



MCEC in Ministry

Spring 2015

CHIN CHRISTIAN CHURCH
OFFICIAL CHURCH OF
KITCHENER 2014
KITCHENER, ONTARIO, CANADA



Mennonite
Church
Eastern
Canada

Pastors Joseph Raltong, Jehu Lian,
and David Martin celebrate as Chin
Christian Church in Kitchener moves
into their own worship space.

Photo: The Record

We're Listening

Listening for the voice of the Spirit is critical for the health of the church. This past year, MCEC Council members and staff visited approximately half of the 100 churches across MCEC. One of the common concerns that we heard was that congregations need support and guidance in knowing how to reach out to their neighbours and communities with the peace of Jesus Christ.

Our listening resulted in a new pilot project, ReLearning Community (page 3), that is aimed at helping us become more intentional about sharing Christ's gift of community with people in our neighbourhoods. I invite you to listen for updates on this new initiative and become even more

engaged in *extending the peace of Jesus Christ* in your neighbourhood and community.

As you read the following stories of MCEC in ministry, I invite you to listen carefully for the inspiring voice of the Spirit that is finding expression in our congregations. Listening for the Spirit, listening to each other, and listening for how God is calling us to be agents of Jesus' peace are essential as we engage the new ministry challenges that are ahead of us. May God grant us ears to listen!

"Listen carefully for the inspiring voice of the Spirit that is finding expression in our congregations."

- David Martin



David Martin, MCEC Executive Minister

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Shine on Faith Formation



“I don’t know if I would have ended up in ministry had it not been for a curriculum writer coming to my congregation,” reflects Carrie Martens, pastor, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church. When Carrie was 18, a curriculum writer came to her congregation to teach storytelling. “I felt like I had found my calling,” she further remarks. “I remember being completely absorbed and after that, teaching Sunday school became my life.”

Carrie Martens and Rebecca Seiling, part of the *Shine* curriculum team, conducted a series of workshops this past fall and winter promoting the MennoMedia curriculum, bringing inspiration to teachers across MCEC.

Shine is an Anabaptist inspired curriculum with an emphasis on spiritual practices and the centrality of Bible stories.

As the workshop travelled, it became obvious that people were excited about *Shine* and faith formation. Some congregations were able to send one or two persons and others sent their whole team. Each workshop was met with enthusiasm for continued growth and learning, attracting Sunday school teachers, planners, and non-teachers from every age spectrum from youth to senior. The workshop participants all learned from each other. “My favourite part of the evenings,” Rebecca recalls, “was hearing other people’s ideas of what was working for them.”

Sharing our faith with younger generations is vital if we wish them to choose to follow Jesus throughout life.” - Carrie Martens

Shine On: A Story Bible is a resource of *Shine* which will extend beyond the years of the curriculum. “I think it is a solid, well written illustrated volume,” explains Rebecca. “I hear from lots of people how happy they are with it.

The kids are bringing them to church - it’s incredible, kids are bringing Bibles to church!”

“Sharing our faith with younger generations is vital if we wish them to choose to follow Jesus throughout life,” says Carrie. “While children will receive some of this formation at home, there is a type of formation that happens within the congregation that simply doesn’t happen elsewhere.”

Carrie and Rebecca with a team from First Hmong Mennonite Church





A "huddle" at the ReLearning Community workshop

A Chance to ReLearn

"ReLearning Community is a place for ordinary people to have ordinary conversations about Jesus," explains Arli Klassen, Coordinator of MCEC ReLearning Community.

Ten MCEC congregations are participating in a two-year spiritual journey, each learning new ways of being disciples. Congregational teams and missional community groups are being coached in finding new ways of connecting with God's story, finding the words to tell their own stories, and sharing these stories with neighbours, friends, and family.

Alyssa Bender, Living Water Christian Community Church, says, "This is a

great opportunity to not only be discipled, but also see spiritual growth as you disciple others and see them disciple others. I found the ripple effect really appealing, and I knew that it would deeply impact my relationship with Christ."

MCEC has partnered with 3dm Europe to offer discipleship coaching and training expertise to MCEC congregations. MCEC staff and council representatives have also formed a group, learning together about discipleship and focusing on carrying forward the coaching.

Jeff Steckley, MCEC Congregational Ministries Minister, says, "It is invigorating for MCEC leadership to walk with congregations in discovering what discipleship means."

"I knew that it would deeply impact my relationship with Christ."

- Alyssa Bender

A new group of congregations is currently being sought to begin a journey in late fall. A one-day workshop is planned for June 2015 for congregations who are interested in learning more.

"ReLearning gets at the heart of congregational life - being the presence of Christ in our communities in the midst of life's daily routine," explains Greg Yantzi, part of the MCEC leadership group. "This process will challenge congregations to be engaged with their neighbours and with each other."

An Eye On Jr. Youth

“We have been intentional about how we point kids to God,” says Jonathan. Sarah adds, “How do we encourage Jr. Youth to start asking those questions? How do we increase the relationship between them and God?”

Jonathan Brubacher, Phil Martin, and Sarah Penner are an MCEC task group empowered to plan events for Jr. Youth within MCEC. They worked together on the fall Make A Difference Day and on the spring retreat for Jr. Youth. At the fall event, youth were invited to explore what it means to meet with God. Through comments and themes emerging from that event, Jonathan, Sarah, and Phil have developed a retreat for May that they are excited about.

Phil explains, “Several kids did a survey in their churches about how people meet God and the second most common space of Divine meeting was named as nature and animals. We decided to pick up on that for the spring retreat. We are encouraging youth to take the Nature Spot Challenge prior to the May retreat and then share their experience with that challenge. I think it will be exciting.”

The Nature Spot Challenge is simple. Find a nature spot in a special outdoor place where you feel the beauty and wonder of creation. Then visit that spot at least three times a week to meet God in nature. Retreat participants will spend time

in their own nature spots over the weekend as well as participate in workshops, camp activities, and worship. Sara Erb will help the group focus on God through Bible stories and reflection.

**“It is the whole body of Christ working together.”
- Phil Martin**

Many are involved in planning the events – the task group, speakers, MCEC, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, and Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. Phil, in speaking of this group, says, “It is the whole body of Christ working together. We are trying to really connect with the interests and needs of Jr. Youth. Their interests and needs are important to us. The whole body is responding and creating a context for learning and growing. It really is inspiring.”

Junior Youth Retreat - Meeting God in the Wilderness





Ichthus: Making a Difference in Quebec City

Ichthus image

Just A Little To Say...

“When we discovered the Mennonite Church at Joliette, it was like a breath of fresh air. We are Mennonites, not by birth, but we are deeply Mennonite because of the values of the gospel.”

– Mario Merchand

There is a faith community springing up in Quebec City. Arriving five years ago, Mario and Line were excited to place their children in a good school and Mario to continue in his studies and pursuit of his doctorate in practical theology. They found a church where they could worship but soon began feeling as though they were missing something. “We missed the sense of community and the emphasis on being a peace church,” Mario explains.

So last spring they began meeting as a family in their home for worship. Slowly that group has grown to a dozen or more some weeks. The group decided

on the name Ichthus for their community.

This symbol, in the shape of the fish, was used by the early Christians as a secret Christian symbol meaning *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour*. Mario says, “When we chose this name it was to let the people know that Jesus Christ is the centre of our community and that this is a place we can grow together.”

As the group moves forward they consider how to be a peace church within their neighbourhood. Mario has worked for many years in the area of restorative justice and is currently discovering how to encourage

restorative justice in the schools and in the criminal justice system. He adds, “Church is for more than Sunday morning. We want it to make a difference in our lives and in our community. We want to be an example and do something in action.”

Ichthus is in the very early stages of being a faith community. “When MCEC first approached me to ask if I had something to share with the larger MCEC family, I said no,” admits Mario. “We changed our minds though because it’s important to have dialogue with and the support and prayers of the Mennonite congregations - even if we only have a little to say.”



Greg Yantzi, Cindy Klassen, Suzanne DeGroot, Brad Schlegel

Sports, Faith, Leadership

Greg Yantzi (pastor), Cindy Klassen (Olympic Long Track Speed Skater), Suzanne DeGroot (All Canadian, Semi-Pro Basketball Player and Coach), Brad Schlegel (Olympian and Former NHL Player) shared their journey in a panel discussion this past October, reflecting how they brought their worlds of sports and faith together.

“There has to be a way of working together. Things that are happening in sports deeply line up with our faith.” - Ruth Boehm, pastor

“I think God is less concerned about which team wins and more concerned about what happens in that event that allows me to grow and experience more of who God is.” - *Suzanne DeGroot*

“Sometimes we forget that our personal values and boundaries are well respected by coaches who also understand the importance of values and boundaries”

- *Greg Yantzi, pastor*

Whatever I am doing, I do it to the best of my ability for Him. With every practice, every stride, every race, I gave it 100%.”

- *Cindy Klassen*

“No matter what happens on the field today, or in the ice rink, God is going to love me.” - Brad Schlegel

**COMING SOON
TO MCEC!**

May 1-3, 2015

Changing the Conversation Events
with Chris Huebner, Professor
Canadian Mennonite University



Bernard Sejour - First Steps in Ottawa

A Catalyzer Arrives in Ottawa

Bernard Sejour knows what Mennonites can do when they support one another and serve their community. They make neighbourhoods safer and friendlier, they care for the vulnerable, and they minister to one another and their world in the name of Christ. Working with the congregations already in Ottawa, Bernard is a catalyzer who wants to bring people together so that they may have a critical mass of Anabaptists in the nation's capital similar to what already exists in the Niagara Peninsula, Region of Waterloo, and Essex County.

When those communities were becoming established, Mennonite churches and businesses were there. Mennonite values were woven into the very fabric of

"The church is a family, and the Mennonite family is a beautiful one that people want to join."

- Bernard Sejour

the community. Creating a critical mass of Anabaptist believers in a large urban centre with two predominant languages and a growing immigrant population is a whole different matter. "We have never done this before," says Brian Bauman, Mission Minister, "but thankfully, Bernard has the skills and knowledge to help us."

Bernard is a Haitian-born Anabaptist leader who has years of experience in church planting, leadership training, and community development. He was asked recently for one thing that gives him hope and one thing that has surprised him so far in Ottawa. "I get hope from the established MCEC congregations in

Ottawa. Every community is different and the pastors and congregation members are helping me understand this community. It is exciting. People are engaged." And the surprise? "None so far," he says. "I have been in this space before. For now we are sharing stories. That is the first step."

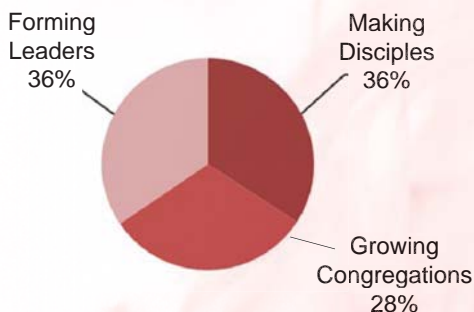
This is a long term project for MCEC and a very important one. "Canada is becoming increasingly urbanized," says Brian, "and God is active in those communities. We need to be part of the peace making and faith formation that is happening there. And I have faith that Bernard will be one of our leaders in this journey."



Dawne Driedger - Pastor and Student

A Generous Community

Investing in the Area Church



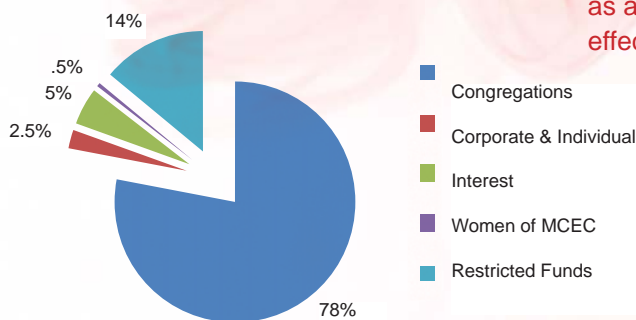
Donations from congregations and individuals support MCEC full-time and short-term students through grants provided by the MCEC Theological Leadership Development Fund.

In addition to providing grants for seminary level education, it also provides financial assistance to applicants for studies at undergraduate and doctoral levels.

"I am so thankful for the generous support of MCEC which has allowed me to attend equipping events that help me to serve as an interim pastor more effectively."

*- Dawne Driedger, Interim Pastor
Milverton Mennonite Fellowship*

Funding Our Ministries





Supporting the needs of existing pastors and lay leaders

Google Image

Anabaptist Learning Workshop

Conventional academic programs are not accessible for all people. MCEC, in partnership with CGUC, has developed the Anabaptist Learning Workshop to offer new opportunities for faith-based learning.

“It would be great if people got fired up about lifelong learning and new ways of doing and being the church,” says Matthew Bailey-Dick, program developer of the new Anabaptist Learning Workshop: A Church and Ministry Certificate Program of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College.

Many individuals within MCEC feel called to ministry or greater learning but there are few avenues for them to currently pursue. Conventional academic programs are not accessible for all people. That is changing. MCEC, in partnership with CGUC, has developed the Anabaptist Learning Workshop to offer new opportunities for faith-based learning.

The program is open to everyone and will begin fall 2015. The courses will comprise informal, experiential styles of learning with a certificate option for those who wish to pursue it. The courses will take a collaborative approach and will be held in a variety of geographical settings – both inside and outside of classrooms. A regular rotation of courses on a variety of topics related to Anabaptist faith and contemporary life will be offered.

This year’s Ralph and Eileen Lebold Banquet in June is in support of this program. Ralph Lebold has been a long term Conference leader, minister, and served as the third president of Conrad Grebel.

At last year’s banquet, MCEC Executive Minister, David Martin, said, “We have a new sense of direction and want to turn the Lebold Endowment into a tool that will support the needs of our existing pastors and our lay leaders. Our vision is to partner church and college to develop a program in church ministry to bring all our Mennonite Church cultures together around the same table.”

Recently, Ralph Lebold stated, “Eileen and I support this new venture as a logical extension of the original vision for the Lebold Endowment for Leadership Training, namely, equipping leaders to serve in our MCEC congregations.”



Jongejan Harder image

Kendall & Charleen with MCEC Staff, Linda Brnjas and Henry Paetkau

Ordination: Two by Two

“**O**rdination was a natural step for me,” says Kendall. Charleen quickly adds, “I think there would have been times that Kendall could have gotten ordained on his own, while I was on maternity leave, but that wasn’t what we chose.” Kendall further explains, “Our ministry is together. I think it would have felt funny for the congregation and for us not to have been ordained together.”

Kendall and Charleen Jongejan Harder’s ministry started during seminary, covering a sabbatical at Harrow Mennonite Church. “We had a wonderful time pastoring and testing ministry together,” recalls Kendall.

The process of ordination required them to revisit their original call to ministry through completion of a

second MLI – Ministerial Leadership Information form – a form filled out when they were originally seeking a congregation. Upon completion of the writing, an interview was then scheduled with a selected group of interviewers at MCEC.

“Part of what I really appreciated about the ordination interviews was how prepared the interviewing team from the Leadership Council was.” Charleen notes. “They had clearly read our materials and they carefully framed their questions. They didn’t ask us to repeat what we had already said but rather expand on it. There was a sense of encouragement all the way through.”

With the interview behind them, Kendall, Charleen,

Ordination is about covenant, commitment, and blessing.”

- Kendall Jongejan Harder

and Valleyview Mennonite Church planned a service that celebrated and affirmed Kendall and Charleen’s ministry.

Kendall recalls, “Naming our promises at the ordination service was a powerful experience for me. Ordination is about covenant, commitment, and blessing.” Charleen continues, “It is an opportunity to reflect on what it is to be church, pastor, and what ministry is. It was significant to reflect on that within the context of being known in the congregation. Valleyview did not call us as new pastors. They know who we are and affirmed us – that is an empowering thing.”



Pastors Joseph, Isaiah and David at TIM retreat

TiM - Cross-Cultural Reflections

“I have come to the conclusion that all of ministry is cross-cultural,” states David Brubacher, TiM coach and MCEC pastor. “Even if we are in a so-called ‘mono-cultural context,’ there are still differences of opinions and understandings. A level of cross-culturalism actually exists in every ministry context and setting.”

Transitioning into Ministry (TiM) is a leadership program for pastors who are new to ministry or to MCEC and the congregations who support them. Throughout the years, there has been a multicultural perspective in the TiM program as Bock Ki Kim (MC Canada Witness), Hans Peters (Jane Finch Faith Community), and Roberson Mbayamvula (Hagerman Mennonite Church) have participated, each from another culture.

This year’s group has both Pastors Isaiah Vang (First Hmong Mennonite Church) and Joseph Raltong (Chin Christian Church) providing a strong multicultural presence.

“I have been a pastor for 18 years but I learn a lot from the people in the program,” Pastor Isaiah shares. “Even though we are all from very different backgrounds, we share how God has called us. It is good.”

Pastor Joseph Raltong from Chin Christian Church says, “I was happy to be a part of the program. We understand each other because we are all in ministry each day. I am pleased to share and learn from our ministry experiences together.”

David has had the opportunity to mentor many

“A level of cross-culturalism actually exists in every ministry context and setting.”
- David Brubacher

pastors. He reflects, “I have discovered that when you have folks from various cultures, it reminds you of the need to look at some things that we perhaps often take for granted. It creates a rich opportunity to pause and dig a little deeper than we might have if we were all from the same cultural background.”

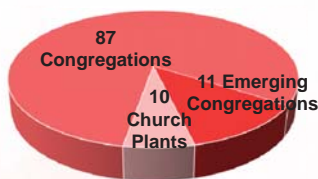
The TiM program has been adapted and modified by Mennonite Church Canada and is now being offered nationwide. TiM is in its eighth year within MCEC.

MCEC By the Numbers...

315 attended Annual Church Gathering 2013 in Niagara - On Holy Ground: Rich Soil for Seeds of Promise.

12 LED Talks - Where is God calling the church? Where is Holy Ground?

1 Congregation welcomed into Full Membership - Church of the Living Word in Ottawa



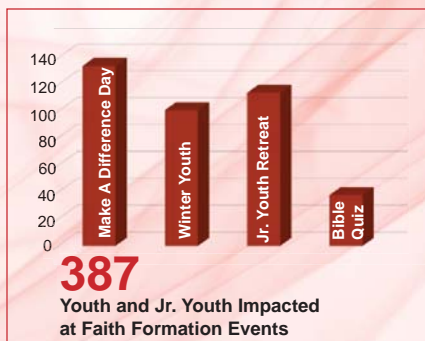
108 MCEC Congregations/Faith Communities

12 languages of worship

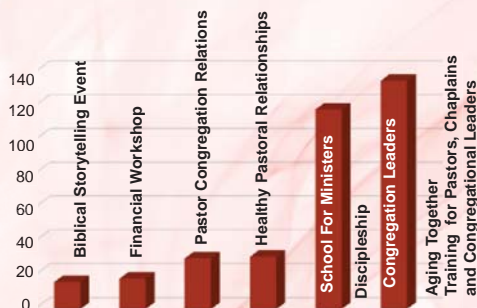
15% of MCEC congregations are first generation Canadian congregations

23% of MCEC congregations hold services in languages other than English

8 Young Adults travel to UK to discover new ways of being and doing church



387 Youth and Jr. Youth Impacted at Faith Formation Events



348 Persons Participated in these Leadership Development events

10 Congregations ReLearning what it means to be disciples and to make disciples



140 take in Sports, Faith, and Leadership Panel with Cindy Klassen & Friends

Pastoral Leadership



296 MCEC Pastors

20 ministers and chaplains concluded their assignments

15 ministers new to MCEC began ministry assignments

16 ministers installed in congregational ministry

2 ministers licensed toward ordination

2 ministers licensed for specific ministry

5 ministers ordained plus 1 ordination credentials received

16 participants in Transitioning into Ministry (TiM) in first, second, or third year of program

Beyond Tomorrow

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada is grateful to individuals and families that 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 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:

**Rita Bauman
Doris Gingrich
Magdalena Martin
Katharina Neufeld
Enid Schmidt**

**Orville Bechtel
Ivan Kuepfer
Valina Martin
Elsie Nighswander
Robert Shantz**

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MC Canada image

Mennonite Church Canada

Sharing the Faith

From Willard Metzger, MC Canada Executive Director

At a breakfast meeting I was asked, “Why don’t Mennonites believe in evangelism?”

It’s not the first time I’ve heard this question. The inquirer usually has a heart for evangelism but is frustrated by what feels like a lack of support by their congregation.

However, the question has an inherent conclusion that Mennonite congregations are opposed to evangelism. This is not true. People in Mennonite congregations may be timid, but not opposed to sharing what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Some are not comfortable with simplistic equations that promise salvation to strangers. They twinge at the “four spiritual laws” and the “sinners prayer.” But this does not mean they are opposed to evangelism. They

just don’t want to reduce the work of the Holy Spirit to a few catch phrases or a particular three-part strategy.

It’s important for Mennonite congregations to enhance their interactive activity; not to only make converts, but to initiate relationships. Explaining what it means to be a follower of Jesus is an on-going conversation, not a one-time encounter.

I pray that God will grant Mennonite congregations a renewed vision for the redemptive power of relationships. I pray that God will increase our yearning to build new relationships with our neighbours and co-workers – so that the people historically known as “the quiet in the land” will beam with the peaceful confidence of God’s passionate love to restore and redeem.

“Explaining what it means to be a follower of Jesus is an on-going conversation, not a one-time encounter.”

- Willard Metzger



Mennonite
Church
Eastern
Canada

Extending the Peace of Jesus Christ
making disciples • growing congregations • forming leaders

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