

Hidden Homelessness ! . . .

In Canada, who is most likely to be homeless?

What would be your answer, were you to be asked this question? How would you describe homelessness in Canada? Interesting questions, you say. But when you begin to classify what segment of the population would be most likely to become homeless, your answer would be single men, right? Historically, the homeless population was made up largely of single white men; in a past era, we called them hobos. More recently it has been documented that women are making up 40-50% of this population. This marginalized genre is a mix of persons of every race and culture, youth, immigrants, and even veterans.



Homelessness is a most complex and widespread issue; it challenges our traditional thinking. We now must include those who live in temporary accommodations with friends, family or strangers; single mothers and their children living with grandparents; in general, it comprises any-

one who is dealing with a long-term housing security issue. While hard to imagine, this branch of our society can comprise 1-2% of the general population. So, out of 100 people you meet on the street, 1 or 2 are dealing with this issue. They, "the hidden homeless," are *not included* in the national statistics on homelessness, yet they **are** without permanent homes; some even without temporary shelter. Hidden Homeless--consider the term and then consider the plight of these people.

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“Good morning, Pastor John!” so says the gentleman from the Niagara Soup Kitchen. “I’m calling to say Thank You for the cases of meat pies you donated. We appreciate the protein in the meat pies as it is a challenge to meet that requirement. Please, if you get more in the future, please, would it be possible that we receive some more?” Well, this is not the beginning of the story, but one of the endings.

The story began with a call from Carl who was leaving on vacation, but let’s go back even a bit further. Ken, a volunteer on the street, said to Carl, “There is a young couple who wishes to speak with you.” (The ministry van was in front of the Niagara Falls Public Library.) Carl found out from the couple that he used to work in a food processing plant, and his former boss had called him to see if he knew of a charitable organization that could use some pre-production meat pies, as the company didn’t wish for them to go to a landfill, yet they were not pristine enough for retail packaging. Carl left a Ministry business card with them, which they promised to pass on to the boss. A few days later, Carl received a phone call confirming that there were 15 cases of meat pies available for JC’s Place Ministries to pick up.

Carl was leaving on vacation, and as he is the one who usually goes and picks up the donations, Trevor and I volunteered to look after this project. What a surprise, when we went to make the pickup. There were not only 15 but 30 cases ready for JC’s Place Ministries to pick up! That began our day as we loaded the 30 boxes onto the van and shared them with 6 other organizations. Words of sincere appreciation were expressed for the sharing attitude of JC’s Place Ministries at each of these organizations, as well as by some of our motel residents who have refrigerators and microwaves to cook the pies. It is not easy to say, “Sorry, we do not have anymore,” when the need is so

great. What a blessing this has been to JC’s Place Ministries in being able to share with our Niagara Falls community.

I was able to thank the company that provided the meat pies and was assured that in the future we would be on the recipient list for more. JC’s Place Ministries needs to

be prepared to do more of this type of work also. Our ministry is in need of an expansion program. There are a lot of needy folks out there.

In other news there was a homeless man and woman hanging out by the bridge in Chippewa, as a tip I received suggested. I spoke with a contact there and it was verified that the couple was there. I left a business card to give to the couple when the contact sees them. I was told by the contact that there is another homeless camp out there but they are a rough bunch, “so be careful.” As you can see, there are more areas that JC’s Place Ministries can service.

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I had the special privilege of having one of the ladies in our motel stop and her sons join me on Thursday as I went about visiting the homeless on my mid week run. We were able to stop and see about 30 folks. On our return trip, I asked her, "Would you and your children be willing to help out in the ministry?" "Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!" came from the mother and her 3 sons. "Sign us up as volunteers! We will help out in the kitchen."



What a blessing to see those who have been helped wanting to help as best as they are able. There is another homeless man named Tom (not his real name) who wants to help.

I located another camp on the northside of town and there are 4-8 people there. We are short of volunteer resources to make this all happen. What a blessing a larger space with freezer and fridge storage, preparation area and a large storage area for clothes



and article sorting and storage, would be! We are asking you to join us in praying that God will further bless the Ministry and provide a home that is easier from which to work, one that will accommodate our growing needs. That's it for this month, Blessing on All.

Isaiah 58:6-8 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

~~ John

What causes hidden homelessness? Poverty, childhood trauma, rising house prices, lack of social housing, job-loss, traumatic life events, breakdown of family relations, domestic abuse and other forms of abuse, health issues, shortage of public services, leaving prison or the army without accommodation? The list could go on. That homelessness can happen to anyone is the emerging sad reality. It is important to emphasize that poverty dramatically increases the likelihood of someone sinking into homelessness.

Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society. Race, sexuality, age, disability and time spent in institutions like prison can also increase a person's risk of homelessness. People who experience disadvantages in these areas are less likely to have the resources necessary to maintain stable housing.

"People living with hidden homelessness are invisible to the service system.... As a society, *hidden* homelessness is not considered to be homelessness," William O'Grady, a sociology professor at the University of Guelph, told *Out in the Open*.

Now that we have defined who might become homeless, persons who are homeless but remain hidden, persons who do not consider themselves homeless but they are but don't seek support or assistance, where does JC's Place Ministries come into the picture?

The reality of the situation is this: the Ministry is beginning to work together with all of the above. Homeless persons--those sleeping on the street, those able to afford low cost and poorly-maintained accommodations, single moms with children in run-down motel rooms, and the transients who manage to beg a room for a night or to pay for a stay with money, drugs, sex or other means—all fall within our mandate, "Love your neighbour as you love yourself."



Since JC's Place Ministry began in early 2021, we have been using the Niagara Falls Seventh-day Adventist Church as an operations base and storage facility. In those early months we were serving approximately 35 lunches per week; as we begin our 3rd year of service, we are now feeding 100+ persons each week. Even at that, we are not meeting the demand. We have limited storage place for the hoodies, coats, jeans, t-shirts and underwear, sleeping bags, blankets, and other donated items so desired and needed on the street to keep these folks clothed and warm.

In plain and simple terms, we have run out of space. What space we do have has become an issue for our volunteers. In preparation for a Sunday outing, based on one volunteer's pedometer on their iPhone, 22 flights of stairs were climbed and 3000 foot-steps taken to move food products down to the basement and lunches back out to the vans, and bags of clothes brought upstairs and sorted and then clothing and items needed to replenish the bins on the vans taken back out to our trucks. This represents a great deal of work on the part of the 60 volunteers who work the rotations every week to make this Ministry possible. Thank you, Volunteers.



In light of the main issue--collecting and storing winter clothing during the spring and

summer months and the reverse for summer clothing during the winter months, and the storage of food and preparation of the lunches--the locations and amount of storage space in the Church is no longer adequate. Goods are stored in multiple rooms on different floors, creating a massive amount of work for the volunteers.

JC's Place Ministries has begun the search for a building constructed all on ground level. It will have room for a commercial kitchen with a food storage area and will allow the staff to prepare the lunches in comfort, storage space for the racking and bin system, and space for the sorting and storage of the clothing and other goods needed to keep the Ministry in operation. Undeniably, this is a huge project. It cannot be undertaken without prayerfully giving careful thought and consideration to all the implications—rental/purchase costs, insurance, heating, hydro, maintenance, and the list will go on. Take a look at the pictures included with this article, and you will see the homeless sleeping on the bare concrete. Is your heart not broken that they might at least have a camping foam mat and sleeping bag to use? Or look at their life's belongings stored in a grocery cart parked on the side of the street as they are forced to move by government and local citizens, or their own circumstances.

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If you know of a location of 2500 to 3500 square feet that the Ministry could rent (affordable to purchase would even be better!), please contact John or Carl at the Ministry phone numbers or website. We need to make it easier on our volunteers, and to accommodate the growing Ministry.

An example of our needs was reenforced this past month: We were offered the pre-production run of meat pies coming off the assembly line of a commercial baker; almost perfect, but not quite good enough for retail, yet an excellent source of protein for our friends. 15 cases, we were told, so our crews were organized to pick up this much-needed dietary supplement for those on the street. In reality there were 30 cases of frozen pies! JC's Place has built relationships with other ministries who are doing a work similar to ours, and the supply was shared with them. There were smiles of appreciation on the faces of those who received the nourishment; the other ministries asked, "Do you have more of these pies to share?" We need space as the commercial community we work with comes to "Lend us a Helping Hand" and we in return give that aid to those in need.

In closing, JC's Place Ministries is in need of two supportive, astute, dedicated leaders who will share the weight of administration and organization responsibilities. We are also looking for volunteers who will give 3 hours, 1 Sunday each month, to aid in the food preparations, the clothes sorting, to drive a vehicle, or to serve food or distribute clothes from the back of our vehicles.

"Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was Me—you did it to Me.'"

Blessings ~~Carl

Ways to Give:

- 1. Electronically: www.jcsPlace.org**
- 2. Mail: JC's Place 2408 Smithville Road Smithville L0R 2A0**
- 3. Phone: 905-975-6394 or 365-880-7229**



JC's Place Ministries

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