



## Church-planting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

September 2007

*“You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth...”*  
Acts 1:8

Dear Friend of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

You will have noticed that I have changed my In-Depth Studies Canada heading to the Acts 29 church-planting in Saskatoon logo. In the year ahead, we will continue with In-Depth Studies Canada – a theological ministry to the Body of Christ. However, we are going to make church-planting a real focus. To this end, Cheryl and I have sold our home in Leask and have moved to an apartment in Saskatoon. Please note our new address and phone number at the bottom of this newsletter. Saskatoon is home to Canada’s fastest growing economy, passing Calgary, according to the latest reports. It is also home to Canada’s highest crime rate. Sounds like a city that needs Jesus!

### **Acts 29 Boot Camp in Raleigh, North Carolina**

Cheryl and I flew to North Carolina on September 18 for the church planter training and assessment interview with the Acts 29 church planting network. I was very impressed by the Christ-centered (cross-centered; gospel-centered) theology, the humility of the leaders in the network, and the God-glorifying vision set forth.

The Acts 29 Network exists to start churches that plant churches – thus continuing Christ’s mission as revealed in the first 28 chapters of Acts; hence the name, Acts 29. God is significantly using this network to influence and shape the church planting culture through both rock-solid theology and contextualizing the gospel. Acts 29 churches won’t water down their theology to reach more people and they won’t attack the culture in the name of Christianity. Their goal is to plant churches that are missionaries in their respective communities sent by Christ with the gospel (John 20:21). You can find out more about Acts 29 on their website: [www.acts29network.org](http://www.acts29network.org)

### **The Interview**

On Friday, Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>, Cheryl and I were interviewed for over 2 hours. This was the culmination of many reports, written interviews and questionnaires and tests, and a phone interview. The whole process began back in May. We received the final report back this week and we have been accepted. The conclusion of a three page reports is as follows:

#### **“Final Remarks**

Murray, please know that we love you and Cheryl. We are confident that God has called and gifted you to lead a church plant and perhaps a whole church planting movement starting in Saskatoon that will influence Saskatchewan and perhaps all of Canada. Acts 29 is honored to have you join us. We are here to serve you, encourage you, and help equip you. Please let us know if you have any questions about this assessment report.”

The church planting strategist for Acts 29 is Tyler Powell. He oversees the entire application and assessment phase. He wrote me an e-mail in which he said, “Murray, I don’t know what you said in that assessment but you had those guys so excited to bring you into the Network that they were about to do flips.” I told him it was their own fault; they got me talking about Jesus!!!

### **Our Home Away from Home**

*“So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time – houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life.’”* Mark 10:29-30

It is always wonderful to see some of those houses and brothers and sisters etc. that we share as Christ’s children. Our stay in North Carolina was especially wonderful because we got to stay with Bill and Fran Wepfer and their family – one of our houses and families “*now in this time.*” We had a time of great fellowship. I also got to drive Bill’s “Eclipse” to and from the Boot Camp. (Much more power than our three cylinder Pontiac Firefly!) Though, the verse does not specifically say cars, I have received a few of those as well! Bill and Fran certainly served us and made our time relaxing, as well as encouraging.

Cheryl and I also got to spend an afternoon with Michael and Pam Feather. Michael is on staff with In-Depth Studies and involved in a new church in Greenville, NC.

### **Areas of Growth**

One of the items on our final report with Acts 29 was called areas of growth. I will quote from it here:

#### Areas of Growth

The greatest factor here is that you are going to be challenged with resources.

1. Financial Resources - It is likely going to require you to look beyond the congregation in Saskatoon and pursue other resource avenues. We would urge you to make your situation known to the Acts 29 office for further ways to generate finances through the Network. In addition, prayerfully investigate other “revenue streams” using as many contacts as you can come up with.

Directly related to this is “Time resources.” Even though we have moved to Saskatoon, I am still teaching in Leask half time to make ends meet. This includes 3 hours a day in travel time. I am traveling in a car pool of three in order to cut back on the gas bill. However, that means I have to stay at the school all day, even though I am finished teaching at 12:30 p.m. For now I am using the afternoon for study, e-mails, website updates, and discipleship with a number of guys using “skype.” However, as recommended by Acts 29,

“Working full time and spending 3 hours a day commuting is obviously a hindrance to investing in church planting. While you must provide for your family, praying that God frees up time and enables you to go full time in ministry ought to be primary goals.”

This will be one of my goals in the coming year, to see if the Lord would be pleased to gather some regular monthly outside support that I might be able to either drop the teaching, or at the very least, perhaps transfer to a school closer to Saskatoon with fewer classroom hours. In addition to trying to raise support for ongoing expenses, we are looking at also creating a fund made up of one time gifts that may enable us to purchase a house in Saskatoon down the road. We have squeezed into the apartment, but this does not allow me to have a study, or any real space for Bible studies, and hosting of others. I would love to have a place with a suite that would even allow us to have young men (and their wives if married) move in with us – that I might pour myself into other men to continue and carry forth the church planting mission.

There is a tremendous need for gospel-centered churches that exalt the Sovereign God of heaven and earth in western Canada. Our desire is not simply to plant one church, but to begin a movement of churches which plant churches in Saskatchewan and the western provinces, beginning in the urban centers. This will take a ministry team. Pray that the Lord would raise up laborers to be sent into His harvest. If you know of individuals who are looking for such a ministry to support, perhaps you could mention us to them. If you know of gifted and godly men who might be interested in being involved in such a church planting ministry, we would love to connect with them.

Grace Fellowship ([www.idscanada.org/grace](http://www.idscanada.org/grace)) is a Christian community which exists for the glory of God and the good of people by extending hope through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see Saskatoon as a strategic center from which to begin to impact our province and from there continue to diffuse the fragrance of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ for the glory of the triune God.

### **Gathering Prayer Support**

One of my highest priorities at this time is to gather prayer support. In order to draw on the faithfulness of our loving heavenly Father who delights to give good gifts to His children who ask. I am seeking people and groups to commit Grace Fellowship to regular prayer. Please consider becoming a prayer supporter of Grace Fellowship by regularly seeking the Lord to provide our needs, and to glorify Himself through the advance of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Blog**

For those of you who would like to keep up with what is happening week by week, you can visit our blog. It is found on our discipleship site (<http://idscanada.org/disciple/>). I usually try to post an “Mmmmm...” article each Monday. “Mmmmm...” stands for Murray McLellan’s Monday morning musings. I thought it expressed both a “meditative” and “tastes good” outlook! You can find all the archives on the blog.

Our God has done wonderful things and we look to Him for all our sufficiency as ministers of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:4-6). We remain content with our current situation and how our Lord has provided. We will continue to strive to magnify His name with everything we have. Should our support increase, we will be thankful and seek to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Regardless, we will continue to strive to advance the joy and faith of others through the teaching of the Word of God. We will see what the Lord has in store for us in the year ahead. Whatever it is, it will certainly be too good for us. I continually stand amazed at His grace. It is a pleasure to follow Him - outside the camp - for here we have no continuing city!

We are striving to be faithful. May the Lord be magnified!

By His grace and for His glory,  
Murray

Please visit our web site for more information on our ministry in Canada, and pray for us as we seek to have God glorified in everything we do.

If you have a desire to support the church-planting and teaching ministry of Murray McLellan you may do so by sending a cheque to:

**Please note our new address and phone number:**

Grace Fellowship  
104 - 235 Kingsmere Blvd.  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, CANADA  
S7J 4J6

Ph. (306) 244-4372

Make cheques payable to “Grace Fellowship” and designate them “for Murray.”

Note: If you live in the United States and would like to receive a tax-deductible receipt, please direct your gift to In-Depth Studies in Arizona and designate it for Murray in Canada.

You may make donations online at: [www.idscanada.org](http://www.idscanada.org)

If you would like to talk with me about all that is happening, please give me a call (or e-mail me and I’ll call you. We have a long distance package now, so I can call anywhere in Canada or the U.S. for “free”.)

“Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God  
and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ...”  
Acts 28:31

*“The story continues...”*