

## Needs increase in our community

**T**HE ICPM focuses our ministry on supporting our neighbours in Edmonton's Boyle-McCauley neighbourhood, many of whom are unhoused and experiencing deep poverty.

We work with a variety of non-profit partners who strive to support these same neighbours with services and supports intended to improve their well-being.

Much of the media narrative has been focusing on the "social disorder" that has been increasing in the city and we wanted to share some context about what is going on with our community.

We are seeing a significant increase in the number of people who are unhoused in Edmonton. This is due to a variety of factors including skyrocketing housing costs, reduced government benefits, the end of pandemic supports and other challenges.

Homeward Trust lists 3,043 individuals experiencing houselessness in May 2023, compared with 1,390 in October of 2019. That number is continuing to grow. This is more than twice as many people at a time when supports are being reduced.

**THE LAST TWO YEARS** have seen the closure of several key drop-in spaces where people can safely connect with other people and stay warm during the day – the Mustard Seed's church building, Operation Friendship and most recently Boyle Street Community Services.

This is a major reduction in the number of safe, supported places for our community members to spend

### City's unhoused population grows as support services decline | **By Lucas Stone**



More than 60 churches, synagogues and mosques provide 250 nutritious lunches on rotation for Boyle/McCauley community members every Sunday. Here is the team from All Saints' Anglican Cathedral. Each year we distribute about 13,000 lunches and pour more than 20,000 cups of coffee.

the day at a time when the need is growing.

This increased competition for supports puts a major stress on our community members who are already struggling. Our teams are working hard to provide spaces of healing, encouragement, and connection during this time, but we are finding that

people are coming in with a higher level of trauma and needing more intense supports than ever before.

At this time, we are asking for support for ourselves, our community partners, and prayer for those being impacted by these challenges.

(**Lucas Stone** is vice-chair of the ICPM board.)

*'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' (Micah 6.8)*

In the midst of pain and oppression, our sharing of experiences can give us a vision of a better tomorrow | **By Glen Argan**

## Men's group's little canoes signal hope

**O**n the weekend, I looked out the window and saw what I had been awaiting – many of the leaves on the mountain ash tree in our yard had burst into red. The red which accompanies leaves which are yellow or still green.

Because of the strong winds of the previous week, I was afraid I would not see those brilliant leaves this year. The wind would strip the tree before the leaves turned red. But now, there they are.

Shining in a sunny afternoon, those leaves offer a splendid sight against the cloudless blue sky. For me, that beauty is a sign of hope, a sign of something more than natural.

Christians are called to be prepared to give an account of the hope which is in us (1 Peter 3.15).

What is that hope? Sure-

ly, we hope for eternal life with Christ after our earthly tenure has drawn to a close. But don't we also hope for an end to the oppression, conflict and injustice on this side of the veil? Don't we long for joy?

On the streets of our inner city, the pain and oppression are obvious. In no world of justice and equality do people live in tents or sleep in doorways as a bitter winter draws near.

But beneath the grim exterior are stories. Stories often of life going wrong but also stories which recall happy moments from the past. Moments where hope burned brightly. Moments on which a better future could be built if the opportunity were there. If justice, compassion and love were present.

On Oct. 11, I attended my first meeting of the ICPM men's group. Twelve of us



ICPM men's and women's sharing circles meet every month in the Bissell Centre. We share food, stories, and laughter. Here is the ICPM men's group enjoying pizza and treats.

sat around a table, sharing mostly hopeful events of the Thanksgiving weekend as well as the annual inner city men's retreat which had preceded it.

Some of the guys told about the little canoes they had made on the retreat and had set sail in the Sturgeon River. Maybe some of those boats have already reached Battleford. Maybe some will make it all the way to Hudson's Bay. We

can hope, can't we?

The leaves on my mountain ash are a harbinger of hope. Those leaves will be on the ground in a few days. The people on our streets need hope that lasts longer than a week. Together, can we do something, do more than we are now, to help make theirs a lasting hope?

(**Glen Argan** is a board member of the Inner City Pastoral Ministry.)



**Our Mission:** Inner City Pastoral Ministry is an interdenominational Christian Ministry of Presence. In partnership with the community, and guided by the Spirit of God, we walk with the people of the inner city of Edmonton.

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### ICPM Board Members

Andrea Wilhelm: Lutheran, Board Chair  
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Maria Kruszewski: Roman Catholic, Food Coordinator  
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When everyone with whom we associate is the same, we may feel safe but we have little to learn. | Shutterstock

## Draw near to those who are poor

**P**roximity is holy because it is transformational. The author, lawyer and activist Bryan Stevenson defines proximity as intentionally getting close to someone to connect with them: “It’s in proximity to the poor that we hear things that we won’t otherwise hear, that we’ll see things we won’t otherwise see ... the things we hear and see are critical to our knowledge and our capacity to problem solve.”

Proximity is the most effective means of breaking down misunderstandings and our tendency to see people as caricatures. When we see people as human and individual, it dispels a lot of fear and mistrust about people who are different than us. We realize we are not different from one another.

### JESUS PRACTISED PROXIMITY.

Proximity was a sign of his love and his tenderness towards many different people: people on the street, people who were lonely or invisible, wealthy people, people with social and political power – Jesus loved them all.

Jesus saw the humanity and the dignity and beloved-ness of everyone with whom he was in relationship. Stigmas, biases and fears were exploded and replaced with connection and relationship.

Something wonderful about ICPM

### Proximity to those on the margins helps break down our misunderstandings of others | **By Quinn Strikwerda**

is that we invite a variety of people from different faith communities into a practice of proximity. People who would normally have no reason to be acquainted with the realities of life on the street are provided with opportunities to practise proximity with members of our community.

To be authentic in love, we are called to go and be with people who are different than us. It can be painful and challenging work to examine our biases and fears about people who we think are so different than

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ourselves.

Getting close to people whose lives are shaped by poverty and the forces and systems that cause God’s beloved to survive on the streets can be intimidating.

Love in the form of proximity requires us to move out of our comfort zones and face our fears.

For me, living out my vocation as a

pastor in the urban core does not require me to step out of my comfort zone. I have had the gift of working in this form of ministry, and it has changed me. It is work in which I experience being united with Jesus.

**GOING OUT OF** my comfort zone now would be to enter a context in which I must develop relationships with people who are radically different than me in their political values and principles. That makes me tremble!

I have a hard time imagining being able to practise proximity in that context. And yet we love a Saviour who bids us to “not be afraid” because Jesus is with us, and we know that when we practise proximity, we are practising a holy love.

Who is the stranger or the “other” to you? Are you curious about what it means to practise proximity with Edmonton’s unhoused? Does your heart break to see the encampments in our city and the number of people on the streets? Change starts with our hearts. You are warmly welcomed to practise proximity with us at ICPM.

**(Quinn Strikwerda** is pastor of Community of Emmanuel.)

**JOB OPPORTUNITY at ICPM**

We are looking for part-time **administrative** support. For details, please visit <http://www.icpmedmonton.ca/wp/>.

**‘Push’ Documentary**

Life is getting perilous for renters. Trouble getting maintenance. Large rent increases. Renovictions....

A new phenomenon called “financialization” is responsible for some of this growing danger. The Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) is focusing on this issue for its annual National Housing Day event on **Nov. 22**.

The documentary “Push” will be screened at Garneau Theatre, 7 p.m., that day. Tickets are \$15. They are available at Eventbrite (<https://www.ecohh.ca/>).

If tickets are still available on Nov. 22, they will be sold at the door.

**Winter Items**

The chill of winter is coming.

We are now collecting Christmas gifts for the homeless and families in need. We are also gathering supplies to hand out on the street throughout the winter. We need these items:

- ◆ Gift cards for Superstore or Walmart. (These two stores are accessible by public transit.)
- ◆ Thermal men’s and women’s long underwear.
- ◆ Warm hats and gloves/mittens. Darker colours are preferred.
- ◆ Warm socks.

Contact Pastor Quinn at 780-424-7652 or [icpm.edmonton@gmail.com](mailto:icpm.edmonton@gmail.com) if you can help.



The Community of Emmanuel meets for worship every Sunday at 9:15 a.m. at the Bissell Centre.



**Ways that you can support the work of the Inner City Pastoral Ministry**

- **Donate Online at [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org) Search for ‘Inner City Pastoral Ministry’**
- **By Cheque to Inner City Pastoral Ministry, 10527 96 St NW, Edmonton, AB T5H 2H6**
- **Etransfer to [icpmgiving@gmail.com](mailto:icpmgiving@gmail.com) through your banking app. If you choose this method, please put your name and address in the message to receive a charitable receipt at year end.**

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