# The Changing Landscape of Denominational Christianity in Canada, 1980-2020

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This essay provides a preliminary overview of the changing landscape of denominational Christianity in Canada since 1980. It is based on a compilation of data and observations drawn from research done, in part, to help Statistics Canada overhaul the response list for the religious affiliation question in the upcoming 2021 census. In compiling a comprehensive list of denominations in Canada, it became clear that the denominational configuration of Canadian Christianity has taken a kaleidoscopic turn in the last forty years. The total number of denominations in Canada now exceeds 340, an increase of more than 120 denominations since 1980. More than sixty-five new denominations were organized in Canada during the last two decades of the twentieth century, and more than fifty-five since the turn of the century. The additions occur within Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

My interest in mapping the denominational landscape in Canada began more than fifteen years ago, when I first worked at compiling a comprehensive list of Protestant denominations in Canada together with an organization called Outreach Canada. The primary goal was to gather membership and attendance information that could be placed alongside census affiliation data for the twenty-year period including the 1981, 1991, and 2001 census years. The goal was to provide a more accurate picture of the diversity within Protestant Christianity than was possible to obtain from census affiliation data, and to use denominational distinctions to provide a more nuanced supplement to the religious participation data collected by Statistics Canada in the General Social Surveys, by sociolo-

gists such as Reginald Bibby, and the more general thematic approaches to the study of religion that have become increasingly common.

Studying denominations is a way (not the only way) of making the diversity that is present in Christianity more visible, and it is a way (not the only way) to offer nuances that make broader themes and trends more understandable. As the distinctions differentiating denominations have become more porous, it has also become common to hear people declare the demise of denominationalism. The substantial increase in the number and diversity of denominations during the last forty years does not support such a verdict, but points rather towards the way denominationalism continues to change, not disappear.[1] The vast majority of Christians practice their faith in congregations that are connected in some way to larger organizational bodies; in my research I use the label "denomination" as a broad category to describe a range of ways by which groups of congregations organize units to serve, support or have authority over congregations. The most common form of denomination is a large group of congregations united by a common faith and name, organized under a single administrative and legal hierarchy.[2] Without giving some attention to the organizational structures that contribute to a sense of identity, that often define beliefs and convictions, and that guide the expression of priorities and practices, it is not possible to understand fully the diversity among Christians in Canada (and elsewhere). This is true of even the many so-called independent mega churches whose charismatic leaders sometimes decry denominations, but are often part of networks and associations that organize events, produce publications and media products (for example, Willow Creek Association). Even though organizational structures may not be as tactile an artifact as prayerbooks or as visible as the architectural aesthetics of a building, they are every bit as much a part of the "material culture" of Christianity, and are a vital part of the complex interplay between religious beliefs and the visible manifestation of religion.[3]

A move into academic administration in 2011 prevented me from doing much with the membership and attendance data I had initially collected, although it was used by organizations like Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and some of it was incorporated into a chapter in *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, and in Brian Clarke and Stuart Macdonald's recent book *Leaving Christianity*.[4] When the invitation came to contribute to Statistics Canada's efforts to overhaul the list of options that were being used to sort the responses received from Canadians in

response to the religious affiliation question in previous census questionnaires, I thought that updating my list of denominations in Canada might be a helpful way to contribute.[5] The revised 2021 list of responses will increase the number of response options from 108 to about 280. While this change might not reach Holiness movement standards of sanctified perfection in that not every denomination will be included, this "second work of grace" on the part of Statistics Canada should ensure that census data provides a much more nuanced depiction of the religious demographics in Canadian society.[6] As for updating my list of denominations in Canada – that turned into a much bigger project than I had imagined, and resulted in some adjustments to my earlier approach to classifying denominations. The compiled list now makes it possible to update the initial membership and attendance data by both extending the denominational range and gathering membership and attendance data for the 2011 and 2021 census years, which would make it possible to do forty-year longitudinal studies. The goal of updating membership and attendance data still awaits to be completed, so this paper is a preliminary glimpse into a work in progress.[7] While there are many changes worth noting, one of the most significant is the way Canadian Christianity has become ever more culturally diverse, and how it has become a crucible of global Christianity reflecting changes taking places in other parts of the world. These recent changes in the denominational demographics represent a new chapter in Canadian Christianity.

### *Overview of Denominational Categories and Sub-Classifications*

Before looking at some of the major factors that have contributed to the recent proliferation and diversification of denominations, I will offer a macro overview of the eleven denominational categories and sixty-plus sub-classifications that I am using,[8] along with several brief observations regarding the most significant changes that have taken place in each category. Each category is its own story, and deserves far more explanation than is possible here; the goal here is simply to present the aggregate totals to provide a high level, comprehensive overview of the changing denominational landscape in Canada. It is important to note that an increase in the number of denominations is ***not*** necessarily an indicator of overall numerical growth. I will include a count of the number of congregations that are a part of each denominational classification, which provides a preliminary sense of proportion, but this does not provide the

same kind of picture as membership and/or attendance data.

**1. Anabaptist**

The forty-five denominations with connections to the Anabaptist tradition, some of which have been present in Canada since the late 1700s, can be divided into six sub-classifications.[9] The most significant denominational additions have taken place among the more culturally conservative Mennonite groups, partly due to immigration and partly due to schisms from other Mennonite denominations that are culturally integrated. Notable also is the cultural diversification that is taking place within some Mennonite denominations (e.g., the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches added twenty-five Chinese congregations in British Columbia during the past forty years).

**2. Anglican**

Present in Canada since the late 1500s the Anglican tradition has a longstanding reputation for managing considerable internal diversity and avoiding frequent schisms. In addition to an ongoing decline in membership, in recent decades the Anglican Church of Canada has experienced fragmentation which spawned a cluster of new Anglican groups, the largest of which are now a part of the Anglican Church in North America.

**3. Baptist**

There has always been a direct correlation between the strong emphasis on congregational autonomy among Baptists and the number of Baptist "denominations" or "fellowships" in Canada. While it has been common to talk about the five major Baptist "families" in Canada, this overshadows the fact that there are almost a dozen additional strands that have been a persistent part of the Baptist tradition in Canada.[10] One of the more significant recent shifts is the emergence of five new Baptist groups with a strong neo-reformed theological emphasis.

**4. Catholic**

By far the most prominent expression of Catholicism in Canada has been, and continues to be, the Roman Catholic Church. During the last

forty years there has been an influx of more than ten Eastern Catholic traditions from eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Some of these parishes are extensions of a Catholic eparchy headquartered in other countries; in some instances a Canadian eparchy has been organized (e.g., Melkite Greek Catholic Church, and the Maronite Catholic Church). This influx of Eastern Catholic groups has added to the considerable cultural diversity that is already present within the Roman Catholic Church. Of interest also in this category is the formation of several Catholic groups using the Old Catholic tradition to establish their apostolic validity.

**5. Lutheran**

The Lutheran category represents a theological tradition that has also been present in Canada since the mid-1700s. Despite some division driven by theological conflict that has resulted in the formation of several new Lutheran denominations and networks (e.g., the Canadian Association of Lutheran Churches, and the North American Lutheran Church), this category is notable for its relative stability during the last forty years.

**6. Methodist / Wesleyan (Holiness Movement)**

Like the previous category, the Holiness movement represents a long established presence within Canada, and its various denominations have experienced relative stability during the last forty years. Particularly notable is the establishment of several new Korean Methodist bodies in Canada, and the organization of an association of nearly 100 Chinese churches within the Christian and Missionary Alliance (according to Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association, 2020).

**7. Orthodox**

Given the historic relationship between the Orthodox tradition and particular nationalities, this category has long been known for its cultural diversity in Canada. Notable is the recent influx of additional Eastern and Oriental Orthodox traditions from eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, which has increased significantly both the variety and numbers of Orthodox Christians in Canada.

**8. Pentecostal / Charismatic**

The number and rapidly-changing diversity, as well as the lack of consensus among scholars about the best way to classify Pentecostal groups, makes this category a particularly daunting challenge.[11] The number of Pentecostal groups in Canada has doubled since 1980, and it has also become significantly more culturally and theologically diverse. Notable also are several aggressive church-planting initiatives (for example, Victory Churches of Canada), numerous personality-driven initiatives, and the emergence of several associations connecting independent Pentecostal congregations (for example, Association of Faith Churches and Ministers Canada).

**9. Presbyterian / Reformed**

This category represents a long established presence within Canada made up of two theologically related denominational clusters. A significant development among Presbyterians has been the formation and growth of several Korean Presbyterian denominations (the Korean American Presbyterian Church, and the Korean Presbyterian Churches Abroad). Within the Reformed tradition, notable has been the formation of the United Reformed Churches in North America in the mid-1990s as many disgruntled congregations left the Christian Reformed Church to create a federative unity that was later extended to theologically conservative congregations in other Reformed as well as Presbyterian denominations.

**10. Other Protestant**

This category is a collection of more than fifty groups that do not fit easily within any other Protestant category. The most significant change in this category is the emergence of more than a dozen new evangelical Protestant denominations. Some are extensions of American evangelical groups (for example, the neo-reformed Acts 29, and Grace Fellowship Canada); others are extensions of denominations from countries such as China (for example, the Association of Christian Evangelical Ministers) and Ethiopia (for example, United Oromo Evangelical Churches); and still others are associations of new congregations (for example, Global Christian Ministry Forum).

**11. Non-Trinitarian**

The final category is a collection of approximately thirty different groups that do not fit easily into the other categories. One of the few things they all have in common is that they do not affirm the creedal doctrine of the Trinity. The most notable change in this category includes the major fragmentation within what was once known as the Worldwide Church of God, a restorationist group started by radio and televangelist Herbert W. Armstrong in the 1930s, during the 1990s when leaders intentionally moved theologically in a more evangelical Protestant direction.[12]

| ***General Category*** | ***Sub-Classification*** | ***1980*** | ***2020*** | ***Churches*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anabaptist | | 36 | 45 | 1,322 |
| | Apostolic Christian Churches (ACC) | 1 | 4 | 11 |
| | Amish | 5 | 5 | 36 |
| | Brethren in Christ | 1 | 1 | 64 |
| | Hutterite | 3 | 3 | 352 |
| | Mennonite | 10 | 15 | 354 |
| | Mennonite-Evangelical | 16 | 17 | 505 |
| Anglican | | 3 | 11 | 1,813 |
| | Anglican (Historic) | 1 | 2 | 1,692 |
| | New Anglican | 2 | 9 | 121 |
| Baptist | | 20 | 29 | 2,746 |
| | Baptist (Historic) | 4 | 4 | 1,000 |
| | Conservative | 5 | 5 | 837 |
| | Eastern European | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| | Ecumenical | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| | Free Will | 1 | 1 | 16 |
| | Independent Fundamental | 2 | 4 | 336 |
| | Missionary | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| | Reformed | 2 | 8 | 97 |
| | Sabbatarian | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Southern | 0 | 1 | 423 |
| Catholic | | 10 | 25 | 4,153 |
| | Old Catholic | 5 | 8 | 33 |
| | Independent | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| | Roman Catholic - Latin Rite | 1 | 1 | 3,713 |
| | Eastern - Alexandrian Rite | 1 | 2 | 8 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eastern - Armenian Rite | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Eastern - Byzantine Rite | 1 | 6 | 343 |
| Eastern - East Syriac Rite | 0 | 2 | 23 |
| Eastern - West Syriac Rite | 0 | 3 | 27 |
| Lutheran | 10 | 15 | 955 |
| Independent | 3 | 6 | 91 |
| Lutheran World Federation | 3 | 4 | 537 |
| International Lutheran Council | 1 | 2 | 298 |
| Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conf. | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| Laestadian | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Methodist / Wesleyan | 16 | 19 | 1,350 |
| Methodist | 6 | 8 | 303 |
| Holiness | 10 | 11 | 1,047 |
| Orthodox | 16 | 25 | 804 |
| Independent | 1 | 3 | 29 |
| Old Calendar | 2 | 3 | 16 |
| Eastern | 10 | 12 | 610 |
| Oriental | 3 | 7 | 149 |
| Pentecostal / Charismatic | 26 | 63 | 3374 |
| Charismatic | 1 | 3 | 27 |
| Classical - Finished Work | 8 | 9 | 2,015 |
| Classical - Holiness | 4 | 4 | 233 |
| Healing - Deliverance | 1 | 1 | 14 |
| Neo-Pentecostal | 6 | 24 | 511 |
| Neo-Pentecostal - International | 1 | 15 | 254 |
| Oneness | 4 | 4 | 266 |
| Prosperity - Word of Faith | 1 | 3 | 54 |
| Presbyterian / Reformed | 20 | 24 | 1,208 |
| Presbyterian | 11 | 11 | 1,003 |
| Reformed | 9 | 13 | 205 |
| Other Protestant | 33 | 54 | 4,542 |
| Adventist | 5 | 6 | 602 |
| Evangelical | 14 | 17 | 484 |
| Marthomite | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| Messianic Jewish | 5 | 5 | 18 |
| New Evangelical | 0 | 15 | 176 |
| Restorationist | 7 | 9 | 537 |
| Uniting | 1 | 1 | 2,721 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Trinitarian | 26 | 33 | 2,433 |
| Christian Science | 3 | 3 | 32 |
| Doukhobor | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Jehovah Witness | 2 | 2 | 1,442 |
| Native American | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Restorationist - Armstrong | 1 | 5 | 88 |
| Restorationist - Morman | 5 | 7 | 553 |
| Swedenborgian | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| Quaker | 1 | 1 | 26 |
| Unitarian | 4 | 4 | 217 |
| Uniting | 4 | 4 | 45 |
| Miscellaneous | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| ***OVERALL TOTALS*** | 216 | 343 | 24,697 |

### *Factors Contributing to Denominational Diversification*

In this final section, I offer a number of preliminary observations regarding several features of, and factors contributing to, the recent denominational proliferation and diversification in Canada.

#### 1. The Extensive Impact of Immigration

More than 200,000 immigrants have arrived in Canada each year since 2000. This influx is by far the most significant factor in the reconfiguration of the denominational landscape in Canada. The impact of immigration is a familiar trope within the history of Christianity in Canada, however immigration patterns began to change after 1980.[13] Not only has the number of immigrants from non-European locations increased, and not only has the proportion of immigrants from non-Christian religions increased, but recent immigrants have also brought a new multi-cultural diversity and vitality to Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions in Canada. Various polls show that the newcomers to Canada are much more likely than those born in Canada to attend religious services regularly. Some Christian immigrants joined denominations already well-established in Canada, some started new denominations, and still others transplanted denominational extensions from other places in Canada thereby creating new transnational forms of Christianity.[14]

The Canadian immigration experience is a reflection of the major migratory patterns that have emerged from the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia, parts of the Middle East and Africa; these patterns have resulted in,

what Brian Stanley describes, "the transmission of southern or eastern styles of Christianity to urban locations in the northern and western hemispheres."[15] This transmission has resulted in a more bilateral kind of globalization[16] within Canadian Christianity, greatly diversifying the "tapestry of Christian life" in Canada. This transmission reflects the shift in the centre of gravity that has taken place within global Christianity during the latter part of the twentieth century.[17] Numerous Canadian scholars have examined the missionary connections between Canadian Christians and other parts of the world during the nineteenth and twentieth century and their attempts to create a world-wide church.[18] The remarkable expansion of Christianity in the global South along with recent immigration patterns has now reversed the direction of influence by bringing new expressions of global Christianity to Canada, which is fundamentally transforming the way Christians in Canada are connected to global Christianity. Examples abound: of the more than 440 congregations that are part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, a denomination with roots in the nineteenth-century Holiness tradition, more than ninety congregations are involved in the Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association. In addition, the combination of the Canadian Presbytery of the Korean American Presbyterian Church, and the Korean Presbyterian Churches Abroad, have started more than 120 churches in Canada since the late 1970s.[19] Many congregations in Canada aspire to be intentionally multi-cultural in order to exemplify the globalized nature of Canadian Christianity, although few have achieved the level of cultural diversity that is present at Calvary Worship Centre, an intentionally multi-cultural Pentecostal congregation located in Surrey, BC. This congregation numbers about 1,800 and includes people born in over a 100 different countries.

**2. Fragmentation of Historic Protestant Denominations**

The challenges created by the dramatic decline in membership since the 1960s that were experienced by historic mainline Protestant denominations is well-known. This "discourse of loss" has been amplified by the internal conflict experienced by some of these denominations in recent decades. For example, the formation of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Churches, which was started in 1992 by a group of about thirty concerned Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada congregations. More dramatic has been the unprecedented realignment of Anglicanism in

Canada, a tradition that has historically managed to retain considerable diversity under one ecclesiastical roof. The intensely divisive conflict over same-sex blessings within the Anglican Church in Canada came hard on the heels of a near bankruptcy from the cost of litigation surrounding involvement in residential schools.[20] The conflict prompted numerous parishes to search for ecclesiastical oversight elsewhere. Some became part of the Anglican Mission in Canada; others organized the Anglican Network in Canada, which became one of the founding dioceses of the new Anglican Church in North America in 2009.[21] There have been at least eight new Anglican denominations organized in Canada since 1992.

### 3. Proliferation of Pentecostal and other Evangelical Protestant Denominations

Since the 1980s evangelical Protestantism has been the dominant ethos within Protestant Christianity in Canada. A significant part of this shift can be attributed to the rapid growth of Pentecostalism, and to the emergence of a constellation of new evangelical denominations many of which were formed by immigrants arrived in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century.[22] Although the growth of many of these early twentieth-century evangelical Protestant denominations has plateaued (and some have declined), a new constellation of Pentecostal and evangelical Protestant denominations have also emerged.

More than twenty-five percent of the almost forty new neo-Pentecostal denominations started since 1980 have been imported by immigrants from countries in the Carribean, parts of Asia, and Africa (examples include Jesus is Lord Church and Pentecostal Missionary Church of Christ (4th Watch), both from the Philippines; Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and the Living Faith Church Worldwide aka Winners Chapel International, all of which came to Canada from Nigeria; Lighthouse Chapel International started by Bishop Dag-Heward Mills, and Church of Pentecost Canada Inc, both from Ghana; C3 Global, started by Phil and Christine Pringle, and New Covenant Ministries International, both from Australia; and Mount Zion Apostolic Church of Canada, and the National Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Faith [also known as the "Shouter Baptists"], both from Jamaica).

Unlike the unbridled proliferation of Pentecostal groups that one sees in parts of Africa, which is often driven by intense intra-church conflict, some of the increase of Pentecostal denominations in Canada can

be attributed to the initiative on the part of aggressive and highly relational individuals who often claimed apostolic status (for example, George and Hazel Hill in Lethbridge, AB, founders of Victory Churches of Canada, Jim and Kathleen Kaseman, founders of the Association of Faith Churches and Ministries [Canada], and Peter Youngren, founder of Open Bible Faith Fellowship of Canada), and the curiosity piqued by the intense supernaturalism of public spectacles like the "Toronto Blessing," a revival and associated phenomena that took place during the 1990s at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, which was part of John Wimber's Vineyard movement at the time).

**4. The Emergence of Mega Churches in Canada**

A phenomenon that has transformed American Christianity is the emergence of hundreds of mega churches in the latter part of the twentieth century, many led by individuals who have become prominent celebrities. To a much lessor extent, this phenomenon has also become a notable feature of more than a dozen evangelical Protestant denominations in Canada. Using the definition of mega church designed by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, that is, congregations with a consistent weekly attendance of at least 2,000 people (including children), there are approximately thirty-five such congregations in Canada (in comparison to 1,700 in the USA).[23] All are located in urban centres, with many distributed over multiple "campus" sites (for example, the Meeting House in Ontario led by Bruxy Cavey, which has approximately twenty locations).[24] These congregations are often the ones experiencing the greatest numerical growth within their denomination, and sometimes have budgets that are significantly larger than denominational budgets.

According to American research, mega churches tend to grow rapidly, and reach their great size within a short period of time,[25] usually in less than ten years, and nearly always under the tenure of a (male) pastor with a charismatic personality. The sheer size provides increased visibility for Christianity within urban centres, defying the common perceptions of decline produced in part by the sight of historic buildings that are significantly underused. Large numbers, along with a clear mission and purpose, generates a sense of vitality, which makes it possible to raise impressive amounts of money for specific projects and programs. The darker side is that much growth often takes place by drawing people from smaller to medium-sized churches in the area that are not able to

offer the same diversity of programming. A majority of these churches (all but seven) are still connected to a denomination, but the ties are often weak, and generally not seen as important or beneficial (church budgets often exceed that of the denomination). Seven belong to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, four to Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, three to Christian and Missionary Alliance, seven are independent (20% in comparison to about 28% in the USA), and the remainder belong to various other evangelical Protestant denominations. Thirteen are located in Ontario, ten are located in British Columbia with all but one in the lower mainland, five in Alberta, four in Manitoba, one in Quebec, and none in the Maritime region. The Canadian cities with the most megachurches are Winnipeg and Toronto, each with three. Three are specifically Asian: two Korean, and one Chinese (all three have worship services in multiple languages). The cumulative attendance in these thirty-five churches is well over 100,000 people; their impact on their denominations, and on Canadian Christianity more generally deserves additional research.

**5. Emergence of New Associations, Networks and Alliances**

Ever since the unique development of religion in America prompted sociologists to describe America as a "denominational society," scholars have recognized the variety and dynamic nature of denominationalism. The last feature I want to highlight has to do with the emergence of new groups using labels such as fellowship, association, network, collective or alliance that illustrate the dynamic nature of contemporary denominationalism.[26] While some new groups quickly self-identify as denominations alongside older established denominations, others are reluctant to do so and perceive themselves as being an alternative to established denominations because of the negative perceptions associated with denominationalism despite performing many of the same functions as established denominations. The language of partnership and family is often used to highlight the priority of relationship, rather than organizational practices or particular theological distinctives. Still other groups insist that their only role is to promote a particular cause, or to serve existing denominations without undermining or usurping the role or authority of denominational bodies.

Some new denominations have been created by theological movements that transcend existing denominations. For example, the recent

resurgence of interest in neo-reformed theology has prompted the formation of new groups within Baptist, Pentecostal, and Other Protestant categories. Examples include the Reformed Baptist Network, Sovereign Grace Churches, Great Commission Collective, and Acts 29 (a family of churches started by Mark Driscoll, pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle).

Some new groups have been formed for a range of pragmatic reasons, for example, to provide a place for pastors of like-minded congregations to experience fellowship and professional development, to assist like-minded congregations with the administrative procedures necessary for legal incorporation, obtaining charitable status, for licensing and ordaining pastors, and to create an accountability structure. These more pragmatic kind of organizational units are common among clusters of independent congregations in multiple denominational categories. Examples include the Canadian Fellowship of Churches and Ministers, Christian Ministers Association, Association of Vineyard Churches, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, Northern Light Association of Churches, and Baptist Bible Fellowship International.

Yet another kind of organizational unit includes church-planting collaborations that are often active across a range of denominational groups. Examples include New Leaf Church Planting Initiative, which is rooted in the Free Methodist Church but includes people from other denominations; Via Apostolica, an Anglo-Catholic church-planting initiative started by Todd Atkinson in 2012 that considers itself to be a convergent movement with roots in evangelical, charismatic, historic church traditions, C2C Collective, which started as a Mennonite Brethren initiative in 2009 and within a decade became a non-denominational organization assisting church planters from multiple denominations; and several Neo-Pentecostal examples such as New Covenant Ministries, Association of Relational Churches Canada, and Christ Central Churches (a group of Newfrontiers Churches working together under the apostolic leadership of Jeremy Simpkins), all of which downplay their Pentecostal identity in order to emphasize a collaborative church-planting vision. These collaborative initiatives represent a response on the part of numerous evangelical Protestant denominations to the growing secularity of Canadian culture.

The emergence of different kinds of denomination-like organizations might well be signalling a new trend – what Brad Christerson and Richard Flory call "network Christianity," and which they believe will be the future of Christianity in America.[27] They argue

> that macro-level social changes since the 1970s, including globalization and the digital revolution, have given competitive advantages to religious groups organized as networks rather than traditionally organized congregations and denominations. Network forms of governance allow for experimentation with controversial supernatural practices, innovative finances and marketing, and a highly participatory, unorthodox, and experiential faith, which is attractive in today's unstable religious marketplace. As more religious groups imitate this type of governance, religious belief and practice will become more experimental, more orientated around practice than theology, more shaped by the individual religious "consumer," and authority will become more highly concentrated in the hands of individuals rather than institutions.[28]

While their research aptly describes the experience within many Pentecostal denominations, it is becoming more prevalent in other denominational groups as well.

### *Conclusion*

As stated at the outset, identifying and classifying denominations in Canada is a massive undertaking. This paper is, therefore, an interim report on what is still very much a work-in-progress. Nevertheless, it hopefully provides a few glimpses into some of the trajectories within the rapidly changing landscape of denominational Christianity in Canada.

### *Endnotes*

1. Despite the fact that scholars have long seen the category of "denomination" as a unique way of organizing the diversity among Christians in North America (Nancy T. Ammerman, *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006], 361-362), scholarly studies of denominations in Canada remain relatively uncommon. In part, this is due to the way that historical studies of denominations have often (rightly) been seen as parochial and providentialist. The common association between denominationalism with division and rejection of collaboration may also have contributed to disinterest. Fortunately there are some notable exceptions (see for example Phyllis D. Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), and Michael Wilkinson and Linda Ambrose, *After the Revival: Pentecostalism*

*and the Making of a Canadian Church* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

2. For a helpful discussion about the distinction between different types of religious organizations see Mark Chaves, "Religious Organizations: Data Resources and Research Opportunities," *American Behavioral Scientist* 45, no, 10 (2002): 1523-1549.

3. See Colleen McDannell, who argues that "religious meaning is not merely inherited or simply accessed through the intellect" (*Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995], 272).

4. Bruce L. Guenther, "Evangelical Protestants and Ethnicity in Canada," in *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, eds. Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 365-414; and Brian Clarke and Stuart Macdonald, *Leaving Christianity: Changing Allegiances in Canada since 1945* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2017), 67-68, 75, 95, 115, 120.

5. I am grateful to Jarod Dobson at Statistics Canada for both the opportunity and for his willingness to share information that contributed to the compilation of a comprehensive list of denominations.

6. This is explicitly anticipated in Louis Cornelissen, "Religiosity in Canada and its Evolution from 1985 to 2019," *Insights on Canadian Society* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 28 October 2021), 2.

7. In February 2021 I received a TWU Provost Research Grant to hire a research assistant to help collect additional membership and attendance data (see https://countingchristians.wordpress.com).

8. I recognize that every attempt at classifying religious groups will be inadequate and will have some inherent problems. My approach has been to use a combination of historic connections, self-identification, and "family" resemblances including theological beliefs, to create categories. Despite significant similarities, my approach to classifying denominations is not identical to the classifications that will be used by Statistics Canada, which gives more consideration to labels recognizable at a popular level and less to the finer nuances of theological/historical traditions. My approach has benefitted considerably from the numerous guides that have been prepared by some denominational families, as well as the more comprehensive efforts by scholars such as Arthur C. Piepkorn, *Profiles in Belief: The Religious Bodies of the United States and Canada*, 4 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), Clifton L. Holland, "Toward a Classification System of Religious Groups in the Americas by Major Traditions and Family Types" (1993, revised in 2008);

Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations: Understanding the History, Beliefs, and Differences, Updated and Expanded* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2015); and the work of the Association of Religion Data Archives (www.thearda.com), and Roger E. Olson, Frank S. Mead, Samuel S. Hill, and Craig D. Atwood, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 14th ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018), in the United States.

9. A helpful guide has been prepared by Margaret Loewen Reimer, *One Quilt, Many Pieces: A Reference Guide to Mennonite Groups in Canada* (Waterloo: Mennonite Publishing Service, 1983).

10. A helpful guide to Baptist varieties is Albert W. Wardin, ed. *Baptists Around the World: A Comprehensive Handbook* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group,1995), which includes a section on Canada.

11. See Todd M. Johnson, "The Global Demographics of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal," *Society* 46, no. 6 (2009): 479-483; Candy Gunther Brown, ed., *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (New Yok: Oxford University Press, 2011); Clifton L Holland, ed., "Toward a Classification System of Religious Groups in the Americas by Major Traditions and Family Types" (The Latin American Socio-Religious Studies Program, 2011), 67-105; and Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010).

12. The denomination was accepted as a member of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1996.

13. Monica Boyd and Michael Vickers, "100 Years of Immigration in Canada," *Canadian Social Trends* (Autumn 2000): 1-13.

14. "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape," Pew Research Centre, 27 June 2013, https://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape; "New Canadians are Injecting Vigour into the Country's Religious Life," *The Economist*, 25 July 2018, https://www.economist.com/ erasmus/ 2018/07/25/new-canadians-are-injecting-vigour-into-the-countrys-religious-life?; and "Faith and Immigration: New Canadians rely on religious communities for material, spiritual support," Angus Reid Institute, 9 July 2018, https://angusreid.org/faith-canada-immigration. Louis Cornelissen's research summary shows that those born outside of Canada are more much more likely than those born in Canada to participate in a group religious activity at least once a month, "Religiosity in Canada and its Evolution from 1985 to 2019," 8.

15. Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 337.

16. Most definitions of globalization share in common the idea of interconnectedness created not only through communications technology and the ability to travel, but also the formation of multi-cultural communities, all of which contribute to the perception of interdependence among people living throughout the world.

17. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

18. Robert Wright, *A World Mission: Canadian Protestantism and the Quest for a New International Order, 1918-1939* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Rosemary R. Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Andrew Hamish Ion, *The Cross and the Rising Sun: The Canadian Protestant Missionary Movement in the Japanese Empire, 1872-1931* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990); Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); and Alvyn Austin, and Jamie S. Scott, eds. *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Alvyn J. Austin, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888-1959*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986); and James Enns, *Saving Germany: North American Protestants and Christian Mission to West Germany, 1945-1974* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

19. This does not include the significant number of Korean immigrants who have joined the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Roman Catholic Church (see Clarke and Macdonald, *Leaving Christianity*, 190-192).

20. An agreement with the Government of Canada in 2003, which shared the cost of compensation to plaintiffs, helped to prevent the complete bankruptcy of the Anglican Church of Canada (see Wendy Fletcher, "Canadian Anglicanism and Ethnicity," in *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, 162).

21. For helpful chronology of events that culminated in the formation of the Anglican Network in Canada, see www.anglicannetwork.ca/our-genesis

22. See Guenther, "Evangelical Protestants and Ethnicity in Canada," 365-414.

23. See the groundbreaking work done by the Hartford Institute of Religion Research (http://hartfordinstitute.org).

24. Peter J. Schuurman, *The Subversive Evangelical: The Ironic Charisma of an Irreligious Megachurch* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).

25. Scott Thumma and Warren Bird, "Recent Shifts in America's Largest Protestant Churches: Megachurches 2015 Report," http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/2015_Megachurches_Report.pdf; and Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

26. The use of some of these labels is not entirely new. The word "fellowship," for example, has been used by a number of denominations to emphasize an ecclesiastical point, namely the autonomy of local congregations (examples include The Fellowship [formerly the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches], and Nationwide Fellowship of Churches [Mennonite]).

27. *The Rise of Network Christianity: How Independent Leaders Are Changing the Religious Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press 2017).

28. See https://crcc.usc.edu/the-rise-of-network-christianity-how-independent-leaders-are-changing-the-religious-landscape