

# SERVANT

Issue 105 | Fall 2019

# UNEXPECTED WONDER

DISCOVERING  
HIDDEN  
TREASURES

HEATHER AVIS  
BEAUTY IN  
THE MUCK

PHIL CALLAWAY  
EMPLOYMENT  
ADVENTURES

ALUMNI IN ACTION  
LAND OF PROMISE

# the faithful

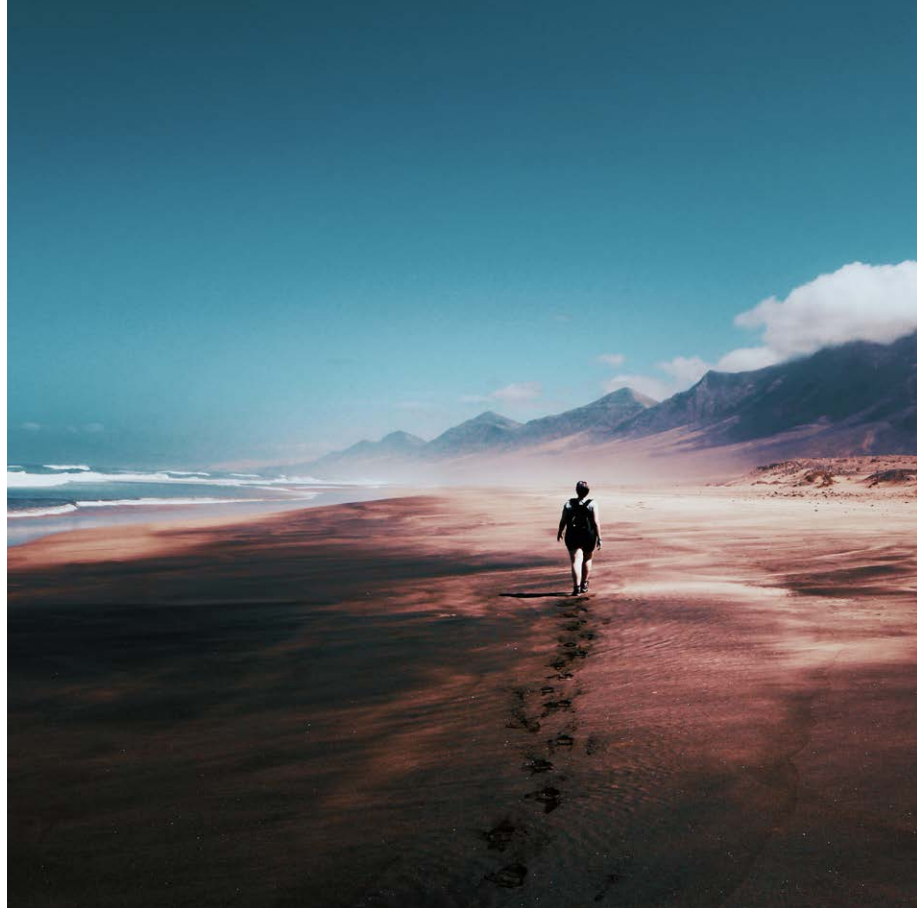
## IN I SAMUEL 7 WE ARE GIVEN A SUMMARY OF THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET SAMUEL:

*Samuel continued as Israel's leader all the days of his life. From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also held court for Israel. And he built an altar there to the LORD.*

Other than a few significant highlights, like a personal visit by the Lord as a boy (Josephus estimated Samuel to have been 11 at that time), the anointing of Saul and then of David as kings of Israel, and leading a few key battles, it appears that the majority of Samuel's life was spent going from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, and stopping by his home in Ramah. From a map of that time, it appears that the full length of this circuit was about 60 kilometres. Hardly significant compared with today's global travellers!

Surely Samuel, respected as a prophet, priest and judge by Christians, Jews and Muslims, must have had a more spectacular life than that. After all, we read in Chapter 25 that when Samuel died, **all Israel assembled and mourned for him.**

Why did the nation grieve as one at the death of this man? Because he was the king-maker? I don't think so. I'm sure you agree that it was because "the Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. All of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord."



## Extraordinary seems to flow from doing the ordinary extra times.

Samuel walked humbly with his God, stayed true to the word of the Lord, dispensed justice and mercy, and embraced the humble routine of walking a circuit. So often our routines feel mundane, uninspired, ordinary. And yet extraordinary seems to flow from doing the ordinary extra times. We remember the highlights, but are remembered for our habits. We gravitate to the adrenaline rush, but then we leave our deepest impression by the ruts in the path we travelled.


We just said good-bye to a contingent of Prairie students from bygone years who returned to campus for our Alumni Reunion. Among them were members of the classes of 1969, 1979 and 1989 who came to reunite with their classmates from fifty, forty and thirty years ago.

What a wonderful and inspiring time we had celebrating the re-graduation of the 50th anniversary class from 1969. These were the heroes among us, who, despite all their aches, pains, pills and scars, told stories of the paths they had walked. It seemed to me they had

much in common, and deeply seated in their values was a determination to remain faithful to the One who had proven himself faithful to them.

I have only one objective in writing this little note...to encourage you to stay the course to which God has called you, to do the hard work of doing it again and yet again, to embrace the mundane. I believe that our objective as humans is to put a smile on the face of the Almighty and I believe that he who sees all smiles on the

faithful, especially when they feel unseen.

May God bless you in your daily routines, may you feel his joy, and may his joy be your strength. 



Mark is available to speak to your church or organization. Reach him at [mark.maxwell@prairie.edu](mailto:mark.maxwell@prairie.edu)

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## LETTERS

Thank you for the alumni testimonies in *SERVANT*. Let's have more! I especially enjoyed issue #104 about the Prairie grad serving in the military. My husband was in the military, so we know the challenges.

**Lois Wall, Clive, AB**

I just read your "Coming Home" article and it reminded me of a funeral I attended recently. At the reception afterwards, I had a strange feeling that I didn't belong there or anywhere else in this world. It wasn't that I wasn't welcome; it was just a feeling that this is NOT my home. As I thought about it, that's really the way all Christians should feel if we're living for the Lord, because this world isn't our real home. It's just a temporary place we're passing through.

**Michael Myers, Denver, CO**

I was encouraged by Mark's article in the Spring issue of *SERVANT*, "Supply Chain Evangelism." At 81 I still haven't discovered whether I have a spiritual gift, but along with my wife, we seek to be faithful in opportunities to serve, which are always there. We were also struck to read the testimony of Michael Hancock ("Full Circle") and to learn more about him. His name and photo were sent to us early in the school year and we have been praying for him regularly, not knowing anything about him. What a joy to hear of the transformation that takes place in young people's lives as they become acquainted with and obedient to God's Word and the work of his Spirit in their lives.

**Reg Friesen, Waldheim, SK**



PREVIEW DAYS  
 Friday, November 22, 2019  
 Friday, February 14, 2020  
 Saturday, April 4, 2020  
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## PRAIRIE COLLEGE

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# THE WONDER WITHIN

DR. PAUL BRAND/PHILIP YANCEY

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I SAW A LIVING CELL UNDER A MICROSCOPE. I HAD SNUCK INTO A COLLEGE LAB EARLY ONE MORNING WITH A TEACUP OF BRACKISH LIQUID I'D SCOOPED FROM A POND. BITS OF DECOMPOSING LEAVES WERE FLOATING ON TOP, EMITTING THE MUSTY ODOR OF ORGANIC DECAY.

No sooner had I touched one drop of pond water to a glass slide under the microscope than a universe sprang to life. Hundreds of organisms crowded into view: delicate, single-celled globes of crystal unfurling and flitting sideways, excited by the warmth of my microscope light. That busy, throbbing drop of water gave me a lasting image of the jungle of life and death we share, and beckoned me to further explore living cells.

Years later I am still observing cells, though as a physician I focus now on how they cooperate within the body. I have my own laboratory at a leprosy hospital in the bayou country of Louisiana. Again I enter the lab early, before anyone is stirring, and only the soft buzz of fluorescent lights breaks the quiet. This morning I will examine a hibernating albino bat who sleeps in a box in my refrigerator. He helps me understand how the body responds to

injury and infection. I lift him carefully, lay him on his back, and spread his wings. I keep expecting him to open an eye and shriek at me, but he doesn't.

As I place his wing under the microscope lens, again a new universe unfolds. The albinic skin under his wing is so limpid that I can look directly through his skin cells into the vessels underneath. I focus the microscope on one bluish capillary until I can see individual blood cells pushing through it. The pulsing fluid is like a river stocked with living matter: a speck of blood contains five million red cells and seven thousand white cells.

I am searching for the body's elite special forces, which protect against invaders. Transparent, bristling with weapons, and possessing a Houdini-like ability to slip between other cells the white blood cells function as the body's advance guard. Amorphous blobs of liquid, they roam through the bat's body by extending a finger-like projection and hunching along to follow it. Sometimes they creep sideways on the walls of the veins; sometimes they let go and free-float in the

bloodstream. To navigate smaller capillaries, the bulky white cells must elongate their shapes, while red blood cells jostle impatiently behind them.

One can't help thinking them sluggish and ineffective at patrolling territory—until an attack occurs. I take a thin steel needle and, without waking the bat, prick through its wing to puncture a fine capillary. Instantly, a silent alarm sounds. Muscle cells contract around the damaged capillary wall, damming up the loss of precious blood. Clotting agents halt the flow at the skin's surface. The most dramatic change, though, occurs among the listless white cells.

As if they have a sense of smell, nearby white cells abruptly halt their aimless wandering. Like beagles on the scent of a rabbit, they home in from all directions toward the point of invasion. Their unique shape-changing qualities allow them to ooze between the overlapping cells of capillary walls. When they arrive, the battle begins.

Although the battle often results in the white cell's demise, its death has little significance. Besides the fifty billion active white cells prowling the adult human, a backup force one hundred times as large lies in reserve in the bone marrow.

When an infection occurs, these reserves leap into action, like young recruits pressed into service.

The body can thus mobilize a vast number of white cells;

**UNDER THE  
MICROSCOPE  
A UNIVERSE  
SPRANG TO LIFE.**



indeed, doctors use a count of them as a diagnostic test to judge the severity of infection.

If the body has previously identified a known threat, as in a smallpox vaccination, it imprints certain white cells with a death wish to target that one danger. These cells spend their lives coursing through the bloodstream, alert, scouting. If the summons to battle sounds, they hold within them the power to disarm a foreign agent that could destroy every cell in the body. If we

as doctors were forced to choose either the human immune system alone or all the resources and technology of science but with the loss of our immune system, without a moment's hesitation we would choose the former.

Though cells share a chemical makeup, they are as different from each other as the animals in a zoo. Red blood cells, discs resembling Life Savers candies, voyage through my blood vessels bearing oxygen supplies for the other cells. The muscle cells that absorbed so much of that nourishment stretch out sleek and supple. Cartilage cells with shiny black nuclei look like bunches of black-eyed peas glued together.

Fat cells resemble overstuffed white plastic garbage bags. Cut in a cross section, bone brings to mind the rings of a tree, its cells overlapping to provide strength and solidity. In contrast, skin cells arrange themselves in undulating patterns of softness and texture, giving shape and beauty to our bodies. Web-like, the nerve cell extends to unite the body's parts with an electrical network of dazzling sophistication. Its axons, organic "wires" that carry far-flung messages to and from the human brain, can reach a yard in length. I never tire of viewing these oddly varied specimens. Individually they seem humble, yet I know these hidden parts combine their efforts to give me the richness of life. When things are going well, I rarely give

my loyal cells a passing thought.

I believe these diverse cells in my body can teach me about the community that is likened to a body more than thirty times in the New Testament, the network of people scattered across the planet who have little in common other than their membership in the Body that follows Jesus Christ. I must guard against picturing the spiritual Body as comprising only American or British cells; it is far grander and more luxuriant. The church of Christ, like our own bodies, consists of individual, unlike cells that are knit together to form one Body.

During my life as a missionary surgeon in India and now as a member of the small chapel on the grounds of the leprosy hospital in Louisiana, I have seen my share of unlikely seekers after God. Most of my worship has taken place among people who do not share my tastes in music, sermons, or even thought. Still, over those years I have been profoundly—and humbly—impressed that I find God in the faces of my fellow worshipers, people who are shockingly different from each other and from me.

The body needs every single member for its proper health and function. More, the less visible members—I think of organs like the pancreas, kidney, liver and colon—may be the most valuable of all. Although I seldom feel consciously grateful for them, they perform vital tasks that keep me alive.

Human societies tend to assign worth based on a hierarchy of value, and living in such a society, my vision gets clouded. When that happens, I must turn back to the lesson from the body. Society confers little status on janitors because their position is considered unskilled. The Body, however, recognizes that janitor cells are indispensable to overall health. If you doubt that, ask someone who must go in for kidney dialysis three times per week.

In a society that ranks everything, an attitude of relative worth can easily seep into the church. The association of people who follow Jesus, though, should not operate that way. The church Jesus founded is more like a family in which the special-needs child has as much worth as his sister the Rhodes Scholar. It is like the human body, composed of cells most striking in their diversity but most effective in their mutuality. If each of us will acknowledge the worth in every other member, then perhaps the cells of Christ's Body will

begin acting as Christ intended.

Unity is the foundation of bodily life. How does the roaming white blood cell in the bat's wing know which cells to attack as invaders and which to welcome as friends? No one yet knows, but the body's cells have a near infallible sense of belonging. The first transplant recipients did not die because their new kidneys failed, but because their bodies would not be fooled. Though the new kidney cells looked and acted in every respect like the old ones, they did not belong. Transplant surgeons must now give the recipient immunosuppressant drugs for the rest of the patient's life in order to lull the guards and keep them from sounding an alarm against the transplanted organ.

When we take on Christ's name and identity, he asks from us the same kind of loyalty and unity that my own body's cells give to me. When I meet strangers in India or Africa or California who share my loyalty to the Head, ethnic and gender categories melt away in significance compared to the new identity that we share.

**JESUS FOUNDED A FAMILY IN WHICH THE SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILD HAS AS MUCH WORTH AS HIS SISTER THE RHODES SCHOLAR.**

In the human body, the sense of belonging extends two ways: a cell follows orders from the brain, while also recognizing a bond with every other cell in the body. God calls me into an organic community, and I join a spiritual Body that binds me to other diverse cells: *"We will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work"* (Eph. 4: 15-16).

No longer do I have to compete through life, looking for ways to prove myself. Instead, I have the singular goal of pleasing God, of living for an audience of One, and I can partner with other cells in the Body to accomplish his work in the world. ❧

# The view from the fence post

Years ago I heard a sermon entitled “A Turtle on a Fence Post.” If ever a word-picture could describe how I ended up at Prairie College, that would be it. If you had ever seen such a thing, you couldn’t help but ask: How on earth did he get there? Clearly, he didn’t do it by himself. And that’s pretty much the story of how I got here. Pure and simple: God did it.

I was waiting for a flight to Seattle when I got a call from Al Mertes, former youth ministries professor at Prairie. I was expecting his call and thought it was about speaking at the college, something my wife and I often did through our non-profit organization, Apprentice Ministries. I had no idea that Prairie was looking for a new director for that program.

When Al asked if I would come and take a look at Prairie and I replied that we would love to visit and do ministry, there was an awkward silence.

“Dan,” he said finally, “I don’t think we’re talking about the same thing.”

I was confused. “So, what are we talking about?”

Al laughed: “I’m looking for a new professor to direct our youth ministry program.” Now it was my turn to laugh! I explained that not only did I not see myself as a professor, but I was far too busy sharing the gospel and equipping the next generation to lead well in their circles of influence around the world. I couldn’t possibly confine myself to a classroom.

We ended our conversation and I boarded my flight. When I called my wife and told her all about the conversation we both agreed that this was certainly out of left field. What a thought—me as a professor! But while I quickly dismissed the conversation, it somehow stuck with me and I began to pray.

Ten months later, after a few more conversations with Al and a lot of life and ministry, we sensed that change was coming and we were to begin seeking God for next steps. We thought he might be calling us into a possible ministry partnership. Several doors were open, but four of the five quickly closed. One remained, but the call would have to wait until morning, so we continued to pray together that night as a family.

“  
**I was far too busy sharing the gospel and equipping the next generation to confine myself to a classroom.**  
”

The next day Gretchen and I sat together, coffee in hand, praying for God’s continued wisdom. We were just about to call “door number five” when the phone began to ring. It was Al. This time, as he described the vision and ministry of Prairie, inviting us to consider



the possibility, I said yes. We agreed to come and talk face-to-face, but it still seemed so surreal. The Lord’s peace was very real, however, and we watched him orchestrate incredible things. In just hours plane tickets were booked and we were headed for Canada.

A simple visit to Prairie to “just check it out” turned into five days of interviews, teaching, touring the town and campus, and meeting the entire faculty. In that whirlwind of activity, something happened as I stood before a class of students and staff: I felt God’s pleasure as I passionately shared my heart! Over the next month, as we prayed and sought council, again and again God continued to lead, confirm, and bless in every step leading to our arrival in Three Hills this past May.

I had many different ideas on how to implement God’s calling on my life. But in amazing ways, like that turtle on a fence post, *he* placed our family here at Prairie, in his time and for his purposes. There is no other place I’d rather be than right here. God gets the glory and I still have the privilege of equipping the next generation of leaders who will transform the world with the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Yes, now even from a classroom. ❧

Dan Jester is Prairie’s new Youth Ministry Program Coordinator and Instructor.

# INVESTING WITH PURPOSE

As you have partnered with us in lowering the cost of training here at Prairie, more students have been able to stay in school and allow God to continue his work in their lives.

*"Thank you for believing in Prairie College and in my potential. Your assistance is helping my family to continue our journey."*

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WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT OF THIS MINISTRY AND ARE PLEASED TO OFFER YOU **ONE** COPY\* OF THE FOLLOWING...



## SCOOT OVER AND MAKE SOME ROOM

By Heather Avis

In a world of divisions and margins, those who grow differently are all too often shoved aside. As God led Josh and Heather Avis to lay aside their expectations and adopt three children, one of mixed race and two with Down syndrome, they discovered priceless treasures and the "best of

the best of the best" in God's plan for them. Heather writes with humor and honesty about the challenges and joys of parenting their unique family, knowing that paying attention to people we are prone to ignore will help us discover the extra-ordinary, abundant heart of God.



## LAUGH AGAIN 2020 CALENDAR

Phil Callaway (One copy only)

This one-of-a-kind calendar from Laugh Again, Phil's daily 5-minute radio program, features some of his favorite stories, a daily scripture reading that will take you through the Bible in a year, and the remarkably wacky artwork of Dennis Jones. Begin each day with great humour, inspiration, and a reminder of the hope we have in Jesus.

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You can also donate: - online at **[www.prairie.edu/donate](http://www.prairie.edu/donate)** or  
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*Laugh Again calendar*

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receive Prairie's email updates.

receive one receipt at the end of the year for all my gifts.

*Prairie Bible Institute, in business as "Prairie College," is a registered charity in Canada and the US and issues tax receipts in both currencies.*





# NEWS & VIEWS

## CORRIE TEN BOOM

"The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world of not being able to do something, and enter God's realm where everything is possible."



## LUIS PALAU

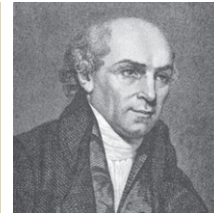
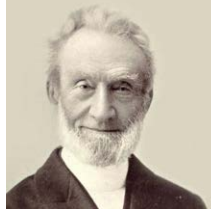
"God is not disillusioned with us. He never had any illusions to begin with."



## QUOTEWORTHY

## GEORGE MULLER

"We should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may be tried. The more I am in a position to be tried in faith, the more I will...see God's help and deliverance."



## WILLIAM CAREY

"The most glorious works of grace that ever took place have been in answer to prayer."



## MEDITATION

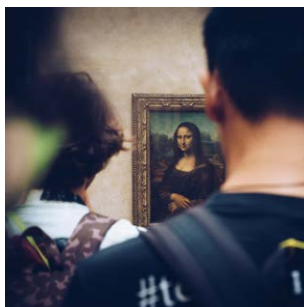
If not to God, you will surrender to the opinions or expectations of others, to money, to resentment, to fear, or to your own pride, lusts or ego. You were designed to worship God and if you fail to worship him, you will create other things...to give your life to. You are free to choose what you surrender to, but you are not free from the consequence of that choice.

“ RICK WARREN ”

## NOW YOU KNOW

Many of the Easter Island heads have hidden bodies, measuring over 30 feet high.

*Forbes*



The Mona Lisa has the highest insurance value in history for a painting, equivalent to \$830 million today.

*Guinness World Records*



Livraria Bertrand in Lisbon, Portugal, is the world's oldest operating bookstore, opened in 1732.

*Guinness World Records*



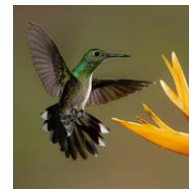
The African bush elephant only sleeps for about two hours a day.

*PLOS One*



From 1900 to 1920 tug-of-war was an Olympic event.

*TIME*



Hummingbirds can move forward, backward and upside down.

*National Park Service*

# OFF THE BEATEN PATH

HEATHER AVIS



Photo © Josh Avis

*After years of trying to start a family, Josh and Heather Avis were forced to let go of hope as the devastating diagnosis of infertility was confirmed. They began to consider adoption and were suddenly faced with a choice between insisting on a healthy baby and accepting one who was medically fragile. As God turned their hearts upside down, the couple soon found themselves the parents of three chosen children—one of mixed race and two with Down syndrome. In her second book *Scout Over and Make Some Room*, Heather, now a strong advocate for the marginalized, invites us to embrace the beauty in the often overlooked.*

**SERVANT: WHAT DID YOU BELIEVE GOD'S BEST FOR YOU WOULD LOOK LIKE WHEN YOU BEGAN PLANNING FOR A FAMILY?**

**HEATHER:** I had my own idea of how life would unfold. I got married, had a career, and we were financially ready. I wanted three kids by the time I was thirty, all of whom I would give birth to, all of whom would be healthy and look like my husband and me. But the time came when we realized that it wasn't going to happen.

**YOU'VE SAID THAT TRUE BEAUTY IS FOUND IN THE MUCK. HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?**

I can say it because I've lived it. I thought I knew what my life would look like until I found myself far from that path through adoption and special needs and my family just looked so different from what I expected. Then in the midst of the fog and the chaos I realized that there was so much beauty and richness in a place I had been trying to avoid all my life.

**YOU'VE CALLED YOUR THREE CHILDREN "WILDFLOWERS." WAS THIS SOMETHING THAT YOU EMBRACED EASILY?**

We knew our adoption agency had a baby born with Down syndrome but that had never been our plan so it wasn't like we were being presented with this baby and said no. We had already said no on paper to a lot of what she was. When we ended up saying yes to adopting Macyn it was the scariest and the best yes of my life. She was so medically fragile that at some point we didn't even care about Down syndrome anymore; we were adopting a little girl who was going to have to fight for her life. I was trying to create this perfect garden with my children, but instead there were these wildflowers blooming in the mud with so much beauty to offer. Parenting a child who has health issues is just a different kind of life and every moment brings a need to embrace it in a new way.

**HOW IMPORTANT WAS IT THAT YOU AND JOSH WERE ON THE SAME PAGE WITH THIS?**

It wasn't as important that we were constantly on the same page, but that we were completely *for* one another. When I was feeling doubtful in the decision, Josh would remind me about all the truths I had already spoken about why we should adopt this little girl. Then he'd be feeling unsure and I could remind him what we had seen of God's goodness and all that was happening. At the end of the day, though, when you're bringing home a baby, then you both need to be in 100% agreement and we were.

**WHAT WERE YOUR BIGGEST FEARS?**

In the very early stages we didn't know whether Macyn would live or die because she had a severe lung condition and a hole in her heart that would require open-heart surgery. We wanted to keep her alive as long as possible, but I knew I had no control over the days of her life. All of our

fears were based on the unknown. Was she going to walk? Talk? And even now when she's eleven and totally healthy, is she going to live independently? Will she have a job that's meaningful to her? There are all these unknowns.

### **HAVE THESE EXPERIENCES CHANGED YOU AND JOSH FOR THE BETTER IN YOUR MARRIAGE?**

I think it could have gone either way. But adopting our kids and especially children with serious medical issues created opportunities for us to grow together and to really need each other. Had we had typical, able-bodied babies in the beginning, I'm sure we could have just gone on not really needing the strength of the other so much. But there were days when I really needed to lean into him and he needed to lean into me and we were given the opportunity to do that. I think that in our western culture independence is something that people seek after and no-one really wants the vulnerability of needing someone else; it's looked on as a weakness. But it really is a strength to be able to admit that we can't do this alone.

### **YOU'VE ALREADY WRITTEN YOUR ADOPTION STORY. WHY DID YOU WRITE, "SCOOT OVER AND MAKE SOME ROOM"?**

Because I have three children who head out my front door every day into a world that continues to marginalize them because of who they are. So there's a part of me as a momma bear that wants to say, "No

ity because of what I've learned when I've made space in my life for the unexpected and for people who are significantly different than me. It's allowed me to discover so much goodness and beauty and a better understanding of God's heart.

### **WHAT CAN I DO AS AN INDIVIDUAL TO EMBRACE MINORITIES AND PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT ABILITIES?**

A really good first step is awareness— noticing who's missing in your spaces. And then find ways to learn about those people. What books can you read, what social media accounts can you follow, what music can you listen to or what shows can you watch where the central character is someone who is marginalized or doesn't have a lot of exposure? As we take the posture of a listener and a learner, it creates the ability to bridge gaps when the opportunity arises in person. For example, your kids may not know anyone with Down syndrome. But if you have exposed them to books or TV shows where the disabled person is viewed in a positive light, then when they see someone at the park, they will be more comfortable in making a connection.

### **WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THE CHURCH COULD DO BETTER?**

Again, asking who is missing and why? Does your church automatically separate out people with special needs? If so, then what is everyone else missing out on? There

*everyone* who doesn't. How are the disabled in your church serving? Are they seen as individuals who bear the full image of God with spiritual gifts that they can contribute? If you have that posture, then as these people enter your church, you can embrace them as you would anybody else. And if the whole church has to adjust because someone has a certain sensory issue or needs access to the building and you now have to build special ramps or whatever, then we do that because we're the church.

### **DOES OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD CHANGE WHEN WE MAKE ROOM FOR PEOPLE WHOSE STORY IS DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN?**

The Bible tells us that *all* people are created in the image of God, not only those who are able-bodied and white, for example. If we are not surrounding ourselves with those who have very different lives than our own, then I don't know that we can fully understand who God is. If we don't look for his image in all kinds of people, then I question if we have the best understanding of God's heart for his creation and his love for humanity.

### **DID YOU ANTICIPATE THE EFFECT THAT TELLING YOUR STORY WOULD HAVE?**

Not completely. I had been sharing through social media in a small way and received very gracious feedback from people telling how it had impacted them. Then the opportunity came to write a book and we are now hearing from people who have chosen to adopt because of reading our story, and from new and expecting parents with a Down syndrome diagnosis who are no longer fearful. There is such power in a story and it's been a real honor to see this one make its way into the world.

### **ONE DAY YOUR CHILDREN ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO JESUS. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THEM TO SAY ABOUT THEIR MOM?**

That my mom taught me how to see the worth and value in every person I ever encountered and helped me see Jesus in everyone. ☞

“*Somewhere off the rose-petal path where easy, normal, and nice bloom, true beauty lives in the muck. God picked me up off the comfortable path I had paved for myself and drop-kicked me into the mud. And the farther I stepped from that pretty path of easy, normal, and nice, the more clearly I could see the beauty he was creating all around me...I have heard the Lord's heartbeat the loudest while walking in the wilderness, far from the easy path I stepped out on years ago.* - Heather Avis

more, friend, and let me tell you why my children should be included and accepted and have full belonging in every space they step into.” I'm so much more aware now that this is not happening. So this is for my kids, but it's for the greater good of human-

will be circumstances when someone who is disabled requires a space they can go to that best meets their needs, but only a few. I believe that inclusion in churches, schools and anywhere else is good for *most* people who have a disability, but it's good for

To order your copy of *Scoot Over and Make Some Room*, please see Page 8.



# LAND

DEANNA AND PETER FAST  
WITH PAT MASSEY

# OF PROMISE



In hopes of a better future, Emmanuel and Rafaela had left their desperate situation in Brazil and travelled to the other side of the world to begin a new life in Israel. They were excited about their new freedom, especially the freedom of not having to hide their Jewish identity, but it had been a costly decision and they were now alone without the support of family and friends.

As reality began to set in, the young couple realized that it would be impossible to find work in their professions if they couldn't speak the language, so they immediately signed up for a Hebrew class. It was there that they heard of an organization that offered assistance to new immigrants. They decided to inquire and were immediately accepted into a program where they found help in adapting to the culture, food and supplies, and most of all, loving friendships. The manager even prayed regarding their deep desire to have a child.

One day at the shop where she worked, Rafaela met a young couple from

Canada. She told them the story of how she and her husband had been successful in starting a new life all because of the kindness and support they had received—from a group of Christians! Rafaela was astonished to discover that Peter and Deanna Fast were part of that same organization.

Involvement with the land of Israel was not something new for the couple. They had met as students at Prairie Bible College and midway through Peter's studies he had interned in the Holy Land for eight months with a ministry called Bridges for Peace. A love for history and a family heritage that included a deep affection for the Jewish people had fostered a lasting passion for the land. As he spent hours with elderly Jews doing much-needed repairs

heart was being touched and she knew that God was leading her into overseas ministry. After she had transferred to the University of Lethbridge to study music, she and Peter began dating and in 2006 they were married. A few years later their growing interest in the nation of Israel prompted them to step out in faith and move there as volunteers with BFP. The mission's goal was to build relationships between Christians and Jews in Israel and around the world, and that was exactly what Peter and Deanna wanted to do.

Immediately they found themselves immersed in a culture that, compared to life in Canada, was less convenient, more congested, infinitely busier, amazingly diverse, more fun to drive in, and almost completely

**NEIGHBOURS WERE AMAZED THAT THE CANADIANS STAYED EVEN WHEN THERE WAS DANGER.**

in their homes, that passion became even more personal.

Deanna knew very little about the importance of Israel and the Jewish people, but through her study of the Bible at Prairie and the influence of friends, her

without personal space. Their home was on a busy street in the centre of Jerusalem in an orthodox neighbourhood made up of Jews from France, Russia and Ethiopia as well as native-born Israelis. Learning Hebrew seemed like a good way to break

down social barriers, so the Fasts plunged ahead, learning how to barter at the market and strike up conversations with local merchants. Their neighbours helped them practice Hebrew in exchange for English lessons and it was a pleasant surprise to find people eager to talk about God and matters of faith. Deanna's musical talents made her a welcome guest at a bar mitzvah and wedding, and when she joined a leadership course, she found herself the first Christian the other students had ever met.

For twenty-five blessed hours on Shabbat (Sabbath) every week, stores closed, public transportation ground to a halt, and peace reigned. It was an oasis of quiet in the midst of the craziness of everyday life and Peter and Deanna looked forward to that time when they could

comforted Holocaust survivors, helped new immigrants get on their feet, and stood in solidarity with terror victims in their time of grief, helping to rebuild shattered lives.

After centuries of anti-Semitism, violence and terrible persecution, even in the name of Jesus, the chasm between Christians and Jews is vast and deeply ingrained. An Orthodox friend of Peter's once commented, "You'll never meet a thirty-year-old Jew or a fifty-year-old Jew or an eighty-year-old Jew. We're all 3000 years old. We pass down our history, we cherish the good and the bad, and we never forget." After 74 years, the wounds of the Holocaust are vivid, as if it happened yesterday. Every year on Tish b'Av (9th day of the month of Av) Jews all over the world still mourn the destruction of the First and

internationally, supporting the mission and vision of BFP. At any given time they may be coordinating 60 to 70 volunteers serving in Israel from countries around the world, followers of Jesus who have a heart for Israel and the nations and a desire to reach people with the love of God. Peter and Deanna often lead tours to the Holy Land and it was on one such journey that they crossed paths with Rafaela in her shop. The young woman was obviously pregnant and it was a thrilling confirmation of their efforts to hear how prayers had been answered and love and grace had made a difference in Jewish lives.

Israel is not immune to challenges. It is almost always a politically charged country and the threat of terrorism and unfriendly neighbours requires constant

## AS COMPASSION CHANGES PERCEPTION, THE BARRIERS OF HISTORY BEGIN TO TOPPLE.

meet with fellow believers and refresh their souls in the Word of God.

Living in Israel through all the seasons allowed them to experience the biblical feasts and cultural and national observances. They learned to build a sukkah (booth), witnessed the breaking of the fast of Yom Kippur at the Western Wall, dressed up for the feast of Esther, walked the streets of the Old City with the golden glow of candles from the hannukiah, and were invited to observe and participate in Passover Seder meals.

Life had its somber moments as well: praying with others for needed rain, reflecting with Israelis during the blaring sirens on Holocaust Memorial Day, racing to bomb shelters during rocket and missile attacks, keeping gas masks at the ready. Neighbours were amazed that the Canadians stayed even when there was danger. Their commitment during the tough times as well as the good became an encouragement and a witness to everyone who knew them.

As volunteers, Peter and Deanna soon discovered significant needs everywhere they turned. Poverty was a reality for thousands of school children and many Israeli Jews, including the elderly, so every month BFP teams dispersed over sixty tons of food out of their foodbanks in Jerusalem and Karmiel to communities throughout the country. They repaired badly deteriorating homes and apartments for those who had no resources to help themselves,

Second Temple. They are a people who clearly remember and have been shaped by their history--the good, the bad and the ugly. And the pain remains.

But there is hope. The stories are multiplying of people who were spared during terrorist attacks or who could never have made a life for themselves in Israel without believers coming alongside in their hour of need and demonstrating godly compassion in practical ways. When that happens, it radically changes the perception of what a true Christian is and what they believe, and the barriers of history begin to topple.

After three years in Israel, the Lord clearly and unexpectedly let Peter and Deanna know that their time in this fascinating country was finished. Trusting that new doors would open, they returned to Canada in 2013 and Peter was soon offered a position with Bridges for Peace Canada as the National Development Director. Sensing that God wanted them as a family to invest in a longer-term commitment, he later accepted the role of Deputy National Director and then National Director in 2019. The Fasts now live in Winnipeg with their two young children, Judah and Naomi.

In addition to dealing with budgets, strategies and the everyday responsibilities of overseeing an office, Peter also spends much of his time teaching and speaking at different events across Canada and



Peter and Deanna Fast:  
Bringing hope to the Holy Land.

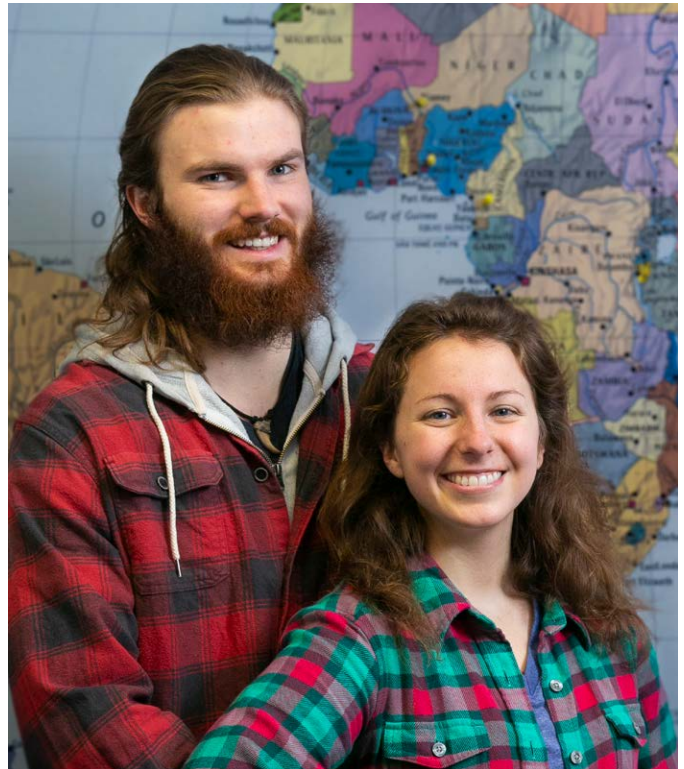
vigilance to ensure the nation's survival and future. Complicated political and national issues remain a reality with no easy answers and as immigrants arrive from all corners of the earth, individual cultural identities struggle to blend with little in common but their faith.

At the same time, God is moving powerfully, bringing the Jewish people home and slowly turning them back to himself as they witness his care in action. The Promised Land, reclaimed, but deeply wounded and fighting for its life, is slowly becoming the land of promises fulfilled as followers of Jesus reach out to the sons of Abraham with only one resource at their command—unconditional, Christ-like love. ❏

The Fasts were named 2019 Distinguished Alumni for Early Career Excellence. Visit Bridges for Peace at [www.bridgesforpeace.com](http://www.bridgesforpeace.com)

# A journey of learning

The family farm in Manitoba was my home until we moved to Alberta and I began attending a Christian school. It was there that I heard a presentation by a student who had attended the Explore (Wilderness Leadership) program at Prairie College. She talked about the physical and mental stretching she faced and how God had used that environment to challenge and grow her.



Lance and Madison Parrott: "We wondered if God was closing a door."

My parents had encouraged me to go on to higher education, but I wasn't really interested and went back to work on a bin building crew in Manitoba. After about eight months on the job, I began to feel a need for more depth in my walk with Christ and that student's words came back to me. I too wanted to grow and be challenged, so I applied to Prairie for the fall of 2013. My plan was to stay for just one year, but the next September found me back on campus and God used those two years to do some foundational work in my life. By the spring my future wife and I had started dating and she continued with her studies while I returned to construction.

Then Prairie began a Global Social Justice Program and that interested me, so I went back—until one day at volleyball practice I suffered a concussion that forced me to drop out of school. After seven months of healing, Madison and I were married in July of 2017.

We began to prepare for Globe-TREK, Prairie's intercultural internship, where students spend the better part of a year experiencing missions around the globe. After travelling as a team to different countries and cultures, each student

then spends six months in the location of their choice. Madison and I wanted to serve our internship in Mozambique, but ran into visa problems. We missed the first leg of the trip with our team and after trying for two months to get a visa we began to think that God was closing a door. Finally we were asked to consider going to Nepal and by then anywhere sounded great, so off we went.

**“ I had just returned to school when a concussion forced me to drop out. ”**

The experience was a bit surreal for me. We were welcomed warmly by the missionaries there, but very little was familiar as we learned our place on the team. It was a time of cultural discomfort and stretching; a time of seeking and de-

pendency as we saw how futile our plans were if God was not involved.

At the same time it was encouraging to see God's light shining in a dark land overshadowed by Hinduism as we watched local believers pray against a background of idol worship for the freedom of their people. We saw hope in the eyes of individuals and families who were the only believers in their villages, and observed their faithfulness in the face of discrimination and abuse. Times of hardship were covered in God's grace and mercy as we found gifts he left for us to discover.

After leaving Nepal we met up with the rest of our team in Kenya for a time to rest and share experiences. Each one had faced their own trials, grown and changed. From there we travelled as a group to Ethiopia, Egypt, Greece, Jordan, Israel, and Turkey.

Now Madison and I are at Prairie once again for my final year of studies. Looking back to when I first arrived at school and the chapters of life that have gone by, I am amazed at the many experiences God has used to change me into the man I am today: still fallen, still broken, and in need of mercy with so much more to learn. ❧

# Nailing it

The summer of my sixteenth year I landed a job on a pig farm hoping to bring home the bacon. Forgive me for wallowing in puns, but the work boared me. Each morning I prayed for rain or snow—anything to keep me from that job. But God didn't answer. I think it was one of the driest summers on record.

We built a pig barn, which wasn't really my God-given talent. Jesse, my boss, was a hard-living farmer whose eyes were tobacco yellow from smoking a pack of cigarettes before lunch. He wanted me to smoke too. "It'll build up an immunity to disease," he said, which was the deepest conversation we had that summer. But my attitude changed the day Jesse handed me a nail gun. I loved that thing. You just lined up a wooden stud, rested the

## My attitude changed when the boss handed me a nail gun.

nail gun against it, and pulled the trigger. *Whamo!* A nail came flying out. What could possibly go wrong?

An hour after introducing me to that nail gun, Jesse held a wooden stud while I nudged the gun up against it, pulled the trigger, and missed the stud. The sharp nail stuck into the poor guy's shoulder. Jesse looked down, stunned, as if he'd just been shot with a nail gun.

"Ow!" I said. "Sorry." *He's gonna kill me, I thought. Then he's gonna keel over and die.* He did neither. Just pulled out the nail, cursed a blue streak, then asked, "Well, who is the stupid one here, you or me?" I have learned never to answer this question. But I did that day.

"Do you wanna quit," said Jesse, "or can I fire you?"

It was my last day on the pig farm. But not the last I would see of Jesse.

Few things in life determine our level of joy quite like our attitude toward work. I regret having such a lousy one that



Artwork by Dennis Jones

summer. I wish I had viewed each day as a chance to brighten the workplace and work whole hog. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men," says Colossians 3:23, which changes everything because it turns work into worship.

Today I sat down and came up with a few things I love about being a writer:

- You can live anywhere you like.
- The writer has the freedom to starve almost anywhere.
- You can stare out windows without your spouse asking what you're up to.
- You don't develop knee problems, just a sore rear end.
- Overhead is cheap. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was written on the back of an old envelope.
- You can work in your bathrobe without being charged with indecency.
- Your career is not over at thirty like most professional athletes.
- You can get your picture in the paper without being charged for a criminal act.
- You can speak your mind long after you're dead.
- You can receive notes like these: "My toddler chewed most of your book. I need another one," or, "I'm a mother of five. Each day I lock my-

self in the bathroom and read your book. When I come out I feel like I can face the world again."

Whatever work you're involved in, give thanks that you have some. My friend Daryl stuffs insulation into nooks and crannies and, frankly, I don't know a more purpose-filled guy. People love him. His work is worship.

I was signing books after speaking at a men's conference a few hours from home. A tall, lanky, clear-eyed guy handed me one and I looked up. "Jesse!" I blurted out. "No way!" It was my former boss.

"How have you been?" I asked.

"So good," he said. And tears started down his face. "I came to Jesus a few years ago."

I asked Jesse what he's up to. "I own that pig farm now," he said, "and I'm loving it."

"How's your shoulder?"

"Fine. A little stiff when the weather changes." Then he laughed and said, "Boy, you really nailed it." ❧



with artwork by Dennis Jones, see pages 7 and 8.

Visit Phil at [philcallaway.com](http://philcallaway.com). To order your copy of his hilarious and hope-filled 2020 calendar



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