

# 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR NEWS

THE MULTIFAITH HOUSING INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

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## TULIPATHON STARTS AT 2:30 PM SUNDAY



COMMISSIONERS PARK – The 2018 annual Tulipathon event is ready to roll this coming Sunday (May 27). Faith groups, MHI supporters, and volunteers are scheduled to gather at Commissioners Park across from Dow's Lake Pavilion to begin the 2-kilometre walking route at 2:30 pm. After two consecutive years of rain, the Tulipathon organizers decided this year to move the event to later in May, with hopes of having better weather. Again this year, faith groups are encouraged to create banners representing their congregations. Guest judges will award first, second, and third place to the top three most eye-catching banners.

For more information on how to fundraise, donate online, download a paper pledge form, volunteer, or support the event, visit MHI's online Tulipathon page at [www.multifaithhousing.ca/tulipathon](http://www.multifaithhousing.ca/tulipathon).

### IS MHI IN YOUR WILL? PLEASE LET US KNOW!

VANIER – If MHI is in your will or other estate plans, and you have yet to inform us, please take a moment and let us know. Even if you wish for your bequest to remain anonymous, it's important to give us a heads up so that we can ensure your gift will be used exactly as you intend, and plan accordingly on our end. In addition, we would appreciate if you could help inspire others with your story. Share with us your motivation behind leaving an important legacy that will continue to support affordable housing in Ottawa. For more information about making a planned gift or to share your story, please call 613-686-1825 or email [fund.development@multifaithhousing.ca](mailto:fund.development@multifaithhousing.ca).



*Rev. George Kwari (top) of St. Stephen's Anglican Church is the guest author of this newsletter's Faith Group Profile. St. Stephen's hosted a special homelessness awareness day on Sun., Apr. 22, which featured a guest sermon from MHI Community Outreach Manager Sahada Alolo (bottom right). Sahada shared the story of MHI with the congregation and revealed how individuals can get involved with the charity.*

## 'Church without walls' fully committed to social justice work, refugee issues

### **FAITH GROUP PROFILE: ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH**

by Rev. George Kwari

BAYSHORE – St. Stephen's Anglican Church, located at 930 Watson St., is proud to be affiliated with MHI and has been a member for some time. What excites us to be part of the Multifaith Housing Initiative is the invaluable work being done to provide housing to all people, regardless of origin. This speaks to St. Stephen's, a "church without walls," which maintains a focus on outreach work and is particularly interested in refugee issues. We currently sponsor a family under the banner of a group of churches in Ottawa West called Refugee Now. Recently, we received our new family of four from Colombia. We also help and support the local Food Banks in our area (namely, Foster Farm and Pinecrest Terrace Community) with funds and volunteers.

In addition, we collect food in our own food bank called Martha's Kitchen. Food from Martha's Kitchen is donated to the local food banks in our area. We support youth and wellness initiatives at Michelle Heights Centre and through the Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre Youth Programme. In our effort to fight homelessness, we adopted a room at Cornerstone Housing for Women. Cornerstone Housing for Women provides emergency shelter and safe, affordable, permanent housing for women in Ottawa. St. Stephen's Anglican Church is a multi-national congregation, which remains open to opportunities to serve the world that God loves. We are honored and happy to serve the city in our small ways through prayer, sharing the good news and acts of kindness.





**"As a pastor, I consider Multifaith Housing Initiative [to be] something that revives our conscience toward our charitable duties... MHI is uplifting religious groups."**

*Blake House tenant Ndusha Ruhune Freecare, pictured above, spearheaded charity initiatives for years in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia. He fully appreciates how much work it takes to start and maintain an organization like MHI.*

## Pentecostal pastor praises MHI's model

### **TENANT PROFILE: NDUSHA RUHUNE FREECARE**

VANIER – Pentecostal pastor Ndusha Ruhune Freecare is no stranger to humanitarian work. The Blake House tenant spent years spearheading community outreach initiatives in Africa, including a food and clothing program for prisoners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and a leadership training program in Zambia. That's why Ndusha was deeply moved after learning about MHI's ongoing efforts to end the affordable housing crisis in Ottawa. "I was so impressed," said the DRC native. "It is really an amazing initiative."

Ndusha entered Canada through the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program and obtained permanent resident status in November 2017. Like many newcomers to Canada, Ndusha struggled to secure suitable accommodation. More than 10,000 people are on Ottawa's centralized wait list for subsidized housing.

"It was challenging to find an affordable place," he said.

One of the worst aspects of apartment hunting was psychological, recounted Ndusha – the process became increasingly urgent as winter approached and temperatures began to drop. Ndusha had always been troubled to see street kids sleeping along the roadsides in DRC and Zambia. However, before arriving in Canada, Ndusha hadn't considered that homeless individuals in an industrialized nation could be worse off in some ways – people who are "sleeping rough" in Ottawa sometimes endure temperatures reaching minus 40 degrees Celsius. "The whole world is full of challenges and troubles," Ndusha observed. "I thought, 'If someone's homeless here, where can they spend the cold night?'"

Unlike many Ottawa residents who cannot find suitable housing, Ndusha did not have to move into an emergency shelter. After a couple of temporary living arrangements, Ndusha signed a lease with MHI in February.

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Ndusha also successfully secured a new spiritual home. Although he isn't performing pastoral duties, he has joined a congregation called the Worshippers Gathering, which hosts services at Bronson Centre.

Ndusha said he's deeply grateful to MHI for supporting tenants like himself. However, he also said it's important to recognize MHI for playing a role in uniting and motivating Ottawa's religious communities and reinvigorating congregations.

"As a pastor, I consider Multifaith Housing Initiative [to be] something that revives our conscience toward our charitable duties, as religious groups may easily forget that people out there are homeless," he said. "[MHI] is uplifting religious groups."

Ndusha said MHI should be commended for its work, and deserves broader support and more resources. Ideally, MHI's model could be rolled out across Canada, he suggested.

"I always believe in humanitarian activities being promoted," he said. "Everyone needs a place to call home."



## **HAPPENINGS AT THE HAVEN**

MHI's newest property, the Haven, was a busy place on Sun., Apr. 22 for Passover. Visitors and tenants made unleavened bread and learned about the history and traditions of the Jewish holy day under the supervision and guidance of Rabbi Menachem Blum (left) of the Ottawa Torah Centre.

MHI's newsletter, *First Floor News*, is published three times per year. For more information or to suggest a faith group, donor, tenant, or volunteer to be featured in the publication, email [office.admin@multifaithhousing.ca](mailto:office.admin@multifaithhousing.ca).