

# Guest Editorial: Farewell & look outward

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This is my farewell column for Religion News Service. After nearly 20 years of writing commentary for this extraordinary news service, it is time for a change.

First, the practical. Second, the meat.



Tom Ehrich As a writer, I am shifting my focus to my new *Fresh Day* online magazine and to two book projects. One book is an on-the-road theology growing out of a month-long pilgrimage I took across the country. The second is a Bible study guide for Advent/Christmas/Epiphany using the *Revised Common Lectionary*.

I continue to write my daily “On a Journey” meditations and weekly essay, as well as a weekly Church Wellness Report and a thrice-weekly blog. These writings are available at [www.morningwalkmedia.com](http://www.morningwalkmedia.com).

Now, the meat.

## **Better days ahead**

Christian congregations have inflicted pain on themselves. But I sense better days lie ahead for Christians who can think beyond inherited

institutions and “go to the edge of your church property and look outward.”

When this column began, my charge was to write commentary on faith and ethics. That has meant looking at politics, the economy, cultural shifts and the complex contexts that greet Christianity in North America.

Those issues are more important than ever. The Christian right has worked hard to identify a single “Christian” perspective on life, centered in a moral agenda having to do with sex. There is far more to be said. Injustice and gross inequalities matter more to the nation and to God. Jesus, after all, taught mostly about wealth and power, with hardly a word about sex.

### **Turn outward and forward**

I feel optimistic about the future of Christianity in America. After all, God wants the Christian enterprise to succeed, and so it will. I am optimistic many congregations will turn outward and forward and work resolutely for a fresh day.

I see a new generation of younger clergy who haven’t spent their careers dealing with 50 years of decline. They are fresh, they have good ideas, and congregations need to hire them and listen to them.

Veterans of the Great Decline need to let go of control and turn their attention to healing and freshening. We suffered mightily during five decades of decline. We have never known the sunny days of the 1950s. We just knew we were getting hammered for not replicating them.

### **Start fresh conversations**

As congregations and denominations move on without our leadership, we need to start fresh conversations. Name our wounds, admit our mistakes, rediscover our hopes, and not allow our unresolved issues and control needs to continue dragging down the enterprise.

Hence, my personal focus on *Fresh Day*. Time to discover fresh ideas, fresh words, fresh alliances and a fresh faith.

*Tom Ehrich is the president of Morning Walk Media and publisher of Fresh Day online magazine. His website is [www.morningwalkmedia.com](http://www.morningwalkmedia.com). Follow Tom on Twitter @tomehrich.*