

# TÕE TERA / THE SOWER - APRIL 2026

ST. PETER'S ESTONIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF TORONTO  
EELK Toronto Peetri Kogudus



## Something to Ponder - Why do people drift away from God?

Billy Graham once stated that he'd "discovered that many people who drift away from God actually don't think much about it — or if they do, they end up deceiving themselves".

After doing some research, I found that among other things, people turn away from God due to a combination of personal, intellectual, and emotional factors, often driven by a desire for autonomy, preoccupation with worldly pleasures, or unanswered questions about suffering and faith. Other factors include disillusionment with hypocritical religious institutions, the influence of secularization, and a lack of consistent spiritual engagement.

After reading a recent article in which someone posed a somewhat similar question, I decided to conduct a small experiment using AI to explore why Christianity might be under threat.

I turned to ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer), an artificial intelligence chatbot developed by OpenAI. It is designed to understand and generate human-like text, allowing people to ask questions, receive explanations, and learn about new topics. The name reflects how it works: "generative" means it creates text, "pre-trained" indicates it has learned from vast amounts of written material, and "transformer" refers to the type of neural network architecture it uses. ChatGPT does not think independently or form personal opinions; rather, it predicts words and sentences based on patterns it has learned from data. Simply put, it is a fast, highly capable digital tool—something like an enormous, interactive library that can produce human-like responses.

I asked ChatGPT the following: "If you were the devil, how would you turn people away from God?" This was AI's response:



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817 Mount Pleasant Road  
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### Kantselei Tunnid/Office Hours

Teisipäeval/Tues. 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Kolmapäeval/Wed. 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Neljapäeval/Thurs. 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

### Deacon Karl Paju

[karl.paju@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:karl.paju@mail.utoronto.ca)  
Neljapäeval/Thurs. 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.

### Music Director & Organist

Erik Kreem [erikkreem@hotmail.com](mailto:erikkreem@hotmail.com)

### Church Administrator

Tiina Jenkins 416-483-5847

### Juhatus Liikmed / Executive

Toomas Arget, Chairman  
416-802-8551  
[argettthomas50@gmail.com](mailto:argettthomas50@gmail.com)

Tiiu Roiser, Vice-Chair  
416-402-1132  
[tiiu-roiser@rogers.com](mailto:tiiu-roiser@rogers.com)

Toomas Trei, Treasurer  
416-698-8555  
[ttrei@sympatico.ca](mailto:ttrei@sympatico.ca)

Mary Donaldson, Secretary  
[maryots156@gmail.com](mailto:maryots156@gmail.com)

Anne Liis Keelmann, Program Director  
[akeelmann@rogers.com](mailto:akeelmann@rogers.com)

Ilo Maimets, Archive Director  
[ilo@yorku.ca](mailto:ilo@yorku.ca)

*“That’s a deep and serious question. I’ll answer it in a thoughtful way — not by promoting harm, but by highlighting common spiritual pitfalls many religious traditions warn about.*

*If I were the “devil” (as understood in traditions like Christianity), and my goal was to turn people away from God, I wouldn’t do it with obvious evil. I’d do it subtly. Here’s how — in principle:*

**Make Distraction Normal** - *I wouldn’t attack faith directly. I’d just keep people constantly distracted — endless entertainment, noise, busyness, comparison. No time for prayer, reflection, or silence. A distracted soul rarely looks upward.*

**Redefine Good and Evil** - *Instead of denying God exists, I’d blur moral lines. Make truth feel subjective. Convince people that “whatever feels right is right.” Confusion weakens conviction.*

**Encourage Pride Over Humility** - *Pride separates. If people believe they are entirely self-sufficient — no need for grace, forgiveness, or guidance — they drift naturally. Ego can quietly replace devotion.*

**Promote Hopelessness** - *When people fail, I’d whisper: “You’re too far gone.” “God couldn’t forgive you.” Despair can distance someone more effectively than rebellion.*

**Turn Religion Into Performance** - *I’d make faith about appearance, status, politics, or superiority — not transformation. When religion becomes hypocrisy, people either harden or walk away.*

**Keep People Spiritually Isolated** - *Faith grows in community. I’d isolate believers — convince them they don’t need fellowship, accountability, or encouragement.*

*Interestingly, many spiritual writers have explored similar ideas. For example, in The Screwtape Letters, C. S. Lewis imagines a senior demon advising a junior one — and the strategy is almost entirely subtlety, distraction, and distortion rather than dramatic evil.*

*If you’re asking this from a personal place, I’d gently flip the question:*

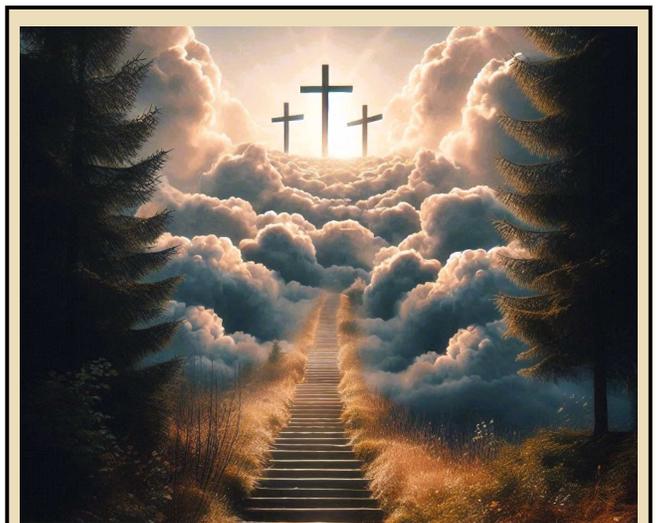
*Instead of “How would evil pull people away?”  
Ask, “What strengthens people toward God?”*

*Usually the answers are the opposite:*

- Stillness
- Gratitude
- Community
- Humility
- Honest repentance
- Love in action”

*What are your thoughts? Did AI get the answer right? Do you think this is what is happening in our society right now?*

*Tiiu Roiser*



*“Feelings come and feelings go,  
And feelings are deceiving;  
My warrant is the Word of God--  
Naught else is worth believing.*

*Though all my heart should feel condemned  
For want of some sweet token,  
There is One greater than my heart  
Whose Word cannot be broken.*

*I’ll trust in God’s unchanging Word  
Till soul and body sever,  
For, though all things shall pass away,  
HIS WORD SHALL STAND FOREVER!”*

*Although the above has always been attributed to Martin Luther, one researcher questions this and suggests that the author may have actually been Lutheran minister W.M. Czamanske.*

## UUDISED / NEWS

**Congratulations to the Estonian Relief Committee in Canada on behalf of its 75th anniversary!**



On Saturday March 7th, the EAK celebrated its 75th anniversary with a fundraising dinner and entertainment program at the Latvian Centre. The fundraising event collected money to support renovations and programs at Ehatare. St. Peter's members supported the event with their attendance at several tables.

### March 8th - English Language Service .

Deacon Karl Paju spoke on the topic of lent. Video of the sermon is available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgBtp8VZGcg>



“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” – John 20:29



**POLICY FOR CHURCH SERVICES COMMITTEE  
(TEENISTUSTE TOIMKOND)**

According to the Constitution & Bylaws of St. Peter's Part VII, Section 18 (h), The Congregational Council (Board) shall appoint such committees as may be necessary or advisable.

- I. Committees will have a defined mandate and report to the Board.
- II. Committees may be re-constituted or revised by the Board as required.

The Church Services Committee (Committee) consists of voting members of the Congregation. Being a member of the Committee includes having duties and responsibilities, but it is also a privilege to be undertaken seriously.

1. The Committee takes effect after the 2025 AGM:
  - a) Any Voting Member of the Congregation may volunteer to serve on the committee or,
  - b) Nominations for the Committee may be submitted in writing to the Board and must include the signed consent of the nominee to accept the position,
  - c) Committee members are annually recognized and blessed by presiding clergy.
2. The Program Director will be the Chairperson of the Committee and may appoint any other member of the Board to chair any meeting in their stead from time to time as required.
3. Meetings of the Committee may be called with at least seven (7) days' notice, by the Chairperson of the Committee.
4. The duties of the Committee consist of the following:
  - a) being spiritual ambassadors for the Congregation
  - b) supporting clergy with pastoral care duties
  - c) performing ushering duties as outlined in the Ushering Guidelines of the Church

- d) participating in services and church events including placing altar linens, lighting candles, preparing holy communion, greeting congregants, distributing service bulletins, Bible readings, collection, and other duties as needed
- e) making sure the sanctuary is tidy, items left are collected, candles are extinguished, lights are turned off, and the doors are locked
- f) maintaining privacy and confidentiality of material and information obtained as a result of being a member of the Committee

**VOLUNTEERS  
WE NEED YOU**

**Lots of opportunities !**

- Church Services Committee (Teenistuste Toimkond)
- Church Archive
- The Guild
- Special event assistance
- Fundraising
- Marketing
- Choir

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**You Can Make a Difference !**

**St. Peter's is looking for volunteers to help out at the church. We have many volunteer opportunities. Please consider joining the Church Services Committee and lending us a helping hand.**

*"If Jesus Came to My House."*

*If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two  
If he came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.  
Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room  
to such an honored Guest,  
And all the food you'd serve to Him  
would be the very best,  
And you'd keep assuring Him  
you're glad to have Him there  
That serving Him in your own home  
is joy beyond compare.*

*But when you saw Him coming,  
would you meet Him at the door  
With arms outstretched in welcome  
to your heavenly Visitor?  
Or would you have to change your clothes  
before you let Him in?  
Or hide some magazines  
and put the Bible where they'd been?  
Would you turn off the radio  
and hope He hadn't heard?  
And wish you hadn't uttered  
that last, loud, hasty word?*

*Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?  
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?  
And I wonder if the Savior spent a day or two with you,  
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?  
Would you go right on saying the things you always say?  
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?*

*Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace?  
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?  
Would you sing the songs you always sing, and read the books you read,  
And let him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?  
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go?  
Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?*

*Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends?  
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?  
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on?  
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?  
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do?  
If Jesus Christ in person came to spend some time with you.*



*Written in 1953  
by Lois Blanchard Eades  
(1919-2011)  
Now in public domain.*

## CHURCH SERVICES & EVENTS / JUMALA-TEENISTUSED & ÜRITUSED\*

\*New events may be added to the calendar—please check our church website for any additions. [www.stpeterstorontoestonianchurch.ca/event-calendar](http://www.stpeterstorontoestonianchurch.ca/event-calendar)

- April 1 - (Wednesday) 12:00 noon Guild gathering. Everyone welcome!
- April 1 - (Wednesday) 7 - 8:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal with Erik Kreem in the Nave. New singers welcome!
- April 3 - (Friday) Good Friday 11:30 a.m. English Service with Deacon Karl Paju and organist Erik Kreem.
- April 5 - (Sunday) Easter Sunday 11:30 a.m. Estonian Service with Reverend Ando Kass, Deacon Karl Paju, and organist Erik Kreem including Communion. Singing will be St. Peter's Choir. An Easter brunch (külmlaud) for \$40 will follow the service -- we ask that you please register your attendance in advance by calling the church office 416-483-5847 by March 29th.
- April 8 - (Wednesday) 7 - 8:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal with Erik Kreem in the Nave. New singers welcome!
- April 15 - (Wednesday) 7 - 8:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal with Erik Kreem in the Nave. New singers welcome!
- April 22 - (Wednesday) 7 - 8:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal with Erik Kreem in the Nave. New singers welcome!
- April 26 - (Sunday) Bilingual Service thanking high donors. Deacon Karl Paju & organist Erik Kreem. Fellowship in Guild room following the service.
- April 26 - (Sunday) 3:00 p.m. Service at Ehatare with Deacon Karl Paju. Everyone welcome.
- April 29 - (Wednesday) 7 - 8:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal with Erik Kreem in the Nave. New singers welcome!

Advance Notice:

- May 3 - (Sunday) Combined early Mother's Day Estonian service with Vana Andres congregation. A light luncheon for a voluntary donation (suggested minimum \$20) will be served in downstairs hall following the service. Please register your attendance with the church office at 416-483-5847 by April 26th.



Chocolate is a health food since it is derived from cacao beans and beans are vegetables. Sugar is derived either from sugar beets or cane, also both vegetables. Vegetables contain healthy fiber. And, of course, the milk/cream in chocolate is dairy. Please feel free to indulge in lots of Easter chocolate to meet the dietary requirements for a healthy daily vegetable and dairy intake.



### Church Office Hours:

Tues. 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Wed. 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Thurs. 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

### Deacon Karl Paju's Office Hours:

Thursdays from  
12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.

To request prayers, please contact  
St. Peter's office.

*Eestpalved võib igal ajal kirjalikult  
esitada kiriku kontorisse:  
[stpeterstoronto@rogers.com](mailto:stpeterstoronto@rogers.com)*

If you have not already done so,  
please ensure that the church has  
your up-to-date contact information.

*Kui teie ei ole juba teinud, palun  
saatke oma kehtivad andmed  
(postiaadress, epost, ja telefoninum-  
ber) kiriku kantseleisse:  
416-483-5847.*

**Safety Bulletin: Skinny people  
are easier to kidnap. Eat choco-  
late and stay safe!**