

SUMMER 2019

HOME VIEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF BOARDING HOMES MINISTRY

*The Lord is my rock,
my fortress,
and my deliverer,
my God,
my rock in whom I take
refuge,
my shield,
and the horn of my
salvation,
my stronghold.*

Psalm 18:2

Dates to look forward to:

October 6: Community
Gathering at Bonar-
Parkdale

November 17: Music at
Rosedale Fundraiser for
BHM, featuring opera
luminary Peter McGillivray

A Year of Renewal

By Kim Oliver, Chair of the Board

2017 was a painful year for all of us in the Boarding Homes Ministry community. Our founder, the Reverend Rodger Hunter, died in April. As we grieved the loss of our friend, we were also faced with decisions: whether and how to continue this important ministry. The Board of Directors chose to move forward and find a way to continue the work of the ministry under new leadership.

Over the course of the summer of 2017, Madelaine Ley, a doctoral student and veteran volunteer, stepped in to the breach to conduct a needs assessment. As a Board, we revisited the values that have been most important to the ministry from the beginning: agenda-free presence and community engagement on the frontlines; advocacy for the reduction of mental health stigma; and education of caring professionals and community members.

We conducted a search for a new Chaplain/ Executive Director through the fall, and in January 2018 we welcomed Kate McGee to lead our community. Once a student with our ministry, Kate went on to gain a broad expertise in mental health and inner city ministry, in both clinical and community settings. Most importantly, Kate loves the people we serve. She has been providing pastoral care, through home visits, team support, one-on-one counselling, hospital visits and memorials. She has also been working hard on rebuilding BHM so it can grow sustainably into the future. From the revitalization of the board to developing new programs and finding new sources of funding, Kate has had a busy first few months.

This summer, Madelaine rejoined the team, and the Board couldn't be more excited to see what Kate and Madeleine accomplish together. We all miss our friend and founder, but we have renewed hope that his legacy will continue.

Becoming a Refuge Together



By Kate McGee

Returning to BHM has felt a lot like coming home, for me. Meeting with my old companions and forging new bonds has reminded me how different BHM is from other ways of doing community. BHM has cultivated a unique sense of kinship.

I've been reflecting on the foundation Rodger Hunter laid, and on the sense of home our teams and residents build together. What does "home" mean? In scriptural terms: what does it mean for God to shelter us and give us refuge?

There's a line that lingers with me after my evening prayer, as I hand the weight of the day over to God before sleep. "Spread over me, Lord, your canopy of peace". Peace and comfort for our residents are often at the forefront of my prayers, and the canopy image is startling. God's peace and loving provision for us are compared to all kinds of protective structures in Scripture: fortresses, clefts in the rock. A canopy, though, is more fragile even than a tent. It's a funny image. To me, it suggests a shared vulnerability. It reminds me of making a blanket fort. And that thought reminds me of our residents, many of whom never got to feel a "blanket fort" level of safety growing up. How can a person know God as shelter and refuge when they don't know what safety feels like?

The overwhelming fragility of the boarding home world, and of our encounters, can make anyone feel powerless. As one resident reminded me yesterday, though, we can't be passive. "We can't wait for God to do the good. We have to do it", said Joel. Our work is to become a refuge for one another, however wobbly and imperfect that refuge may be. We have been entrusted to each other.

Building a shelter together requires steadfastness (many of our team members have been visiting for 20 years and counting). Teams build trust slowly over time, as danger and abandonment have dug deep grooves into our friends' psyches. Mutual vulnerability and devotion knit our groups together. Under these fragile shelters, God's peace can be found in the simple fact of our togetherness. God is with us as we extend the canopy of peace for each other. We are giggling under the ballooning blanket, or cradling each other in sorrow. God is with us.

To my mind, we have built very fine communions together. One team says that every visit is "holy ground" to them, and I feel the same way. The relationships we have built, the spaces we have filled with laughter and silence and vulnerability, are our cathedrals.



"Peace is when you call me by my name."

—Sal, a resident



Progress and Programs

by Madelaine Ley



"I feel like I can come here and you people will really listen to me. You guys accept me for who I really am."

—Sal, a resident

Over the last year we've been asking: how can we preserve the core of BHM's mission, while extending our reach in a sustainable way? After Rodger's passing I met with team members, clergy, and residents to hear why they're still committed to BHM after all these years. I nodded in agreement when people described the visits as "church without walls," "the most important time of the week," and "deeply transformative."

In the last few months Kate and I have been busy looking for opportunities to learn from and collaborate with community partners. I participated in the United Church's Social Innovation Challenge and attended a training by the Mental Health Commission of Canada in order to develop a workshop for faith communities seeking to grow their capacity to support people with mental illnesses. I will also be receiving marketing and fundraising mentorship from both the Social Mentor Network and the Centre for Social Innovation, as well as hosting a workshop with Kate at the Parliament of World Religions 2018 Conference in December titled, "Agenda-Free Presence: Companionship as Spiritual Practice for Justice".

I have been encouraged to find that people being introduced to BHM really understand its value. I think this is because there is a hunger for kinship at all levels in our society. For years BHM has fostered meaningful relationships across social barriers, and I am thrilled to help carry this on into our third decade.



○ God who meets us in the narrow place:
deliver us from our indifference.

Soften our hearts

to a point of such tenderness
that we can receive each other,
receive You,

let Love break in and rearrange us.

○ God who shelters us in the cleft of the rock,
May we be a shelter to those
who have rarely felt safe.

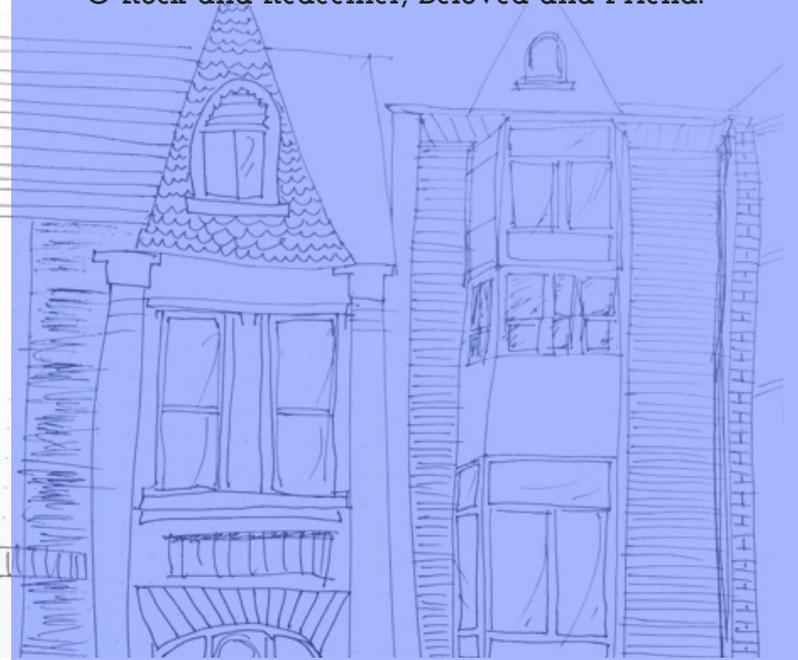
May we be a refuge

as you have been a refuge.

May we be merciful

as you are merciful

○ Rock and Redeemer, Beloved and Friend.



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Your gifts gave our communities:

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Annual Barbecue feasts

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Development of a workshop so we can expand our reach



Boarding
Homes
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For more information and to donate, visit:

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