



Canadian Faith at Work Conversations

An *Our Common Calling* National Project

In late 2020, the leaders of five Canadian communities invested in the faith at work conversation¹ met to explore how faith is being lived out in the workplace across Canada. We understand the workplace as any place where people are working, whether paid or not.

We were responding to research on cross-cultural marketplace mission that suggested Canadian pastors were supportive of the model, but their churches were not as strongly engaged.² These findings raised a question of how engaged Canadian churches are with the wider challenge of Jesus' followers living out their faith in their own culture, let alone in other cultures.

To explore this, we conducted a series of 27 interviews with leaders from across Canada: in the church, the academy, the agency, and the marketplace.³ While not an exhaustive academic survey, these conversations provided a glimpse of how God's people are living out their faith beyond the walls of the church.

The results were both encouraging and deeply challenging.

Uncovering Stories of Faith in the Workplace

All five of us facilitating interviews have lived as Christians in the marketplace long enough to know that God is at work here—but we were still amazed at the sheer number and diversity of stories we uncovered.

We heard of opportunities to witness in the workplace and how workplace excellence was a witness in and of itself. People shared workplace struggles with us too: of difficult decisions as followers of Jesus and how they experienced Jesus' presence in those challenges.

We were deeply encouraged by the stories of God at work in our Canadian workplace, but left asking how can we release these stories into the local church to inspire and encourage God's people as they go to work?

Grieving a Disconnect between Church and the Workplace

Most of those we interviewed attend a local church yet experience a deep disconnect between their church and work life. Churches were often seen as trapped within their walls, busy with programs for the members within them, but unable to identify with—let alone speak meaningfully to—the workplace where the members spend the majority of their waking hours. Pastors were perceived as being too busy running the church to be able to spend time in the workplace. Even if they wanted to be supportive, many grew up in a

¹ See end of report for list of these leaders and their respective organizations.

² Jonathan Fuller, "Renewing the Role of the Canadian Church in Cross-Cultural Marketplace Ministry" (Toronto, Ontario, paper presented at the Evangelical Missiological Society of Canada, February 25, 2020).

³ See Appendix for a list and brief description of those interviewed.

church, studied in a seminary, and had spent little time in the workplace. As one entrepreneur put it, *“Why would I expect them to have anything to say to me?”*

As a result, some workplace Christians are forming their own communities. A Wednesday noon prayer meeting with colleagues is their church, not the congregation they sit with on Sunday morning. We celebrated the encouragement that these workplace communities are providing, but grieve the disconnect. How do we ensure these workplace faith communities, complement and inform the church, rather than competing, or worse, inoculating people against the church? How can we build Kingdom partnerships together?

We did hear stories of churches that are supporting their people in the workplace with creativity and understanding, churches whose theology transcends the sacred / secular divide with leaders who are students of both their congregation and their culture. In these churches, pastors spend time visiting their people in the workplace and workplace Christians are welcomed regularly on the platform or even in the pulpit.

We recognize that most pastors desire to help their people live out their faith in the workplace, but the testimony of those we talked to is that many churches aren't succeeding at this. How do we help the church do better at equipping God's people to live faithfully in the workplace? How can we help church leaders recognize this as a priority?

Acknowledging the Loneliness of God's People in the Workplace

Although we heard many encouraging stories, we also heard a lot of loneliness. Many young professionals struggle alone to define their faith in the workplace. Without practical, meaningful support from their church, they feel alone as a follower of Jesus in their workplace.

Workplace Christians we talked to longed for a mentor or companion, especially as they were starting out. Only a few found someone who could relate to their work context and walk with them in it. Knowing how important that has been in their lives, everyone we talked to said they would be willing to be that friend for someone else.

Ideally, the local church would be a place where mentors could be found, and we did hear stories of churches helping to make those connections. However, it was much more common for those connections to be made through organizations like the Canadian Christian Business Federation or Faith at Work Canada. Small groups meeting in company board rooms, or factory cafeterias across the country provide encouragement, support, resources and mentoring for Christians in their workplaces.

We are grateful for those communities but they are so few compared to the need. How can we together, do more to create community that nurtures faith in the workplace? How can we provide mentors for young professionals starting out?

Championing & Promoting Resources for the Workplace

One of the survey's original purposes was to identify Canadian resources for living out faith in the workplace by talking to those living, working and teaching in and about that context. We were aware of good resources in the US and the UK, and are grateful for that material but we wondered if good Canadian resources might be in short supply. In fact, we were pleasantly surprised to find more resources than we had expected.

The problem isn't a lack of Canadian resources,⁴ but rather that they aren't well known or well used. And particularly, they aren't impacting local congregations effectively.

In part, this is because much of the material is labelled for "Christians in the workplace"—and churches don't see this as relevant, forgetting that their people spend most of their time in the workplace.

We see a need to promote this excellent material, and in some cases, repackage it for the local church context. Can we complement or repurpose the excellent existing resources targeted towards Christians in the workplace, in order to provide equally compelling material for pastors and lay leaders in the local church? How can we invite these church leaders to discover the amazing stories and rich insights that currently seem sequestered away in the faith at work conversation outside the church?

The Value of a National Conversation for the Workplace

Through our conversations, we met many of God's people living out their faith effectively in the workplace, encountered many churches and communities that are trying to support them and found more resources than we had expected. However, everyone we talked to said that more work is needed in this space. They would welcome more conversation, greater collaboration and increased sharing in order to see the workplace transformed through the presence of God's people, here in Canada and around the globe.

We came away from our conversations committed to facilitating a national conversation about faith at work, bringing God's people together to explore his purposes in the Canadian and global workplace.

An Urgent Call to Bridge the Gap between the Workplace and the Church

We have walked through the marketplace and met with God's people seeking to live out their faith through their work.

We've been encouraged by stories of work made holy and lives transformed through God's presence made real in the workplace. We've also experienced the common loneliness of Jesus followers longing for mentoring, support, resources, and help to be disciples transforming their workplace. In our conversations, we heard a clarion call from the

⁴ See [Faith at Work Resources](#) on the Our Common Calling website.

marketplace to the church — a call to help God’s people be effective disciple-makers in the workplace.

The church needs to equip a new generation of Elijahs to stand on today’s Mt. Carmels; of Daniels to serve before the kings of contemporary Babylon; of Nehemiahs to rebuild our world’s crumbling walls, of Bezalels and Oholiab to reflect the beauty of God’s creativity.

We know that pastors and church leaders long for this as well, and yet there is a disconnect. It doesn’t need to remain this way. How can we bridge the gap between the workplace and church? How can we inspire the church to embrace the workplace and give hope to Christians in the workplace that the church is for them?

We are inspired by the stories of churches that are equipping their people for the workplace, but we dream of a day when every church is that church.

A Word to the Church

We love the Church and we recognize that it is through the church God works to transform the world. Our conversations with God’s people in the local church and the workplace have raised these questions:

1. How can church leaders discover and value the amazing stories and rich insights that currently seem sequestered away in the faith at work conversation?
2. How can the church better equip God’s people to live faithfully in the workplace? How can we help church leaders recognize this as a priority?
3. How can our local churches create community that nurtures faith in the workplace? How can churches partner strategically with faith at work communities in this?
4. How can churches provide workplace mentors for young professionals starting out?
5. Can we complement or repurpose the excellent existing resources targeted towards Christians in the workplace, in order to provide equally compelling material for pastors and lay leaders in the local church?
6. How can we support pastors as they seek to be students of their culture as well as shepherds of their flock?
7. How can we inspire the church to embrace the workplace and give hope to Christians in the workplace that the church is for them?

A Word to the Workplace

In our wonderful conversations with God’s people in the workplace, we recognize them as part of the church, yet grieve the sense of disconnect many workplace Christians feel between their workplace and the local church. Our conversations have raised these questions as we consider God’s people in the workplace:

1. How can workplace Christians be encouraged and enabled to tell stories of God at work in their workplaces in order to inspire and encourage God's people in the local church?
2. How can workplace Christians do more to create community that nurtures faith in the workplace, and provide mentors for young professionals starting out?
3. How do we ensure that the wonderful workplace faith communities complement and inform the church, rather than competing, or worse, inoculating people against the church?
4. How can young entrepreneurs be encouraged to stay engaged with the local church, even though they often feel misunderstood and alienated from the church?
5. How do we help entrepreneurs find courage to be true to their God-given gifting, perhaps even to be a prophetic voice in the local church?

Jon Fuller,
Our Common Calling Executive Director
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In collaboration with

- James Bruyn, Faith at Work
- Keith Knight, Canadian Christian Business Federation
- Harvey Matchullis, The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada
- Aubrey Tozer, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
- Philip Yan, Tyndale Centre for Redemptive Entrepreneurship

Appendix: Faith at Work Survey Participants

Agency (Ministry Organization)

Interviewee	Organization	Description
Jim Beerley	CrossWorld	CrossWorld creates disciple-makers of professionals of all sorts and international church planting.
Khevna Dave	Mission Hub	Missions Hub Toronto walks alongside university/college students and young professionals on how to use their skills/education to engage in missions locally and globally.
Brad Bell	Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada	For over 75 years, Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) has used aviation and technology to share the love of Jesus Christ with isolated people who have not yet heard the Gospel.
Terry Smith	Canadian Baptist Ministries	A global missions organization embracing a broken world through word & deed by partnering with national church bodies in the Global south. CBM is committed to Integral Mission and its work includes relief and development, theological education, discipleship, and equipping God's people to live out their faith in the marketplace.
Greg Laing	Multiply	Our mandate is to help multiply disciples, churches, and missional leaders in 65 countries around the world.
James Sinsel	Operation Mobilization	Operation Mobilization ministries in over 100 countries worldwide and onboard our ship Logos Hope are involved in evangelism, church planting, relief and development, justice, mentoring and discipleship.
Craig & Krista S	Transformational SME	Transformational SME (www.transformationalSME.org) operates an investment fund across North Africa, the Middle East and Asia with the goal of supporting Christian-owned and managed businesses focused on a quadruple bottom line impact for the glory of Jesus Christ. We do this through the provision of growth-capital, mentoring, and strategic recruitment of key professional and business personnel.

Assembly (Churches)

Mike Ivancic	New City Church Calgary	Started in 2010, New City is a growing Christian church in Calgary, Alberta centered on 3 core values - Gospel, Community, and Mission. As a community of people redeemed through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are called to be a source of blessing to Calgary and the world through mission.
Sandra Ryan	The Peoples Church	A Toronto-based movement of gospel-centered, globally engaged Christians committed to growing the Body of Christ for God's global Mission.
David Friesen	Brentview Baptist Church	Located in Calgary Alberta, Brentview exists to see every person making disciples. They have a focus on personal change, living a seamless life, and outreach.
Harding Ng	Toronto Christian Community Church	Holds a mission to grow missional disciples of Jesus Christ to impact the world through compassion, justice and reconciliation. Harding is also involved in the 105 Gibson Centre to deploy the vocational expertise within the church in order to outreach the community and train youth.
Timothy Tang	East Toronto Chinese Baptist Church	Church in Toronto aiming to inspire, enable, and develop people to grow in their understanding of Kingdom values, and to use their God-given gifts to live out those values in all spheres of life.

Adventurer (Entrepreneurs)

Val Lieske	Fire Exit Theatre	Fire Exit Theatre exists to produce excellent, innovative art that unlocks the soul of its audience and to build a vibrant, meaningful community engaged in a dialogue about faith and a satisfying creative experience for artists.
Mydene Cuevas	[energy transportation]	A corporate commercial lawyer in the oil and gas industry who is passionate about faith at work living. She was a former host of a Bible study at her workplace and continually encourages her coworkers through living out Christ-centered values in every aspect of her life.
Brad Lounsbury	The Lounsbury Group	A Christian entrepreneur that is working on real estate and owns multiple businesses. Brad integrates faith at work through conversations with CEOs and high-profile business people.
Tim Chan	Suncor	Responding to a nudge from God that prayer needs to happen at Suncor, Tim (an accountant and internal auditor) founded the Suncor Prayer

		Network, a workplace community of believers working in the energy sector who meet regularly to share of their experiences, encourage each other through Scripture and teachings and to pray for each other.
Sam Yiu	Business as Mission	Sam is currently in the property management business and owns a coin laundry business. He lives out the gospel through providing housing services, emphasizing integrity and fairness in his vocation.

Academia (Universities/Colleges)

Michael Krause	Tyndale University	Tyndale University has a main focus on ministerial leadership and recently on urban ministry church planters.
Gordon Preston	The King's University, Leder School of Business	The King's University is a Canadian Christian university located in Edmonton, Alberta that serves students and communities across Western Canada and internationally. The university exists to provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ.
Laurie Busuttill	Redeemer University	Redeemer offers a university-level liberal arts and science education which is scripturally directed, exploring the relation of faith, learning, and living from a Reformed Christian perspective.
Murray MacTavish	Ambrose University	Located in Calgary, Alberta, Ambrose University prepares men and women for wise, joyful and redemptive engagement in the church, society and the created order through excellent Christian post-secondary education.

Faith and Work Movement

Keith Knight	Canadian Christian Business Federation	CCBF exists to advocate for Christ's presence in the Canadian business community in partnership with Christian business leaders and their businesses.
Seeon Smith	Marketplace Chaplains	Marketplace Chaplains are a caring team, presenting concerns to each other, focusing on developing a relationship and building trust with various vocations and life stages.

Debbie Hoffele	Christian Veterinary Mission Canada	An organization of Canadian animal health professionals committed to Christian ministry through the veterinary profession.
Greg Young	Engineering Ministries International	A non-profit Christian development organization mobilizing volunteer architects, engineers, surveyors, building technicians and other design professionals who donate their skills to help children and families around the world step out of poverty and into a world of hope.
Don Moore	Canadian Christian Business Federation	The Canadian Christian Business Federation is committed to help Christian business leaders increase their business success by applying Biblical leadership principles within the context of peer business relationships.