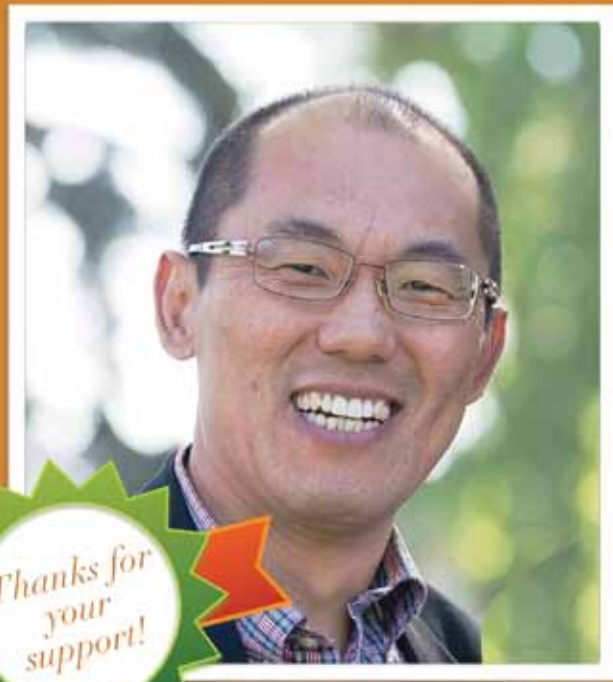


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