



2020 IN REVIEW

THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY



CHRISTIAN DIRECTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an incalculable impact on children, families, and communities, the effects of which will be seen for years to come. The pandemic has also left an indelible mark on the local church, with traumatic effects on Christians whose identity is founded on being “gathered together.” Through these great challenges, dedicated and praying partners of Christian Direction have volunteered, prayed, given generously, and collaborated with us. That commitment and compassion are the heart of Christian Direction.

THANK YOU!

We say thank you to all of those who have volunteered, prayed, given generously, and overall collaborated with us. *You* are making a difference in the lives of children, youth, their families, and their communities.



In 2020, Christian Direction journeyed through transition like never before. We saw the transition to new leadership, the challenges of a pandemic, and the departure of tenured employees with over 120 years of combined service with Christian Direction. It has been a journey through which we have gained—*an honest estimation of ourselves, an utter dependence of God, and a radical compassion for others.*

TIM KEENER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

Wilderness—a word in Scripture that immediately captures our imagination. The wilderness is both a beautiful and treacherous place. In the wilderness we have less control, and we are more vulnerable. AW Tozer wrote that, “every farmer knows the hunger of the wilderness,” and “the bias of nature is toward the wilderness, never toward the fruitful field.”

The wilderness is also a transitional space. We can learn a lot about ourselves

and about God as we pass through the wilderness. God liberated his people in Egypt, but he conformed them to his image in the desert. The Gospel of Mark begins with a voice in the wilderness that cries out, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.” Another translation of this might be, “*In the wilderness, the way of the Lord is prepared.*”

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wilderness journey for all of us. It has been deeply formative for our

team at Christian Direction, at times deconstructing us, and at times reshaping us for our mission. This wilderness has caused us to slow down, take inventory, and consider our work. In this report you will see echoes of this formative process for our team. In Isaiah, the voice of the Lord proclaims, **“I am making a way in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.”** We invite you into this journey with us, a journey towards yourself, towards God, and towards your neighbour.



GROWTH IN 2020

Among the challenges and changes in 2020, we saw some tremendous growth in 2020, including:

MINISTRY

1. *Innovation-Assistance* was launched in downtown Peter-McGill as an urgent response to food security needs during COVID-19.
2. *The Gang du jardin Entr'Ados (Garden Gang)*, our micro-enterprise gardening project, became a lifeline for youth in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, helping them cope with the new realities of the pandemic.
3. The West Island Network of churches launched the *Love Your Neighbour* campaign to build bridges and combat isolation.
4. We employed a dozen summer employees, each who received spiritual/missional training through our *Urban Labs* program.

ORGANIZATIONALLY

5. We created three new positions: a communication agent, and two community-based positions.
6. We completely revised our website and launched a new communication plan.
7. We grew in organizational agility as we shifted to working remotely and collaborating virtually.

RESOURCING THE CHURCH

8. We launched the *Preaching Peace* roundtable and grew our training portfolio for providing support to ministers and urban practitioners.
9. We developed resources for Christians that could be accessed online including *Urban Liturgies*, and the *Studies in Matthew* video series.



CHALLENGES AND LOSS IN 2020

We also experienced loss in 2020.

1. In early April, all of our ministries, in five locations and our downtown office, were closed because of COVID-19. By the fall, three were opened back up with new restrictions.
2. After 27 years, we closed the Centre Accroche in Ville Saint-Laurent.
3. We discontinued a community engagement ministry Laval/North Shore.
4. We said goodbye to five staff in all, including former director and chief advocate Glenn Smith and his wife Sandy, supervisor of our work in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve.
5. We experienced a decrease in donations as a result COVID-19.

This year has had its share of unexpected challenges, difficult decisions, and God-given opportunities. It has been a pleasure to witness the collaboration between Tim and the team as they faced these challenges together. Throughout the year, we have been kept well-informed of leadership reflection and decisions. The board fully endorses the ministry the team is doing under Tim's leadership.

We are thankful for all who have been able to support the mission of Christian Direction, whether it be through prayer, finances, or volunteering, and we are excited about the ongoing and the new aspects of ministry.

MARJORIE BERGEN
BOARD SECRETARY AND VICE-CHAIR



OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our desire is to see God transform urban communities by the concerted actions of committed Christians. Motivated by the love of Jesus Christ and his desire to reconcile the world to himself, our mission is to pursue the transformation of people, families and their communities in the cities of Québec.



WHO WE ARE

We are a community of urban practitioners committed to the whole Mission of God in our city and province. We partner with local congregations and social service agencies for the social and spiritual transformation of youth, families and their communities.

WHAT WE DO

We work to nurture the whole Mission of God in our communities, cities, and province.

God is at work, but what is he doing? He is putting a divided, broken world back together again. His work is the work of reconciling people to himself, and reconciling people to one another, and reconciling creation to its creator. As the People of God, we were meant to participate with God in this work of redeeming, reconciling, and renewing all things.

HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

ENGAGING LEADERS

We engage leaders with a shared commitment to our city.

We connect and engage those who share a commitment to the well-being of our city and its communities. We promote collaboration rather than isolation among local churches and community organizations. We help churches demonstrate their commitment to their communities and the challenges they face.

CAPACITY BUILDING

We strengthen the capacity of urban practitioners.

Gifted and committed practitioners are at the heart of urban transformation. We resource the head, heart, and hands of urban “missionaries” from all walks of life and in multiple vocations. We equip Christians to integrate their spiritual life into a lived theology, putting their faith into practice.

DEVELOPING INITIATIVES

We develop joint initiatives for change.

We foster the development of creative initiatives that will result in sustainable change. This involves facilitating partnerships and collaboration between partners committed to the wellbeing of neighbourhoods and their residents. We believe in the abundance of goodness and resources that already exist in our communities and seek to discover and make those resources available equitably.

INNOVATION YOUTH AND EVANGEL PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, PARTNERS FOR THE COMMUNITY

Evangel Pentecostal Church generously welcomed Innovation Youth to its premises in 2019, providing us a great location on the historic Cabot Square, near a major metro stop. In 2020, during COVID-19, Evangel has additionally allowed us to use a secondary building for our Innovation-Assistance food security program. Through this initiative 567 people (277 households) were served weekly through an effort involving four staff, 13 student workers, and 70 active volunteers!

Our team of five talented and dedicated employees, two associate staff, and dozens of volunteers also worked at developing new models of partnership with community partners, including the City of Montreal, the Peter-McGill Community Council, and the English School Board of Montreal.

Innovation Youth is a multi-faceted community development initiative in the downtown borough of Peter-McGill. It is creating community space for youth and families living in or frequently visiting downtown, opening up possibilities of integration into academic, family, and social life.



CONNECTIONS HELPING YOUTH ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

In 2020, during COVID-19, participants in our Connections program have been volunteering or working (with a stipend) at Innovation-Assistance, our food bank. **This new initiative has provided vital training, community engagement and employment for our youth, who normally face many challenges entering the workforce.** Normally, each day is split up between group conversation time, study time with support, practical workshops, and work/service opportunities. We also run an optional Alpha program after school hours for the participants, which is facilitated by a volunteer from a local church.

In 2020, we took a new approach with one of our Connections students. He is a wonderful young adult who has some learning difficulties. We put him in an intensive work-training program at our new food security initiative, supervised by a youth pastor. This student responded so well to this training that he has joined the janitorial team at Evangel Pentecostal Church, working one day a week as a bona fide employee. He now has skills and confidence that will enable him to enter adult life in an autonomous fashion and he has an experience of authentic Christian community.

Connections is an academic and personal development program for young adults who have not graduated from high school. Our participants attend Innovation Youth and work towards self-defined goals, with the support of our intervention worker and pastoral staff. For some that is furthering their education, for others it is acquiring life skills or professional development that will help them enter the workforce. The English Montreal School Board has given accreditation to our students, so they can obtain their full high school diploma with us.

URBAN AGRICULTURE, SOWING SEEDS OF TRANSFORMATION

In 2020, during COVID-19, youth working at the gardens gave their harvest to the food bank and helped distribute baskets. This was an unplanned but wonderful outcome, in which youth were meeting the needs of their neighbours. We also held farmers markets with fun themes.

One fellow pastor expressed it best, **“Green spaces and gardens are the love language of this neighbourhood.”** We have developed over 10,000 square feet of urban gardens and employed over 40 youth since the beginning of this initiative. We watch the gardeners grow as they tend and grow the garden! Urban gardening exposes people to a theology of food, creation care, sustainability, land use, and more. We are working now to extend our gardening season to a year-round program.

For the past six years, Innovation Youth has developed an expertise in urban agriculture. The impacts of this ministry are twofold. We are developing green spaces for residents in an urban sector badly lacking gardens and parks. In addition, it provides a secondary space for youth, children and parents to interact and engage in community life. We also employ marginalized youth to work in these gardens, giving them necessary training and support to help them grow their skills.



YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN HOCHELAGA-MAISONNEUVE

In 2020, during COVID-19, eight students participated in Choco-Hochma, our micro-enterprise (Financial Capability project). They set their own goals, opened bank accounts, and earned their own paychecks. Students develop social skills, customer service, teamwork, and money management.

Our Youth and Community Development initiatives in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve include programs and partnerships in that borough. Since 2009, we have partnered with Carrefour Parenfants, a local community centre, and in their space we operate Entr'Ados, an after-school program for students ages 12-17. Our team in this East-End borough has always been active in the broader community, partnering in the community round table.



LA GANG DU JARDIN ENTR'ADOS

In 2020, we were impressed by 14 of our youth from Entr'Ados who participated faithfully in our Gang du jardin all summer long. Even as our city largely went into shut down, our gardens opened, as this was outside, and considered an essential service. It became a lifeline for youth as they began coping to the realities of a pandemic.

We temporarily set up our garden in a beautiful private park on the property of a former convent, as we waited to take possession of our new rooftop garden. The students began with workshops to plan their gardens, then they got to work. The youth sold their vegetables and herbs and shared their profits based on the hours each student worked. They also created savings plans.



Not every youth took to the gardening project easily. In the fall of 2019, one of the participants had a very difficult start to secondary school. Entr'Ados became a lifeline for him. However, gardening didn't interest him one bit. One of our volunteers was a talented photographer who gave him a special mission: become the photo/video journalist for the garden. At our harvest celebration, he shared a moving video montage of the whole gardening season. **It was clear evidence of how powerful urban gardening is as a tool in motivating youth who have been paralysed throughout COVID-19.**

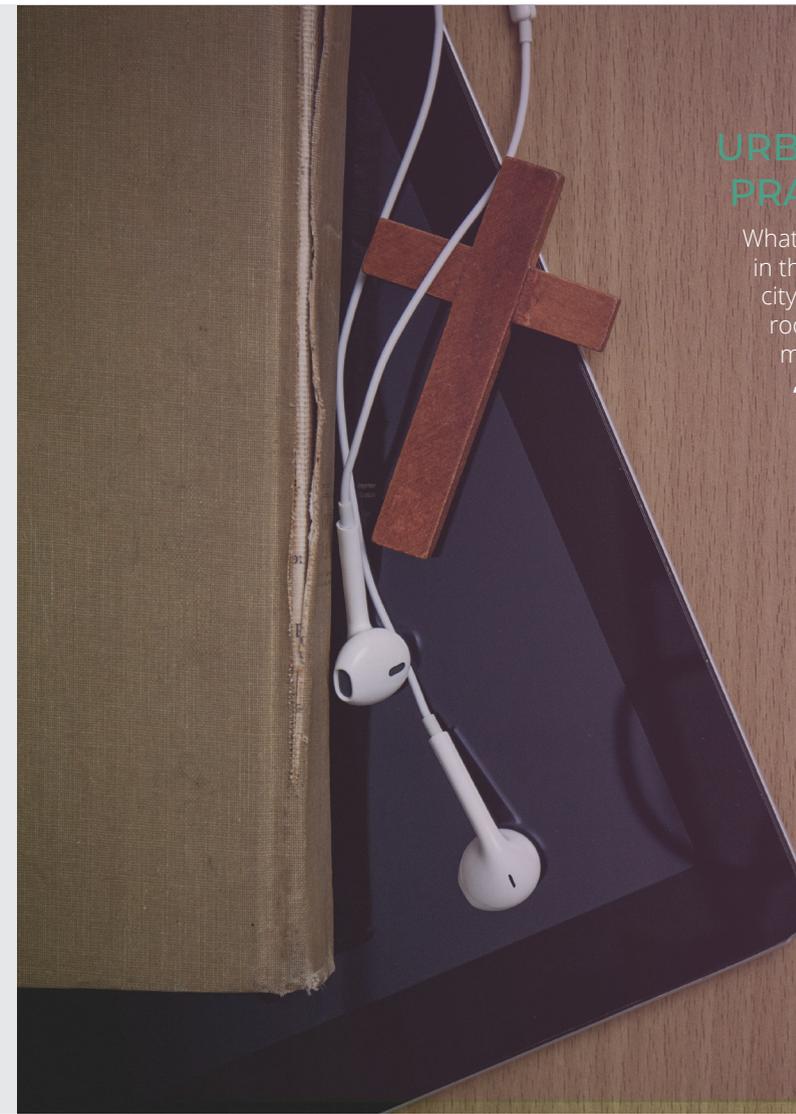
This year we are extending the program by growing seedlings in early spring and adding a food transformation component in the autumn. This allows the microenterprise to operate nearly year round.

URBAN LABS, FORMING URBAN PRACTITIONERS

What would it look like to see a new wave of Christians, formed in the image of Christ, engaging in God's mission around our city? This is the vision for our Urban Labs, a formative process rooted in a spiritual and theological framework for urban mission praxis.

"We are forming young adults to see the city with a new perspective so they can see abundance and peace where most people see sorrow." - Khrystelle Melé

The Urban Labs walks participants through a six-week training, consisting of weekly meetings and an online discussion platform. The formation uses the Incarnational Training Framework tool, and aims to empower young adults to become agents of change, and co-creators in the Mission of God.



PREACHING PEACE, A ROUND TABLE FOR URBAN PREACHERS

“How would we preach this passage for peace?”

This is the question around which a small group of urban preachers met weekly throughout 2020. Also empowered through our partnership with Street Psalms, Preaching Peace is an open format that begins with a communally written prayer, a reading of the week's Gospel, and conversation about how we would preach peace through the passage.

Preaching Peace is especially designed to help preachers fight isolation, and find support and inspiration in their ministry.



WEST ISLAND NETWORK, CHURCHES WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMUNITY

The West Island Network creates synergy among local churches to impact their communities. In 2020, the West Island Network developed innovative projects such as the Love Your Neighbour initiative, which helped break down isolation and mobilize Christians and churches to care for their neighbours. Ten churches participated in the Big Give in June, collecting food for four local food banks, providing 124 gift bags for seniors (in collaboration with Meals on Wheels). One church set up a bike clinic, repairing over 40 bikes.

The West Island Network also serves as a vital link to community services. The network partnered with the COVID-19 Community Food Program, and co-facilitated the Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion roundtable. The West Island Network convenes regular prayer meetings for church leaders, helping keep the well-being of the community at the centre of the Church's mission and ministry.

“The West Island Network is defined above all as a group of people who wear their heart on their sleeve and who put the development of their community beyond their beliefs and into practice.” - Community leader from the Table de quartier sud de l'Ouest-de-l'Île



PARTNERSHIPS

Our work nurturing the Mission of God is enhanced through several strategic partnerships. Notably, the Mission Montreal partnership with the Christian Reformed Church in North America empowers work in missional church engagement, young adult formation, and newcomer ministry. This creates opportunities for our staff to participate in communities of practice with other practitioners around North America. This unique relationship makes our partnership with Street Psalms possible as they provide tools for our Urban Labs.

Our partnership with Street Psalms has given us access to an international network of practitioners through the Urban Training Collaborative. Street Psalms has facilitated the Preaching Peace roundtable and shared valuable insight through their Incarnational Training Framework.

These partnerships provide a mutual learning relationship and promote interdependence in mission and ministry. We are grateful for these valued relationships!

RESOURCING THE MISSION

All that we do at Christian Direction is oriented towards a Gospel of reconciliation - God's justice, peace, and healing, for everyone. Your generosity makes a difference.

YOUR GIFT IS CULTIVATING THE MISSION OF GOD

My husband and I, we have been donors of Christian Direction since 2015 for two main reasons: We love the urban aspect of this Christian mission because it brings a focus on the city and its different elements, and it gives a dynamic, concrete, and inspiring quality to the mission.

PAULE-ANDRÉE KOFFI-KONAN
DONOR AND BOARD MEMBER

Since its inception in 2013, Arboplus shared the values of Christian Direction and supported its projects. Arboplus is an enterprise that takes care of trees. It, therefore, highly values Christian Direction's urban garden projects. These initiatives seek the reconciliation of our relationship with nature and with each other. They allow youth from poor neighbourhoods to experience peace and justice thanks to valued Christian workers. These adolescents learn to serve others and to invest in their neighbourhood.

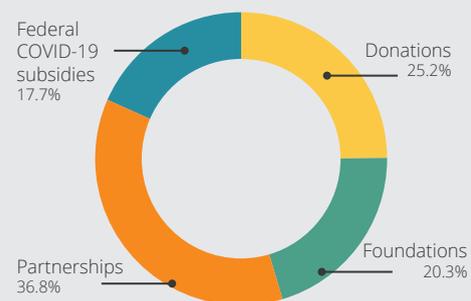
MICHAËL PINARD
DONOR AND FOUNDER OF ARBOPLUS

2020 FINANCIALS

In a year like no other, a few things stand out concerning our finances. First, like many other charities and non-profits, we qualified for government COVID-19 subsidies. This in turn helped us end the year in the positive and even pay off some long-standing debt. We have a unique opportunity to continue to operate debt-free, although the road ahead will not be easy. Christian Direction has no property or other substantial capital and we have seen an overall decrease in donations in 2020. Finally, we have seen our financial model shift towards growing local partnerships and community-based funding as individual donor support has decreased. We are glad to see the sustainability of these partnerships, but desire to bolster our individual donor support in a post-COVID context.

Revenue	\$1,321,237
Expenses	\$1,151,861
Net worth	\$169,376
Debt reduction	\$90,206
Total capital	\$79,170

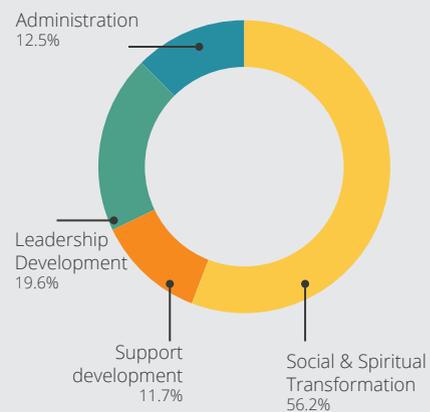
REVENUE



IN NUMBERS

Donors	512	Foundations	17
Churches/Organizations	52	Partnerships	34

EXPENSES



STAFF 2020

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