Founder of Charismatic TV Network in Canada Resigns

The president of Canada's only fully charismatic television network recently resigned after admitting he committed adultery.

Dick Dewert, the 55-year-old founder of The Miracle Channel, is now focusing on restoration with his wife, Joan, according to network spokesman and recently appointed CEO Ray Block. Joan Dewert also resigned in a show of support for her husband. The couple, who have two grown children, were unavailable for comment.

"We're just going ahead as usual with our programming and our day-to-day operations," Block told Charisma. "Our partner base has been gracious. We've had overwhelming support from them after hearing the news. We don't know yet what professional direction Dick will move in. But this ministry isn't about one or two people—it's God's, and we expect Him to use it as He sees fit."

Dewert, who was pastor of Victory Church in Lethbridge, Alberta, until 1997 when he became a full-time broadcaster, is well known for challenging Canada's regulations regarding religious broadcasting. In 1986, he illegally rebroadcast Trinity Broadcasting Network in Canada, subsequently causing the Canadian Radio and Television Commission to re-examine its laws and allow religious broadcasters to start their own stations. The Miracle Channel in Lethbridge, Vision TV in Toronto and Crossroads Television Service (CTS) in Burlington, Ontario, were soon born.

Although Dewert received the first license for a Christian TV station in Canada in 1995, CTS founder David Mainse established the nation's first Christian television show, Crossroads, in 1963. In 1977 he launched 100 Huntley Street, now Canada's longest-running Christian TV program. CTS received its license 20 years later. "I think the very nature of someone who'd build a channel like The Miracle Channel—rugged and pioneering—might also have too little accountability," Mainse said. "Accountability with a board of directors who don't just rubberstamp things and a closely guarded prayer life are key when you're in that type of position. Dick has done a great work, however—brave and bold. He's been amazingly determined to establish Christian television here in Canada."

Although The Miracle Channel recently applied for a license in Calgary and Edmonton, which are both located in Alberta, CTS received approval to broadcast in those areas. The Miracle Channel has signals in Lethbridge, where is it headquartered, and in Bow Island/Medicine Hat, Alberta. It is available on both of Canada's major satellite providers and on some cable stations in western Canada. Until their resignations, the Dewerts hosted the flagship show, Lifeline, which featured interviews with charismatic and prophetic leaders from across North America.

The 24-hour station is commercial-free but frequently broadcasts fundraising drives. The Miracle Channel reported donations of close to $4 million in 2005 and is expected to raise $7.5 million this year, Block said.

Josie Newman in Toronto