

HOME VIEWS

Pentecost 2012

Celebrating Fifteen Years Of Nurturing Christian Community Boarding Homes Ministry

For I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh Acts 2:17 RSV

Godly community is born of Spirit. It ripens in the Spirit's gifts of kindness, and faithfulness, joy, peace and love. The Christian communities nurtured by Boarding Homes Ministry turn to the Spirit for support and direction. Life can bring harsh pressures and turmoil. Still, there is hope. The Spirit – moving – creates *home*.

“When you are in the throes of the Spirit, then you are home.”

These unusual and insightful words from a boarding home resident were presented in *Home Views* 2004. To be in the throes of Spirit is perhaps to be alive in the unpredictable swirl of God, and open to inspiration. Further, it is the belief of BHM that since the Spirit is poured out on all God's people that the richness of Spirit is available to Christians who desire to fashion *community – home*.

All willing Christians might practice loving kindness.

All willing Christians might move out beyond church walls, relying on the Spirit, and counter forces in society that too often push people away who have mental health problems.

Life *in the throes* might create a mobile dwelling place in which there is happy immersion in the *uncontrollability, unsettled, and unsettling blessings* of Spirit.

Reflections by Annemiek Miller on spiritual community.

In May of 2002 some members of our congregation acted on an invitation from Rodger Hunter to visit a boarding home in downtown Toronto. In ten years of visiting we have been blessed with deep and meaningful community.

Residents are talented at warmly welcoming us, in writing poetry, in drawing, in thinking creatively, in making us both laugh and cry. Some have passed away; others have moved away; new friends have come in, and the community continues.

There is little that is predictable in these visits. Interactions are genuine, and rarely wrapped in social conventions. Waves of humility, gratitude, joy, laughter, silence, frustration, irritation and aggression, ebb and flow in our midst.

Life's joys and challenges seem magnified in this boarding home.

*Prayer and conversation often calm the spirit,
and make room for laughter and reflection.*

The presentation of the **E H Johnson Award** in 2011 recognized the spiritual importance and vitality of these communities. **Your kind donations** provide BHM with resources that sustain our existing ministry, and develop **holy communions** through:

*Seasonal meals and celebrations
Pastoral training for teams
Music and Art resources
Ongoing costs of house visits
Emergency funds for residents
Funding for seminary students
Development of new teams*

BHM is a faith ministry. All of its funding is from individual donors, Presbyteries congregations, Christian groups and foundations. In 2012 BHM faces a possible deficit of \$12,000.

BHM wants to express its deep appreciation for the faithfulness and generosity of its donors over these remarkable fifteen years.

Grace, blessings and peace attend you.

Please consider **PAR**
Preauthorized Remittance

To make a monthly donation please forward a voided cheque to BHM and indicate the monthly amount.

For donations by VISA please visit BHM's link at www.canadahelps.org

Looking Back In Thanksgiving: Fifteen Years Of Ministry

Our communities have fielded many questions over the years. They are often from the heart, and need to be gently addressed.

“Does God love everyone?”

“Why would God love me?”

“Can our bodies get raised from the dead?”

God’s people crave assurance.

Donors are partners with these communities, as they foster support.

Christian community comes alive when it makes an intentional effort to welcome and receive.

The regular bi-weekly gatherings in boarding homes have brought neighbours together. Previously residents and team members didn’t know each other. Now, they are alive in community. Visits into the homes are open, glad, compassionate, and ‘small’ enough to be intimate. They are face-to-face, and characterized by love.

This closeness, and this integrity, allows residents and church visitors to ***bring their lives forward and share them in Christ.***

Humanity-in-Christ is ***received.*** Here is the foundation of solid pastoral relations that can last for years. Good friends gather, commit to each other, and respectfully hold *whatever comes forward*: the rich statements of faith, joys, hurts, doubts, laughter, cries, puzzlements, and questions rooted in profound life issues.

Special banquets in the homes (Easter, Thanksgiving, BBQ’s, Christmas) also provide wonderful opportunities for ‘*holy reception*’. **Humanity arrives – hungered!** As the food is laid out, so are life issues. And, casting an eye back over the past fifteen years, one thing has certainly been clear: **the banquet is apt to get a bit messy!** Fair enough. As we noted in *Home Views 2009*, **“At a holy feast - tidiness kills!”** Space has to be made for human disarray if people are to be genuinely received. Not to worry, followers of a crucified Messiah can deal with a fair bit of chaos, and open wounds. And so, we might put aside any idea that a place of *Christian Reception* will be orderly, and guarantee happy endings. Still, our communities faithfully *engage life* strengthened by God, and equipped with love, a light spirit, and holy wit. *Our donors are partners as the banquet is spread.*

Partners In Ministry: Looking Forward In Hope

Developing new boarding home communities remains a priority. Your partnership in prayer and financial support are crucial as BHM strives to create new teams.

God is glorified as churches venture out into their neighbourhoods to form loving unions.

BHM hopes that the adult lessons in the ***Cat Jeoffry*** Church School Curriculum will help churches take up the spiritual enterprise of building holy community.

Looking Forward To Better Advocacy. Too often, those in the mental health community are pushed aside and receive poor treatment from church and society. Promoting justice is a holy calling. Donors who partner with BHM first of all help *raise awareness* of current injustices that add to the hurt of those with mental illness. Then, our supporters help BHM to *promote* better, more fitting, righteous care in which the lives of these beautiful and gifted people are held as precious. Advocacy promotes respect.

Looking Forward To Deeper Communion. Humanity has a deep longing for *union in Spirit*, but not every setting can lead to fulfilment. BHM is so grateful to teams and residents *who have remained spiritually open.* New life and relationships have blossomed. Even so, calling on grace, we press for deeper union.

In expectation, and trusting in grace, our home communities look to the future.

“Celebrating God and people” Boarding Home Resident
(Words engraved on the 2011 EH Johnson Award presented to the home communities of BHM.)