

# SPOTLIGHT ON MISSION

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## Converge: A new name for an old C&MA tradition

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Special to Christian Week

CALGARY, AB—Since its inception in 1887, The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (C&MA) has been recruiting and training missionaries.

In January 2007, restructuring of the C&MA's international arm resulted in the formation of an in-house team called "Converge" responsible for overseeing the process of hiring and supporting overseas workers. This July, Ric and Ruth-Anne Gilbertson of Calgary, Alberta assumed full-time positions as national directors.

"Converge is not a separate entity," says Ric. "It's a new name for something that's been going on for a long time. . . that is, the candidate recruitment and development side of our organization. For those who believe God is calling them to serve internationally and are connected with the Alliance church, it's our way of helping them get to where they're meant to go."

From 1992 to 2005 the Gilbertsons were missionaries in Venezuela, so they are familiar with the challenges of serving internationally.

"During our time in Latin America we saw the need for a good system which matched people with their giftedness, as well as made sure the people had the kinds of tools they needed in order to have a long-lasting ministry," explains Ruth-Anne. "There was a lot of turnover and it hampered the



Ruth-Anne and Ric Gilbertson

effectiveness of our work there. We also saw people coming and not working in their gifts; that hurt people's souls."

As national directors the Gilbertsons are dedicated to listening to their missionary candidates, supporting them along every leg of the journey and ensuring they are placed where their gifts are best put to use.

After all, these factors will determine their effectiveness on the mission field. "Most of the time international workers' difficulties lie in their soul issues, things going on deep within them; we want to help them have the tools they need so when the going gets tough they know how to turn to God," says Ruth-Anne.

Converge focuses on sending equipped missionaries to

the world's least-reached people groups—places where less than two per cent of the population is Christian. Such assignments require intense training and focus.

In addition to having a new name, Converge has initiated new roles for those working overseas. These initiatives include second-career and marketplace missionaries.

Second career missionaries, explains Ric, are generally those in their mid-40s who have decided to exchange a previous profession for that of working overseas. "Through time God will have made it clear He wants to change their vocation and be involved in something international; second-career is a way of identifying those people and then preparing them and sending them."

Marketplace missionaries, on the other hand, can go where more conventional missionaries cannot in light of having a marketable skill or trade; men and women will sign up to go to a place "which might be more overtly hostile to Christianity, and either start a business or be hired," explains Ric.

The Gilbertsons have high hopes for the future of Converge, including two-year apprenticeships and weekend conferences for overseas candidates.

"We desire to see people where God wants them to be," explains Ruth-Anne. "Yes, we have the overseas focus because that's our specialty, but what really excites us is seeing people being used by God in the places He's called them."

For more information, visit [www.cmalliance.ca](http://www.cmalliance.ca) or [www.cmaconverge.com](http://www.cmaconverge.com).

## Spots

1865: 21-year-old Albert Simpson preaches his first sermon as a pastor in one of Canada's most prestigious pulpits; becomes ordained; gets married; honeymoons; and returns to his pulpit inside one week.

1885: John Salmon leaves his Toronto pastorate to start an independent ministry for the "least, the last and the lost".

1887: Salmon and Simpson founds the C&MA

1920s: The society becomes a huge evangelical movement on both sides of the border

1981: The C&MA in Canada became autonomous with 251 churches, 44,549 inclusive members, 436 official workers and 112 missionaries

1998: The Global Ministeries leadership was formed and four Canadian Regional Developers were appointed

2007: Converge became an in-house network of the C&MA

[www.cmacan.org](http://www.cmacan.org)

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### OUR VISION PRAYER:

O God,  
with all our hearts  
we long to be:

a movement of churches;  
transformed by Christ,  
transforming Canada  
and the world.



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