



**INTERCULTURAL
ENGAGEMENT TEAM**

(IET) REPORT

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IMAGINE

PREPARED FOR THE 2024 FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA
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Intercultural Engagement Team (IET)

Report to General Conference 2024

IET Leader: Rev. Adam Kline

IE Team: Vinola Pakkianathan (Missions Administrator), Rev. Darryl Dozlaw (BoA Representative), Paula Moriarity (ICCM-Canada), Rev. Dustin Schellenberg (Crestview FMC), Abdul Salaam (Westdale Park FMC), Pastor Monique Ransom (Queensway FMC).

Our Call to Intercultural Missions

Intercultural missions is central and essential to Christ's kingdom come. From cover to cover in Scripture we see God creating and calling a diverse community of people, distinct in a multiplicity of cultures and ethnicities, and yet, united in mission and purpose.

As Free Methodists we recognize the need for the Good News of Jesus Christ to be revealed in every place and people group, as well as, our own need to be humble and hear from the Holy Spirit through intercultural practices.

Which is why the Intercultural Engagement Team (IET) continues to provide support, resources and consultation for missional efforts by the local church. We are here to help congregations embrace intercultural empathy and education, to be equipped as missionaries right where they are, and to join God's work all around the world.

Global Partnerships

In the last three years the FMCiC has strengthened its ties overseas, both in Ghana and Sri Lanka, we have completed and closed a short-term partnership in India, we have expanded our collaboration with ICCM-Canada and Tearfund, we have seen new international missionaries step into the MEGaP credentialing process, and short-term missions trips have returned and are on the rise.

Ghana

In 2022 the Free Methodist Church in Ghana officially became a Provisional Annual Conference. Under Superintendent Ahmed's leadership, our Ghanaian brothers and sisters have grown, persevered and above all else, remained faithful to their witness and outreach. In 2023 Bishop Cliff led a missions trip to Ghana where we visited nearly a dozen congregations across the country, and listened to their stories of struggle and success. At their annual conference over 50 pastors and leaders were in attendance, representing 22 established societies and 10 church plants. At that time, we also introduced to the Superintendent and his BoA the possibility of partnering with Tearfund.

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adam.kline@fmcic.ca



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Several months later the partnership was made official and 14 pastors and leaders received training in conservation agriculture and church and community transformation.

Here at home, interest and support for the Ghanaian Church has increased. Though we faced some administrative challenges and delay in sending support last year – praise be to God – we are now transferring funds directed towards leadership development and new building projects. We are blessed to have the designated support of 12 congregations from across Canada, as well as 32 congregations that provide general support through the IET giving stream.

Sri Lanka

The Free Methodist Church in Sri Lanka is an inspiring Mission District, and a shining example of what it means to persevere and faithfully bear witness in the midst of suffering. In addition to extended pandemic related restrictions, residual legal issues, and the country's complete economic collapse in 2022 – by the grace of God – Superintendent Jayamani, Sister Pramila and the entire BoA have remained connected and committed to God's call and commission. By encouraging and equipping one another through their own monthly zonal zoom meetings, and consistent outreach and ministry through their own homes, our Sri Lankan brothers and sisters have endured. After being apart for over three years, the Free Methodist Church in Sri Lanka is now preparing for their first in-person district meeting. Though they remain small, with a combined total of 23 societies and church plants, they are strong and excited to see how God will lead them through this next season of renewal.

Here at home, interest and prayer support has been consistent, and despite the many challenges, we are now transferring funds for financial relief and organizational restructuring. We are blessed to have the designated support of 12 congregations from across Canada, as well as 32 congregations that provide general support through the IET giving stream.

International Missionaries and Short-Term Trips

In addition to these global partnerships, the FMCiC can also be found serving in several other countries around the world. We currently have three sets of international missionaries released for service beyond the denomination: Sok Em in Cambodia (<http://tahas.org/>) – the Babcocks in Malawi (<http://www.jesuslovesmalawi.com/>) – and Jessie and Judah Rath in Colombia (<https://lamcanada.ca/missionary/81/judah-and-jessie-rath>) from Thornbury, Ontario who just last year entered the credentialing process with MEGaP. More than a dozen Free Methodist congregations support these international missionaries, and we are so proud that they are us – it's exciting to see all generations accept God's call, and we are praying that many more will step forward in faith!

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Similarly, it is a great encouragement to see the return of short-term missions trips! In the last two years we have received several inquiries about short-term trips, and thankfully, the FMCiC can be found in faithful service, supporting the work of the local church overseas. In addition to annual opportunities in Ghana and Sri Lanka, more recently Free Methodist teams from Saskatchewan and Ontario have travelled to Kenya, through ICCM and Tearfund. We also have several Canadian congregations with their own unique international partnerships – including the Free Methodist Church in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Brazil and the Philippines. Moving forward, the IET is committed to telling more of these stories and inviting these congregations to be a part of a referral network, so that more Free Methodists can be engaged with the unique work God is doing in and through us!

Canadian Mission Field

Of course, cross-cultural trips and intercultural missions is also happening here at home. Over the last three years the IET has been invited to come alongside, educate, equip and inspire a record number of congregations. Since our last report, more than 30 Free Methodist churches have taken steps to strengthen their witness and expand their reach as missionaries here in Canada. From hosting workshop weekends or Indigenous ministries, to casting vision through preaching and our own unique resources, we have seen Free Methodists take responsibility for truth and reconciliation, support refugee sponsorship and minister to international students more than ever before - praise be to God!

All of this work has only been made possible thanks to the 32 churches and 8 individual donors who generously send undesignated support through the IET giving stream. Which has included the work of the Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force (RJEETF). The IET has had the honour and privilege of supporting the work of the RJEETF for several years. We are excited for their final report to be read and received by this conference, and are committed to facilitating active engagement with their recommendations.

Refugee Sponsorship

For 26 years the FMCiC has been sponsoring refugees and welcoming newcomers to Canada with the radical hospitality of Jesus Christ. Though most of this work is behind the scenes, thousands of beloved individuals have been welcomed to Canada and supported by Free Methodist families with a 100% success rate (according to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada). Currently, this is the work of just a few of our congregations (Chapel Ridge FMC, Gospel of Love Church, Kingsview FMC) and our administrative champion at the Ministry Centre, Roseline Isaac. In addition to this, over the last three years we have seen a handful of other Free Methodist congregations send

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designated support to our host churches in order to alleviate the financial burden – and we are praying and excited to see even more take part in this important legacy!

International Students

Many of our Free Methodist congregations are within reach of a Canadian college or university, and most of these institutions have an extremely large international student body. For the last three years, the IET has been inviting the FMCiC to reach out and be a blessing to these students who are far from home, and often (statistically speaking) dealing with isolation and depression. Through our unique partnership with Friends for Dinner (a program that started out of Chapel Ridge FMC) Free Methodists are making a difference and bearing witness to these young men and women. Last year, a new location was launched in Belleville, Ontario and we are praying and excited to see even more open up in the years to come – maybe your church would like to make plans for Thanksgiving 2024!?

Indigenous Ministry

Our greatest area of growth and engagement the last few years has been related to Indigenous relationships and taking responsibility for truth and reconciliation. At our last General Conference, building upon the good work of our predecessors, the FMCiC read and received, *A Response and Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery*. Since then we have seen a rise of interest and request by Free Methodists to listen, learn, seek the Holy Spirit's reconciling power to renew hearts and minds, and put us all in right-relationship with our Indigenous neighbours.

Prior to General Conference 2021, the IET had observed no more than 20 Free Methodist Churches showing evidence of engaging with Indigenous ministry. As of March 2024, we are aware of at least 60 churches taking, or moving beyond, first steps. This statistic does not include congregations that have used or shared our online resources related to Indigenous History Month or our National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Orange Shirt Day). From inviting Indigenous partners and elders to share and speak in Sunday worship, to hosting a Blanket Exercise (an interactive and prayerful history lesson), to learning tours with Tearfund Canada and the Buffalo Project, to recommended videos, articles and books, and prayerful land acknowledgements crafted in consultation with Indigenous neighbours, the IET has been inviting the FMCiC to discern and discover what it means to bear witness and be missionaries marked by the humility of Christ – and thanks be to God, many more have accepted this invitation.

Of course, the only reason the FMCiC has been able to take such significant steps in recent years is because all of this is a work of the Holy Spirit wrapped up in relationship. We are so grateful to be in right-relationship with many Indigenous brothers and sisters and ministry partners, such as Broken Walls, the music and ministry of Jonathan Maracle – NAIITS the ATS accredited community for

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Indigenous theological studies – as well as, the Loko Koa Mission, stewards of the Buffalo Project in Saskatchewan. Without these dear friends and partners in ministry, reconciliation would not be possible. Together we will continue to fulfill the commitment our conference read and received three years ago: to continue, in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, to take steps towards both the interior and relational work of healing, holistic renewal, and the rooting of right-relationship for this land and its people.

Intercultural Missions Near and Far

And so, the future is bright for the Free Methodist Church in Canada. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, has called and commissioned each and every one of us to be missionaries – across the street, throughout our towns and cities, upon these traditional lands we call Canada, and all around the world. Wherever we find ourselves we have a witness to share, and the Holy Spirit has not only gone on ahead of us, but is ready and willing to equip us for intercultural mission anywhere and everywhere.

I am so grateful for the IE Team that surrounds me and guides me, for the support and encouragement of Bishop Cliff, and for everyone who has kept me and my family in prayer. This is God's work and for his glory – I am thankful.