

Making the Most With What You've Got
—Turning amateur works into
something worthy of print

Canadian Church Press Workshop

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My process:

- Read through once, looking for tone, obvious grammar or factual errors, holes in story, see if writer captured the angle I was looking for or uncovered a new, more significant or important lead.
- Rewrite lead to either: tighten it up or raise a buried lead.
- Bring voices—direct or indirect quotes—up to the front of story to support lead
- Reflow story to follow lead.
- Check to see if inverted pyramid has been followed.

Presbyterian church leaves denomination (December 2007)

Original submitted copy

Connexus Community Church, with soon-to-be sites in Barrie and Orillia, is preparing for a December launch, with up to 1,400 worshippers.

Connexus is composed of most of the members and adherents of Trinity Community Church of Oro, until now, one of the Presbyterian Church of Canada's (PCC) largest congregations

In 1995, Carey Niewhof, 42, a lawyer-cum-minister, took on the pastorate of three struggling Oro area Presbyterian churches, between Barrie and Orillia.

In 2000, the churches consolidated into one new building, valued at \$1.6 million.

Among the issues intertwined in the Connexus story are:

- Niewhof and the church's leadership wanted Trinity to be "a church for people who are not into church."
- Many of the church's participants were travelling one to two hours each way, for Sunday worship. The church draws from Toronto to North Bay on a north-south axis.

Seeking experience in developing multi-site centres, the Trinity leadership affiliated with North Point Ministries (NPM) of Atlanta, Georgia. NPM is an outgrowth of North Point Church, a multi-site megachurch pastored by Andy Stanley, a former Southern Baptist minister. (Stanley is son of Charles Stanley, preacher on the *In Touch* television ministry.)

Trinity has grown more quickly than even Niewhof might have expected. And to have checked that growth as an accommodation to the denomination would, in his view, not have been right.

Lifelong Presbyterian Peggy Fitch backs Nieuwhof and, with husband Bill, has been volunteering on Connexus' prayer and missions aspects.

Fitch notes: "I was – and am – sorry that we are leaving the Presbyterian church, because Trinity has been like a breath of fresh air in the denomination." As it happens, Bill Fitch is the son of the late and revered William Fitch, who was minister of historic Knox Church in Toronto from 1955 to 1972.

But Fitch says, in effect, that was then and this is now.

She points out that the Nieuwhof leadership has brought "creative teaching, an attractive atmosphere for non-Christians and an inspiring fit".

Andrew Wagner-Chazalon, a Bracebridge resident and editor of Metroland's *Beyond the City* magazine, speaks of the church's "culture of excellence". He and his wife, Sharon, and their three children, look forward to the startup of a Bracebridge site in 2008.

At press time, Hans Kouwenberg, moderator of the Presbyterian general assembly was planning to meet soon with Nieuwhof.

Multi-site churches have not been on the PCC radar screen, he suggests. “But we have many regional churches, which draw worshippers from long distances.”

For now, the Barrie presbytery has delayed action on a Connexus offer to purchase the Oro church. Some 50 members staying behind may try to keep an Oro Presbyterian church alive.

And Connexus will spend November training some 450 volunteers to occupy rented worship sites in Barrie and Orillia theatres.

First revision

1. Tightened it up a bit and focused more on the PCC
2. Corrected obvious error: Presbyterian Church **in** Canada, not “of”
3. Rewrote to get rid of bullet points
4. Brought up quotes to give story colour.

ORO, ON—Connexus Community Church has severed its Presbyterian Church in Canada (2) ties to develop a multi-site congregation. (1)

Connexus, composed of most of the members and adherents of Trinity Community Church of Oro, was one of the PCC’s largest congregations. This month it launches sites in Barrie and Orillia to serve up to 1,400 worshippers.

Lifelong Presbyterian Peggy Fitch backs pastor Carey Nieuwhof and, with husband Bill, has been volunteering on Connexus’ prayer and missions aspects.

“I was—and am—sorry we’re leaving the Presbyterian church, because Trinity has been like a breath of fresh air in the denomination,” says Fitch, whose husband is the son of the late and revered William Fitch, a minister at historic Knox Church in Toronto from 1955 to 1972.

But Fitch says, that was then and this is now. (4)

Nieuwhof left law to become a pastor and took on the pastorate of three struggling Presbyterian churches in the Oro area, between Barrie and Orillia in 1995. In 2000, the churches consolidated into one new building, valued at \$1.6 million.

Among the reasons for Connexus’ latest decision include Nieuwhof’s and the church leadership’s desire for Trinity to be “a church for people who aren’t into church.” Also a factor is the drive some church participants make to attend Connexus. Many travel one to two hours each way, with the church drawing from Toronto to North Bay on a north-south axis. (3)

The Trinity leadership became affiliated with North Point Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia to learn how to develop a multi-site centre. The ministry is an outgrowth of North Point Church, a multi-site megachurch pastored by Andy Stanley, son of Charles Stanley, of the *In Touch* radio and television ministry.

Trinity’s grown more quickly than even Nieuwhof expected. To have checked that growth to accommodate the denomination wouldn’t have been right, he says.

Fitch points out the Nieuwhof leadership has brought “creative teaching, an attractive atmosphere for non-Christians and an inspiring fit.”

Andrew Wagner-Chazalon, a Bracebridge resident and editor of Metroland’s *Beyond the City* magazine, speaks of the church’s “culture of excellence.” He and his wife, Sharon, and their three children, look forward to the startup of a Bracebridge site in 2008.

At press time, PCC moderator Hans Kouwenberg, planned to meet with Nieuwhof.

Multi-site churches haven’t been on the PCC radar screen, he suggests.

“But we have many regional churches, which draw worshippers from long distances,” says Kouwneberg.

For now, the Barrie presbytery has delayed a decision on Connexus’ offer to purchase the Oro church. Some 50 members staying behind may try to keep an Oro Presbyterian church alive.

Connexus spent November training some 450 volunteers to occupy rented worship sites in Barrie and Orillia theatres.

Second revision

1. Tightened lead up further
2. Switched more significant information about decisions to leave denomination and “colour” quotes
3. Asked for more information, specifically from denomination

ORO, ON—A growing Presbyterian church has severed its ties with the denomination to develop a multi-site congregation. (1)

Trinity Community Church in Oro was one of the PCC’s largest congregations. With decision to leave the denomination, the church has renamed itself Connexus and is composed of Trinity, now Connexus, pastor Carey Nieuwhof, along with most of the members and adherents of Trinity.

Nieuwhof resigned both the Trinity pastorate and as a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Canada at the end of October, in order to pastor Connexus. His associate at Trinity, Patrick Voo, also resigned but remains a PCC minister.

This month it launches sites in Barrie and Orillia to serve up to 1,400 worshippers. About 50 members of Trinity may stay with the PCC to try to keep an Oro Presbyterian church alive.

A few issues factored into the decision. First, under its current policies, the PCC isn’t able to allow a single congregation to be part of more than one presbytery. In a *Presbyterian Record* article, presbytery clerk Jim Sitler suggested study and input from the denomination would be needed before a change in this policy could be considered. (3)

Church leadership and Nieuwhof also wanted to quickly move outside denominational strictures to model Connexus as “a church for people who aren’t into church.”

The final factor is the drive some church participants make to attend Connexus in Oro. Many travel one to two hours each way, with the church drawing from Toronto to North Bay on a north-south axis. (2)

Lifelong Presbyterian Peggy Fitch backs Nieuwhof’s decision to leave the denomination and, with husband Bill, has been volunteering on Connexus’ prayer and missions aspects.

“I was—and am—sorry we’re leaving the Presbyterian church, because Trinity has been like a breath of fresh air in the denomination,” says Fitch, whose husband is the son of the late and revered William Fitch, a minister at historic Knox Church in Toronto from 1955 to 1972.

But Fitch says, that was then and this is now. (2)

Nieuwhof left law to become a pastor and took on the pastorate of three struggling Presbyterian churches in the Oro area, between Barrie and Orillia in 1995. In 2000, the churches consolidated into Trinity Community Church and one new building, valued at \$1.6 million.

The Trinity leadership then became affiliated with North Point Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia to learn how to develop a multi-site centre. The ministry is an outgrowth of North Point Church, a multi-site megachurch pastored by Andy Stanley, son of Charles Stanley, of the *In Touch* radio and television ministry.

Trinity's grown more quickly than even Nieuwhof expected. To have checked that growth to accommodate the denomination wouldn't have been right, he says.

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"But we have many regional churches, which draw worshippers from long distances," says Kouwneberg.

For now, the Barrie presbytery has delayed a decision on Connexus' offer to purchase the Oro church.

Connexus spent November training some 450 volunteers to occupy rented worship sites in Barrie and Orillia theatres.

Volunteers at Jesus parade (September 2006)

Original submitted copy

Reverend Ayanna Solomon doesn't hesitate when asked how she got the idea to bring Jesus into the heart of Toronto. "The Lord spoke to my heart while I was still studying at World Impact Bible Institute in St.Catharines."

To bring praise and worship into the public domain, she gathered an ecumenical group. "A parade with the creative use of music and the arts in worship seemed to be the best way to bring Jesus to a diffident public. All our floats have either live bands or recorded music on them, and the participants, whether walking or riding floats, dance.

A parade - March for Jesus - held in Toronto for ten years had ceased. The city was open for another venture. Solomon's committee plans were ambitious. "We decided to present all sixty-six books of the Bible. Everything from Genesis to Revelations. Last year -our eighth parade - we had 24 floats representing over a third of the Bible. There's a modest entry charge for each float. The remaining Biblical books are represented by banners."

Toronto area churches gave strong support to the concept of a "Jesus in the City" parade. Before she knew it, hundreds of volunteers with 1500 people participated in the first parade. "I believe the entire project is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It will continue as long as God wants it to." That heavenly support remains, judging from the increase in volunteers and 23,000 spectators at the last few years' parades.

Volunteers are involved in everything from float construction to clean up. Maureen Emanuel chuckles recalling her involvement: "Six years ago, I was recruited to sew fifteen biblical costumes. When I delivered them, I was told some other hadn't made theirs. Before I knew it, I was put in charge. I'm still at it." Why does she do it? "It's important to bring the church to the street. In order to touch people, you have to get out of the church. I watched the character depicting Moses walk down Yonge Street carrying the two tablets. When I heard the crowd chanting Moses, Moses, I knew we'd connected with the spectators."

Jesus in the City parade begins with a rally at 12 noon, Sept. 9th at Queen's Park, with the parade starting at 1.30 pm. Get your dancing shoes on and be a part of bringing Jesus into Toronto. (For information contact www.jesusinthecity.com)

Revision

1. Rewrote buried lead
2. Reflowed copy to follow lead
3. Tightened up copy, cutting unneeded wording
4. Reflowed to inverted pyramid style
5. Edited to CP Style

TORONTO—When the first Jesus in the City parade was held, Maureen Emanuel was asked to sew 15 (5) biblical costumes. (1)

“When I delivered them, I was told some others hadn’t made theirs. Before I knew it, I was put in charge,” says Emanuel. “I’m still at it.”

Hundreds of volunteers were recruited that first year, and 1,500 people participated in the march, the idea of Ayanna Solomon.

The March for Jesus, which had been held in Toronto for seven years, had ceased. While at bible college “the Lord spoke to my heart,” says Solomon, who sensed the city was open for another venture. She came forward with ambitious plans and, with strong support from area churches, Jesus in the City was birthed. (2) (3)

“A parade with the creative use of music and the arts in worship seemed to be the best way to bring Jesus to a diffident public,” says Solomon. “All our floats have either live gospel bands or recorded music on them. Participants whether walking or riding floats, dance.”

That first year the Jesus in the City parade presented all 66 (5) books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

“Last year—our eighth parade—we had 24 floats representing over a third of the Bible,” says Solomon. “The remaining Biblical books are represented by banners.”

The number of volunteers, involved in everything from float construction to clean up, has increased since its beginning. An estimated 23,000 people watched the parade last year.

Emanuel sees Jesus in the City as a way of bringing the church to the street.

“In order to touch people, you have to get out of the church,” Emanuel says. “I watched the character depicting Moses walk down Yonge Street carrying the two tablets. When I heard the crowd chanting Moses, Moses, I knew we’d connected with the spectators.” (4)

Jesus in the City parade begins with a rally at 12 noon, September 9 at Queen’s Park, the parade starts at 1.30 pm. For information see www.jesusinthecity.com.