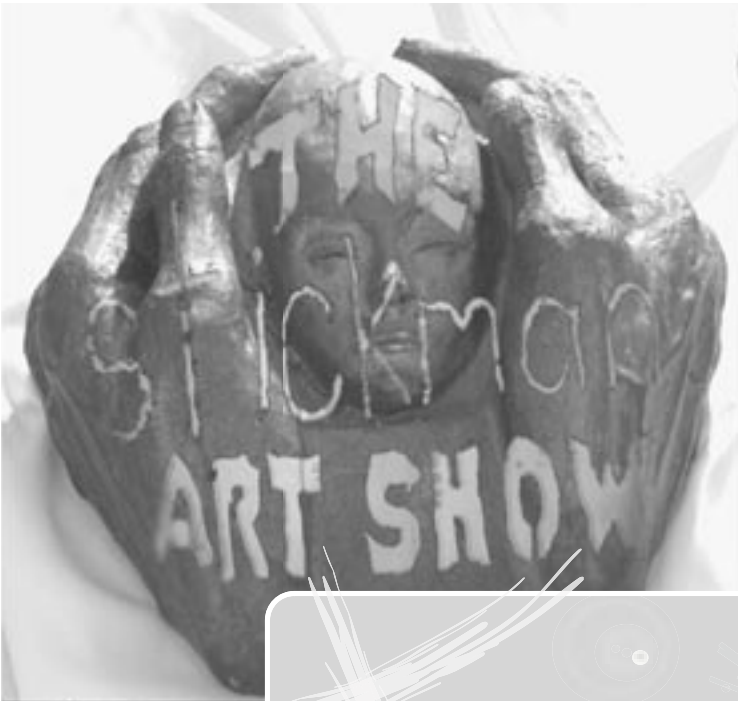


July 2003



common**PLACE?**

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# notes

[from the editor]

**T**rumpets sound. Whistle's blown. Voiced raised. Houston, we have life off.

Yep. CommonPLACE? is up 'n' running. After a little starter at Easter, we are officially launching the first edition (keep it in its original packing, it'll be worth loads in 50 years) of this er... offering. More than a newsletter, less than a magazine, work is in progress to define our ambiguous identity. In these pages you will find articles, thoughts and poetry from our community, as well as ways of getting involved and the general low-down.

If there is a theme this time 'round, then it is dual - *engagement and beauty* - two of our core values at the Place. Both are expressions of our worship to God. The cover design is a collage of art from the Stickman Art Show '02, and serves to remind you all to enter or just come along to this year's bigger, brighter and more brazen affair (Sept 4-7).

Finally, we need you to fill up the People's place section. So if you have some thoughts then email them to me (simon@lambrick.com) for (dis?)approval and if they fit the theme and bypass the tight censorship controls (!) then *voilà*.

Have a great summer!

*Simon*

# news

[what's going on?]

**E**thiopia: we have committed to raising money for a children's aid centre, organised through Canadian Food for the Hungry. **Teaching:** we have finished an epic *Hestonesque* tour of Exodus and are starting on the challenge of Ecclesiastes, which starts by suggesting 'all passing...all pointless...there is nothing to anything.' **Website:** a re-design is in the works with a launch date around January. **Staff:** joining the 'small-but-perfectly-formed' team are James, your friendly neighbourhood small group cross-pollinator, and Marsha, a work-term nurse looking to create a much-needed social needs resource book. Cool. **Art Show:** yes, 'tis back and for an expanded run (Sept 4-7<sup>th</sup>). From last year, a definite must see. **Choir:** they are sounding great and will be doing their first performance on the church's **Open Day** (Sept 7<sup>th</sup>), which is a chance for us all to see what our wider church is doing, celebrate with them and have fun. Check out the **Small Groups** report to find out all the great stuff that has been happening. You heard it here first: **Place Leadership Summit** (Sept 12-13<sup>th</sup>) - if you are or want to be in anyway involved in leadership this is a must; **Place Retreat** - a highlight, 110 people can't be wrong, more community than could be crammed into Randy's minivan.



# Challenge to the “Rich Life”?

[1. engaging the world]

**O**n March 28th, we had the opportunity to travel to Ethiopia with Canadian Food for the Hungry International ([www.cfhi.ca](http://www.cfhi.ca))- a Christian relief and development agency that works with some of the world’s most destitute people. The purpose of the trip was to evaluate the extent of the current food shortage - a food shortage that threatens over 11.5 million people, but which has largely gone unnoticed by the Western media as the result of events in Iraq. This famine is larger than ever before and even areas that have previously been unaffected by food security issues are starting to experience acute malnutrition, disease, and death. For one week, we had the opportunity to walk through villages where people were literally starving. In one community alone, 14 people had died in the last 10 days...and we think a handful of SARS related deaths constitute a national emergency. We talked with mothers who were too malnourished to produce any milk for their children. We met with fathers who insisted that we see their failing children, and we held glassy-eyed babies and unresponsive infants who were too weak to voice their suffering from the double impact of acute hunger and parasites.

*We learned that Ethiopian people are very proud people who will often boil water rather than admit to their neighbour that they have no food.*

*We learned that famine is not the result of laziness, apathy or an expectation that the West will always provide a free lunch.*

*We learned about government programs to detect and monitor early signs of famine among the most vulnerable.*

*We learned about local communities that are learning to share what little they have with those who have even less.*



*We learned that Africa is rich in resources and that it is the combination of prolonged drought and various social and economic vulnerabilities that precipitate a crisis.*

Although some of the children we met were too far gone by the time they were found, the opportunity still exists to provide much needed emergency food and de-worming medicine to thousands of others. Having walked through the villages and seen the need, we are convinced that the \$35 required to provide 6 months of food and medicine is not merely a fund-raising gimmick, it is a real matter of living or dying. And since we Know CFHI, we are comfortable assuring any potential donors that all money donated will actually get to where it can be used the most.

All that said, we came home looking at how we spend our leisure time, how we spend our extra money - how we act when we are not required to do anything other than pursue the good life. And as we seek to define ourselves in comparison to others, then we would ask why do we always compare up, because if we take a hard look at our lifestyle, consumption habits, spending patterns, North Americans are richer than 90% of the rest of the world. So what’s the discussion about wealth really about? Status? Self Importance? Greed? Ego? The RIGHT to live a comfortable lifestyle? Try explaining our RIGHT to own two cars, a big home, have four weeks of paid vacation each year to one of the mothers we met who had just watched their third child wither away and die from hunger.

We live in a an entitlement, rights-based culture that feeds off questions of wealth accumulation and personal net worth. But in the broad context of the global village that we - and all of your readers live in - perhaps the

better question is about stewardship and sharing and giving to those who are in need...and loving them as we love ourselves. Robin Hood is far too often relegated to folklore when what is needed is a rediscovery of an alternative economy based on the awareness that all we possess is a gift - homes, cars, finances, jobs, health - everything is a trust that has been given to us to use to bless others. We own nothing but we are stewards of all we have.

In this light, charity is not something we do off the corner of our desk with any additional resources we can spare, but instead charity is transformed into stewardship and service whereby those who have realize their affluence is a blessing and so they are freed to share with others.

And this is the rich life - not bogged down in the pursuit of the new suit, car, home, or technogadget. Rather life becomes an opportunity to invest in others, to build relationships, to give from a posture that recognizes our abundance rather than hoards because of fear of scarcity.



What would happen if we loved more and worried about money less? What would happen if companies and organizations recognized the social responsibility that they have? What would happen if the desire to give more than receive permeated into

the fabric of our culture, our thoughts, and our hearts?

The pursuit of the rich life has little to do with money - regardless of what current management theory, businesses lingo, satellite television, or slick marketing campaigns may say. And we think it's even the wrong question. The more people we talk to, the more we learn that people are looking for lives of authenticity, integrity, hope, faith, and service. These are the things that bring fulfillment...and so questions of fidelity, transparency, honesty, and responsibility are what we need to ask one another.

And in the answers, we will find more wealth than we could ever imagine.

*Daryl Thomson and Paul Duncan*



In early May about 235 people from different denominations in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Washington, and Oregon attended the Shifting Realities conference at Lambrick. A good cross-generational mix of pastors, lay leaders and others from para-church, youth, and children's ministries spent two days examining the New Church/New World transition and what type of leadership will be required to revitalize and build a vibrant faith and vision of the mission of Jesus. As well as the conference paying for itself, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for continued

discussions and future seminar opportunities.

The following snippets were received from a feedback survey conducted post-conference, in which 98% that they would love to do it all again!

*Question: Were your expectations met?*

1. Absolutely. I came as an older person looking for some thoughts on how the younger generation are viewing our world and I certainly got that but much more.

2. No. But they changed. I expected "heavier" content, but quickly realized that the attendants were at widely varying places in their shifting perspectives. The opportunity to dialogue and interact was excellent.

3. Yep. Steve Bell was a highlight, almost superceding McLaren in presentation and theological insight.

4. I would like to have seen a women presenter or at least more perspectives from women. I think you've already had this as feedback. It would need to be someone at a similar level of understanding.

5. I can't even remember what my expectations were. Certainly, the caliber and profile of the speakers was high. I think it took a lot of courage to put this thing together.

6. My expectations were met as I was looking to be enlightened on the emergent church

# Shifting Realities?

[2. engaging the church]



concepts. I enjoyed Brian McLaren a great deal and Steve Bell was excellent.

*Question: Was the content too heavy/light? Was the schedule too full?*

1. No. I felt both stretched and refreshed.
2. I think the content was right for the audience. Schedule was good. I liked the coffee breaks and opportunity to interact over meal times.
3. I like heavy and maybe controversial content as it forces us to constantly evaluate what we believe - whatever can be shaken, let it be shaken! The schedule seemed to be fine but I was tired by the end.

4. The content was not too heavy. I do not need a light treatment of this topic. I need the heavy nitty gritty and as much up to date material as possible. It may have to come with qualifiers that "the bugs haven't been worked out," but I must hear what is going on. I did not find the schedule too full. But two full days was probably the limit.

*Question: Were the workshop topics applicable/useful?*

1. I got something good out of each one I went to: Jordan's tech-talk gave me lots of links to the cutting-edge



stuff; Steve' lunch-time talk on Worship was both seminar and worship, and very interesting; Mark's workshop on the struggle to balance being a pastor and a writer turned out not to be about that at all, so I'd still like to hear his thoughts on that issue - I found something good in the discussion, but was disappointed that we didn't really address the topic that drew me in the first place.

2. I thought the breakout ideas were great, yet not all the presenters seemed to know how to use these effectively. I wonder if there are other dialogue tools that might work for a seminar like this... such as an Open Space.

3. Yes. I really enjoyed the workshops. They were, however, a lot less controversial than the plenary.

*Any other comments?*

1. Thank you for your hospitality. You did an outstanding job. Blessings on you.

2. The hospitality by the Place and Lambrick Park was outstanding. Thanks so much.

3. M a n y thanks. Keep up the excellent work. Your (plural) heart for the Lord was well in evidence. You blessed many people!!

4. Thank you very much for all your efforts. It was a great couple of days for me. Your two main speakers were very challenging. Steve did an excellent job in leading the worship time. Lambrick was an excellent host and fed us well.



**MP3 disks are available from the SHIFTING REALITIES and NEXT STEP gatherings (\$5)**

# Small Groups

[3. engaging the city]

Well, it has been a busy past couple of weeks in the old small groups department! The summer has really taken a twist and thrown some very new looking types of groups into the mix that we've got going on at the Place. Our softball team has started doing some study and sharing after their games (praying for broken windows etc - har har); our unofficial 'college and careers' not-so-small-group is looking to September with new vision and perhaps a new look; we've kicked off a group for single parents that is already stretching out to include any parent looking to get together to pray for their children and study the Scriptures from the perspective of a parent; we're in the works of developing a group to help out with Extreme Outreach Ministries (more on that later); the Koinonia Garden Project is sprouting (sorry about the pun); our newly formed choir is coming together in more areas than just vocal harmonies to form a solid community of their own - and soundin' sweet and doing it up right - keep your ears open for them in September; and we've also got a whack of new people itching to get involved in some new groups as the fall draws nearer (yes, I'm sorry to mention it, but summer will not be lasting forever this year). There's a ton going on, and even more hoped for in the Fall.

The following are a few areas where some of you looking to get involved should look into, and as always, if you're interested in these, or anything else, drop me an email and we can get you hooked up!

On Father's day we wrangled up a crew of about 25 or so members of the Place Community and went on down to Blanchard Courts where 'Smokey Cliff' and his BBQ were set up and building relationships with many who live in that neighborhood. As the smell of smokeys wafted through the air and brought masses of children and their folks to the center of the neighborhood, there we were - all assembled with lawnmowers, rakes, and the offer of some free yardwork. It was a pretty sweet day and serving in that manner has inspired a few of us to get together and see how we at the Place can aid in the Lord's work which Cliff and Extreme Outreach has started there.

The Koinonia Garden Project (lovingly referred to as the 'KGP') has recently decided to turn over ALL our produce to those in need of good fresh healthy green veggies! There's about 6-10 of us who get together on a semi-regular basis to tend to the eight garden plots that we've got beside the church. As of writing this update, we just

harvested some peas, some onions and other good greens and were able to provide some members of Lambrick's community with some good grub. As much fun as we're having, and as much greenery as we're getting, we're still looking for someone with a really green (tres vert) thumb who can aid us in all the ins and outs of planting, harvesting and all such other knowledge of gardening that city-slickers like me have no idea about. So, whether you're a gardener par excellence or just someone who could help out with watering, weeding, or delivering, we'd love to have you come down and visit!

And finally, September is drawing near and I'm starting the wheels turning on a few new groups. If you're interested in 'leading' a group drop me an email and we can get together for some coffee and see what we can do. I place 'leading' in quotations, because there are so many different types of groups going on with so many different looks that not one 'leader' looks the same as another. But we stick with the term because the one thing each of these people does do is step up and lead others in whatever direction the Lord is taking them. If you've even the slightest inkling about facilitating a group, don't hesitate to get a hold of me - I'm here to help you out!

Cheers,

James

[theplacesmallgroups@hotmail.com](mailto:theplacesmallgroups@hotmail.com)





## POEM by Fanny

Do you know  
of the soft pockets of silence  
and joy that are hiding  
in the folds of your day?  
Has anyone pointed out  
how blessed your life is?

Look:

the hummingbirds are chasing  
each other carelessly,  
yet are avoiding the trees.

The pitcher stands, ready  
to be filled, content  
to be empty. The broom  
leans, not tired, not eager,  
in a corner of the room.

And you,

beautiful as a curtain  
about to be pulled back, as  
a window almost opened  
on the day, which the birds  
are already busy praising—

Have you tasted, really tasted  
the orange, the coffee, the possibilities  
of being other, of being quiet,  
of being exuberant and thankful,  
and yourself?

Have you really, *really*  
looked into the trees, into the light  
falling through the leaves?

*Have you?*



# BEAUTY

*beau·ty ( definition found in the Webster's Dictionary 2001)*

1. The quality that gives pleasure to the mind or senses and is associated with such properties as harmony of form or color, excellence of artistry, truthfulness, and originality.

2. One that is beautiful, especially a beautiful woman.

3. A quality or feature that is most effective, gratifying, or telling:

4. An outstanding or conspicuous example: his shot was a beauty

5. An assemblage or graces or properties pleasing to the eye, the ear, the intellect, the [ae]sthetic faculty, or the moral sense.

6. A particular grace, feature, ornament, or excellence; anything beautiful; as, the beauties of nature.

7. Prevailing style or taste; rage; fashion

Many definitions of beauty, but none really capture the essence. We know what it is, but how to explain it is another thing. Its hard, truly hard, to define beauty. Is it merely a subjective ambiguity? Or is there a common theme to what beauty is?

It certainly comes in different forms. As a society we say, 'that flower is beautiful', 'she is beautiful', 'he has a beautiful smile', 'what a beautiful painting'. We use the word to amplify our enjoyment of something or our approval. We use it to describe the animate and the inanimate. We use it to describe our emotional state. How is it so versatile?

I could write and write about this, but what it comes down to is this, beauty is more than just an noun. It's a word that we use when our soul recognizes God. To me beauty is the Love that you see IN something. The love you recognize, has been put into something or someone. We recognize creation. We see it in Nature, that God created and put His love into. We see it in humans that God created and put His love into. We see it in the effort people make - out of love. We see it in Art - us mimicking (or sub-creating - eds.) God. Put your love into your work, and people will see it. Put the love that God has blessed you with into your work, into your relationships, into your day, into your art.

I see beauty in the clouds.

I see beauty in the smile of my children.

I see beauty in the hands of my husband.

I see beauty in the color blue.

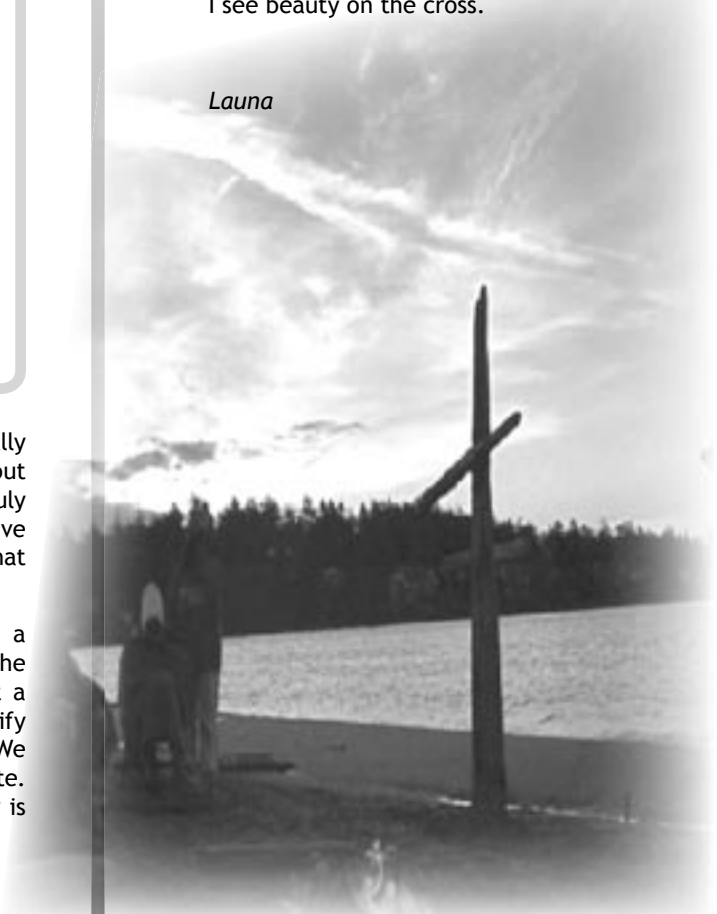
I see beauty in a pile of freshly cleaned clothes, or washed dishes drying on the counter.

I see beauty in a shiny, hand-polished car.

I see beauty in a single perfect drop of water.

I see beauty on the cross.

*Launa*



I was one of the biggest girls in my elementary school class; I was chubby and teased mercilessly as a result. Alongside other cruel names, I was called "big", "fatty", and "blubber". Often at night I would pretend that I wore a huge body suit that made me fat so that I could really determine who were my real friends. I would dream of having friends that accepted me and loved me as I was, blubber and all. I dreamed that one day I would unveil myself to those who accepted me and show them that, after all, I was actually thin and beautiful.

Isn't that similar to everyone's dream? Don't we all long for people to love us as we are, however we look or act, without cutting us down or trying to change us?

The first time I experienced this kind of acceptance, apart from my family, was in a church youth group when I was 13. In some ways, my dream became reality. As a result of their love and acceptance, I was able to reveal myself to them, and allow the beauty of who I was to be unveiled (this "unveiling", however, had nothing to do with a bodysuit). Looking back, I consider my experience with those people to be the main reason why I follow Christ today.

North America is facing a huge problem with weight. A recent article in the Calgary Herald stated that about fifty percent of Canadian children are overweight or obese and sixty percent of North American adults are overweight, with a large portion of those being obese. It is no wonder, then, that our culture has seen a rise in diet programs and weight-loss books.

The North American Church is being forced to deal with the same issue. This has resulted in the development of Christian diet programs like "Slim For Him", "Weigh Down", and "More of Jesus, Less of Me". Thousands of churches across the United States and Canada are running weight-loss programs for the members of their congregations.

Perhaps one could argue that the basis for these diet programs is to remain relevant to our culture. If we cannot face the fact that our culture has serious problems with food and diet, then we remain in the dark ages and unable to paint an accurate picture of God, who is relevant and who cares about our current issues and problems.

There is a good argument behind that reasoning; however, I think that simply trying to remain relevant to our culture in this issue, we may be overlooking some very important points. The first is that our culture's weight "problem" in which all these diets are trying to solve is not the actual problem. The fact that so many North Americans are overweight is only a symptom of

deeper issues that are not being faced by both our culture and the Church. It is true, that there have been articles and books written on these deeper issues, yet, as always, we are slow learners. We need to be reminded often about our focus and our goal.

I have no intention in this article to discuss the deeper problems, mainly because my guess is as good as yours. My intention is only to point out that we have, perhaps, lost our focus.

As Christians, isn't it our greatest goal, our highest calling, to love? To Love God and to love our neighbours. If this is our highest goal, and therefore our focus in life, then is love the reasoning behind all these Christian weight-loss programs? It may be. However, are people in these circumstances being loved the best way possible?

What would happen if someone who struggled with obesity were to go into a church that advertised a "Slim For Him" Diet program? I can only speculate that he/she might feel embarrassed and unacceptable, even in a church. We live in a culture that finds fat unacceptable. We need only to look at the models on the covers of magazines to know that our culture cannot tolerate any sign of "chubbiness". If the church continues to allow society's notion of weight to affect our focus and goal, then who is going to love and accept those whom our culture, as well as the church, deems unacceptable?

I once took a course on Active Listening. In that course we discussed various blocks to effective listening. One of these blocks was the tendency to try and solve the speakers problems too quickly, thus not thoroughly listening to all of what was said. The effect that kind of response has is that it further isolates the speaker, causing him/her to feel unheard and helpless. By running all these weight-loss programs we are doing nothing more than presenting a solution to a problem we know nothing of, because we have not listened well; we have lost our focus.

If our focus is to be a community that solves problems, then are we not taking on more responsibility than we can handle? God chooses to daily leave problems unsolved, it is absurd we think we can do better. If we are a community that deals with symptoms of problems, yet refuses to face the real issues, then we are no different from the rest of society. However, if our aim is to be a community that shows Christ's love, then let us do so; let us love and accept people as they are and let us listen. By doing this, the beauty of all of those who are near us will begin to be unveiled.

Roxanne

## MORE LOVE, LESS WAIST SIZE

# information

[and getting involved...]

## SMALL GROUPS

This is an important part of the Place and if you are feeling left out and needing a friendly weekly community then email the ever-smiling James Kingsley at:

*theplacesmallgroups@hotmail.com*

## STICKMAN II

THE STickman Art Show is back with a vengeance. This time it will be September 4-7th in an expanded venue at Lambrick. It will be bigger, better and longer. Remember this is something for everyone - whatever your skill in art, photos or sculpting. Caren Willms (*willms@acts.bc.ca*) is going to be overseeing this event and artists can register at the Place. So:

- 1) Please come and support us!
- 2) To help organize the event contact Caren
- 3) If you want to contribute then pick up a form and start creating.

## GOSPEL CHOIR

Auditions have been held, practices have been practiced and the new choir is ready for its first showing at Lambrick's Open House (Sept 7th 2003).

## OFFERINGS

Financial support is only one of the ways we can worship God with our life. If you wish to make this easier, more regular and get a tax receipt at the end of the year you can get some envelopes from Simon in the foyer.

## MERCHANDISE

We're not particularly big on the idea of merchandising, however we do have a huge amount of talent at the Place and so you will find all sorts of odds and ends in foyer after the Place including Disclaimer - a Journal of Christian Thought and Art, CDs from various bands at the Place and other fragrant offerings. We often have some bargain basement books available from authors that we highly recommend.

## VOLUNTEERING

There are plenty of ways you can get involved at the Place. Most of these causes need people throughout the year:

Place Kids Ministry - Kim Williams

*theplacekids@hotmail.com*

Cafe Suburbia - Dave Booth

*dbooth@humboldthouse.com*

Facilities and Ushering - Ken Thomson

*kenjthomson@hotmail.com*

Art and Music Setup - Ant Andrews

*canadiandrifter@hotmail.com*

# pastor's place

[a word from Randy]



For the most part, we don't read our Bibles. There are, of course, various reasons for this. For those of you who didn't grow up going to church, *all* of this - the stories, the language, even the experience of community - is pretty new. The Bible can be a pretty intimidating book to simply pick up and read.

For some of you, your childhood experiences of church and Sunday school were either dark or so sterile that you have been put off from reading the Bible, thinking the characters and plot lines are as two dimensional as a flannel board. Some of you feel a sense of guilt when looking at the Bible on your shelf, because you were told at one point that "anybody can read and understand these pages so long as you have the Holy Spirit guiding you", yet your experience of reading the *Book of Leviticus* was nothing but confusion...so you stopped. The bottom line is this: we are a pretty biblically illiterate congregation.

This is sad, really, on several fronts. Firstly, it means that - more and more - we are relying on biblical teachers to do our thinking for us. Secondly, the truth is that the Bible is the most three dimensional, colourful, soul-filled book in the world.

There is a third front as well. Along with the Apostle Paul, as a congregation we affirm that the Bible is "God-breathed". From beginning to end, it is God's story. In the pages of Scripture, we find the very heart and character of the Almighty. In this, Scripture not only has the potential to speak to us as a community, but to you as an individual.

So, where does this leave us? Maybe with a realistic confession that - especially for the uninitiated - the Bible can be an extremely difficult book to read. *But* that it is definitely worth the effort. As we tackle the book of *Ecclesiastes* this summer, we will be 'conversing' with a wise philosopher who wrote about his lifelong attempts to find happiness. Traditionally, no other book in the Bible has been such a difficult read. It was written several thousand years ago in a different language and into a very different culture. Is it relevant to our world-view today? I challenge you to read along with us and find out.


A word to the wise: be patient with yourself. If stuff doesn't make sense, or if you have questions, write them down. Consult others if you are stuck. Read the passage BEFORE the Sunday sermon is given. Give yourself an opportunity to formulate your own ponderings before you hear a sermon on the passage: who knows? The passage may speak to you more deeply than the sermon. Lastly, read the passage prayer-fully. If the goal is to get to know God better, then take your time. As David Foster has pointed out, "When we come to Scripture we come to be changed, not to amass information."

Randy

## schedule

[Ecclesiastes]

Date	Teaching	Title
July 6	Eccl. 1:1-18	Intro: Meaning
July 13	Eccl. 2:1-16	Pleasures
July 20	Eccl. 2:1-26	Toil
July 27	Eccl. 3:1-22	Time
Aug 3	Eccl. 4:1-16	Work
Aug 10	Eccl. 5:1-7	Awe
Aug 17	Eccl. 5:8-6:12	Wealth
Aug 24	Eccl. 7:1-8:1	Wisdom
Aug 31	Eccl. 8:2-17	Politics
Sep 7	Eccl. 9:1-16	Community
Sep 14	Eccl. 10:1-11:6	Engagement
Sep 21	Eccl. 11:7-12:8	Beauty
Sep 28	Eccl. 12:9-14	Orthodoxy



commonPLACE?

## THE PLACE

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