

MAY 2023

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Straight from the street

A newsletter for friends of Inner City Pastoral Ministry

“WITH WHAT SHALL I COME BEFORE THE LORD?...HE HAS TOLD YOU, O MORTAL, WHAT IS GOOD; AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU BUT TO DO JUSTICE, AND TO LOVE KINDNESS, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD?”

~ MICAH 6:6-8 ~



A REFLECTION ON FOOD SECURITY

The following reflection by Mary-Lou Cleveland and Maria Kruszewski was given at the Edmonton Outdoor Way of the Cross.

Jesus said, “Bring the bread and the fish to me.” Then he told the people to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves of bread and the two fish. He looked into the sky and thanked God for the food. Then he broke the bread into pieces, which he gave to the followers, and they gave the food to the people. Everyone ate until they were full.

Matthew 16:18-20, ERV

Food is a human right, but like housing, for many here in the inner city and in other parts of the world, it is an overlooked right.

Every Sunday morning, the Community of Emmanuel and the Inner City Pastoral Ministry team meet here, at the Bissell Centre, to worship and to serve. And every Sunday morning, different faith groups donate 200 or more lunch bags to our low-income and homeless family members who live in this area. This is only a portion of the thousands of meals provided

by various agencies and groups in any given week.

In the past, it used to take a half-hour to an hour to give that many lunches away, but for the last while, the 200 lunches have easily disappeared in half that time and, sadly, some people are turned away –except that often, those who are turned away do not leave empty-handed. This is because the people who receive the bag lunches know what it is like to be hungry; when someone arrives too late to get a lunch, it is almost inevitable that someone else, who received one, will reach into their bag and offer their own banana, cheese string, or juice box to the person who has none. These generous people know that no one should be hungry, so they share from what little they have.

The rapid rise in food prices in the last two years means that some of the communities who provide the lunches we offer to inner city folks are finding it hard to continue to support our Sunday lunch ministry. As the food coordinator, I have to find other groups to fill gaps, but that is nothing compared to people who are unable to stretch their income to put enough

food on the table for their families. Given the current inflation rate, it is no wonder our lunches disappear more and more quickly on Sunday mornings. On weekday mornings, we sometimes bring granola bars and fruit snacks for the folks living in encampments around the downtown



neighbourhood. One day, a woman who had just survived a drug poisoning came to us crying angry tears, telling us that she did not want the paramedics to give her Narcan because she wanted to die. We gave her the little snacks we had and listened to her misery. We looked her in the eye, gently reminding her that she is an important person, that there are people in her life who care about her, and that there are others who want to help her leave her addictions behind whenever she is ready. However, it was not until she had eaten a few granola

bars that she was able to feel our love and concern for her well-being. Life on the street is bleak, and it is even bleaker on an empty stomach.

The food we hand out is part of a toolkit that allows us to give more than just physical sustenance to people. Food is a doorway to all sorts of other ways to care. But if food is a human right, the people who live here and in so many other places in the world should not have to rely on charity for their daily bread. Food should be equally available to all.

Everyone in this inner-city neighbourhood should have food security; everyone in the world should have food security and be able to eat until they are full. When Jesus fed the crowds, not only did he satisfy their physical hunger, but he satisfied them spiritually. Food security here, in the inner city, is necessary so that everyone can know that they matter, not just to God, but to all of us.

For this reason, we conclude with a prayer:

Creator of abundance,

You have made this earth rich in food, but so many go hungry.

Some of us feast on steak and lobsters, while others look for crumbs in dumpsters.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to share our bread and fishes with the multitudes so that everyone can eat until they are full, physically and spiritually.

Give us your eyes to see the injustices around us.

Give us your ears to hear the cries of the hungry.

Give us your heart, so we can look with love at the crowds who are in need, and use our hands and feet to share the abundance with which we have been blessed.

Help us to work so that our food systems can be made equal and equitable for all.

Help us to find ways to awaken the corporations and food magnates when it comes to price gouging and food insecurity issues that have nothing to do with supply chains.

Help us to help these corporations to see the difference they can make.

May we walk humbly with your children who are struggling with food insecurity, and may we do what we can to give of ourselves as we meet you face to face in those in need.

Creator of life, help us to give life, to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with you and your people.

Amen.



Way Of The Cross

CALL FOR LUNCH PROVIDERS!

Do you know anyone who might like to join the Lunch Ministry with ICPM?

Presently, there are more than 65 individuals and faith communities providing lunch bags to make Sunday mornings on 96 Street much more pleasant for our brothers and sisters living in encampments in the area. Most Sundays, we also have two to four volunteers to help us distribute the lunches. This makes our lunch guests especially happy, as they like having the chance to thank the people who bring their lunches.

The items that go into each lunch bag are an orange, a banana, a bottle of water, a box of juice, a snack "kit" of crackers with tuna, chicken or cheese, a piece of individually wrapped cheese, a factory wrapped muffin, breakfast bar or protein bar, and everybody's favourite, a bag of chips, Doritos or Cheezies!

Lunch providers also supply enough coffee, creamer, and sugar to serve 200 double doubles – "the best in the city," we're often told.

Nevertheless, we have a few gaps in our lunch providers' schedule. We still need lunch providers for July 9, August 27, and November 19. Generally, each group supplies 100 or 200 lunches, but smaller contributions are welcome, too!

We also welcome donations of toiletries, men's and women's socks, and briefs (sizes medium and large), which we pass out through the week as we meet with people.

If you know of any youth groups, faith communities, service organizations, or other folks who might be willing to make and bring lunches on any Sunday morning of the year or help us with other donations, we would love to hear from you or them! We can be reached at icpmlunch@gmail.com, icpm.edmonton@gmail.com, or 780-440-6711.



This May, Pastor Jim Gurnett left the Community of Emmanuel for an incredible adventure! His first stop was in Italy so that he could spend a few days visiting a dear friend. Then, after he left Italy, he visited Egypt – something he has wanted to do since he first heard about the pyramids as a young boy!

However, the main reason for Jim's trip is found in the country of Cameroon. For several years, Jim has been working with friends in Canada to raise money to drill and install a water well near Mforya, a small town in Northwest Cameroon. Mforya has been relying on unsafe surface waterholes for its drinking water, but on May 7, if all went as planned, a well was drilled for the community. After that, a collection tank and two water outlets were to be installed, so that the people of Mforya would no longer need to walk long distances to get their water. The installation of the well also ensures that the nearby vocational school has a safe and ready supply of water for its students, enabling them return to continue their studies.

We pray that Jim has a safe journey and wish him and his friends success as they embark on this amazing project. We look forward to hearing more about it when he returns!



School Children Collecting Water



Mforya



Ruth & Dawson

In March, the board of the ICPM contacted me and asked if I would be willing to fill in as the organization's pastor for three months while Rev. Quinn is away on medical leave. I have known about the good work of ICPM for many years, and I am grateful to be able to support this ministry until the end of June.

Although I have known about ICPM, it is likely that most of you reading this newsletter do not know much about me, so here is the "Coles Notes" version of my life. I grew up all over central Alberta and studied at the University of Toronto and the Institute for Christian Studies. I have been married to my husband, Dawson, for 14 years, and for the past 8 years, he and I have called Edmonton, particularly the Alberta Avenue neighbourhood, home. In addition, I have worked in diverse ministry settings: as a parish Rector for the university chaplaincy; as the Prayer

Works Community Coordinator at St. Faith's in Alberta Avenue; and currently, as the Vicar of All Saints' Anglican Cathedral in downtown Edmonton.

Like many of our downtown street-involved neighbours, I live with multiple chronic illnesses. My journey with my own health has spurred me on and created a desire in me to nurture faith communities that not only make space for, but also celebrate and center all parishioners, especially those who live with physical, neural, and socioeconomic differences. We, as a faith community, are not whole until everyone is present at the table.

Alongside our fantastic Pastoral Associate Jim Gurnett, while working with ICPM, I will lead Sunday services and bible studies, provide pastoral care, and connect with our community members through the weekly distribution of toiletries, socks, and underwear.

On that note, our stock of toiletries, socks, and underwear is running low. We need men and women's underwear of all sizes, socks, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitary supplies, soap, small packages of tissue, deodorant, shampoo, and conditioner. We appreciate your generosity, but we are unable to take any other household or clothing items at this time and encourage you to donate those to the Bissell Thrift store.

Thank you for your partnership with ICPM! In the last month I have witnessed just how blessed ICPM is with amazing volunteers and partner churches who indeed make our ministry possible.

In Gratitude,

Rev. Ruth Sesink Bott



Dear members of the Community of Emmanuel, dear friends of ICPM, Our community has encountered some challenges since March, but we can also attest to God's faithfulness in helping us through.

Unfortunately, our pastor, Quinn Strikwerda, had to take some time off for a medical leave. Thankfully, his condition is not life-threatening, and we expect him to be back at the end of June.

It was a godsend that thanks to the quick response of the Anglican diocese, we found an interim pastor almost right away. We are so grateful to have Ruth Sesink Bott working with us part-time (50%) while Pastor Quinn is away. You can find out more about her elsewhere in this newsletter.

In addition, in May, long-time pastoral associate Jim Gurnett went on an exciting, and not surprisingly,

social justice-related trip to Cameroon. You can read all about it in the article "Where in the World is Pastor Jim?" found in this issue of our newsletter.

Despite being short-staffed, we managed to participate in the Good Friday Outdoor Walk of the Cross, and most ministries, such as Sunday worship, Bible study, and the men's and women's groups are continuing.

Thank you to the Sunday staff, volunteers, and our board for stepping in so quickly, generously, and capably. I am also grateful for the graciousness of our community members. You rock! Thank you, also, to Rev. Nick Trussell and Rev. Arthur Dyck for leading services when neither Ruth nor Jim were available.

Unfortunately, though, our visits to the supporting congregations and groups have slowed due to Quinn and Jim's absences. We are sorry that

we do not have the capacity for this at the moment, but we will resume once Quinn is back.

Unexpected challenges may be familiar to many of us in our own lives and so too, I hope, is God's faithfulness. One way I have seen that faithfulness in the past weeks is in the way that the community has come together. Miraculously, I feel very hopeful and even energized.

Thank you for your continued prayers for the full recovery and restoration of Quinn; for glad hearts and smooth work for Ruth, Jim, Annie, Farley, and all volunteers; for patience and ingenuity as renovations at the Bissell continue to impact us; and above all, for all of us as individuals in the ups and downs of our lives. Jesus, Emmanuel, is walking with us.

*Andrea Wilhelm
Chair, ICPM Board*





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

- **Donate Online** at 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 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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ICPM Mission Statement

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.

INNER CITY PASTORAL MINISTRY

Straight From The Street

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In This Issue:

- **A Reflection On Food Security**
 - **Call For Lunch Providers**
 - **Where In The World Is Pastor Jim?**
 - **A Message From Pastor Ruth Sesink Bott**
 - **Chairs Update**
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