

DENNIS

- Actor
- Writer
- Director & Producer
- Founder
- Teacher
- Artist
- Believer
- Storyteller

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Dennis' Dramatic Change

Last fall, a very large deal that Dennis had worked a long time towards, with a very large client, fell through. This was a huge crash for Dennis: for once, he was looking forward to a steady income for months, from scriptwriting, with the potential for more if the play was a hit. Now it was being snatched back. Why had God once again made his life difficult? Dennis had been sure that scriptwriting was what God had long been directing him towards. He felt a horrible, cold realization that he could have been wrong, for

30 years, about God's call



on his life. He said aloud the words he had never spoken before. "I quit."

In that brokenness, that letting go, he saw that his striving, even his

prayers, were conditional on "success". In this crisis, he suddenly saw that his obedience and prayers to God had unconsciously been aimed at successfulness, not faithfulness.

Dennis went on a weekend retreat to a boat-house with his daughter, to celebrate her sixteenth birthday. They had talked off and on for months about youth theatre. Dennis had explored several possibilities with other orgs, but nothing was forthcoming. The discussion with his daughter renewed.

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NEWS: *Glory Man* a Finalist

Dennis Hassell's first screenplay, *GLORY MAN*, is a finalist for the \$50,000 Kairos prize.

The Kairos Prizes are designed to encourage the production of movies that are wholesome, uplifting and inspirational and that result in

a greater increase in either man's understanding or love of God. The top winner's script will also be read by top studio executives at Disney, DreamWorks, Fox, etc. (see www.templeton.org)

Glory Man is one of twelve finalists.

Glory Man is based on a true story of race, terror, and faith. It is about a tiny community of Christians who stood up to their society and the Ku Klux Klan, and who ultimately birthed Habitat for Humanity.

Dennis' Dramatic Change, cont.



About youth,
for youth, by
youth.

*“Lord,
I am at your
service.”*

A thirst for
faith-based
arts, and
arts-based
outreach.

She said, “Why don’t you just get some youth together and do it your-

self?” He started to think about being based in the most multi-cultural city in the world, Toronto, and transcultural theatre made a lot of sense. He couldn’t sleep. He got up and wrote for hours. By dawn, he had outlined a pilot project for transcultural youth theatre.

That, however, was not the dramatic change. The next day,

walking bleary-eyed up the path to the car, Dennis said out loud to God and the chipmunks, “I am tired, Lord, of pushing my agenda, and getting angry at you for not following it. Show me what you are doing, and I will join in. I have given up on being the master, so I will be the servant. I’m at your service.”

Driving back to Toronto, he got an idea for a youth play. Then another. And another, and another. In a week, he had rough outlines for nine plays. People started contacting *him*, out of the blue. He started finding funding and other resources.

Within six weeks, he received a pledge for \$10,000 in seed money.

And that snarl with the big client, that prompted his despair? Friends in Calgary offered to pay for a top notch intellectual property lawyer. Dennis ended up with a very satisfactory deal.

Perhaps the funding opportunities will shrink. Perhaps the next five years will be a struggle to finance this vision for transcultural youth-

to-youth outreach theatre.

Then again, perhaps everything will flourish. In either case, in both the best and the worst, will Dennis continue to pray, “Lord, I am at your service.”?

A script writer would say, that in the story of Dennis’ life, that is the dramatic question.

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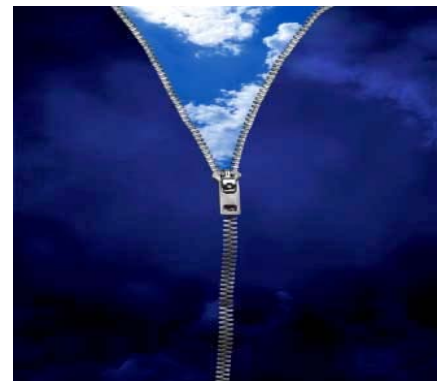
Dramatic Change Youth Theatre

Dramatic Change (DC) is about putting urban teenagers onstage, in youth-to-youth ministry.

DC equips youth for this by training and rehearsing them in local touring productions.

Youth come out of the project with broad experience, practical training, and a thirst for faith-based arts, and arts-based outreach.

Dramatic Change currently has seven youth scripts in early development.



DCYT PHASE ONE: Toronto Pilot Projects



Dramatic Change supplies the local sponsor(s) with a youth outreach script and a professional instructor, director, choreographer, etc. to train young actors and technical crewmembers through the process of mounting a one-act show. The

end of the show includes youth testimonies, audience feedback cards, and interaction between cast and youth in the audience.

DC also supplies costume/set/props/sound designs, an A-Z pr kit, and the production template for the sponsor's adult volunteers (building costumes & sets, etc.). This can be a terrific community-building activity, as they support

their youth behind the scenes. Alternately, the Sponsor can usually buy or rent ready-made costumes and sets from DC.

The show will be available to the youths' church(es) or other sponsoring organizations or community events for unlimited performances within a one-year time period. They can also tour it overseas. Sponsors(s) may be an alliance of neighbourhood churches, a large church, a city-wide denominational project, a para-church organization, or any combination thereof.

“Everyouth became alive to me!...I fell in love with the play,...I’m so excited about the play.”

DC: THE TRANSCULTURAL GLOBAL PHASE

The long term vision for **Dramatic Change Youth Theatre**: A North American team rehearses a transcultural play in two languages: English/French, or English/Spanish, or Mandarin, Hindi, Swahili, etc. After premiering the show locally (in part to raise funds) they take the show overseas on a short mis-

sion trip. While there, they train a local cast of youth, and transfer the production, lock, stock and barrel, to the national team, which has a long license to perform, and the freedom to adapt music and language to cultural nuances.

To this end, the first play has already been translated into

Spanish. From the Spanish Youth Pastor in Bolivia who did the translation:

“Everyouth became alive to me! I felt pursued by Death. I fell in love with the play, for there’s so many messages for our spiritual life. I’m so excited about the play. My sister read it with me, she really likes it!”

What People Are Saying

Recently, Dennis celebrated his 50th birthday. At the big bash that was thrown by his family, a former colleague shared at the open mike. In conversation with a pastor a few days before, the pastor had told him,

“I did go to Toronto to see **A Divine Comedy**. I loved that play. I was a teenager at the time, but it

still rings in my head today and has been part of the formation of who I am today.

The idea that God wants to be out in the community more than just in the walls of the church is a huge part of my heart today. So, if you had anything to do with that play, I thank you very much.”

Dennis Hassell wrote and directed

A Divine Comedy. He went on to re-write it as **St. Hilaria’s**, which he tours as a one-man show. **If you are interested in bringing this show to your community, contact Linda at touring@dennishassell.com.**



Almost 50....

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Faith, with imagination.

....a scribble from Dennis

Oysh, back from seven errands
this afternoon— so much for the quiet
reflective life of the writer!

Both *A MIGHTY CLOUD...* and
EVERYOUTH are on the home stretch
of re-writes — although rewrites never
really end.

Life is rewrites.

- - Dennis

Mark Your Calendar

A MIGHTY CLOUD OF WITNESSES

by Dennis Hassell, has an on-stage reading including a full black gospel choir, 8 pm April 18 and 7 pm on Sat. 19th at First Baptist Church, 101 Huron St. (College & Spadina, park in school lot east of church).

This is a story of the oldest surviving black institution in Ontario, First Baptist Church: from the Underground Railroad to confronting the KKK, to issues facing the wider African Canadian urban community today.



**Fri. April 18 8 p.m.
and Sat. April 19, 7 p.m. First
Baptist Church, 101 Huron St.**

A Mighty Cloud of Witnesses was commissioned by the Ontario Government's Bicentennial Committee on the Abolition of Slavery (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration).

To order tickets, email
touring@dennishassell.com
We will send directions and parking info.

Include your name and phone number with your order. Tickets are \$10, in advance, \$15 at the door.