



Insider's Look SPECIAL EDITION

NOVEMBER 2023

KINSHIP COMPASSION HOPE

GRACE & MERCY

It is truly heart-warming to experience the love and support of those whom you count upon as friends. Even more so, of those who come forward even before they are asked as we experienced this past year during our difficult challenges. It is the basis of our Christian Ministry to serve and support those in need and offer love and support unconditionally. We were certainly the recipients of many blessings from individuals and organizations during our time of need. We apologize for those not specifically mentioned here, as there are simply too many to list, but to give you an idea of the kinds of blessings we received, here is a sampling:

- A volunteer donated services to repair our furnaces.
- A youth group from Grant Memorial turned their Halloween into a food drive for Forward House instead of a treat drive for themselves. Young leaders in action and caring for their community!
- Oasis Church volunteers provided a "Meal-Train" to prepare and cook meals for the men while our resident kitchen help was unwell.
- Oasis Church did a community collection of needed items such as hygiene products, blankets, and toiletries.
- Hellard's NoFrills, Second Harvest and Harvest Manitoba continue to provide needed food donations.
- King Cole Catering has a long history of providing delicious meals for the men.
- Many faith groups chose to make Forward House an "Outreach Project" to bring awareness to their congregations to help with volunteering and donations. These groups in part were:

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- Shoal Lake Baptist Church
- Lakeside Gospel Church
- Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society
- Grant Memorial Baptist Church
- Covenant Christian Reformed Church
- Crosspoint Community Church
- Crestview Fellowship EMC
- Many more blessings from volunteers coming to provide maintenance, fellowship with the men, providing shuttle service to medical appointments, church services and more.



Some of the Oasis "Meal Train"

Grant Memorial Daybreak Library



They Say When It Rains, It Pours!

Last year at the height of our challenges, we had 2 furnaces that decided that we didn't have quite enough stress and they decided to stop working. This year, it was our sanitizer/dishwasher in the kitchen. With no ability to get parts for repair due to its age, we had no choice but to replace it. Thanks to a very generous contribution from Miele Canada Commercial Division, we were able to get a new unit, and have it installed at a cost we could afford.

It seems we won't be bored this winter either as we have a water heater that has decided it is time to move on as well!



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

ROBERT KREIS

Well, it has certainly been a tumultuous year since October of 2022. I took on the Chair position after being told that Forward House was in dire financial trouble with unpaid bills, unpaid staff, and no funds or credit left. Not exactly the way anyone hopes to take anything on. With God's grace, some deeply dedicated volunteers, and staff who stuck with us, we pulled ourselves together and decided this was too important to the men we served, to simply "let it go". We would do everything in our power to save it. We sent out a press release that garnered two television interviews, a radio and newspaper interview. We now had the opportunity to tell a wider audience who we were, what we did, and that we desperately needed their help.



That help came! Generous people made donations large and small. Several of the companies with whom we had unpaid bills, helped by either being patient, or in some cases, even forgiving some our debt because they too, believed in who we were helping. Lynda Wilson was and continues to be critical to getting our bookkeeping on track and procedures in place. Working together with Access Credit Union who had also been more than patient with us, we were able to refinance our debt into a small mortgage on our properties to give us enough capital to pay our bills and have enough to work with until we could formalize a longer-term fundraising strategy.

Our next step was to rationalize all expenses, and basically our entire operation, including the staff. Many of our processes were changed with everything having to be justified. In the end, we unfortunately had to let go of our Executive Director. We have been operating since the end of March with me filling the role of Interim Executive Director as well. It always was, and still is a full-time position. As we made our changes and began to expand the number of available beds we had, and the number of men who filled them, the work only grows. It is deeply gratifying work though as each day, the staff and I are reminded of how our efforts directly impact the lives of the men. We have since hired someone to assist with outreach to community partners and manage the intakes and to help with many of the networking and liaison duties with the other agencies we work with. We are still looking for a new Executive Director, one who sees the same vision of the future for all that Forward House is and can be, including the realization of one day opening a home for women.

To ensure that the men were getting balanced meals and that our food donations and purchases were being used most efficiently, we hired Wayne, our new chef. He prepares and serves the men their lunches and dinners 5 days a week. He also prepares the meals for the other days which are then heated and served by several of the men of Forward House on those days Wayne is not here.

We have been blessed by some donors who have helped us begin to rejuvenate and repair some of the aspects of our buildings which have seen better care in earlier years. Different donors have helped us to replace our aging dining room and classroom chairs, for which Cunningham Business Interiors was very instrumental. Image Flooring and its staff made a large contribution towards supplying and installing new vinyl flooring in our Watt St and 403 Chalmers buildings. Volunteers from Crestview Christian Centre helped us to paint the main floor classroom and kitchen and dining area in April in advance of a visit from Mayor Gillingham, who was

followed by Deputy Mayor Markus Chambers in July. The Grant Memorial Church Women's Daybreak Group generously had a book drive which has now become our new library for the men, with additional books being donated by another faith organization.

So where are we now? We are now on stable ground, with much greater clarity and purpose. We still have work to do in public awareness and in building our list of regular donors, both large and small. We have made changes to ensure we never get into the same position we were in last fall, which will require diligence, commitment and



always some hard choices. We expect that of our participants, and should expect no less from ourselves. We have a new commitment to our mission and to the men we serve. We are trying to build a ministry and organization that others will be able to point to and say we need to do more of what they are doing. We want the men who come to Forward House to have the absolute best opportunity and faith to rebuild themselves and their self-confidence, and to give them the best hope for success when they leave Forward House. As a Christian organization, we will show them love, grace and compassion without judgement of any kind, and to offer a hand-up as Christ teaches us to do.

As the path before us becomes more illuminated, we will continue, with more energy, our planning for a home for women, a long-held dream of Forward House. We are beginning to and will continue to re-invest in our facilities to ensure they provide a welcoming and healing environment for the men during the time they spend with us. We will continue to refine our programming to meet the needs and our ability to provide them, or partner with other agencies to provide them for us. We want to be a part of the larger solution to the issues that face our community.

We are very blessed to have the staff, volunteers and support of our donors and friends without whom none of what we do would be possible. On behalf of the Board, I give our most heart-felt thanks for your grace and generosity.

Before



After

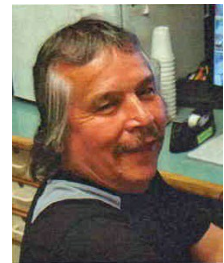


Our Values right from the Start,

Forward House's 1st Participant: Russell Sinclair

My name is Russell Sinclair, and I spent my life running until I found Jesus.

My parents were both alcoholics, so as a kid, I hopelessly watched my parents get drunk and fight. When I was 14, Dad walked out and a week later, my Mom also left me, my two brothers and 3 sisters alone and without food. Finally, someone called Child and Family Services and we were put in Foster Care.



I'm from an indigenous family, but unlike most of my siblings, I went into a white foster home. For the next couple years, I bounced from one home to the next. If I didn't like it, I would run away.

In 1979, I went to Knowles School for Boys. It was a pretty good home, I got to know the staff, but it was where I was introduced to drugs.

At 16, I smoked my first joint and took my first drink. By the time I was 18, I was an alcoholic. I often got violent when I got drunk. One time, at a friend's place, I got drunk, walked into the kitchen, pulled out a big knife and put it through a table. I could just as easily have killed somebody.

One day I woke up in the drunk tank with no memory of how I got there. As the lady gave me my stuff back, she asked if I had ever thought of giving up drinking, I said no. She told me if I didn't stop, I'd probably end up in Stony Mountain Penitentiary. I tried to get sober, going to addictions programs at Union Gospel Mission in 1987, but a year after being in the program, I went out into the street and got right back into alcohol. This cycle repeated itself several times, and I began to wonder why I was wasting my time. It wasn't going to work so I went back to living on the street.

In the early 90's, I started going to AA. A guy in AA talked about God, but I was skeptical. I figured God had let me suffer. If God hadn't done anything for me so far, why would He help me now?

I moved to a halfway house and got sober. Not long after that, I was invited to live at a Christian halfway house. The guy who ran the Christian home kept telling me about Jesus. He kept bugging me! One day, he asked me to go for coffee with him. I said OKAY, even he didn't talk about Jesus. We had barely sat down and the guy says to me "you need Jesus", I said I didn't want to hear about Jesus, he said "yes, but you really need Jesus!"

I thought about for a few minutes. Maybe if I said yes, the guy would leave me alone, so I asked him what I needed to do to accept Jesus. My friend asked me to pray by repeating after him. He went on for about 5 or 10 minutes with me repeating everything he said.

Though I thought I didn't want Jesus, something happened that day. Things began to fall into place. My old friends began to stop calling me and I got new friends. I decided I wanted to volunteer at Union Gospel Mission.

Twenty-six years later, I', still sober and I have no cravings to drink or take drugs and I work as a supervisor at UGM. I tell the men in the addiction programs that I am no better than they are. I still have problems in my life, I just deal with them differently. I go to God instead of a bottle or a joint.

God brought me to UGM for a reason. After moving from place to place all my life, this is the place I've stayed. God is good. God has kept me here for a reason. Though I struggle, he has given me a lot.

Russell Sinclair
Supervisor
Union Gospel Mission

*Please consider financially supporting
Forward House.*

Tuesday November 28th, 2023. You can donate in person, online, or in person. Use can also use your mobile device and our QR Code. Want to make it fun? Consider starting your very own fundraiser at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/fundraise/>

You can challenge your friends and help us get a chance for even bigger donations!

You may also consider an ongoing small monthly donation. It is easier to afford and helps us with more predicable funds and budgeting.

GI  **ING**
TUESDAY



Vision, compassion, and commitment to others



You may not be aware of our history, so we want to give you a refresher since we never want to forget our roots. Forward House Ministries was the result of 2 people's vision and compassion. In 1992, Ed and Joanne Mullis having seen the need for men in recovery to have a longer term "safe home" to allow for a more stable recovery and transition back to the community, founded Forward House as a single home on Chalmers Ave. Soon, growing in response to the needs, combining 2 homes, a commercial kitchen and adding a home on either side. Forward House now offers transitional housing for up to 30 men in second stage recovery. Staying for a minimum of 6 months and up to 3 years, we help provide a safe and stable home for men to move further along their recovery and gain the skills and confidence to transition back into the community, be it to their families, or their own homes. Founded in the Christian Faith and in keeping with our teachings, we welcome those of all faiths and beliefs who require our help and love. Offering addictions counselling, anger and stress-management classes, art programs and assistance in finding employment and life skills.



Sadly, we lost Joanne in 2013 and just this past December, Ed joined Jo-Anne to be with the Lord. Though they are gone, their spirit and compassion for those in need will be carried on at Forward House.



LACONA (CONEY) HEATHER CUNNINGHAM May 29, 1944 – September 26, 2023

We also more recently lost a long-time advocate for Forward House. She hated injustice and committed herself to causes, of which Forward House was one of them. Most of all Coney loved her family and friends. She gave unconditionally the gifts of her time, her trust, her ear, her loyalty, her baking, and her voice. She encouraged us to be kind and generous, to foster goodness in ourselves and others, to embrace adventure and joy, to work hard with honest effort, and to leave your community better than it was when you arrived.



LIVED EXPERIENCE AND PAYING IT FORWARD!



I am honoured to be able to share my time as Peer Support to the residents of Forward House.

I believe that Forward House is a special place that allows the residents to grow in their recovery within a safe and structured environment. I have a special attachment to the house as I used to be a resident there beginning in June of 2019. After some time away I decided that I wanted to give back in a way that fosters my recovery and helps the men with theirs too. In recovery, Service Work is very important to maintaining one's sobriety. I view my role as giving of myself in order to be of service to others in an enriching and positive way.

As Peer Support I am there as a positive example of someone who used to be a resident, has moved on to live successfully in the community and now want to share the strengths I have gained. It is rewarding for me to see the cohesiveness that is evident in the house while observing the growth among individual residents. Not only am I learning lots about the residents I am also learning lots about myself and my own recovery due to the nature of my role as Peer Support.

Shawn Milanese

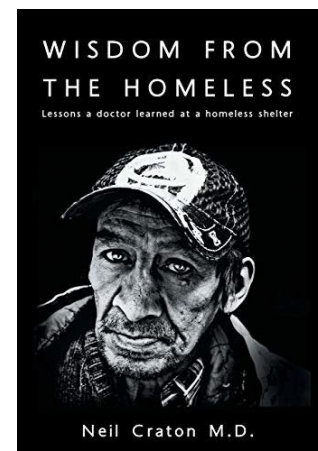
New Board Appointment

In January, we welcomed our newest board member, Dr. Neil Craton. Dr. Craton has been practising medicine for over 30 years with a passion for sports medicine for most of them. With a career that began in the emergency room in Winnipeg and six years later was admitted to UBC sports medicine fellowship where he earned his master's degree in human kinetics. He returned to Winnipeg in 1992 and started Legacy Sport Medicine Clinic in 1994. He works with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and has devoted a great deal of time to working with local charitable organizations including several years with Siloam Mission where he learned the lessons he shares in his book "Wisdom from the Homeless". He believes that practising medicine is a privilege and an opportunity to serve others.



Dr. Craton, with his 8 years of experience at Siloam Mission, crafted a "must-read" book outlining some of the lesson he learned from listening to and caring for the homeless. The book also includes beautiful photos by Leah Denbrok.

These can be purchased at Forward House!



Our Current Board



*Scott Groen
Director*



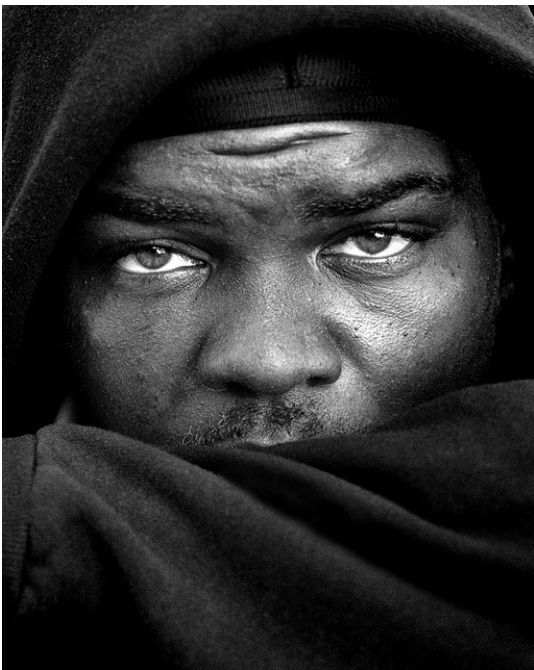
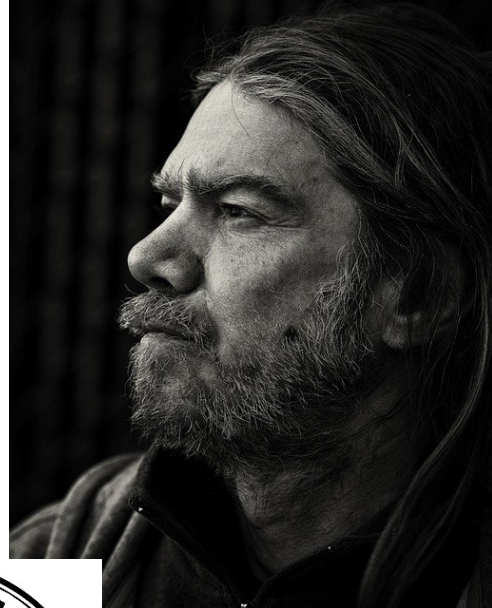
*Dr. Neil Craton
Director*



*Robert Kreis
Chair*



THE FACES OF NEED



Missionfest Manitoba
introduces



Forward House Ministries
2023 Exhibitor



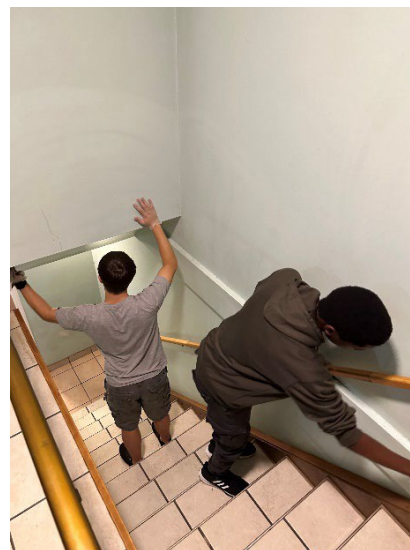

Happenings

Dr. Neil in May began hosting 2 clinics a month at Forward House to give the men an opportunity to see a doctor “in house” to discuss any health issues, get some advice on physical training, or just have some fellowship with someone who truly cares for the well-being of others. This is such a unique and helpful blessing that Dr. Neil provides the men, something few other agencies have access to.

Scott Groen of Tache Pharmacy, another of our board members, has hosted vaccine clinics at the house to provide the men with easy access to both the flu and Covid booster shots. He also provides medication consultations for the men when they require.

Fourteen students from Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute, chose Forward House for their “service day” this past October 5th. These hard-working and tremendously polite young adults came and did a thorough “fall clean-up” washing and disinfecting walls, doors and anything else in their way! We so appreciate their efforts as we ready ourselves for another big painting project to refresh the rooms!

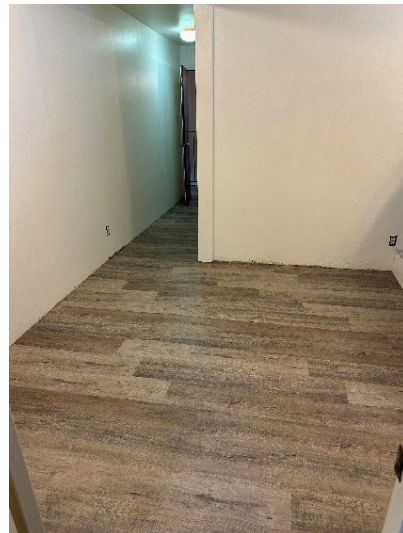
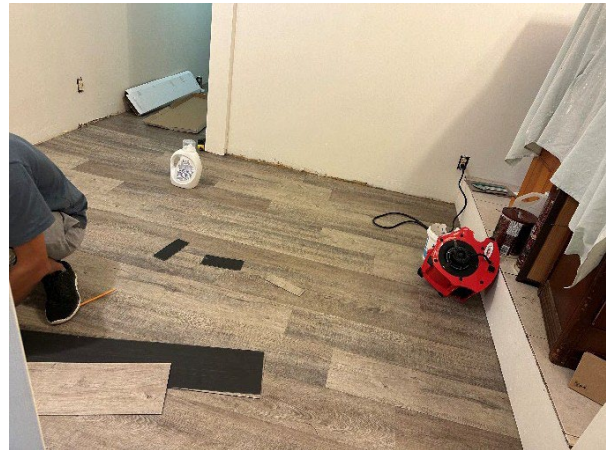
The team at Forward House “Hit the road” this year, first attending MissionFest 2023 at Church of The Rock, the first since Covid lockdowns. Elvis and Randall, two of our participants attended Recovery Day at the forks organized by SRWC and we had an information booth and talked to many people about our services and mission. Randall, later in the month, attended the Sara Riel “Health and Wellness” expo. We have been taking our show on the road to reach men in need closer to where they are and partnering with other agencies to give the best results to the men in need. This partnership went one step further with SRWC and generous funding from the Thomas Sill Foundation to allow us provision of SWRC’s services to men at Forward House without cost to the men.



Recovery Day September 10, 2023



It was time to do some necessary repairs. The flooring in our Watt Street Building was quite worn. Our wonderful friends, Richard at **Image Flooring**, and Joe at **Confab Projects**, helped us greatly with a generous donation of some of the materials and labour! Thank you so much and to the crews that did amazing work!



Out with the old and in with the new!



Current Needs!

You might ask “with everything that you have been able to accomplish, do you still need anything else?”

The short answer is yes. Our rebuilding process helped us to shine a spotlight on some areas that need immediate and less immediate work. While the fire may be out, we must be careful to not let any “hot spots” reignite an emergency. We are still looking for a permanent Executive Director. Our board chair, Robert Kreis has been voluntarily filling this role since March on a full-time basis, fulfilling not only the duties of board chair, but also the daily duties associated with being the Interim-Executive Director. This means hiring and managing staff, managing the daily needs of the organization, donor relations and fund-raising, overseeing the repairs and renovations, and managing the finances of the organization. This also involves working closely with Clyde Finlay, our Case Manager and Henry Loewen, our House Manager, in reviewing applications and selecting interviewing prospective program participants. Lynda Wilson assists by managing all of the files and for intakes, move-ins, and to act as liaison to many of the other agencies we work with. We know that the organization will be best served by having a full-time Executive Director separate from the Board.

- **Bedroom furniture** – Much of our bedroom furniture in the way of small dressers and nightstands are well beyond their usable life and need replacement. We hope to be able to standardize this furniture between the rooms with new, small space, ergonomic furniture suited to our type of facility.
- **More board members** – like any successful board, we need to have a vibrant engaged and diversified board in all aspects. We are currently looking for candidates that are accountants, lawyers, faith leaders and members of the greater community; people that can help propel us forwards towards our goals. If you know someone we should consider, or are interested yourself, please reach out to us for more information.
- **Volunteers** – Volunteers are a precious resource, and we are blessed with a dedicated few who are selfless with their time. We hope to find some volunteers who can provide interesting workshops, or educational classes on any kind of topic, or just fellowship or prayer with the men. While they are here, if they are not at work, we want them to have as much exposure to new areas and ideas that can bring self-improvement or new opportunities to them.
- **Fund-raising/donor relations ambassadors** – We need a few people who believe in what we do and want to help us share that message with others so that if we are the kind of organization providing the kind of service they would like to support, that they know where to find us and how to support us. We also want our donors to know how appreciated they are and how much their support helps the men in our program. Creative people with fun and engaging ideas who like to meet new people are most welcome!

The Wrap

Thank you to everyone who had faith in us and our Ministry! Without you, your support, and the Grace of God, we may not be here today. We are stronger than before, and planning and working towards the future. We encourage you to stop by and see us, visit with the men, see how God works with hearts.

Please share our story with others. We still need your ongoing support, but sharing our story may give someone else hope, someone who is seeing times as dark and discouraging as we did. God Bless.