

Fall 2026



**Mennonite
Church**
Eastern Canada

Sprout

Energized Congregations in
Worship, Discipleship and Mission

**Welcome to the
Family**

PG. 6

**Grounding
Generosity**

PG. 8

**When a Church
Reads Scripture
Together**

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Thank you to all who shared
their stories and tips, offering
encouragement and inspiration
across the MCEC community of
faith.

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Wisdom In an Age of Innovation



Anthony Siegrist
MCEC Executive Minister
executiveminister@mcec.ca

The recent AI boom has reminded us that we live in an age defined by unceasing technological innovation. Every few years our congregations need to decide how to handle some new technology. These technologies affect our communities in a host of ways, changing how we communicate, how we worship, even how we imagine our connectedness. Jacques Ellul long ago pointed out that our culture tries to reduce

everything to repeatable, use-anywhere techniques. Yet, if our congregations are anything, they are unique and local and responsive to the voice of God.

When I think about the ways technology impacts our churches I think about Augustine and the tool of rhetoric. Before becoming a pastor, Augustine studied and taught rhetoric. In the ancient world rhetoric was a

highly valued discipline that encompassed a set of skills we now parse into communication, logic, advocacy and so on. Aspiring public figures studied rhetoric because it gave them tools for getting noticed and getting things done. At its most basic, rhetoric is an enhancement of the tool of language.

Augustine had some opinions about the use of rhetoric in preaching. He thought, for instance, that it was more important to learn to understand scripture clearly than to use ornate language to describe it. This approach follows the Apostle Paul. In the first two chapters of I Corinthians, Paul says that his message isn't made attractive through fancy speech. It was the power of God that made Paul's proclamation effective. Of course, putting things that way was itself a use of rhetoric.

For those that could learn to use rhetorical tools quickly, Augustine thought it was a good idea. Why should we leave this helpful technology to forces that want to advance the untrue or the misdirected? The key for Augustine was that rhetorical technology was always to be

accompanied by wisdom. "The speaker who is awash with the kind of eloquence that is not wise is particularly dangerous," the ancient bishop said.

Wisdom is knowing how faith, hope and love are to be manifest in the specifics of the here and now. Some years ago, I was working on a grant application to study how faith communities might address political polarization in a variety of settings. During my background research an organizational leader expressed caution about my project. "Maybe there are no 'best practices' in this area," she said. "Maybe every context is different."

That thought has stuck with me. There are always things that we can learn from each other, but maybe our congregations will each flourish in their own way, a way that fits their identity and their context. I think this applies to the use of new technologies, just as it does to larger decisions a congregation might make about its mission. We learn from others but attend carefully to our own context.

This issue of Sprout describes congregations seeking to flourish in their specific places. These stories highlight congregations discovering how their unique calling meets the

*Wisdom is knowing
how faith, hope
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challenges and opportunities of the present moment while connecting with others across their region. There are stories of congregations choosing to read and interpret the Bible together at a time when technologies make it much easier to read on our own. These are all examples of wisdom cultivated through humility and reflection.

I hope the content of this issue of Sprout encourages your congregation along this path, learning from others but never mistaking technical tools for the Spirit's guidance. 🙏



Welcome to the Family

What happens when a church opens its doors, and its property, to the wider community?

For Tree of Life/Arbre de Vie, Family Day weekend became a vivid picture of welcome: roughly 150 people gathered over two days for ice fishing, skating, snow sports, campfires, games and an unexpected community fish fry made possible when people freely gave what they had. The congregation, which typically

gathers between ten and forty people on a Sunday, opened not only its doors but also its lakeside location near Monetville, Ontario, to the wider community.

Held at The Solid Rock, a retreat property where Tree of Life gathers for worship, the event built on a long tradition of hospitality. The property is open for camping, retreats, family gatherings, weddings and community recreation. The church extends that welcome to their events.

Phil drilled 30 ice-fishing holes while his son David spent 10 hours over the two days pulling children on GT sleds behind a snowmobile.

This year's warmer February weather allowed organizers to expand outdoor activities. Pastor Phil Lichty drilled 30 ice-fishing holes across the lake, while his son David spent 10 hours over the two days pulling children on GT sleds behind a snowmobile. Families gathered around a fire in the gazebo, roasted marshmallows, enjoyed time together on the ice or visiting indoors.

What stood out most to Phil and his wife Sharon wasn't the attendance, but the relationships that formed. Homeschooling families, local school communities, churchgoers and people with little connection to church all found themselves sharing the same space. "You really had people that wouldn't normally meet," Phil reflected. Looking back on the weekend, he saw it as evidence of God's presence and blessing.

Mykayla Turner, who led MCEC's small church theology workshop this spring, believes this is one of the unique strengths of small congregations. Rather than focusing on what they lack, Mykayla encourages churches to look at the gifts already present in their communities.

Whether or not you are experiencing numerical growth, you can work with what you have to thrive right where you are. Stories like Tree of Life's, she suggests, "redefine what it means to flourish."



A modern-day loaves and fishes story, where abundance was shared and community was strengthened as everyone gathered to enjoy a fish fry together.

The event reflected an opportunity often available to smaller churches: inter-church collaboration. A neighbouring congregation's help allowed Tree of Life to extend the activities to Monday, resulting in a second day of community connection.

"Rather than continuing to go it alone, working together is probably what God is calling us to," Mykayla says. "That feels like maybe exactly what it means to follow Jesus."

When enough fish were caught for a fish fry, community members helped. Additional fish appeared from freezers and grocery stores, volunteers found burners and supplies and the meal came together with little planning.

For Sharon, the event reflected something central to Tree of Life's identity: welcoming people as they are. "We love and accept people where they're at," she said.

Phil echoes that sentiment by saying, "You are welcome to the family!" Family, he explains, is the foundation of everything the congregation seeks to do.

Mykayla believes that welcome begins with paying attention to the place where God has planted you.

"Get to know your community and the uniqueness of it," she says. "You can do a lot with what is uniquely yours."

At Tree of Life, what is uniquely theirs includes a frozen lake, a fish fry, a campground ministry and a willingness to share them. On one February weekend, that was enough to offer a glimpse of God's love and hospitality to an entire community. An important reminder that sometimes, ministry begins with a simple invitation to come and be part of the family. 🌱



Grounding Generosity: Five Tips for your Congregation



Fred W. Martin

After 24 years as Director of Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College, Fred W. Martin has a wealth of experience in encouraging generosity and strengthening community support for ministry. At the 2026 MCEC Annual Church Gathering, he presented a workshop titled *Faith and Fundraising: How Our Spiritual Heritage Could Help Us Meet the Budget*. Fred offers the following tips from his presentation.

Cultivating generosity is about more than meeting a budget. It is an invitation to participate in God's mission and to join in the work God is doing through the church.

By connecting financial stewardship to ministry, purpose and community, congregations can nurture a culture of joyful giving. Fred shares practical insights on inspiring generous stewardship within congregations.

1. Grace

At its core the Christian life is about receiving and giving grace. Remember to live in God's love and be conscious of this all embracing love that surrounds us. While this involves personal spirituality, this is reflected collectively in the culture of your congregation. Being filled with grace spills over into acts of generosity. We are motivated by God's universal and unconditional love, not by guilt, judgment or obligation.

2. Grounding

Remember and celebrate our heritage and roots as a people. The Anabaptists were a persecuted minority, but developed a strong community and identity by supporting and helping each other in times of terrible persecution. Mennonite history is filled with stories of supporting immigrants, and of deacons supporting physical and financial needs within the congregation. In the 20th century, Mennonites created a plethora of social agencies, nursing homes, schools and camps to support those in need and to nurture faith. Congregational support for these institutions provides

an avenue to impact the broader community. MCEC's budget includes collective support for many partner agencies.

3. Generosity

Model generosity in congregational life. Highlight volunteer opportunities and celebrate those who give their time. Giving of our time and money needs to be taught and modelled in congregational life. Stewardship education should be a topical focus in small group discussions, Sunday school lessons, seminars, workshops or retreats. These are ways to teach youth and young families to be engaged in financial planning for their households, while ensuring charitable giving is included.

4. Giving from the Heart

Ensure that offering is a central and regular part of your worship service. It may not be passing the plates anymore, but it needs a prayerful and consistent place in your worship. Anabaptists and other traditional Mennonite groups used alms boxes in the back of worship space to collect offerings. *Voices Together* has some good litanies and prayers

that are easy to use. Ensure that giving is tactile and celebratory. Some churches have a loose change offering that the children collect. Some collect cans for food bank offerings and others collect mittens, hats and grocery cards for charities at Christmas.

5. Joy

Joy: "The Lord loves a 'hilarious' giver". This is a closer transliteration of the familiar verse from 2 Corinthians - so be enthusiastic and carefree in your generosity. I saw firsthand the joy of a granddaughter bidding up a quilt her grandfather made at the MCC auction. Plan creative fundraising events, inject some excitement in your fundraising campaigns. Recently we planned a congregational concert as a way to generate support for our kitchen renovation at Waterloo North Mennonite Church. Updates from the treasurer should be engaging and underscore the amazing things you do with your offerings. 🙌



Listening to God Through the Next Generation

It is a typical Sunday morning at Meheret Evangelical Church as the congregation gathers to worship God. Yet one of the most meaningful moments of the service comes before the sermon is preached.

Before the sermon begins, the children meet together. The leaders encourage them not only to learn about God but also to listen for His

voice and grow in their own faith.

Then comes the moment everyone looks forward to. The children are invited to come to the front of the church.

A leader asks, “What did God teach you this week?” Immediately, dozens of hands rise into the air.

Some children share a Bible verse, some sing a Christian song and

“It is unbelievable to see how God works through the children. Through everything they share, we can clearly see the Holy Spirit moving among them.”

others offer prayers for children, their families and the church. Their sincerity, confidence and growing faith inspire the entire congregation. The congregation recognizes that God can speak through them, so everyone listens attentively and responds to each child with encouragement and applause.

“It is unbelievable to see how God works through the children,” says Aklilu Agonfer, church leader at Meheret Evangelical Church. “Through everything they share, we can clearly see the Holy Spirit moving among them. Sometimes we want to continue our Sunday morning worship with only them!”

As the children grow older, the church remains intentional about helping them continue in their faith. One of the challenges facing many diaspora congregations is how to keep young adults connected to the church. Language, culture and life experiences often differ between generations. Many young people are more comfortable worshipping in English and connecting with the broader multicultural community around them.

At Meheret, this became an opportunity rather than an obstacle. The church supported

the development of a young adult ministry where the next generation could grow as disciples and leaders. English-language worship created a bridge for young adults to remain connected to their faith while also reaching people from many cultural backgrounds across Canada.

For Aklilu, this has been an answer to prayer. “Our children are still our children,” he says, “but now they can worship and connect with people from many cultures. God has a purpose for them.”

Another foundation of the church’s life is fasting and prayer. Every month, the congregation gathers for three days of fasting and prayer. Each year they also spend an extended season seeking God together. They pray for their families, their community, Canada and the nations of the world.

“Fasting and prayer are so important,” says Aklilu. “They help us to see God, hear His voice and then He is able to guide us.”

The children, the young adults and



Young adults lead worship, building a vibrant ministry where the next generation grows as disciples and leaders.

“Fasting and prayer help us to see God, hear His voice and then He is able to guide us.”

the congregation’s commitment to prayer and fasting each tell part of the same story. Together, they demonstrate that the strongest bridge between generations is not culture, language or programs, but a shared relationship with God. As children learn to hear God’s voice, young adults embrace God’s mission and the church seeks Him through prayer and fasting, God faithfully leads His people from one generation to the next. 🌿



Discovering God's Word

A Church Reads Scripture Together

When a father first arrived at East Zorra Mennonite Church, he came for one reason: his children wanted to attend Sunday school. A year later, he shared something surprising. “At first, I was just doing the “good dad” thing by bringing the kids to Sunday school,” he said. “But now I can’t wait to come here myself!”

His story is one of many signs of a quiet but meaningful renewal

taking place at East Zorra. Over the past three years, a congregation-wide commitment to read the Bible together has sparked fresh energy and a deeper engagement in the life of the church.

When pastors Ray Martin and Mike Williamson introduced a Bible reading guide in 2023, they hoped it would encourage people to spend more time in Scripture. What they did not anticipate, however, was

“I come to worship differently because I’ve already read the passage you’re going to preach on!”

how deeply it would resonate with the congregation.

The guides are closely connected to Sunday worship. Each Friday's reading is the passage that will be the focus of Sunday's sermon. Many worshippers arrive already familiar with the text and eager to explore it together. "We began hearing people say, 'I come to worship differently because I've already read the passage you're going to preach on,'" says Ray. The conversation was no longer beginning on a Sunday morning; it had already started earlier in the week.

The church launched a Wednesday morning Bible discussion. Rather than working through a curriculum, people share what stood out to them in the week's readings. "Mike and I don't come with a teaching that we want to give," Ray explains. "We come asking, 'What are you reading, and where do we want to go with this?'" The conversations have led into topics and questions they never expected to explore together.

The effects can be seen throughout congregational life. The congregation reimagined its Sunday school hour, bringing separate classes together into an intergenerational discussion focused on the week's readings

and sermon. They also launched a congregational book club, hoping perhaps a dozen people would participate. Instead, 40 people showed up!

Women's and men's Bible studies have grown. A young adult study group is taking shape. Newer attenders are stepping into leadership and ministry. One member became so excited about her faith and life at East Zorra that she volunteered to strengthen the church's website and communications, eager to help others discover what she had found.

The journey has not been without challenges. People bring different perspectives to Scripture, and difficult conversations sometimes emerge. Yet East Zorra has discovered the value of listening to one another. Rather than seeking quick answers, they are learning to ask thoughtful questions, hear different perspectives and seek God's direction together.

Three years after the first reading guide was introduced, the enthusiasm remains strong. For East Zorra Mennonite Church, reading the Bible together has become a shared practice that is deepening faith, strengthening relationships and helping the congregation grow together as followers of Jesus. 🌱



East Zorra and Meheret pastors serving one another in morning worship.

Discovering God's Intercultural Church

What happens when two congregations intentionally build relationships across cultures?

Through worship, meals, prayer and meaningful conversation, Meheret Evangelical Church and East Zorra Mennonite Church are discovering new friendships, deeper understanding and the joy of belonging to one body in Christ.





Biblical Engagement

Derek's Bible Study Tips

Derek Suderman, Associate Professor at Conrad Grebel University College, is the lead facilitator in the “Catching the Spark” initiative that explores engaging, interactive ways of reading the Bible together. At the 2026 MCEC Annual Church Gathering, he presented a workshop entitled *Gather Around Scripture: An Invitation to Dynamic Bible Study*. Derek offers the following tips for congregations engaging in Bible study.

Not all Bible study is created equal. Bible study is a key venue for training and forming disciples for the kingdom. This is a challenging and complex task, which means our engagement with the Bible and each other should also dare to be challenging and complex.

Done well, the experience will be life-giving and prompt movement on the road to transformation.

Before A Study

Be interested in what you are leading - and prepare! Choose a topic/passage and spend the time necessary to find resources (both written and human) that spark your own interest in the material.

Keep a specific passage central to your study – this levels the playing field, so that novices and people with lots of

knowledge can engage it together.

Be aware (BEWARE) of constantly choosing themes over the Bible - often Bible studies provide a platform to do something else, so that the Bible functions as a secondary resource for the real main event.

Thoughtfully prepare questions more than content or answers. A leader can often be so eager to share what they have learned that they end up “talking at” the group instead of leading it.

During a Study

Get into the Bible within 5 minutes.

The way you begin a study is CRUCIAL. Set the right tone.

Be clear about your role as a facilitator. I like to use the metaphor of going on a hike. Just as hiking with an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide can enhance one's experience, the purpose of the hike is not information but building curiosity and wonder.

Become comfortable with silence

Once you have developed good questions, ask them and then sit back and smile. Waiting, sitting in silence or reframing the question (but NOT answering it yourself) signals that you actually want to hear from the group.

Foster a sense of discovery.

Even if you know what you would like people to notice or consider, leading the group to discover it themselves is always more effective.

Redirect (or sensitively shut down!) tangential or extended “hobby horse” comments. My own strategy developed over the years has been to respond with some version of – “That’s really interesting. What in the passage gave you this idea?” This leads people to refocus on the passage under discussion.

After a Study

Evaluate it. How did it go? What questions really engaged people? Where did it fall flat? How could this be improved next time?

Coach and mentor. Have an experienced facilitator in your congregation or cluster walk alongside people as they try their wings in leadership in this area.

Plan for another study. People are often a bit intimidated when there has been no Bible study in their setting. “Where do we start?” The important issue is not where we start but rather the conviction and commitment that we don’t STOP. 🌱

For Derek’s full Tips for Bible Study article, see www.mcec.ca.



Catching the Spark!

Looking for a fresh way to engage Scripture or know someone who would enjoy exploring the Bible and Bible study? Join our “Catching the Spark” Bible study series.

Recently, Erb Street Mennonite church hosted *Ruth: An Immigrant Story*, sparking meaningful conversation and new insights.

Visit our website to discover other studies offered this fall and winter. Looking ahead, we hope to gather participants from across Ontario for a retreat, equipping and encouraging people to facilitate Bible study in their own congregations and communities.





Growing in Unity One Celebration at a Time

What began as a shared desire for deeper connection has grown into a meaningful expression of ministry among four intercultural Mennonite congregations in Quebec and Ontario.

As several church leaders from across the two provinces gathered in conversation, they discerned a shared desire to strengthen connections among their congregations. From those

discussions emerged a vision of building unity through shared worship, mutual encouragement and intentional fellowship.

Pastor Machichi of Goshen Mennonite Church of Ottawa explains that the goal was clear: “to help our churches remain united and supportive of one another.”

Congregations began organizing joint celebrations around key moments in the Christian calendar.

They are reminded that they are part of something greater than their local congregation, they are part of a wider family connected through Christ.



*Unity does not happen automatically.
It grows through intentional relationships,
shared experiences and a willingness to
support one another.*



Many languages. Many traditions. One body in Christ.
Joined in worship. Reflecting the beauty of God's diverse Church.

Easter was celebrated together in Ottawa. Pentecost was hosted in Saint-Hyacinthe. Plans are underway for a Christmas gathering in Joliette.

These gatherings provide opportunities for congregations to pray together, build friendships and experience the strength that comes from belonging to a larger community of faith. Participants are reminded that they are part of something greater than their local congregation, they are part of a wider family connected through Christ.

This year's Pentecost celebration was a beautiful example of that vision as worshippers gathered to celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the unity of the church. In a

season that recalls people from many nations hearing the good news in their own languages, the gathering reflected the richness and diversity of the churches represented.

The event was co-hosted by Église Bethésda Mennonite de Saint-Hyacinthe, Goshen Mennonite Church of Ottawa, Mennonite Disciples Mission (MDM) Joliette and Mennonite Disciples Swahili Church. Together, these congregations demonstrated what it looks like to share ministry across communities, cultures and distances.

The initiative also highlights an important reality; unity does not happen automatically. It grows through intentional relationships,

shared experiences and a willingness to support one another. By gathering regularly around significant moments in the church year, they are creating space for deeper connections and a stronger sense of belonging.

As the partnerships continue to grow, they offer a compelling example of congregations living into the biblical vision of the church as one body. Through shared worship, mutual encouragement and collaborative ministry, they are nurturing a spirit of unity that strengthens both individual congregations and the wider MCEC community. 🌿



Explore resources from two dedicated teams committed to serving churches with encouragement, insight and practical support. These teams offer tools, ideas and learning opportunities to help communities grow in worship, discipleship and mission.

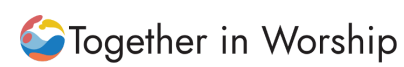
CommonWord offers a diverse array of Christian books and materials with a focus on Anabaptism for congregations and individuals. It is the bookstore and resource centre of Mennonite Church Canada.

Arlyn Friesen Epp and the CommonWord team are ready to connect people with valuable Anabaptist-Mennonite resources.



Together in Worship is a curated collection of free online resources that people are creating in Anabaptist communities across Canada, the United States and around the world.

The Together in Worship team cultivates a community where congregations can discover downloadable resources, share their own, and learn from one another's experiences.



Resources
At your fingertips

Worship

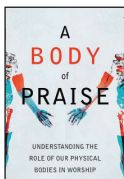


Call to Worship: We are the People

Lonnie Buerge, 2025

During a time of political upheaval, this call to worship reminds worshippers of their Anabaptist identity as followers of Jesus, rooted in peace, hospitality and service, and calls them to embody God's love and hope amid uncertainty and division.

 Together in Worship



A Body of Praise: Understanding the Role of Our Physical Bodies in Worship

W. David O. Taylor, 2023

Drawing on Scripture, theology and church history, this book explores how our bodies, senses, postures and actions in worship shape Christlike discipleship and deepen faithful, embodied participation in the praise of God and prayer.

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Voices Together Curriculum

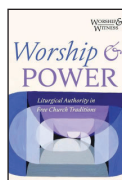
Anneli Loepp

Thiessen, 2021

Designed to introduce

your congregation to the contents of *Voices Together*. Participants will explore the who, what, where, when and why of the new hymnal while being encouraged to engage a variety of styles of music and prayer while broadening understanding of Mennonite worship.

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre



Worship & Prayer: Liturgical Authority in Free Church Traditions

Worship & Witness

ed. Sarah Kathleen Johnson,

Andrew Wymer, 2023

This volume explores how power, authority and relationships shape Christian worship within Free Church traditions, highlighting local agency and diversity while fostering dialogue between scholars and practitioners seeking worship that is both faithful and just.

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre



Unsettling Worship: Reforming Liturgy for Right Relations with Indigenous Communities

Part of Worship & Witness

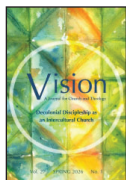
Sarah Travis, 2023

Unsettling Worship examines how Christian worship can support reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples by identifying colonial patterns within liturgy and exploring practices that nurture justice, healing and right relationships. It invites communities to embrace worship that both challenges and transforms.

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre

More resources at
CommonWord,
Together in Worship
or visit Sprout at
www.mcec.ca.

Discipleship



Decolonial Discipleship as an Intercultural Church: Spring 2026

Part of Series Vision:

A Journal for Church and Theology
This special issue of Vision explores the interconnected work of decolonization and interculturality, inviting Mennonite churches to pursue discipleship that fosters reconciliation, justice, peace and authentic relationships across cultural, ethnic and racial differences.

CommonWord
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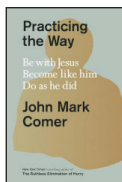


Prayer: Blow, Wind of God

Christine Nafziger, 2012.

This prayer invites worshippers to open themselves to the Holy Spirit's renewing work, awakening them from complacency, deepening spiritual attentiveness and shaping intentional lives marked by growth, transformation and faithful discipleship.

 Together in Worship



Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus. Become like him. Do as he did

John Mark Comer, 2024

John Mark Comer invites readers to embrace a Rule of Life, cultivating spiritual practices and rhythms that create space for God's transforming work, helping disciples grow in Christlikeness and faithfully follow the way of Jesus.

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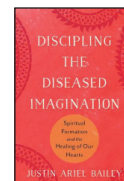


Song: Live the Call

Makinto (Liberia / Germany), 2007.

A congregational song calling believers to follow Jesus together, live by the Spirit, pursue peace, speak truth, pray faithfully and embody God's calling. Includes lyrics, chords and lead sheet. A video recording is also available.

 Together in Worship



Discipling the Diseased Imagination: Spiritual Formation and the Healing of our Hearts

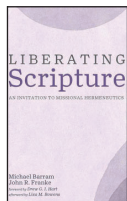
Justine Bailey, 2026

Justin Ariel Bailey argues that imagination lies at the heart of discipleship, shaping how we perceive God, ourselves and the world. He explores how imagination can be both damaged and renewed, fostering deeper spiritual growth, Christ-centred living and faithful cultural engagement.

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre

More resources at
CommonWord,
Together in Worship
or visit Sprout at
www.mcec.ca.

Mission



Liberating Scripture An Invitation to Missional Hermeneutics

Michael Barram,
John R. Franke, 2024

Liberating Scripture introduces missional hermeneutics through postmodern and postcolonial perspectives, examining how Scripture shapes participation in God's mission and offering a framework for reimagining church, mission and biblical interpretation in light of the *missio Dei*.

CommonWord
Bookstore and Resource Centre

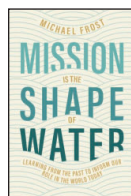


Song: And It Shall Be

Lonnie Buerge,
Paul Zehr, 2024

And It Shall Be invites the church to answer Christ's call in troubled times through acts of compassion, justice, and hospitality, embodying God's peace by serving the vulnerable, welcoming strangers, and bringing healing and hope. Includes lyrics, chords and lead sheet. A video recording is also available.

 Together in Worship



Mission Is the Shape of Water: Learning From the Past to Inform Our Role in the World Today

Michael Frost, 2023

Michael Frost explores how Christian mission has taken shape across history, helping readers understand how context influences ministry (just as a bottle shapes water) and offering practical wisdom for participating in God's mission today with faithfulness, creativity and renewed imagination.

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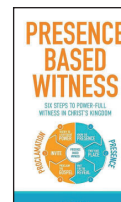


Benediction: Go filled with Jesus' love

Anna Ressler, 2025.

A sending benediction commissioning worshippers into the world grounded in Christ's love, empowered by the Holy Spirit and assured of God's presence for faithful ministry, service, and witness in daily life.

 Together in Worship



Presence Based Witness: Six Steps to Power-Full Witness in Christ's Kingdom

David E. Fitch,
Gino Curcuruto, 2025

This booklet offers a practical framework for presence-based witness, helping Christians share the good news of Jesus through authentic relationships, attentive presence and invitation rather than coercion, assumptions or information alone in today's post-Christian context.

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More resources at
CommonWord,
Together in Worship
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Ten Years of Belonging: The O-Town Ark

“**F**our months is a short time, but it’s also a really long time when you’re desperately lonely,” says Carrie Lehn, one of the pastors at Ottawa Mennonite Church (OMC).

For more than a decade, OMC has helped young adults find more than a place to live. Through the O-Town Ark, a four-bedroom shared house in Ottawa, the congregation has

provided affordable housing and a welcoming community for more than 20 students and young adults.

What began as a response to a practical housing challenge has become a ministry of hospitality. Through shared meals, friendship and ongoing support, the Ark offers young adults something many are searching for: a home away from home.

“The faces around the table change, but the community aspect doesn’t. it’s a place to get to know new folks and watch people find belonging.”

The idea for O-Town Ark grew from a need that Carrie was seeing firsthand. As part of her ministry with young adults, she regularly heard from students looking for housing while completing co-op placements or pursuing studies in Ottawa. Many were arriving for only a few months and often knew no one in the city.

In 2014, Carrie and Paul Berg-Dick, a member at Ottawa Mennonite Church, began exploring what it might look like for the congregation to offer housing for young adults. Rather than simply helping people find rooms to rent, they imagined a home where residents could build friendships and experience genuine community. The result was the O-Town Ark, named as a place where people from many different places could gather for a season.

Located between Ottawa's two major universities and close to public transit, the house accommodates four residents at a time. Over the years, it has welcomed co-op students, undergraduate and graduate students, recent graduates and young professionals.

The Ark offers rooms at below-market rates and accommodates

short-term stays that can be difficult to find elsewhere.

From the beginning, shared meals have been central to life at the Ark. In its early years, young adults gathered every Sunday evening around a long dining table for food, conversation and friendship. Today, those gatherings take place monthly, but they continue to create opportunities for connection.

"The faces around the table change, but the community aspect doesn't," says Carrie. "It's a place to get to know new folks and watch people find belonging."

The meals are open not only to residents but also to other young adults connected to OMC and the wider community. For some, they provide an introduction to church life. For others, they offer friendship and support while navigating life in a new city.

More than ten years after opening its doors, the Ark continues to welcome new residents, nurture new friendships and demonstrate how a congregation can create space for faith, connection and belonging. 🌱



Looking for a Home Away from Home in Ottawa?

What if your next home offered not only affordable housing, but also friendship, support and community?

The O-Town Ark provides a welcoming place for students and young adults who are studying, working or settling into life in Ottawa. The Ark is located close to the University of Ottawa and on a transit route to Carleton University.

For more information and to check availability, contact Carrie Lehn at carrie@ottawamennonite.ca



The stories in Sprout represent just a small portion of what God is doing in MCEC. Your prayers, words of encouragement, donations and gifts of time play in the background of each story. Together we are transformed by the love of God, inspired by the hope we find in Jesus and called to action by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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MCEC
201-50 Kent Ave
Kitchener, ON N2P 3G1
www.mcec.ca