

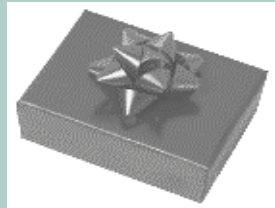
SHARING OUR BLESSINGS WITH OTHERS

"Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land." Deut 15:10,11

Once again this holiday season, we hope to show the love of God by sharing some of the good things we have with those less fortunate in downtown Hamilton. With the assistance of the surrounding church and business community, we wish to assist families and individuals by providing them with gifts in one way or another. Gifts are given to the children who attend youth programs. Adults who are part of the Streetlight community receive a gift of toiletries, clothing, and/or grocery gift cards. Needy families receive a Christmas hamper. Streetlight also hosts a Christmas dinner for the Streetlight church community in December.

Please consider assisting us once again with our Christmas projects. You can help in different ways:

- Make a Christmas Hamper for a family: Together with your Bible Study group, extended family, or friends, consider providing a hamper for a family in need. A hamper would typically include all the fixings for a Christmas dinner, and perhaps some extras like toiletries and clothing or small toys for the children. We will match you up with a family, giving you a profile that gives you the details of the family's needs. Christmas hampers are provided for the families associated with our programs - many are single moms with several children who would truly appreciate some extras at Christmas time.
- Have a collection of toiletry items with your work associates, your study society, or even with your whole church! Please contact us, and we will provide you with a list of needed items. Please hand in your donations by Monday December 7.
- Assist us with delivering of gifts. Teams of 2 or 3 people are needed to make deliveries in the downtown neighbourhood to lodging homes and individuals in our community.
- Make a financial donation - Money is needed to purchase gifts, to purchase grocery gift cards, and to cover the costs of the Streetlight community dinner. You can choose to earmark your donation towards one of these specific causes, or simply make a donation towards Christmas programs in general. Note that any extra funds not required for Christmas programs are put into essential counseling needs for those in the Streetlight fellowship.



For more information, please call Alida @ 905-332-0909 or e-mail streetlightministries@bellnet.ca. We look forward to hearing how you would like to help!



6th Annual Family Skate Night!

Sponsored by P.V.& V. and Meester Insurance Centres

When: Thursday December 3, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Where: Copps Coliseum - 101 York Boulevard, Hamilton
Cost: Monetary Donation for Streetlight Ministries
(Tax Receipts will be provided for all donations over \$10.00)



RSVP is mandatory! Call or e-mail Lee Dam or Peter VanDyk by Monday November 30
Leed@pvv-insurance.com or 905-632-6192

Please direct donations and correspondence to:

Streetlight Ministries
82 Ferguson Avenue North
Hamilton, Ontario
L8R 1L4



Pastor: Paul Aasman
Mission Worker: Hilco de Haan
Youth Worker: Tracy Lynn Hoeksema
Administration: Alida Spanninga

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A ministry of the Canadian and United Reformed Churches

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2009
VOLUME 23



"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven."

Matthew 5: 14-16 Matthew 5: 14-16

BOARD REPORT Ed Aasman, Chairman

How quickly time flies at Streetlight. By the time you read this, October is behind us and we already have 2 months of programs behind us. To give you a sense of how many programs are going on at the Streetlight centre, our board meetings have to be held at the Ancaster Church building. There is simply no room for us! It is amazing to see so many programs running and the talented and dedicated staff and volunteers leading them. This is definitely a reason to praise God for his many blessings.

The board has been busy over the last few months. Along with the regular monthly agenda items, we have been implementing our new vision and mission statements, going over the final recommendations from the strategic conference in the spring and preparing (already) for 2010. Some other important dates in November include our annual delegates meeting, where delegates from local United Reformed and Canadian Reformed churches can come together and hear what is happening at Streetlight and what we can all look forward to in 2010. This will be followed a few weeks later by our annual meeting between Ancaster church council and the board executive. This is an excellent opportunity for us to ensure that lines of communication between board and council are open and flowing well. Early in December we can also look forward to the 6th annual Family Skate for Streetlight at Copps Coliseum, hosted by PV&V and Meester Insurance Centres. This is an excellent fundraiser for Streetlight and we look forward to seeing many of our friends and supporters there. Mark December 3 on your calendars!

Many have asked over the last while about building plans. Suitable properties are hard to find, especially in the Beasley neighbourhood where the focus of our ministry is. Over the next several months we will continue to look for a suitable property, but should this property not present itself, we will again explore our second option, to renovate the existing building to suit our needs. Anyone who has attended a Streetlight service recently (especially in the evening) will see what I mean when I say we are bursting at the seams and need to do something about it! Part of our planning for 2010 will need to include building plans and financing. It is always an interesting time when we try to balance the needs of the ministry against the reality of the finances available. Please pray for guidance during this time of planning.

We are always amazed when we look back and see God's hand in ensuring the smooth running of the ministry. Remember the work of Pastor Paul, Hilco, and Tracy Lynn in your prayers. Without this type of support their work would be all the harder. May God continue to provide the resources, wisdom, and strength for the work at Streetlight.

BOARD MEMBERS

Ed Aasman
chair

Henry Alkema
member

Gerlinda Beintema
treasurer

Kevin Eigenbrood
transportation

John Hordyk
board relations

Dave Koning
committee of administration

Jack Scholtens
liaison (Fellowship)

Ryan Schutten
recording secretary

Alida Spanninga
corresponding secretary

Jeff Tigchelaar
liaison (Rehoboth URC)

Roland VanAndel
liaison (Ancaster)

Ken Vander Boom
vice-chair

John Vander Heiden
expansion committee

Adrian Vanderlaan
liaison (Providence)

I LOVE YOU Alida Spanninga

As I sit at my computer today, my heart rejoices at the sounds of happy children playing behind me. Sure, sometimes the sounds are mixed with some sibling arguments, sometimes the sounds are a little louder than I'd like them to be, but today I am so thankful for those happy, healthy sounds. I even hear my son telling my youngest daughter, "I love you Nadia."

"I love you" – words that typically make one feel warm, content, safe, and happy. Nadia replies, "I wuv you too Noah." And they carry on with their play – something I take for granted every day. But what if the words "I love you" made you scared – not just a little scared, but deeply frightened? Yesterday, when I met with Kim (that is what I'll call her), she told me that the words "I love you" had been deeply frightening for her. Those words meant "I want to hold you down, force you, control you."

Kim did not have a childhood. Born and raised in the north end of Hamilton, she grew up in an atheistic and severely abusive household. Daily Kim suffered from severe physical, mental, and emotional abuse. She was severely beaten and repeatedly told by her mother that she was worthless. "I wish you were dead" were words imbedded into her mind from a very young age. Kim was babysitting her infant sister at the age of five, while her mother went out for pleasure. By the time she entered the school system her mother was entertaining men who paid to have their way with Kim. When she once refused to lie down and submit herself to the sexual abuse of a visitor, she was nearly drowned as her mother held her head down under the bath water in deep anger. Kim was also not permitted to have relationships with other children. She says of herself, "I was told and believed that the forced isolation from other children was because I was bad and unworthy of their presence; unworthy of any love and care at all. Only recently did I learn that it was really just an effort to keep the abuse a secret."

By nine, Kim had been diagnosed with depression by a social worker at school. The social worker would at times have contact with the woman who Kim refers to as her "birth mother" – for that is the only kind of mother that she was. This contact only made the abuse worse.

Kim was encouraged at the young age of 10 to start dating – her mother eager to "get rid of her". Kim was eager for acceptance, longing for someone to love her. She quickly connected with a boy who, like her, was in need of help. His family was also friendly, and Kim began to spend more and more time with them. She was shown kindness – so when the boy's father began to show an unhealthy interest in Kim, she stayed, for in her mind, this situation was far better than the loveless abuse she suffered at home. At least the assault was mixed with occasional words of "love" and acts of kindness. As time went by, Kim continued to accept the assault – she had been trained as a young child to withdraw, to be silent, and to accept the forced acts of the adults around her.

Despite the signs of abuse in Kim's life, the school and social system failed to rescue her. Even when Kim found herself pregnant at 13, a miscarriage several months later allowed the deception of her mother to go undetected. Doctor's questions about the physical signs of severe abuse were discarded by her mother's claim that Kim was promiscuous.

Despite the abuse that she continued to undergo at home, Kim began volunteering at an after school program in a building that was both a community centre and a church. Kim had a helpful, caring nature. She had a maturity far beyond her years, and worked well with young children. Over time she not only grew in favor with the youngsters, but slowly began to know the adults as well. They began to encourage her to come to church. Kim went home to ask permission, but her parents refused, afraid of what she might reveal about her life at home. She says: "still somehow I continued in my work with the children, my interactions with the adults, and the hope that God really did exist, and that He did in fact love me and would deliver me from the evil I faced daily."

Over time, Kim did begin to attend church. However Kim continued to be a victim – both at home and in the community. Her low self esteem made her an easy target, and Kim twice left a church community, being victimized by controlling men. However, during this time Kim more and more began to know the love of God. She worked to escape the grip of her abusive mother, and in 2007 she found a church where she was comfortable and secure in the love of God and those around her.

Kim's "childhood" experiences leave her with complex disorders and severe depression at times. Now, at the age of 24, she is not able to work, and sometimes she is not able to care for herself. Simple activities in life are not always so simple. A dental visit is met with great fear as she needs to submit herself to lying on her back, a position of vulnerability.

A simple unexpected touch on the shoulder evokes a startled response. A suggestion from a close friend of two years to chase one another in a fun game of tag causes her to freeze in fright.

Help is hard to find due to the complexity of Kim's disorders. While there are many programs available to help with drug or alcohol addictions, Kim's addiction is more complicated - she is addicted to self-destruction. While she works to escape an addiction to drugs or alcohol, other self-destructive obstacles are also in her path: self-inflicted pain, eating disorders, thoughts of suicide, the list continues. However, despite the complex post traumatic stress disorder that Kim deals with constantly, the grace of God is very evident in her life. Kim expresses that

"parents are the first teachers and first role models of God. People who have experienced such a fundamental betrayal as abuse by a parent will have difficulty putting their faith and trust in God...especially if when we were small and defenseless ... our tender shoots of trust were trampled instead of cultivated."

Yet, she praises God that

"because of what God has done Himself and through others, I have been able to celebrate a whole year free from the controlling issues I have been battling; though I still struggle on a daily basis and know that the battle is far from over. I have rekindled the belief that not only does a loving God exist, but that He exists both in and through me, and that He can use even me, and is doing so, despite the pain and struggles, and maybe even sometimes because of them. And I have began, albeit slowly, the journey of heartfelt knowledge that God loves me; not only as I am and as a good parent, a perfect parent, would look upon their child, but that He loves me even as He loved His own Son. A feeling of love I never had, the one that often brings me to tears in amazement and gratitude, that I, by grace, would be saved through His sacrifice, and receive no greater love than this."

Kim is able, in the strength of God, to donate many hours of service in the community helping others. She regularly volunteers at organizations that help those in need. She attends Bible studies and other Christian functions where she is also able to share with others not just how sin has crushed her life, but also how God is redeeming it in His great love.

"I love you" – three words that can be badly distorted by the power of sin. But by God's amazing grace, Kim can confess with us: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life, for us." (1 John 3:16)

BACK TO SCHOOL Hilco deHaan, Mission Worker



On Friday the 9th of October I was invited to come to Covenant Christian School. On this day the annual Thanksgiving Assembly was held. The theme for the Assembly was "Blessed are the poor in Spirit". During the devotion a link was made with the poverty in downtown Hamilton. Many people who are members or visitors at Streetlight are indeed quite poor. It was explained that being poor in Spirit does not have anything to do with not having enough money. We are all poor or empty in Spirit because we do not have anything that we can offer to God. Only Jesus Christ can fill our emptiness. This is just as true for rich as for poor people. Especially for this occasion the school organized a food drive for Streetlight. At the same time money was collected in a Piggy Bank also to be used for a program at Streetlight. It was great to receive these wonderful gifts from Covenant Christian School. It was also

equally gratifying to see that schools are very much interested in the work of Streetlight and in the plight of the many poor people in downtown Hamilton. Towards to end of the assembly I had an opportunity to thank everybody for their generous donations. At the same time an invitation was extended for classes to come and visit Streetlight.

The great contact we have with our schools is very important to us. First of all working with children and teenagers is an important part of Streetlight. There are many programs for children and teenagers of all ages. Almost every day of the week the Streetlight Centre is used for youth programs. It is a growing and exciting part of the Streetlight ministry in downtown Hamilton. This strong focus on children also explains why we value going to our schools. We enjoy invitations to come to a school and give a presentation or like in the example above, be part of an assembly. Every year we also have groups from elementary schools and high schools who come down for "a tour" of Streetlight. It is an excellent opportunity to get to know the mission project of Streetlight. For some groups special arrangements were made to visit the Olive Branch (a soup kitchen next door to Streetlight). If your school/class is interested in coming down to Streetlight to have a special tour or if you would like one of us to come down to your school, please feel free to contact us any time. May God bless you richly.