



Evan Garst

Introduction

I am happy and honoured to introduce myself to you as a Bishop Nominee. I am an Ordained Minister with 25 years of ministry experience. Over those years I have been committed to planting and pastoring churches that are centered on Jesus, inviting people to become fully devoted followers of him, and to express the love, grace and goodness of God in their neighbourhood settings. I believe the church is at its best when it embodies what I call “Wesley’s Genius”: *a radical commitment to Christian Orthodoxy that expresses itself in creative organization of disciple-making and mission strategies in our culture and time.* John Wesley was committed to faith in Jesus Christ and providing individuals every opportunity to experience the sanctifying work of God through culturally appropriate models of discipleship and kingdom mission.

This vision and genius inspire me and is the foundation of my sense of calling to serve as Bishop. We live in a culture that has changed significantly over the last 70 years and the church is facing challenges as a result. I believe that our Free Methodist values and practices provide us with everything we need to navigate the challenges of our time and I’m looking forward to the opportunity to serve and lead our national church in this effort.

Our vision is to provide healthy churches within reach of all Canadians and beyond. The health and vitality of our churches rests on the health and vitality of our pastors and lay leaders. All of our leaders, Bishop, NLT, BOA, SCOD, Network Leaders and the administration team, need to inspire, support, encourage, coach and equip our pastors and lay leaders, providing them with every opportunity to minister effectively in our increasingly secular culture.

I am excited about the opportunity to lead the FMCiC in our ongoing mission to be a movement of Free Methodists that embodies our Free Methodist values, amplifies Jesus shaped character through our Means of Grace, and relies on the leading of the Holy Spirit in our discipleship and mission.

Experience

In 2009 I, along with my wife and a small team of 14 people, planted Una Church in Kitchener, ON. We were excited to join the Free Methodist Church in Canada. Our movement offered tremendous support, coaching and encouragement to us as we followed God’s call to start a new church. It was a special day when our church was accepted into the Free Methodist family as a Society. I continue to pastor at Una and have witnessed God’s presence and grace among us over the past 15 years.

My love and commitment to the FMCiC have grown more and more since joining our movement in 2009. I have had the privilege and honour to serve in a variety of roles. I have served as a Network Leader, which provided the opportunity to learn from capable and passionate leaders within our movement and also

contribute to the ongoing work of faithfully following Jesus as a movement and support our pastors and local churches in the mission of God.

I served as a Church Plant Coach for many years. It was so rewarding to sit with individuals and teams who had a vision and passion to see God do something new and unique in their location. Throughout the history of the church, God has called individuals to launch fresh expressions of the kingdom and I am thrilled that the FMCiC has a standing commitment to follow the Spirit of God as he inspires and gifts individuals to create new opportunities for people to discover who Jesus is and follow him as leader and Lord.

In more recent years I have enjoyed serving as a member of the Leadership Development Executive Team. This is a great team of people, working with the Director of Leadership Development. We developed a fresh vision and strategy for supporting young leaders and pastors within our movement through Internships. We have worked closely with the Lorne Park Foundation in order to ensure that the financial support that we offer to local churches and interns is being managed and used wisely. We were recently tasked with providing oversight of our Ministers Conferences and are currently developing a plan to offer dynamic, meaningful and formative conferences for our pastors and leaders.

Prior to joining the FMCiC I served as an Associate Pastor of Worship and Student Ministries at a church in Cambridge. This was a church that also started as a church plant and grew to become a church of 500 people with a multi-staffed team.

While planting UNA Church I spent many years working bi-vocationally as a Youth Care Worker and Chaplain for Ray of Hope, a Christian organization that operates youth custody facilities, community support programs and a drop-in centre for people who live on the street.

My ministry experience also includes international and cross-cultural ministry. My family lived in Ethiopia for a year and I learned so much as I watched missionaries serve Jesus faithfully in a culture that was unique and different from their own. I observed the grace and power of God as the Spirit moves in different cultures. The world-wide church is a beautiful thing. I'm glad that the FMCiC is a part of a global movement of Free Methodist churches. Our unity in Christ is a wonderful expression of God's power and goodness. I also believe that our connection to the worldwide church strengthens us as a Canadian national church. Together we learn and grow as together we submit to Jesus and one another.

Education

My formal education started at Emmanuel Bible College in Kitchener in the Pastoral Studies program. Ever since I have been committed to ongoing study and development, taking advantage of multiple learning venues and platforms. This included Learning Retreats with David Fitch (B. R. Lindner Chair of Evangelical Theology at Northern Seminary), Andrew Root (Olson Baalson Professor of Youth and Family Ministry at Luther Seminary), Willow Creek Leadership Summit, Missio Alliance, and others. I have been certified as a Grip-Birkman Coach and have a Certification as a Personal and Professional Coach through Transformational Coaching Canada.

Family

I have been married to Jennifer for 27 years. We have two adult children. Mikayla is our oldest. She is 24 years old and married to Joshua Hall. Seth is our youngest. He is 21 years old and is preparing to be an electrician. Jennifer has been a true partner in ministry with me over the years and she is excited about the ministry possibilities of my serving as Bishop.