



MCEC in Ministry

Spring 2016



New Things are Brewing

Just like a coffee percolator brewing a good cup of java, the Spirit of God is perking away in MCEC brewing all kinds of good stuff. I can't help but be amazed at all the new things that are bubbling up in our congregations and in our work together as the MCEC community of congregations. These are challenging times to be the church but this is also an incredibly exciting time to watch how God is brewing up fresh initiatives, revitalizing the tried and true, and preparing the church for some exciting fresh starts.

Anabaptist Learning Workshop is a new venture for pastors, lay people, and new Canadians that is helping us delve deeper into scripture and reflect on our

Mennonite faith. Pastors in Exile (PiE) is an MCEC supported initiative that is challenging young adults to take another look at how Jesus is relevant to their lives today. ReLearning Community is helping congregations to change long held habits of being the "silent in the land" and to learn new ways of sharing their faith in their local neighbourhoods. MCEC Go and Grow grants are helping congregations break new ground in their local communities. The Shalom Healing & Worship Centre, a Tigrinya speaking church with roots in Eritrea, is making a new covenant to join the MCEC community of congregations in extending the peace of Jesus Christ.



David Martin, MCEC Executive Minister

"Before long you will discover that you are on holy ground..."

- David Martin

Young adults who are participating in Leadership Training for Under Resourced Neighbourhoods are finding new ways to express their faith and be church in their urban communities. God is definitely brewing up all kinds of good things in MCEC and is inviting us to get out there and join the action.

So grab your favourite brew, sit down with a hot drink and read through this ministry report to see for yourself what God is up to. Before long you will discover that you are on holy ground and that God is a fantastic brew master. With everything God is brewing up, we know the church is in good hands and we can joyfully support what God is doing.

David Martin, Executive Minister

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A Wall Like No Other

“When we actually got there,” says Reid Kennel of the separation wall, “it was so massive. We delayed the other part of our day because we were all pretty stunned by this.” Reid Kennel travelled to Israel/Palestine last spring with the Yella young adult learning trip sponsored by MCEC and Mennonite Central Committee.

One of the most impactful moments of the Yella trip was their first view of the separation wall between Israel and Palestine. “The wall stretches across the country in some form or another, mostly in that large, concrete block style,” Reid continues. “This wasn’t even a planned stop on our trip, we were going somewhere else, had a few minutes and wanted to check it out. But seeing the wall overshadowed the rest of the day.”

MCEC has partnered with Mennonite Central Committee Ontario to provide young adults with an opportunity to go to the Middle East to explore questions of Christian faith and life while interacting with Christians and Jews, encountering complex peace and conflict issues, and considering the context for Jesus’ life and ministry.

Faith partners, three older adults who travelled with the group, were a sounding board for the group as they processed all that they were seeing and experiencing. “If we didn’t understand something,” Reid explains, “we could ask them and not worry about asking the wrong question or being insensitive.”

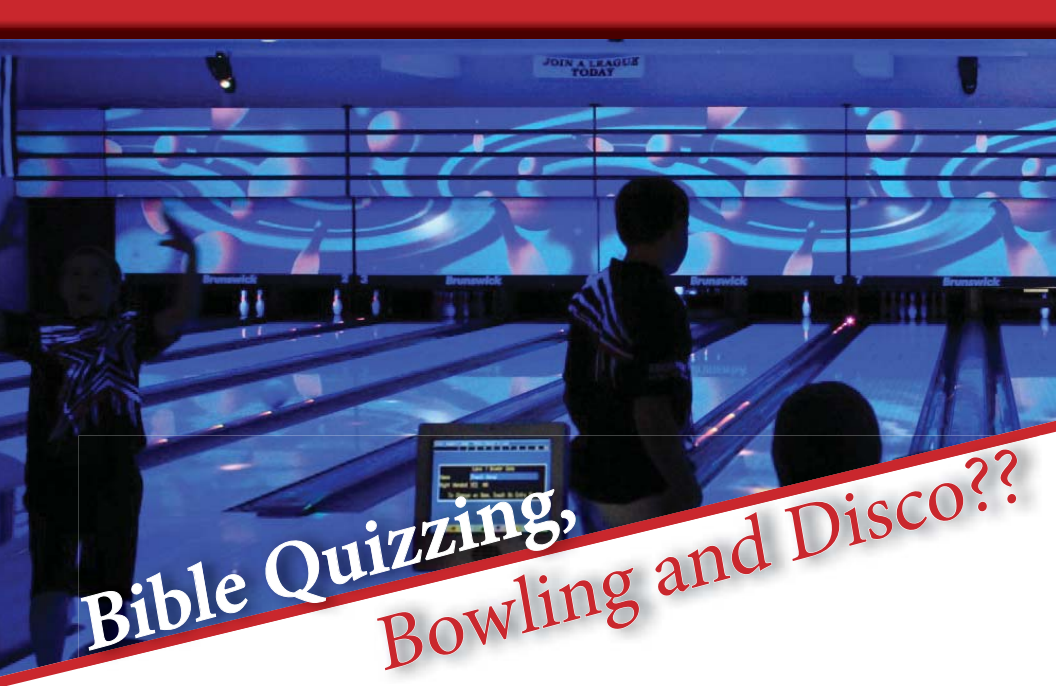
The first week was spent in Israel visiting some of the Biblical tourism sites. Each evening the group would debrief with the faith partners. The second week was spent in Bethlehem with Palestinian families. Two participants stayed in a home together and after each day would return to their host’s home where they would have dinner and an evening together.

“There is a history of conflict there that has left both sides so traumatized and scarred,” reflects Reid. “I would be sad if a Yella trip didn’t happen again but if it is because there is no conflict in the area, I’d be very fine with that.”

Google image



***Good Fences DON'T
Make Good Neighbours***



Bible Quizzing, Bowling and Disco??

Something was happening under the disco balls at the local bowling alley. A great silence, followed by extreme laughter and lengthy applause occurred again and again. This was always followed by someone heading down the lane to bowl their turn.

This was the scene the night before the MCEC Bible Quiz competition. Community Mennonite Fellowship (Drayton) used the night to blow off steam after an intense few months of studying together in preparation for the annual tournament. Not only was this a great night of hanging out and bowling, but they also used it as a final study prep – before each person could bowl, they had to answer a quiz question. The disco balls only added to the ambiance.

Bible Quizzing has been a long standing tradition bringing together youth to study scripture in friendly competition. “It’s a fun way to learn more about the Bible in depth,” says Alecia Weber. Dawson Martin adds, “And it’s a great way for everyone to dive deep into a specific part of the Bible and get everything that the chapter has to offer.”

During each quiz, team members are asked designated questions. All try to be the first to buzz in on buzzer questions, and work with other team members in answering team questions. The last number of years has included a Quizzer of the Year scholarship from

either Conrad Grebel University College or Canadian Mennonite University. Not only did Staci Weber from Community win the scholarship last year, the entire team at Community Mennonite Fellowship won the coveted Overall Team Awesomeness award, a certificate that is displayed outside of their youth room.

Team questions are a highlight. “We have altered our Bible study a little this year to give more attention to the application focus,” explains coach Josh Martin. “You may know the cities and towns people travelled to, but that doesn’t really

***Community’s Bible quiz team
work together on their
team question.***



Google Image

**"It's a great way to dive deep into a specific part of the Bible."
- Dawson Martin**

matter if you can't apply it to anything." Teams are given a few minutes to gather their thoughts together and one person is then designated to give their answer. Judges, listening for specific information, credit each team with a score. "It's cool how unified a team can be as they work together and try to come up with the answer," says Lauren Horst.

There have been many quizzers who have studied much scripture over the years. "I love when we are in church and something will come up that we studied one year," remarks Jessica Martin. "We look at each other from across the room as if to say, 'That's Bible quizzing!'"

As the team studies the book of Joshua for this year's quiz, Coach Josh finds creative ways to learn the stories. I wonder if there were disco balls in Jericho. If there were, the team in Drayton will find them I am sure!



Focus on Mental Wellness

"Within two years of meeting Lee however, we began to witness his struggles with depression. It was our first encounter with a clinically diagnosed illness up close. When I would veer through the campus centre on my way to seminary and stop in to see him at work, I was never sure exactly which version of Lee I would find. Would it be the one who, in the throes of a manic stage, was ready to take over the communications department, or the one who would simply look up from his desk when I came around the corner, despair pooling in his huge blue eyes?"

- Swartz, Ted. *Laughter is Sacred Space*, Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press, 2012, p 41.
Reprinted with permission.

The buzz across the room quickly quieted as the lights came down. The anticipation was tangible as a tall, toque-wearing character took centre stage. And so it began.

It actually began months earlier as the leadership at Tavistock Mennonite Church dreamed what a year focused on mental health and mental illness might hold for their congregation.

Connecting with MCEC's Go & Grow fund provided the impetus for bringing Ted Swartz to their community. Ted Swartz is a playwright and actor from Ted & Company TheatreWorks in VA. *Laughter is Sacred Space* explores his relationship with his friend and business partner, Lee Eshleman, who struggled with bipolar disorder and depression until he took his own life in 2007.

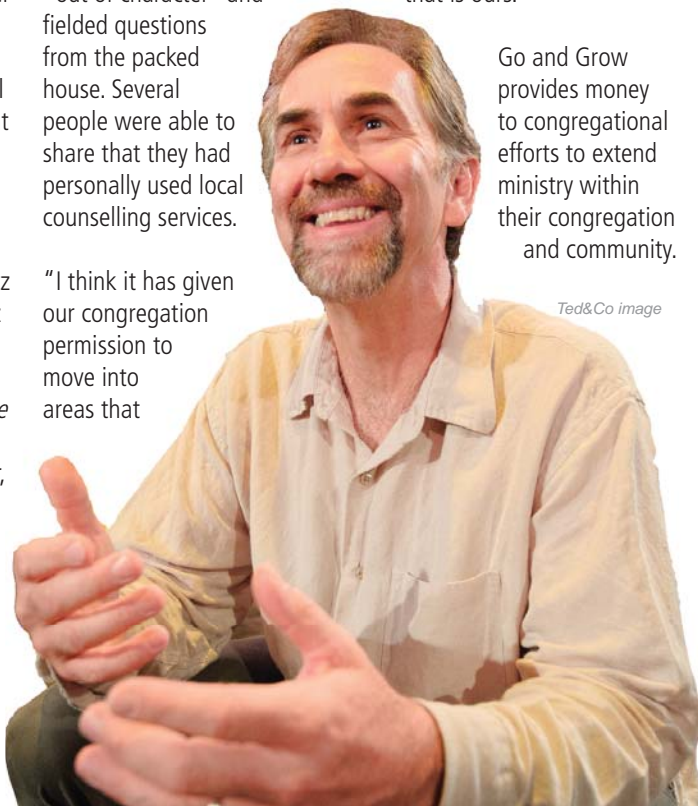
The evening featured Ted Swartz and was supported by the presence of local congregations and four or five mental health and wellness organizations. At the end of the evening, Ted came "out of character" and fielded questions from the packed house. Several people were able to share that they had personally used local counselling services.

"I think it has given our congregation permission to move into areas that

have been often talked about in hushed tones," reflects Paul Adams, pastor at Tavistock Mennonite Church. "It seems to me that if we don't address this theme we are not being good stewards of the trust that is ours."

Go and Grow provides money to congregational efforts to extend ministry within their congregation and community.

Ted & Co image



Ted Swartz

- Facilitating healthy conversation in MCEC.



"Let the children come to me."- Jesus

Jonathan Abraham Jonassen

"It's Time to Become Mennonite."

Meeting at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, ON for the past six years, Shalom Worship & Healing Centre is a Tigrinya speaking church with roots in Eritrea. They have a hope and a dream to see the healing of people through true worship. "This is our vision," says Pastor Jonathan. "Healing comes through true worship of God. Although we are known by the name Shalom, this is why our full name is Shalom Worship & Healing Centre."

Many of the people at Shalom, if not all, have fled their country of Eritrea. Prolonged periods of conflict and severe drought have affected Eritrea's agriculture-based economy and it remains one of the poorest countries in Africa. Many churches are underground and many pastors are in prison. "Every night my daughter prays, 'God please help the

refugee people, the Eritrean people. Keep them in every corner," states Pastor Jonathan. "God is our shelter, the Bible says. He is our everything."

Over the past year, Shalom has baptized eight persons, six of them were new believers. All newcomers are required to take a Bible study class and their church is growing, almost filling the space where they are meeting. With approximately 100 children in their congregation, they have recently hired a young woman to help teach them. "We have to shape the children now. We are praying for them," Pastor Jonathan shares. "Every woman in the congregation has two names of children in our congregation and each day they pray for those two children."

Aware of the Mennonite denomination when he was in Eritrea, Pastor Jonathan greatly values the relationships he has developed over the past six years within MCEC. "I feel very strongly that God is leading us to be affiliated with the Mennonites now – it is time," says Pastor Jonathan. Shalom is led by 23 elders who were unanimous in their decision to join MCEC, further confirming for Pastor Jonathan that the time is now.

Shalom Worship & Healing Centre will be welcomed into MCEC as an emerging congregation at the April 2016 Annual Church Gathering in Leamington.

A Journey Through Lent

This is a story of strength and struggle, of weariness and rest, of death and resurrection – a story of God's care and God's grace. It is the story of a small group of people forming a church community in the Vanier district of Ottawa. Their hopes and dreams fresh and excited at the official launch in 2010.

Meeting in an old Anglican church building on Montreal Road, a needle drop-box attached to the back of the building provided a much needed place for the needles which are a regular part of everyday life on Montreal Road. "We wanted to be the hands and feet of Christ to the people of the neighbourhood," says pastor Stefan Cherry. People from the neighbourhood started coming to the church on a regular basis, people with high needs. A woman from the neighbourhood would sometimes rollerblade into the service and pass out on the pew. The alley behind the church was always busy as men and women met to sell or use drugs. Stefan explains, "We were such a small congregation and began to realize that we did not have the resources or capacity to meet the needs in the neighbourhood." It became challenging for The

Village as members began to leave, simply because they were tired and overextended. Even Stefan was finding that most of his energy was used to serve the people in the neighbourhood with little left for those in the congregation. It was quickly becoming a crisis.

"After four years, we were basically sinking," recalls Stefan. "That's when I sent a 'mayday' email to Brian Bauman, Mission Minister at MCEC." Brian immediately went to Ottawa for an emergency time of discernment.

The Village decided to close its doors on Montreal Road and move to a new location just outside of the neighbourhood. "But our new lease was for May and we were in January. We weren't sure if we would make it from January to May,"

says Stefan. So they celebrated what God had done through The Village on Montreal Road and immediately closed its doors. The congregation then took a four-month sabbatical until their new space was available in May.

"The timing was great. We had a closing celebration and then we entered into the season of Lent," Stefan remembers. "We did our re-start just after Easter. We experienced death and resurrection as a congregation."



The Village now finds itself as a growing congregation. With just over 13 people at the re-start, they have grown to approximately 30, and the congregation has become much healthier than it was before. Meeting in a Community Centre, they are near the high-needs neighbourhood they were once a part of, able to minister there, but are not overwhelmed as they were before.

“We experienced death and resurrection as a congregation.”

- Stefan Cherry

As Stefan now prepares to step down from The Village, not only does the congregation have a leadership team but it also has a transitional team in place. “I am feeling that God is now asking me to let go. I am grateful that the people are

excited about the possibility of finding a new pastor and that MCEC is interested in seeing The Village continue to grow,” says Stefan. “Please continue to pray for this young and fragile ministry.”



Being Church in an Urban Neighbourhood

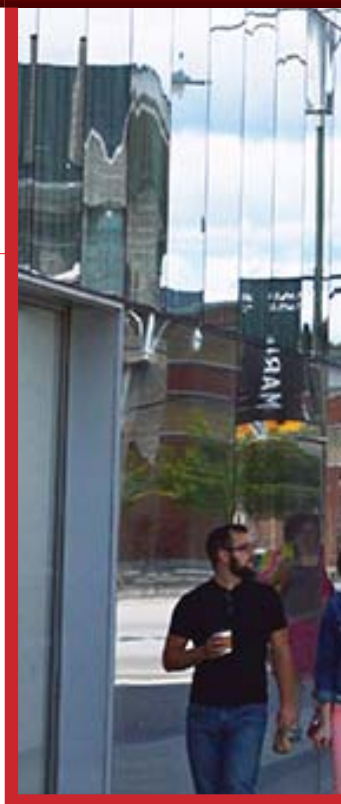
The vendors at Hamilton Farmers' Market couldn't understand why their applications were being denied. They had been a part of the farmer's market for years and now they were losing their spots. When Matt and Jeanette from The Commons became aware of it, they were greatly distressed.

In 2010, the market had been newly renovated and all vendors needed to reapply for their spots. The city decided to rebrand the market as a "local market," favouring the vendors whose produce was grown within a 100-mile radius. This looked like a great idea – unless you were one of the 23 immigrant vendors with an "ethnic" focus who were being denied, even though they had a long history of service to the community.

Matt and Jeanette, along with a core of community

members and market patrons, founded the Friends of the Hamilton Farmers Market to support the vendors. They began advocating to the City of Hamilton but they were not getting results or even being heard. However, upon contacting Andrew Potter, a reporter from MacLean's magazine, suddenly there was national attention. In the end, all the vendors who appealed to the City retained their spots. Mr. Potter pressed The Friends about what had driven them to help the vendors. Matt and Jeanette were able to share with him that they were a part of The Commons and that for them, it was something they did because of their faith in God.

"Because we value community and justice and we saw something that was detrimental to the community and to the idea of what justice should look like, we had to act," says



Randell Neudorf, pastor at The Commons. "It's not like the church did a project but it is an example of two people internalizing the values of the church."

With a large percentage of people from The Commons working in non-profit organizations, social services, volunteering or involved in





Google image

neighbourhood associations they daily live out their faith as an extension of their church community. "When we put ourselves in all these community situations," continues Randell, "we are caring for our neighbours and bringing a pastoral presence into that space."

The Commons - committed to making God tangible in their neighbourhood.

The Commons set aside certain times of the year as sabbath seasons. As a small congregation, most of the people are usually preparing some part of each worship service. The sabbath rhythms allow The Commons a time of rest, a time when they can

simply come to the gatherings and not be involved in the planning. "By paring down our programming and church commitments, we make it possible so that people have time to do community things," explains Randell. "We encourage people to be involved in the wider neighbourhood and we talk about that as being an expression of the church."



The Commons, an MCEC supported congregation, ministers in an urban neighbourhood within Hamilton, ON.

Jennifer
Kellner
image

PIE

Pastors in Exile



Vibrant Faith in Exile

"There is a future with hope for MCEC – for the Church," says Jessica Reesor Rempel, cofounder of Pastors in Exile. "God promises us a future with hope and we see it every day in our work with young adults. There are talented, passionate, faithful young adults out there, here and now, who are really excited about the Church."

Inspired by a passage from Jeremiah 29, Jessica and Chris Brnjas have worked together over the past few years pastoring young adults in the KW area. Pastors in Exile, PIE, is an Anabaptist rooted movement connecting young adults with vibrant faith experiences inside and outside of church walls. "Not all young adults are in our congregations,

not all of them are in the pews. Maybe we wish it would be more like the 1960s when the pews were overflowing with young people. It's not like that anymore; this might be our new normal. What will it look like to really invest in this space rather than try to get back to how it used to be?" muses Jessica.

She continues, "Chris and I are both active members in our own MCEC congregations and we think there is value in church. Rather than start another church, we are excited to help people find ways to become more invested in their own congregations." Jessica is involved with spiritual care in the community, connecting young adults to their congregations and encouraging them to find

meaning and use for their gifts. She holds a woman's Bible study weekly. Chris recently developed a Lenten email series and works with community development initiatives across KW. Both are faithful bloggers and meet with young adults one on one. They have also led youth retreats for congregations and a *Winter Camp for Grownups* with Silver Lake Mennonite Camp.

With initial seed money from MCEC and donations from individuals and congregations PIE has grown into a movement that is now a registered charity. It has attracted the attention of other geographic areas of MCEC as well as other denominations. "PIE is designed specifically for Waterloo Region," notes Chris.



PIE image

"It is a model for ministry that focuses on Anabaptist identity in a specific location." Jessica and Chris are open to the potential of mentoring people in other areas to do something in the same spirit as PiE that meets the needs of that specific community.

"PiE is something that is for the community, for young adults, and for churches. We are not in a space where we need to be fearful or anxious because we remember that this is not our church, it is Christ's church. God is doing a new thing and inviting us to join in," observes Chris.

To find out more of PiE, follow their blog or visit their site at pastorsinexile.org.

"I was made to feel young again!"

"A new and exciting chapter began in my life when I became a Mennonite in 1976. I became involved in my new church in many ways.

With advancing age and diminishing health, I've wound down my level of activity. When the Theology of Anabaptism workshop appeared close by, I jumped at the chance to attend," explains Bill Bryson from Danforth Mennonite Church.

Bill, along with 16 other people, attended the Anabaptist Learning Workshop event Exploring Anabaptist Theology. Facilitator Roberson Mbayamvula led this one-day workshop using a combination of large-group conversation, storytelling, video clips, and small-group dialogues. They considered three Anabaptist core values of keeping Jesus at the centre of our faith, keeping community at the

centre of our lives, and keeping reconciliation at the centre of our work.

The Anabaptist Learning Workshop is offered by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada in cooperation with Conrad Grebel University College. It seeks to build a culture of lifelong learning within Anabaptist churches, offers a regular rotation of non-formal workshops, grants certificates for those who want to pursue that option, and facilitates creative and interactive educational experiences. Workshops are open to people who are interested in the topic, whether they are laypeople or pastors.

After a fulfilling day of conversation and learning at the recent Anabaptist Learning Workshop, Bill was able to say, "I was transported back to earlier times when I was more active, and I was made to feel young again!"

**ANABAPTIST
LEARNING
WORKSHOP**



A CHURCH AND MINISTRY CERTIFICATE PROGRAM OF

Mennonite
Church
Eastern
Canada

AND



Conrad Grebel
University College

Toronto ALW Participants



Rising Leaders in Toronto

"We need to start looking at planting churches through the young adults that we minister to in our neighbourhoods and have them be the pastors and lead our churches," says Colin McCartney.

Formerly with Urban Promise, an inner city program working with kids until the age of 17, Colin McCartney has been working with young people in Toronto for many years.

As the youth in Urban Promise became young adults, Colin noted that even though the youth had experienced church in a non-traditional way, now that they were young adults they were expected to start attending churches that were already operating. This proved to be too much of a culture shock. It was then that Colin established Connect Ministries, a program working with young adults to connect their communities with God.

"For many young adults, church needs to look differently than the way we look at it today," Colin suggests. "We need to empower young adults, believe in them, resource them and equip them to serve in their way."

"For many young adults, church needs to look differently than today." - Colin McCartney

With a vision to train young adults to be Christian leaders in the marketplace, schools, and in urban neighbourhoods, Colin works with MCEC in the Leadership Training for Under Resourced Neighbourhoods initiative providing training, mentoring, and resources to equip young leaders who live in or are willing to move into these areas. "I love working with MCEC," reveals Colin. "There is an openness

and willingness to further this dream of finding more young adult leaders and developing them to plant churches their way within the MCEC banner."

Colin began mentoring Jordan from Warden Underground, an MCEC supported church plant. Warden Underground has approximately 30-40 people with an average age of 19-20. "The fun part of my job is to sit down with Jordan, hear the vision he has for Warden Underground and talk about the needs he has," explains Colin. "As a coach I then try to encourage him and try to meet those expressed needs." Colin, along with Hans and Oderay Peters, is working with the "tripod of leaders" at Jane Finch Faith Community:

Dimitri, Ernest and CJ. As more leadership at Jane Finch Faith Community is given to these young adult leaders, Colin will mentor and coach them.

Each year a leadership retreat takes place at the Muskoka Woods Retreat Centre bringing 20-30 young adults, every quarter a leadership training day is held in Toronto as well as weekly theological leadership classes.



"God is working in these young adults' hearts and in their lives but is doing it in a different way than with people my age," Colin states. "They are going to serve differently but they love Jesus just like we do."

Ernest and CJ, while attending a leadership conference, stop at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's church in Atlanta (right).

Colin McCartney
images



Colin teaches at the annual leadership retreat.



Photo: AMBS

A Generous Community

Donations from congregations and individuals support MCEC leadership development.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and MCEC have a fund available

(administered by AMBS) for potential full-time or part-time students. The fund also facilitates participation in workshops and other on-going educational opportunities. MCEC pastors were able to use this fund to attend Pastors Week at AMBS.

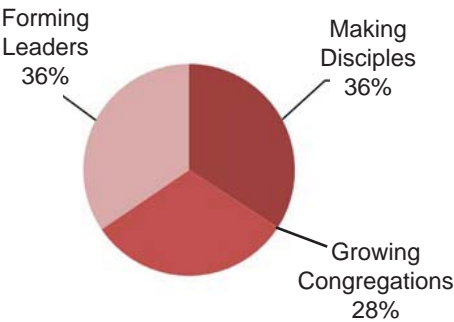
Beyond Tomorrow

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.

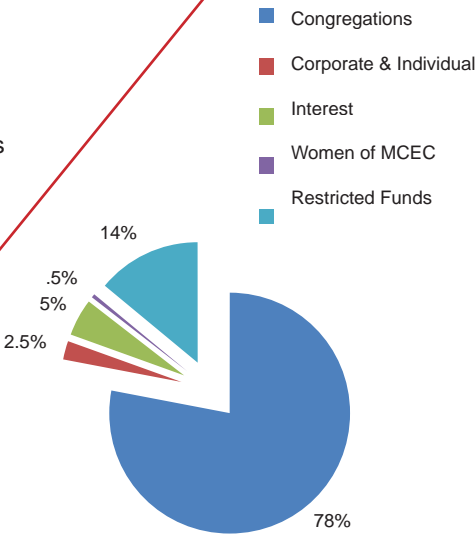
Investing in the Area Church



"I am grateful for the financial assistance allowing me to attend Pastors Week at AMBS. It shows me that MCEC and AMBS are serious about forming pastors through the richness of the biblical text."



Sara Erb, Pastor
Breslau Mennonite Church



Funding Our Ministries

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

- Aileen Feick
- Doris Ada Good
- Edith Greenwood
- Mary Ann Horst
- Ivan Kuepfer
- Elsie Nighswander
- Enid Schmidt
- Roy G. Snyder

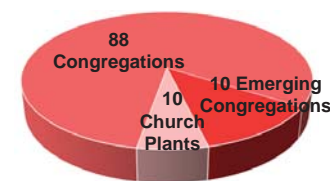
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MCEC By the Numbers...

351 attended
Annual Church Gathering 2015
in Kitchener - Sharing Our Faith!

14
LED Talks - "that you and I may
be mutually encouraged by each
other's faith." - Romans 1:12

1
Congregation welcomed
into Full Membership
- Chin Christian Church (Kitchener)



108
MCEC Congregations/Faith Communities

13
languages of worship

19%
of MCEC congregations are
first generation Canadian
congregations

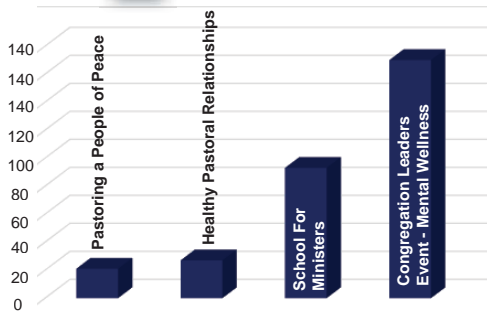
25%
of MCEC congregations hold
services in languages other
than English

**ANABAPTIST
LEARNING
WORKSHOP**

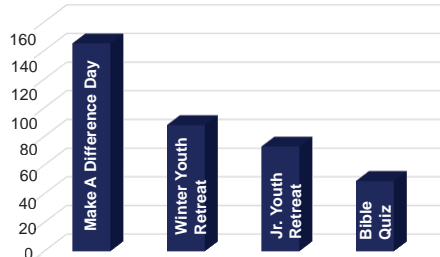


133
supported the Anabaptist Learning
Workshop through the Ralph &
Eileen Lebold Fundraising Dinner

19
Young Adults travel to
Israel/Palestine with MCEC and MCC



311
Persons Participated in these
Leadership Development events



355
Youth and Jr. Youth Impacted
at Faith Formation Events



13
Congregations continuing
or beginning ReLearning
Community - intentionally
being and making disciples
in their neighbourhoods

Pastoral Leadership



275
MCEC Pastors

27 ministers and chaplains
concluded their assignments

26 ministers new to MCEC
began ministry assignments

7 ministers ordained plus
1 ordination credentials received

4 ministers licensed
toward ordination

1 minister licensed
for specific ministry

Mennonite Church Canada



MC Canada image

Periods of Dramatic Change

From Willard Metzger, MC Canada Executive Director



In my small group Bible study we recently reflected on the work of the church. For many, it has often felt like spending energy keeping traditions alive, just for the sake of keeping them alive. This has become a tough sell for many people.

The Christian Church across Canada is experiencing a time of dramatic change. Our current context is significantly different than when our current church structures and programs were first developed.

I must admit, I have often felt uncomfortable with the enterprise of Christianity. Worship has become a retail commodity. Representing God has become a career. Christianity has become addicted to growth and success.

I believe that God remains active redeeming the world. But I see a different future. I see a future where people are invited to discover their own vision through Christ. It may be expressed in very different ways – ways we have not yet imagined. I see a future where the transforming wonder of God's grace is experienced by those who have historically been rejected. In a society that is growing more secular, people are aching for spiritual meaning and connection. Our conversations should not be dictated by secular society. Our conversations should be relevant to the spiritual aching of society.

Over the years, we as the church have done many things right. But much of our wisdom

"The Spirit of God is active in the realm of what we do not know."

- Willard Metzger

is bound by culture and context. Wisdom is constrained by what we know. The Spirit of God is active in the realm of what we do not know.

In this season of dramatic change it is important for the church to display an unshakable confidence in the God who knows what we do not know. Only then can we push away the fear and despair that always accompany times of dramatic change.



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

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