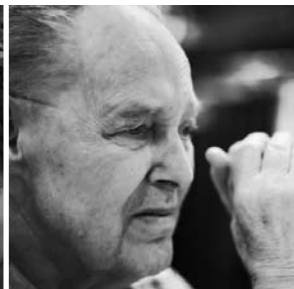


# SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 2 • 2008



**SPECIAL ISSUE** – John Graham, Guest Editor  
Canada, Social Work, and Christianity

## ARTICLES

Faith-Based Social Services in North America: A Comparison  
of American and Canadian Religious History and Initiative

Christianity and Canadian Social Work: A Personal Overview

Social Work and the Social Gospel in Canada:  
Historical Overview and Implications for Future Practice

Furthering Parish Wellness: Including Social Work as  
Part of a Catholic Pastoral Team

Using Artistic Accurate Empathy and Artistic Advanced  
Accurate Empathy to Assist Clients in Dealing Spiritually  
with Death and Dying

## PUBLICATIONS

## HOME STUDY

ISSN 0737-5778

*and Christian presence in social work*

**NACSW**  
NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

*Social Work and Christianity* (SWC) is a refereed journal published by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) to support and encourage the growth of social workers in the ethical integration of Christian faith and professional practice. SWC welcomes articles, shorter contributions, book reviews, and letters which deal with issues related to the integration of faith and professional social work practice and other professional concerns which have relevance to Christianity.

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# SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

A N I N T E R N A T I O N A L J O U R N A L

SUMMER 2008  
VOLUME 35, NUMBER 2  
ISSN 0737-5778

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Social Work and Christianity is published quarterly by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work, 21 Turkey Roost Rd., Sandy Hook, Connecticut 06482. Periodicals postage at Newtown, CT and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0737-5778

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NACSW, PO Box 121; Botsford, CT 06404.

# Introduction to the Special Issue: Canada, Social Work, and Christianity

*John R. Graham, Guest Editor*

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, I WAS APPROACHED BY DAVID SHERWOOD and Patricia Slade to edit a special edition on Canadians, Christianity and social work. I was delighted to accept: I thought that this could make a valuable contribution to the literature, helping also to foster the journal's truly North American mandate. Canadians are sensitive about being compared to their more populous counterparts south of them. Perhaps this is not unusual. New Zealanders may have a similar relationship to Australia. And these intra-country distinctions certainly do not end with the four countries I have just mentioned. But in any case, there is something ubiquitous about the American presence in much of Canadian life. Years ago, as an MA student in modern history, I read a major work in Canadian historiography that began with this powerful sentence: "Perhaps the most striking thing about Canada is that it is not part of the United States" (Brebner, 1960, p. ix). We have so much in common: shared colonial histories from Europe, and in particular the United Kingdom, Spain, and France; a common major language; a mutual commitment to democracy; many similarities in culture and values; what is popularly described as the world's longest, undefended border; and a system of intra-national trade under NAFTA that greatly reinforces our historic economic, political, cultural, and social ties.

Yet there are many differences between American and Canadian societies, too. We have distinct histories, contrasting political tradi-

tions, and a divergent sense of presence in the world community. The United States is a republic; Canada is a constitutional monarchy. An increasingly important domestic second language in the United States might be Spanish; in Canada, we have two official languages, English and French. In both countries, of course, there is a *mélange* of languages reflecting our multicultural make up, and hundreds of languages and dialects representing our First Nations living traditions. But here again, an official 1971 policy of multiculturalism was adopted in Canada, and our country's national *élan*, emphasizing this diversity, has a different intention from the American idea of a cultural melting pot. Turning to religion, and comparing the two countries, there are significant differences in regularity of public Christian worship. Gallup polls show attendance at churches in Canada to be roughly 60% of the population in 1945; this fell to 30% in 1975, and 20% in 2000 (Bibby, 2006). Church attendance in the United States, in contrast, has been far more constant (Chaves & Stevens, 2003). Distinctions between the US and Canada don't end there. Americans outnumber Canadians by a ratio of 9:1. Likewise, there are ideological differences between our two countries. A 2008 survey of Canadian voter attitudes towards the American presidential race found Canadians favouring the Democrats in the presidential election by a margin of four to one (Martin, 2008). Reflecting, I think, disparate political traditions, there are dissimilarities in approach to social work. We in Canada have a structural tradition to social work theory in many Canadian schools of social work, for which, as far as I can tell, there is no proportional counterpart in the US (Carniol, 2005).

On a second level, the journal, it seems to me, ought to exercise a mandate to appeal to the broadest understanding of what might constitute Christianity. Like many readers of this journal, I fell into social work as an expression of my political ideology and spirituality. I incline to social democracy, was raised in the High Church tradition of the Anglican Church of Canada, and am committed to same sex marriage, polycentric approaches to faith, and to a Christology that is oriented to myth and story. These dispositions inform everything that I do, including my work on this journal; and because of this, they bear mention. As a student of social work many years ago, I joined the NACSW as a lifetime member. In doing so, I suspected then, as I do now, that my values were more liberal than some of my friends in this Association. So be it. Christianity has diverse origins, has grown though

distinct international traditions, and is a rich tapestry of theologies existing over a rainbow of cultures across time and place. By sharing different views – and in particular, learning from others – our own are clarified. As the late UK philosopher Michael Oakeshott puts it, those in a pluralist society live within the conversation: we refrain from being disconcerted by difference; we strive to appreciate the other's perspective (Graham, 2008).

In these and many other respects: what enormous potential our journal possesses – for all of us.

The following pages are wonderful representations of Canadian scholarship. The first is an article I commissioned, written by Kelly Dean Schwartz, Buetta Warkentin, and Michael Wilkinson. It analyses differences between Canadian and American approaches to Christianity and social work. Next is an invited submission by one of Canada's foremost scholars of social work, Francis Turner. Turner presents auto-ethnographic insight into Christianity's place in the life of one social work scholar, as well as the extensive circles in which he has travelled. This is followed by Glen Schmidt's assessment of the social gospel movement. It was significant in the United States too, but in Canada, as Schmidt notes, the Social Gospel precipitated the creation of a major social democratic political party, and was a catalyst to social policies that rendered a welfare state more interventionist than its American counterpart. Following is Joanne Ebear, Rick Csiernik, and Michael Béchard, who offer sensitive insight into parish wellness and the role of social work in Roman Catholic pastoral care. The journal ends with Wilfred Gallant, Michael Holosko, and Melanie Gallant, who look at use of the arts and empathy in death and dying.

The articles are written by scholars from major Canadian universities in provinces in western and central Canada, as well as by authors who are situated outside of Canada. Given their overwhelming presence in Canada, it is not surprising that most (but not all) university affiliations are to public institutions. It is also notable to see authors representing private post-secondary institutions (universities and colleges), too. The articles cover a range of concerns, from history, to direct practice, to the arts. They focus on myriad institutional (Roman Catholic versus Protestant) and philosophical approaches to Christianity, and are likewise catholic in their approach to social work itself. I regret that there are no entries from French Canada, and hope that this omission might be corrected in any subsequent Canadian edition.

I am indebted to David Sherwood, the co-editor of this special edition. His yeoman work in helping to shepherd each manuscript through review processes; his meticulous work in copy editing and formatting; and his helpful insights into all aspects of the edition's conception and final production, have been absolutely essential. Special thanks are likewise extended to editorial board members, including Rick Chamiec-Case and Hope Haslam Straughan, for their support and encouragement. Anonymous reviewers provided very useful double blind peer review. In addition to regular reviewers of the journal, special thanks are accorded to scholars across Canada who participated in the review process, among them: Connie Barlow, Tom Brenner, Susan Cadell, John Coates, Diana Coholic, Roger Delaney, David Hodge (a Canadian ex-patriate), Tuula Heinonen, David Tranter, and Kim Zapf. ❖

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