

Neighbourhood Ministry  
St. Philip's  
September 29, 2019 (Pentecost 16)  
P. Potter

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Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts, be always acceptable in your sight, O God our Rock and our redeemer. *Amen*

## **I. Introduction**

Today, as we commemorate the Westside Anglicans Neighbourhood Ministry, and indeed throughout the homelessness action month of October and indeed at all times, we remember our fellow human beings who struggle with homelessness and need. And indeed, through today's Scripture readings we are invited to think about the challenges of prosperity and need.

Saint Paul's letter to Timothy reminds us that we brought nothing into this world and hence everything we possess and enjoy is a gift from God's abundance not from our own worthiness. As the old Anglican Prayer of Humble Access reminds us, we should trust in God's manifold and great

mercies rather than our own righteousness. And so we are directed in Paul's letter "to do good, to be rich in good works, generous and ready to share." And therein lies our salvation, the transformation that allows us to be in the world but not of it.

In today's Gospel reading we hear of the story of the Lazarus and the rich man, and how the reality of their lives was overturned. But we needn't wait, the invitation of Timothy enables us to share our bounty with the Lazaruses of this world, now. In encouraging his listeners, after delivering the sobering story of Lazarus, Jesus invites us to listen to Moses and the prophets – one of whom who speaks to us all is the prophet Micah who calls us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God. And therein lies our salvation.

## **II. NM at St. Philip's**

We have seen many examples of this here at St. Philip's – support for refugees, support for the VGH chaplaincy, ministries to children and the elderly, ministries

of reconciliation and climate justice, and of course the Neighbourhood Ministry. We are all called to serve, not to rest on the passing materials comforts of our lives, but to serve, to be a servant to all and thus to demonstrate the authority of the Holy One whose call we answer.

Over the past twelve years of the Neighbourhood Ministry, we've heard stories from our friends on the street – about people in need, people with Moms and Dads, and brothers and sisters, and hopes and dreams. But also people for whom the blessings of our modern society have mostly been absent – absent (or abusive) parents, absent (sometimes deceased siblings), lost hopes and dreams. And there have been good news stories too - the stories of dozens and dozens of long-term homeless neighbours being brought into permanent housing at 17<sup>th</sup> and Dunbar, at 4<sup>th</sup> and Fir, at Steves Manor, at the recently established modular housing facilities in Vancouver. The Mobile Care Unit continues to serve at Kits Community Centre and St. Augustine's Marpole, offering medical and social services to neighbours in need. And our Street Teams, loaded with

your generous contributions, bring care and cheer on their weekly street visits.

Here at St. Philip's we are seeing such heart-warming enthusiasm from so many for the Neighbourhood Ministry. As you'll see in the NM display in the Narthex, there have been many great stories about the Neighbourhood Ministry, with highlights of street outreach and MCU activities. And you've seen the invaluable contributions of our St. Philip's Parish Liaison Rhona Thornton, Indoor Team Coordinator Suzi Noetzel, and Street Ministry Coordinator Mary Lymburner in leading St. Philip's activities, all faithfully supported by Administrative Communications Coordinator Beth Vondette. And of course Rector Stuart, whose encouragement and support have been immeasurable. And perhaps you've seen more information, on our website: [www.neighbourhoodministry.com](http://www.neighbourhoodministry.com). A few examples:

**The NM is beginning its 13th year!**

### **Street Outreach Highlights**

-Combines Indoor and Outdoor Teams. Suzi Noetzel

and Mary Lymburner.

### **MCU Highlights**

-Vicki Potter.

### **Dunbar Highlights**

-NM financial contribution sustains breakfast program 3x/week.

-Special Events: Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Easter etc., Summer BBQ, etc. (about 5 per year).

-Help with taxes, bus pass forms. Fund eyeglasses, dental work, bus passes - when not covered by government.

### **Partners**

- UBC (SSW and Med School), Kits Community Centre, St. Augustine Marpole, PHS Society (2d and Ash modular housing).

### **Support**

- Care+Share; ACW; Diocesan Designated Group, and of course all the generous individual contributions of time, treasure and goods.

So I think it is fair to say we have come a long way from the time when our first publicity brochure invited interested parishioners to participate in the Neighborhood Ministry. It

is indeed humbling to think of how far we've come from those first days when quite a few people wondered if we had all taken leave of our senses (“what homeless?” “oh those dirty guys on the street - we need to get close to those guys?”) and in those early days of cold evenings and lonely Saturdays (“what are we doing?”).

But with God's grace we have persevered in carrying out this ministry. The personal connections among the four parishes have been wonderful, and within our own Parish, we have been overwhelmed by the breadth of support – from the many individual contributors who have brought in goods for the packets (our boxes in the Narthex are always billowing over), to the Indoor Teams who have helped prepare the packets, and the Outdoor Teams who have gone out in all kinds of weather to distribute the packets and be presence for the needy.

And so this morning we once again extend the invitation to those who are already involved to stay involved and perhaps even to do more, and an invitation to those who

have not yet had the opportunity to join in this ministry to join us. For we have miles to go before we rest. Dependent always on God's grace, grateful for support from the Parish and the community, and ever hopeful that through this ministry we are so thankful for the opportunity to transform ourselves as well as our neighbors.

And now I'd like to:

**Invite folks to speak about their experiences.**

**Invite Indoor Team members to stand.**

**Invite Outdoor Team members to stand.**

**Invite any who have attended a NM event – thanksgiving, Christmas, bingo – to stand.**

**Invite everyone who has held the NM in their thoughts and prayers to stand.**

**Sing: “We shall overcome.”**