

May 6, 2022



Dear Larry Scott,

"...remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'"
- Acts 20:35

On behalf of everyone at Our Place, I would like to take this time to say a heartfelt thank you to all of you at First Metropolitan United Church. You've put your faith into action through your generosity and support over our past fiscal year ending March 31st. Your donations are vital in supporting our "family members" who often carry the trauma of abandonment and rejection as we work with them to develop a sense of hope and belonging. Thanks in part to you, our family members can receive three nourishing meals a day, enjoy a hot shower, receive toiletries and clothing, and have access to shelter and outreach supports.

Furthermore, your generosity and support has enabled the Spiritual Care program to expand over the last six months beyond Pandora's downtown drop-in to provide care across eight sites, including housing and shelters, New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community, and:

- A team of 15 caring community volunteers have been recruited to offer Spiritual Care at our housing and shelter sites.
- Monthly we have an average of 35 private sessions, and 200 Spiritual Care program participants.
- An Indigenous Elder offers cleansing smudge weekly, as well as Indigenous ceremonies on occasion.
- Memorial services are held to honour the lives of family members that have passed.
- There is a weekly Bible Study, Spiritual Discussion Group, and an Intensive Journal Workshop, providing opportunities for reflection and healing.

Please find attached a report about some of the impact that donor generosity has had recently at Our Place. We encourage you to pin the report on a bulletin board or share it with your leadership and groups to help spread the word of the essential work that you are helping make possible. You may find it helpful to review and circulate our programs, financials, newsletters, and videos that are listed on our website at www.ourplacesociety.com or our Facebook posts. We will send an e-copy so you can forward it if you prefer.

To learn more about how your faith is alive through support of Our Place, and to learn how we can work together, I would love to connect! Please call me at 250-388-7112 ext 237, or send me an email at mariag@ourplacesociety.com. Since many in-person services have resumed, I would also like to offer you a chance to book CEO Julian Daly, myself or a member of Our Place's Spiritual Care team to address topics in-person that may be of interest to your congregation. Should you have any questions, please reach out anytime. I look forward to hearing from you!

With gratitude,



Maria Green (she/her), Manager of Spiritual Care



ourplace

Hope and Belonging

nourish

change • community • dignity • hope



Clockwise from top left: Our WorkPlace training at 1627 Quadra; Meal service at 919 Pandora; Dandelion street outreach workers, Kim and Kai; New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community; "HandUp" program worker powerwashing outside the downtown drop-in. Special thanks to volunteer Dominic Hall Photography.

Thank you, Circle of Love Monthly Donors!

Because of you, nutritious meals, hot coffees, hot showers, hygiene supplies, clean clothes and medical care are there for Victoria's most hurting, vulnerable people when they walk through the doors seeking support at the Our Place downtown Drop-in Centre. But when folks get inside, they discover that there's a community that nourishes, shelters and heals. As people begin to open up and trust us, they can begin to walk a path toward a better life. Kind, compassionate, and dedicated donors like you make this **Circle of Love** possible, and we are truly grateful. Here are a few examples of how your donations come to life at Our Place.

Our Place outreach workers nourish hope and encourage change



Outreach workers like Nina bring smiles and kind, listening ears to the folks we serve each day.

It's 6:30am inside 919 Pandora, and the aroma of breakfast cooking and coffee brewing are coming from the Our Place kitchen.

"As soon as we get there in the morning, we start by making it as warm and inviting as possible for everyone," says Nina, an Addictions Outreach Worker who has been working at Pandora for over a year. "This is our family members' first point of contact each day and we're there for them as soon as we open the doors."

Once basic needs are addressed, outreach workers can focus on connecting with our family members in deeper, more meaningful ways. "Whether it's helping to

make a phone call, or being there if they need to sit and cry with someone for an hour, or if they need to figure out how to find housing, or where to go for addiction support – it's all about being there for whatever that family member needs right then," says Nina.

"Some people come to us for togetherness and some people come to us in pure survival mode. We meet them right where they are in that moment and try to provide the care they need, whatever that may be."

Along with providing social support through things like art programs, bingo and knitting, outreach workers at Our Place provide critical life-saving roles as frontline workers and responders to medical emergencies, among many other things. Adds Nina, "We do a 'block walk' several times a day, where we walk the neighbourhood around 919 Pandora looking for people at risk of overdose, or who are in medical distress. Then we can radio Our Place paramedics for help right away."

Our Place outreach workers also provide much-needed assistance – not just on Pandora. "We're case workers as well for some family members. We drive clients to doctor's appointments, to detox, to get medications, or whatever the case may be. I've even dropped off a few of the Tenant Starter Kits that some of our amazing donors have put together as people get back on their feet and start to find housing. Watching the looks on their faces as they start their lives fresh again. If that isn't about nourishing hope in our family members, I don't know what is."

Your Impact

Our Place offers food, shelter, hygiene, and much more, 365 days a year

268,600 meals served
500+ people housed

11 managed facilities

27,689 charitable donations

175 footcans

427 supportive housing referrals

10,241 hot showers in Our Place hygiene

62 detox and treatment referrals

4,320 paramedic/outreach medical assessments

7,749 volunteer hours

370 unique storage facility visits

61 BCID I.D. referrals

346 medical room visits

36 birth certificates

\$238 average donor gift

As reported in the Community Report, published Sept. 2021.



Your monthly commitment is so important to our organization, not only enhancing planning and sustainability, but significantly lowering our administrative costs. Your reliable monthly contributions mean we can plan ahead, budget better and save money. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of others.

Seniors find connection and companionship in the Our Place 50+ Club

"Kirsty 'dragged' me out and into the hot sunlight and fresh air to see some new and old friends. She arrives with such a positive spin, lunch kits with fresh veggies and always a topic or activity of interest, mixed with laughter and understanding," says one member of the Our Place 50+ Club.

Kirsty is the Seniors Program Coordinator at Our Place where she's the driving force behind the '50+ Club', a program geared at bringing seniors who are our family members together to build connection and a sense of belonging. "At the core of the 50+ Club is how important community is to us and how getting together, just being together, however we can be, is the main focus," says Kirsty.

Seniors who participate in the Club are often some of the most vulnerable in our community – the average age of mortality of people experiencing homelessness in BC is 47. The 50+ Club fills a void in serving seniors that would otherwise fall through the cracks because of limited resources and barriers that restrict them from participating in social, recreational, and educational activities.

"Social inclusion programs are particularly important for impoverished seniors because they are at greater risk of isolation and depression than others," says Patricia O'Byrne, Community Engagement Program Manager at Our Place, who started the 50+ Club in 2018 to address a need she saw missing. "The Club improves morale and well-being and ensures that this group has access to the services and information that they need. We're there for them when sometimes no one else is. That connection is the most critical aspect."

Adds Patricia: "We were so grateful to be able to carry on the program throughout the pandemic, which would not have been possible without our donors and funders. We're grateful, and we know the 50+ Club members are too."



Kirsty plays a vital role by providing seniors with a caring listening ear, one-on-one companionship and support, and advocacy assistance.

She also coordinates fun outings and activities, always with proper safety protocols in place, like wearing masks, staying outdoors when possible, and having a sign-up system for events.

During this past year, the 50+ Club enjoyed picnics at Willows Beach, exercise class in Central Park, going out for a pizza or taco lunch, and gardening together in two plots in the Yates Street Community Garden. The 50+ Club also brings in guest speakers to provide information on topics like fraud prevention.

Helping people walk through the minefield of addiction towards hope

The perfect gift is unique to each individual, but the greatest one of all can be the strength to save your own life.

“I am the only surviving member of my family,” says Jordan, a recovering addict and team lead at New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community operated by Our Place. “My parents struggled with addiction most of their lives, and it ultimately took the life of my biological father,” Jordan explains. “My stepdad and mom got sober, but unfortunately both died of cancer. My brother died of a heroin overdose when he was 19. I was addicted to hard drugs, and I’ve overdosed twice.”

During his addiction, Jordan experienced homelessness, and was in hospital for weeks at a time.

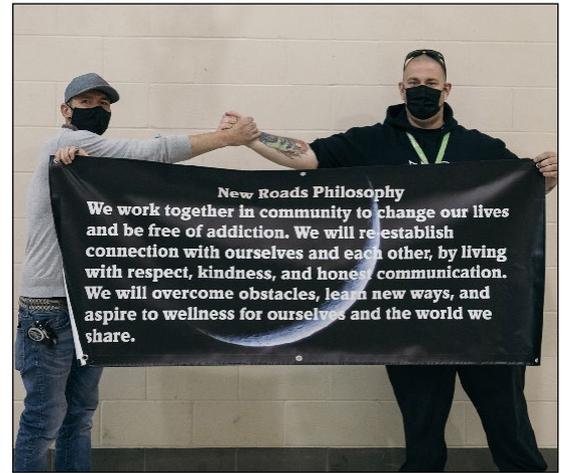
“I did some really stupid things,” he says. “But in 2004, I took my first steps into recovery because of the example my parents showed me. They successfully got clean and showed me that it was possible. I’ve only had four pretty minor relapses since. The mind is hard to overcome sometimes. It takes time.”

Jordan has come a long way during his journey of recovery. He has a background in addictions recovery work in Surrey – where he’d often share his story publicly, inspiring hundreds of others to find hope. For the last two and a half years, he’s been working at Our Place and New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community.

“My life’s work is to pass on what I’ve learned,” says Jordan. “A friend of mine describes it best: when you find the map in the minefield, you don’t just keep it for yourself. You walk back through the minefield, and you take others through safely. That is what I’m here to do.”

At New Roads, Jordan mentors residents through their own paths of recovery by showing them that there is hope and another side to the traumas they are each battling.

“There’s so much tragedy in addiction and I’ve been exposed to some of the ugliest,” he says. “But then there are also the victories. When someone’s failed so much in their life, all they need is for someone to believe in them. We surround the residents as a community, and we really show them that we all care about them. That’s where hope starts for these guys. They begin to realize that the power of love is more powerful than their addiction, and that power is what they need to follow.”



Says Jordan: “It’s my job to ask, ‘What if you step into happiness and in to love and start using that as your power instead?’ We show them that you’ve got to draw towards the good, towards love. I feel that it’s my responsibility to show people that it’s possible, that there’s power in hope.”

From its humble beginnings as a simple downtown Victoria refuge, Our Place has grown from an inner-city community centre to employing 275+ staff and 250+ volunteers who operate a continuum of critical services in 11 locations throughout the CRD. Thank you for nourishing hope and belonging throughout our community!

- 919 Pandora Avenue
- Muncey Place on Blanshard
- Capital City Centre on Douglas
- Howard Johnson Hotel on Gorge
- Tiny Homes Village on Caledonia
- Russell Street Shelter
- My Place Shelter on Yates
- First Metropolitan Church Shelter
- Pandora Night Shelter
- New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal
- Jaymac Place Recovery Home
- Our WorkPlace on Quadra Street

