

From the Mouths of Babes

the youth perspective



Do you know the song *We Are the Church*? You probably do. I remember learning it in Sunday School along with hand motions. Back then I learned that the church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people. It's simple, yet I think that I'm really only learning how true it is now.

Last September was the beginning of many new things in my life. I had just moved away from home to go to university in British Columbia and I was living on my own for the first time. I had already been in university for a couple of years before I transferred, so the course work wasn't too different. Also, growing up, my parents taught me how to cook, so when I got here I wasn't starving. But in all of my excitement to be on my own, I missed a few things. I never knew that grocery shopping for one person would still be expensive. How did my parents support our family of five kids and my grandparents? I didn't realize that not having a car meant having to take the bus or walk-*everywhere!* It made me rethink buying that sack of rice. But most of all, I didn't know that, while exciting at times, moving away would also be lonely and that there would be a lot of things that I'd miss about home.

I'd always gone to church with my family and I was active in the Youth Group, in Bible Study, in Sunday School and in Praise Band. Yet, in the months that I've been away, I haven't found a church to attend regularly. It's embarrassing to admit, but it's true: I've slept in more times on a Sunday morning than I've been in a church pew. There are a lot of churches around here and there's even one on campus! But I miss my church family back home. I miss the ladies at my church who give you a hug during coffee time and a card on your birthday. I miss Pastor Ray's thoughtful sermons and the elders' deep prayers at the communion table. I miss the choir's sweeping anthems and the sound of the whole congregation singing the Lord's Prayer. I miss playing in the praise and worship band with my friends on Saturday afternoons. I even miss the Board meetings on the third Sunday of every other month that go on for hours! Being away, I've relearned something I knew back when I was a kid: the church really is a people.

I miss my church family back home, but I also know that I can't use them as an excuse forever. I'll be on my own for the next couple of years and I want to find a church family out here too. Back home I'd never even attended another church's service unless I was out of town. So going somewhere new might be scary. Also, in these churches there will be families, couples, and friends - people who have known each other for years. So going in alone might be uncomfortable. There might be varied orders of worship, a different style of preaching, and hymns I've never sung before. There may even be contrasting views and traditions. So going into these new spaces and seeing new ways of doing church, might be both confusing and refreshing. I think that attending a new church may be all of these things and more, but I still want to find a community of faith that I can call my own and grow in - I mean, it's hard reading *Numbers* on my own! I'm scared, but I want to try something new. More than that, I think that God is planning something new in my life. So I've Googled the churches in my area, I've checked out their websites and I've compared transit times online. It's a new year and I'm starting this Sunday. I think that this can be another new thing for me to add to the list.

Awit Marcelino is a member of Broadway Disciples United Church in Winnipeg, MB. She is currently attending Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC.

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Just over a month ago I got the opportunity to attend an event in downtown Toronto called *Walk a Mile in Her Shoes*, a day of raising awareness to end violence against women, created by the White Ribbon Foundation. The idea was to get as many men as possible together and have them literally walk a mile in women's shoes. There was even a guest model to teach the men how to walk in high heels and to give a speech. Although this was a very entertaining way to spend a couple of hours, as one of the speakers at the event said, they are "trying to do something fun, with an issue that is not at all funny."

Five hundred people took to the streets of Toronto by first circling Nathan Phillips Square and then venturing out into the downtown area. This event raised over \$81,000 and has now become an annual affair in Toronto. Many other cities across the globe are also taking part. This year in Canada alone, Moncton, London, St. Catharines, Chatham, Bowmanville, Northumberland, Peterborough, Cobourg, Calgary, Banff, Halifax, and Vancouver have all had the *Walk a Mile in Her Shoes* fundraiser. There are over fifty-five other countries around the world that support the White Ribbon Foundation. All of these organizations are led by both men and women fighting to end violence against women.

I heard about *Walk a Mile in Her Shoes* through Ryerson University. I am in my first year of a Bachelor of Social Work Degree program there and am just beginning to learn of issues in our society that I never gave much thought to as a high school student studying music at an Arts School. Many students and faculty from Ryerson took part in this event. When I first noticed the posters on campus and listened to a speaker in one of my classes, my first thought was that it would just be an interesting take on one of the social issues of our time. Even though that was true, it was also awesome to see so many people, both men and women, out to support such an important cause.

Violence against women is an issue that should not still be around in our world today. I believe that an event such as *Walk a Mile in Her Shoes* is a good way to get the word out about women who are suffering from domestic abuse. It even made the evening news and will be talked about as a result. I won't forget that it was fun; but in with all of the laughter, the participants are getting the word out that violence against women must end. We must all join in to show our support.

I believe that in the years to come, the attendance rate for this fundraiser will increase dramatically. The money raised by the White Ribbon Campaign is used to help women's groups. The more people who know about this event, the more money it will raise to help these women.

To learn more about the White Ribbon Campaign, or to make a donation, visit www.whiteribbon.ca.

Meg Allinson is the nineteen-year-old daughter of WICC's Executive Director Pat Allinson. Meg lives in Toronto, ON.

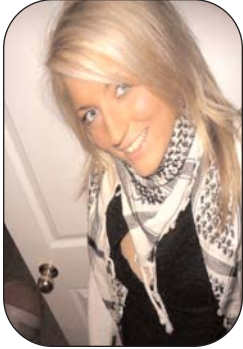


Oh So Cosmo Co-Host Wilder Weir walks for change



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When I was only 14 my grandmother took me to Tokyo. This was my first traveling experience that came with ongoing warnings about what could happen if I went off on my own. Grama would not let me out of her sight when we were 'out and about'. Later, we both learned that Japan is probably one of the safest places, due to their wonderful culture of honouring each other; unlike Canada where young girls and boys are continually warned about being picked up by strangers.

Since that time, my Grama tries her best to keep me alert to the dangers of sexual trafficking. To be honest I don't know how close to the surface these messages are. When I am out with my girlfriends shopping, clubbing, working or traveling, I have to say we are just having fun.

According to my Mom and Grama, this is a very modern way for girls to be. Boyfriends, it seems to me, have almost become an aside to what was once the norm. Couples first, with girl friends running behind waiting for their opportunity to become part of a 'coupling' as Grama puts it. Now, we girls run in packs... When we go out to a club we all dance *together*. When we go to the mall, you'll usually see a bunch of us, never alone... and if we work and travel as I did in Australia last year, there were always 3, 4 or 5 of us.

I've never really thought about this until now, but I believe we are all aware on some level of what *could* happen to us if we were to stray from this pattern of behaviour... safety in numbers, so to speak. In primary school we used the buddy system.

So far in my young life I have never been approached by anyone who could do harm or violence to me, or so I believe, and I pray this will continue. When you read this I'll be happily back in Australia with my girlfriends doing our thing, and it is on behalf of all of us that I thank WICC and others for taking on the massive problem of global sexual trafficking. Thank you!

Zoe Munro is the granddaughter of Gloria Cope, a member of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada. Zoe lives in Byron Bay, Australia.

