## MCEC

# MCEC in Ministry Spring 2019

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Vacation Bible School

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Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

# **MCEC** in Ministry

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### God Is At Work In and Through MCEC

A word from MCEC Executive Minister, David Martin. David encourages us to be aware of the Presence of God.

#### God Makes A Difference Markham Christian Worship Centre

Read the ways in which Markham Christian Worship Centre seeks God first.

#### A Small Congregation with a Big Heart Refuge de Paix

Learn how this small congregation is having a big impact on their community in Sherbrooke, QC.

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### Supporting Pastors Across MCEC

Regional Ministry Associates Hear how the Regional Ministry Associates have been working across MCEC.

### Sprouts of Life

**Creativity and Innovation** Find here pockets of God's movement within MCEC congregations as they respond to God's leading.

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Image: Fore

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A heartfelt thank you to all who shared their stories.

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### God Is At Work In and Through MCEC

A Word from David Martin, MCEC Executive Minister

s one by one I turn over the pages of this booklet, I am reminded of a recent visit with our grandchildren. With my twentymonth-old granddaughter, Clara, snuggled in my lap, we paged through one of her favourite storybooks. On each page, I would ask, "Where is the baby horse? Where is the baby deer? Where is the baby bird?" On each page, Clara would carefully look and then consistently point to the baby animal featured on that page. With great satisfaction, she found what she was looking for.

Where is the Presence of God on this page, in this experience, in this relationship? In a similar way, I would like to challenge you to a somewhat more sophisticated adult task as you page through this edition of MCEC in Ministry. On each page, I invite you to stop and ask, "Where is the Presence of God on this page?" As you read the stories, ask, "Where is God present here? How is God at work in and through MCEC?"

In the stories from the Regional Ministry Associates, ponder where you see God's Presence in our congregations as they faithfully engage in ministry. When you read the stories about ReLearning Community, ask, "Where is God in this story? How are we being invited to be God's Presence in the relationship with our neighbour, with our colleague at work or in our church family?" As you reflect on the Voices Together images, ask, "How does God want to be more present in our weekly worship experiences and draw us ever more deeply into an experience of Divine Presence?"

Each page has a story that will inspire you to look for the Presence of God at work in your church, across MCEC or around the world. And when you are done reading, keep asking the same questions as you look at the everyday experiences of life all around you. "Where is the Presence of God in this experience, in this relationship?" Let MCEC in Ministry inspire you to become more aware of God's Presence within and among us, so that in living more deeply into that Presence, we become the very living, breathing Presence of God in our world.

### God Makes A Difference Markham Christian Worship Centre

**(W**e knock on doors and ask if they would like us to pray with them," says Pastor Kapilan Savarimuthu. "Certain hospitals do not want us to go in but others have let us. We ask the patients and if they give permission, we pray. Otherwise we walk away. We have prayed for a lot of people."

Every two weeks for the last three years, Markham Christian Worship Centre (MCWC) visits hospitals and prays with patients. As the youth became interested in being a part of this ministry, older members of MCWC paired with the youth; the older prayed for Tamil patients and the youth, for younger or English-speaking

English-speaking patients.

"It is exciting at Markham Christian Worship Centre," says Pastor Kapilin. "We are taking some new paths and have some ministry ideas but

it is only when we put those plans into the presence of God that God will speak to and lead us. As a church, we are here to sow the seed and make disciples. God does the work."

> Ten years ago, Markham Christian Worship Centre joined MCEC as an emerging congregation. They are

75 people, predominately Tamil, with roots in Sri Lanka. When they became an emerging congregation, they received a plant from the MCEC community of congregations. "I still have that plant from when we joined," says Pastor Kapilan. "It is still living."

Each week the congregation meets for prayer. Pastor Kapilan says, "We are trying to stay at the feet of God by spending more time in prayer. Each Tuesday we meet to pray and people say that it helps them deal with their troubles and stresses in life. Staying in the presence of God makes a difference."

<u>Left</u>: Pastor Kapilan (right) at the opening of their shared worship facility alongside Pastor Paul (Markham Chinese MC) and Pastor Roberson (Hagerman MC). <u>Above</u>: Christmas celebrations.



### A Small Congregation with a Big Heart Refuge de Paix in Sherbrooke, QC

Lucy bundled herself up warmly and made her way through the blustery streets of Sherbrooke on the way to Refuge de Paix early one Sunday morning. It was the kind of grey, stormy day when Sunday worship services are cancelled because it is too wintry to be outside. It was also a morning that Lucy Roca, pastor, had prayed. "Lord, even if there is only one person who will come," she had prayed, "I will go and be there for them."

One man arrived for worship that morning – only one. He was a young man from Mexico, new to Canada. He worshipped with the congregation for the next three months before leaving and returning to his native land of Mexico.

A few months later, he contacted Lucy by email. "It was that day I arrived at Refuge de Paix that I was in a bad space," he wrote. "I was even thinking about suicide. God saved me that day. I am so grateful. Thank you for being there for me." God has influenced many lives through this small congregation. They provide a space for prayer, counselling and encouragement in their neighbourhood, responding to needs

as they arise. They offer support to many Hispanic migrants, guiding and helping them to navigate their new surroundings.

A local government organization refers people who are seeking asylum or refugee status in Canada to Refuge de Paix. Refuge de Paix then assists them as they fill out immigration papers, helps them in interviews, takes them to medical appointments or to the food bank and provides translation services when needed. On average, they connect with people in this way up to three times a week.

"Most of the people that we see do not have family here," says Lucy. "We welcome, encourage,



accompany and help them according to their needs – to be a testimony of help and concern in caring for our brothers and sisters. We also pray with them if they are open to that."

This small congregation started as a house church, moved to worshipping in the local library and now rents their own meeting place. "We have a dream to build a large space for the church with enough room to provide services to the community," says Lucy. "We dream of a day care centre and a place to sell used clothing and furniture." Lucy, a trained social worker, sees many women who struggle with depression. "This would be a great opportunity to provide jobs for women to help them support their families and gain confidence," she says.

Originally commissioned by the Mennonite Church of Teusaquillo in Colombia, Lucy arrived in 2006 to plant churches for Hispanic people in Canada. Following a tradition that when one is sent from them with a passion and calling to plant a church, the Mennonite Church of Teusaquillo faithfully prays for and lights a candle for Refuge de Paix each week.

Children and Careto

Refuge de Paix joined MCEC in 2011 as an emerging congregation and is excited to now become a full membership congregation in MCEC.

"We have been attending the Annual Church Gathering since 2007 and my eyes have tears of gratitude to God every time for the brotherhood and unity of those gathered as brothers and sisters. We have different languages and ethnicities, but have the same open heart to serve the Lord. During difficult times, we did not feel alone despite the physical distance. We knew that you were there for us," says Lucy. "God brought me to the Mennonite church and I will continue there because he brought me with a purpose. It is a privilege and a great gift of God to be part of this family."

"We have a dream to build a large space for the church to provide services to the community. We dream of a day care centre and a place to sell used clothes and furniture."

- Lucy Roca

Refuge de Paix provides a safe place in Sherbrooke, QC for all.



### Supporting Pastors Across MCEC Regional Ministry Associates

"We have an incredible collection of pastors in MCEC," says Kevin Derksen, MCEC Regional Ministry Associate (RMA). "They are faithful pastors who are doing amazing things in the contexts where they are. It is encouraging to have regular conversations and connections with them."

Kevin Derksen, Cathrin van Sintern-Dick and Roberson Mbayamvula have been intentionally providing pastoral care and support for pastors within MCEC. They began their ministry in fall of 2017.

Through attending ministerial gatherings, meeting one on one

with pastors or simply being available by telephone or email, they continue to build relationships and trust with those who are serving as pastors. "RMA ministry is a ministry of presence and of learning together," says Roberson. "Friendship is essential and my goal is to continue developing personal relationships with those in pastoral charge across MCEC."

As a church leadership team, the RMA's along with Marilyn Rudy-Froese, Church Leadership Minister, and Al Rempel, Regional Minister, are committed to provide strong support for pastoral ministry within MCEC. "The RMA role has brought more attention to the listening and caring elements of support for our pastors," says Al.

RMAs listen for what is happening in congregations, where needs and struggles are and where God is moving. Pastors provide a unique window into congregational life and ministry. "It is exciting to hear the pastor's stories of the congregations where they serve," says Cathrin. "There are sprouts of life everywhere across MCEC. Our congregations are a beautiful bouquet of different wild flowers. So are our pastors, and I'm honoured that they allow me to share into their lives and ministry."





"The Regional Minstry Associate role has brought more attention to the listening and caring elements of support for our pastors." - Al Rempel

"I believe the RMA's presence will help the Church Leadership Office to be more responsive to the needs of pastors and more able to provide resources for their ongoing formation and development," says Marilyn Rudy-Froese.



A beautiful quilt adorns Roberson's office in Markham, ON, gifted to him by the New Life Mennonite Church in Toronto. "When I see the quilt I reflect on how diverse we are across MCEC. Each piece of the quilt is different, as is each pastor or congregation," says Roberson. "The pieces form a beautiful masterpiece. In the same way, we, as MCEC, also come together as one to do God's beautiful ministry together."

<u>Above</u>: Kevin, Cathrin and Roberson in creative consultation are joined (page 8, left) by Marilyn and Al.

<u>Page 8, Right</u>: Roberson and Pastor Westerne discuss healthy boundaries in ministry at the French MCEC workshop in Quebec.

<u>Page 9, Left</u>: Cathrin and Kevin greet Ernie Harris at Annual Church Gathering.





### Sprouts of Life Responding to God's Leading

Constant of the second seco

- Cathrin van Sintern-Dick Regional Ministry Associate

#### Risking a Change to Sunday Morning Structure

Listowel Mennonite Church reversed their Sunday morning structure and holds their Sunday school time after the morning service to allow discussion and intentional discipleship with each other. Intentional Discussion After Sermon

#### **Sharing Worship Services**

Some congregations share worship services regularly, partnering together or with a small cluster of congregations for combined services on long weekends, during the summer or on special occasions. This shares resources, eases work load and builds relationships.

#### **Forest Church**

Forest Church celebrates wilderness as a place to encounter the divine presence of God and tend to our souls. Wendy Janzen has been leading Forest Church in Waterloo, as has Glyn Jones at Wanner Mennonite Church. Wilmot Mennonite Church is exploring possibilities with Wendy for community engagement opportunities.

#### **Retreats**

Five Kitchener-Waterloo area congregations plan a youth retreat each fall as a way to share resources and build community.

#### Vacation Bible School

Collections of congregations, in several locations thoroughout MCEC, work together to hold a VBS program for their community.

#### **New Welcome Centre**

Leamington United Mennonite Church has found a way to make newcomers feel welcome and integrated by creating a Sunday morning welcome centre.

#### **Community Ministries**

Suppers at Stirling, a wintertime meal for the community, is provided by Stirling Avenue, First, Pioneer Park and Rockway Mennonite congregations. Zion Mennonite Fellowship provides a *Resting Place* for people during the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival.

### Strong commitment to congregations

All congregations carry their own people and traditions, taking good, attentive care of the people in their congregation.

#### Intentionally connecting

to people with roots in the church and people with no connection to church, Pastors in Exile provides space for people who are drawn to ways of being church outside of traditional church formats.

#### Shared Staff

Some congregations share staff or combine youth programs to make use of resources in the most effective way possible.



Image: Leamington United MC

Velcome Centre





## **Creativity & Innovation Across MCEC**

New ways of framing worship gatherings/faith formation within our congregations. Many congregations wrestle

with changing demographics and a diminished number of children in churches. Hillcrest Mennonite Church has creatively implemented changes in worship and study formats to encourage intergenerational or multigenerational faith formation. Using Space in New Ways Some congregations are assessing their worship space and are giving strategic thought to how they can benefit their neighbourhoods through that

#### Sharing Facilities and Ministering Together

space.

Many congregations share facilities, combining space, people and ideas as they minister to their community.

### Working with Neighbourhood Agencies

Faith Mennonite Church is intentionally partnering with agencies in their community to find out how best to support their neighbours.

"Sharing our stories with each other helps us to support each other in ministry."

> - Roberson Mbayamvula Regional Ministry Associate



English, Tamil and Chinese people worship in the same space in Markham - Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham Christian Worship Centre and Markham Chinese Mennonite Church

#### Book Club for Jr. Youth/ Community Kids' Program

Faith Mennonite Church started an after school book club to provide a space for kids to be engaged in other ways than on sports teams. West Hills Mennonite Fellowship tends to a long standing community kids' program every other week in New Hamburg.

#### **Reading the Bible With Jesus**

The GTA Cluster of congregations met on a weekend with Bryan Moyer Suderman to intentionally read the Bible together in an intergenerational, multicongregational and intercultural setting.



GTA Cluster with Bryan Moyer Suderman

"I see congregations across MCEC being creative, innovative and open to try new things as we continue to learn how to be church together."

> - Kevin Derksen Regional Ministry Associate

Youth Retreats



# MCEC by the Numbers...





www.mcec.ca

### **Beyond Tomorrow**

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada is grateful to individuals and families who choose to support our shared ministry through an estate gift. Estates are made up of assets from years of hard work and careful management. MCEC takes equal care with these special contributions.

Proceeds from estates help to ensure that MCEC remains healthy by stabilizing MCEC funds. These funds ensure that MCEC will have resources for mission, congregational and leadership development into the future.

Thank you for contributing to MCEC through your estate. Your faithful and generous giving will serve the Church beyond tomorrow.

Through planned gifts, MCEC gratefully received financial support from the following estates:

> Estate of Mildred Ropp Estate of Ivan Kuepfer Estate of Emma Brubacher Estate of Earl and Vera Martin Estate of Elsie Mae McDowell Estate of Harvey Snyder Estate of Reuben Steinman Estate of Grace Weber

### Four Years Into the Journey The View From Here: ReLearning Community

What would happen if they switched it up on Sunday morning so that the worship service was first and the Sunday school time second? This was the question posed by the ReLearning Community team at Listowel Mennonite Church. It began as an experiment.

The hope was that there would be greater community emphasis in that second hour with the opportunity to work at discipleship around some of the teaching from the first hour. Presented as a sixmonth experiment, there were bumps along the way but the team pointed to the six-month time frame and congregational evaluation at the end, while continually asking what was going well.

"By the time we got to that meeting," says Norm Dyck, then pastor at Listowel Mennonite Church, "most of the congregation thought the shift made sense and we stayed with that pattern. We were grateful that the congregation was prepared to provide the space "The real question is: are we being faithful to what God is calling us to do and are we living into that reality?"

#### - Norm Dyck

to risk a significant change for a large number of people."

Over the last four years, congregations have engaged in a journey of intentional discipleship through ReLearning Community. Congregations are discovering that they are able to explore alternative ways of being church in their contexts and some are beginning to take risks. West Hills Mennonite Church has taken a risk in changing their Sunday morning format as they make room for new ministry opportunities. Learnington United Mennonite Church has taken a risk by adding a welcome centre for visiting people to their congregation, creating a warm atmosphere for newcomers. Hillcrest Mennonite Church has taken a risk by making changes to their worship and study formats.

Each congregation tells a different story. Some stories will be about dramatic change and other stories will appear less dramatic. Norm Dyck, MCEC Mission Engagement Minister, challenges, "The real question is: are we being faithful to what God is calling us to do and are we living into that reality?"

Currently there are 27 congregations engaged with ReLearning Community, either in the initial two-year commitment or in the following stage, Community of Practice, where practitioners come together for support and continued learning.

Cohort four began this past fall and is the largest cohort yet, with 10 congregations involved. Eric Makinen from Zion Mennonite Fellowship says, "I've always had a lingering feeling that something



**Connect City** 

Kingsfield - Zurich Mennonite Church

is missing in the Christian culture that we live in and also in my personal walk of faith in terms of discipleship. I thought that ReLearning Community might help me figure that out."

"We continue to build capacity for ReLearning Community by

developing an MCEC delivery team – trained leaders from within MCEC who have already gone through a two-year learning community," says Norm. "Cohort five is scheduled for this November and you and your congregation are definitely invited." If you are interested in more information contact Norm at ndyck@mcec.ca.

Norm teaching at a learning weekend.



## Following God's Rhythm A West Hills' Story of Change

he air conditioning on the bus felt good and I relished the cool breeze as I waited for the people to take their seats. I turned to the man who had invited us to the Toronto Blue Jays baseball game that June afternoon. "You're going to be pretty tired tomorrow for your sermon," I jokingly said to him as he was a pastor and we would be returning to Kitchener late that Saturdav night. Sean said. "This is church this week." That was unexpected. I was surprised that a church would choose not to gather on Sunday because

they had gone to a Blue Jays game on Saturday!

West Hills Mennonite Church has made some significant shifts over the last two years. "West Hills was in a unique place," says Sean East, pastor. "We had lost a number of families and no longer had the same capacity to run programs, or even a Sunday morning service each week. It freed us to think outside of the box. We put some intentional thought into how best to make changes to implement teachings from ReLearning Community." That was unexpected. I was surprised that a church would choose not to gather on Sunday because they had gone to a Blue Jays game on Saturday!





Following one of the key concepts of ReLearning Community, that as a disciple of Jesus we have a relationship *UP* with God, *IN* with fellow believers and *OUT* with people who do not know God, West Hills adopted a pattern or rhythm in terms of their weekend gatherings. Every four weeks they cycle through this rhythm.

One week they have a traditional worship service that looks very similar to worship services in other congregations. This is their **UP** Sunday. The next week is an **IN** Sunday and looks quite different. They meet in someone's home and have a more informal time of worship and faith formation intentionally focused upon seeking God together as a community. They share a meal and perhaps part of the afternoon together. The following Sunday they return to a traditional service in another **UP** Sunday.

The fourth weekend is designated an OUT weekend. "We don't have any kind of formal gathering on an OUT weekend - there is no worship service, no communion service. no gathering in that sense. As a group, we will either plan something or join something that is already happening in the community," says Sean. They have held gym nights, instituted an annual trip to a Toronto Blue Jays game, gone bowling, and held nature walks or scavenger hunts.

ReLearning Community recognizes that we all have busy lives and encourages people to give something up in order to do something new.

"We have found that by adopting a bi-weekly Sunday morning worship service, it frees time and space to invite people into our lives," says Kelly Freeman, member at West Hills. "This rhythm is a deviation from traditional church and there has been some lamenting over the loss of the traditional church format."

It was hard for some to have one Sunday a month where they were not gathering as a faith community. At the same time, people also saw the excitement and impact.



West Hills started this on a trial basis in 2017. People engaged the rhythm at varying levels of participation. It was hard for some to have one Sunday a month where they were not gathering as a faith community. At the same time, people also saw the excitement and the impact that this new rhythm had on the lives of people.

One woman who did not attend the **OUT** weekends would faithfully pray during each of those **OUT** events. So even though some members of the congregation were unsure of the changes, all agreed that they did not want things to return to how it used to be and supported the new pattern of being church together. West Hills has continued in this rhythm for the last two years.

"God has really shown us that the church is the people and not the walls in which you meet," says Kelly. "I've been in the church all of my life and I think this has been one of the most impactful frameworks for being church together."

Sean concludes, "Our success is measured in whether we are being obedient to what God is Sean preaches on UP Sundays

calling us to do. That is all that we can do. It's not about how well we design something; but it is up to God to work through those things in God's timing and in God's way."

> "I think this has been one of the most impactful frameworks for being church together."

> > - Kelly Freeman



## **Voices Together: A Year of Worship**

We asked Sarah Johnson to develop and test worship resources within MCEC over the past year. She is the worship resources editor for *Voices Together*, the new Mennonite hymnal/worship project.

<u>Above</u>: Sarah Johnson (right) guides the MCEC youth at Winter Youth Retreat to reflect on the rhythms of worship in our daily life.

Left: Worshippers at the Voices Together Resource Day coordinated by Mark Diller Harder and supported by MCEC.

<u>Right</u>: Junior Youth form a drumming circle at Make A Difference Day.









Igniting the Imagination of the Church

June 28 - July 1

## It Only Takes A Spark

#### A Word From Henry Paetkau, MC Canada Interim Executive Minister

*"It only takes a spark to get a fire going."* 

Those opening words of a popular campfire song have been echoing in my mind recently. Words we often sang with the youth group for which we were sponsors many years ago. The lyrics reflected a youthful exuberance for sharing (and even shouting!) the love of God so others might come to experience and know it.

It only takes a spark to get a fire going, And soon all those around can warm up to its glowing. That's how it is with God's love once you've experienced it, You spread your love to everyone, you want to pass it on.

The theme for the Mennonite Church Canada Gathering in Abbotsford, BC this summer is, "Igniting the Imagination of the Church." A central feature of our worship will be Firestarter stories. Yes, firestarters! Sparks, intended to "get a fire going."

These brief presentations will illustrate a variety of the ways in which the Holy Spirit has inspired an imagination for new and creative expressions of God's love in the Regional Churches which comprise our nationwide community of faith. Sparks to get a fire going. Sparks from the fire of God's love ignited and glowing within us. That's where it begins. With the love we experience in our personal relationship with God. "Once you've experienced it," the song reminds us, "you want to pass it on." In fact, "I'll shout it from the mountain tops," the song concludes, "I want the world to know."

The mountain tops of British Columbia will serve as a fitting backdrop for the theme of this Gathering. Come join us to be inspired with a deeper understanding of God's love and a renewed imagination for how to share it. "It only takes a spark."



### **MCEC Congregations**

Agape Fellowship Avon Mennonite Church Bethany Mennonite Church Bethel Ethiopian Evangelical Church Bethel Mennonite Church (Elora) **Blenheim Ecumenical House Church** Bloomingdale Mennonite Church Breslau Mennonite Church Brussels Mennonite Fellowship Calvary Church Ayr (Mennonite) **Cassel Mennonite Church** Chin Christian Church (Kitchener) Chin Christian Church (Ottawa) Church of the Living Word in Ottawa Community Mennonite Church, Stouffville Community Mennonite Fellowship **Crosshill Mennonite Church** Danforth Mennonite Church Fast Zorra Mennonite Church Église Évangélique Mennonite de Joliette Elmira Mennonite Church Frb Street Mennonite Church Erie View United Mennonite Church Faith Mennonite Church Famille Assemblée de la Grâce First Hmong Mennonite Church First Mennonite Church Floradale Mennonite Church Freedom Gospel Ethiopian Church Grace Lao Mennonite Church Grace Mennonite Church Grace New Life Mennonite Church Hagerman Mennonite Church Hamilton Mennonite Church Hanover Mennonite Church Harrow Mennonite Church Hawkesville Mennonite Church Hillcrest Mennonite Church Hochma Hunta Mennonite Church

Jane Finch Faith Community - Connect City Kingsfield - Clinton Kingsfield - Zurich Mennonite Church Kitchener Emmanuel Church KW House Church Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church Lao Christian Fellowship Leamington United Mennonite Church Listowel Mennonite Church Living Water Community Christian Fellowship Mannheim Mennonite Church Maple View Mennonite Church Markham Chinese Mennonite Church Markham Christian Worship Centre McArthurs Mills Christian Fellowship Medahnialem Ethiopian Evangelical Church Meheret Evangelical Church Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal Milverton Mennonite Fellowship Mississauga Mennonite Fellowship Nairn Mennonite Church Niagara United Mennonite Church Nith Valley Mennonite Church North Leamington United Mennonite Church Open Table Oromo Evangelical Church of Ottawa Ottawa Mennonite Church Petitcodiac Mennonite Church Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship Poole Mennonite Church Preston Mennonite Church Rainham Mennonite Church Refuge de Paix River of Life Fellowship Rockway Mennonite Church Rouge Valley Mennonite Church Shalom Worship and Healing Centre Shantz Mennonite Church

Soul House - Connect City St. Agatha Mennonite Church St. Catharines United Mennonite Church St. Jacobs Mennonite Church Steinmann Mennonite Church Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church Tavistock Mennonite Church The Commons The First Mennonite Church The Gathering Church The Network Church Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church Toronto Mennonite New Life Church Toronto United Mennonite Church Tree of Life/Arbre de Vie Valleyview Mennonite Church Vineland United Mennonite Church Wanner Mennonite Church Warden Underground - Connect City Waterloo North Mennonite Church Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church Waters Mennonite Church Wellesley Mennonite Church West Hills Mennonite Fellowship Westview Christian Fellowship Wideman Mennonite Church Wilmot Mennonite Church Windsor Mennonite Fellowship

107 Congregations 12,441 members

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