



My View From the Top Bunk —A Brother's Perspective of Patrick Nixon and the Mustard SEED

By Rev. Bill Nixon

Some of my earliest memories of childhood involve sharing a room and a bunk bed with my brother Pat. In those days I got the top bunk, and my brother Pat got the lower bunk.

Much has changed...now Pat along with his team at the Mustard SEED in Calgary, lead one of the most dynamic and successful Street Ministries in North America. For most of the last six years, it was my privilege to work alongside that team.

Pat knows what it is like to be homeless, and his true gift, despite his success, has been never forgetting the streets that God took him from. As brothers, we grew up in an alcoholic and abusive home. At the age of 12, he found himself living on the streets as a homeless person. By the time Pat was 15, he himself was an addict and alcoholic having spent a good part of the previous 3 years as a drug mule. He was then introduced to the Grace of God in a meaningful way that would impact him, and through him, others forever.

Some men from First Baptist Church were reaching out to the poor on the streets of Calgary when they saw Pat; he tried his best to panhandle from them, but they didn't give him money, they took him to get something to eat. While Pat was eating one of the men in the group offered to take him home and give him a bed to sleep in. Pat accepted.

They cared for him for about a year. Unfortunately, Pat fell back into his addictions and had to be asked to leave the house. He ended up in prison. After his release, these same wonderful people found Pat and asked him if he was ready to try again. This simple act of grace formed what would become an unwritten policy of the SEED:

"It's not about first or second chances, but how many chances will it take". The rest, as they say, is history.

Patrick & Bill Nixon will be speaking at the ACOP Regional Conferences across Canada next month, telling the story of The SEED Ministry and talking about how your church can become involved in justice and compassionate ministries.



LtoR: Patrick Nixon and Rev. Bill Nixon

Pat's commitment to faith in Jesus Christ empowered his determination to change himself, and the world around him, for the good. It's always been amazing to me that both Pat and I came to Christ, within weeks of each other, both went on to full time ministry, but neither one of us knew about the other's faith for many years.

At 22, Pat started volunteering at the Baptist Church Burning Bush Coffee House, washing coffee cups. One day he was asked to give his testimony, which he did after some arm twisting. When he had finished, he did what he saw others do, and invited those who were present to come forward to accept Christ. He closed his eyes and began to pray, and as he prayed he heard chairs moving. He was devastated -- everyone was leaving! He opened his eyes to discover no one had left. They were all on their knees at the altar. He really wasn't sure what to do next, so he did the only thing he

My View From the Bottom Bunk, cont'd



Guest living in SEED's Transitional Housing.



Former addict now working for the SEED at Mountain Aire Lodge.

knew to do, he went back to washing coffee cups.

This was the source of another great unwritten policy at the SEED:

“Leaders get their hands dirty and serve others.”

The Mustard SEED Street Ministry is coming up to its 25th anniversary. The roots of this life-changing ministry go deep into the First Baptist Church's Burning Bush Coffeehouse; a drop-in center for young street people in downtown Calgary. On March 11, 1984, the first Mustard SEED Street Church service was held, and the concept was to be a church of street people that was run by ex-street people. Five years later, the Street Church changed its name to The Mustard SEED Street Ministry (The SEED) and proclaimed themselves a “ministry of the church” to the street people of Calgary.

They began sharing their conviction that the church had an obligation to care for the underprivileged. This change in philosophy of street ministry was the turning point that allowed the

SEED to realize its present growth, a growth that would not have happened unless the members of the street church were willing to give up what had become familiar to them, and to find new ways to make a meaningful difference in the lives they served.

The SEED started with one staff member and 12 volunteers providing care for approximately 50 people. Pat Nixon's vision has grown over the years to where The SEED employs over 200 staff with more than 12,000 volunteers per year. Over 600 churches located throughout the province assist The SEED through their volunteerism, prayer and financial support. The SEED has also found support from over 3000 businesses and corporations.

As the Chief Executive Officer and visionary for The SEED, Pat has impacted the lives of thousands in our society. Pat's vision has led to developments like the Creative Centre in Calgary, where the city's homeless find hope through education, housing and real ministry. Mountain Aire Lodge is a functioning business providing meaningful paid employment

and training opportunities for former crack addicts and the terminally homeless; enabling them to rebuild their lives. The Mustard SEED Shelter in Calgary's southeast has introduced a pro-active approach to providing hardcore street people the tools they need to move from poverty to higher levels of independence. And most recently, the Calgary Mustard SEED has partnered with the Mustard SEED Edmonton to support their exciting approach to provide compassionate care for the homeless in that community.

On a national level, Pat was a key player in the development of a national conference for street workers to gather and share their experience and knowledge with their peers from across Canada. He continues to have a heart for the poor of our nation, and has been an inspiration to directors of street ministries across the country. But simple borders can't restrain the vision and caring Pat is determined to share with others.

In 2001, Pat was invited by international leaders in Poland and Latvia to travel to their countries to

help them understand compassionate ministry to the poor. For three weeks, Pat traveled throughout Eastern Europe, teaching and training in churches, universities and cultural centres. In 2008, Pat spent three weeks in the Ukraine observing ministry trends and supporting church efforts to expand social care services throughout the country.

Pat's efforts have been recognized in many ways, by many people and organizations. On May 23, 2002, His Worship, Mayor Dave Bronconnier declared Patrick Nixon “Calgary's Citizen of the Year 2001”. On February 9, 2005, Pat was appointed a Member of The Order of Canada by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson. In June of 2007, Pat Nixon was awarded the Alberta Order of Excellence by Alberta's Lieutenant Governor Norman Kwong. The Alberta Order of Excellence is the highest honour the Province of Alberta can award any citizen.

Pat would be the first to tell you these earthly recognitions are useful signs of encouragement, bringing visibility and understanding to all Canadians on the “real” face of homelessness in our country and our world.

But when all is said and done, Pat would want you to know one thing: “In



A SEED guest participating in an Art Program in the Creative Centre.

the end the most important recognition I seek is before an audience of one, my Lord Jesus Christ. He has always been faithful to me; I seek only to be faithful to Him”

So why am I telling you all this? Because this story is not about who gets the top bunk. Rather, this is about how we ensure we are performing relevant ministry in increasingly difficult times. It is about how to take what you have, which may not seem sufficient, and allow God to make it

sufficient. It is about the part that we in ACOP can, and I believe should, play in reaching this nation for Christ.

Pat is not just my brother. I am certainly proud of the fact that he is, but I believe he is a man whose story and heart for those who are perishing all around us, and whose vision for what the Church can be, can inspire us all. What we have is enough, if we make it enough with the will and the hand of God.

THE SEED facts&stats

The Mustard Seed **Centre Street** provides long-term, supportive housing for **28 individuals**. The **Mustard Seed Shelter** provides emergency shelter for up to **317 guests**. The Mustard Seed **Mountain Aire Lodge** provides **homes** and employment for **22** men and women. The **Mustard Seed Shelter** serves between 900-**1000 meals every day**. The Mustard Seed Centre Street serves between 200-250 meals every day. The Mustard Seed runs **over 40 programs** in education, **employment**, arts & recreation, **health** and wellness, and case **management**.

Eston College Graduation 2009

The 63rd annual graduation ceremonies of Eston College were held on April 19, 2009. There were 6 graduates who received a Certificate in Biblical Studies, 13 graduates received an Associate of Biblical Studies Diploma, and 7 students graduated with a Bachelor of Biblical Studies Degree.

This year's Valedictorian was Mr. Nikolas Amodeo – from the Dryden Full Gospel Church in Dryden Ont. Nikolas did his class proud with a thoughtful and visual Valedictory address. Nikolas also received the Presidential Award for Outstanding Student in the Degree Program. Nic will be returning to Eston College this fall as a Staff Assistant.

The Graduation Address was brought by Mr. Jason Holderbein, a degree graduate from the class of 2004. Jason delivered an articulate, humorous and thought-provoking address about the importance and the value of Bible college education. Mr. Holderbein is a business man in Swift Current Saskatchewan, and also serves on the Eston College Board of Directors.

This year's Presidential Award for Outstanding Student – Associate Program went to Joanna Korchinsk. The recipient of the Presidential Award for Outstanding Student – Certificate Program was Hannah Miller. The award for Outstanding Student in Bible & Theology – Nikolas Amodeo, the Outstanding Student in General Studies was Nicole Sample, and the Outstanding Student in Professional Ministry – Karmen Whitbread.

During the graduation weekend, tribute was paid to Mrs. Arlene Mitchell, who has served as both a long time volunteer and staff member of the College. The College also honoured Sherri McConnell, who has served as both Dean of Women and Dean of Students and will be



President Brian Fuller and graduates.

leaving the College's employment this summer. Both of these women have made positive contributions to the College and will be missed.

The College set a goal to raise \$10,000 towards general operational expenses over the graduation weekend, as well as to increase both the number of monthly contributors and the size of the monthly donations. We are pleased to report that the College reached all of its fiscal objectives this weekend!

Here are the words of President Brian Fuller to the 2009 Graduates:



Jason Holderbein addresses graduates.

“You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father

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Eston College Graduation 2009, cont'd

will give you whatever you ask in my name." John 15:14-16

I trust that these words of Christ will resonate in the soul of each graduate. After spending months of your lives drawing nearer to our Lord, you no doubt sense a shift in your relationship

from servant to friend. As a friend, you will discover new joys and pleasures. You will find that His commands take on a new feel – one that is easy and light.

You are about to embark on a new phase of your journey. If you will

remain faithful to read the Bible, spend time in prayer and daily submitting your life to the Holy Spirit, you will experience the fullness of God and your life will have the utmost meaning and purpose. What could be better? As His friends, serve Him well.



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Greg Paulson: gpaulson@gatewaycm.ca | (250) 563-1003

Rocky Mountain Regional Conference

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North Edmonton Christian Fellowship, 9004 - 153rd Avenue, Edmonton, AB

Rev. Ken Stange: ruralrev@hotmail.com | (780) 954-2611

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Booth Centre, 180 Henry Avenue, Winnipeg, MB

Rev. Al Huckabay: pastoral@dfgc.ca | (807) 223-5504

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Vie Abondante Church, 1763 Boulevard Maloney E, Gatineau, Quebec

Rev. Gary Langerud: gelangerud@gmail.com | (819) 663-1301

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Visit us online at **www.acop.ca** for more information and to register!

Prayer Matters in Estonia

With the vision of “Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to Every Nation”, ACOP actively supports 25 missionaries around the globe. We invite you to join with us in prayer for their ministries.

This month’s prayer focus: Märt and Alta Vähi, Missionaries to Estonia

Märt and Alta Vähi have been married for 39 years and have three children and five grand-children. They have been missionaries since 1971. They smuggled Bibles into Estonia and the Iron Curtain countries for seven years. After returning to Canada, he built Smythe Street Cathedral in Fredericton and pastored there for fourteen years. During this time Märt also served as Chaplain of the New Brunswick Legislature.

Following this Märt and Alta, along with their family moved to Estonia in 1991 during the break-up of the Soviet Union. In the years that followed he was involved in founding the Estonian Pentecostal Church while planting many churches, helping with the beginning of a Bible School, building a national Foreign Missions program and a Prison Ministry, which all continue to this day.

After handing over responsibilities to nationals, Märt along with his son Andrew and their wives, went on to pioneer the Village of Hope, an in-residence ministry and leadership training facility, for those in drug and

alcohol addiction, in Estonia and now also in New Brunswick, Canada.

Presently, Märt and Alta continue to live in Estonia, while he and Andrew, who now lives in Canada, continue to develop and expand the Village of Hope ministry together. The Village of Hope in Estonia has also trained leadership leading the program there - young men who just six years ago were heroin addicts on the streets - today are fine Christian leaders! Märt also continues to mentor as well as be a father figure to the national leadership and church in Estonia. Not only this, but there is an ever increasing demand for this type of ministry requiring Märt and Alta to travel throughout Europe to build up national leadership with the challenge of ever increasing missions.

During these days of upheaval in Europe as well as the world Märt feels we need to build up ministry while at the same time storm the very “gates of hell - a black hole of addiction” with the gospel of Christ! The ministry to those in addiction is “really a tough one” says Märt, but “it is as important as it is challenging - as it is the world



we live in today and we cannot ignore it!”.

“The building of the Village of Hope in New Brunswick and the ever increasing expansion of the work in Estonia have many huge and great challenges creating a vital need for, as many as will, to join us with all the prayer and financial support we can get!” states Märt. “It is the passion of our hearts!”

Be sure to visit their web site at www.villageofhope.net.



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