

Two conversations with the same content, but different participants were held. The notes below are Beth's attempt to capture what was shared. Any omissions or errors are hers. Those who participated in each conversation will also receive an email that enables them to be directly connected to those with whom they spoke.

Feb 10 Conversation

Present:

1. Milad (Emmanuel Iranian United Ministries in Toronto, Newmarket, Richmond Hill & Aurora)
2. Don Sellsted (Orchard Valley UC in New Minas NS – Annapolis Valley Migrant workers)
3. Michael Lee (Gallery of Faith in Markham ON – Hong Kong Diaspora)
4. Sun Do Hyun (Meadowlake SK – NW part in congregational ministry)
5. David Van Patter (SW of London ON – produce farming Migrant Workers), Issa Winasi (Emmanuel United & Methodist Church in Ottawa),
6. Miguel Fernandez (from Colombia – Spanish congregation in downtown Toronto)
7. Linda Buchanan (Beaconsfield UC on West Island of Montreal – refugee integration and support program – also LGBTQ centre and close interactions),
8. Emo Yango (Team Lead for Migrant & Diaspora Church Planting),
9. Calin Lau (Growth Animator Shining Waters & Canadian Shield)
10. Hugh Gardin (Brockville ON),
11. Onias Masawi (Zimbabwe Migrant Communities spread across Canada – he is in London, supports Montreal, Toronto & Alberta too)
12. Inzwi Munikwa (indigenous & Racialized Youth coordinator – Dieppe NB)

Proposed agenda

Welcome & grounding

Introductions – name, location, why be here, something that will help us get to know each other (if Beth can't share your contact info, please indicate this via private message)

Reminder of our Terms of Reference – how can these support us in creating a culture within the network that enables us to know one another and develop together the commitment to be leaders in this work? [The Terms of Reference are posted on the ChurchX page]

In addition to the definition in the terms of reference themselves the following clarification was offered

- Migrant – Government defines this as someone with temporary status. Minister of Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada (IRCC) focus on permanent residency
- Finding ways to share what is happening in your local communities

- Connecting churches that are locally close to our emerging communities of faith to build relationships and offer support

Wonderings for today:

What is the UCC's (local, regional, national) location in the conversation about those who are being pushed out of Canada or underground? Who are you talking to or working with?

What are you doing locally to support your communities as they are experiencing this chill and push?

- Linda – one thing they are doing is maintaining a room of warm clothing to help people dress well in Montreal. Members who recently got protected person status were celebrated last Sunday.
- Do we know about how the medical care policy is changing? There is now an expectation to pay a user fee? Linda has not been able to find anything online. Effective May 1, 2026 (see information below)
- We are asking people to forward UCC statements and letters to their own MPs from themselves
- Emo shared www.uccmigrathub.ca and explained that this is a place for migrants to learn about UCC in their own language and worship reflecting their own culture – He is soliciting communities of faith beyond church plants to add information too – eyango@united-church.ca
- February 14 is an Iranian protest in North Toronto. On a related, but separate note, there is a blog on the UCC that Milad has written <https://united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/cry-innocent-iran>
- What does a Church Plant mean? One demographic? Where are they based, out of a church, home, online?
 - Gallery of Faith hosts online gatherings. Meet in public spaces and people's homes. Main demographic is Hong Kong Diaspora
 - Issa – has a space at Riverside UC in Ottawa which is rented for use on Saturday and Sundays
- Some people that are part of the Orchard Valley community are orchard owners and some who are Jamaican, but not necessarily migrant workers. Don would like to explore how to be welcoming without expecting people to conform to Sunday morning worship. Linda's advice is to lean into the Affirming Identity that calls us into radical welcome
- Orchard Valley hosts a space for laundry and showers a couple of afternoons a week with the Open Arms organization – primarily for those without housing – sometimes connect through this program with International Students or others who are new to Canada
- Access to employment and housing are big challenges for many of those in the emerging and diasporic communities of faith

Funding requests – are there 2 to 3 people willing to meet with staff to discern if we will fund requests

- Check our chat for offers – Issa
- To help us discern how the funds can best be spent
- Questions to ask – where else are they getting funds? Can we legally direct funds to them? Discern how to best allocate funds in a way that will make a difference. Create a check list – criteria based on justice making principles
- Issa Winasi and Michael Lee both offered to join this group

Next meeting – Tuesday April 14 at 1 or 7 PM ET

Possible Actions between gatherings – see end of both sets of notes for these

Closing prayer/reflection/commissioning - Emo led us in a closing prayer

Feb 11 Conversations

Present:

1. Emo Yango (Church Plant lead of migrant and diaspora churches)
2. Timothy Lam (Hong Kong originally - Glory United Steveson – Hong Kong style Cantonese speaking (last 5 years) (Richmond BC) Musician – hymn translator
3. Dyanne Marlok (Diaconal Minister, Newmarket ON)
4. Issa Winasi (from Congo DRC- Swahili speaking church in Ottawa)
5. Maureen (Kenya originally – traveling to Canada – part of the refugee assistance program, Candidate for ministry at St. Andrew's Currently in the Philippines)

Proposed agenda

Welcome & grounding

Introductions – name, location, why be here, something that will help us get to know each other (*if Beth can't share your contact info, please indicate this via private message*)

Reminder of our Terms of Reference – how can these support us in creating a culture within the network that enables us to know one another and develop together the commitment to be leaders in this work?

- Network is the way forward in doing our work across the whole church and the country

Wonderings for today:

What is the UCC's (local, regional, national) location in the conversation about those who are being pushed out of Canada or underground? Who are you talking to or working with?

What are you doing locally to support your communities as they are experiencing this chill and push?

- Maureen is engaged in a child protection network in the Philippines and finding ways to connect across churches. What are our strategies and plans to increase civil society engagement beyond the churches and individuals? Willing to share her experience as part of a national and global network.
- Dyanne minister at Tottenham UC – has had some people coming to look for help at the church and is seeking knowledge about how to help. Connect her with refugee program, newsletter. Experience of diversity in her previous healthcare career. Participating in the 100 table program. Will connect with Calin
- Timothy – supporting people as they get to know the community. They have grown from 8 to 20 people in worship since August of 2025. Connecting in an afternoon worship service once a month is working well for them. Have a young musician who will become baptized at Easter. Looking at starting a meal program and also opportunities for study and reading groups. Because of teen dying of overdose they have engaged in some education about drug use and bringing in counsellors for support
- Issa – challenging to find space to conduct worship. 4 United Churches were unable to offer them a welcome. Even in their new place it was on a trial basis to make sure that they did not disturb the established community of faith worship time. Food insecurity is a challenge for some of the people who are part of the community. Need to build some partnerships so that there are others who can provide food and money to meet this need. Some challenges in finding work for people in Ottawa. Making connections with members of Riverside UC now, but no solid leads yet. Delayed refugee process that leaves people in limbo, also the transition from being a supported refugee to someone who needs to find their own accommodation after the first year
- An Iranian community worship at Trinity United in Newmarket on Wednesday nights – also ADD IN THE INFORMATION FROM CHAT

Funding requests – are there 2 to 3 people willing to meet with staff to discern if we will fund requests

Next meeting – Tuesday April 14 at 1 or 7 PM ET

Possible Actions between gatherings – see notes below

Closing prayer/reflection/commissioning - would someone like to lead this?

Possible Actions between gatherings

- Posting on ChurchX in our Migrant Justice Network page
 - Look for events on Women's Day (Mar 8) or International Day for the Elimination of Racism (Mar 21) to participate in
 - Consider connecting to local IMA (International Migrant Alliance) chapters
 - People are invited to participate in CWWM (Churches Witnessing with Migrants Canada) – steering committee meetings (meeting dates for 2026: Feb. 17, March 17, April 21, May 19, June 16) Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89806855934?pwd=rUE86bPeD8Q6WuB9bopu2CHiyIU65l.1> Meeting ID: 898 0685 5934
- If you plan to attend these meetings let Beth or Emo know and they will send you a link to the notes of previous meetings.

Information shared in the Chat

There is a course coming up, starting on Feb 28 for 3 Saturdays on Addictions Ministries which will be offered through the Saskatoon Theological Union (where St. Andrews College is a member). Perhaps @Timothy Lam , you may have 2 members of your community with an interest in serving in this way, join the training? If so, I encourage you to contact the registrar of the school. It is open to non students as I understand it.

This is where people can find United Churches that offer worship in their language. This is also a place where communities of faith who have migrants in their community can post their information too <https://uccanmigranhub.ca/>

Changes to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/changes-ifhp.html>

Starting May 1, 2026, [supplemental health products and services](#) under the [Interim Federal Health Program](#) (IFHP) will require co-payments.

The IFHP provides temporary health coverage for eligible newcomers, ensuring access to essential care. Basic services like doctor visits and hospital care will continue to be fully covered at no cost.

New co-payments:

- \$4 per prescription medication filled or refilled.
- 30% of the cost for other eligible services, such as dental care, vision care, counselling, and assistive devices.

Co-payments are paid directly to the provider, with IFHP covering the rest.

Tips for beneficiaries:

- Use providers registered with IFHP (searchable online).
- Ask ahead if a co-payment applies and how much it will be.
- Keep receipts for any payments.

For those who might want to know about the Refugee Sponsorship Program, check out their recent newsletter. <https://mailchi.mp/united-church/refugee-sponsorship-news-4755176?e=20286cb1e9>