

## RELIGION

# Electronics and evang

## Pastor Joseph Hovsepien combines repairing radios with spr

Joseph Hovsepien has had a passion for electronics since he was a boy.

When he was 14 or 15, and a member of the ethnic Armenian community in Greece, his father, a Protestant pastor, offered him a choice.

If Joseph decided to train for the pastorate, his father would help him financially to reach his goal. But if Joseph insisted on a career in electronics, his father would pray for him.

Joseph chose electronics.

He has made quite a go of it, too.

He started by volunteering for the Greek air force and becoming a wireless engineer. Today, he and his wife, Hasmig, operate a busy electronics sales and service centre, Radio Hovsep, on Park Ave., just below Van Horne

### RELIGION HARVEY SHEPHERD

Ave., which he founded after immigrating to Canada in 1960. The store supports Hov-

sepien, his wife and other members of his family, who live in apartments over or next to the store.

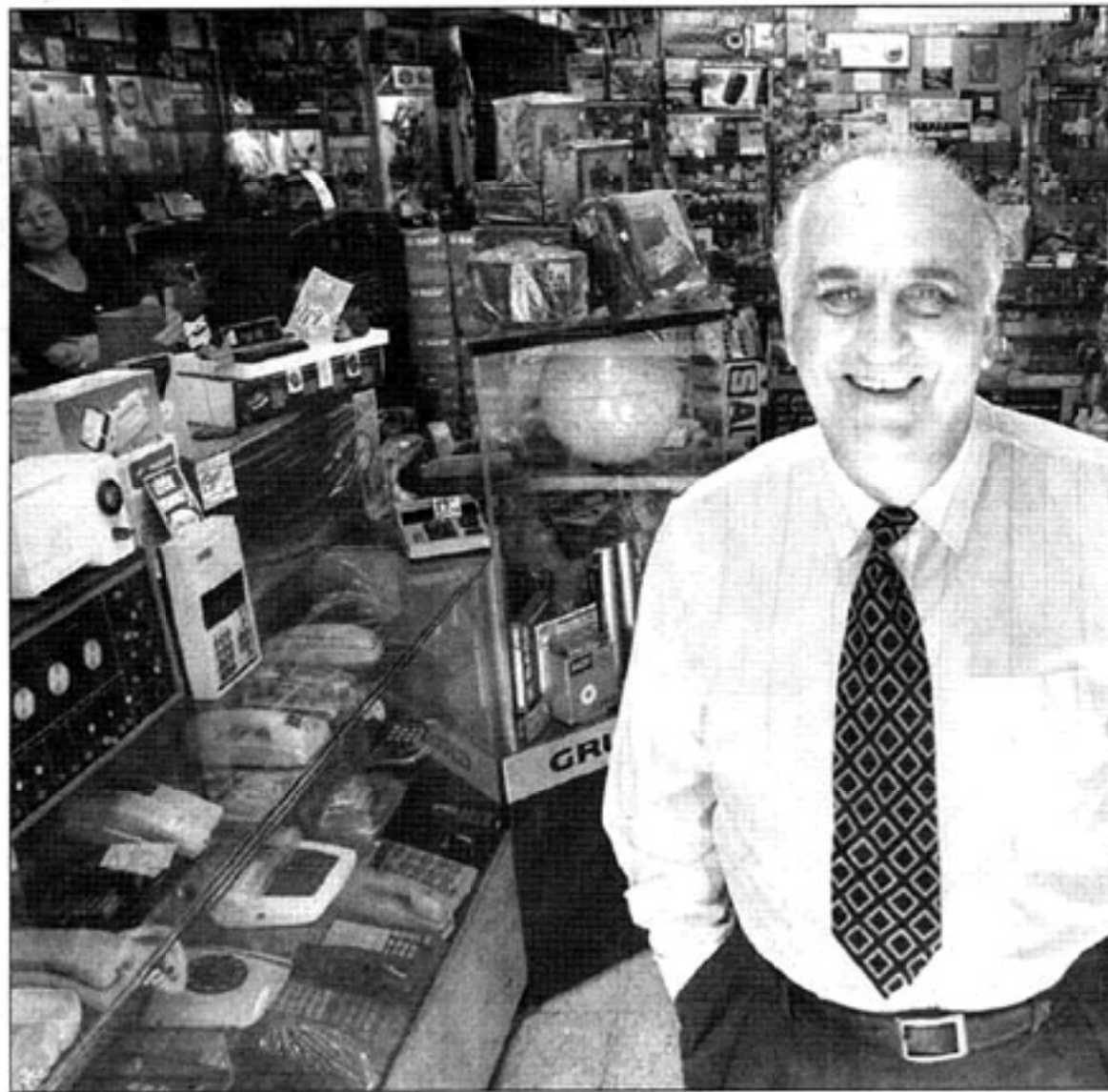
But Joseph Hovsepien's late father eventually got his wish as well. Sixteen years ago, Joseph became the unpaid pastor of Temple Baptist Church, at 5815 Durocher Ave. in Outremont, which was on the brink of closing.

Today, it is what he calls a self-supporting mission centre, with a multi-ethnic congregation of anywhere from 50 to 90 in the pews at a Sunday service, and an active program of Bible study, local evangelizing and other activities. It also contributes financial support to a few missionaries in Canada and other countries.

Tracts written by Hovsepien have been translated into several languages, and he has been told of their turning up in surprisingly remote corners of the globe. He also broadcasts a daily inspirational message at noon on Radio WCHP in Champlain, N.Y., just over the Canada-U.S. border.

And he has just published a book, *God's Workshop: Meditations From Everyday Life for Everyday People*, a collection of about 100 sermonettes based largely on his WCHP broadcasts.

But Hovsepien has not lost his love of electronics and, for him, the two sides of his life have a lot in common



Joseph Hovsepien works in Radio Hovsep on Park Ave. when he isn't preaching at the nearby Ten

closely intertwined. His day at the store often includes ministerial work with people who drop in, knowing they can find him there. He believes the store job makes him more accessible to the public than pastors whose church work is their living.

Hovsepien has always been committed to the Christian church as a layman, although he did take advantage of the freedom gained when he left Greece en route for Canada to visit several Asian countries, look at other religions and try to make his Christian commitment more personal.

ership in Vancouver, encouraged Hovsepien to get involved in the church, even though he did not speak English.

Hovsepien learned English and began teaching and preaching as a layman. He met Hasmig, an ethnic Armenian from Egypt, at the church, where she played the piano.

Hovsepien moved into the ordained ministry 16 years ago after he opposed proposals that Temple Baptist Church shut down for want of members and financial support. He argued that there was no need for the church to rely on a dwindling band of anglophones but

Hovsepien acknowledged that the church's dance has seen-sawed since as the church responded to members of various groups who arrived, for the church, and moved on.

"We are a mission supporting mission post more than a classic local church (making disciples of people and sending them out to spread the

Like some other evangelists, Hovsepien likes to speak to the institutional church, but what he preaches is not

# gelism

Leading the gospel



JOHN MAHONEY, GAZETTE

Temple Baptist Church.

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But he also upholds quite a traditional approach to faith and morality, even showing a little contempt for the "politically correct." He does not object to having Buddhists and Muslims show up at Temple Baptist to argue, and makes no apology for having baptized former Buddhists and Muslims (even though his theology does not consider baptism essential for salvation).

And he does not mind provoking liberal colleagues with an uncompromising insistence that, for example, "adultery is sin." But he said he takes a hard

the two have a lot in common.  
"In my workshop," he writes in God's Workshop, "I restore broken and discarded radios to make them last a little longer. In God's workshop, He restores broken and rejected souls and gives them eternal life."

The two sides of Hovsepian's life are

His connection with Temple Baptist Church has been pretty well continuous since his arrival in Canada. Hovsepian notes in his book that Paul Stevens, pastor at Temple Baptist when Hovsepian arrived in 1960 and now a professor of theology and lead-

that it should emphasize its open-door policy for all comers.

He carried the day, but it was clear that there was no money for salaries and Temple Baptist would have to be a volunteer operation, from the parson on down.

"I am not religious," he

"Religions have destroyed  
Man-made religions have

"I believe in a Creator whose name is Jehovah in Jesus. I'm not 'Catholic' or 'Protestant

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