

Editorial

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As I write this introduction to our inaugural issue of *Ecclesia*, there is war in Ukraine; the COVID-19 pandemic persists; questions of gender and sexuality dominate the cultural landscape; mental health issues are on the rise; and not only are we, as Christians, facing pressure from the wider, secular culture, we are also experiencing tension from within. Little wonder that more and more faithful leaders in local churches are exhausted and stepping away from ministry. I wouldn't blame Christians—particularly in Canada—for feeling discouraged as they survey the world around them. The purpose of my short editorial, however, is to not lament but, instead, to exhort. In other words, this is a call to action.

As Christians we must come to grips with the reality of being disciples of Christ: in this life, suffering and hardships come with the territory. Jesus could not have been more clear about this when He declared: “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:11-12).¹ Yet, Scripture also teaches that, regardless of how things may appear, God is sovereign and all things are accomplished according to His will: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). While it may *feel* as though things are unravelling around us, the truth is that all of creation—including humanity and its institutions—is subject to the will of God. This means that we can go into the world and boldly fulfill Christ's Great Commission knowing that, whatever obstacles and difficulties lay ahead for the church (and there *will* be

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all scriptural passages are from the ESV translation.

obstacles and difficulties), “...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

It is with this call to action in mind that *Ecclesia: Journal of Practical Theology* was born. The Northview Leadership Institute exists to train both lay and vocational leaders in the church, and so it is our desire to provide a resource where pastors, students, and church members can engage with a host of topics relevant to the local Canadian church. Our hope is that it not only serves as a vehicle through which readers can reflect more deeply on the issues of the day, but also as a way to exemplify how God’s Word should serve as the *primary* lens through which Christians are to engage the world around them. For our first issue, our editorial team has sought to showcase articles that incorporate the range and diversity of topics that readers of *Ecclesia* can expect to find in future issues, from scholarly arguments and pastoral guidance to personal experiences and testimonies that are meant to exhort and encourage. Accordingly, our contributors bring with them a variety of ministerial contexts, each one seeking to lend their experience and expertise in hopes of providing greater knowledge, more profound reflection, greater application and, most importantly, a deeper love and passion for God and His Word.