

2018

Annual Report

the meeting
house





Peace

We are committed to non-violence, peace-making, and being agents of reconciliation.

Community

We believe that God created us for relationship with him and with each other.

Simplicity

We challenge ourselves to live simply so that we can give generously.

Mission

We move beyond our spaces to share the Gospel with people and care for them.



We exist to grow loving communities of Jesus-followers who live and share his irreligious message.



Thank you for giving this annual report your time and attention. We are a family, and being a healthy family takes an ongoing investment of time, attention, care, and contribution. As you read through this report, we hope you feel the same encouragement and enthusiasm that we feel about what God is doing through The Meeting House family of churches. This past year has given us all a lot to celebrate, and the year ahead holds some significant and exciting developments. The best part is that we get to do all of this TOGETHER!

Faith, Hope, & Love,



Bruxy, Darrell, Rod
Senior Pastors

Your generosity makes ministry happen.

Thank you for being a part of the over 3,000 people who gave offerings this past year to support our vision. **Together, this looks like:**

Kids & Youth

This category includes both local and cross-regional staff, the production of kids and youth curriculum, program budgets, classroom supplies, curriculum materials, and subsidies for our youth retreats.

Adult Ministries

This category includes funds that support Sunday morning services and Home Church, as well as funds for other learning and community building opportunities, such as local site events, training and appreciation for volunteers, and resourcing and salaries for our site pastors.



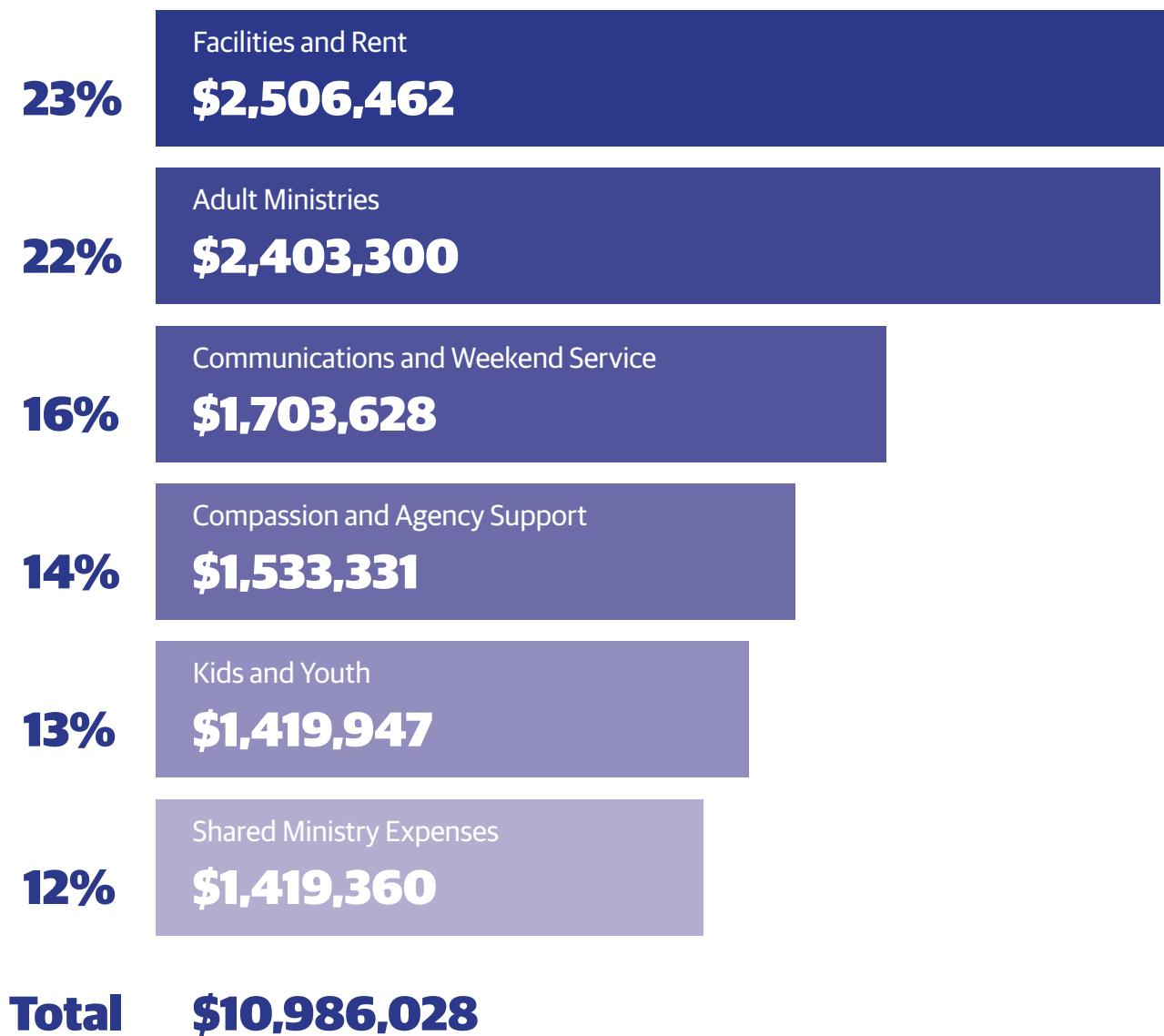
Compassion & Agency Support

This category includes supporting the work of our partners here and around the world: the agencies connected to each of our local sites, World Vision, MCC, and BIC Canada Global. Also included here are funds for benevolence within our church community, Compassion staff, and site-directed compassion initiatives.

Shared Ministry Expenses

This category includes funds for resourcing, training, and appreciating our staff team, as well as administrative costs and salaries for our Senior Pastors, IT, Accounting, and HR staff.





Facilities & Rent

This category includes funds for rental facilities across all of our sites, including spaces for Sunday mornings and midweek youth, music rehearsal rooms, and storage facilities for our trucks and trailers. It also includes utilities, maintenance, and facilities staff for our Oakville facility.

Communications & Weekend Service

This category includes costs related to producing and distributing Sunday's message to our sites and online community. It also includes funds for trucks, trailers, and equipment for all ministry areas, as well as the cross-regional staff that support them, including Tech, Site Support, and Communications.



Ministry makes discipleship happen.

We focus on teaching the message of Jesus and actively living it out in our communities.

For our core ministries, this looks like:

Kids

Our Kidmax ministry has been busy this year! Many of our locations saw an increase in the number of children attending regularly. We heard stories of preschoolers motivating their families to collect soap for our Peacemakers campaign, and of elementary kids who felt encouraged by our Life Story videos that cover many of the tough topics our kids face. We experimented with new ways of connecting with families, including park pop-ups, book clubs, church in the park, and bouncy castles in the parking lot. We celebrated our Coordinators who provide overall vision, training, and pastoral care to our vast Kidmax volunteer team. We welcomed over 900 kids each Sunday, and we are grateful for those serving our children. We look forward to continue seeing God's spirit at work as our children learn to love and follow Jesus.



Youth

In June, The Underground wrapped up another successful ministry year. Over 1000 leaders and students joined our two retreats. In the fall, we focused on letting God affect our whole lives as we learned to seek justice, love mercy, and be humble. In the spring, we focused on knowing that even in the storms of life we can have peace and stillness with Jesus. Our compassion trip gave students and leaders the opportunity to spend a few days intentionally connecting with communities in Toronto, hearing personal stories, and learning more about those around them. We had the privilege of baptizing over 30 of our leaders and students across our local sites. We had our first leaders trip in February, where we learned how to "go deep with a few to become equipped to go wide with many." We believe that teenagers have the ability to transform their community, and this is why we choose to walk alongside them in their journey with Jesus, equipping them to share his message with others.

4288 people benefited
from the **1072 Relief Kits** we sent
to Jordan.

\$250,000
of Local Compassion Fund
was distributed to 23 partner
organizations across our sites.

\$250,000+
has been provided to World
Vision's Raw Hope program
to-date, bringing tangible hope
to displaced families.

\$13,800+
went to MCC's peacebuilding
efforts in Southern Africa.

7000+ residents
of Mposa and Chamba were
provided with clean water
through sponsorship.

Home Church

Jesus teaches us that where two or three are gathered in his name, he is with us. This has been the experience of so many people across our sites as they prioritize participating in Home Church. This year, we have seen examples of innovation, with many sites hosting campus based Home Churches, experimenting with larger family friendly Home Churches, and meeting in spaces like coffee shops and pubs that are welcoming to newcomers. We've seen Home Churches continue to celebrate people coming to understand the love of Jesus, publicly declaring their new life through baptism, praying for one another through illness and grief, and being challenged and transformed through serving the marginalized people within their communities, like refugees and those impacted by poverty. With over 2,000 people at The Meeting House belonging to a Home Church, we continue to be amazed at the presence of Jesus we encounter when we are together.



Compassion

It has been an exciting year seeing Jesus transform lives as we make compassion an integral part of our discipleship journey, practically loving the vulnerable. We partnered with peace-building programs across Sub-Saharan Africa, provided tangible relief to families affected by international conflicts, and helped equip the global church. During our Peacemakers series, we hosted the Exchange Team who shared their frontline experience about bringing peace to areas of unrest. We also hosted an event called Dancing Toward Reconciliation and visited the Mohawk Residential School to learn about the impact of residential schools; helping us discern our role in the reconciliation process between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We launched the Peace Workshop pilot and equipped three sites with practical peacebuilding skills for everyday use and are excited to extend it to more sites in the coming year.



**Podcast Total Downloads
(Audio & Video)**

This fiscal year: **619,409**

Last fiscal year: **454,798**



YouTube

4.3+ Million Minutes of watch time
(+58% over last fiscal year)

500,245 Views
(+43% over last fiscal year)

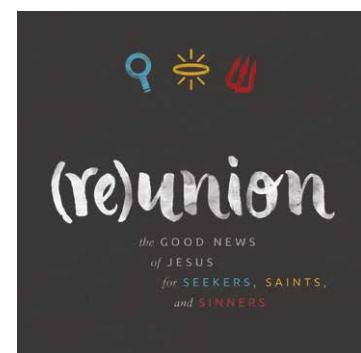


**Bad Ideas, Jesus &
Buddha, and Way To
Pray among most
popular video teaching**



Sunday Services

This year, thought-provoking teaching series helped us dive deeper into understanding a Jesus-centred philosophy of life. We created practical resources, such as our Gospel Cheat Sheet, and Bruxy's (*re)Union Study Guide*, to equip our community to go out into their workplaces and neighbourhoods and engage in spiritual conversations in meaningful ways. Teaching Series like *Bad Ideas, Jesus & Buddha*, and *Way to Pray* created opportunities to invite family and friends to learn more about Jesus and the application of his teaching to their lives. These series were also very popular with our online audiences, and contributed to a 27% increase in the number of times our podcast was downloaded in our 2017-2018 fiscal year compared to the previous year. We're looking forward to partnering with God as we explore new and unpredictable ways to communicate with our audience in the months ahead!



We choose to be intentional in our areas of focus.

We strategically prioritize in four ways: developing disciples, developing leaders, developing resources, and strengthening the core. **Across our sites, this looks like:**



Developing Disciples

Reaching out with the message of Jesus, inviting spiritual seekers, and training apprentices of Jesus.

The first time Jeffrey came to The Meeting House he was intrigued by the unorthodox setup, music, and teaching at the Oakville site. Although he left with a good impression that day, he gave little thought to pursuing his faith. "I don't think I was looking for or saw any value in spirituality," he says. "It's where I was at."

A few years later, shortly after joining the workforce, Jeffrey experienced a period of dissatisfaction and re-evaluation. "Things weren't really going the way I was hoping for...Leaving [a relationship] and a career entirely started the journey of figuring out, as cheesy as it sounds, the purpose of my life." He began looking for answers, seeing a counsellor and reading New Age literature, but looking back, it was a volunteer position at a local YMCA that made the biggest impact. "It was an area of being other-focused, which is definitely more in line with servitude...I knew in my heart that this was more in the direction that I should go."

Around that time, he met and began to build a close relationship with a husband and wife. Together, they had discussions about careers, mentorship, and life goals. "[Through them,] I met people that are actually vulnerable and talk about things honestly and are all trying to become better...I just thought, 'They're just really real people that are going places, and I want to be around these people.'" Jeffrey later discovered that they were all Christ-followers, and it was then that he decided to really look into the Christian faith.

As he searched for churches in his area, Jeffrey recalled his first encounter with The Meeting House and began visiting the Downtown Toronto location. "I just remember that I connected, and from there I was just pretty excited. I kept going, and pretty quickly I realized that it made sense for me to look into what it would look like to actually develop a relationship with Christ." After transitioning to the Richmond Hill site, he had many conversations with the Lead Pastor, Melissa, who encouraged him to volunteer and think about getting baptized.

Earlier this year, not long after those conversations, Jeffrey took the plunge in front of his community. Baptism, for him, was about experiencing God's grace and sharing it with others. "I'm a very strong advocate of leading by example," he says. "If anything, I did it to share a little bit of the journey in hopes that people can say to me, 'Oh okay, it doesn't have to look perfect.' Not everyone will relate to me, but maybe someone will relate to my journey...You never know how you can change someone's life."

Developing Leaders

Equipping our servant-leaders to effectively meet our future opportunities and challenges.

Sandra had always felt her faith was based more on tradition rather than relationship. It wasn't until university, after she decided to step away from church altogether, that she began to re-evaluate and re-explore her spirituality. "It was actually in and around that time that I was diagnosed with cancer," says Sandra. "So, faith became much more important to me at that point, and I was struggling to understand what was happening and what did I truly believe. And that's kind of what really cemented my journey."

A significant step on this journey occurred about three years ago, when Sandra began attending The Meeting House in Richmond Hill. One



Sunday morning, she read about a BIC booklet on Indigenous history and reconciliation in the teaching notes. "I was just really interested to learn more, which was why I wanted to pick up this booklet, and then it turned into this amazing conversation with Sarah [the Compassion Coordinator], and I was sharing how even before I had kind of come into my own as far as my faith, I felt there was something there in terms of a passion for First Nations, even if I didn't know a lot at that point."

Soon after, Sandra joined the Indigenous Learning Group organized by Sarah, which offered a context and community in which she could pursue this passion. "Being part of [it] was a huge first step and allowed me to get to know the other people that were part of that group. And because you're talking about something near and dear to your heart, you get to know people quite well quite quickly." Things began to click from there, and Sandra was encouraged by the Lead Pastor, Melissa, to volunteer at a Peace Workshop this past summer. "It was an awesome opportunity," Sandra says, "and I learned a lot through it. So as much as I was part of facilitating, there was a lot of learning for me personally and applying it to my own life."

Presently, Sandra is continuing to grow and serve her community in her new role as Co-Compassion Coordinator. "I'm really excited to see where I can continue to be used in this opportunity," she reflects. "What I really value in terms of my experience so far at The Meeting House is just people's willingness to let you try things out...That really supported me being able to move further within the community and to get to know people and to have some open and honest conversations."

Developing Resources

Creating and curating tools to help develop more Jesus-centred leaders and disciples.

Matt has been serving as Compassion Manager at The Meeting House for over two years. In that time, a large part of his role has involved kickstarting a new peace initiative. "The Peace Workshop," he explains, "is an adaptation of a curriculum based on an organization called Peace Clubs." Founded by Issa Ebombolo, Peace Clubs is a program based in Zambia which has now expanded to more than 650 clubs across Sub-Saharan Africa. "They look at teaching peacebuilding literacy and approach-



ing conflict nonviolently for youth in school, and... they've also extended into the church and into the prison systems."

Early last year, Issa came to The Meeting House to speak about Peace Clubs during our Peacemakers campaign. "We had a lot of people from across all of our sites messaging us saying, 'How can we bring Peace Clubs to Canada?'" And so after much discussion and planning, Matt, along with one of Issa's former colleagues, began to adapt the original program. The final result was a six-week workshop series focused on everyday interpersonal conflict and reconciliation.

"We ended up doing a pilot last year, which we started at the Downtown Hamilton site," Matt says. "We've taken a lot of the feedback that we got from [it], and we've made an update, and so we're really adapting the curriculum based off the needs and



feedback of the community." Since then, The Meeting House has launched three additional pilots with the hope of training more facilitators and eventually running Peace Workshops across all our sites. "The purpose...is to equip members of our community with actual skills to be within conflict and be like, 'Okay, this is a good thing. Conflict is normal, but how can I actually move that conflict toward a peaceful solution?'"

The format of the Peace Workshop is very similar to Home Church, where individuals come together in small groups to learn, discuss, and live out the peace teaching of Jesus. "There's an endless list of stories I could share," Matt says. "I have heard from most of the six facilitators that we've trained so far, that this has been an opportunity to step into leadership that they haven't been able to step into before." And for Matt himself, being exposed to and developing a passion for peacebuilding has become a huge part of his personal growth and discipleship journey. "There was an alignment theologically, and now being able to participate in the development of the curriculum, I can see that I'm, for lack of a better word, transformed by the curriculum itself."



Strengthening the Core

Continuously improving the ministries and operations that keep us healthy as a church.

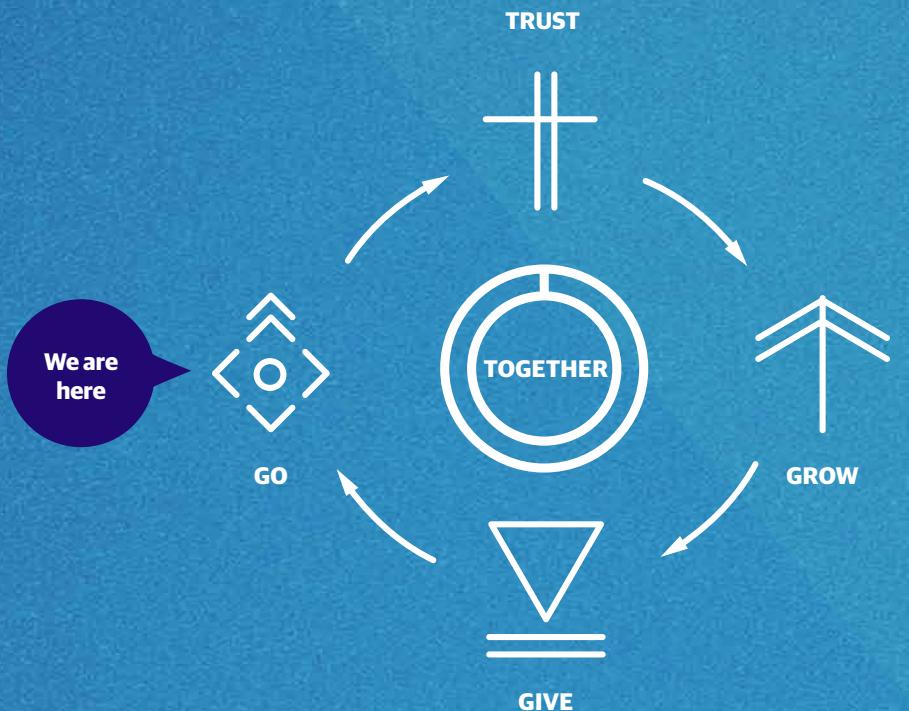
Adriana first began visiting and volunteering at a church with her family seven years ago. "We started attending regularly and just learning about God and the church and the Bible. And we were happy where we were...We had started to create a community." Not long after, however, her then husband started to become verbally abusive, controlling, and manipulative. Adriana approached the elders in her church for help, but they told her that it was her biblical duty to stay with her husband. "I needed the support," she says, "and I did not get it." She turned instead to a therapist for counselling, and soon after, she left the relationship and the church altogether.

Then, almost two years ago, she heard about The Meeting House from the mother of her son's friend. Adriana looked it up online and decided to go to the Oakville site by herself one Sunday morning. "I needed a sense of community...I was so lonely." After the service, she was approached by Kathy, the Care Teams Pastor, who introduced herself and gave Adriana a hug. "It was so welcoming. I told her a little bit about my story, that I was going through a divorce, and she told me that they had DivorceCare available." Adriana joined the program two days later, and it was here that she began to experience love, support, and community. "Feeling care was amazing. It helped me heal a lot of my pain, and it gave me a little group of people that really took care of me and loved me and helped me and prayed for me...I cannot tell you how blessed I am."

During this time, Adriana's son was on his own faith journey. Hurt and confused after the family's previous experience, he wanted no part in church, but after much encouragement and prayer, he attended youth at The Meeting House for the first time. There, he met an incredible community of students and leaders who introduced him to Jesus. "He lost his anger. He says he felt peace, he felt welcomed, not judged. He said that he felt like he belonged." Something fell into place for him, and her son now serves on the Kidmax team and aspires to become a youth leader himself in order to share and inspire other children with his story.

Looking back now, Adriana describes her life and her son's as one answered prayer after another. "[Before,] I was angry at God, I was questioning his love." But through DivorceCare and the kindness of strangers, she and her children were able to find community and experience the transformative love of Christ. "That's what The Meeting House has been to me. I met Jesus there. I met his compassion, his love. He's taking care of me through people, and my family and I are in love with him."

Discipleship Model



Trust: We demonstrate our trust in Christ through baptism. This journey is not just a one-time deal, it's a daily choice to trust Jesus to lead our lives.

Grow: When we choose to trust in Jesus, we want to learn from one another and live out what he taught us.

Give: As we learn how to follow Jesus, we begin to give back, teach others, and serve communities.

Go: True discipleship requires us to look outside of ourselves and help others become disciples of Jesus.

Together: As we grow, we develop deeper relationships with others and with God. Personal spirituality is not enough. We need each other.

Looking forward

As we continue in this "Year of Go" we are excited to move ahead on various aspects of our vision to become a more outward facing church that is engaging the world with the message of Jesus and equipping a disciple making movement. We look forward to teaching series specifically designed to give us an increased opportunity to invite our non-Christian friends and family; to find new ways to welcome those who visit our sites for the first time; to better equip those who serve; to invest more in leadership development; to engage and resource young adults; and to go from talking about the network idea to taking steps toward making it happen through a pilot experience with several new network ministry partners in the 2018/19 ministry year. Stay tuned for more, and let's keep praying every step of the way!



"...teaching them to obey everything
I have commanded you..."

- Jesus

(Matthew 28:20)

To view our complete 2018 Annual Report, Financial Audit, and Proxy Ballot go to
themeetinghouse.com/annualreport
