

2023 Wesley Studies Day, Tyndale Seminary in Toronto

On April 25, Tyndale Seminary in Toronto held its annual Wesley Studies symposium. The theme this year was “Heritage and Hope: Wesleyan Wisdom for the Future of Ministry.” It was the best attended since 2009, when the symposium was launched. One hundred attended in person, and about fifty online.

All the presentations will be made publicly available in the coming weeks on the Symposium website <https://www.tyndale.ca/seminary/wesley-studies/annual-symposium>

The day featured two keynote speeches. The first was by Victor Shepherd, ThD, the first occupant of the Donald N. and Kathleen G. Bastian Chair of Wesley Studies, lodged at Tyndale. The second was by the second occupant, Howard Snyder, PhD. The day was ably organized and hosted by the current occupant, James Pedlar, PhD.

Shepherd’s keynote was entitled “The Chair of Wesley Studies: Its Birth Pangs at Tyndale, Its Unapologetic Contribution of Theological Riches, Its Full Flowering in a World God Refuses to Forsake.” And it was presented with Shepherd’s trademark verve and good humor. An audio file of his address can be found here.

<https://www.tyndale.ca/sites/default/files/2023-04/Symposium23VictorShepherd.mp3>

Shepherd “took on” the view, found here and there in evangelicalism, that John Wesley is somehow less substantial than some other giants of the faith. In response, Shepherd in his paper contextualizes the life and times of the Wesleys. He documents Wesley’s brilliance and accomplishments. And he includes inspiring anecdotes of Wesley’s faith in action, e.g., his going door-to-door in terrible weather at age eighty-one, to solicit money for the poor, at a time (the 1700s) when there was no societal safety net.

Howard Snyder’s very fine and creative address, “Unlikely Twins: Francis of Assisi and John Wesley—Implications for Pastoral Ministry Today,” may be found here <https://www.tyndale.ca/sites/default/files/2023->

[04/Symposium23HowardSnyder.mp3](#) Snyder speaks of twelve similarities between the thirteenth-century friar and the eighteenth-century Oxford scholar. He says, however, that the overarching similarity is that both were transformed by Jesus' call to become ministers of the gospel. And their primary concept of ministry, from Scripture, was faith working through love for the benefit of the poor.

The seminary hosted a fine dinner at the end of the day to mark the thirty-year anniversary of the Bastian Chair. There were presentations by Pedlar, Shepherd, and Snyder, and by the president of Tyndale University, Dr. Marjory Kerr.

Representatives from the denominations that crucially support the chair – the Free Methodist Church in Canada, Nazarene, and Wesleyan churches and the Salvation Army – were also in attendance.

Bishop Emeritus Donald N. Bastian and his wife, Kathleen, attended, showing their ongoing engagement and interest in the Kingdom despite their advanced ages of ninety-seven. The Bastian family was represented as well by three of their children and their spouses, and by six grandchildren.

In his thank-you comments, the Bastians' son Robert Bastian, MD, said the entire Bastian family has a fond wish for Wesley scholarship in perpetuity that is tied to Scripture, history, and orthodoxy, and free from the enticements of novelty and contemporary culture. He said that the family's prayer is that attention to Wesley studies will always be for the purpose of furthering the Gospel and magnifying praising Christ the Lord.