

GOOD WORK NEWS

The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

Issue 160

March 2025

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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The 36th Mayors' Dinner

Join us for an evening of celebration and recognition of the work of building social connections and community

Knowing Our Neighbours

Building social connections is the work of community.

To be an active citizen is to cultivate positive relationships, seeing differences as part of the diverse work of community building. In Waterloo Region we have a rich tradition of welcome and connectedness.

Join us as we celebrate the ways we all help to know our neighbours. The evening will recognize the community work of Fauzia Mazhar and John Loughheed. We will also feature The Working Centre's Making Home Project at 97 Victoria St. N.

Saturday, April 5th, 2025

Marshall Hall | Bingemans

Tickets are now available for purchase. Join us for this celebration and invite your friends to come along. All proceeds support The Working Centre.

See ticket information on Page 8 or visit:
www.theworkingcentre.org/md2025

Knowing Our Neighbour

By Stephanie Mancini

This year's Mayors' Dinner theme, **Knowing Our Neighbour**, is about the positive social connections that engender dialogue and reciprocity. We all know the importance of neighbours. Can we become neighbourly people in the widest sense, can we strive to find positive ways to build community?

The Dinner this year comes at a time when there is a discouragement for the divides that we see around us. Neighbourliness, the ability of people and groups to talk to each other, help each other out and learn from each other is a pathway to building community.

A quote by Mother Teresa states a simple principle that unlocks a perspective on why neighbourliness is indispensable. "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." This surprising quote does not locate the problem in the other, but in society's ability to acknowledge the other, to

teach that we truly belong to each other.

Baratunde Thurston turns the idea of citizenship into a verb, something we actively do as we work to create a vision of a community where we can all thrive together. He emphasizes four pillars for doing this. First, show up and participate. Second, invest in relationships with others, recognizing that we need each other. Third, recognize that even when we feel powerless, we do have power to impact the world around us. And fourth, work on behalf of the many, remembering that a stranger is only a person we do not yet know.

As we contemplate these kind of messages, we also recognize that we as a community are already doing many creative and positive things – how do we amplify and celebrate these moments as examples we can all lean in to. How do we change our narrative from despair to the positive

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Visit Our New Websites



We are excited to announce that our new website is finally online! It has been a long transition changing the style that we first built back in 2008. Check the website regularly to see the latest news on the homepage, or in the News and Updates page to learn about events across The Working Centre.

Visit the site at: www.theworkingcentre.org

We are also introducing **TWC Interactive**, an online resource exploring The Working Centre's community of projects and offering an in-depth look into the ideas that influence our community building work. The site includes a virtual tour, historical timeline, and The Good Work News Archive. The Archive has a searchable collection of nearly 700 articles from past issues of Good Work News.

Explore the site at: www.twcinteractive.org

Thank you to all those who helped develop and contribute to the new sites including the Alcor Media team, Martin Edmonds, JP Smola, Doug MacLellan, and The Working Centre IT team.

Forty-First Year

Issue 160

March 2025

Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 13,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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Contributors: Douglas MacLellan, JP Smola, Darren Denomme, Katherine Bitzer, Tomasz Adamski, Christina Mancini

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Thank You for Your Generous Support!



We want to thank all the volunteers, donors, and community partners who have supported The Working Centre community in our efforts to produce and distribute over 700 meals each day, provide shelter to 150 people a night, build housing, support job searching and develop our access to tools projects.

Free Walk-In Income Tax Clinic



The Working Centre is once again hosting an Income Tax clinic during March and April for people living on a limited income.

Due to the high numbers of people hoping to access supports, our tax clinic support is once again operating as a walk-in first come-first served clinic.

You can see a tax clinic helper to review your completed intake form and required papers starting on **March 3rd, 2025** in person.

Volunteers registered with the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program will help to complete your income tax return.

More information and eligibility requirements available online at www.theworkingcentre.org. If you have questions, please contact us at taxclinic@theworkingcentre.org

Thank You for Your Support!



In this photo, Bob Stassburger (left) is with Katherine Bitzer and Joe Mancini on site at the 97 Victoria Making Home Project, standing beside the Strassburger Windows donated for all three floors of the main building! Strassburger Windows has been a generous friend to The Working Centre, having contributed many times to our downtown renovation projects. All Strassburger

Windows have high energy efficiency, durability, and meet historical criteria. We are very grateful for their support.



Inshallah is a community choir of more than 130 voices, gathering from across campus and throughout Waterloo Region, singing songs of praise and prayer, of joy and lament, from around the world. It's a fun and welcoming space where multifaith and multicultural diversity is explored

through music at rehearsals, public gatherings and workshops. Martin Luther University College is the choir's home, with the leadership of Debbie Lou Ludolph, director of the school's Kanant Centre for Worship and Global Song. After a beautiful evening of song at the City of Kitchener Rotunda on December 10th, a free will offering for the Making Home project raised over \$3,500.



In October 2013 Sharon Gilroy-Dreher started collecting socks in honour of what would have been her mother's 80th birthday. By 2019, 130,000+ pairs of new socks had been shared to benefit people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The **ToastyToes Waterloo Region Fund** was



**ToastyToes
Waterloo
Region Fund**

established in 2020, and in 5 years has collected over \$250,000 in donations. In this photo Sharon is presenting Connie Watson and Joe Mancini with a \$3,000 cheque towards sock purchases that are distributed through St. John's Kitchen. Each day 10-15 pairs of socks are distributed, helping to keep people's feet warm.



We were so pleased over Christmas when Steve Scherer, owner of Scherer Chevrolet Buick GMC asked The Working Centre to think about our vehicle needs. The Working Centre is constantly using vehicles for picking up and distributing food,

helping people to appointments, moving people into housing, picking up used goods, and transporting our maintenance teams for construction and repairs. While on site at Scherer Chevrolet we saw a lightly-used cube van with only 36,000 km. It was the perfect gift to replace our aging cube van that picks up goods for Worth A Second Look Furniture and Housewares. The photo above was taken when picking up the van. In the photo is: John Scherer and Ed Figueiredo of Scherer Chevrolet and Joe Mancini and Dave McKinley from The Working Centre.



A Busy Christmas Season

By Joe Mancini

This Christmas season was a busy time. We received overflowing generosity as the community responded to ensure many meals were available through the Christmas season. During mid-December, Maurita’s Kitchen on Queen Street was extra busy as over 1000 pounds of turkey were cooked and prepared for serving. In the final days massive quantities of potatoes, vegetables and gravy were produced and made ready. Altogether about 800 Christmas meals were prepared and served at St. John’s Kitchen, King Street Shelter and the Erbs Road Shelter. Chef Michael Bertling our Maurita’s Kitchen team and volunteers chopped, prepared and cooked hundreds of pounds of turkey, potatoes, carrots and bread so that they could be served at the Christmas meals.

On Thursday December 19th, about 480 meals were served at a

Photos above: Staff and volunteers gather together on Christmas morning for a photo before St. John’s Kitchen opens to serve the Christmas Day meal; Workers at the King Street Shelter prepare for serving the Christmas Day meal

special Christmas dinner at St. John’s Kitchen. The annual St. John’s Christmas dinner has a special focus for those living in encampments and the wider community who regularly use St. John’s Kitchen. This was the second year in a row that we served the Christmas meal in the gymnasium of St. John’s Anglican Church. For the last few years, in contrast to about 500 people showing up between 11:00 am – 1:00 pm, the meal flows through the whole day, starting around 10:30 and ending closer to 4:00. During that time gifts are distributed and it always remains a special day in the

St. John’s Kitchen year.

On Christmas Day, The Working Centre was open in three different locations. We served special sit down meals at the King Street Shelter and the Erbs Road Shelter. At the King Street Shelter where 100 people live together in common, so much is shared. Christmas Day we celebrate the main meal all together, creating a festive and family-like setting. Staff and volunteers all join in the celebration providing a full Christmas meal along with music played by musician Michael Kelly. The same is true at the Erbs Road Shelter, where 50 people live in small cabins. The Christmas dinner was served as a sit down meal in the main community centre where all were welcome. Christmas doesn’t always bring good memories, and often is a time that emphasizes the loss of family ties. The celebrations are important and each person participates as they are able. This is the time of year when we emphasize how we all stand as family with one another.

This year our community was blessed by two other acts of

generosity. Before COVID, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society had provided and coordinated a Christmas Eve dinner from Swiss Chalet for almost 25 years. This was a tradition that people looked forward to. The pandemic interrupted this, but this year the Kitchener-Waterloo Swiss Chalet franchises all pitched in to provide 500 chicken dinners for the St. John’s Kitchen Christmas Eve lunch. We heard that Swiss Chalet staff were happy to put in the extra time to make this meal possible. People coming to St. John’s Kitchen were so pleased that the tradition started again. It has always made for a festive day on Christmas Eve.

The next day, Bingemans offered to provide a Christmas meal to St. John’s Kitchen. This generous offer meant that we could open the kitchen with volunteers and ensure a full Christmas meal could be served. It was very special to be open, in the gym at St. John’s church serving the Christmas meal on Christmas Day. May thanks to all the volunteers, to our team members who hosted, and to Bingemans for helping to make this day special.



People at the King Street Shelter gather as gifts are shared before the Christmas Day meal



On the Friday before Christmas, volunteers from Worth A Second Look gather for the annual Christmas volunteer appreciation lunch

Who Is My Neighbour?



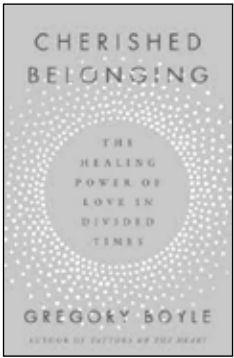
The Working Centre is watching with interest Fr. Greg Boyle’s model of Homeboy Industries to explain the philosophic commitment needed to address growing marginalization.

In Fr. Boyle’s latest book, *Cherished Belonging, the Healing Power of Love in Divided Times*, he tells the story of responding to a question in a packed church with the answer, “I’ve never met anyone evil... and neither have you.” Many in the audience laughed in disbelief, but Boyle thought to himself, “No, you haven’t; you only think you did. We’ve all met the broken, the despondent and damaged, the desperate and unwell, the traumatized, wounded and injured. But never anybody evil.”

This is another layer to the work of neighbourliness. It is not only how do we see the depth of the brokenness that is in front of us? How do we develop community responses that make a difference? How do we understand the person that is in front of us?

Fr. Boyle draws that story to a close reflecting on a scripture passage, “Then your light shall break like the dawn and your wound shall quickly be healed. The light shall rise for you in your gloom. The darkness shall become for you like midday.”

The work of building community in the midst of harsher social realities means that we all have to dig deeper to understand and act on the changing circumstances around us.



Knowing Our Neighbour

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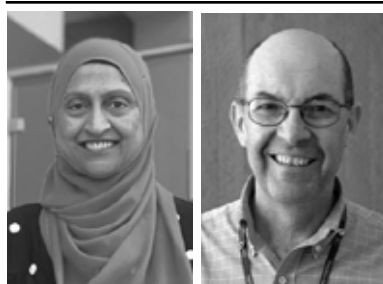
nurturing of neighbourliness?

This year's Mayors' Dinner will focus on telling positive stories about how building social connections are at the heart of community; how active citizens can cultivate constructive relationships that enhance community. We want to celebrate how in Waterloo Region we have a rich tradition of welcome and connectedness.

The evening will focus on three presentations. The first will be **Fauzia Mazhar** who came to Canada twenty-two years ago. She quickly worked to learn the Canadian culture and to use her considerable leadership skills to work with and on behalf of culturally and economically diverse communities in K-W. Her work experience includes managing a neighbourhood-based community centre and a large-size service hub, as well as leading community collaborations and social change initiatives. She has served as the President of Pakistan Canada Association, Council Member and Chair of the Belong Group for Immigration Partnership Waterloo Region and as a member of the Board of Directors of Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery.

In 2010, Fauzia joined with a handful of women to support Muslim women to be leaders and change makers, able to address stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslim women through community outreach and bridge-building. The initiative became the Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener-Waterloo. Fauzia has provided consistent leadership to CMW since its inception, overseeing strategic planning and all aspects of developing a non-profit social service organization. Fauzia will share her insights into bringing people and groups together to build a welcoming, inclusive, and safe community.

John Lougheed is a retired Minister and Chaplain who has called Waterloo Region home for 27 years, so far. He is also partial to



Fauzia Mazhar and John Lougheed will be recognized at the 36th Annual Mayors' Dinner

'God's Country' in Bruce and Grey Counties! He works part-time at Erb & Good Family Funeral Home, and volunteers with The Working Centre, The House of Friendship, and Supportive Housing Advocacy Waterloo Region.

John is a long-time friend of The Working Centre and our outreach work. He can effortlessly see beauty and inclusion in small actions and often reflects back the actions he witnesses, helping others to see the importance of sustaining a village of care. John has a unique eye that sees and celebrates this care and compassion through small, persistent acts of kindness. His stories of deliberate action at The Mayors' Dinner will offer a powerful lens on the importance of neighbourliness.

We will also feature The Working Centre's **Making Home** project at 97 Victoria, as construction of this new hub moves to completion. Making Home will provide a full campus of possibilities from housing to medical clinic assistance to daily outreach supports. We will celebrate the many donors to this project and the team that has brought it to fruition.

Neighbourliness is all about stepping outside of ourselves and learning and seeing the other, in so many vivid and changing circumstances. This is where hearts are opened.

This year's Mayors' Dinner will explore Knowing Our Neighbour in ever more creative ways, helping each of us to see our place in sustaining the community of Waterloo Region.

Closing King Street Shelter

By Stephanie Mancini

We are now one and half months from the closing of King Street Shelter. King Street Shelter has come out of a line of innovative and highly responsive approaches The Working Centre has brought to the dramatic increase in homelessness, combined with the opioid drug crisis. We have created a place of belonging where people come together in a congregate setting to share living every day.

By all counts, this shelter should not work. But it does. The people in the shelter change as people find housing, or move on due to conflict or an inability to keep living in a congregate setting, or move to a different shelter after a period of settling at King Street Shelter. The acceptance, the care, the unconditional regard offered to people is an important step in helping people to feel seen, to be known, to rest and be welcomed back into community.

Fr. Greg Boyle says, "people get hope from each other and from everybody supplying a dose of tenderness and care and everybody's on the receiving end of it. It's a way to engage full participation in cherishing love. Then you end up being the front porch of the house everybody wants to live in." Being cherished accelerates the healing.

King Street Shelter is not all pretty, but no matter what happens we work to love past behaviour and touch the humanity of each person even if they are angry or psychotic or too unwell to live in a congregate setting. Whenever we can we look for the next place for people that recognizes the end of the current reality but encourages people forward to their next option. And many people fight not to leave because people find home and community in this setting with our staff team acting as buffer to the theft, the danger, the roughness of street life.

The limits are created by the ability of the wider group to tolerate the circumstances when someone becomes unwell. Sometimes the group shifts in acceptance, sometimes the person is asked to leave, sometimes the person impacts the wellbeing of our wider community neighbours. We see the hardship created when we ask someone to leave – a few weeks ago we gave someone a 2 week break and while outside he fell and hit his head and died soon after in hospital. Decisions made often have serious consequences. The choices we end up making about welcoming people into shelter can be life and death as we stand witness to the harshness of living unsheltered.

We walk people through the rolling wave of craving and withdrawal, and stand with them when the drugs are so toxic people drop into drug poisoning. We monitor epileptic seizures, calling EMS as needed as we come to know someone's

base level when they suffer from a seizure disorder. We literally walk with 5 women who use walkers at KSS – one who has serious fall risk, two that can't move around at all without the walker. We supported a man through serious alcohol poisoning until he agreed to let us measure out a regular alcohol dose.

The health team from Community Health Caring, and The Working Centre's Specialized Outreach Services team assess overall wellness, connect to specialists, support mental health and addiction needs and facilitate access to treatment options where appropriate. The Working Centre's Justice Outreach Services supports people through court procedures and probation to help avoid unnecessary charges when court dates are forgotten because of the tumultuousness of living without housing. Ontario Health at Home has been assessing people for long-term care (approximately 10+ would qualify if they were willing to overcome their fear and leave what is familiar to them, a common situation for women as they age and fear loss of freedom). Community partners visit regularly to connect with residents.

The King Street Shelter Housing and Outreach team helps everyone become paper ready for housing opportunities. Starling joins to make these housing opportunities happen. Since April of 2024 we have supported 46 people to find housing. Ontario Works attends on site to problem-solve income support issues. Traverse Independence supports people with acquired brain injury, a common reality for people who are experiencing homelessness.

We are on a time-sensitive push to help 100 people to find their next-spot when the shelter closes. This is not something you can start too early because it leaves everyone unsettled and feeling unsafe. The KSS residents have become prioritized for options open within the Housing and Homeless system as everyone leans in to help close the shelter as thoughtfully as possible. This only means that people who are living outside have fewer options for coming inside as there is a limit in the number of spots available in the system. And we know there will not be enough spots for everyone before March 31. When the YW closed last year, 47 of the 60 women who were relocated at the closing ended up at King Street Shelter – solutions are not there for all, and we shuffle people around. Again.

The conversations with the team of workers at King Street Shelter are complex. We have invited people to bring themselves into this work, acting with love, and thoughtfully separating one's mood on a particular day with the patience it takes to stand in this work. Fr. Gregory Boyle says – "Allow yourself to be reached, to be loving, to enter into relational wholeness. I allow my heart to be altered." We work together on how

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Over 800 guests attended the 35th Mayors' Dinner in April 2024, an evening featuring a 3-part presentation by Greg Kennedy and Rebecca Mancini, and a musical collaboration performing Leonard Cohen's song "Anthem"



Specialized Outreach Services



Our Specialized Outreach Services (SOS) is a mobile multidisciplinary team that supports individuals who are experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed and who are experiencing medical, mental health and/or substance use concerns. SOS is designed to provide low barrier clinical care to individuals who may have difficulty accessing other traditional supports. The SOS team is comprised of social workers, nurses and outreach workers who work alongside physicians, nurse practitioners, hospitals, police, and the court/probation system.

- SOS works with close to 1000 people in a year – offering direct support to encampments, motels, drop-ins where people are accessing services. Team members, including nurses can see 10-20 people a day in different locations, providing vital community connections and access to health care.
- The team provides clinical care on the street; including primary care, medical assessment, coordinating with medical care providers, wound care, medication administration, counselling, and support coordination. We offer accompaniment to appointments, so that they are kept in a timely way and we provide support/follow-through for the medical provider.
- The Emergency Department diversion is significant – the team treats people where they are, in a responsive way that prevents presentations to hospitals.
- The team works collaboratively with Emergency Departments, medical floors, and mental health wards around admission and discharge planning; we receive many requests for wound care following discharge from hospital and following long acting anti-psychotic injections. We also coordinate with Freeport Specialized Mental Health.
- The Impact team contacts our team when working with people who are homeless for ongoing community based support to reduce calls for service to WRPS.
- We are receiving 3-5 new referrals per week which is high given our ongoing caseload. In one week we supported 8 different people out of hospital who had nowhere to go, providing follow-up care in community once we found them an often inadequate place to be sheltered.
- The Point in Time Count reported that 75% of people homeless (over 2,371 people) are living unsheltered – we provide ongoing care to people experiencing homelessness who are unable to navigate the system – these numbers are growing.

The work of SOS happens every day, behind the scenes, supporting people in important ways as they deal with homelessness, addictions, mental health, and the frustrations of being marginalized. The work is all about caring for the other, showing up for each person even when we don't have solutions to the main challenges. These photos show how real this work is. They were all taken on a Friday in January.

SOS and Street Outreach workers gather outside at Queen and Charles where each Friday morning the Waterloo Region Foodbank delivers food to Maurita's Kitchen. The delivery includes 80 food hampers packaged specifically to be distributed to people living in motels and precarious situations.

A great deal of effort and good will goes into distributing the food hampers and they are a way to connect weekly, to check in on people's wellbeing, and from which to coordinate follow-up. Later in the day, the work continues and includes going to encampments and to various housing, shelter, and drop-in spaces, checking in on medical and other support issues. In the photo above, one of the SOS nurses tends a wound at our 87 Victoria Street drop-in, located directly across the street from the 100 Victoria St. encampment. SOS provides important connecting services that support people dealing with complex health, mental health, legal issues and basic needs that are constantly a part of living unsheltered or precariously housed.



A SOS Team member visits and check ins with individuals living at a motel



A SOS Team member gives a motel resident a haircut while visiting with him



A SOS Team member loads her car with food boxes donated from the Food Bank of Waterloo Region

Special thank you to Douglas MacLellan for photographing the work of our SOS Team



The Working Centre Receives Community Housing Award

The Region of Waterloo National Housing Day 2024 Planning Committee acknowledged The Working Centre Family with this year's Christine Wilson Outstanding Housing Community Worker Award! Pat Fisher, Program Analyst – Region of Waterloo Housing Services submitted a nomination which read:

"This nomination is for the Working Centre Family, in recognition of their ongoing work in our community to support people who are experiencing homelessness. Rather than a nomination for one or two people, I would like to recognize that the Working Centre works as a collective, their efforts built on relationships, seeing the strengths of people, listening, learning, reflecting and applying those lessons in the way that they believe best supports the people they collectively support.

"The Working Centre Family has been a consistent voice, naming truths and proposing solutions to an evolving set of needs and challenges. They were the first to issue a warning in 2019 using both data and stories to name and describe the surge in both the number of people experiencing homelessness and the complexity of their situations. Time and again since then they have leaned in and offered solutions that are grounded in the lived experiences of the people they walk with each day. When the Housing and Homelessness system has faced challenges, The Working Centre Family have consistently said, let us try. They have brought in new partners, organized needed trainings for direct service staff, innovated with new types of services and consistently found ways to support people that no one else was able to support. They have proposed options, offered solutions, negotiated, stretched limited resources - always with a focus on creating spaces and supports that are grounded in the lived experiences, the challenges and the needs of people who are stuck in experiences of homelessness.

"The Working Centre Family was originally built on the foundation of Street Outreach and St. John's Kitchen. They have expanded hours, expanded services, brought in new partners, worked to integrate

traditional housing system partners. They leveraged their skilled and experienced SOS team to fill gaps in the housing system. They created drop in spaces, created temporary shelters including finding locations when no one else could find them. In COVID they consistently leaned in and provided the backbone support needed to keep people safe throughout the waves of COVID in our community. The Working Centre Family innovated by creating transitional housing for a group of people who had been stuck outside for years in a location no one else could find at University Ave, they saved lives by supporting people in Motels while recovering from or awaiting hospital medical procedures. They stepped up to demonstrate how couples and people with pets can be supported in emergency shelter. They stepped forward and said let us try when the Region wanted to pilot an outdoor shelter. They created programs that provided supportive housing to people with complex needs. They provide innovative supports for newcomers and re-purposed some of their property to provide housing for vulnerable newcomer women. Today you see their ongoing spirit of making the most of limited investments as they re-envision St. John's Kitchen and build long term supportive housing in a model where the lived experience of people experiencing homelessness is front and centre.

"Today, I wish to nominate the Working Centre Family, not because of one thing that one or two people have done, but rather because of the ongoing effort of a collection of people coming together again and again and saying - let us try to find new ways to house those who have none. We as a community are a MUCH better place because of them, people experiencing homelessness are better cared for because of them, political leaders are more informed because of them, the circle of supports in our community is wider and stronger because of a collection of people who have approached every challenge with an attitude of, let us try. We are a better community because of you."

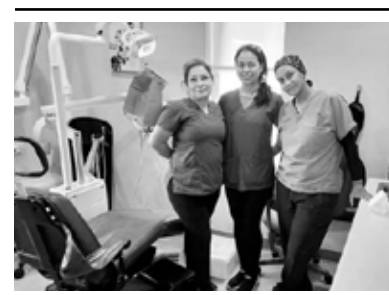
Dental Clinic Support

Community Dental has been fortunate to receive a grant from the Accerta Health Access Foundation Grant to support volunteer Dentists and Hygienists to provide dental services to those individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We appreciate the help of Joe Cheira, Co-ordinator for Government Relations and Advocacy, Ontario Dental Association for helping to make this grant possible.

This year there have been 9 dentists and 2 hygienists who volunteered at Community Dental and three other volunteers who help in the clinic.

The Working Centre has provided dental appointments to people who we support through our community kitchen - St. John's Kitchen (serving over 400 people each day), Downtown Street Outreach (caseload of about 600 people), Specialized Outreach Services (caseload of 900 people who are street involved with concurrent issues of addictions and mental health), King Street Shelter (a 24/7 shelter for 100 people) and Erbs Road Shelter (a 24/7 tiny cabin shelter for 50 people). These projects generate a wide number of prospective clients for Community Dental.

All of this group in total include over 2000 individuals who The Working Centre supports all of whom are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This group consists of those who are on the margins of society, often living without long term housing, many who suffer from both addictions and mental health issues.



In 2024, there were 203 successful appointments – 164 dental appointments and 39 hygienist appointments. Part of the reality of providing dental services to those whose daily lives are unpredictable means that appointments are missed which is disappointing for our volunteers. Dentists provided services valued at \$105,336 and hygienist provided services valued at \$8,935 for a total value of \$114,271.

How does this project benefit the community, including those who did not participate in the program?

Community Dental is a dental clinic built with volunteer and fund-raised dollars by The Working Centre to specifically serve the homeless community. It is a highly marginalized group with minimal access to dental care. Over time cavities, gum disease and distortions cause by physical interactions result in significant pain. This pain is sometimes soothed by street drugs or alcohol, which only makes the pain worse in the long run. The outreach and housing workers develop relationships of trust. In total 376 appointments were made at Community Dental, but only 203 were successful with the individual showing up. Another way to look at this is that tremendous work was accomplished by outreach workers to help 203 people show up for their appointments and to receive dental care.



Harm Reduction Training

The Working Centre partners with the Region of Waterloo Paramedic Services throughout the year to hold workshops on Harm Reduction. The workshops focus on responding to drug poisonings and overdoses, including when tools like an ambubags and pulse oximeters can be helpful – and when they are not. Paramedics in training spend time at St. John's Kitchen and King Street Shelter to become more familiar with the realities of homelessness. We partner actively within the local Harm Reduction network.

An Alternative Path of Positive Cultural Change

By Joe Mancini

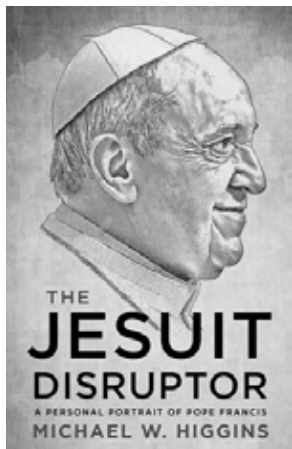
The Jesuit Disruptor offers a guide to embracing the animating spirit of the Gospels. Michael Higgins does this by documenting the changes percolating below the surface of Catholicism, rethinking democracy and reciprocity. Of course, the changes Francis has developed could all fall apart. Yet, Higgins produces evidence that the reforms themselves are the learning process.

This book is about an alternative path of positive cultural change. A model in utter contrast to the one presently playing out in Washington. Francis is disrupting patterns, expectations, and the standard way of doing things, but not as a negative-malignant way of overturning old structures, rather with a focus on constructive goals through useful actions.

A passage from Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* describes the method of his model of change: "The image of the polyhedron can represent a society where differences coexist, complementing, enriching and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations. Each of us can learn something from others."

The core story of *The Jesuit Disruptor* is a commentary on the Synod on Synodality, which was designed as an experiment with a new kind of democracy.

This approach is important because cultures change. Back in the



1980s, the Ontario Community Development Association held conferences with workshops where everything was scripted. With so many creative people at the conference, it seemed a wasted opportunity to not allow people to gather in groups of interest and learn from each other. This is often true of many conferences and so-called democratic processes. Higgins documents how the most important work Francis has accomplished is to create a Synod model where participants talk through issues without conclusions already decided. At press conferences, participants at the Synod on Synodality have all stated "their genuine pleasure in arriving at the synod without the outcomes determined in advance."

Higgins describes Francis' core method to bring about change, stating that "Francis' belief that synodality could only be experienced in an atmosphere of mutual trust, with

all participants in the round-table discussions feeling free to share their hesitations and vulnerabilities in an environment enveloped in prayer, is entirely consonant with the Jesuit emphasis on deep listening as an integral part of any spiritual encounter."

Francis' goals are clear with this approach. The signs of the times call for change in this age of upheaval as institutions withdraw from people. They call for a deepening of spirituality, a call to come out of ourselves, a call to dialogue, a call to reach out to the peripheries, to reject self-referential behaviour, to let go of status, to reflect the light of the Gospel. This is not a time to lock our doors, but to open the windows and to learn more. People have to reach deeper to find the opening of the spirit and to nurture it in community. Francis calls this the church as field hospital, accepting and bandaging up those who have been left on the outside without resources. Developing the habits and virtues of community.

Higgins draws on University of Toronto Jesuit, Bernard Lonergan, who identified the coming epoch shift in the 1980s, that Francis is currently embracing. The way forward in Lonergan's thinking is to



Michael Higgins, Author of *The Jesuit Disruptor*

take time to find prudence, trust, and meaningful encounters. Higgins shows how similar Francis' synodal approach is through a focus on listening deeply, walking together slowly with real people in mind, and a pastoral attentiveness to the issues that are real.

The book presents this as a vision of the church in the afternoon of Christianity, an uncertain time when different virtues are needed such as humility, dialogue, and discernment. The goal is to enlarge the tent, accompany the seekers, build radical inclusion, and see dialogue as the mechanism for traveling together in the midst of tensions.

While the new dialogue is what stands out the most, this is just a portion of the book's focus. There is a full chapter on the drama behind the election of a Jesuit Pope and the role the Pope plays in the Catholic world. As usual, Higgins does this with humour and energy, following fascinating rabbit holes of knowledge that only a Vaticanologist could explore. Using the polyhedron model, the book honestly covers the clerical sex abuse scandal, the groundbreaking encyclical *On Care for Our Common Home*, the wider social issues of LGBTQ+, how women gain a seat at the Vatican table, clericalism, immigration, and economic inequality.

Michael Higgins has had a major influence on Catholic thinking in Waterloo Region since he first turned up at St. Jerome's University some 40 years ago. While engaged in Catholic university governance, he has been watching and documenting the changes at the Vatican and shares them generously in this engaging book about hope and change.

The Rose Bird by Helen Davies

Book Review
By Darren Denomme

The Rose Bird is a beautifully written book providing a mother's perspective on loving and losing her daughter to fentanyl. The author, Helen Davies, gives a raw account of the life of her daughter Katie, the tragic story of the life and struggles of a young woman who eventually is taken from this world by addiction and mental health issues.

Davies starts the book with Chapter 1 – The End, setting out the excruciating pain experienced when a police officer knocks on their door and informs them that their 23 year old daughter has passed away from a fentanyl overdose. This opening leaves the reader with no doubt that this will be a terribly sad story of loss, yet throughout the rest of the book, readers will find themselves hoping and begging for Katie to get the treatment needed to turn things around and get through her addiction and mental health struggles.

This dramatic opening to the book leaves the reader desperately



wanting to understand how Katie's illnesses progressed to such a point, and the rest of the book answers that question. It is a roller coaster of emotions throughout the remaining chapters as you ride alongside Helen and hear first hand the experiences of a mother trying to support and guide her child away from the dangers of living on the streets and succumbing to addiction. While the book is incredibly well written and articulate, it is very raw. Davies gives a very honest and open

window to her life, starting with the birth of her first daughter Katie, then continues through Katie's teenage years where life began to unravel. It truly is a depiction of every parent's nightmare.

Throughout the book, the reader will experience a progression of painful events with Davies that eventually led to Katie's death. There are also many happy and hopeful times included, which seem to give the reader unwarranted hope and a brief reprieve from the onslaught of disappointment, sadness and frustration. At all times however, you feel the love of a mother for their child, and we as the reader also feel this love and support for Katie.

The Rose Bird is not a book about solutions, just the painful journey the family has and continues to travel. Davies sets out her firsthand experience with the support systems available in the Waterloo Region, exposing the many deficiencies and issues which failed her daughter, but these insights are given in a productive way, meant to help improve the system, rather than a vindictive delivery of blame. It is Davies's hope and desire that this book about the tragic life of her daughter can somehow reach the hands of those who

control and manage publicly funded programmes that need to be in place to prevent future loss of life in our region.

The book is also written with the purpose of providing support to others going through similar experiences, as Davies states, "While there will be content that is triggering, I hope our story might resonate and bring some validation of the feelings and thoughts you have, and the confusion and dilemmas you have faced or are facing in your own journey."

The Rose Bird ends with a chapter appropriately named Life Beyond Katie – Dread, Healing, and Hope. There is no closure to this story; there is no moving on from the loss of a child, just the desire and hope that you are able to feel the presence of lost ones in the beauty of the world around us, the roses and the birds.

More information about the book is available online at: www.rosebird.ca

Darren is a CFO and accountant who has supported the development of many tech companies in our region and is highly engaged in community. Darren joined The Working Centre's board in 2020.



Construction Continues on the Making Home Project

Construction continues on the Making Home project. The third floor addition including the roof, windows, walls and blue skin are all completed. The framing for the units on the third floor is complete along with plumbing, electrical and HVAC rough ins. Drywall is the next step. When you drive by 97 Victoria you can see the new windows donated by Strassburger Windows. They were installed in late November before the cold weather took hold. The second floor is now at the framing stage with progress towards completing plumbing rough-in and the HVAC rough-in along the main hallway.

The main floor ceiling of 7,500 square feet now has four layers of 5/8 fire rated drywall. The high number of drywall layers is because the main floor will have an occupancy of up to 200 people at any one time and above the main floor will be the 44 units of housing. The old sprinkler system from the 1950's will be replaced with an upgraded new system that will be installed throughout the building. Progress on the main floor includes the main entrance stairwell which is ready for finishing and the elevator shaft which is waiting for the installation of the elevator in mid-March. A major enhancement of this construction project has been the extra design work on the sanitary lines, accounting for the many different uses of the building including the apartments, the public access washrooms and showers and the operation of St. John's Kitchen. Extra underground servicing was necessary to ensure all these plumbing services had separate lines to avoid major sewage backups. All

this work, including exterior work in the courtyard to Victoria Street is now complete.

During the week before Christmas on December 16th, Element 5, a mass timber manufacturer specializing in fabrication and assembly of timber structures, arrived to site to assemble the new St. John's Kitchen building. When they left on December 20th, the mass timber structure was completed which included the roof and the interior finish. This structure which now sits in the former parking lot, will have a bank of windows overlooking the central courtyard



while serving as the entrance to the apartments, entrance area to St. John's Kitchen and to the medical clinic. By early summer in June, all of the buildings will be in their final stages of completion. With so much snow on site, it is hard to visualize, but the construction work will all come together over the next months.

During the Mayors' Dinner we look forward to providing a larger update on the construction project and the operation of Making Home. Another large update we are looking forward to sharing, is the progress of our fundraising campaign as it nears completion!



Closing King Street Shelter

continued from page 4

this lives out day to day, how to trust one's team, how to process one's own stuff, how we hold a consistent place of care. As we navigate the close-down conversations we are grieving the loss of this beautiful model of shelter, and we are appreciating the way each person has brought themselves into this work.

The need for a low-barrier shelter has not gone away. In fact we could probably use 3 low barrier shelters as we respond to the consequences of extensive periods of living unsheltered, building on the learnings of what we have done already. The closing of King Street Shelter means more people will be living on the streets of downtown Kitchener, already overwhelmed with the volume of people facing homelessness and the related deepening of mental health challenges.

King Street Shelter is closing because the neighbours insisted the shelter did not belong in their

neighbourhood. We are closing at a time when neighbourhood incidents have reduced and the shelter has found its stable culture after two years, a reasonable length of time when bringing together 100 people in a congregate space, people who are often deeply unwell when they enter the space. The building is still available but the commitment to close has been made.

As a wider community we need to make the choice to support low-barrier shelter options. The human cost of living unsheltered is unbearable to witness. The social costs increase as we add security and waste management to encampments, as we arrest people for aggression, theft and violence when they have nothing to lose, and the infections continue to grow from unsafe living conditions.

Making this choice is not only good for people living unsheltered, this is for the good of all of us. Fr. Greg Boyle again – "None of us belong, unless all of us belong." "None of us are well, unless all of us are well." We have learned this lesson through the pandemic, yet we continue to close down, close in and think we can push this away.



The 36th Mayors' Dinner Knowing Our Neighbours

Saturday, April 5th, 2025

Marshall Hall, Bingemans | Kitchener, Ontario

Cocktails & Social 5:30 PM | Dinner 6:45 PM

Program to Follow

Join us for this celebration and invite your friends to come along. All proceeds from the Mayors' Dinner support The Working Centre.

Individual Tickets | \$150

Includes tax receipt of \$55

Contributor Sponsorship Package | \$360

Includes two dinner tickets, recognition, and one tax receipt for \$170

Community Group Package | \$1100

Includes eight dinner tickets, one tax receipt for \$340

Patron Sponsorship Package | \$2500

Includes ten dinner tickets, preferred seating, recognition during event, and tax receipt for \$1550

Tickets can be purchased online at:

www.theworkingcentre.org/md2025

For more information, call 519.743.1151 x111 or email: mayorsdinner@theworkingcentre.org



Learn more about the project or donate at:
www.97victoria.theworkingcentre.org