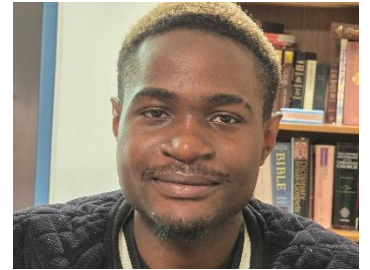


NEW MEMBERS' STORIES

June 15, 2025

EMILE

Emile is a young man who arrived from Cameroon in 2024 as a teenager. Through family contact he was able to find a safe haven at 101 Wilson. Emile's parents are both in the military and in a nation with ethnic conflict, Emile was kidnapped twice and held hostage. Fearing for his continued safety his parents supported his coming to Canada. Raised Roman Catholic, Emile has found a welcome and warmth at Armour Heights that has attracted him spiritually. Even as he is struggling to find his place in Canada and awaiting permanent residency so he can continue higher education, the church can provide one more space of stability and love for Emile, as well as the freedom to be who he is without discrimination.



ALEXANDER

Alex was born in southern Cameroon and raised in the Roman Catholic tradition where he was baptized and nurtured from early on. After studying medicine, Alex spent his life serving his people as a nurse in his local hospital with skill and compassion. Upon retirement he looked forward to rest, having built a home and settling in a peaceful community. But war soon broke out and his community became a battleground. To escape the escalating violence and threats to his life, Alex fled first to other parts of Cameroon, and eventually, made his



way as a refugee to Canada, seeking to heal many wounds incurred both physical and mental/spiritual. Having also been diagnosed with glaucoma and cataracts, and after unsuccessful surgery, he lost sight completely in one eye and retained limited vision in the other. Feeling deep despair and isolation he contemplated returning to Cameroon to face whatever fate awaited him there. But with the outreach of extended family here and a community of care, he also found his way to us at Armour Heights. The worship, music, sermons and love that he feels among us have moved

his heart and given him new hope and meaning for his life. He seeks membership as a significant step on his spiritual journey, and an expression of gratitude to God and our welcoming communion of faith here at Armour Heights.

JENNIFER

Jennifer has lived in North York for most of her life. She was baptized and professed her faith in the Christian Reformed Church. However, two years in St. Catharines for a master's degree brought her to Knox Presbyterian Church, where she encountered the Presbyterian tradition for the first time. Jennifer now works in healthcare research at St. Michael's Hospital in downtown Toronto. Since she began attending Armour Heights in person in June 2024, Jennifer has found a warm and welcoming community that is a blessing to be a part of! She is looking forward to getting to know everyone in the Armour Heights community better.



SETAREH KESHAVARZ

Setarah is a young woman born into a highly traditional religious family in Iran where women are made to submit completely to male authority and follow strict hijab requirements. She was also arranged to marry a cousin without any choice in the matter when she grew older. High school also included traumatic experiences of harassment, detention and continuing threats. In the meantime, Setarah was inspired to protest along with other women, but this continued to come at a cost with conflict in her family and mental stress within herself. Having come to Canada for a visit and fearing her return would force her into an unwanted marriage and further gender oppression, she has sought asylum in Canada. While here she also discovered Christianity through a friend and was also guided to come to Armour Heights where she has found welcome and community. Even as Setarah works many a Sunday, participating in worship and fellowship at AHPC is an oasis of freedom and peace. She is deeply grateful to become a member of the body of Christ here through baptism.



SHERVIN, MALIHEH, HOSSEIN, ASHKAN

(left to right)

Hossein, Maliheh, and their children Ashkan and Shervin, are also new to Canada and from Iran. While there are various versions of Islam in Iran, and some more progressive and, therefore, more under fire by a religiously conservative regime, Hossein and Maliheh found Islam inadequate for their spiritual journeys. Both have been involved in work, school and protests in Iran which make them suspect and threatened should they ever return. Trying to raise their children in a secular way back in Iran also became a hardship. On a trip to Armenia for a covid-19 vaccine and after a visit to a monastery there, Hossein had a deeply religious experience where he met Christ. Since then the family sought out underground Christian community in Iran which itself was dangerous. Eventually this became unsustainable. Here now in Canada they are seeking a life of freedom to be, to believe and to raise their children free to have their own voice and embrace faith for themselves. All four are seeking baptism into the body of Christ and have felt welcome and embraced by the love they have experienced at AHPC.

