



**mission canada**  
BECAUSE WE MUST  
PARCE QUE NOUS DEVONS

walking an  
**EMMAUS ROAD**  
journey with  
**BUDDHISTS** IN CANADA





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## walking an EMMAUS ROAD journey with BUDDHISTS in Canada©

has been produced by **The PAOC's Mission Canada Cultural Ministries Priority** to highlight the need for befriending and reaching cross-culturally in our nation. It is produced with the profound *agape*' love of Christ that motivates us to follow Jesus and be obedient to His command, "...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth," Acts 1:8 (ESV). And we're motivated to take Emmaus Road journeys with those searching in the same way Jesus did in Luke 24, opening Scripture with compassion and grace explaining in all the Scriptures concerning Jesus so that their hearts burn within them!



## Neighbours & Newcomers Network

is the ministry group within Mission Canada for those working in culturally sensitive areas wherein a protected online identity is advantageous not only for the worker but even more for those we are working with. **Neighbours & Newcomers Network (NNNetwork)** workers reach cross-culturally into the missional gaps in our nation of first-generation newcomers to Canada along with the following second and third generations. We deploy workers into the midst of our culturally diverse communities throughout Canada, reaching in religious groups who will otherwise not seek spiritual guidance from a local church. We seek to go be among, full of grace and truth, just like Jesus. **Scan this QR code to learn more:**



WHO IS NNNETWORK?

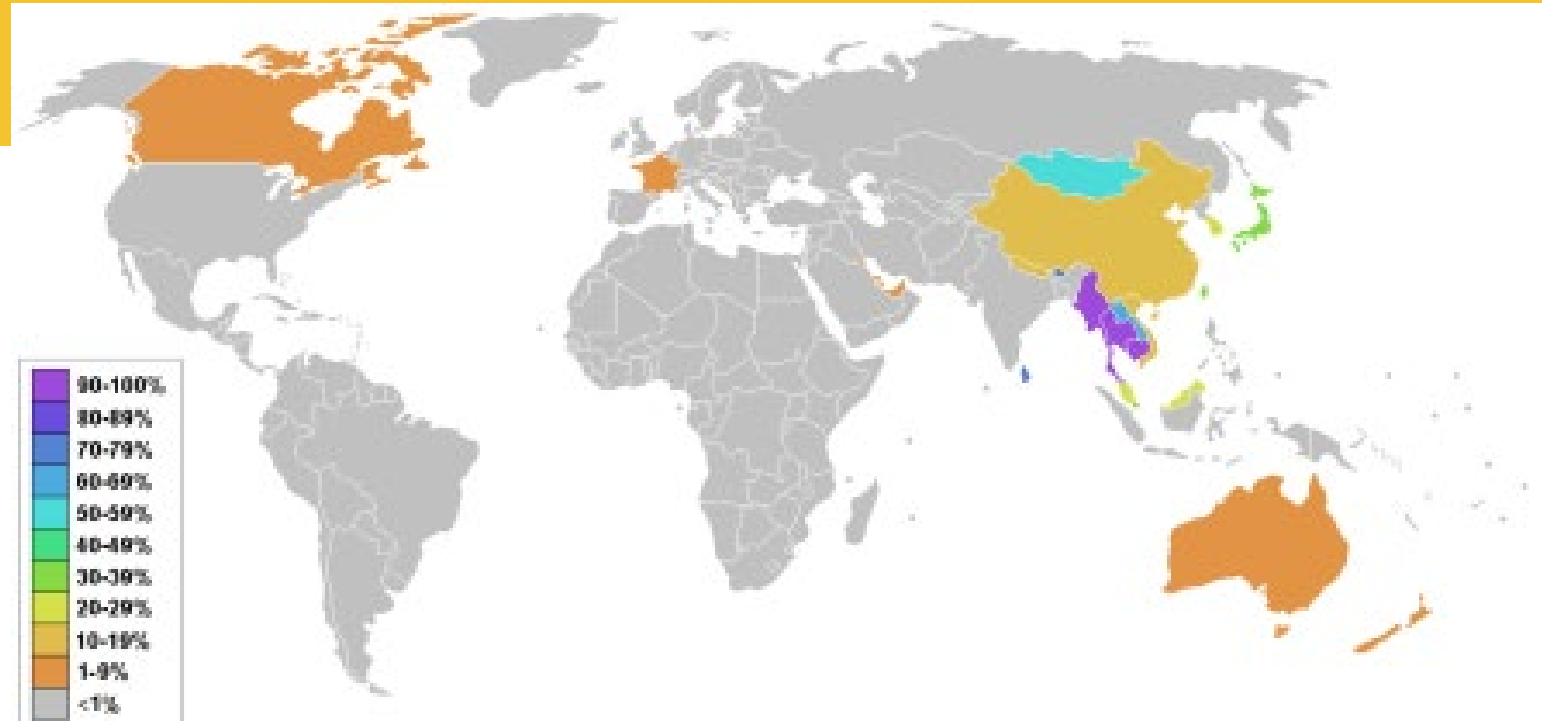
# BUDDHISTS

## FAST FACTS

**FOUNDING:** Founded in NE India (now Nepal) around the 5th–6th century BCE by Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha (“the Awakened One”).

**HOLY TEXTS:** . The earliest core texts are the Pāli Canon (Tipiṭaka/Tripitaka), written down in the 1<sup>st</sup> C. BCE from oral traditions from the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> C. BCE. Additional Mahayana sutras are from the 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> C. CE.

**THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE:** Central contention is that life is marked by dukkha (suffering, unsatisfactoriness), caused by craving, attachment, and ignorance. These are summarized in the Four Noble Truths, and addressed by the Noble Eightfold Path. Other key ideas include: karma, rebirth, and impermanence, the not-self, and no permanent soul.



## WHERE THEY LIVE - Worldwide & Canada:

Buddhists, at 325M (million) worldwide, represent just over 4% of the world’s population. And 98% of Buddhists live in Pacific Asia, with Thailand (68M), China (53M), Myanmar (38M) and Japan (36M) being the top four, followed by Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Cambodia (14M each), South Korean (11M), India (10M), and Malaysia (6M) completing the top 10. In the West, the US with 4.2M Buddhist outnumbers all of Europe combined, followed by Russia at 1M.

# MAJOR BELIEFS

Buddhism centers on understanding and overcoming suffering rather than on belief in a creator god.

**The Four Noble Truths:** These are the basic diagnosis and solution to human suffering (dukkha).

- **Life involves suffering:** Physical and emotional pain, dissatisfaction, and stress are part of ordinary life.
- **Suffering has a cause:** Craving, attachment, and ignorance keep people stuck in cycles of dissatisfaction.
- **Suffering can end:** It is possible to attain a state free from these causes, called nirvana or liberation.
- **There is a path to end suffering: *The Noble Eightfold Path*** shows how to live ethically, train the mind, and develop wisdom.

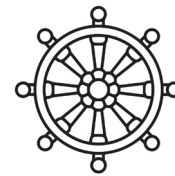
**Three Marks of Existence:** These describe the basic nature of all phenomena – the **Impermanence (anicca)** of all things; **Suffering or unsatisfactoriness (dukkha)**; Because things are unstable, clinging to them leads to dissatisfaction; and the **Non-self (anattā)**: There is no fixed, permanent “soul” or self.

**Karma** and **Rebirth** explain how actions shape future experiences: **Karma** is the consequences of our intentional actions (physical, verbal, mental) that affect one’s present

and future states. **Rebirth (samsara):** Beings are reborn repeatedly in different realms of existence until liberation (nirvana) is attained.

**Nirvana** and **Enlightenment:** These are the ultimate goals of Buddhist practice. **Nirvana** is the extinguishing of ignorance, craving, and suffering, leading to peace and freedom from the cycle of rebirth. **Enlightenment (Buddhahood):** A fully awakened state characterized by perfect wisdom, compassion, and freedom from defilements. These beliefs are shared *in different forms* across major Buddhist traditions (Theravāda, Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna), though emphasis and practices will vary.

## COMMON SYMBOLS:



**Dharmachakra** – one of the most common symbols of Buddhism, this wheel (chakra) represents both the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.



**Lotus** – this flower grows in muddy water but blooms clean—an analogy symbolizing purity, spiritual awakening and enlightenment.



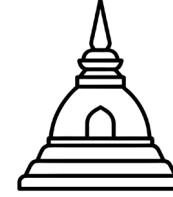
**Buddha** – this image in the meditating pose represents the historical Buddha and the ideal of enlightenment.



**Bodhi tree** – under which Siddhartha sat meditating and achieved enlightenment, becoming the Buddha – the Enlightened One.



**Endless Knot** – symbolizing interconnectedness, karma, and the eternal cycle of life.



**Stupa** – a domed monument containing relics and representing the Buddha's enlightened mind and the path to awakening.

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## ENLIGHTENMENT

**The goal of Buddhism** is the elimination of suffering by achieving **enlightenment** through the practice of the **Noble Eightfold Path**. This is Buddhism's practical guide for ending suffering, usually grouped into three parts: wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental discipline for living ethically, training the mind and developing wisdom.

### WISDOM:

**Right View:** Understanding reality clearly, especially the Four Noble Truths, impermanence, and how attachment leads to suffering. In practice, this means reflecting on experience honestly and trying to see things as they are rather than as you wish they were.

**Right Intention:** Choosing motives based on renunciation, kindness, and non-harm instead of greed, anger, or cruelty. In practice, this means checking your purpose before acting and trying to cultivate generous, compassionate aims.

### ETHICAL CONDUCT:

**Right Speech:** Speaking truthfully, gently, and helpfully, while avoiding lying, harsh speech, gossip, and divisive speech. In practice, this means pausing before speaking and asking whether your words are true, useful, and kind.

**Right Action:** Acting in ways that avoid harm through non-violence, honesty, and respect for life. In practice, this means behaving ethically in daily life, such as being fair, not stealing, and avoiding harmful conduct.

# ENLIGHTENMENT, cont'd

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**Right Livelihood:** Earning a living in a way that does not harm others. In practice, this means choosing work that supports wellbeing rather than jobs that depend on deception, exploitation, or injury.

## **MENTAL DISCIPLINE:**

**Right Effort:** Developing and maintaining wholesome states of mind while reducing unwholesome ones. In practice, this means noticing harmful habits early and deliberately cultivating patience, generosity, and calm.

**Right Mindfulness:** Paying clear, steady attention to body, feelings, thoughts, and surroundings in the present moment. In practice, this often means mindfulness meditation and bringing awareness into ordinary activities like walking, eating, or breathing.

**Right Concentration:** Training the mind to become deeply focused and stable, usually through meditation. In practice, this means sustained attention on one object, such as the breath, until the mind becomes calm and unified.

## **How the NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH it is practiced:**

The path is not usually treated as eight separate chores done one at a time; it is a connected system where each part supports the others. Ethical behavior makes meditation easier, meditation strengthens wisdom, and wisdom improves ethical choices.

## **A simple way to practice it in daily life, for a Buddhist, is:**

- Reflect on your view and intentions in the morning.
- Speak and act carefully during the day.
- Choose work and habits that reduce harm.
- Set aside time for mindfulness and concentration practice, such as breath meditation.



# A COMPARISON OF THEOLOGY AND PRACTICES

ASPECT	BUDDHIST EIGHTFOLD PATH	CHRISTIAN PARALLEL OR CONTRAST
Right View	Understanding the Four Noble Truths, impermanence, and the causes of suffering.	“Right understanding” as faith in the gospel: sin, Christ as Savior, and salvation by grace through faith; Scripture as final authority.
Right Intention	Cultivating intentions of renunciation, goodwill, and non-harm instead of greed or ill-will.	“Pure heart” and right motive: love for God and neighbor, motivated by grace and Spirit-led desire (e.g., Matt. 22:37–40).
Right Speech	Avoiding lying, harsh words, gossip, and divisive talk; speaking truthfully and kindly.	“Edifying speech” that builds up, avoids slander, and glorifies God (e.g., Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6).
Right Action	Acting non-violently, honestly, and with restraint; avoiding harm to others.	Ethical living in obedience to God’s commands (e.g., the Ten Commandments, Sermon on the Mount; Rom. 12–13).
Right Livelihood	Earning a living without causing harm (e.g., avoiding deceit, weapons trade, exploitation).	“God-honoring work:” Working “as unto the Lord” in ways that serve others and avoid injustice (Col. 3:23; cf. also Proverbs).
Right Effort	Guarding the mind, abandoning unwholesome states, and cultivating wholesome ones.	“Spiritual discipline of holiness:” Putting off the “old self” / putting on the “new self” by the Spirit (Rom. 12:1–2; Phil. 3:12–14).
Right Mindfulness	Continuous, non-judgmental awareness of body, feelings, and mind in the present moment.	“Watchfulness” of spirit: Guarding the heart and mind, avoiding temptation, seeking God’s presence (Matt. 26:41; 1 Pet. 1:13).
Right Concentration	Training the mind to become deeply focused and stable through meditation.	Contemplative prayer on God’s Word: focusing the mind on God, Scripture, and prayer rather than on self-dissolution.

While the above chart provides Christian parallel beliefs and practices to Buddhist theology and praxis, what it doesn’t show is that the end destination for each is entirely different. **Make no mistake though! We can utilize the above parallels to build bridges of understanding with our Buddhist friends**, appreciating in their religious interest and efforts a recognition that all is not right with us and the world, and the desire to address this imbalance. *The end goal of Buddhism is, however...*

## SALVATION?



## NIRVANA & ENLIGHTENMENT vs. SALVATION & HEAVEN



***The end goal of Buddhism is, however, is quite different than salvation and heaven:***

For Buddhists, **enlightenment** – a fully awakened state characterized by perfect wisdom, compassion, and freedom from defilements – is the path to reaching **nirvana** - the extinguishing of ignorance, craving, and suffering, leading to peace and freedom from the cycle of rebirth.

On the surface it might sound nice to get rid of all those things, but that’s not “heaven.” Rather, Buddhists believe in the **anatta**, the “**no-self**,” that what we perceive as our “self” is an illusion. Thus, upon attaining enlightenment and entering nirvana after death, the “no-self” is simply not reborn yet again; there is no rebirth. As such, what which never was is no longer, and thus freed from the suffering of this world: The liberated person does not take birth again in any world; at death, they enter **parinirvana**, the final cessation (nothingness).

**Eternal state:** Buddhist labour lifelong through their own actions to achieve release into nothingness.



***Salvation, the ultimate goal of our faith and how it is accomplished, is entirely different:***

The good news of Jesus is that we’re freed from fruitless deeds, because we cannot produce self-righteousness earning our own salvation. Rather, **salvation is by grace, the free gift of God**. We do righteous deeds, but they are not to try and earn our salvation nor save ourselves, but rather we do them as a result of our salvation, to worship the Father and the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and let our light shine before others so that they, too, may see and glorify our Father in heaven (cf. Eph. 2:8-10, Matt. 5:16).

**Our eternal state:** The Christ-follower joins God, all believers and angelic beings in a new heaven and new earth for eternity. Rather than passing into nothingness, we are perfected and enjoy God’s – and others’ – presence forever.

# Walking an EMMAUS ROAD Journey with Buddhists:

Believers in Jesus can engage Buddhists through simple practices with profound impact. These are culturally relevant by being genuine, low/no pressure, life-sharing and loving:

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:

Find common ground between their beliefs and practices and ours. Appreciate their moral discipline, striving for peace and to detach from selfishness. Listen before sharing. Seek to understand their story, background, their beliefs and why they believe them.

## CULTURAL LEARNING:

Buddhist cultures are often ancient with a rich heritage. If they are newcomers or have a recent immigrant personal history, ask them and learn on your own of their national and ethnic background. The more you know, the more you can understand, appreciate and adapt.

## SHARE COMPASSIONATELY, PATIENTLY:

First, pray. Depend on the Holy Spirit rather than persuasive techniques or high-pressure apologetics. Listen deeply and respectfully, and then when sharing, use relational, story-based sharing such as parables and the testimony of your own faith journey.

Explain concepts patiently avoiding theological jargon. Emphasize God's love, grace, forgiveness, and personal relationship, even though this will challenge their Buddhist beliefs. Let' the Holy Spirit use your witness and words. Highlight Jesus as a compassionate teacher who goes beyond self-effort to offer salvation. Emphasize hope and joy over fear and guilt.

Common pitfalls to avoid: Don't criticize or mock Buddhist beliefs. Don't argue philosophy—keep focus on Jesus. Don't assume all Buddhists think alike as there are many versions and variations. Don't push toward conversion; relationships and the Holy Spirit's work takes time.

Remember: Buddhists come from countries and ethnicities worldwide!



## And, most of all, PRAYER!



Join us in prayer for Buddhists and all newcomers to Canada, fulfilling the Father’s Heart and Jesus’ statement, “*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all [ethnos = nations, peoples, ethnicities],*” Mark 11:17, Isaiah 56:7 (ESV). Salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit, and both prayer and witness are our responsibilities to His commissioning of each of us as His imitators.

## 8 Intercessory prayer points for BUDDHISTS according to their beliefs, plus 1 more!

# 1

**Buddhist belief 1: Buddhism teaches that the world is ultimately a delusion**—a projection of the mind—so that nothing exists independently outside of it. According to the Buddha, all definite things are illusory; they have no inherent reality and are comparable to a heat haze.

**Christian belief:** Christians, by contrast, believe that while no one has seen God, “*the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*” (John 1:18). Scripture teaches that all things were created through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being (John 1:3); therefore, creation is not an illusion but a real act of God.

**Let us pray that Buddhists would receive a revelation of Jesus Christ**—the One who truly became human and dwelt among us—and that every spiritual barrier would be removed from the eyes of their hearts so they may see this truth.

# 2

**Buddhist belief 2:** In Buddhism, the Eightfold Path outlines the way to spiritual progress: right vision, right intention, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation.

**Christian belief:** Christianity, however, is not primarily a philosophical system of principles but a living relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Right living flows from this relationship. Jesus said, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6–7), emphasizing that salvation is found in Him alone.

**Let us pray that Buddhists would come to understand what truly satisfies the human soul**, that a deep hunger and thirst for truth would arise in their hearts, and that they would have opportunities to hear about Jesus as the one and only path to salvation.

# 3

**Buddhist belief 3:** Buddhism teaches that the material world and the individual self are ultimately impermanent and illusory. The self is seen as the root of suffering and must be extinguished for liberation from all suffering.

**Christian belief:** Christianity teaches that each person is created with purpose and eternal value. God foreknew, called, justified, and will glorify His people (Rom. 8:29–30). Believers remain distinct individuals within the body of Christ, and it is Jesus—through His sacrifice—who bore the suffering of the world, not human self-effort.

**Let us pray that Buddhists would seek the true purpose of their lives,** encounter God as their Creator, and have their eyes opened to the truth of Jesus Christ as their Saviour.



# 5

**Buddhist belief 5:** Buddhism teaches that in Nirvana all sense perceptions cease, and one is freed from the elements that make up human experience.

**Christian belief:** Christianity teaches that salvation is not achieved by human effort but through Jesus Christ, who has already overcome the world. In Him, believers can have peace amid suffering because He has conquered its power (John 16:33).

**Let us pray that** Buddhists would recognize these tensions, begin seeking the living God, and be led by the Father to Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

# 4

**Buddhist belief 4:** Buddhism teaches reincarnation—the cycle of being reborn after death—and karma, the accumulation of a person’s actions across past, present, and future lives.

**Christian belief:** Christianity teaches that people live once, then face judgment (Heb. 9:27). Through His death on the cross, Jesus bore the full weight of our sin, offering forgiveness and eternal life as a gift of grace, not something earned by our works (Eph. 2:4–5).

**Let us pray that Buddhists would receive a revelation of God’s love,** come to understand the mystery of grace, and recognize that redemption has been accomplished through Christ and is received simply by faith.

# 6

**Buddhist belief 6:** Buddhism teaches that reality should be interpreted through a Buddhist perspective, often viewing belief in a personal God and biblical morality as mistaken. Early Buddhism was largely non-theistic, though later forms included belief in many gods.

**Christian belief:** Christianity teaches that the living God reveals Himself through His Spirit, His Word, and a personal relationship with His people. Christian morality flows from Christ’s command to love others, and believers trust in one God as their refuge and security.

**Let us pray that Buddhists would be open** to examining Christian beliefs and that God would grant them a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17) to understand the hope found in Jesus Christ.

# 7

**Buddhist belief 7:** Buddhism teaches reincarnation—that after death a person is reborn according to their actions, possibly as another human, an animal, or ultimately reaching Nirvana. Yet as Buddhism denies a permanent soul, it is unclear what exactly continues from one life to the next.

**Christian belief:** Christianity teaches that each person lives once, then faces judgment (Hebrews 9:27–28). Christ was sacrificed once to take away sin and will return to bring salvation to those who trust in Him. He alone is the way to the Father.

**Let us pray that Buddhists would come to know the assurance of salvation** in this life and the next and gain a deep understanding of God’s promise in John 3:16—that whoever believes in His Son will not perish but have eternal life.

# 8

**Buddhist belief 4:** Buddhism is hard to define. Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) was a man seeking spiritual enlightenment apart from divine revelation, aiming to address human suffering. His exact words were never recorded, so what survives may reflect his disciples’ teachings centuries later rather than his original message.

**Christianity:** The Bible is uniquely reliable, with numerous manuscripts confirming earlier texts and historical events, making it more thoroughly verified than any other religious writing (see Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell).

**Let us pray that Buddhists’ search for truth** will lead them to the perfect law of the Lord, which revives the soul, guides the heart, gives joy, and endures forever (Psalm 19:7–9).

# 9

**Most Buddhists in the world (80-90%) have never met a Christian.** In Canada, that doesn’t have to be the case. God has brought Buddhist immigrants to Canada for His purpose – to encounter Him, through us (cf. Acts 17:26-27).

**Christ’s command:** *“The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out...”* Luke 10:2 ESV.

**Let us pray for ourselves, all pastors, churches, and believers in Canada** will answer the Father’s call to go out as His labourers, intentionally befriending Buddhists in Canada, lovingly and patiently walking an Emmaus Road journey with them, sharing in both word and deed the liberating love and truth of Jesus Christ! Amen.



# An Emmaus Road Story

Lien was angry at God. And this was doubly problematic for her as a Buddhist, since they're not to believe in a personal – or even impersonal – God at all. But she was mad. And she needed to be mad at someone. She wanted to tell God off!

Lien had been blessed with five children, but only one was a girl. They were close. But now her girl was gone.

A couple years ago Lien's daughter, Mei, and friends when on vacation together. They were having a good time drinking and partying. And then were in a car accident. Mei died. And Lien felt that void every single day.

Why would karma have taken her away? Were they really so bad in some previous life to have deserved this? Surely there must be someone to blame, or someone to appeal to, to make responsible, for this tragedy.

Now elderly and in a care home, Lien is left with her anger and bitterness. Therapy and books didn't help. Yet she was not forgotten by the true God of Heaven who loves her. One of her care home neighbours asked a local pastor to come in and visit. These visits grew, became regular, and they started an Alpha course. Lien came because she wanted to find some way to aim her anger at God and tell him off for taking her daughter!

The pastor repeatedly shared with her from Job's story, how all our days are numbered, and the answer is to release her pain, let go, and receive peace and healing. After some time the pastor overheard Lien encouraging another resident to pray, release it all to God, receive forgiveness, healing and peace in Jesus Christ!

Lien has placed her faith in Jesus, the God who loves her, and is now looking forward to being water baptized.

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Lien (a pseudonym for her in this real Canadian story) is an example of a small but growing number of Buddhist background believers in Jesus in Canada. Buddhists come to faith because a Christian individual, couple or even local church body have graciously, patiently walked an Emmaus Road Journey with them.

**Will you walk this road by the leading of the Holy Spirit with Buddhists in your life?**



## Thank you for agreeing in prayer!

Jesus grants us this powerful promise: *“...if any of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven,”* Matthew 18:19 (ESV). **Amazing!**

We invite and encourage you to continue using these prayer points all year long. And share them with friends, too. **To share this Emmaus Road Journey with others, direct your friends here:**



EMMAUS ROAD JOURNEYS

## Want to know more about how to better reach cross-culturally right here in Canada?

That's what Mission Canada is here for. Contact us at: [missioncanada@paoc.org](mailto:missioncanada@paoc.org)



## Is God calling **YOU** to cross-cultural outreach in Canada?

Mission Canada deploys those called of God as workers to be His witnesses in the gaps of Canada. Our five missional gaps in Canada are: **Cultural, Urban, Indigenous, Francophone & Quebec,** and **NextGen (Campus, Youth and Children)**. To learn more about our missional work in Canada and what it takes to become a deployed worker with Mission Canada, scan this QR code.

**We look forward to engaging with you!**



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