



sprout

Fall 2012



*inspiring stories from
new & emerging
ministries in MCEC*

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sprout

Refuge of Peace photo



Women from Refuge de Paix
Sowing and Stitching Relationships

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*We gratefully thank all
those who shared their
stories with us.*

Refuge of Peace

Sowing and Stitching Relationships of Peace, Hope, and Happiness Among Women

“Used sewing machines needed!”
The call went out to women’s groups across MCEC. And the women responded.

Sewing machines were quickly collected in the hopes of teaching women to sew their own clothing and perhaps even giving them a skill for a livelihood.

Women from Refuge de Paix/Refuge of Peace and their surrounding community in Quebec have benefitted. Refugio de Paz holds events for women that offer a time to learn, practice crafts, sew, laugh, and build relationships.

Two machines have been lent - one to an older person and the second to a younger person who wishes to study and learn how to design her own clothing!

“At church we prayed a prayer of blessing and thank you for the persons who donated the machines,” says Lucy Roca, pastor of Refuge de Paix. “Our dreams are bigger than our church, but this is possible with other women and churches that support us and pray for us. God will multiply what you have invested in the Kingdom of God!



Finding Her Way

A local 16 year old girl was struggling to find her way in her new country of Canada. She was very discontented and unhappy. When asked, she said that her dream was to be an artist and to design and create clothing. As a congregation, we encouraged her to take a course to learn how to sew and loaned her one of the sewing machines. As she pursues her dream, she has started to smile again.

- Lucy Roca

Refuge of Peace photo

Pastor Lucy Roca, (left) says a prayer of thanksgiving for the sewing machines received from MCEC congregations as well as a for the many people who will be helped through the use of them.



Meet The Commons

Finding their “tribe” in the Mennonite Church

In Hamilton you will find a group of people known as The Commons. With roots reaching back to 2001, The Commons has had a rich history of ministry. Since 2005 they have been worshipping on Sunday evenings in the Beasley neighbourhood of Hamilton.

With a core group of 15 – 20 people, The Commons is a community who is committed to live the Good News wherever it is they find themselves. All scripture, programs, and ideas are seen through the lenses of seven values: Justice, Hope, Beauty, Authenticity, Truth, Community, and Peace.

Described as an eclectic group of people from all ages and walks of life, they are a socio-economically diverse people who gather together, share their unique gifts, and actively participate in the neighbourhood. “We may not have a lot of programs,” says Randell Neudorf, leader of The Commons. “But we have people who personally appreciate these values and look for ways to live them out in our community. We are an authentic community who really care about each other.”

Randell and his wife, Susan, have two young children who are the only children in the community. Each Sunday, Ross, a senior from the community, comes

early so that he has time to play a game of checkers with Randell’s seven year old son. This game of checkers is looked forward to by both parties. “They are truly friends,” Randell shares. “There is no shortage of mentors for my children – my kids have 15 uncles and aunts!”

Finding a denominational home has been an important journey for The Commons. They did not wish to function on their own, but longed to find a “tribe” that they could call home; a tribe who was accepting of who they were and a community who would nurture and mentor mutually. Through connections with Brian Bauman, MCEC Mission Minister, and Troy

Photo By Jennifer Kellner



People walked the labyrinth and listened to a meditation via their phone or The Commons’ iPod while at Open Streets Hamilton.

“What I felt in that moment was compassion and humility - compassion from Susan Neudorf’s gentle touch... and humility to love and support others like God would want me to.”
- Susan S, The Commons



Watson, pastor at The Quest in St. Catharines, ON, the Mennonite denomination began to feel like home. “Some of us were reading *The Naked Anabaptist* by Stuart Murray,” explains Randell, “and we realized that we were doing some of the very same things!” Over the past year a relationship with the Mennonite denomination has developed and strengthened, resulting in a request from The Commons to be a part of MCEC.

The MCEC Executive Council approved a recommendation that they be accepted as an emerging congregation in MCEC, pending delegate approval at the Annual Church Gathering in April 2013.

Upon hearing the good news, The Commons immediately placed the Mennonite Peace Dove on their website and posted on their blog: “We will keep everyone posted as to what this will mean for our community in the near future, and how we will really celebrate with a big crazy party.”

You can continue to follow the journey of The Commons by visiting their website and blog at www.HamiltonCommons.ca.

The Commons is a community looking at their city and seeing the Kingdom of God being realized. Now that’s a big crazy party we all want to be at!



As a faith community, The Commons practice many new and old rituals as they worship together, bringing the rituals into their context.

Because they were in the process of joining the Mennonite denomination, and some Mennonite congregations practice foot washing, The Commons decided to explore this ritual.

During their evening worship, Randell and Susan Neudorf set two chairs and buckets at the front and proceeded to wash the feet of their faith community - those who felt comfortable.

“It was a good experience,” reflected Randell, “however, there was a level of awkwardness with it. As the foot washers, we were both very much aware that we weren’t the ones being vulnerable - it seems that the people who submitted to having their feet washed were the ones becoming vulnerable. We realized the value in switching between the foot washer and the one having their feet washed - to be mutually vulnerable. We may try that the next time.”

Following God's Call

Selam Abebe Ministers In Indonesia

Selam Abebe, a young leader from Church of the Living Word in Ottawa, has recently taken an assignment with MCC in Indonesia. Church of the Living Word in Ottawa is a part of the MCEC community of congregations.

During a recent email conversation with Selam, she shared her reasons for connecting with Asia. This is her story.

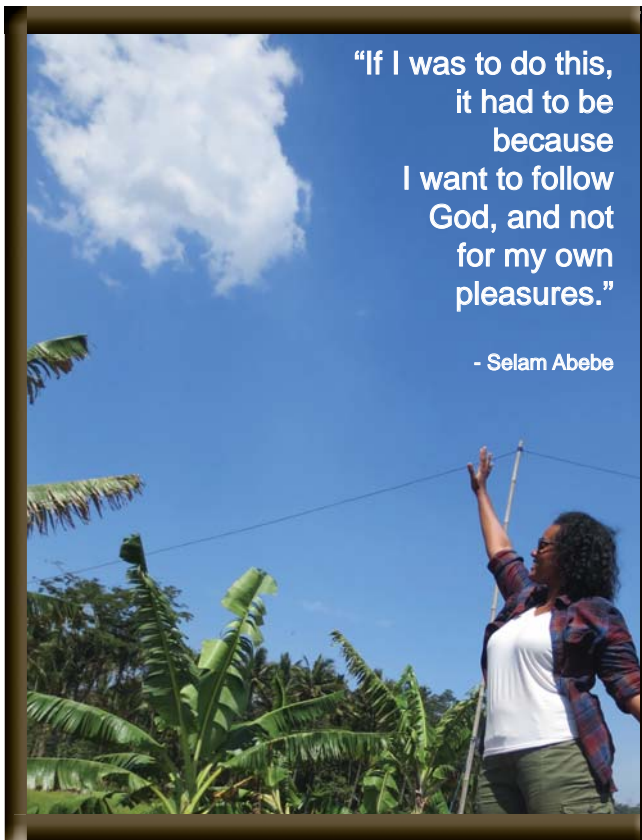
What made you decide to look at ministry in Indonesia?

I've always wanted to go abroad to learn and also I have wanted to do some missions work. This seemed like a good way to start and learn about serving God in another country.

I knew for sure that God wanted me in Asia because I really have always had a passion and interest in that continent. The Asian country I am most familiar with is Korea. I needed another choice as well, and I was also interested in an assignment here

in Indonesia. I wasn't sure if I should take the position in Indonesia because I really was interested in Korea and Korean culture and language. I was praying about it and I realized that this wasn't for my benefit. If I was to do this, it had to be because I want to follow

God, not for my own pleasures. Whether it be in Korea or Indonesia, or another Asian country, it is God's will that has to be done.



"If I was to do this, it had to be because I want to follow God, and not for my own pleasures."

- Selam Abebe

Photos from Selam Abebe

How have you been supported?


The congregation and my youth group really blessed me with spiritual and financial support. I had a small auction and then I had a fund-raising dinner, where the majority of the finances came in to cover my fees. A lot of people played a big role in helping me fund-raise and I will forever be grateful to them all. There was one person who went above and beyond in supporting and organizing things for and with me and that was Rahel Tefera. Thank you Rahel!

What are you doing in Indonesia?

To be honest, I'm not quite sure myself. I am just about to end my language studies and heading to my assignment location. But from what I know I will be working for a disaster relief organization. I will probably be teaching English and assisting others that need help in the church. Also, many other things if the opportunities present themselves. I've been told that if there are disasters, there will be more work; if there are no disasters, then there will be less work.

How is God making a difference in Indonesia?

The same way I've seen Him make a difference in Canada - through people. I've had the wonderful experience of meeting people who have willingly, without me asking, shared their testimonies with me about how God has changed their lives. Also, allowing me to share mine with them. It's amazing how God takes us from hopeless situations, delivers us, loves us, and gives us a purpose to live. God is always working, even if we don't notice.



“It’s amazing how God takes us from hopeless situations, delivers us, loves us, and gives us a purpose. God is always working, even if we don’t notice.”

- Selam Abebe

Jehu Lian

The Heart of a “Mennonite Evangelist”

Tell me about your family.

I grew up in a Christian home in Burma. My dad was a pastor there. By the grace of God my father still preaches but my youngest brother has taken over responsibilities as pastor. My sister and her husband are in Sweden where my brother-in-law is a pastor. I also have family in the U.S.

How did you first learn about Mennonites?

This was from First Hmong Mennonite Church and especially Pastor Dan Yang. They opened their doors and allowed us to worship in their building.

Why do you want the Chin to know about Mennonites?

We are Christian and believe in Jesus Christ but we don't practice our faith like the Mennonites by helping other people and practicing peace. This is why I want them to practice this kind of faith. It is my wish to share among the Chin people the Mennonite faith and doctrine.

Tell me about that. Who have you shared with?

In North America, the Chin people have never heard about this kind of faith and they like it very much. I share with them by telephone and by email and sometimes I can travel to them.

In the States, I visited Buffalo and they are now connected with Mennonite Church USA and are Mennonite. I also travelled to Houston and shared with the leaders of Chin Christian Church. They were also interested.

So, in USA we have two churches that are Mennonite now - Buffalo and Houston.

In Canada there are four - Kitchener, Ottawa, Regina, and Calgary. Edmonton is also hoping to start a fellowship but their numbers are small and they don't currently have leadership. Please pray with me for them. I have also recently spent time in Winnipeg. I was



glad to teach from the Bible and share about Mennonite faith.

You have also been to India?

Yes, I travelled to New Delhi to the Chin Christian Church of which I am the founding pastor. While there, I met with the Mennonite pastor in India, the director of Mennonite churches, and leaders of the Chin Christian Church. They agreed to join the Mennonites and now they are working together! I am very happy because they are practicing Mennonite faith and learning more. Since Brian and Nancy Brubaker Bauman travelled to Burma earlier this year to teach, many people from India are asking me by telephone or email about Mennonite faith. I am very busy teaching about Mennonite faith by email.

Students in Burma eagerly learn about Anabaptist/ Mennonite doctrines and faith from Brian Bauman, MCEC Mission Minister.



Pastor Jehu Lian in prayer at Chin Christian Church in Kitchener, ON.

***It is my wish to share
among the Chin people the
Mennonite faith and doctrine***

- Jehu Lian

What is next for you?

Look forward to spending time at home in Kitchener with the Chin Christian Church. I would like to return to Burma and share with the Chin people.

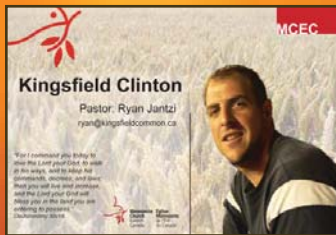
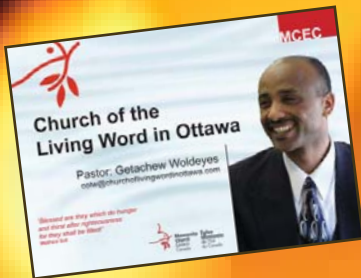


Jehu Lian is pastor of Chin Christian Church in Kitchener, Ontario. He and his wife Ma live in Kitchener with their family. They also have a son and daughter-in-law in Alberta.

Chin Christian Church in Kitchener is a part of the MCEC community of congregations.

MCEC in Prayer

Pray for Church Planters and Congregations

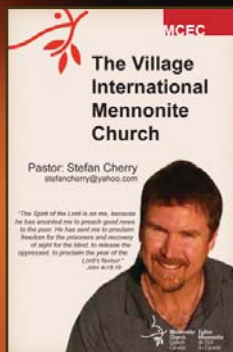


Prayer cards have been delivered to your congregation over the past few years. These are representative of some of the exploring/emerging congregations within MCEC.

Perhaps you would like to:

- start a personal or congregational prayer relationship with a ministry.
- receive a refresh pack of prayer cards, a poster for your congregation, or more information.

Please contact Joan Schooley at jschooley@mcec.ca / 1-800-206-9356 x 101.



Quest

Out of This Dark and Heavy Soil

- Troy Watson, Spiritual Life Director and Pastor

Several months ago Quest hosted a fundraiser event for two joint organizations called *Terry's Evergreen Addiction Recovery Services (TEARS)* and the *Niagara Sex Trade Task Force*. Deb Nanson, founder and leader of both programs, is a former sex trade worker and addict who has turned her life around and is now helping women get off the streets and live with sobriety and dignity.

Deb shared her story along with the stories

of other women still working the streets of Hamilton, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. The evening was a hard-hitting reality check for me and its impact was compounded by what had happened several hours before the fundraiser began

That afternoon, Onefortyfive, the name of our arts center and Quest's flagship outreach program, received a provocative painting submission for an upcoming art exhibit.

It was a large painting portraying scantily clad, depressed looking, immigrant sex trade workers and a man peering at them out of a car

We can't hang this.

What will people think?

window. My first response was, "We can't hang this. What will people think?"

However, the next day, after the fundraiser, I saw the painting with new eyes. The women depicted in this painting were the very women Deb was fighting for, trying to get the rest of us to look at as human beings, just like us, not like a leperous disease inflicted upon society. The arrival of this painting and the TEARS fundraiser happening on the same day did not feel like a coincidence. I began discerning with other Quest leaders what to do.

A couple of weeks later, "Niagara" magazine published an article entitled "Enslaved In



Deb Nanson, founder and leader of support programs for sex trade workers, helps women get off the streets.

Photo from Quest



Quest young people serving at a Oneforthyfive fundraiser event.

Photo from Quest

Our Own Backyard.” It began by recounting the story of a 17 year-old sex slave escaping a Niagara Falls hotel where she had been held captive for two and a half years. It continued to unveil the tragic truth about sex trafficking, the fastest growing and third most lucrative criminal activity in the world, after illegal drugs and arms trade. There are more human slaves today than ever before in history, an estimated 27 million people globally. This is not just an issue

in foreign countries like Thailand or Mexico though. In fact, this is a serious problem in the Niagara region. The Golden Horseshoe of Ontario accounts for 75% of Canada’s sex trafficking cases. The article confirmed five points Deb Nanson had made at the fundraiser:

1. this issue is very real,
2. it is happening all around us,
3. addiction is almost always a factor (or tactic),
4. it is one of the

Within the period of one month, Quest had been touched three times by events dealing with sex trade injustice and addiction.

4. the greatest injustice issues facing us as a society today, and
5. not much is being done about it.

Continued on next page ➔

Quest

Continued from previous page

Out of This Dark and Heavy Soil

- Troy Watson, Spiritual Life Director and Pastor

Within the period of one month Quest had been touched by a fundraiser, an art submission, and a local news article, all of them dealing with sex trade injustice and addiction. Clearly God was trying to get our attention.

We decided to bring the issue to the Quest community. I unveiled the provocative prostitute painting on stage during the teaching time at our Collective (church service) after the children went downstairs to Kidsquest (Sunday school). I read the artist statement to provide context for the artist's intentions: "To

create a body of work that reflects the choices that immigrants face upon entering Canada and to depict the various layers of social behaviour, negative and positive, with the hopes of encouraging healthy choices."

I shared a little bit about the TEARS fundraiser and the "Enslaved In Our Own Backyard" article and then invited the group to focus on two primary questions: What is God communicating to us and calling us to hear? And should we hang this painting in our arts center (in an area not accessible to children) given that

its mission is to promote peace and justice, conscious living, and community building?

There were plenty of questions, unease, and diverse responses during our community dialogue but most of us sensed God at work, albeit in an unexpected and uncomfortable way.

We spent time as a community in Luke 7 where Jesus visits the house of Simon, a religious Pharisee, and a prostitute crashes the party. She begins washing Jesus' feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair and anointing them with

Google Image



perfume and kisses. We asked ourselves some tough questions like: What would we do in this situation, if a prostitute entered a church or social gathering, and began weeping and kissing the feet of someone we assumed was a Spirit-filled Christian leader? Who did Jesus connect with and commend as understanding God here – the religious guy or the sex trade worker? Who are we in this story?

Through our reflections God confronted us with many issues, including our own complicated sexuality, our own brokenness, our apathetic ignorance at times to the plights of others and our often unacknowledged reluctance to respond to certain kinds of people the way Jesus responded to them – as human beings who deserve compassion and dignity as much as anyone and as people who often get his message of grace and love more than most. As a faith community we continue to wrestle with how God is calling us to respond to all this. Presently our hearts are heavy but hopeful. One positive thing that has sprouted out of this dark and heavy soil is our Peace Café. One of the singers performing at the TEARS fundraiser was

Photo from the Quest



a recovering alcoholic who has been clean for seven years. She said one of the difficulties of being a music performer in recovery is that most gigs are in bars. She said, “This is an awesome welcoming space you have here. It would be a perfect place to host an “open mic” where recovering addicts could come and play and hang out without having to worry about alcohol being served.”

Anthony Sweet - co-leader of Peace Café Open Mic

So we hosted our first Peace Café, a “dry” open mic, a few weeks ago on September 12. It was a wonderful evening of broken people, all of us, listening to one another’s stories, longings, wounds, and celebrations through song.

Please pray for us as we continue to open ourselves to the leading of God’s Spirit into messy and muddy waters.



onefortyfive

145

An arts center promoting peace & justice, community building and conscious living.

Art Exhibits	Public Lectures	Meditation Sessions
Concerts	Workshops	Yoga
Live Performances	Film Screenings	Community Events

145 King Street, St. Catharines, 905-980-1145, www.onefortyfive.com, info@questcc.ca

Photo from the Quest

Grace New Life Mennonite Church

We Saw God's Love In Your Church

When Pastor Sririsack Saythavy asked a family why they were wishing to be baptised and join Grace New Life Mennonite Church, this was their answer: "We saw God's love in your church."

This past year, the congregation was able to welcome three persons through baptism and looks forward to welcoming six more next month. "The good thing," says Pastor Sririsack, "is that we have a connection with them and have shown Christ to them. They

have been encouraged and are now an active part of the church." One other person has already expressed interest in becoming a member of the congregation as well. "That is such a blessing to my life as their pastor," shares Pastor Sririsack with a smile.

Through special events held by Grace New Life, the surrounding community is invited to come, worship, and get to know each other. It was through one of these events that several families grew to call Grace

New Life "home." Grace New Life has 35 - 40 worshippers on a regular Sunday. However, at one of these community events, the attendance more than doubles to around 80 - 100!

Grace New Life Mennonite Church is one of the newest members of the MCEC community of congregations. Located in Hamilton, the congregation is multi-cultural with Laotian, Thai, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Caucasian. In fact, one of the members

Grace New Life at worship.

Photo from Grace New Life





Grace New Life officially welcomed at the MCEC Annual Church Gathering 2012.

recently baptised is Caucasian. "Sometimes it is confusing when I preach as one sentence is in Lao and the next in English," explains Pastor Sririsack. "When I say, 'Please turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 5,' the Laotians turn to 2 Chronicles but the Canadians turn to 2 Corinthians! PowerPoint helps a lot!" At this point in time, the core of Grace New Life Mennonite Church is Laotian but their prayer is that it will become a more international/multi-cultural congregation in the future.

Each Monday and Tuesday night, Pastor Sririsack visits people in the community with the hopes of building bridges of friendship. Because he is a pastor, the Laotian community welcomes him into their homes,

regardless if they are a part of the congregation. He sometimes goes on these visits by himself, with his wife, or with another congregation member. Pastor Sririsack describes two members of the congregation who support and pray for him as he goes on these visits as the "key that helps to open the community door."

The congregation has a strong desire to connect with the youth of the community – 40 - 50 youth. At present they do not have the ability to run such a program but have been praying and know that God will provide. Currently they are working on building strong members so that the congregation knows how to welcome and encourage new people who are arriving at Grace New Life. They are also

"Our prayer is that we will become a more international/multi-cultural congregation."

- Pastor Sririsack

looking at ways of nurturing the children who come with their parents.

"One of the reasons that we decided to join the umbrella of the Mennonite Church is so that we are not alone. It is not good to be alone," shares Pastor Sririsack. "I thank God for our partnership with MCEC. We ask again for the brothers and sisters of MCEC to pray for us and if there is anything they could do to encourage Grace New Life to help us to grow, we welcome that."



In Sprout

MCEC Emerging/Exploring Congregations

Baden Space
Baden, ON
Worship Language: English
Leadership: Susan Allison-Jones

Bethel Ethiopian Evangelical Church
Kitchener, ON
Worship Language: Amharic
Leadership: Woldearegay Mesfin

Chin Christian Church
Kitchener, ON
Worship Language: Chin
Leadership: Jehu Lian

Chin Christian Church
Ottawa, ON
Worship Language: Chin
Leadership: No Kio Bik

Church of the Living Word in Ottawa
Ottawa, ON
Worship Language: Amharic
Leadership: Getachew Woldeyes

Freedom Gospel Ethiopian Church
Toronto, ON
Worship Language: Amharic
Leadership: Ashenafi Fulase

Grace New Life Mennonite Church
Hamilton, ON
Worship Language: Lao and English
Leadership: Srisisack Saythavy

Kingsfield - Clinton
Clinton, ON
Worship Language: English
Leadership: Ryan Jantzi

Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church
Toronto, ON
Worship Language: Lao and English
Leadership: Chinda Kommala/Ongath Phounsavath

Maranatha Evangelical Church
London, ON
Worship Language: Amharic
Leadership: Eshetu Asfaw

Markham Christian Worship Centre
Markham, ON
Worship Language: Tamil
Leadership: Joseph Savarimuthu

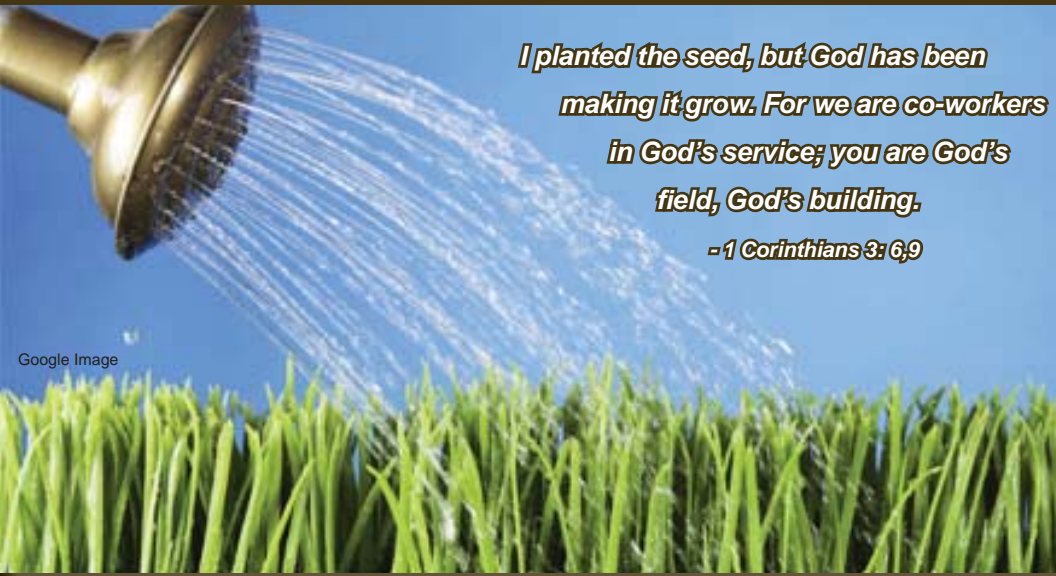
Medihanialem Ethiopian Church
Toronto, ON
Worship Language: Amharic
Leadership: Tadesse Mekuria Aleme

Open Table
Hamilton, ON
Worship Language: English
Leadership: Jeff and Mary Beth Druery

Oromo Evangelical Church of Ottawa
Ottawa, ON
Language: Oromo
Leadership: Teso Yman



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I planted the seed, but God has been making it grow. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.
- 1 Corinthians 3: 6,9

Quest Christian Community
St. Catharines, ON
Worship Language: English
Leadership: Troy Watson

Refuge de Paix
Sherbrooke, QC
Worship Language: Spanish and French
Leadership: Lucy Roca

Rehoboth Evangelical Church
Toronto, ON
Worship Language: Amharic
Leadership: Kassa Lemma

Shalom
Kitchener, ON
Worship Language: Tigrunya
Leadership: Yonathan Abraham

soulSPACE
Stratford, ON
Worship Language: English
Leadership: Anne Campion

The Commons
Hamilton, ON
Worship Language: English
Leadership: Randell Neudorf

The Village International Mennonite Church
Ottawa, ON
Worship Language: English (multicultural)
Leadership: Stefan Cherry



Every neighbourhood deserves a disciple-making peace presence. I certainly benefitted from growing up in such a place where the peace of Jesus Christ made a difference on the inside, and that was reflected in how people lived.

The stories in this issue of Sprout are a reflection of how the churches new to MCEC, as well as the church plants, strive to be a disciple-making peace presence in their neighbourhoods. Making a difference isn't easy. The questions, doubts and struggles at times overwhelm these young churches. They know that it is only by God's grace that they carry on with God's mission. And at the end of the day, the week or the month, they see lives touched by the peace of Jesus Christ. The reward comes when they catch sight of new disciples being a peace presence in the neighbourhood.

- Brian Bauman, MCEC Mission Minister



Mennonite Church
Eastern Canada

Église Mennonite
de l'Est
du Canada

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