

MCC TORONTO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meeting Summary - April 2025

April 30, 2025 / 6:15 pm / Hybrid (in-person and online)

AGENDA

- A. Discussion on Proposed 2025 Budget
 - B. Executive Report - Senior Pastor and Executive Director
 - C. Engagement Committee Update
 - D. Human Rights Program
 - E. Town Hall Feedback and Future Planning
 - F. Accessibility Improvements
 - G. Recognition of Service
-

A. Discussion on Proposed 2025 Budget

- The board reviewed and unanimously accepted Draft 2 of the proposed 2025 budget, which projects a small surplus. The conversation focused on financial transparency, congregational perceptions, and messaging priorities for the year ahead.
- Appreciation was expressed for the hard work and collaboration involved in refining the budget, which is now clearer and more accessible to read.
- Financial Reporting & Transparency - The need for more detailed and digestible financial reporting was emphasized, especially in response to past feedback that previous budgets were perceived to be too technical and high-level. The team will endeavour to explore ways to present financial data more clearly and meaningfully to the congregation.

B. Executive Report - Senior Pastor and Executive Director

- **Fundraising & Donations** - A long-time member celebrated their birthday by requesting donations to MCCT in lieu of gifts, successfully raising over \$7,500. And through a connection made by a board member, a major gift commitment of \$100,000 was secured from a new donor.
- **Staffing & HR** - The hiring process for the Finance Manager position is in its final stages, pending the results of the candidate's criminal record check. Annual employee reviews have been completed. Reports are being finalized and feedback sessions are currently being scheduled.
- **Programs & Events** - The March 31st Proud Voices event, *"Trapped by Border: Supporting Trans and Non-Binary Refugees under the Safe Third Country Agreement"* was held in person with strong attendance and positive feedback. Highlights included: A greeting from MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam, participation from a panel of experts, including Toni Johnson from Ubuntu, a graduate of MCCT's refugee program, insightful discussions on the growing challenges facing trans and non-binary refugees, particularly in light of policy shifts in the U.S.

The board suggested capturing impactful sound/video clips from these events to support future media outreach and promotion.

- **Facilities & Concert Programming** - Candlelight Concerts is interested in expanding performances into the summer months. They raised two logistical concerns: light and heat in the sanctuary. Two solutions were considered: Air conditioning installation: Estimated cost of \$120,000+ with complex installation, and Blackout blinds: Approximate cost of \$15,000 with a four-day installation. The board has agreed to proceed with the blackout blinds option, which will improve both event conditions and summer comfort for congregants.
- C. **Engagement Committee Update** - The Games Afternoon event was a success, with 7 tables of participants, plenty of food, and lively conversation. The event, led by Colleen with a team of volunteers, supported the Committee's goal of fostering fellowship and creating meaningful opportunities for community connection. Notably, attendees were seen interacting with individuals outside their usual circles, supporting the committee's mission to strengthen relationships across the church community.
- D. **Human Rights Program:** A comprehensive discussion was held regarding the current state and future direction of the Human Rights strategy at MCC Toronto, including a proposal to undertake a focused review with an emphasis on advocacy. The session was led by members of the Human Rights team, with insights from Tom K and Ben R whose deep experience in global human rights advocacy guides the proposal.

There is strong board alignment on the value and importance of revitalizing MCCT's human rights work with a specific focus on advocacy. The next step is to proceed with outreach and strategic review, supported by staff, board members, and interested congregants. This initiative is seen as vital both to honoring the church's legacy and to addressing the urgent human rights challenges of today.

Key Updates & Insights:

- There is a general board consensus that this is an opportune moment for a thoughtful review and reset of the human rights work, following two years of program implementation.
 - The refugee sponsorship work, particularly for LGBTQ individuals fleeing persecution, was described as remarkable and uniquely impactful in the national context. Although the work primarily supports external beneficiaries, this must also resonate with and reflect the core values of the Church.
 - The broader human rights landscape is experiencing a crisis, with the backsliding of democratic principles, and LGBTQ+ rights under attack, even in historically supportive nations like the U.S.
 - Advocacy was proposed as the strategic focus for the review. This work can also engage and activate the congregation more fully, positioning them as both supporters and amplifiers of MCC's human rights mission.
 - Determine which issues MCCT has credibility and capacity to speak on, and where strategic partnerships might amplify impact.
 - Continue identifying the unique niche MCCT occupies and how best to leverage it without duplicating efforts.
 - Explore ways to connect the congregation more directly with refugee support programming, fostering mutual understanding and deeper investment.
- E. **Town Hall Feedback and Future Planning**

The recent Town Hall received positive feedback from congregants. It was recognized as a valuable forum for connection and dialogue. The Board agreed it would be beneficial to schedule these regularly, with a potential next session around Homecoming (possibly September 14).

While affirming the value of live Town Halls, the Board acknowledged the need to develop a multi-pronged engagement strategy to include those who may not attend in-person meetings, especially on Sunday afternoons. Alternatives could include surveys, digital forums, or small group gatherings.

- F. **Accessibility Planning** - The Board discussed recent steps taken to address accessibility requirements within the building, specifically the retrofitting two bathrooms to meet accessibility standards, and installing push-button doors in the corridor leading to the downstairs elevator. It was agreed that the staff will explore relevant grants and funding opportunities to offset these costs.
- G. **Recognition of Service** - The Board expressed its deep gratitude and appreciation to Kevin W. for his six years of service on the Board, as well as his broader leadership contributions to the church community over the years.

NEXT MEETING: July 23, 2025