

good idea!

A resource for evangelism & congregational development

The Difficult Journey to Faith: How the Church can Provide Stepping Stones

by John Bowen

Moving toward Christian faith is seldom easy. There are intellectual, ethical and relational issues to be worked through, to name but three. Churches which seek to practice evangelism will try to offer help at every step for those who wish it. There are many such "stepping stones" churches can offer: classical music is one of them.

Coming to Christian faith is often a long and complex process involving many steps.

Take Dave, for instance. Though his parents never went to church, his grandmother had a reputation for being "religious" and told him stories of Jesus. At university, he had been intrigued to discover in a history of science course how many of the great scientists were also thoughtful and articulate Christians—Kepler, Newton, Boyle, and Maxwell, for example. When he got a job with an innovative high tech firm, he found that one of his colleagues was a person of quiet but firm Christian faith. They talked sometimes about the historic connection between science and faith, and Sam invited Dave to a lecture by a leading physicist on "Why I am a Christian." Dave found it thought-provoking.

Dave and Sam hung out together sometimes on the weekends. Dave was impressed by Sam's integrity and enjoyed his sense of humour. So, after six months,

when Sam invited him to a Sunday afternoon discussion group about the Bible for young singles who were figuring out their spirituality, Dave was interested to go. Then he checked out Sam's church, to which some of the group also went, on a Sunday when they were doing a jazz mass, and, to his surprise, he liked it. A year later, he decided to be baptized.

Dave, as you may have guessed, is a composite of many people, but I have heard enough stories of this kind to know it is a pattern: a long-term friendship with someone who is genuine in their faith, plus a special event or two, plus plenty of time for reflection and asking questions, some experimentation with church, and then a thoughtful commitment.

This edition of *good idea!* looks at one place where churches often fail to help people who are taking that kind of step towards Christian faith: the special event. (continued on page 2)



Inside:

- **Sundays with Bach at St. John's Anglican Church, Shaughnessy, in Vancouver**
- **The Great Composers Tell a Story at Stone Church in Saint John**
- **New Wycliffe Booklets**
- **New CD's and DVD's**
- **Institute Associates**

Provide Stepping Stones *(continued from page 1)*

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We often assume that if we make our churches friendly enough, and the liturgy contemporary enough, new people will flock in. Well, that may be true for some.

But there are many for whom a regular Sunday service is unlikely to be an accessible door through which they can move towards faith. For Dave, the lecture by the physicist was on a Thursday evening on a local university campus. The Bible study was on a Sunday afternoon, over a glass of wine in a young couple’s apartment. And his first Sunday service was a little out of the ordinary. Each event was a stepping stone on the way, and each was more user-friendly than a “regular” Sunday for a non-churchgoer like Dave.

There are many forms this kind of bridging event can take.

- I know one family who every summer invite their neighbours to watch a thought-provoking current movie on a wide-screen TV in their back yard. Significant conversation about big issues of life and death always follows over hot chocolate.
- Many churches in the past thirty years have invited hockey legend Paul Henderson to be an after-dinner speaker, to talk about his hockey, his life and his faith.
- I recently heard of two clergy in England who have begun running regular discussions about spiritual issues in their local pub: the program is called “Pints of View.”
- And Jenny Andison, in a recent Wycliffe Booklet on Evangelism, *Doors into Faith: Inviting Friends to Join the Big Game*, gives more examples to stimulate our creativity (see page 7).

Future editions of *good idea!* may feature some of these events. This edition, however, examines two churches, one in Eastern Canada and one in the West, who have made classical music just such a stepping stone towards faith. As it happens, both have run their programs in the church and on a Sunday. But in neither case is it in the form of a regular Sunday service. St. John’s Anglican Church, Shaughnessy, in Vancouver, has experimented with performances of Bach Cantatas, which were originally composed to be performed in the context of a church service, with a sermon on the relevant text. And Stone Church in Saint John NB has offered evening concerts of sacred music entitled *The Great Composers Tell a Great Story*, highlighting the Christian narrative that underlies much classical music.

If evangelism is helping people take steps towards faith in Jesus, and if those steps can take several years, we need to be sensitized to how we can help. A lively and welcoming church is often a piece of the puzzle. A friendship with a Christian is usually a key part of the process. But between the friendship and the normal life of the church there is often a great gulf fixed.

Probably the journey to faith will never be an easy one, but the church can at least remove some of the unnecessary difficulties. One way to do that is by creating the sort of stepping stones which special events provide along the way.

John Bowen is Director of the Wycliffe College Institute of Evangelism. He loves classical music.

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Sundays with Bach at St. John's, Shaughnessy

by Jo Ella Eriksen

How many lovers of Bach know that his Cantatas were written for singing in conjunction with a sermon on the same Biblical text? One church decided to introduce music lovers to the original Bach tradition of word and music.

Pauline Hale had an idea. As a choir member at St. John's Anglican Church in Shaughnessy, Vancouver, and an avid concert attender, Pauline had experienced sacred music in church and at concerts. She began to consider how the church might use the wealth of sacred music to extend itself to those people on the outside who already love such music. She thought that we could do more than host concerts in church buildings, and hoped to find a way to invite her concert-going friends into her church community.

While previously in a choir directed by Dr. Mel Unger, Pauline had discovered that Bach's cantatas were particularly well suited for use within church services. In his *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, Unger wrote:

Bach's cantatas were written for church services; thus each related to the theme of the given day within the liturgical

year. The German church cantata was placed between the Gospel reading and the Sermon of the Lutheran liturgy and culminated a long tradition of sermon music that sought to teach and persuade the listener.

Bach's intention in writing his cantatas was to serve the message of the sermon, and his intended audience was the worshipping community. Pauline recognized that early cantatas, most of which are currently performed at concerts, offered the

Those who invited their friends found that the morning spent together led to dynamic conversations about faith and religion over lunch.

church a unique opportunity to return this musical form to its intended context, the church service. At the same time, they could reach an interested audience of concert-goers, while allowing the church to be authentically and boldly Christian.

In the fall of 2003, St. John's launched its first *Sunday with Bach* with the performance of one of Bach's cantatas within its Sunday morning church services. Since the content of the cantata was based on a particular Scripture reading, the liturgy, readings, and the sermon were focused on that Scripture reading. The preacher had the rare opportunity (continued on page 4)

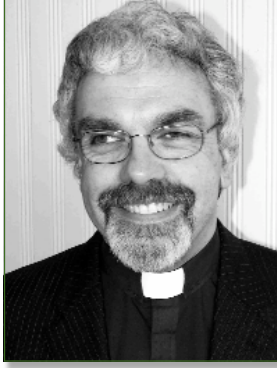
ST. JOHN'S (SHAUGHNESSY) CHURCH - AN INSPIRING MORNING OF MUSIC IN CONTEXT

Sunday morning with Bach
Cantata *Love 51*

Oct 16
9 am & 11 am

Charlotte Kauls is establishing herself as the foremost of Canadian cantatas with her engaging and sensitive performances. She has been invited to sing across the country working with musicians such as: Kenneth Torrey, Robert Cooper, Jean-Francois Monod, Frederic Roussin, and the late Robert Shaw, as well as in Germany with Michael Willing and Martin Sauter. Recent studies include work with Early Music specialist Norma Kelly and internationally acclaimed soprano Edith Wiens. Kauls teaches at the Canadian Conservatory of Music and holds a Master's degree in vocal performance from McGill University.

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- from *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*



The Great Composers Tell a Story at Stone Church, Saint John NB

by David Edwards

Many people enjoy “sacred music” without realizing that each piece represents only a part of the Biblical narrative that underlies it. A church choir in eastern Canada put a number of such pieces together, so that by “joining the dots” they could tell the old, old story in a way it is seldom heard.

In the early 1990s, Canon Robin Gamble, now the Diocesan Missioner for the Diocese of Manchester (England) produced an evangelistic presentation based around the music of the rock band *Queen*, called *The Gospel According to Queen*. The aim of this was not to call people to faith at the end of the evening, but to raise questions in their minds as they were brought up in the lyrics of the songs. Tracks with such titles as *Who Wants to Live Forever?* or *I Want It All* gave scope for the sharing of Gospel ideas.

Fast forward to 2003: I am now the Rector of Stone Church in Saint John, New Brunswick. During our Christmas carol service that year, I sat listening to our *ad hoc* choir and realized that they sounded excellent. This led me to ask a question: is there a way of using this skill in evangelism? After some thought, I spoke to our Musical

Director, Marilyn Williams, and floated the idea of *The Great Composers Tell a Great Story*.

Essentially this is a choral evening which tells the story of the Biblical narrative through choral works. We began with creation and made our way through to the second coming,

each part of the story illustrated by a different piece of choral music. Obviously, there are some parts of the story which have more material written about them than others—Easter for example—but the others do exist if one looks hard enough. Between the musical works we placed a narration to explain where the particular item fitted into the story.

During 2005 we developed a second project for which we stole the title *One Solitary Life*. This followed the same pattern, but this time explored the life of Jesus through choral works, and narrated his story using the music as a basis.

Each of the performances ran for about 90 minutes, including a 15 minute break. In addition to the music, we produced a printed program containing a short explanation of the Gospel, based around a musical theme.

The question has been asked: what do we do in 2006? The plan right now is to work with our local Shakespeare Festival to produce an Elizabethan Service of Evening Prayer based around Cranmer’s early prayer books. This will include *(continued on page 6)*



“One Solitary Life”... explored the life of Jesus through choral works, and narrated his message using the music as a basis.

Great Composers Tell a Story *(continued from page 5)*

some period choral works and I hope either to write or borrow (maybe from Cranmer, Donne or Baxter) an appropriate sermon for the event.

Here are the choral pieces we used for *The Great Composers Tell a Great Story* (bear in mind that there is a narration before each piece):

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) From Haydn's <i>Creation</i> | "In the Beginning" |
| 2) From Haydn's <i>Creation</i> | "In Splendour Bright" |
| 3) From Haydn's <i>Creation</i> | "The Heavens Are Telling" |
| 4) Vivaldi | "Laudamus Te" |
| 5) S.S. Wesley | "Lead Me, Lord" |
| 6) Mendelssohn | "Lift Thine Eyes" |
| 7) Pachelbel/Hopson | "Canon of Praise" |
| 8) J.S. Bach | "Sleepers Wake" |
| 9) F. Gruber | "Stille Nacht" |
| 10) Tallis | "If Ye Love Me" |
| 11) Handel | "He Was Despised" |
| 12) Handel | "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" |
| 13) Stainer | "God So Loved the World" |
| 14) Weatherly/Adams | "The Holy City" |
| 15) Beethoven | "The Heavens Are Declaring" |



The intention of these events is not necessarily to see people come to faith in Jesus during that evening. The aim is rather to present ideas in order that people might think about the Gospel message expressed in terms that they can relate to. The next step would be to link the evening to an Alpha Program or another such enquirers' group.

The Rev. Dr. David Edwards is Rector of Stone Church in Saint John NB, and Principal of Taylor College, the Church Army Training College.

Sources of Resources

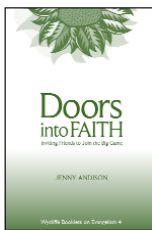
New Wycliffe College Booklets on Evangelism

The Institute of Evangelism has begun a new series of booklets entitled The Wycliffe Booklets on Evangelism. The series offers practical help to clergy and lay leaders in various aspects of parish-based evangelism. Each offers biblical and theological reflection as well as practical suggestions by writers experienced in their field. They are short (20-25 pages), practical, and biblical.

The three original titles are still available:

Preaching the Church's Mission: Sermons Towards Self-Understanding by John Bowen
Just the Basics: Teaching Christian Faith to Beginners by Harold Percy and John Bowen
Unwrapping all our Gifts: A Neglected Key to Evangelism by Judy Paulsen

Three new titles have recently been published:

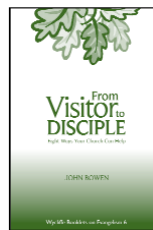


#4 Doors into Faith: *Inviting Friends to Join the Big Game*

by Jenny Andison

Those who have been in church a long time cannot imagine how intimidating the first encounter with church can be for those who have never tried it before. Using

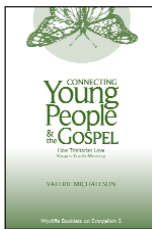
the analogy of a sports fan who invites an inexperienced friend to their first game, Jenny Andison suggests a range of user-friendly activities a church can offer to enable friends to begin to move towards personal faith.



#6 From Visitor to Disciple: *Eight Ways Your Church Can Help* by John Bowen

Most churches identify themselves as friendly communities. Yet the experience of a first-time visitor is often one of confusion,

embarrassment and even alienation. John Bowen helps us think through the steps by which we can make that first visit a positive one, so that a visitor will feel confidence to return, to explore the reality of faith, and to move towards discipleship.



#5 Connecting Young People and the Gospel: *How Tritinarian Love Shapes Youth Ministry*

by Valerie Michaelson

The key to good youth ministry is movie and pizza nights, right? Wrong! Val Michaelson writes out of extensive experience of youth

ministry in British Columbia and Ontario to help us understand who today's young people are, and how they can be nurtured in faith. Weaving together theological conviction and practical recommendations, this booklet will be a welcome resource, both for youth workers themselves and for congregations just beginning to think about youth ministry.

To order any or all of these titles, contact Lida at the college, by phone at (416) 946-3535 or by email at wycliffe.college@utoronto.ca. The booklets are also available at Crux, the College bookstore. The price is \$5, plus tax and postage.

You can also ask Lida to put you on the list which will ensure that you receive each new title automatically as it is published.

New from the Institute: Wycliffe Media

Evangelism as Dance—a 20 minute talk by Brian McLaren, given at the Institute fund-raising dinner in April 2006. CD: \$10.

Evangelism as a Ministry of the Whole People of God—a 25 minute introduction to evangelism as process, by John Bowen. DVD: \$15.

Are the Chronicles of Narnia an Evangelistic Text?—a 40 minute talk by John Bowen, originally given at Calvin Seminary, Grand Rapids MI. CD: \$10.

To order any of these, contact Lida at (416) 946-3535, or at wycliffe.college@utoronto.ca.

*“Not the last word on any subject,
but often the first.”*



Sources of Resources

Institute Associates

Last year, the Institute introduced what we think is our most exciting resource, the Institute Associates. These are congregational leaders from across the country with a track record of effective ministry in some area of revitalization and evangelism. The Institute is publicizing their giftedness and availability so that they can be a resource for other congregations.

The original five Associates have now been joined by four new ones. Associates are available for events such as:

- Diocesan or Area Conferences
- Ecumenical groups
- Regional Ministry Days
- Deanery gatherings
- Retreats

The first five, and their areas of specialization, are:

Tim Chesterton (Edmonton AB):	Teaching the Faith to Seekers
Ed Dallow (Kingston ON):	Welcoming and Integrating Newcomers
Connie Den Bok (Etobicoke ON):	How to Help Churches Grow
Judy Paulsen (Oshawa ON):	Leadership and Congregational Turnaround
George Porter (Fredericton NB):	Training for Youth Workers

To their number are now added:

David Reed (Toronto ON):
Assessing your Congregation for Growth

After leading a congregation in Connecticut into renewal and growth for thirteen years, David became Professor of Pastoral Theology at Wycliffe College in 1987. Now retired, he brings a wealth of experience of congregations of different sizes and in various states of health.

John van Sloten (Calgary AB):
Preaching from the Culture

John was the founding pastor of New Hope Christian Reformed Church in Calgary AB ten years ago. There (among other ministries) he has pioneered preaching “from the culture”, including rock music, movies, and current issues.

Glenn Gibson (Kitchener ON):
Church Revitalization

After planting several churches under the auspices of the Evangelical Missionary Church, Glenn joined the staff of Outreach Canada in 1998, and has developed a strong reputation as a congregational consultant across a wide range of denominations.

Wendy Moore (Lakefield ON):
Mobilising Lay Ministry

Wendy is in her second rural parish, and has a track record of encouraging and training lay people in ministry, with resultant significant growth in the congregation.

To invite an Associate to your area, or if you have questions about the program, please contact the **Rev. Nicole Poitras**, the Project Manager. She can be reached at: (705) 524-2376, or by email at: **npoitrasca@yahoo.ca**. There is also information on the College website at **wycliffecollege.ca**.

Praise for Associates' Work

Participants at a recent seminar led by an Institute Associate wrote:

- So helpful! Grounded, informative, well researched, and set in congregational reality.
- Very helpful and inspiring. The time flew by.
- This was the practical info I have always looked for.
- Wonderful, fascinating, clear, thoughtful.
- High point of my week. Something to unpack, reflect on, and implement.
- Outstanding presentation and content.

good idea! online

If you would like to read past editions of *good idea!* online, go to the college website, wycliffecollege.ca, and follow the links for the Institute of Evangelism.

If you would like to read new editions of *good idea!* online instead of receiving them by mail, please email Penny at wycliffe.development@utoronto.ca.

