

The Welcome Home

April 2020

W.H. Update



In these difficult times.

Delores Courchene — Community Coordinator

With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing all of us to spend more time indoors, we at The Welcome Home are still functioning with our live-in community maintaining life here, but like most other places we have closed our doors for our regular programs. However, as part of our on-going services to the community, our Wednesday morning hampers and sandwich distribution carries on. We appreciate all those that continue to give so that our Hampers and sandwich program can continue.

Life as we know it has taken a turn and, for many of us, it is more difficult. Many of our regular attendees are already struggling with balancing their finances, so now they are trying to make every dollar count. They are needing to go further to find what they need for their homes because of the shortages of essential items in the stores closer to them.

While we may not be gathering together in person, we continue to stay connected with almost everyone, who had come out on our Family Nights or Sunday Liturgy, through a personal phone call, a text, a message on Facebook or a message on Messenger. We also live-stream our Sunday Liturgy for people to watch and stay connected with us. Some have commented that they are happy to watch and hear Fr Larry's messages and that they miss coming to WH. People share pictures with us and let us know how well they are keeping. Some continue to ask for prayers for themselves and for loved ones. Some have asked for assistance in applying for EI and the CERB. We do miss the physical presence of everyone, but we also understand how important social distancing is at this time. It's great to actually see people when we are out shopping or greet them from the bottom of the stairs when we deliver groceries. Hugging is what we want but we remain distant and just briefly exchange a few words.

This time has given me an opportunity to catch up with some much needed work on the computer. "Self Isolation", as it is currently called, gives us time for family, time to slow down, time to catch our breath, time to reflect and time to take in the "Now". Maybe we needed this time to slow down. Maybe....could be so many things !

This picture was taken by Gabriel outside The Welcome Home, when I look at it, it gives me a feeling of hope. Hope that God is here and He's giving us a sign that things will get better.

Matthew 11:25-30 *Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*



Context for our Charism - Larry Kondra, C.Ss.R., Chaplain

In this Covid 19 moment of history, our ministry at The Welcome Home, like so many others, has needed to adapt to a new “normal” and discover ways to accompany the poor and marginalized in these challenging times. Recently, one of our friends from the street commented about the “state of emergency” declared in Manitoba: He said, “this is the way I live all the time: I’ve been jobless for years, I can’t travel, most people avoid me when they see me on the sidewalk, there are always limitations and restrictions – welcome to the world of the poor!” He then added, “a buddy of mine just got a big stack of coffee filters, they are flushable and a lot cheaper, no worries for toilet paper!” LOL! The view many in our neighborhood have of the present crisis is formed through the basic needs of life or lack thereof. Sheila Block, senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, suggests that in the current reality, “the greatest harm is likely to those people who are most marginalized and have the least resources.”

Among the folks in our community gathered around The Welcome Home, 95% do not have credit cards, 60% don’t have internet and 25% don’t have a phone 100% of the time. Self-isolating in a small house with 7 other people and one bathroom isn’t a consideration. Being poor is a full-time job, especially if you are a single parent or grandmother raising children. You have no car, you search for the cheapest deals to stretch your loonies, and you pull your hair out trying to home-school (without internet) and keep the kids busy (in-doors in the springtime!) and, if someone in the household is into an addiction – *Lord, have mercy!* While covid 19 has no respect for borders, it is not a democratic disease; inequalities in housing and income make a huge difference. To be sure, this covid moment is revealing systemic injustices that have long been a part of what was “normal” so when we speak of going back to “normal” we need to keep that in context.

Being housebound and physical distancing goes against my instincts as a Redemptorist to be with the people we serve. As Redemptorists, we have a storied history of going where others rather not go. In the Yorkton Province of old, there is a confrere who stands out during this time of pandemic: Fr. Hendrik Boels, C.Ss.R., born in Belgium, entered the Congregation in 1901 and was ordained in 1907. After receiving permission to adopt the Byzantine-Ukrainian Rite, he arrived in Yorkton, Sask on Jan. 6, 1909. During the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, he comforted people through his many pastoral visits, giving the “last rites” to many, until he himself became infected and died in a parishioner’s house in Hubbard, Sask, Nov. 24, 1918 at the age of 36 years. This gentle, holy Redemptorist pioneer was considered by many to be a saint. He dedicated his life to the Ukrainians and, in spite of the pandemic, a huge crowd gathered for his funeral. The world was different then and it will be different after covid-19. In a cyber-savvy, touchless post-covid world, the poor are at risk of being left out and left behind. Fr. Hendrik’s example challenges us to do all we can to be there for the least, the last and the lost – come what may.



At The Welcome Home, we (Redemptorists, Partners in Mission and volunteers) look forward to a house filled with smiles again, as soon as possible. In our ministry, technology can never replace the value of personal encounter. We trust that the people we serve are those with whom God desires us to be in relationship and that our celebration of “Christ is risen!” is a declaration of where we are going together! For those who make “the choice in favour of the poor,” it is the realization that we are always Thomas – forever invited to touch the wounds of the Risen Christ in our wounded world and be evangelized!

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

Gabriel Ciang

The Welcome Home is a warm place. The doors are always open to people, no matter who they are; bells and rings are always answered, no matter urgent or random; old and young, men and women are always greeted, no matter how and why they come here. This is not a place strange to me. I visited the lovely house three years ago and had a wonderful experience. Therefore, I was already familiar, when I got here in the mid-January, with most of the programs and volunteers, even some of those who come frequently for activities.



The first two months of my stay this year gave me an opportunity to serve in an all-dimensional manner. The Redemptorist mission to spread the Good News to the most marginalized has been completely represented here and inspired me a lot. On one hand, preparing and organizing various weekly events with Fr Larry, Delores and Ed allowed me to make my own contributions to the community. The team work appeared to be an ideal occasion where I could exchange ideas with others. On the other hand, my interaction with people coming in offered me access to some first-hand knowledge of their lives, their thoughts and the light of Christ reflected on their faces.

However, a virus called Covid-19 had been lingering around some parts of the world before it gradually became a new challenge for Canada. As the federal and governmental authorities implementing measures and lockdowns, The Welcome Home gradually closed and canceled most of the indoor programs. While it is still so for the time being, apart from missing family nights, cooking classes and so forth, I am having more time to reflect on my life, organize the time and discover deeper meanings of the ministry. Instead of being busy following the to-do list given, I have been constantly looking into myself and adjusting to a self-motivated lifestyle, and this process is, indeed, another way of serving Our Lord, of improving the inner self in order to be more prepared for further work.

Thus, our only outdoor event, namely the giving out of hampers and lunch-bags, turns out to be our window towards the world. Our regular method was not in accordance with current measures, so we slightly adjusted the pattern with the help of our great volunteer, Carl. In order to avoid any line-up of more than ten people, the door ministry now starts around 9am and people should pick up the bags as soon as they arrive. Having gloves and masks on, we put out a table with its north end one feet outside the front door and its south end near the threshold of the inner door. A tray is first used for preparing the hamper bags with sandwiches and bread inside, and then pushed out to the other end where the person stands. After the last bag is given out, all the trays and tables involved are disinfected carefully.

**Ed Bird**

The world changed with the events of this pandemic we are now facing. I can't lie, it made me think about my own mortality and of those near to me. Social distancing will keep doors closed for large gatherings for some time now. But Welcome Home will continue to serve in our best capacity. We will get through this and we keep our community in thought and prayers. Thank you for your continued prayers. Stay safe!





Yes, we are smiling under our protective gear!



Anyone for isolation borsht?



Making a fashion statement at Wal-Mart.

The Welcome Home Current Needs:

- Non perishable food** (eg.. Proteins, vegetables variety of can & packaged soups, variety of beans) and toiletries that can be shared with our neighbours. This is an ongoing need throughout the year. It is not unusual for there to be 50 people at our door on Wednesday morning for our Groceries and Lunches program. Please consider sharing food donations with us throughout the year.
- Please No peanut butter or nut products!.**



THE CATHOLIC
FOUNDATION
of MANITOBA



Unique values. True strength.

Thank You for Your Support!

We would like to extend a special thank you to those who have sent in cards, emails and posted appreciation for our online efforts. It is greatly appreciated.

We also Thank and appreciate all those who continue to give to The Welcome Home. Thank you very much and God bless you during this time of our Lord's Resurrection! The Welcome Home, where we can still come together for fellowship and grow in spirit through live-streaming, Facebook, YouTube and other social media.

The Welcome Home

188 Euclid Avenue

Winnipeg, MB R2W 2X4

204-946-5352 thewelcomehome.ca whome01@mymts.net

