

THE MANY FACES OF BOLDNESS

Why Matthew Houses are flourishing



Matthew House Fort Erie

"Boldness is to be able to have courage and conviction to perform the duties that you are called to do, and to take risks in what you believe in even when it is not popular with those who are in authority. It is often [about] our faithfulness to God and [then] seeing God respond and provide above and beyond our imagination." ~ John Mtshede, executive director

Your faithful support of Baptist Women means you have invested in the lives of every family that's arrived on the doorstep of one of these Matthew Houses. Since the 1990s, Baptist Women has disbursed significant grants yearly to Matthew Houses across Ontario. In fact, your gifts helped the very first Matthew House to open in Toronto, and today, your donations ensure that these Matthew Houses continue their bold welcome.

by Tabitha Mui

Tabitha is an Uptick Baptist Women alumni and a recent MDiv graduate of Tyndale University and Seminary.



Matthew House Windsor

"Boldness is acting, by the power of the Holy Spirit, on an urgent conviction in the face of some opportunity, crisis, or need." ~ Rev. Mike Morency, executive director



Matthew House Ottawa

"Boldness is being willing to take risks, adapting and innovating as needed, and being courageous one step at a time (even while many are fearful)." ~ Allan Reesor-McDowell, executive director

In early fall, live magazine contributor Tabitha Mui filed this report on Matthew Houses in Ottawa, Windsor and Fort Erie.

THE PANDEMIC has forced the entire world to learn how to live in a state of uncertainty. During my interviews with Rev. Mike Morency from Matthew House Windsor, Allan Reesor-McDowell from Matthew House Ottawa, and John Mtshede from Matthew House Fort Erie, I realized that they and their residents have learned to live with uncertainty even before the pandemic began.

God's provision in the ordinary

When it comes to witnessing God's provision in the ordinary, Allan, John and Rev. Mike shared some of the stories of trust and provision that the residents at the different Matthew Houses have experienced.

For example, one time, no volunteers or staff were onsite so older and more experienced residents took the initiative to call the ambulance for a pregnant young female resident.

Even before he got his work permit, a father with three children and a pregnant wife knocked on the door of every employment agency in the area to secure a job he could start as soon as the permit was in hand (which he did).

Some of the female residents decided to pursue personal support worker certification so they could provide additional support in long-term care homes during the pandemic.

And over the years, residents have emerged as leaders in their Houses, for example ensuring that any refugees who arrive after hours are well-received. These residents are in a new country, adjusting to a new way of living and even so, they continue to make the decision to live boldly, trusting in God's provision while supporting each other and those in the wider community.

For the staff and volunteers at these different Matthew Houses, God's provision for the residents, and the resiliency that residents display inspire them to continue to do the work, especially during the pandemic.

God's provision in the unexpected

This season has not been easy for many non-profit organizations that rely on fundraising, but all three Matthew Houses made the bold decision to continue to invite their donors and the wider community to financially partner with them.

After a local CBC spotlight during the pandemic, Matthew House Windsor received over \$32,000 to support their operations. A business that was previously not a partner pre-pandemic made a donation of \$15,000. An older lady from a neighbouring town asked for someone to pick up a box of dishes and a cheque for \$1,000.

Financial donations like these offset the increased operational costs at the different Matthew Houses, and fuel their growth.

Matthew House Ottawa not only expanded their refugee services program during the pandemic, but also opened a second home with 14 additional beds on September 1. In August 2020, Matthew House Fort Erie had planned to launch the 32-unit dwelling built on the 0.6 acre of land they had purchased in 2019. Although they have decided to launch in August 2021 instead, leadership has put those funds towards their mortgage, so that the units may be built debt free.

The scale of these stories could hide the seed of truth at their core: these God-sized answers to prayer began with people taking a bold step forward to trust in God's provision regardless of the circumstances.

To live boldly requires a deep trust in God's provision every day—from finding a safe place to sleep in a new country to purchasing new houses. All these acts—grand and ordinary—are bold in the eyes of God. ■