

What is NECM? The NORTHUMBERLAND EAST COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY is a collaboration among three local churches; Roseneath United, Roseneath, Trinity United, Hastings and St Paul's United, Warkworth. Through our combined ministry we hope to continue to maintain a United Church presence in all three communities of faith. Come and see what it's all about.

We're better together!

YOU'RE INVITED. COME ON IN!

Schedule of Services

Sun., Sept 6:

9:30 service @ Trinity, Hastings

11:00 service @ St Paul's/Warkworth

Sun., Sept 13:

No service @ St Paul's/Warkworth

11:00 service @ Roseneath

Sun., Sept 20:

9:30 service @ Roseneath

11:00 service @ Trinity, Hastings

Sun Sept 27:

9:30 service @ Trinity/Hastings

11:00 service @ St Paul's/Warkworth

Sun Oct 4:

9:30 service @ St Paul's/Warkworth

No service @ Roseneath

What's Happening?

Tues Sept 1:

It's time for the Abundance lunch at St Paul's. Come enjoy food and fellowship. 11:00 Coffee and chat - Lunch served at 12:00 followed by Bruce Williamson with a talk about his travels to Borneo.

****Abundance lunch 1st Tues of every month****

NECM News, September 1, 2026

Sunday Sept 13:

Pancake Breakfast under the Big Top at the Warkworth Fall Fair from 8:30-10:30

- Gospel music at 9:00am with Roxanne & The Right Direction.

Also, come and enjoy a light lunch at St Paul's UCW booth on Saturday & Sunday. See you at the Fair!

Sunday Oct 4:

Ecumenical Service @ the Roseneath Fair hosted by Roseneath United Church & St James Anglican Church. Come join in!

Everyone Welcome!

**"In a small church relationships matter.
That's why people attend."**

The following two articles are from the September Issue of Broadview, an issue that focuses on Small Churches.

There is also a link to three follow up Zoom workshops that are being offered.

Little Churches That COULD

Small faith communities offer a different kind of belonging — and newcomers are noticing

by CHRISTOPHER WHITE

AFTER 37 YEARS of pastoral ministry, I left the church. I was emotionally exhausted and burnt out, and so I retired and studiously avoided church in my new community, Hamilton. But as the world became more threatening and confusing, I found myself missing congregational life. In February, I took a part-time position at Faith United.

Around the same time, I had begun hearing reports of new people arriving in worship services across the country. At first, I was skeptical. Much of my ministry had involved adapting to the decline of the United Church. With an average Sunday attendance of 47 people in 2024, we can no longer deny that we are a small denomination today.

And yet, beyond the statistics, I sensed a shift in the wind. Walking through Faith United's doors, I was delighted to meet many recent arrivals. When we announced a new-member Sunday, I was genuinely shocked when 15 people came forward to join the church.

I now believe that the Spirit is reconstituting the church, and that the denominational transformation from large to small actually presents an opportunity. The church can finally write the new story it so desperately needs. We can experiment with all aspects of what it means to be a community of faith — and, yes, we can even attract new members.

But it's important to understand the people who are now joining our small churches, what they are looking for when they walk into church for the first time, and what we have to offer that they can't find within mainstream culture.

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Among the newcomers I've encountered at Faith United, some are young adults and some are older. Some come from other denominational backgrounds, and some have no church affiliation. Some are members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and some of those are refugees from Africa.

They are not looking for a church that is large and anonymous, and the denominational label of the United Church is largely irrelevant to them.

What they want is a church community where they can be seen and heard, develop relationships and quickly integrate into the life and work of the congregation. They want to understand and experience God in a community that lives out its faith in its actions, not just in its words.

What, then, do small churches offer that people cannot easily find elsewhere?

1. SMALL CHURCHES ARE COUNTERCULTURAL

Newcomers arrive at church seeking a way through the morass of our new realities. We are all experiencing an economic system that's designed to extract everything it can from us, while giving us precarious work, unaffordable housing and rising costs. We are facing forces that dehumanize, commodify and marginalize us. The belief that markets and privatization are the answer to most problems is so pervasive that we barely register it anymore, and yet it is as controlling as any authoritarian regime.

The church rejects this and says follow Jesus, who led people away from self-destructive and selfish behaviours —and transformed their lives because of it. For newcomers, the Gospels offer a fresh set of countercultural values. *Small churches provide them with the intimacy to explore the stories, ask questions,*

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and create intentional and meaningful values for their lives.

2. SMALL CHURCHES TREAT PEOPLE AS BELOVED MEMBERS OF A COMMUNITY

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Advertising and social media thrive by telling us we are not enough. For-profit companies will never assure you that you are loved and that you belong. The prevailing cultural message is that every individual is out for themselves and genuine community doesn't exist.

In a small church, you are seen, loved and accepted as you are. You are created, not in the image of TikTok or Instagram, but in the image of God. You are sacred and of great value to God and to the church community.

Those messages are powerful antidotes to the sense of isolation, loneliness and "not-enoughness" that are so much a part of our contemporary world. The small church carries you when you can't walk on your own, when life's blows are too much to bear.

3. SMALL CHURCHES TURN DESPAIR INTO REPAIR

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the size of the challenges we are facing: rising inequality, the climate crisis, war and genocide, to name just a few. What is now being termed the "polycrisis" can cause an all-encompassing sense of helplessness.

The small church offers an opportunity to reshape the world by taking tangible action on some of these issues. A small congregation may have a ministry with Indigenous Peoples working toward reconciliation, or with those struggling to make ends meet in a difficult economy, or with the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

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By participating in even small actions to help repair the world, we help to heal our own souls.

4. SMALL CHURCHES OFFER SACRED PRACTICES

Whenever we pray to God, we acknowledge that there is something beyond ourselves, and that we are both grateful and accountable to our Creator. We are reminded of the needs of others.

In a small church, communal prayer is more intimate because we know the people for whom we are praying. They are our friends and family, and we can see them in our mind's eye as we pray. Equally, those being prayed for in a small church have a greater sense of being enveloped by the love and care of a faith community that knows them well.

***Have you ever heard a
small congregation
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We also sing to God. Have you ever heard a small congregation belt out a hymn they know and love? It's so moving to listen to people with imperfect and very human voices singing their hearts out with real joy. The walls themselves reflect the generations who have sung in the same space, Sunday after Sunday. It will give you chills and bring tears to your eyes.

Where else, besides church, do people get to sing each week, without needing to perform? What a gift!

5. SMALL CHURCHES ARE RESILIENT

Small churches can be nimble, relational and creative. With fewer layers of bureaucracy, they can make decisions quickly and respond to the current needs of the congregation. Most small churches have a history of thriving, despite smaller numbers and financial challenges. They know how to adapt.

Rev. Daniel Reed is the associate director of mission, property and finance for the Toronto United Church Council. As a minister in his 30s, Reed has only ever known a declining denomination and so functions comfortably in a world of re-creation and innovation. In his role, he has worked with several small communities of faith he describes as "scrappy and innovative" and "doing really cool things?"

For example, Reed notes, Sprucedale (Ont.) United is tiny church that has created a community cafe. Mount Zion United in London, Ont., is erecting a new building for an EarlyON Centre, a provincial service for families with small children. And four churches in London, Ont., are employing three ministers as a new way to share leadership. "I am seeing churches prayerfully moving outside their comfort zone and letting themselves be open to both failure and transformation through the movement of the Spirit," Reed says. "In my work I see that resurrection is real?"

After decades of Good Fridays, the Easter hope for small churches may not be a return to former strength. It may be something humbler, but also more surprising: a willingness to loosen our grip on old models and discover new purpose by truly welcoming newcomers and letting their presence questions and gifts help shape what comes next.

Rev. Christopher White is a writer and minister in Hamilton.

INTERVIEW: REV. HEATHER McCANCE

LEADERSHIP

Sharing the Load

THE WAY WE HAVE church today, if you look at Jesus' time, they didn't really have any of these things," notes Atlantic School of Theology president Rev. Heather McCance. The Apostle Paul simply trained locals to do what was needed to lead communities. As membership numbers decline, McCance sees churches reverting to that apostolic way of being and becoming more decentralized and ecumenical. "The people who are still involved in churches really do want to be there," she says — and that can be a huge strength.

HERE ARE McCANCE'S 10 TIPS TO FILL THE LEADERSHIP GAP:

1. REFRAME YOUR MINDSET. Think of your church as apostolic and ask how it can respond to today's needs, rather than the traditional way of doing things.

2. LEAN INTO SHARED LEADERSHIP. Find each person's gifts and ensure nobody carries the responsibilities of the church alone. "Share in the tasks of ministry so everybody is cared for," she says.

3. EQUIP YOUR TEAM TO SUCCEED. "Churches are really good at asking people to do things but not giving them the training to do it," McCance says. Find relevant resources and leadership programs.

4. CREATE ONGOING SPIRITUAL STUDY. Spiritual development for the whole congregation bonds and strengthens the community "because they're renewing themselves together," McCance says.

5. BE PRAGMATIC. Adapting to changing circumstances is necessary for survival, so embrace new ideas and approaches, even if it's

uncomfortable. "God is excited for what we are able to do now," she says.

6. TARGET YOUR ENERGIES. "Understand that being realistic is not failing," McCance says. It's okay to do less. Successful churches know when to scale back offerings and programs according to the capacity of their members.

7. FIND LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS. "Start with, 'What do we have, and what do you have?'" she says. "That can mean sharing buildings, resources or leadership."

8. CREATE A PLAN FOR TURNOVER. When one person needs a break, another can step in. "God doesn't call us to burn ourselves out," McCance notes.

9. PLAN FOR SUCCESSION. A lack of succession planning means that "it lasts for five or 10 years and then it falls apart," McCance says. She urges congregations to continually cultivate leadership.

10. DON'T TRY TO DO IT ALONE. Support is available, whether it's from your regional council, ecumenical organizations or the broader community.

McCance remains hopeful: "Small churches will always find a way to be faithful to who God is calling them to be." —Ashely L. Crouch

Engaging Youth and Young Adults: A First Thirds Workshop

September 28th at 7pm - Join us on Zoom:
Register to receive the link

Youth and young adults (First Thirds) are a population that the United Church would like to see grow within our Communities of Faith. This past spring, our regional councils supported research to learn more about how best to engage them. Join Janet Cottreau for a two-hour workshop on September 28th at 7pm. This workshop will leave you with not only a new understanding of youth and young adults, but also a list of practical, easy-to-implement takeaways

for your Community of Faith to put into action this year. The goal of the workshop is to provide you with a toolbox filled with simple, achievable strategies, along with renewed motivation to welcome, connect with, and better engage First Thirds in your Community of Faith.

Janet Cottreau is a Camp Director and educator who has trained and worked with youth and young adults for thirty years. She brings extensive experience, practical insight, and a passion for creating meaningful connections with the next generation.

Click Here to Register

<https://eoorc.ca/registration-for-engaging-youth-and-young-adults-a-first-thirds-workshop/>

What Comes Next For Your Congregation?

This fall, we invite church boards, lay leaders, visioning committees and ministry personnel to a three-part webinar series designed for small and mid-sized congregations seeking clarity, shared purpose and a faithful way forward.

Session 1: Sept. 22 @ 7 pm

First Steps & Big Questions

Attending to your current reality — and the questions that are already emerging within it.

Session 2: Sept. 29 @ 7 pm

Building the Plan & Congregational Buy-In

Discerning direction together and learning how shared ownership takes shape.

Session 3: Oct. 9 @ 7pm

From Vision to Action

Turning clarity into practice and sustaining momentum over time.

Register:

<https://broadview.org/smallchurchwebinar/>