

GOOD WORK NEWS

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

Issue 158

September 2024

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

Inside This Issue:

- Searching for Wholeness
- Change Over Time
- Construction Update at 97 Victoria
- Demolition & Transformation
- The Gospel According to Oz
- Resentment by Moralism
- Louisa House Update
- Fresh Ground Cafe is Re-Opening



Construction is progressing at the 97 Victoria site for the Making Home Project

See updates on pages 4 & 5

Change Over Time

By Stephanie Mancini

We are starting to get ready for the Point in Time (PiT) count, which is a national coordinated effort to take a snapshot of how many people are experiencing homelessness in one night. It is important to recognize the many ways that homelessness is increasing in our communities, especially for people just trying to cope as best they can. Encampments demonstrate that we no longer have an effective social structure response to homelessness. There are many more people staying with friends or couch surfing as people make space for people that they know.

One form of support that we have focused on in the past 5 years is to make sure that the people we meet are counted in these homelessness snapshots that are guiding policy, spending and access to available housing.

We usually focus our eye on the

person before us – I am listening, you are cared for, how can I help you? We feel the numbers in the growing desperation, in the lack of opportunities for creative problem-solving, when we see the growing unwellness of so many people who are left out – wounds, infections, psychosis, seizures, diabetes, burns, the cycle of seeking drugs, the risk of drug poisoning/overdose, outbreaks of frustration and violence, the desperate withdrawal from addictions. Not all are active drug users, but it does speak to the dystopia of the situation when we see growing numbers of people who fall prey to these highly addictive drugs.

Each day throughout The Working Centre we see large numbers of people who feel invisible despite their resilient focus on survival. Here is a Working Centre reflection

continued on page 2

Searching for Wholeness

By Joe Mancini

A Neighbourhood Story

All around us, we have seen higher levels of anger expressed in political and social environments. You see this in relation to politics, you see it in the eyes of enraged drivers, and we have seen it in our community as people reconcile the realities of more and more people experiencing homelessness and drug addiction, especially around shelters and spaces that support people most at risk.

As supports have moved into more neighbourhoods across KW, we are hearing people worry for their safety as they hold on to a time when homelessness and drug issues were not always as visible. Psychosis can be frightening. Theft can be violating. Fear is palpable as our neighbourhoods change with the growing reality of a group of people who are so left out that they have nothing to fear.

“Place a curfew on people so that they are not on the streets at night, since they are only doing illegal acts at night.” “Why do we give people a social income if they are going to spend it on drugs?” “I worked hard for what I have, why are we supporting these people who do not contribute to society?”

This frustration has become a part of the fabric of our society. The divisions are palpable, the trauma of people left out is unconscionable, the anger of people whose comfort and safety is being challenged leads to “othering” and divisions that we have not seen in our community.

We are witnessing a loosening of the bonds of social solidarity. This is not just about tending to the people

You truly exist where you love, not merely where you live.

– St. Bonaventure

who are most left out, it requires a rethinking of the social norms that have led us to this place. Part of the rebuilding process is moving towards embracing the gaze of compassion, the practice of feeling the beautiful interconnections of trees, animals, soil and humans. We are all in this together. It takes community to open our hearts, to be the change we want to see.

The Myth of Normal

In his latest book *The Myth of Normal*, Gabor Mate has put his finger on this cultural moment. He suggests that people long for Normal, they believe that some kind of ordered existence is attainable. But the reality for most people and groups is substantially different. In fact, our culture is far from Normal. We all participate in what Mate describes as a culture that “stresses the body, burdens the immune system and undermines emotional balance”.

He goes further, noting that the rash of ailments that people suffer through and the social realities they fight against are interlinked. Both come “with ideological blind spots that keep us from seeing our predicaments clearly [...] These blind spots – prevalent throughout the culture, keep us ignorant of the connections that bind our health to our social-emotional lives.”

One aspect of the myth of Normal

continued on page 7

Fresh Ground CAFE

Fresh Ground Cafe is re-opening this September!

Read more on page 8

Fortieth Year

Issue 158

September 2024

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.

Editors: Joe Mancini, Stephanie Mancini

Contributors: Zack Mason, JP Smola, Katherine Bitzer, Tim Hegedus, Peter Lisinski, Douglas MacLellan, Andy Macpherson, Christina Mancini

Editorial comments, changes of address and new subscriptions should be directed to:

The Working Centre
58 Queen St. S., Kitchener, Ontario, N2G 1V6
Phone: (519) 743-1151 • **Fax:** (519) 743-3840
E-mail: kara@theworkingcentre.org
Web: www.theworkingcentre.org
Canada Post Bulk #05306256
Charitable Registration #13092 9607 RR0001

THE REGISTRY THEATRE PRESENTS

Reverence for Radiance

Poetry by Rae Crossman

with accompaniment by Stephen Preece and Gerard Yun

Rae Crossman's Poems are clear, accessible and celebratory. He presents themes of nature, love, parenting, birth, death, and our shared humanity. Musical accompaniment will augment what promises to be a thought provoking evening.

Friday October 4th at 7:30pm

Registry Theatre | 122 Frederick St. Kitchener

This is a "Pay What You Can" event with proceeds going to support The Working Centre. Tickets at the door only.

More information at: registrytheatre.com

Change Over Time

continued from page 1

on the people we see and support. There are overlaps in these numbers as people are supported in multiple ways:

- St. John's Kitchen sees 300-450 people per day; 2,000+ different people who are unhoused or precariously housed
- Our outreach teams work closely with over 600 people living precariously; and we can easily name over 250 people living outside or couch surfing
- Every day we prepare and serve over 700 meals; share 80 food hampers weekly; this is possible because of the 800,000 pounds of food from Waterloo Region Foodbank in a year
- 80 people who are part of our community died in the last year and a half
- Specialized Outreach Services, our concurrent mental health and addictions team, supports 960 people
- King Street Shelter supports 100 people at a time, 268 different people in a year; King Street Shelter has reversed its pattern – now 60 women and 40 men as we prioritize women without shelter; over 40 people ask us to keep them in mind when a bed becomes available
- Erbs Road Shelter supports 50 people at a time, 110 different people since we opened

- Our Job Search Resource Centre on Queen Street supported 5,000 different people last year. There are 40-50 new people a day right now, people who are urgently seeking enough income to pay for the housing they have.

The numbers reflect the fullness and help us to understand why the work is harder; as we stand witness to the kind of decline most cannot bear to see, or do not directly see on a daily basis. Looking for some breath on this reflection, I picked up a copy of the book we put together

The pace of the work used to be different, the desperation was not as palpable, but the approach and hopes are still the same.

that reflects on Arleen Macpherson's work with St. John's Kitchen and The Working Centre over 30 years. The pace of the work used to be different, the desperation was not as palpable, but the approach and hopes are still the same. The cover of the book reflects a graphic by Andy Macpherson. The small print describes St. John's Kitchen – a beautiful wild community born of grace, dignity, trust, hope, serendipity, Loss and Resilience, compassion and empathy, generosity, mutuality, hardship and pain, awe and mystery, a pragmatic response that is not afraid. Then the larger image boldly states – We flourish and blossom when we give and receive love and understanding.

Our hope is that this vision carries us through this time, one person at a time.

Thank You to Perimeter Development



Perimeter Development donated over 100 cases of water bottles for distribution at St. John's Kitchen. Here is a photo of the team unloading the cases on a hot day. The photo below shows all the cases lined up for distribution. For people living on the streets and in encampments such bottles of water are critical. Thank you to Perimeter Development for your generous support.

HOCKEY HELPS THE HOMELESS



11TH ANNUAL WATERLOO REGION TOURNAMENT

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25TH, 2024 | RIM PARK

Our charity tournaments leverage Canada's affinity for hockey to raise awareness and financial support for the homeless through education, fundraising, and by partnering with solutions-based local homeless support agencies.

All net proceeds from the Waterloo Region event will support oneRoof, House of Friendship, Starling Community Services, Cambridge Shelter Corp, YW of K-W, and The Working Centre, which together run the Region's emergency shelter bed network. Last year, the Hockey Helps the Homeless Tournament of Waterloo Region raised over \$300,000 for these local community organizations.

Donate, volunteer, or support the tournament in other ways.

Please visit the website: www.hockeyhelpsthehomeless.com

FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT ERIK LUCZAK | ERIK@HHTH.COM

The Gospel According to Oz

Remarks from the Memorial Service for Rev. Dr. Oscar Cole Arnal at Christ Lutheran Church, Waterloo, Ontario, June 15, 2024

By Dr. Tim Hegedus & Pastor Peter Lisinski

When Mohandas Gandhi arrived in England to begin negotiating India's independence, a journalist asked him, "What do you think of western civilization?" The esteemed Mahatma replied, "I think it would be a very good idea!" [Sue Johnson, *Love Sense* (Little Brown, 2013), p. 285.] In his turn of the millennium book, *Napalm and Silly Putty*, American comedian George Carlin empathizes: "When I was young I used to read about the decline of western civilization and I decided it was something I would like to make a contribution to." [George Carlin, *Napalm and Silly Putty* (Hyperion, 2001), p. 188.] The revered Indian Hindu prophet and martyr and the irreverent Irish-Catholic comedian find a true kindred spirit in our own revered and irreverent brother in Christ, Reverend Doctor Oscar Cole Arnal.

The title of this sermon, "The Gospel According to Oz," refers to the "evangel", Greek for the "good news" of God's new civilization, the "kingdom of God" envisioned, embodied and established by the radical first century itinerant rabbi named Jesus of Nazareth. And in Oz's understanding, the inspiration for Jesus' evangelical mission lies in the prophetic manifesto proclaimed by his pregnant, unwed mother under the fateful shadow of the Jerusalem temple, in the home of one of its priests, who said:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for ... [God] has scattered the proud ... brought down the powerful ... lifted up the lowly ... filled the hungry ... and sent the rich away empty (Luke 1:46-55).



With the best balance of humour, "dross and gold" I have ever witnessed, Oz persistently practiced what the poster on his office door during my seminary days preached: "Your life may be the only Gospel other people ever read."

Talk about "levelling the playing field"! Pastor Paul Bosch of lately sainted memory, also an insightful and eloquent apologist for the gospel, and one of Oz's closest friends, commented on these words of Scripture: "What Mary announces [in her Magnificat] is a revolutionary new vision ... challenging the conventional values that direct the principalities and powers who now enslave so much of our world, [including] most of us!" [Paul Bosch, *Church Year Guide* (Augsburg Fortress, 1987), p. 91-92.] Ouch!

Mother Mary's "Magnificat Spirit" in turn shaped Jesus' "Inaugural Address" in their hometown synagogue: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to ... proclaim release to the captives and ... to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's Jubilee" (Luke 4:18-19). Today this scripture has

been fulfilled again in our hearing!

Mary's "Magnificat Spirit" and Jesus' "Jubilee Sermon" form the very heart and soul of the personal faith Oz "wore on his sleeve" – or literally on the buttons of his baseball cap and the slogans of his tee-shirts, which his family have brought here today as we gather as a rainbow coalition of Gospel people and promise.

Some of you will know that, growing up, Oz was not very fond of his given name. But in later years he found great pride in sharing his once despised, but now highly prized, baptismal name with El Salvador's beloved archbishop, prophet and martyr, Saint Oscar Romero, who courageously held high the "two-edged sword" of the spirit of the Magnificat and Jesus' Jubilee sermon! "The mission of the church", according to Oz's Salvadoran namesake, "is to identify itself with the poor, to join with them in their struggle for justice and, in so doing, find its own salvation."

For Oz, the promise of finding God's salvation with and among the world's structurally impoverished and systemically oppressed children of God propelled him beyond the proverbial "ivory tower" of academia, as well as the "bourgeois ways" he lamented in his poetry. Oz's robust conscience recognized the limited perspective and, therefore, limited credibility – and, therefore, the limited effectiveness – of his deferential status as a pastor and professor in the "comfortable pew" of institutionalized "white privilege".

To overcome the inevitable inertia of a privatized spirituality – and the glib self-delusion of smug self-righteousness – Oz intentionally stepped out of the introverted comfort zone of the self-described "Luddite" and bookworm we all know and love, to immerse himself in a public "spirituality of the feet" learned among Franciscan comrades, persistently practiced in self-critical accountability, social advocacy, and political activism – even under fire of tear gas or water cannon and, more recently, despite the frustration of declining health and restricted mobility,

complicated by the social distancing of the COVID 19 pandemic. With the best balance of humour, "dross and gold" I have ever witnessed, Oz persistently practiced what the poster on his office door during my seminary days preached: "Your life may be the only Gospel other people ever read."

Like the door to his office, Oz's life was, and remains, an open book, written with transparent humanity, including honest self-examination and authentic contrition for his confessed "flaws, misdeeds and deep failings." Notwithstanding the sin that manifests itself in the natural self-centredness that plagues all mere mortals, The Gospel According to Oz – his teaching, preaching and living – testifies to the truth of God's salvation, made flesh in Jesus, whose full humanity fulfills the divine promise inherent in the name revealed in a dream to his father and mentor, Joseph (Matthew 1:21) – "God saves" – as well as the meaning of Prophet Isaiah's name: "God is salvation."

Throughout his life, Oz embraced and exemplified God's new civilization, envisioned, embodied and established in the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth. Today, in his death, Oz's legacy calls for a truly evangelical globalization of human solidarity, in truth, justice and peace, bequeathing to us the prophetic mantle of the gospel he ever so passionately personified for us and among us.

In today's Hebrew scripture reading, Prophet Isaiah – whose Jubilee vision Jesus' Jubilee mission fulfills – promises that God will be with us when we pass through the waters and walk through the fire. Today God walks with Oz, and promises to walk with us, too, until that surely coming day when we all pass through the water and fire of God's baptismal grace to assemble with Oz and all God's risen saints; and "free at last" we will go "marchin' in" to the whole and holy communion of his Gospel's promised future within God's eternal life of infinite love.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit is with you now, Amen.

2024 Tax Clinic Helps Secure Nearly \$9.4 Million in Benefits

This past spring, The Working Centre's free tax clinic helped **1474 individuals and families** file their taxes to secure **\$9,384,000 in benefits**. Our Money Matters program was able to expand its reach and successfully processed **1162 tax returns** from March to May 2024, serving a greater number of community members than ever before. We supported numerous new Canadian residents in navigating the tax system for the first time, enabling them to access vital benefits.



The numbers represent more than mere statistics; they signify the positive change and stability brought into the lives of those we serve, and also play a critical role in enhancing the financial security for many in our community. Tax credits, refunds, payments from GST, OTB, CCB, CAIP, and more are often a lifeline for covering essential expenses and ensuring secure housing. This support comes at a time when elevated living costs and inflation continue to challenge household stability.

We want to express special recognition to our volunteers who tirelessly worked behind the scenes and on the front lines—receiving documents, screening, completing intake forms, tackling complex tax situations, filing returns, and ensuring the smooth operation of the clinic. Thank You to Prosper Canada and Ontario MCCSS for support for this financial empowerment project.

Construction Update at 97 Victoria

The 97 Victoria site is located near the corner of Victoria Street and Weber Street in Kitchener

Target Occupancy Date: September 2025

Third floor addition is being built for 22 units of supportive housing

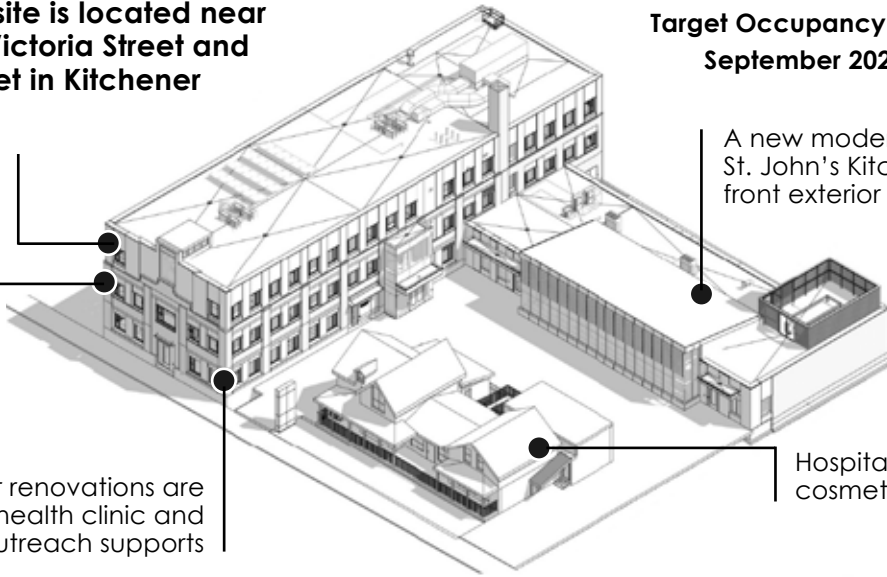
A new modern building for St. John's Kitchen with glass front exterior is being built

The former St. John's Kitchen space on the second floor is being converted into 22 units of supportive housing

Community Dental Clinic (not shown) provides access to oral healthcare and supports to those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness

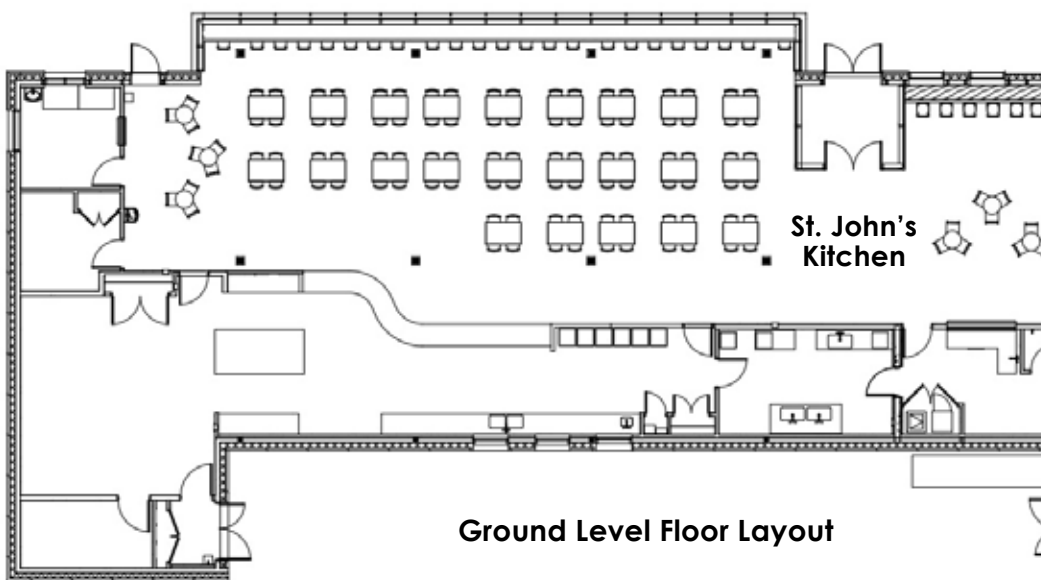
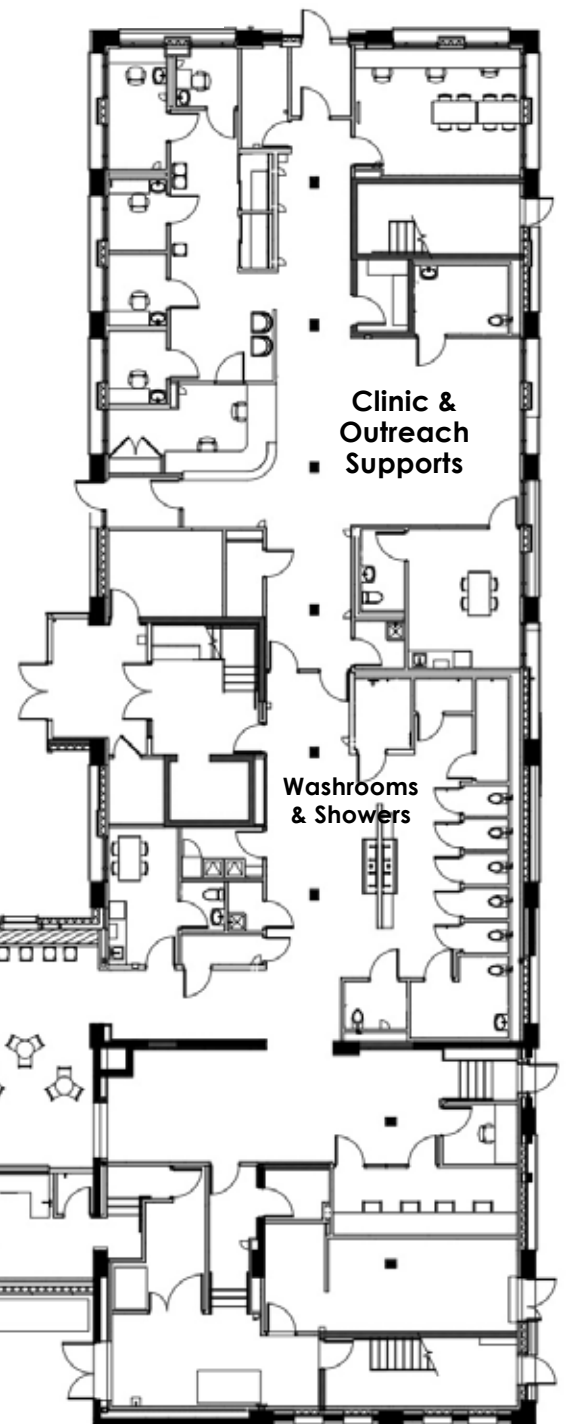
Ground floor renovations are adding a health clinic and expanded outreach supports

Hospitality House is receiving cosmetic upgrades



Making Home Project Taking Shape

97 Victoria will focus on the combination of housing, health and community, supporting those most left out of services, and connecting people with mental health and addiction supports. We are excited that the building of the 44 new units of housing is well underway. Also exciting is that the foundation for the new St. John's Kitchen building is set to begin in mid-September. A third development is the building of a 3500 sq ft medical clinic. The clinic is designed for primary health care and programing such as low barrier access to addiction services, supportive therapy and groups, and ABI supports. This space will add to the in-the-community-approach to health care, mental health and addictions that The Working Centre and Community Health Caring (CHC) have developed.



Ground Level Floor Layout



Computer visualization of the renovated building viewed from Victoria Street



Computer visualization of the interior of the new St. John's Kitchen space



Workers installing plumbing and utilities on the ground floor level



Construction of the new third floor that will include 22 units of housing



Construction on 97 Victoria viewed from the 100 Victoria St. encampment site



The second floor previously home to St. John's Kitchen will include 22 units of housing

Demolition and Transformation

By Katherine Bitzer

The transformation of 97 Victoria Street is well underway!

In February 2024, Govan Brown mobilized to site, and interior demolition began. This demolition work on the ground floor and the second floor of our existing building continued through March. In early April, with the receipt of our Building Permit for Foundation, Site Services and Under Slab Plumbing, work moved quickly ahead with the footings and foundation walls poured for the elevator and all 3 stairwells, and the waterproofing for the elevator pit. In addition, installation of below-grade plumbing on the ground floor got underway. This is a crucial part of the building process as we have worked with the whole design crew to ensure that the plumbing system is robust. This includes zoning the plumbing to create separate plumbing streams for St. John's Kitchen as separate from the housing. We have even zoned some of the plumbing for the housing area, so as to limit plumbing backups that can be disastrous.

By the end of May, installation of the structural masonry and the structural steel for both the ground floor and the second floor was about 90% complete, and the below-grade plumbing on the ground floor was 95% complete.

Also completed is the demolition of the concrete annex building attached to 97 Victoria. For almost 20 years it was the storage/sorting area for Worth A Second Look. In early September, excavation will proceed for the foundation of the new St. John's Kitchen building. There was also the partial demolition of the concrete block garage (shown on page 4) that was attached to Hospitality House. The demolition of 70% of the garage allows for the development of the courtyard space which is the main gathering area for the entrance to the housing, entrance to St. John's Kitchen and entrance to the Primary Clinic space.

After our full Building Permit was issued the main work started to accelerate. June was a busy month

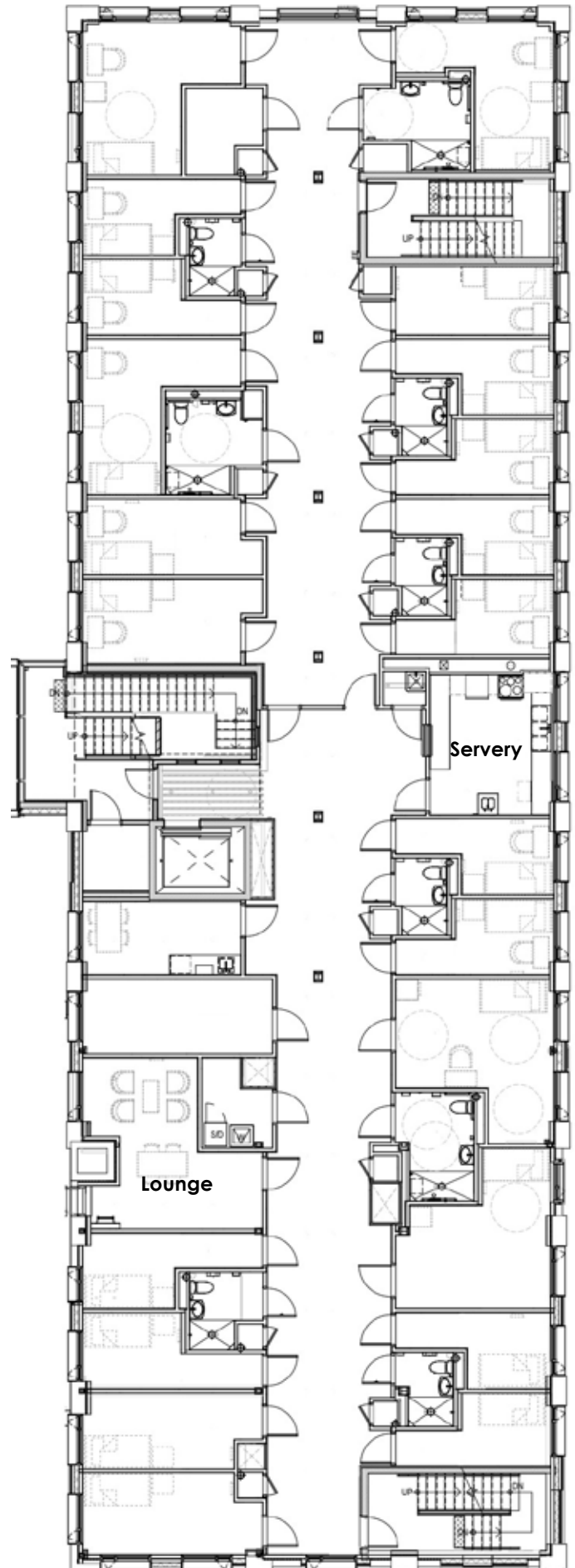
with masonry, steel, mechanical and electrical contractors on site. The priority job was to erect the new third floor structural steel. This part of the construction process needed to be completed before construction could begin on the new St. John's Kitchen building, as this area was needed for staging the steel work. We did experience a one month delay related to an unforeseen electrical issue at the front of the building. However, once the third floor structural steel work began, progress finally became visible for all to see!

In July, demolition for the roof openings (for the third floor stairs and elevator) was completed. One of the structural elements of the design are the three stairwells – the main entrance, and the two fire escape stairwells on either end of the building. All three of these stairwells are constructed of concrete block and have been mostly completed to the third floor.

On the hottest Friday of the summer in early August, the cement crew was on site to pour the 7500 square feet cement pad for the main floor. The 97 Victoria main floor is composed of two sections, the back half is made up of the area for the washrooms, showers, laundry, SJK storage, electrical room and the front half will be the Primary Health clinic. Also completed is the demolition work for the future main entrance.

As of September the exterior walls for the third floor are being framed and cladded. On the second floor the exterior framing is being completed so that rooms and plumbing can be marked out. All together there is good momentum as the construction project moves into the Fall.

The second floor layout is shown on the right. It is similar to the third floor layout. Both floors of housing will include several wheelchair accessible bedroom units, single bedroom units, 9 shared washroom/showers per floor including accessible washrooms, a servery on the second floor, lounge, laundry on each floor and a staff room.



Second Floor Layout - Housing Units



Resentment by Moralism

By Zack Mason

Drama at the Checkout Line

A few days ago, while grocery shopping, I saw one woman accidentally butt in front of another at the checkout line.

"Oops, I was in line here," said Woman One.

Woman Two swiveled around with one of those wide-eyed, teeth-bared, who-do-you-think-you-are smiles. "Oh. Okay. I didn't see you pressed against the magazines there, but I'll let you go first."

Woman One smiled and stepped into her rightful place in line. "Oh, well! You try to save space and people make mistakes! It's okay!"

Woman 2 fumed behind her.

For something as apparently banal as buying spaghetti and tomato sauce, the tension was unbelievable.

Trials of Story Telling

When I started this article, I figured that getting people on the streets to talk to me would be a breeze. Of course they'd be excited to share their stories with a writer!

I was mistaken. The truth is that over the last few months, wringing stories out of people hasn't been easy.

There are a number of factors here:

The weather, for example: when it's bad, people aren't social. They're guarded, quiet, scarce.

Time is an issue as well. Most people I tried to interview were just too busy to talk. Non-homeless friends were surprised by this: "What are they doing? It's not like they have jobs."

One would-be interview went like this:

"Would you like to participate in an interview?"

"Yeah, I'd love to."

"Today?"

"No, not today. I'm busy today."

"No problem. Are there any days you aren't busy?"

"I'm always busy."

The final obstacle was simple privacy. Surprise, surprise, people in one of society's most stigmatized groups don't jump at the opportunity to dump their life stories to strangers.

Brenda

Eventually, I spoke to Brenda. She was familiar to me: I've seen her asking for change for years. I've seen her in snow and rain. I've seen her cheerful, and I've seen her looking up at passers by, tears in her eyes, an expression of true, profound desperation.

I'd pestered Brenda for interviews before, but usually she was busy. On April 29th, mostly out of desperation I pestered again. To my surprise, Brenda said fine, so I sat down on the pavement and slid out my notebook.

The way our actions are perceived by others becomes more important than the actions themselves. In order to preserve our value and virtue, we objectify those around us. By being overly socially aware, polite for politeness' sake, we use the people around us as ladder rungs towards moral superiority.

"How long have you been living out here?"

"Oh, I'm not homeless."

The notebook slid back in.

Over the next forty-five minutes, Brenda gave me the run-down of her day to day. She has a hard time finding work because of her learning disabilities. She lives with her husband (who has cerebral palsy), and pan-handles so she can buy him weed. Things have been especially difficult since last year, when he was hit by a truck trying to cross Victoria street on his mobility scooter. The driver paid for a new scooter, but Brenda's husband is constantly in pain.

"You live close by?"

"Nah, but I take the bus."

"Ugh, transfers can be so expensive."

"I just get a month pass."

She goes to a dispensary further down the stretch because she lost her wallet a while back. They know her there and let her buy weed without ID.

"How'd you lose your ID? Did something happen?"

"Nah," she said, cheerfully. "Just lost it."

She enjoys drugstore thrillers, romances, sudoku, and word searches, all of which she consumes voraciously as she sits and begs.

"Are people ever nasty to you here?" I asked, reaching for my notebook.

"Sometimes rude, but I don't really care."

I put the notebook away again.

"Some people are dumb too. They ask for the time and I tell them 'it's 4:55' and they're like 'how'd you know that?' Duh! The bus stop right there has a clock, idiot!"

She smoked a cigarette.

She's pretty sure she's pregnant.

Brenda told me about the people she knows: the workers in the surrounding stores who she chats with, friends who stop by. We had to wrap up our talk before 5:30 because someone was coming to pick her up. We talked about her husband, his complaints and gripes. At one point, someone named Austen stopped by with chocolate. We hung out, talked about piercings and tattoos we had or wanted, ate the chocolate and he left. I gave Brenda a 20. I left too.

I had a strange feeling as I left my meeting with Brenda. I couldn't

really place it at first, but the next day I was talking to my parents about the whole thing, and it began to make sense.

"The article isn't going well."

"Oh?"

"I spent like an hour talking to some lady yesterday only to find out she's not even homeless."

Resentment.

I went on to explain Brenda's story.

"Zack, that sounds pretty bleak."

They were absolutely right—Brenda's situation is terrible: no job prospects, no upward-mobility, a husband with chronic illness and constant pain, and a baby on the way.

Unpacking Moral Standing

Initially, my resentment puzzled me. Yesterday though, the conversation I overheard in the grocery store made things click.

In our society we value kindness, and a person's moral standing is often based on how socially aware they are. The problem that speaking to Brenda showed me is that sometimes we become dependent on other people for our moral value, and therefore, our self concept. The way our actions are perceived by others becomes more important than the actions themselves. In order to preserve our value and virtue, we objectify those around us. By being overly socially aware, polite for politeness' sake, we use the people around us as ladder rungs towards moral superiority.

The resentment comes in when the person we are trying to objectify ruins the fun by defying our expectations. This is what Woman One did in the grocery store after Woman Two "allowed" her to have her rightful spot in line. Woman

Two tried to take the moral high ground, Woman One flipped the script, Woman Two bristled in resentful silence.

It's also what Brenda did to me. Throughout our talk, I was constantly trying to put her down with my sensitivity.

"Is it hard living out here?"

"Did you lose your wallet in some traumatic way?"

"Are you constantly mistreated?"

"Poor you, having to take the bus."

Every step of the way, I was trying to diminish Brenda's subjectivity. By trying to 'relate' to her, I was actually working to widen the space between us so I'd have a broader gap to bridge, making me a better person.

Listen and Being with the Other

The realization I did this makes me feel queasy now.

Every step of the way, Brenda defied me. Every time I tried to cast her in a more downtrodden, dramatic light, she refused to fit the narrative, and (at first) I resented her for it.

In my first article for GWN, I argued that our society is disconnected and riddled with isolation. But the disconnect is easier to fall into than I originally thought. Even when trying to be more related to one another, our moral insecurity can get the better of us, drive the disconnect deeper. I think Brenda taught me to be more aware of that

Remembering this meeting, I keep returning to Austen. He just came by, shared some candy, hung out, left. No pretenses, no bull. He was simply generous with his chocolate and his time.

Louisa House Update

David Ramirez Bumaguin
Supportive Housing Worker

This month we warmly welcomed two young men from Ethiopia, to Louisa Street. The keys to their rooms were a symbol of their new home in our community.

I showed them the emergency exits and the basement with washers and dryers. I talked to them about boundaries and sharing cultural experiences that will help them grow, strengthen, and become part of this friendly community. You should absorb the best from this culture, combine it with your own, and put it into practice.

I advised them and explained a few concepts that this society appreciates. Tolerance and behaviour are critical keys when you arrive as a newcomer. I learned this back in 2001 when I supported the Lancaster Hospitality House when over 50 people a year were supported into KW. It takes work to minimize/eradicate your own bias about others. Humans sometimes assume that one group is better than the other, but unfortunately, that is not the case. Each of us is unique, with strengths, weaknesses and fallacies.

However, we need to learn about each other and respect where we live. Working toward a Tikkum Olam is not easy, but most of it depends on us. Here, we learn about you, them and the earth; we all deserve to live intertwined in harmony.

Searching for Wholeness

continued from page 1

is the belief that everyone can pull themselves up by the bootstraps. Cultural solidarity ends when those most disenfranchised seem to trample on the myth. Particularly if they transcend established boundaries like property. Yet Mate stresses that it is exactly at this point of tension when we need compassion and social understanding.

Homelessness is essentially emotional trauma and multi-leveled social abandonment. For many, it has numerous starting points such as an addiction, psychosis, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), anti-social behaviour, brain injury, developmental issues or debilitating physical illness. Over time the individual dealing with severe social disability is impaired in their ability to navigate society and it worsens when they are subjected to the cycle of homelessness.

Many fight their way through this maze, showing tremendous courage, while others with the same level of courage cannot find their way out. The capacity to rise above social odds is a mystery that is written on the hearts of each person.

Complicating homelessness is the ongoing drug epidemic that has been building for twenty years and flows directly out of this culture of Normal. Drug use grows when family and community ties lessen, and as gangs profit financially from locally produced synthetic drugs. Drugs like fentanyl and crystal meth are potent, cheap and easily distributed. They tear through personalities and wreak havoc on the delicate brain chemistry of their users.

Even when people enter into recovery they face a wall of obstacles. A person has to engage emotional change and the development of personal meaning while also dealing with past relationships, family, loneliness, and boredom. We work with people in the shelter system that are trying to move past addictions while they have no options for housing. It takes a village to support the journey. These are challenges that are enormous for anyone to overcome. Outreach workers are often the friend offering a helping hand.

Ongoing Shelter Work and A Series of Neighbours Meetings

It is in this context of homelessness that the neighbours meetings about homelessness services at the King Street Shelter have witnessed an unfortunate level of anger. The neighbours have raised legitimate concerns about property theft and other disturbances in their neighbourhood that are clearly the result of The Working Centre and the Region of Waterloo establishing a 100 person shelter for those experiencing homelessness.

The contrast in circumstances is enormous, and even as people express their outrage, they see the dichotomy of circumstances. Those

**Remain true to yourself but
move ever upward toward
greater consciousness and
greater love.**

– Teilhard De Chardin

who have a place to call home, live under the stresses of life, but they have a home. Those without a home, look at the housed with envy and long for the peace that a home might bring. It is impossible to ignore the resentment of their circumstances.

The sirens of emergency response vehicles coming to the shelter at all hours in response to an overdose or medical emergency are loud, but so is the stark reality of people's lives as they struggle to survive opioid drug addiction, and the overlapping effect on staff and first responders as they put their heart and soul into offering lifesaving help.

It is true that many of those who are homeless are dealing with addictions and are looking for money in any way they can. They have given up on the dignity of housing and they can only focus on their addiction. There are others, a larger group, who deal with PTSD and psychosis who truly scream and yell to let out the turmoil inside. They will do this in a park, in front of a house, or in the middle of the street. Their depth of dislocation is high. Each of these people are part of our community.

Many who respond to this crisis call for more health care, medications that alleviate psychosis or schizophrenia. In reality, medical/mental health and addiction supports cannot keep up. We are living in a stew of prescribed and illegal drugs, seeking to balance out body chemistry, a balance that is exacerbated by street drugs, laced with so many additives that create the ups-and-downs that now govern people's lives. We all continue to act into this work of finding chemical/medicated balance, helping a person to feel more human, more themselves.

The despair and hopelessness makes people feel lost and unloved.

How do we hold on to a person past this despair, to help them see the hope and compassion that makes their life feel meaningful?

Recently, I was at Worth A Second Look (WASL) and a young man was purchasing something at the cash station. After he left, Ayman asked me if I knew who that was. I didn't recognize him, but Ayman let me know it was someone who I knew well for about seven years when he constantly experienced intense moments throughout the downtown. He was out of control and there was nothing to be done. He was smart enough not to end up in hospital against his will, but he also had deep mental health issues that were obvious. Yet today after slow, deliberate care and coordination of supports, he was shopping at WASL and part of community.

It is not easy to express the depth of good work being done every day, in deep collaboration. Social problems cannot be solved in a magical way. It takes consistent work and resources to support people past their afflictions.

In the community meetings we hear frustration that can border on disregard for the community that is disenfranchised. There were occasions when people stated that they wanted 'these people' to go somewhere else. One person called it an infestation of homelessness. The level of fear was high. People are witnessing these harsh realities for the first time and they want it to go away.

In all cases, this person without a home, comes from our culture - a culture where they were abused, abandoned, taught bizarre social skills from birth or from life's experiences. All humans have the good in them, but many have been shunned. The good is bottled up inside. Fr. Greg Boyle asks, what is the language of this violence, what is behind the pain and disconnection?

Change, Growth, Healing

As the shelter moved into its second year, changes by both The Working Centre and Region of Waterloo have made substantial improvements. A 24/7 shelter for 100 people dealing with the trauma of homelessness is a work of give and take. The most important change was developing the side yard with a

fence facing King Street. A fence had been proposed in the first months of the shelter but was deemed not possible for various reasons.

At the same time, over a year, 268 people used the shelter for at least one night. Of that group 63 left for housing including 7 who found housing on their own, 15 who were supported into the private market with last month rent assistance, 36 who found subsidized housing and 5 who moved into supportive housing. Helping people find housing is an important part of shelter work.

Over time we have responded and evolved changes so that all the pieces work better together. The genuine stress of the day-to-day work of providing shelter with 100 people living and sleeping in the same spaces, creates a focus on the work at hand, making the best of a hard situation. The concerns of the neighbours have brought new resources to support the complex needs people are experiencing. However, many of these challenges are not easily fixed with more resources.

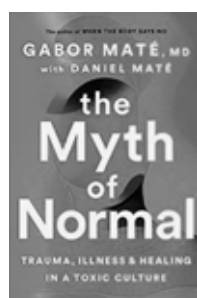
Our culture rarely teaches us how to see the whole, how to contemplate the fullness of our wondrous natural world. The joy and struggle of living demands ongoing deep self-discovery. Our culture can only grow past its paralyzed mindset when we identify the frustrations of the violence that is within and among us. Ilia Delio, a Franciscan theologian, puts it this way: the inner war of rejection is inevitably projected into an outer war of rejection. The path of liberation is the growth of the good. It is a path of higher consciousness that demands self-knowledge.

The lessons from this point of tension lead toward gaining the ability to see the wider wholeness of our interconnected world, to follow the greater spirit of healing, kindness and compassion. The actualization of love must become personal, from the heart, practiced on the ground, overcoming alienation and disconnection. Our model can be the natural world where unifying and synthesizing energy results in ever new combinations of growth. The wonder of that growth is a model for our organizations and neighbourhoods. It can be a model for how people heal and grow out of the trauma they have experienced.

Our goal in community is to understand how the power of love can break through the layers of matter around us. On so many levels the depth of relationships need to extend to human personhood and also to the birds, insects, trees, water and animals. It is not about what we have materially, it is the depth of our spirit interiorly that can recognize how we belong to one another and to the natural world. Fr. Greg Boyle repeats that we all belong to each other and none of us are well until all of us are well. This is the wholeness of healing, the wholeness of forgiveness and the wholeness of listening. It is the journey of deepening love, the growth of the good that we need to all continue striving towards.

BOOKS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Place orders: 519-743-1151 x111 or catalogue.theworkingcentre.org



**The Myth of Normal:
Trauma, Illness and
Healing in a Toxic
Culture**

Gabor Maté

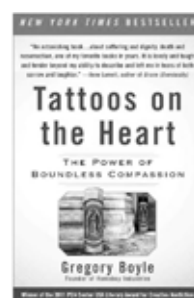
576 pages | \$39.95



**The Not-Yet God:
Carl Jung, Teilhard
de Chardin, and the
Relational Whole**

Ilia Delio

304 pages | \$39.99



**Tattoos on the
Heart: The Power
of Boundless
Compassion**

Fr. Gregory Boyle

240 pages | \$26.00



Fresh Ground Cafe is Re-Opening

After considerable remediation work on the building at 256 King, we are ready to open our doors. We have intentionally crafted the space at Fresh Ground to be an oasis of brightness and calm, with close to 1,000 plants helping us to build fresh ground as a gathering place.

We are introducing a new menu that celebrates community, sustainability, and the joy of sharing meals. This menu will be available at Fresh Ground, in take home meals and catering options.

In our lively kitchen, we prepare fresh food daily, uniting individuals from diverse backgrounds to collaborate, acquire new skills, and create delicious, affordable, and healthy whole food dishes. Discover our beloved traditional favorites alongside offerings from our new café, which features a plant-based menu designed to encourage mindful eating and promote a lighter lifestyle.



We have been working to build a regenerative café model by reducing waste in our practices and in our take out dishes. A new coffee roaster prepares fresh roasted coffee and the delicious teas and drinks make this a great spot to grab a tea or coffee, or meet a friend.

We are hoping you come for more than the food. Fresh Ground Café is also a space that will host discussions, explorations of ideas, and circles to understand deeply the great unravelling of our world and the opportunity to build a more compassionate and just world.

We welcome you to join us! Fresh Ground Cafe is open Monday to Saturday 8:30am – 3:30pm.

More information available at: www.theworkingcentre.org/freshground

PS: Next we are working on renewing the Queen Street Commons Café and the Green Door on Queen Street South!



Recycle Cycles Community Bike Shop helping the public to repair bikes. Since opening in January at our new location on King Street the shop has been constantly full, helping people to do small and large bike repairs. Over 400 bikes have been recycled or refurbished in the last six months. New volunteers are welcome! We are looking for volunteers to do bike repair and to learn to support the bike reception area. Visit the bike shop at 256B King St. East, Kitchener at our Fresh Ground location.

Bike Shop Hours:

- Wed: 12:30pm – 6pm
- Thurs: 10:30am – 1pm
- Fri: 11:30am – 4pm
- Sat: 10:30am – 4pm

worth a second look furniture & housewares

256 King St. East & 37 Market Lane

Steps from the Kitchener Market



Worth A Second Look thrift shop provides the community with low-cost used furniture and assorted housewares items while keeping reusable goods out of landfills.



Thousands of affordable items are available for purchase!

- Furniture | Small Appliances | Housewares
- Electronics | Tools | Linens | Mattresses
- Jewelry | Books | Toys | Movies & Music



Donations welcome! If you would like to donate items, please contact us or drop off items at the donation door of the King St. East entrance during open hours.

Tuesday - Friday: 9am - 5pm | Saturday: 9am - 3pm

519.569.7566 | wasl@theworkingcentre.org



A customer enters Worth A Second Look thrift store at 37 Market Lane. Located steps from the Kitchener Market, Saturdays are a great day to visit and shop from thousands of affordable items. Come and see the wide selection of furniture and household goods that are available at affordable prices!