



Street Ministry

“**Glory to God**, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or **imagine**” –the Book of Alternative Services

One of the things we have been particularly celebrating in our LUMS community recently, especially beginning at our recent autumn 15th anniversary observation, is the dual pronged focus of our ministry.

From the very outset our founders envisioned a mission that was not just aimed at the fragile needy of the Downtowneastside. But also to the church(es).

We were convinced that the DTES had as much to give (back) to the church as vice versa.

This issue of our newsletter we want to pay special attention to the ministry of LUMS to the wider church. Without you; our wider support community, there is no way Vicar Lori-Anne, Aidan & myself could do the front line ministry we do on a daily basis with our friends here in the DTES.

We are intrinsically integrated with each other. It is how St. Paul describes the body with all its various constituent members functioning in harmonious concert together.

As we continue to give thanks to God for all of you who enable this ministry, we want to take this opportunity to pause & listen to the testimony of those who have been touched & influenced by LUMS & consequently the DTES. I am intentionally making my article brief this newsletter; just an introduction, as it were. A brief introduction to the personal testimonies of some of the young folk who have been transformed because we all together have deemed that this mission is something we are committed to & support with our time & resources, that God might be proclaimed & glorified by our deeds.

It humbles & encourages me that we have LUMS formed ambassadors serving globally, for example, as missionaries in Africa, as a pastor in Sweden, as a pastor in Alberta & as a potential future pastor still in formation at the Lutheran School of Theology in Saskatoon. And there are others too, recently I met a young dreadlocked woman on the Hastings street bus; she immediately recognized me as the LUMS pastor & struck up a conversation; & related how she had come with her congregation as a young teenager to participate in serving our meal; & what a powerful transformative impact the experience had had upon her & her life.

Often we are unaware of the scope & reverberating influence of our ministry. Give thanks to the One who’s life flows through us in ways we can’t completely grasp & listen to the witness of Katie, Flemming, Kristian & David.

Your street priest
Pastor brian



Our new sandwich board has brought in many new faces



Katie, Mickey, Pastor Brian, Susan, Intern Lori-Anne at L.U.M.S. 15th Anniversary

I saw in the LUMS newsletter that you are having a new intern. I hope it is as profound and spiritually formative for her as the experience was for me.

My internship year with LUMS was such a spiritually important time for me - it's hard to put it all into words. Even though I now serve a relatively wealthy, highly-educated, ethnically homogenous church, the DTES has shaped just about everything about my "take" on what it means to be a pastor in God's church. My gratitude to the community at LUMS is profound (and I don't think expressed often enough).

Peace be with you.

*Pastor Kristian Wold
Bethel Camrose Alberta*

A LUMS FAREWELL

At LUMS we often talk about the work that we do for the folks of the DTES. But LUMS is a community that serves so many more...and I'm one of them.

I volunteered at my first LUMS hot meal when I was 17. Over the last twelve years, my involvement in LUMS has grown from attending the occasional meal, to attending as many as I could, to serving as a LUMS Board member, and finally my most recent position as LUMS chair. Last week I said my official farewell to the LUMS board (having a baby will do that to your available volunteer time!) and as I said my goodbyes and stepped away from what has been a long standing part of my 20s, I realize how much my experience at LUMS has shaped me.

Saturday mornings at LUMS have long served to remind me of the blessings I have. A lousy week at work tended to

disappear when I was reminded about how little I had to whine about. I was also repeatedly reminded of the kindness of others...I don't mean the volunteers (though of course our LUMS volunteers are lovely people), rather the kindness of those we serve. There is a sense of camaraderie that comes from experiencing and continually persevering in the DTES, and more than any other neighborhood in the Lower Mainland, in no other place have I felt that such a strong bond between so called strangers can exist. The impact this has had on me over the last decade can't be negligible in how I view humanity, and has certainly helped strengthen my Christian faith. To be Christian to me as much more than a simple belief in the divinity of Christ...it is a belief in the value of love for each other and at no other place have I felt this as I do when I get a genuine smile from a stranger in need.

On a more practical note, my position on the LUMS board taught me a whole series of skill sets which have helped shape my professional successes. Through serving as Synod rep and writing numerous reports and presentations I honed my communication skills. Through service as the LUMS board member responsible for HR, I developed experience in people management that a 26 year old would normally not be given. And finally as Chair, I've developed the leadership skills that helped me become one of the youngest managers ever at my current employer. The trust and faith in my abilities given to me by my fellow board members has been a blessing and a great opportunity to which I am so glad to have had.

So as I say good bye for now to LUMS, I realize just how much it has meant to me and how fortunate I was to be served by LUMS.

Love and Peace,

Katie Eloranta

“CHRIST OUR LOVER”

Lori-Anne Boutin

She stands on the street-corner, waiting, watching, hoping for someone to employ a much-needed business transaction, vulnerable to whomever interested may come her way. Yet she also stands defiant to the reigning culture, mocking her, assaulting her, judging her actions as illicit and illegal. Not to mention the prior life that brought her to find her livelihood on the street, propagating lies of unworthiness and most often violent abuse, causing her to leave the residence of her outer home, and resulting in the dissonance within her inner world. This is the life of a ‘hooker,’ a ‘prostitute,’ a ‘street-worker,’ or a ‘sex-trade worker.’

In this affluent North-American city, like most other cities, the code of silence we all abide by stops us from taking action to care for the most vulnerable and the most violently abused women in our world. Typically, the only other code that propels us to action is of law and judgement, keeping these women silenced behind physical or psychological bars that render the rest of us fictitiously safe and secure.

As one of the few visible female ‘pastors’ (albeit non-ordained) in the Downtown Eastside, I interestingly find that men are more open to my pastoral presence. Many women here do not feel safe with a visible minister, even a female minister, feeling the judgement of religious condemnation against their profession or habits, or perhaps had excruciatingly painful experiences in residential schools with religious clergy. At LUMS, the majority of our friends coming into the office are male, since it is often difficult for women to feel safe in a ministerial environment where both men and women are present.

In order to reach out to the women in my midst, I have been

volunteering with WISH, a safe-haven for street-workers. WISH provides a safe setting for women to eat, relax, express their inner-world, and prepare themselves for their evening work. Several times a month, I typically help women with their clothing or make-up, thankful for the opportunity to walk with women I am most often unable to reach wearing a clergy collar.

I was particularly moved a couple months ago when speaking with a 30-something year old woman who asked me why I was volunteering at an organization that helps street-workers. I responded: “Because I think you are all beautiful women, and I want you to know that you are loved.” Somewhat shocked at my response, she declared most street-workers feel that almost no one in society cares for them. She also shared with me that when she starting coming to WISH six years ago, she was only 80 pounds; it has been her connection with this non-judgmental and embracing organization that has kept her alive throughout these past years. She thanked me for my involvement with WISH. I was extremely touched by her gratitude; for now, I deeply understood how this ministry nourishes Vancouver’s women.

I wonder how our current criminalization of the sex-trade industry prevents us from dealing with the core issues at hand, and steers us towards a band-aid solution that keeps our country’s women both silenced and living in the darkness that covers the complexities of their lives. In the dark, we cannot see how pimps are controlling street-workers with violence and aggression. In the dark, we cannot see how customers often abuse these women leaving them helpless or even dead in the street. In the dark, we cannot hear the internal dialogue that takes place within a worker’s soul, and cannot see that most women find it necessary to do drugs in order to numb their pain to cope with their reality. And in the dark, we

cannot analyse our own paradigms that keep us from understanding what is really taking place, and often keep us from embracing the most neglected women in our society.

How much better would these women would be cared for and protected if prostitution was decriminalized? The production, selling, and viewing of pornography are considered legal in our country, which I am certain most Christians would judge as ‘immoral.’ Yet when it comes to the actual livelihood of the women who are amongst the most despised and judged in our midst, our system is ineffective to protect their sanctity. Why is this? Why are we standing by equally silenced? These are our women. These are our sisters. In them lives our Christ.

Brian Heinrich’s ministry at LUMS has a strong Christological focus, and he thankfully continues to challenge me to continue to minister with a strong sense of the Christ I see active in my midst. For our women in the DTES, I see the need for a Christ who is the lover of those who have been so disastrously unloved, of those who have most often known a sexual touch that only exploits instead of nourishes. I wonder if most of the women I see here in the DTES will ever sense a Christ who unabashedly loves them for who they are, embracing them right exactly where they are as precious and worthy in his sight. I wonder if most street-workers will be able to see how Christ is unlike any lover they have ever known, nurturing their bodies and souls, caring for every ounce of their beings. For truly, it is in Christ that we all come to know ourselves as beloved.

May Christ, who is the lover of all who live in the streets, teach us all how to cling to our precious identity found in his love. May we all be given the grace to love with the fiercely passionate and unabashed love of Christ our lover. Amen.



**Mother and Son,
Mary and Bill**

An update from your LUMS Treasurer

We are just in to process of preparing the financial documents for our year end. This has been a challenging year for us here at LUMS. The downturn in our economy has adversely effected giving from a number of sources. The additional cost associated in offering expanded programs and operating our own location has placed in a serious deficit situation for 2010. Final numbers will be presented at our Annual General Meeting in the spring. At this point we appear to have an operation deficit for 2010 nearing sixteen thousand dollars. Financial surpluses' from previous years allow us to carry on our operations however, if current trends continue we will be required to seriously curtail our missions program within the next year. At LUMS we depend solely on the financial gifts from individuals and church congregations for the funding of our ongoing ministry. We receive no financial operating support from our parent church organizations or governments. We ask for your continued support and prayers during these times.

I want to say what a special place LUMS holds in my heart for it was through my time with them that I surrendered my life to the Lord. It was at my summer internship with LUMS, one of the greatest summers of my life, when this life changing event occurred.

The folks at LUMS took me under their wings and helped teach me how to love without judging and how to serve without condemning. They taught me to persevere despite all despair and hopelessness that I saw around me. They were also great examples, living out their lives as Christ did, taking those considered 'social outcasts' as friends, opening up their lives and homes to them all.

Lastly, they truly exhibited a beautiful balance between the ministry of prayer and the sacraments on the one hand and social justice on the other. For example, everybody that came to a service where there was communion drank from the same cup, prince and pauper, aristocrat and outcast. It was a seemingly simple time, those times of Eucharist, but they held great significance and symbolized the values that defined LUMS- that ALL were created in his image and worthy of respect and ALL were equally redeemed through the blood of our saviour.

The values they have instilled in me in regards to working with the poor I have now taken around the world with me... and I am forever grateful for what I learnt and the time I spent with them.

David Foster (missionary in Africa)

My contact with LUMS was brief, but crucially meaningful.

I believe that LUMS lives close to the disciple-life Jesus envisioned for us. So LUMS has formed a *longing* within me, a longing for church as prophetic and compassionate undertaking.

The longing for *something a little more like LUMS* lives on in my ministry- it beckons, fascinates, challenges and disturbs. It's not something I can easily turn away from and forget.

Doug Scott, Vicar at St. Ansgar's Church – Gottfridsberg, Sweden

The other day I was talking to my father about remembering the past as we drove out to a gravesite in Regina and I asked him "Why is it that when we get older we start to reflect more on the past?" He said, "We want to know what made us who we are today." It is always interesting to reflect on what has shaped who we are today, at this moment. Our past may be just that, our past, but it continues to influence us now and in the future. One of my past experiences was a week I spent at the Patricia Hotel when I was in my late teens. A week where Pastor Brian Heinrich of LUMS and the community that lives, eats and breathes near East Vancouver's Hastings Street showed me something that would influence me to this day.

Today I am finishing up my studies at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon. No doubt that experience 10 years ago has shaped who I am today. I saw Jesus in the people that I served during my week of volunteering for LUMS.

-Fleming Blishen



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