

# Cross Current



Real help for real life

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## Wall to Wall Support



Alan Darlington's new environmental design is turning competitors green, and not just with envy.

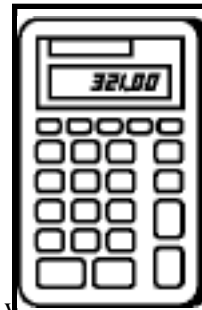
A plant biologist who began working on his radical idea at the University of Guelph, Darlington now runs a company specializing in *living walls* — walls comprised entirely of plants that play a key role in improving the indoor environment. Though walls made up entirely of greenery have been

around for years, Darlington's are different.

A case in point is the one his company built at St. Mary's University in Halifax, one of the biggest living walls in the world. Three storeys high and incorporating more than 1,100 plants, the project is hailed as a combination of science, art and engineering, it not only looks great, it's a vital part of the building's air handling system.

The wall actually sucks air through the wall and into the building's ventilation system. That's important because the air gets into the roots of the plants where microbes break down contaminants and clean the air of impurities. Though mechanical air purifiers can do the same thing, their filters eventually fill up and become toxic, a problem not shared by the plants in a living wall.

Living walls also save money on winter heating. With a conventional



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Christ's sin calculator  
has only one key:  
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brought into a building to replace old air must be heated, whereas the plants in a living wall merely clean the existing warm air and recirculate it. No new air from outside is needed, which cuts heating costs by up to 30 per cent.

Along with being easy on the eye, living walls help muffle interior sound; aid relaxation and alleviate stress; change carbon dioxide into oxygen, which is healthier for all of us; and they reduce overall temperatures in buildings, which cuts energy consumption. Popular plants include clematis, hydrangeas and wisteria. Living walls are popular on university campuses and other public buildings like city halls and hospitals. They're starting to show up in churches, too.

How symbolic. Wherever we gather to share our lives in community, the real walls — the things that give us definition, shelter and support — are our relationships. What counts is not lathe and plaster but love and people. All of us, when brought together in the family of God, comprise the living walls of the church.

As such, our relationships must be vital and dynamic, improving the environment in which we find ourselves and enhancing the quality of life around us.

We hear lots of talk these days about sustainability — maintaining an ecological balance through the protection of natural resources. But the concept is equally important on a spiritual level. We must have sustainable relationships by maintaining an emotional balance through the protection of spiritual resources, like love, faith, hope and peace.

Simply, if the church is to be anything more than an organization or institution, we must clear the environment around us of pollutants such as greed, jealousy and jaded self-interest. We must take the Holy Spirit into our lives and let him filter out the toxins that clog the heart and cloud the mind. He does so by purifying the good that's already within us and circulating the warmth of his love in all that we do.

In a church with living walls, caring, supportive relationships quiet the noise of the world and reduce stress while fostering peace of mind. They turn toxic self-centredness into love, which is the oxygen of the soul. And they quell anger and envy, bringing down the emotional temperature and letting us live more fulfilling and efficient lives.

In every successful church, the secret to living well is the living wall.