



MCC TORONTO

Respond. Restore. Renew

2021

**REPORT TO MEMBERS,
CONGREGANTS AND
COMMUNITY**

February 2022

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MESSAGE FROM REV. JEFF ROCK

Dear MCC Toronto Friends & Family,

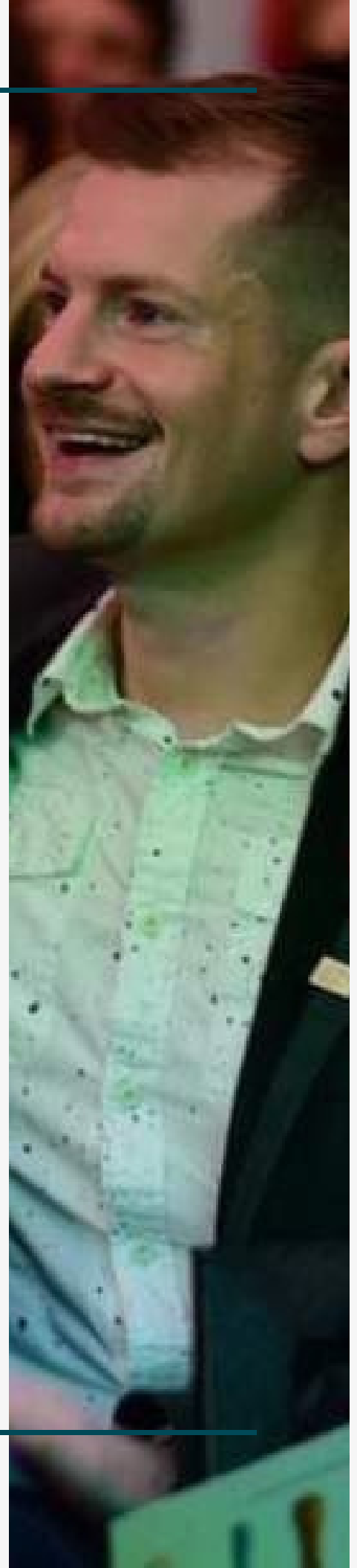
Long before the time of Jesus, the Hebrew people were conquered and deported to Babylon. It was a tough time living in exile, and isolation, but the people kept the faith that they would one day return to Jerusalem. But the road home was a treacherous path through the desert, with many mountains and valleys, but they lived in hope that, "Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain." (Isaiah 40:4)

When I think of the year 2021 and look at the daily **COVID case count in Ontario** I can't help but think of that passage and the many peaks and valleys we've endured. But I remain fiercely proud of how we as a spiritual community have worked hard to lift each other up. Despite the challenges, MCC Toronto saw many highlights in 2021. The resplendent music of our Choir and the hybrid of in-person and online faith-filled worship services kept us connected as a community. We held Zoom check-ins, online bible studies and spirituality groups, membership classes, refugee programs, and more. We completed renovations to our community kitchen as well as emergency repairs on the west foundation. We created new rental partnerships that have brought in new revenue streams.

I am proud of the work of our AMAZING staff team including Mark Asselin, Brenda Lee Cox, Rev. Deana Dudley, John R. Farrell, Cass Hicks, Amy Hoffman, Music Director Jason Jestadt, Abiodun Ojo and JJ Viviers, as well as new staff who joined our team in 2021 - Rev. Junia Joplin (Associate Pastor of Programs & Congregational Care), Elle Behnia (Communications & Development Manager), Dave Kerr (Director of LGBTQ+ Refugee Programs) and Basir Poya (Project Coordinator).

Through it all though, I am most thankful for YOU our community who have continued to pray for each other, care for each other, give generously to support our spiritual and human rights work and build this incredible growing community of MCC Toronto. Together we truly are a formidable force fording the Jordan River ready to return home.

-Rev. Jeff Rock, Senior Pastor



MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Members and Congregants,

On behalf of the MCC Toronto Board of Directors, it is our pleasure to extend deep thanks to our MCC Toronto family for your support, engagement and commitment over the past year.

While 2021 was marked by ongoing challenges – from seemingly endless lockdowns, to delays in returning to in-person Worship Services and to a disappointing but necessary end-of-year pivot to an online Christmas Eve Service – MCC Toronto worked hard to ensure that our members, congregants and the broader community had the supports and services needed to weather these trying times. We applaud our ministerial team led by our Senior Pastor Rev. Jeff Rock together with Rev. Deana Dudley and Rev. Junia Joplin, our Music Director Jason Jestadt and the entire staff team for their resilience and resourcefulness in adapting MCC Toronto's services and programs throughout 2021, and for their continued efforts to keep our communities engaged.

All of us on the Board were particularly heartened by the enthusiasm that met our return to in-person Worship Services in September and the equally enthusiastic response of those who watched our livestreamed Services from home. This hybrid engagement model not only ensured that our Services were accessible to all but also served as a template emulated by other churches and denominations.

We would particularly like to extend our thanks and appreciation to MCC Toronto's 300+ weekly and monthly sustaining donors – your gifts provided an important level of support and predictability to MCC Toronto's finances during a very unpredictable year. Special thanks also to the members, congregants and community members whose generosity helped us to achieve – and exceed! – our Year End Appeal goal, which was a critical piece for our 2021 fundraising program.

Your Board of Directors remains committed to being transparent and timely in our communication to members and congregants. Please feel free to review 2021 monthly Board reports on our website, <https://www.mcctoronto.com/about-us/meet-the-board/> and to reach out to the Board with your feedback and comments to bofd@mcctoronto.com.

Andrew Fleming & Bradley Hickman
Co-Moderators/Co-Chairs MCC Toronto Board of Directors

Meet the Board



Rev. Jeff Rock
Senior Pastor

Susan Leslie-Berkis



Lori Boyce
Retired June 2021

Lee Sef B. Moran
Joined June 2021



Lisa Chinnery
Retired June 2021

Sylvie Pelletier
Joined June 2021



Andrew Fleming
Vice Moderator
and Co-Chair

Bentley Springer
Engagement
Committee Chair



Bradley Hickman
Vice Moderator
and Co-Chair

Kevin Willcock
Finance Committee
Chair



Joe Jamieson
Treasurer

WORSHIP SERVICES

At MCC Toronto we call ourselves a "*Vibrant, Inclusive, and Progressive Faith Community and Human Rights Church*" and our weekly Worship Services remain the centre of our community, even more so in these challenging times.

In 2021 we gleefully welcomed Rev. Junia to our Clergy team and had guest preachers including Rev. Adam Kilner during Black History Month and Rev. Kharma Amos from the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, our denomination. We had a whole lot of fun with Sermon Series like "A Leonard Cohen Lent", "Summer Shorts", "Back to the Future", "Reel Human Rights" and more. But we also celebrated the sombre occasions with a Good Friday Service Online, an All Saints' Day mass funeral service, Blue Christmas, and the reminder that it's ok to not be ok.

We'd like to give a huge shout out to Duncan Broom for putting together our weekly Online Worship Services and new congregant and Livestream Operator Dennis Aita.

Our worship team has remained flexible as we've pivoted back and forth, often by the seat of our pants, learning to go with the flow and expect the unexpected!

SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE WORSHIP SERVICES FROM 2021:

Click to watch



Rev. Junia Joplin's Installation Service
from April 2021

Click to watch



Our Last Midweek Worship Service
from November 2021

Worship Services by the Numbers:



29

In-Person Worship
Services



1,887

Attendees



50

Online Worship
Services



19,228

Attendees



44

Midweek Worship
Services



438

Volunteer Hours

“

I have so looked forward to all of the online Worship Services throughout this past year mainly for the comfort and positive message they provide. It is a wonderful way for us all to stay connected and to help build faith in and hope for a better future together. I always enjoy the beautiful music and videos created by the choir and weekly guest singers.

-Cathy Brown

SPECIAL EVENTS

While MCC Toronto was unable to roll-out our usual in-person slate of special events in 2021, the staff team worked hard to provide online options to keep our members and congregants connected and entertained. In June, we offered our online **Fiercely Proud Pride Celebration Service**. In December, we offered **Our Gift to You**, a special online Concert to get you in the Christmas spirit. And while our original plans to host four in-person Christmas Eve Services had to be cancelled, we pivoted to one joyful online Christmas Eve Service. In between Pride and Christmas, we were delighted to present **Hark! A Christmas Concert with The Choir of MCC Toronto & Special Guests**, our first in-person Choir Concerts in two years that was made possible by a gift from The Estate of Lee Hill.

1,770 Views



Click to watch

Pride Celebration Service
June 27, 2021

400 Attendees



Hark! A Christmas Concert with The
Choir of MCC Toronto & Special Guests
December 4, 2021

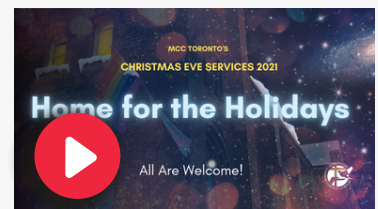
1,050 Views



Click to watch

Our Gift To You 2021
December 4, 2021

1,575 Views



Click to watch

Christmas Eve Service

MUSIC MINISTRY

Despite the enormous challenges in 2021, The Choir of MCC Toronto continued making music together in every way imaginable, and in some ways unimaginable. For the first eight months of the year, the music making was created entirely virtually with each choir member attending a weekly Thursday rehearsal online before painstakingly recording their individual voice. In September, the choir pivoted to weekly in-person rehearsals and services with singers' masks and physical distancing which culminated in two in-person sold-out concerts in December. In any case, making music for any choir in 2021 required a creative, if not unprecedented approach.

With these great challenges, however, came great rewards. Choir members came together and found comfort in each other's company and with the knowledge that whatever the world had in store would not cancel their ability to make music together. Our weekly virtual projects also allowed current, as well as former choir members from near and far to participate, as well as some special guests including acclaimed Canadian singer-songwriter, Ron Sexsmith, and Queen guitarist, Brian May.




A special thank you to my whole team, including Claudio Tarulli for creating the visuals for all of our video choir performances, and Jeannie Wyse and Scott Christian for assisting me at in-person rehearsals and services. And a big thanks to you – our congregants and members – for joining us week after week on our musical journey.

–Jason Jestadt, Music Director

The Choir by the Numbers:

 **25**
Performed
Anthems
(online)

 **156**
Volunteer hours
(rehearsal & Worship
Services)

 **16-20**
Participants
each week

 **10**
Performances
(in-person)

 **1,500+**
Private rehearsal
hours

“

One of the highlights of each week for me is listening to The Choir of MCC Toronto – the sounds of the piano, the voices of individuals or groups sharing their musical talents and words enriching my soul and spirit. The gift of this music sends me out into the world with love, peace, joy and happiness.

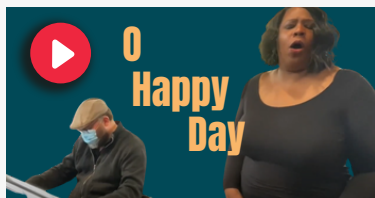
–Walter Donovan

“

During the past two years, The Choir of MCC Toronto has been a lifeline for me. We are a family of choice and I feel so grateful and blessed for the support and love we have always offered each other now more than ever.

–Dawn Sinclair (Choir member for 25 years)

SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE MUSICAL MOMENTS OF 2021:



Click to watch

Music Director Jason Jestadt and guest Alana Bridgewater impromptu jam to O Happy Day from February 2021



Click to watch

Brenda McIntyre sings Bruce Cockburn's Child of the Wind from June 2021



Click to watch

A Choir favourite! My Love Colours Outside the Lines from November 2021

A close-up photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark blue top, singing into a silver microphone. Her eyes are closed and her expression is one of deep emotion. The background is dark and out of focus.

Musical Guests in 2021:

MCC Toronto is grateful to the following talented artists who shared their musical gifts with us in 2021:

Troy Adams
Tristan Avakian
Alana Bridgewater
Mark Cassius
Billy Newton-Davis
Arinea Hermans
Kelly Holiff
Gavin Hope
Mary Kelly
Chilina Kennedy
Shannon Linton
George Masswohl
Shannon McCracken
Julie Michels
Dale Miller
Erica Peck
Dana Jean Phoenix
Jackie Richardson
Monica Schroeder
Cailin Stadnyk
Jennie Such

CONGREGATIONAL CARE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A place of worship – and a place of action – MCC Toronto has always prided itself on the duality of the work we do to keep our communities engaged. Through our Congregational Care Program, we provide spiritual and emotional supports to congregants and members in need. Our Worship team and Lay Ministers responded to **116** formal congregational care requests, and hundreds of informal requests in 2021. Our Benevolence Fund helped **40** congregants in need of financial support. In 2021 we offered a host of programming options to keep you connected such as Tuesday Night Bible Studies, The Quest for Meaning Spiritual Discussion Group, Lenten Meditation Group and a How to be an Anti Racist Book Study. We also hosted a slew of virtual programs during Pride month including a Women's Happy Hour, a Proud, Faithful & Trans panel and a special Be Proud of You event for families. We also saw the renewal of our Young Adults Program.

MCC Toronto remains fiercely proud of its long-standing support as the home for The Triangle Program, a unique 26-year partnership with the Toronto District School Board. While students endured both online and in-person study during 2021, MCC Toronto was quick to resume the Triangle Lunch Program as soon circumstances allowed. Between September and December, our team of volunteers served **350** lunches.

Following the completion of our new Community Kitchen in February, MCC Toronto was delighted to form a new partnership with Club Sandwich, a food security organization that distributes food to shelters in Toronto's east end. Since then, Club Sandwich volunteers have made and distributed over 50,000 sandwiches – right in our very own kitchen.

In December 2021, we awarded a \$5,000 grant to Act-On Ability Foundation through our Community Outreach Partnerships (COP) Fund. Act-On Ability Foundation provides tailored training to LGBTQ+ persons with disabilities who are typically not accommodated when it comes to opportunities to work within film, television and theatre.

Throughout 2021, MCC Toronto continued to engage our communities through social media. In July we created our [first Instagram Reel](#). In August we joined [TikTok](#). And on Facebook, our most popular post was [Rev. Junia Joplin's thoughts on #TDOV2021](#).

–Rev. Junia Joplin, Associate Pastor, Programs & Congregational Care

LGBTQ+ REFUGEE PROGRAMS

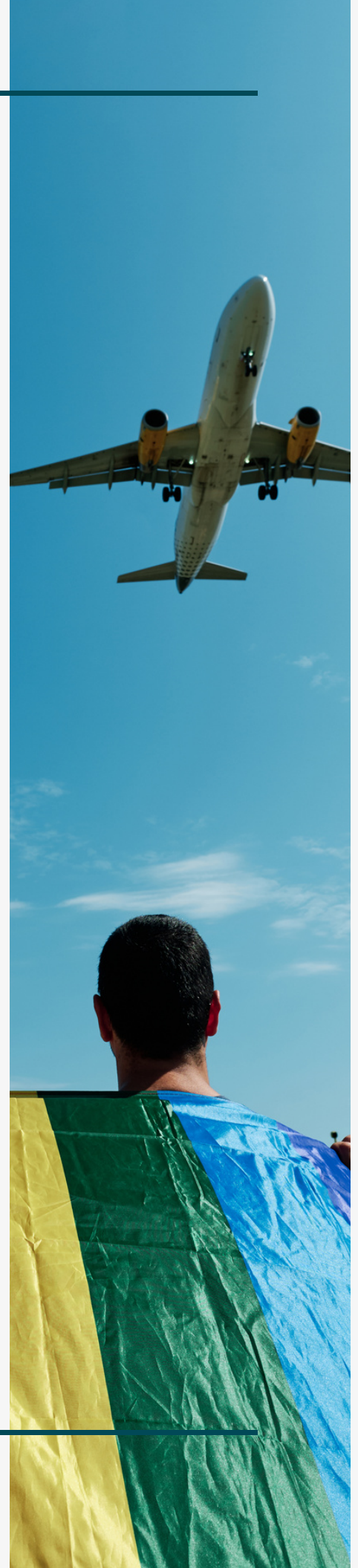
In a year marred by difficulties, the humanitarian situation of many refugees around the world has worsened. Many LGBTQ+ asylum seekers globally continued to feel the devastating impact of the pandemic as they remained trapped in dangerous situations because of closed borders. For LGBTQ+ refugees already in Canada, the prolonged delays of Immigration and Refugee Hearings resulted in increased anxiety and uncertainty. Despite these challenges, LGBTQ+ Refugee Programs staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to keep program participants engaged, informed and connected.

Throughout 2021, we continued to enhance our online programming, created even more opportunities for participants to support each other through increased check-ins, and increased direct one-on-one supports. Our bi-weekly Orientation Sessions helped support **125** new LGBTQ+ refugees to Canada providing them with the information they needed and a community to call their own. Our weekly Let's Chat sessions, typically attended by 20-40 program participants, gave folks the opportunity to interact with and support their peers while learning about issues which specifically touch and concern them as refugees and as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

This past year, our program staff helped support **800+** program participants representing 17 countries of origin. In December, we launched our Afghan Refugee Response Program with a goal of bringing **3-5** Afghan refugees to Canada in 2022.

Many thanks to congregants, community members and foundations that supported our LGBTQ+ Refugee Programs in 2021.

-Dave Kerr, Director of LGBTQ+ Refugee Programs



GIVING

To MCC Toronto every gift is a blessing. And in 2021, MCC Toronto was extremely blessed by the continued generosity of our members, congregants and the broader community. Despite the ongoing challenges that prevented us from being together for in-person Worship Services for much of 2021, the support of our weekly and monthly sustaining donors provided a critical level of support that was incredibly important to our operations. MCC Toronto was also extremely grateful to folks who generously supported our 2021 fundraising Campaigns including Easter Offerings, our Fiercely Proud Campaign, our Christmas Memorial Campaign, Christmas Offerings and our Year-End Appeal (Respond Restore Renew Campaign). Special thanks to those who attended our one in-person fundraising event in 2021 – Hark! A Christmas Concert with The Choir of MCC Toronto & Special Guests.

While MCC Toronto is unable to provide detailed financial statements until a formal audit of our books is completed in time for our 2022 Annual Church Business Meeting (ACBM) in June, we can report that we believe we have met our financial goals for 2021.

–John R. Farrell, Director of Development & Communications

325+

Monthly donors

202



Donors to Respond Restore
Renew Campaign

WITH THANKS TO OUR DONORS

MCC Toronto extends a heartfelt thanks to the following donors who made cumulative gifts of \$2,500 or more in support of our work and mission in 2021

\$10,000+

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Stephen Wateridge & Zenon Polejowski
Beverley Wybrow
Anonymous (8)

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