



#myGoodLife

TRY US FREE

ADULT COLOURING BOOKS ARE DRAWING A CROWD! ORDER NOW!

9° Toronto (/cities/toronto/weather)

CANADA

Sign In ([https://my.thestar.com/users/sign\\_in](https://my.thestar.com/users/sign_in))

beta > We're building a new site with you in mind. Give it a scroll and tell us what you think.

[beta.thestar.com](https://beta.thestar.com)

HOME

NEWS

- GTA
- Queen's Park
- Canada
- World
- Investigations
- Crime

YOUR TORONTO

OPINION

SPORTS

BUSINESS

ENTERTAINMENT

LIFE

AUTOS

PHOTOS

DIVERSIONS

CLASSIFIEDS

OBITUARIES

Inside thestar.com



Jeff Melanson leaves top job at Toronto Symphony Orchestra



'Do not be dissuaded,' Ghameshi's lawyer tells female peers



Mississauga's Muzzo Park gets a tweak to its name

News / Canada

# Atheist United Church minister challenges review that could lead to firing

While Rev. Gretta Vosper's superiors question whether she is fit to do her job, she says dismissal talks put colleagues at risk of being judged for their beliefs.

Tweet

G+1

5

reddit this!



VIEW 2 PHOTOS

COLIN PERKEL / THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rev. Gretta Vosper, a committed atheist who does not believe in the Bible, is fighting a process that could see her defrocked for her views.

By: Colin Perkel The Canadian Press, Published on Wed Aug 05 2015

An ordained [United Church of Canada](#) minister who believes in neither God nor the Bible said Wednesday she is prepared to fight an unprecedented attempt to boot her from the pulpit for her beliefs.

In an interview at her West Hill church, Rev. Gretta Vosper said congregants support her view that [how you live is more important](#) than what you believe in.

"I don't believe in . . . the god called God," Vosper said. "Using the word gets in the way of sharing what I want to share."

Vosper, 57, who was ordained in 1993 and joined her east-end church in 1997, said the idea of an interventionist, supernatural being on which so much church doctrine is based belongs to an outdated world view.

What's important, she says, is that [her views hear](#)ken to Christianity's beginnings, before the focus shifted from how one lived to doctrinal belief in God, Jesus and the Bible.

"Is the Bible really the word of God? Was Jesus a person?" she said.

"It's mythology. We build a faith tradition upon it which shifted to find belief more important than how we lived."

### Latest National Videos

Watch more

Jean Lapierre was 'loved by all,' Justin Trudeau says



### Top News

**NEW** Kevin Mohamed's trip to Turkey was an innocent family holiday, mom says  
Trudeau's 'sunny ways' politely received by U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Boys get 'extreme sports,' girls offered manicures at Richmond Hill day camp

**Updated** Vice reporter must give RCMP texts from suspected terrorist: judge

Jeff Melanson leaves TSO top job amid messy marriage breakup

Ontario extends paramedic house-call program for seniors

Swiss Chalet owner Cara buying St-Hubert for \$537M

LIVE: Tim Bosma murder trial continues

Vosper made her views clear as far back as a Sunday sermon in 2001, but her congregation stood behind her until a decision to do away with the Lord's Prayer in 2008 prompted about 100 of the 150 members to leave. The rest backed her.

Things came to a head this year after she wrote an open letter to the church's spiritual leader pointing out that belief in God can motivate bad things — a reference to the [Charlie Hebdo massacre](#) in Paris.

"That didn't go over well," Vosper said. "(But) if we are going to continue to use language that suggests we get our moral authority from a supernatural source, any group that says that can trump any humanistic endeavour."

Rev. David Allen, executive secretary of the Toronto Conference, said he took various concerns about Vosper to the church's executive, which decided it wanted to investigate her fitness to be a minister.

First, however, they needed to know the process.

"We'd never done it before," Allen said.

In response, Nora Sanders, general secretary of the church's General Council, issued a ruling in May laying out a review process that could ultimately lead to Vosper's defrocking.

Essentially, Sanders said, the review should determine whether she was being faithful to her ordination vows, which included affirming a belief in "God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Vosper is appealing Sanders' ruling, saying it puts any minister at risk of being judged and found wanting. An ecclesiastical court is set to hear her appeal in the fall.

Allen concedes the issue has the potential to cause disunity in the United Church, which prides itself on tolerance for diversity and inclusiveness.

"What we don't want is to limit the scope of beliefs within the church and yet what was being questioned here was: Has she gone too far?" Allen said.

"The vision of the United Church of Canada is: There is a God in whom we believe and our statements of faith are very clear about that."

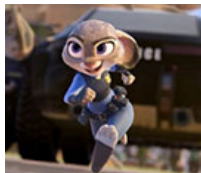
Randy Bowes, board chairman at West Hill who led the search committee that hired Vosper, said he's had no complaints from congregants.

People want to engage in critical thinking as they explore new ways of expressing their faith and values, Bowes said, and that conversation is "alive and rich" within the community.

In the interim, Vosper said she and those who support her will continue to hold true to her humanistic views.

"If the cost of that is that we are no longer welcome within that denomination," she said, "it will be because that denomination has defined us out of it, not because we have defined ourselves out of it."

**More on thestar.com**



Zootopia hops with life: review

GO bus terminal opens at Mississauga's Squar...



Restyle your home on a budget

Kevin Mohamed's trip to Turkey was an innocen...

Read more about: [Charlie Hebdo](#)

**Become a "Barefoot Writer"**

And live the life of a famous writer without having to write a blockbuster movie script or a chart-topping book.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS UNIQUE GROUP OF HIGHLY-PAID WRITERS ...

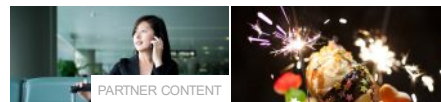


Toronto parking fines jump on Thursday



On Assignment: Sourced

Let the people fund your education



Travel essentials

Toronto.com: Where to Eat this Weekend

**Become a "Barefoot Writer"**

And live the life of a famous writer without having to write a blockbuster movie script or a chart-topping book.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS UNIQUE GROUP OF HIGHLY-PAID WRITERS ...

**From around the web**



Trump Is No Accident The New York Times



Amanda Dufner Is The Most Attractive PGA Tour Wife By Far AllRookie



Facial Redness Can Be Fixed From The Inside Out — Here's



A new spin on an old mix and my gut is disappearing!