

The Church Planter

Ruby Pratka

Stefan Cherry has spent most of his career planting seeds. Now he and his family are in Vanier to plant a church.

Cherry and his wife, Pascale, run Ottawa's two-year-old Mennonite congregation, The Village Church. He was raised in Montreal, in a Québécois-American family, but spent much of his time overseas. "My training was in sustainable agriculture, and I spent ten years working in Africa," explains Cherry, who speaks English, French and Portuguese along with "a couple of African languages."

"I was training farmers and working with local church groups. When I first went to Cameroon I wasn't even a Christian; I was just there as an environmentalist, but when I was there I just had a very powerful conversion."

Cherry says he was drawn to the Mennonite church while working on a graduate degree in Ithaca, N.Y. "I like the sense of community it brings," he says. "And it's a peace church. The Mennonites were persecuted in Europe because they wouldn't take up arms." "When Jesus said 'Love your enemy,' I think he probably meant don't kill them," Cherry says, quoting a favourite bumper sticker. "I renounced my US citizenship when America started bombing Iraq; I just went to the consulate, talked to the consular official and turned my passport in."

The seeds for The Village Church were planted in June 2008. "I'd just finished seminary and spent some time pastoring in Waterloo," he says. "My son was five weeks old. My wife and I spent some time fasting and praying and wondering what plan God had for us, and that plan was to plant a new church in Vanier. We followed Jesus here."

When Cherry first arrived in Vanier, he said he "spent a lot of time just walking around in the neighbourhood." He grew to love Richelieu Park, which he calls a great place to get away from city noise.

"I love the outdoors," he says. "It's a place where God can speak to us so clearly. I try to take walks in the forest a lot. Our society is so busy it's very difficult to hear God, and every now and then I need to just separate myself."

The church was born in the Cherry family's living room. Then Cherry says he was contacted by St. Margaret's Church on Montreal Road and asked if the Mennonites wanted to share space. That's where services are held now, on Sundays at 2 p.m. Cherry says he can expect around 40 people to gather for the services, which are "intentionally multicultural and multilingual."

"Our primary language is English, but we incorporate French and Spanish into prayers, songs and other things," he says.

The environment is very important for Cherry and his congregation, who have started a community garden in Vanier. "We're doing such a disservice to our planet," he says. "The earth is a gift, and when you're given a gift what do you do with it? You don't trash it."

Community activism is also essential for the church, Cherry says. The church has helped organize the neighbourhood block party and they were approached by the City of Ottawa to maintain the Richelieu Park ice rink. "It doesn't just take people to build a church; it takes a neighbourhood," Cherry says.

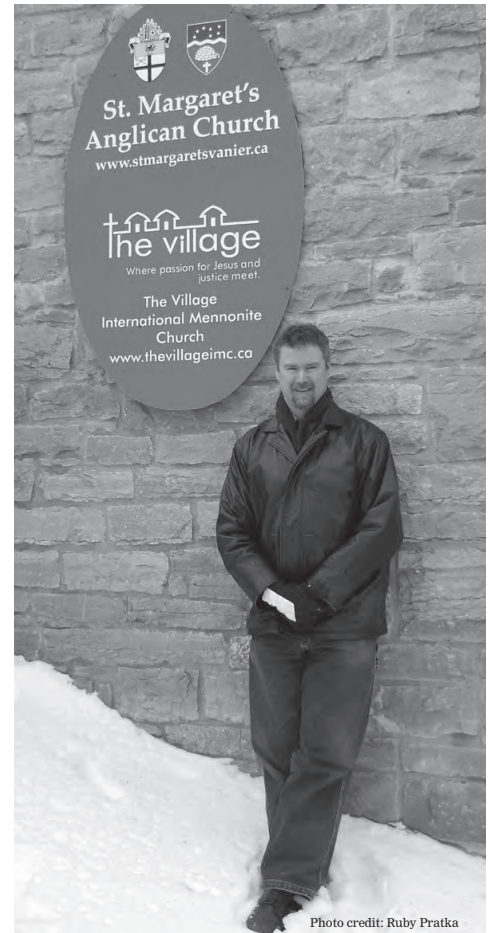


Photo credit: Ruby Pratka

Investing today, powering tomorrow

PLANNED WORK IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Hydro Ottawa is committed to delivering the highest levels of customer service and safety. To achieve this goal, Hydro Ottawa regularly evaluates, replaces and upgrades equipment in your area — and across the region's electrical distribution system. Investing in infrastructure is essential to the delivery of reliable electricity service for the future.

Project Duration:

April to September 2011

Areas:

- Granville Street between Bedard Avenue and Boudreau Street
- Lovergne Street between Perrier Avenue and Ste. Marique Street
- St. Denis Street between Ste. Anne Avenue and Granville Street
- Cantin Street between Morfort Street and St. Denis Street
- Brittany Drive between St. Laurent Boulevard and Quarry Road
- Electric Street
- Vaughan Street
- Mackay Street between Electric Street and Beechwood Avenue
- Springfield Road between Putman Avenue and Beechwood Avenue
- Beechwood Avenue between Charlevoix Street and Joliet Avenue
- Langevin Avenue between Putman Avenue and Beechwood Avenue
- Champlain Avenue between Putman Avenue and Beechwood Avenue

Hydro Ottawa has begun a pole replacement project in Vanier and New Edinburgh to improve the reliability of the electrical distribution system. Tree trimming may be required to facilitate this work.

We apologize for any inconvenience this vital work may cause.

Hydro Ottawa will take steps to mitigate any power disruptions, construction noise and traffic concerns. Your patience is appreciated.



hydroottawa.com/plannedwork

2508154

SPÉCIALITÉ COIFFURE POUR HOMMES
MEN'S HAIRSTYLING OUR SPECIALITY

ST-LAURENT BARBER SHOP



**15 BARBERS
TO SERVE YOU !**
**15 BARBIERS POUR
MIEUX VOUS SERVIR !**
**BILINGUAL STAFF
PERSONNEL BILINGUE**

LUN. AU SAM. | MON. TO SAT.
9 h à 21 h | 9 a.m. TO 9 p.m.
DIM 11 h à 17 h | SUN. 11 a.m. TO 5 p.m.

SHOPPING CENTER ST-LAURENT CENTRE COMMERCIAL
OTTAWA, ONTARIO
ENTRANCE AT TOYS "R" US AND SHOPPERS DRUG MART
ENTRÉE DU TOYS «R» US ET SHOPPERS DRUG MART

613 749-2544

2508120