

Sharing a House of Worship

Faced with the need for more room, some churches purchase land and construct a new building, while others choose the less costly route of co-locating with another Christian community. With the general decline in Sunday service attendance across Canada, sharing under utilized houses of worship is an increasingly viable option. Here are stories of two congregations in the VMC network that have found ways to make it work.

by Sandra Reimer

Pastors Brandon Malo (Elevation) and Fred Ludolph (St. John's Lutheran).
Photo by Wes Reimer.



THINKING AHEAD

The Newsletter of Vision Ministries Canada

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MORE AND BETTER CHURCHES

vision-ministries.org

Building Partners

When Elevation, a church in Waterloo, ON, outgrew their meeting space, they didn't want to rent again. "We explored a capital campaign and purchasing a building, but it didn't feel right for us," says Pastor Brandon Malo.

Then a family member told Brandon that his childhood church was struggling to maintain their large, beautiful building. At 177 years old, St. John's Lutheran Church is one of the oldest congregations in the city—they've been in their current location

for about 50 years.

Brandon approached the St. John's council about sharing a venue. After several discussions between leadership teams over a year, they became building partners in November 2012.

Partnership carries more rights and responsibilities than renting but has fewer financial obligations or decision-making privileges than co-ownership.

"For the most part it has gone very well, though there have been some hiccups," says

Brandon. He recalls the first Easter Sunday when the two congregations had back-to-back pancake breakfasts planned. Someone neglected to tell the St. John's kitchen coordinator about Elevation's event. Tensions were high when the Elevation group arrived and were told that they could not use the kitchen.

"In the beginning, it was a struggle to help some people understand that we weren't just renters," Brandon says that the St. John's leadership team were fantastic

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2014 Annual Report

DEAR FRIENDS OF VMC,
More than ever, I am aware of the beauty of many people working together for a clear purpose. In this edition of our newsletter you will see and read about people that are working together to start churches, construct buildings, and create cooperative plans to advance the Gospel of Jesus.

Many of you gave, prayed, and joyfully collaborated with VMC in 2014. It's been a year full of highlights:

- ▶ In May at Lakeside Church in Guelph, we held Thinking Shrewdly VI, our national conference .
- ▶ A teaching team went to Kenya in August to support Vision Ministries Kenya.
- ▶ 15 new church plants began, more than double the number in previous years.
- ▶ God was stirring church leaders in the VMC network to consider new ways to collectively extend the Kingdom in their regions.
- ▶ Two new church buildings in Kenya are nearing completion because of your financial support.

- ▶ Increasingly, churches are responding to the idea that they exist to advance the mission of God in their communities.
- ▶ Some individuals and foundations have contributed very generously to support VMC.

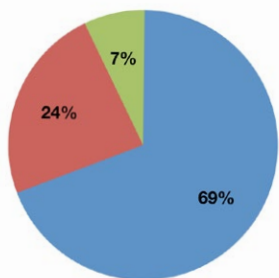
"Without Him we can do nothing" said the Apostle John, but with him "we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us," said Paul.

The reason we do what we do is to see more and more people become obedient followers of Jesus in Canada. We rejoice over conversions through the ministry of churches and church plants. We are thrilled to hear of people whose lives were once chaotic becoming "givers instead of takers" in society. We love to see young people step forward to contribute their gifts and abilities as the next generation of church leadership.

We are particularly grateful for the VMC board who regularly gather to provide a superintending influence on our ministry.

Gord Martin
Executive Director

2014



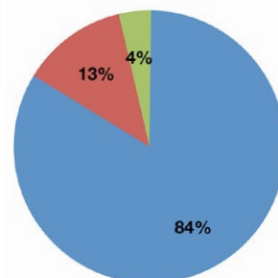
General Fund

Audited, Year Ended June 30

Revenue

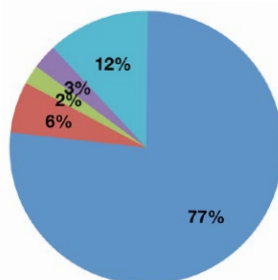
	2014	2013
General contributions	316,924	320,972
Conference, event fees and other	108,359	48,509
Investment income	33,617	14,719
Total	458,900	384,200

2013



Expenses

Salaries and benefits	318,912	307,516
Travel	26,531	24,314
Leadership development and conferences	36,902	9,191
Newsletter "Thinking Ahead"	10,620	11,732
Administrative and office expenses	54,819	48,710
Total	447,784	401,463
Excess of revenue over expenses	11,116	(17,263)



Project Funds

Church plants	674,160	686,691
Vision Ministries Kenya	110,747	950
Total	784,907	687,641

in this respect. Though they retain ownership, they made great efforts to welcome Elevation. “They removed bulletin boards and banners specific to their congregation from the common spaces and replaced them with more generic wall hangings.”

Brandon and the Elevation congregation also appreciate that St. John’s consulted them when they were considering selling part of their property to a developer. “We don’t have a vote,” says Brandon, “But we do have a voice and that means a lot.”

Both churches have benefitted from the alliance. St. John’s older congregation appreciates Elevation’s children, teens, young adults, and young families. When it came time to purchase new windows for the auditorium, the partners shouldered the \$20,000 cost together.

Grateful to St. John’s for agreeing to a partnership, Elevation staff and congregation value a home for their offices. They also appreciate a place to host mid-week meetings and space for their children and youth Sunday school programs. Co-locating, rather than sinking hundreds of thousands of dollars into their own building, has also freed up funds for other kingdom work.

“I think it says something to our community when churches share a building—both congregations are doing good for the community in a financially sustainable way.” Brandon urges other pastors of church plants or “nomadic” groups to start conversations about co-location with established churches. “There is a lot of give and take on both sides...but it can work and be healthy.”

Caring for the Baby in the Basement

Though the Victoria, BC weather was pleasant all summer and into the fall, the fledgling Hollydene Community Church knew their days of meeting for worship on the beach were at an end.

“I looked around our neighbourhood and started making calls,” says Hollydene planter, Randy Hein. At a nearby United Church, the minister, Rev. Erin Sterling, eagerly welcomed him. An aging congregation with a large building, Gordon Head United Church was discussing next steps, when Hollydene approached them about sharing space.

“They are a liberal, mainline congregation and we are from a conservative, evangelical background. They are an older community and we are younger. Yet, we use a lot of the same language and pray many of the same prayers,” says Randy.

Gordon Head opened their basement the Hollydene congregation—which has grown to about 70 or 80 people. Both groups worship at 10 am, then meet together afterward. “The generations mingle over coffee—it’s a beautiful expression of God’s kingdom.”

For Gordon Head, Hollydene’s youthfulness is a waft of fresh air and they help to cover operational costs. Meanwhile, Hollydene is thankful for an indoor worship space.

Both congregations are discerning what their future relationship will look like. The United Church is pondering amalgamation with other United churches in town, which may mean selling the building to the highest bidder. But, as Gordon Head considers what is best for them, they are also thinking about how to love and bless Hollydene with their decision. “They feel kind of paternalistic. They want to make sure the ‘baby’ growing in their basement will be okay.” ■

Building Sharing Tips

- ▶ Make sure you have enough common ground to be able to cooperate.
- ▶ Clearly discuss expectations.
- ▶ Consult stakeholders in both congregations.
- ▶ Determine whether you will rent space, share as partners, or co-own the building.
- ▶ Put agreement details in writing—a legal document is often necessary.
- ▶ Maintain open communication and review your agreement regularly.
- ▶ Celebrate the joys of collaboration knowing you are making good use of kingdom resources!

Looking for a house of worship? Browse an inventory of religious buildings in Ontario: <http://bit.ly/1uvLzRq>



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THINKING AHEAD is published three times per year in an effort to connect like-minded Christians and their local churches and encourage them to work cooperatively, especially in evangelism, through church planting and church extension.

Spending of funds received by VMC is confined to board-approved programs and purchases. Each gift designated toward an approved program will be used as designated with the understanding that when any given need has been met, designated gifts will be used where needed most. Gifts of \$20 or more are acknowledged with an official tax receipt.

VMC is committed to financial accountability; all accounts are audited by an independent auditing firm; financial statements available on request.

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New and Bigger Digs Help Expand God's Kingdom



PHOTO: ANDREW GOODWIN

Care Centre and Worship Site LAKESIDE DOWNTOWN, GUELPH, ON

Two years ago, we purchased the historic Norfolk United Church from an amazing group of Kingdom-minded elders who had seen their congregation decline. Since that time, the Lakeside Community has helped develop Hope House, a care centre where each month more than 500 families receive free food, clothing, haircuts and now dentistry. Last year we planted a worshipping community we call Lakeside Downtown, with Sunday services, Alpha courses, artistic events, community discussions and more in the space.

– Pastor Graham Singh | www.lakesidedowntown.ca

"God is in this Place" ÉGLISE GRÂCE ET VÉRITÉ, SAINTE-ANNE-DU-SAULT, QC

"It seems God is in this place," said VMC's Gord Martin while standing in front of the former textile factory that Église Grace et Verité (EGV) is renovating (see photo bottom right). The congregation, lead by Jean-Sébastien Lemelin, purchased this 18,000 square foot building in downtown Sainte-Anne-Du-Sault in Southern Quebec on November 7, 2014. If all goes well with the group renovation project, the congregation will still be "united in love" at their Grand Opening on April 18th, 2015.

Watch a powerful video about a woman transformed by God through the ministry of EGV and the desperate need for the Gospel in Quebec: <http://vimeo.com/113457570>

Stepping Out in Faith

PINEWOODS CHAPEL, ANGUS, ON



In 2001 the leadership at Pinewoods Chapel had a vision for a new facility with greater visibility and accessibility for their community. At that time, future growth was limited by the size of the church's lot and building.

In 2009, a piece of property came up for sale on a major road in the community of Angus. Pinewoods purchased the 8.5-acre property that was on that five-lane road. After selling the church's older facility, we began meeting in an elementary school. In 2015, we are planning to build.

It has been a long road from vision to reality, but our congregation has grown and we have seen God work in amazing ways. It is exciting to step out in faith, believing that God has promised to build His Kingdom and then see it come to pass!

– Pastor Chris Atkinson | www.pinewoodschapel.com

More Opportunity to "Follow Jesus. Love God. Love People."



REINDERS + RIEDER

Launched in the fall of 2013, Creekside Church will complete a 30,000 square foot expansion along with major facility renovations in February (Open House on March 7th, 2015). With four Sunday services, Creekside desperately needed the extra space. Expansions include renovated offices, renovated nursery, an extended kids' wing with a large atrium, café, and indoor playground, as well as a 300-seat overflow auditorium, a resource room, and a second café. The church family is excited by the opportunities the enlarged space provides for them to continue their mission to . . . Follow Jesus. Love God. Love People.

– Pastor Ken Taylor | www.creeksidechurch.ca



Future home of EGV



GENERATIONS CHURCH, WELLESLEY, ON

Originally a home group, Generations Church began meeting at a community centre in December 2012. In search of a permanent site, pastor Mark Laronde approached a local Mennonite church that was moving to a larger location.

To his delight, the congregation graciously “sold” their beautiful 125-year old building to Generations for \$10. Years earlier, a United Church that was closing had sold the building—worth nearly \$250,000—to the Mennonites for the same gift price.

While honouring the generations of Christians who were baptized, married, and heard the gospel in the building, the congregation wants to reach a new generation with God’s love in their rural bedroom community full of young families. To this end, they offer contemporary services and plan to redecorate their vintage venue. “The old girl needs some colour,” says Mark. A burnt red door will welcome worshippers into a colourful sanctuary with chairs instead of pews. “It will look like a Starbucks when we’re finished.” Generations began regularly meeting in their new building on February 15th, 2015.

Time to Renovate

ROSEMOUNT BIBLE CHURCH, MONTREAL, QC

After years of prayerful consideration, in 2012 our congregation enthusiastically approved a building renovation. After seven months of construction, we returned to our newly transformed facility on November 23rd, 2014. Features include: greater multi-purpose capacity, enhanced child safety, updated



Rosemount trustees sign the agreement to begin renovations.

multi-media technology, and accessibility improvements like an elevator, ramps, and wheelchair-friendly washrooms. The congregation continues to be eager about how our improved facility will support future ministry. Rosemount Bible Church is 85 years old and as we enter this next chapter, we trust in the Lord’s faithfulness to guide us in serving His purposes for our community and our world.

– Pastor Nick Azzulo

More New Digs

- We also celebrate with City Chapel in Red Deer, AB, and Pastor Shane Fox. The congregation recently bought and moved into their first building just prior to their third anniversary. VMC came alongside them in 2012 and they obtained their own charitable status in the fall of 2014.
- Congratulations to ForestView Church in Oakville, ON, led by Mike Stone, on a major renovation that will begin soon.

Reaching the Beach



Wasaga Community Church, led by John Hamilton, built a new facility in 2014 that will help them continue to “reach the beach” in Wasaga Beach, ON, a popular summer spot.

<http://www.wasagachristianchurch.org>

Churches Completed in Kenya



Thank you to VMC supporters who gave toward much-needed building supplies and roofing to complete Mumbo Chapel (top) and Namanga Chapel. Both projects were organized by Vision Ministries Kenya.

VMC Network News

Geoff Tunnicliffe Retires from World Evangelical Alliance



Geoff Tunnicliffe at a farewell event held in his honour in New York City

GEOFF TUNNICLIFFE retired as General Secretary and CEO of the World Evangelical Alliance at the end of December 2014. During his ten years at WEA, Geoff helped to build a global evangelical identity, encourage collaboration and unity, and advocate on behalf of people who are marginalized, poor, and persecuted.

Geoff is well known to the Vision Ministries Canada church network. He

came to faith at Bakerview Gospel Chapel in Richmond, BC and served for several years with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. For the many years that Geoff led International Teams Canada, he and his wife Jewel were members of Lakeshore Bible Chapel—now Lincoln Road Chapel in Waterloo, ON. These days, Geoff and Jewel live in Vancouver and have two adult children, Natasha and Justin.

We at VMC wish to express our appreciation to Geoff for his service to the churches of our network, the churches of Canada, and the churches of the world. Geoff's future focus will be on Wilberforce Global Strategies. You can contact him at [gt \[at\] geofftglobal.com](mailto:gt@geofftglobal.com).

VMC Church Planter Appointed to Church Planting Canada Board

IN NOVEMBER 2014, members of Church Planting Canada (CPC) appointed Graham Singh, a church planter with Lakeside Church in Guelph, ON, to the CPC Board.

Graham was commissioned as a church planter from Holy Trinity Brompton in London, UK—the birthplace of Alpha—before coming to Guelph, and brings a fresh perspective to Canada. He has been leading a project called the Canadian Church Buildings Pact, which brings leaders from a variety of denominations (including Anglican, United, Presbyterian, Catholic) together to discuss the future of church buildings in Canada. CPC was eager to have a representative from this initiative on their board.

While serving on the CPC board over the next year, Graham wants to learn from the 100 or so key church planting leaders and champions in this country. "I love seeing the mission diplomats that gather at CPC and it is my greatest joy to be part of this important group." Graham also hopes to facilitate greater cooperation among churches in Canada and to help determine and remove roadblocks to unity. "When people are left in little silos and don't know what each other is doing, we risk duplication, waste, mistakes, unnecessary tension."



Church is the Spiritual Voice of Christmas for County Event



"STRATHCONA COUNTY asked us if we would create a stop [on their Christmas in the Country event] that would be the 'spiritual voice' of Christmas," says Doug Siewert, pastor of Ministik Community Church in a rural area southeast of Sherwood Park, AB.

The congregation gathered animals from three different farmers—including a neighbour who doesn't know Christ yet. "We decided that rather than spend hours preparing our children to put on a Christmas program, that together as a church (kids and adults) we were going to be the Christmas story in our community."

People from the church dressed in biblical costumes and for five hours rotated in the various roles of the nativity. Church members had great interactions over refreshments with 80–100 visitors—including a busload from the city. The church collected donations for the local food bank and winter clothing items for a "Mitten Tree" given to people in poverty at Hope Mission in Edmonton. People loved seeing the live representation of the Christmas story and county organizers were also pleased.

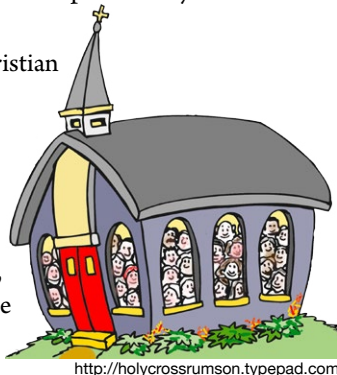
"Our purpose, as a church, has not been to create events and then push our neighbours to come to our thing. Instead, we help the county with their community events," says Doug. The church also assists with a summer festival called Trail Days.



A group of leaders connected to VMC prays together at a regional Move the Mission Forward meeting in November 2014. At this lively gathering in Victoriaville, Quebec, church leaders were keen about partnering to build God's kingdom. "I was deeply impressed by the testimonies of God's transforming power in the lives of the leaders of the Église Grâce et Vérité," says Gord Martin.

Birth & Pregnancy Announcements

- ▶ Proud planting parents Joe and Heidi White are just about ready to launch **Neighborhood Church**, daughter of Granville Chapel Vancouver, way down south in **Fresno, California**.
- ▶ Dave and Carolyn Slomka and his team are planning a spring 2015 relaunch of **Elmira Community Church** in Ontario.
- ▶ Robb and Sara Williamson-Bynoe birthed **Livingstones Community Fellowship** in **Oshawa, ON**.
- ▶ Bow Valley Christian Church became a multi-site congregation in Calgary, AB, when they added two new siblings—**Mahogany** led by Evan Spencer and **Skyview Ranch** pastored by Bob Dun.
- ▶ Roland and Colleen Mechler are pregnant with **24/7 Church**, a Christian community that is growing in their living room among youth and neighbours in **Drayton, ON**.
- ▶ After worshipping on the beach in **Victoria, BC** all summer, a group of thirty “granola burn-outs, artists, students, and others who were done with church” led by Randy Hein,



- coalesced into **Hollydene Community Church**.
- ▶ Together with Association of Related Churches, VMC helped to incubate **Groundswell Church**, led by Jeff & Mika Pike, in **Toronto**.
- ▶ Charleswood Community Church is pregnant with **The Light Worship Community**, a campus-based church plant led by Brad Williams and Boaz Fadun at the **University of Manitoba**.
- ▶ Toronto China Bible Church has given birth to baby number six! They’ve almost outgrown their mini-van! **The People’s Academy** congregation was started in **Toronto** in June 2014.
- ▶ To reach the next generation of Ethiopian immigrants and their neighbours, Tesfa Chutta in **Toronto** began an Amharic-speaking congregation called **Bright Hope Christian Church**, now led by Amare Teklu Akalu.
- ▶ Midwives Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada and Vision Ministries Canada helped Kevin Mast give birth to **Hope City** in **Barrie, ON**.
- ▶ With the help of the Greater Calgary Church Planting Network (Bow Valley Christian Church is a key partner), Peter Roberts gave birth to **Northern Hills Church** in **Calgary**.

CONTINUED FROM BACK

youth leaders, and do pulpit exchanges. Collectively they are wondering, “Are there new initiatives that we would support together?”

- ▶ In Toronto, a very diverse gathering from about 20 churches is beginning to pray and look for ways to support each other and advance mission together.
- ▶ At a lively gathering in Victoriaville, Quebec, church leaders were keen about partnering to move the mission forward. I was deeply impressed by the testimonies of God’s transforming power in the lives of the leaders of the Église Grâce et Vérité.
- ▶ A group of churches in the Halifax area have cooperated before to plant new works. Now they are talking and praying again about labouring together and sharing more for the sake of the Gospel.

It’s early in the process, but we will continue to help leaders in these regions to pursue common ground and united agendas. We anticipate that more new churches will be started and that existing churches will become more fruitful because of this level of cooperation. King David said that in the place of “harmony the LORD pronounces his blessing, even life everlasting” (adapted from Psalm 133:3).

Just like you, we know of places where this harmony is not so evident or where unity comes at the expense of truth. Nevertheless, we love it when the genuine article appears and thank God for it! ■



VMC Executive Director Gord Martin at a regional gathering in Waterloo, ON.

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New Openness to Collaborate Among VMC Churches

GORD MARTIN

A fresh wind of cooperation among churches, ministry agencies, and denominations is blowing in our country. Vision Ministries Canada has been planting churches in collaboration with other denominations for a number of years. These initiatives grew out of relationships that developed at Church Planting Canada events and at gatherings hosted by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. When partners respectfully and clearly spell out expectations and when people do what they said they would do—good things happen. Praise God!

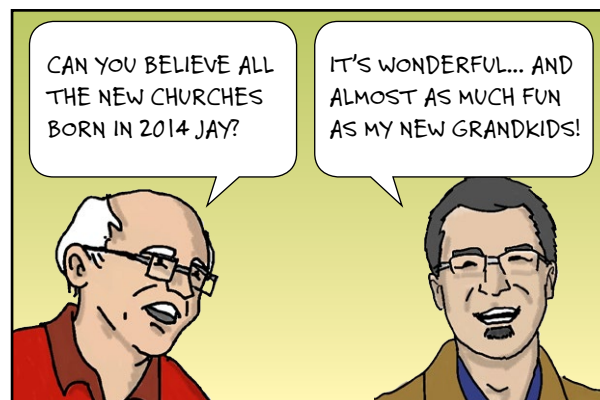
King David exclaimed, “How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!” (Psalm 133:1)

A much greater “David” prayed earnestly “that they may all be one, just as you and I are one” (John 17:21).

The apostle Paul wrote with urgency, “Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose” (I Cor. 1:10).

In 2014, we discovered that VMC related churches were open to a new kind of collaboration

KINGDOM ADVENTURES WITH GORD & JAY



that we had not seen before. In the past, VMC worked with individual churches to advance the Gospel. But now churches within geographic regions are ready to collaborate with each other.

Here are a few examples:

- ▶ In Edmonton, a network of northern Alberta churches—all within about 90 minutes of Edmonton—has a long history of individually connecting with Vision Ministries. Though the idea of cooperating on new entities and projects was as fresh to them as anyone else, five fellowships jumped on board. Some even sent funds within four months of hearing the idea in early October 2014. Suggestions for possible initiatives are beginning to flow as well.
- ▶ There is already significant momentum and energy among the 12 or so people that belong to the London, ON regional network. They met once in the fall and have plans to meet again soon.
- ▶ In the Barrie/Orillia area of Ontario, six modest-sized churches have begun to share worship team members and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



THINKING AHEAD



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