

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

We are full of thanksgiving for another amazing year! At the Open Door we are grateful to God and you for 32 wonderful years, 6 days per week of being a front-line ministry outreach of the churches of Mississauga, making every effort to minister to people's practical, spiritual and emotional needs. The heart of the ministry is to love God and love and serve His people.

It is with a sense of great joy and thanksgiving to God that I write this annual report. Every day I have many wonderful stories to tell of what God has done in our midst and of all the wonderful happenings, so to try to report on a whole year is a challenge. It is a wonderful problem to have. One of the most amazing things is the way we experience God's Presence with us every day in so many ways, big and small. To see peoples' lives being touched and in some cases being changed, and to see people come in with despair and leave with a measure of hope is so uplifting.

Looking back over this past year, I am amazed at all that has transpired and I thank God for all that He has done. Please don't miss the MINISTRY NOTES at the end of this report as they tell some of the stories of what has been happening here in people's lives and they will give you more insight into the ministry.

We are especially thankful for the wonderful partnership we have with all our churches and every one of you who participate in this ministry. The people who come to us for help are from all over Mississauga and beyond. We serve people from every walk of life, all different ages, races, religions and cultures for every reason imaginable. As the second largest shopping mall in Canada, located in the heart of the city, Square One is a real city centre. It is easily reached by bus from any area of our city. There are over 5,000 employees, countless shoppers, and also many people who wander around the mall for various reasons. It is surprising the number of people who are in distress who come to the mall and end up at The Open Door. Many different agencies and both hospitals refer people to us, as well as those who find us by word of mouth. People can see the churches of Mississauga wanting to be available to them when they need someone to turn to, whatever the reason. People also appreciate Square One's desire to have us here as an expression of their caring commitment and service to the community, the people of Mississauga.

There are so many wonderful resources available in our churches – but many people do not know they exist. There are parenting groups, alpha groups, bereavement, small home groups, youth groups, sports groups, separated and divorced, financial advising, anger management, prayer groups etc. There are programs to help youth in difficulty with school work or the law, ESL classes, vacation schools. There are concerts and plays, etc.

This is just a small sampling of the vast resources. We are thankful to be able to connect people who need these resources to our churches. We also network with many agencies in the community to obtain help needed by those who come to us as a part of our referral counseling.

We have a map of Mississauga with all our churches on it plus a file on every church which we try to keep as current as possible. Please make sure that your information is up-to-date.

Thanks to our Lord and to all our churches and the people who partner with us in so many ways. Thank you to those of you who financially support this ministry as we are run entirely by donation and do not receive any grants.

Every day is packed full of ministry both in the centre and on the telephone. A lot of our work is caring for people in distress, for people who are homeless or about to be evicted, for abused women and children, teenagers or young adults in difficulty, for people suffering from marriage breakdowns, joblessness, poverty, bereavement, poor health, people in need of food and for people who do not know where to turn for help in their particular circumstances. Many people who come are hungry for a sense of wholeness, and some people have a deep spiritual hunger. So many people need someone to talk to, and to know that someone cares.

We also have people who come in seeking information on how to access the help they need in order to assist them in their endeavours to help loved ones, ie. aging parents, children with various problems, etc. Some of our pastors and churches call upon us for information as well.

The centre is also a place of comfort, a source of encouraging friendship for people who are lonely, for those who are battling disabilities or chronic illness such as cancer, etc.. Some are new to the country. We have many opportunities to encourage and pray with people and we also try to connect them to groups or places where their needs can be further met.

Every day is different, but there is always so much joy and thankfulness each day for all that has happened. How wonderful when a little family about to be wrongfully evicted is safe because of the instruction they receive from our outreach worker. How beautiful when a terrified, single mother out of an abusive situation is reassured, offered help and regains her hope or when we see someone grieving a loved one, being encouraged by our Lord. We are all so encouraged when we see people overcoming addictions, finding employment, not losing their new job because we were able to provide some bus tickets or work boots; being able to be of help to someone facing critical illness or to journey with people with disabilities or providing food and diapers and clothing for a little baby; watching people come into faith, hope replacing despair, and the lonely comforted.

We had well over 14,000 visits to The Open Door last year. The majority of the visits are for crisis situations but this number includes over 2,500 visits to our food cupboard, over 200 people who attended our free Christmas dinner and 135 families totaling 470 people were provided with turkeys and gifts in their homes. Every Thursday evening between 25 and 40 people attended the free dinners. We see approximately 40 to 50 people every day, six days per week. We have also distributed a large number of diapers, grocery vouchers, bus tickets and clothing.

We have a number of churches who faithfully collect food for us, but we need more who will join in on a regular basis. We also receive food gift certificates from a couple of churches which helps so much when people are desperate for milk or margarine, etc. or need special foods such as baby formula or Ensure for adults who are ill. Many people have illnesses which require special diets and fresh foods.

When people come to us for food, we recognize that it is a symptom that something isn't going well for them and we befriend people and see what we can do to help further with their difficulties.

Christmas at The Open Door is a huge undertaking, but it is worth it when we see how the Lord blesses everyone involved. Over 200 people attended the Christmas dinner and we took care of another 135 families by either matching them with churches or individuals and when we didn't have enough sponsors, we pulled it together in-house somehow.

We use the Older Adult Centre auditorium for our dinner. After a delicious turkey dinner and desserts provided by our churches, we invited any children or teens present who want to be in a play to come up. We tell them the true story of Christmas, dress them all up in costumes and they become the impromptu nativity play. For some children and for some of the adults watching, this is the first time they have heard the real story of the birth of Jesus. Throughout the dinner we had 2 groups who sang Christmas carols and a group of dancers who did a worship dance after the nativity. Before dinner everyone has an opportunity to have a free picture taken.

So many people comment on the loving atmosphere as a large number of volunteers work together to make this a memorable evening. Over 100 New Testaments were given to people who expressed a desire to receive one. At the end of the evening everyone receives Christmas gifts provided by our churches and others as well. Those attending are people we have been ministering to and we know they are so much in need of this encouragement and provision. See ministry notes at end of report for a Christmas story.

In addition, we took care of 135 families or approximately 470 people. Everyone is interviewed, a gift suggestion list is made of their children's wishes and even the adults, and then these families are matched to people from our churches and some from the community to provide these gifts and also a turkey and all the needs for their Christmas dinner at home. This year we had to provide for a number of families in The Open Door we didn't have sponsors for by putting together gifts, turkeys and food we had received. Some gift certificates provided by our churches really helped and we were thankful for the people who volunteered to help put things together and deliver last minute to a number of families.

We have many beautiful stories of how God touched people's lives through the gift of love and care provided by these Christmas events and we would like to extend a huge thank you to all of you who made this Christmas a special celebration for the people who needed your help.

We are so encouraged by the number of people from our churches who drop in just at the right moment with bus tickets, or financial donations, food, gift certificates for grocery stores, coffee, leftovers from a function, etc. God manages to send them in just when we need them most! Others have asked for donations at their own parties for The Open Door in lieu of gifts.. At a children's church musical, food was collected for admission, a line dancing class brought bus tickets to every session for us, children brought in used toys, people came with jars of change. This list could go on and on. It is always beautiful to see how people's hearts are touched by God to do something to help.

We have wonderful volunteers who come in to give of themselves to help in this ministry, some for half a day per week – others for more to minister to the people who come in for help. We have quite a

number of new volunteers that God has been calling in to serve here from various churches in Mississauga. We have had a volunteer meeting recently to begin our training and more meetings are being planned.

We also thank all the ambassadors for The Open Door in the congregations of Mississauga, in their service clubs or workplaces. We have people who have food drives and people who regularly bring in day-old bread and people who knit for us, people who make toiletry kits and blessing kits. A church had a barbecue and sold hot dogs and hamburgers and the young people did a bake table with the proceeds coming to the Open Door. Another church provided a large number of work boots and socks for us so that people wouldn't lose jobs they had just found. There are just so many people to thank as there are also so many other ways people participate in this ministry.

Our thanks to the merchants and mall management for the many ways they participate at The Open Door too. Some of the employees in Square One find ways to help as well. The mall management has always been supportive of The Open Door and we thank God for them. This year we were truly honoured when they made a special award to The Open Door at their annual Tenny Awards. We also have a great relationship with security.

The crockpot ministry is growing. We have so many people during the week who are hungry and in the winter cold and hungry. Some people pick a day to provide stew, soup or chili, and in the summer sandwiches, etc. to keep available as we unofficially feed at least 15 people during the day.

Our Thursday evening friendship dinners are packed out with people attending and our churches really enjoy taking turns providing the dinner. In addition to our regulars, a number of new churches have joined our roster this year. Usually a church does the whole evening themselves, but sometimes we have more than one church helping – for example, one night the food and people to serve was provided by one church. A group from another church played guitars and sang before and during dinner and shared a story about their experience of God's love in their life and helped everyone play a fun game where everyone went home with a gift. We open our evening with guitars or other worship music, a short Scripture reading, reflection and grace followed by a wonderful home cooked meal with good fellowship around the table. These dinners mean so much to the people who attend and we have many beautiful encounters with them. Thank you to all who so lovingly serve in this ministry. Our churches really enjoy this opportunity to minister in the marketplace.

On Wednesdays we provide a free lunch with our noontime Bible Stories and prayer time for anyone who wants to attend. We have many stories to tell of how people have been touched by this part of the ministry. Some churches have started to come in to provide hot lunches and we also have had some school groups providing and serving the lunches too.

On some Saturdays, some churches and youth groups have begun providing hot lunches for us. Our thanks to those who have helped.

We have so many comments from the people coming to serve at all of our different meals about how much they enjoy this opportunity to be able to connect personally with people who really need their help.

A special thank you to the “Trinity Purposeful Providers”, City Centre Baptist volunteers and the many other volunteers who help with our clothing and food cupboards. We have monthly clothing days where people can pick out clothes for their family free of charge. Volunteers come regularly to sort the clothes and to bring them over and back from our storage room. This is a huge job and we really appreciate their commitment.

The library and tape ministry is flourishing. We find books to be very effective in ministry. We are really in need of more Jesus videos as our supply is depleted, especially English. We lend gospel videos and tapes in all different languages which are very much in demand.

Our thanks to our faithful intercessors, some who pray with us on Friday mornings and others who pray for us in our churches and in their own personal prayer times. We consider this time to be the heart beat of the ministry as we pray for The Open Door and the City of Mississauga. You are welcome to join us at The Open Door on Friday mornings for our time of prayer. Prayer is so important to us and we appreciate all the prayer support. Some churches pray for the ministry on a regular basis. Every day begins with prayer at the Open Door and we also spend quite a bit of time in our little chapel room praying with people every day.

The blessings from our Blessing tree disappear very quickly as many people enjoy taking one. We have lovely stories of how God has used these scriptures to minister to people’s hearts. Encouraging scriptures are written on colourful paper, rolled up and tied with a ribbon to our tree for all to help themselves to.

The Mississauga Waterfront Festival provided us with free entry tickets and vouchers for food and rides for children, teens and adults to accompany them. People who otherwise couldn’t afford it had an opportunity to have a lovely outing.

Youth groups and students doing their community hours came in to help in various ways. We consider this an important part of our ministry, as for some young people this is their first experience doing volunteer work. We also mentored a Guelph University student who did their field placement with us. Since September we had Stan Bunston doing his field work placement from the Toronto Schools of Theology. He was a real gift to our ministry and I enjoyed our times of theological reflection together and his reports. He is missed by all as he now continues on elsewhere on his journey towards ordination.

The number of invitations to speak has really increased this year and I have enjoyed having the opportunity to speak at a number of churches and other groups and to share our powerpoint and the wonderful stories of how we see God at work in people’s lives here. It’s always great to see so many friends of The Open Door. Pastors from our churches come in and it is always a joy to have them. People from various agencies come in to find out more about The Open Door and we are happy to be of help to them and them to us.

A very special thank you to our Board members who serve so faithfully and enthusiastically. Our board meetings begin and end with prayer and there is such a wonderful sense of working together. I

always feel inspired and encouraged by our meetings and I value their wisdom. They give freely of themselves to serve our Lord as representatives of our churches at The Open Door.

We are really missing Krista, the Assistant Director, who is on maternity leave as of May 2007. She is so loved by all! During this past year Krista has been ministering to so many people as well as her many other tasks and assuming leadership when I needed to be elsewhere speaking or on vacation, etc. In addition, Krista took charge of our Christmas families program, and also set up a website with the help of a student. Our new website is “www.theopendoordrop-in.org”. We congratulate her and her husband on the addition of another little girl to their family and we are looking forward to Krista’s return to The Open Door.

We also thank God for the rest of our staff – Sandra, our Office Manager and our part-time staff – Belma, Violet, Vashti, and Roberta who share among themselves Saturdays and other days when needed. Jennifer is working full-time with us for the summer and we are thankful to have her with us.

Deb Rudack is the case worker for the Region of Peel who is a wonderful asset to our ministry. Deb helps us with so many difficult circumstances that people are in that require intervention with social services and other government agencies. We are so thankful for her help cutting through so much red tape. Deb helps us with everyone from the homeless, to cheques gone astray to even attending court with some of our clients. We really thank God for her and all her expertise and her heart for the people she sees! You will hear more about her in the ministry notes. Thank you to all the people who have come in this past year to give thanks for what God has done in their lives through this ministry. It is so encouraging to hear how they are continuing on in His love and care and how lives are truly affected for the good and there is lasting fruit from the ministry.

Thank you for the love, encouragement, support and friendship that has been extended to me personally and to our staff and for your prayers that mean so much to us.

I thank God for calling me to serve here. It brings great joy to me. It seems that over all the years God’s call is the same “Love Me and Love My People”. I have an opportunity to be in relationship with so many beautiful people, to walk with others on part of their journey, to experience the joy of being used of God in ministry and to experience the love and fellowship of Christian community. This fills my heart with even more love for God and for His people. I look forward to all that God has planned for us in the coming year.

The rest of my report follows. Please see the attached ministry notes.

Lynne Culham
Executive Director

Lynne and Krista's Ministry Notes June 2007

A lady called saying that she was in need of someone to talk to and just to help to lift her up because she was feeling very depressed. After talking with her I learned that her 15-year-old daughter was just home from hospital with a serious illness of Crohn's Disease and she was on a feeding tube, although she was able to eat a few foods and the mother didn't have any food in the house at all and was very much in need of some help. She had no way to come and get the food as she had to stay and take care of her daughter. So we managed to get together some of the fresh food she needed from some grocery vouchers that we had and we gave her a voucher to use later and some food out of our food cupboard. In our conversation we discovered that it helped her to be able to read and so we were able to give her some books from our library – a good Christian fiction book and a daily reading book as well as "A Shepherd's Look at the 23rd Psalm". She had also requested that I pray with her on the telephone, which I did, and it just happened that we had a pastor and a few people who had come in to bring in some lunch to serve at The Open Door who overheard what was going on with me trying to find someone to deliver the food and they offered to deliver it after lunch and said that they would pray for her in person. We also called Caring and Sharing so that we would be able to get an order for her in the next week to stock her cupboards up a little bit with some of the types of food that she needed. She was absolutely delighted to receive the help and it really lifted her spirits a lot. The mom was on disability and therefore they have a very limited income. She had used a bit of money that she had to buy a new mattress for her daughter when she was coming out of hospital and didn't realize that there might be a way to get some help with that. We contacted our outreach worker, Deb Rudack who will look into the possibility of getting some of that money refunded which will really help this lady as well.

A very lovely lady who is battling cancer comes in for prayer on a fairly regular basis. We pray with her about her chemo difficulties, her surgery, and the many other difficulties she is coping with. She is so full of faith that we are very inspired by her journey with the Lord and her insights and we often see the beautiful ways God meets with her. What a privilege to pray with her.

It was after hours and I was going to be late for a meeting when a lady and her two children were knocking on the door. She was apologetic, but desperately in need of food and so I brought them in and started to get food for them and as I did one of the two little girls asked if it was possible to come to the Christmas dinner at The Open Door again this year as this was just before Christmas. She said that they had been at the dinner the year before and that she had been in the play and that she was Mary and that her sister was an angel and she was really excited about the possibility of being in the play again this year. After I registered them I suddenly realized that we would have had pictures of them from the play, so I went and found the photo album and brought a picture of each of the children to give to them. They were so excited you would have thought that I had handed them something really amazing. The mother who suffers from severe depression actually smiled when she saw the pictures (one of the first times I've seen her smile) and said "Thank you so much, I don't have any pictures of my children". And then I realized of course that in her poverty there are so many things that we can take for granted, yet were beyond her reach. Of course she didn't have a camera and couldn't afford school pictures or anything else as she could barely manage day to day to feed her kids.

They all had a wonderful time at the Christmas dinner again this year, and the girls were in the play once again. We were just delighted that the girls were so eager to come again and that we were able to bring some joy into their lives.

A lady came in who said that she was feeling as if God was mad at her. This lady had struggled through a marriage that was marred by a husband who had a real problem with alcohol and other problems and eventually left them. She had raised five children in poverty. Now her daughter had grown up and married and had a little baby with her and the mother was feeling very upset because she felt as though now her beautiful daughter was ending up in the same situation as she was in. The daughter had moved back in with the mother now with this baby. We had a good talk about how God had always been there for her and her children and that she had always taught her children to trust Him. She just had to get her feelings off her chest and then was able to see and know that indeed God had always been with her and was with her now.

She needed food and baby formula and diapers and we were able to provide her with the food and the diapers, but unfortunately we didn't have the right kind of baby formula and the baby was too young to switch to another one. As we were also out of grocery vouchers we couldn't buy any. She gave me the label from the can of formula for the right kind and asked if I would save her some if it came in and I assured her that we would. I also said that we would help her daughter who was with her who we had known as a child. Just at this time a man walked in with three bags of groceries. I ran out to make sure that we recorded his donation and he asked if we ever use baby formula. We said that we certainly do and he took two cans of baby formula out to see if they were the right kind that we would use and of course there they were, the exact baby formula that we needed.

I said to this gentleman, "Would you like to see the baby that you just bought this baby formula for? The baby's right there." And the man turned around and saw the baby in the baby carriage and was very moved and said that he didn't even know why he bought baby formula as he didn't have any children, didn't even know what it looked like and that he had asked the people in the store where it was. He felt that somehow God must have prompted him to get that baby formula and we were very thankful for it. I was then able to go around the corner in The Open Door and show the mother who had been so upset the cans of formula and she could hardly believe her eyes. She thanked God for His provision.

We see this kind of thing happen in The Open Door all the time and we really thank God for the way that He can use the smallest thing to encourage people and assure them that He is with them somehow.

As we befriended a young mother who came in with her 3-month-old to get food and diapers, we discovered that she was going to be evicted from the room she was renting. When we found out that it was because she hadn't received cheques that she was supposed to have received in the last two months we immediately called Deb, our outreach worker and within two days Deb was able to get those cheques for us as there had simply been a mix-up. She was able to keep her room. She said she was so thankful to God because she had been praying to God for help and didn't know what to do.

Just after morning prayer on Friday a lady came by with some hearing aid batteries that she had bought by mistake as they were the wrong ones for her hearing aid. She hoped that perhaps someone could use them and we never say no to anything so we thanked her. Half an hour later Deb, our outreach worker had come in, bringing in someone she had wanted to meet us who was a worker with the region. While

we were talking, a gentleman came in that we have been helping and praying with for quite a while as he had applied for disability and had been turned down and was still waiting again after appealing it and had multiple health problems. He was living in a room cordoned off by a blanket and going through a really rough time. He came for our free lunches and dinners occasionally and we also encouraged him and prayed with him as he was doing well overcoming an addiction. When the person who Deb had brought in saw him, she exclaimed that he was her client and that his disability had just come through and she hadn't been able to contact him, because, of course he didn't have a telephone and would it be all right if she went out and told him. We were really excited because we'd been praying and praying for this disability pension to come through for him. Then I remembered that he wore hearing aids and so I went out and asked him if he needed batteries for his hearing aids. He profusely apologized and said that he was sorry if he was yelling, but that he couldn't hear because his hearing aid batteries were almost dead. I said, "No, no, I was asking if you need hearing aid batteries," and showed him the batteries that I had been given and they were the exact kind that he needed for his hearing aids.

A lady was brought to us whose husband had left her and she was in the final months of pregnancy and had another child at home. She had no income and nothing ready for the baby who was to be born and didn't know where to turn. We told her about legal services that would be available for her and also how to apply for Ontario Works for support in the meantime if she needed it so that she would be able to get some kind of money coming in. We then provided her with baby clothes and diapers and other baby products for the unborn child as well as some toiletries that she could take to the hospital with her for herself. As well as assuring her that we would continue to be a friend and a help to her we also referred her to other helpful agencies such as Healthy Start, Birthright, Mississauga Life Centre, Jewels for Jesus, and Vita Manor and explained to her what the various agencies did.

We also gave her a resource where she could receive some counseling if she felt she needed it. She had come in feeling very frightened and overwhelmed and left with a sense that others could be around to help her in some way in her difficulties.

A man came in who had no OHIP with a daughter who was an insulin dependent diabetic, only 12-years-old and in medical crisis as despite the insulin, her blood sugars were extremely high. He didn't want to take her to emergency because he said that they told him he was going to have to pay a fairly substantial sum of money and he said he had no money to pay it with. We tried calling the juvenile diabetes clinic and they said there was nothing they could do to help and we called emergency and they did say that he would have to pay, but they wouldn't turn a child away, that he would be billed. This man was still reluctant to take his daughter to the hospital as he was afraid of a bill and we explained to him that he could go to crisis intervention where he would be able to talk to a social worker and see if they would be able to help. We made a number of calls trying to find a way to get some help, but to no avail. We were very concerned that this child was not going to be taken to the hospital, but fortunately one of our people who brings in food from a church just happened to stay for a while. He was retired from the police force. He agreed to drive them to emergency for us as we wanted to be sure that this child was going to get help and the father agreed to accept the ride. The child was admitted to hospital and they kept her over for some treatment. We were very thankful that we were able to get this child to the hospital.

A lady came in with a history of abusive relationships and recognized that she currently was in another one and seemed unable to help herself from this repetitive cycle. After talking and praying with her, we referred her to a course offered by the Salvation Army. She has come in since and is so thankful that there is going to be a way for her to get some help with this ongoing problem.

A lady called for help. She had a broken ankle and had had surgery. She was a single mom with a son who was trying to work and so there was no one to pick up the groceries that they so desperately needed. We were able again to find someone who would deliver the groceries to her for us and then we arranged for a Caring and Sharing order. We found out that she had been praying for help because she didn't know what to do. How wonderful to know that God would use some of us to help and answer her prayers.

A lady came in with broken glasses. She had been wearing glasses since she was a small child and really couldn't see at all. She had small children and didn't know what she was going to do since one of the children had broken her glasses and because she is on welfare she had glasses within the last two years and wasn't eligible for new ones. We called up to Lenscrafters and they agreed to see the lady immediately and provided her with much-needed glasses.

A lady came in desperation as she was being evicted because she couldn't afford the rent and was behind in the rent. She has four children and is a single mom and one of her children has a disability. She was trying to work, but because she had severe injuries from the past in a very bad car accident, she is in chronic pain and one of her legs keeps collapsing on her. Not only did she have many physical scars, but also was still trying to overcome the trauma of losing family members in the accident. She had been out trying to find another apartment or place to live that was cheaper than the one she was in, but had great difficulty walking very far and didn't have enough money for more transit tickets. We helped her with information about a shelter and were able to give her bus tickets so that she could get around to more places. We provided her with food, encouragement and prayer. We referred her to our outreach worker, Deb so she could help her to apply for disability insurance.

We were thankful to be able to help a 17-year-old girl who was living on the street and was in great distress. She came in with her arms bleeding and bandaged where she had been cutting herself and didn't want to go to the hospital for treatment, but Krista spent a great deal of time with her, encouraging her to get help and gave her information so she could receive counselling. We have been helping her with prayer and encouragement, with groceries and bus tickets to get to job interviews as she's now progressing and recently she has moved into a basement apartment off the streets. She is in the process of searching for a job and so we're thankful to be able to help her with much-needed toiletries and clothing.

A man came all the way to see us in a motorized wheelchair. He has many handicaps and very limited use of his hands. His apartment was broken into and totally ransacked, cables and phone pulled out of the wall, walls bashed in, paint splashed all over and broken glass everywhere. The lock on his door was broken and because he can't use the phone he can't let anyone in downstairs as it has to be activated by the telephone. He had received a note from the landlord saying he owed under \$200 in rent and was warned that it needed to be paid immediately. In order to get some money for him to help with the rent that was behind as his money and everything had been stolen, we needed to have his

police record released as he had reported the break-in. We needed to have the record faxed to our worker, but the police station kept saying that he had to come down. We kept getting sent to different departments and finally they agreed that if we wrote a letter and had him sign it and faxed it with ID then they would accept it. It really showed us how much effort you have to go through sometimes to help people with things that seem so obvious. This gentleman continues to come into The Open Door and we've been able to help him with some articles to replace some of the things in his apartment that had been destroyed and he also often eats with us at our Thursday night dinners. He is still very much in need of someone to help just pack some of his things into boxes so that some of the repairs that are covered by insurance can be accomplished. We continue to journey with him as he tries to get things back together. He told us that his mother, who lives a long distance away, is a person who prays for him everyday and he said that it's interesting that he would end up at The Open Door and that this would be the place that he received help.

A couple who were desperately trying to get off the street were coming into The Open Door, mostly for dinner and help with bus tickets so they could get to interviews to try to get a job. We were thankful that a church had provided us with work boots because he finally managed to get a job, but had to have work boots right away. They have now been able to move into a basement apartment and regained custody of their 15-year-old who was unable to be with them because they were on the street. After the 15-year-old moved back in with them, she needed to do her volunteer hours for school and we agreed to have her at The Open Door. She was an excellent volunteer and we really enjoyed having her. We have also connected the mother to some helpful programs for her own personal development.

I was invited to speak to some children in grades 4, 5 and 6 for their career day and as part of the time with them, we made toiletry bags and candy shishkebabs and I took pictures of them holding up the bags and things that they had made. After a return to The Open Door, I found that some of the recipients of these things were happy to have their picture taken for the children and so I'm going to be able to send pictures back to them of the people who they blessed.

A young man came in who was just out of the shelter. He was in a basement room and was allowed the use of the microwave and refrigerator in the house. He was on Ontario Works, but he was very determined to find work as he said that he wanted to be self-supporting and not on welfare. We gave him food and he told us that there was a job fair the next day, but he didn't know what he was going to do because he didn't have anything appropriate to wear. He was unaware of our clothing cupboard as we keep the clothes in the storage room, so we were able to offer him clothes that would be appropriate for the job fair. He was so excited and thankful. He has returned to tell us that he did obtain employment. Thanks be to God.

A 10-year-old came in with his older sister who was coming to pick up some things for the family from us. I knew that this young man lived with four sisters and his mother and that the father was long gone and he had been living in a abusive situation as a younger boy. We had been given a few hockey sticks earlier and I asked this young man if he ever played street hockey and he said no, but he really liked to watch the other kids play. I asked him if he would play if he had a hockey stick and he said "Oh, yes," and I was able to go into the chapel and bring out a hockey stick for him and he was just absolutely thrilled to receive it. I then remembered that we'd also been given some balls, so I asked him if he played ball games of any kind and he said that he played volleyball and that he was actually on the

championship team at his school. I asked him if he practiced very much at home and he said no because he didn't have a volleyball. As it turned out, the only ball that I had left between the basketballs and the soccer balls that I had been given was a volley ball and so I was able to give it to him. These can seem like small things and yet we know how much they can mean in a little boy's life at this age, especially a little boy who didn't have a dad to play things with him, because he can go out and join the other children. We also had another boy who had come in with a single mom and we gave him a hockey stick as well for the same reason that he was now able to play a healthy game of sport with other children.

A man came in needing help with some mental health issues and we were able to refer him to the Peel After Care Recreation Centre where he would be able to learn some good skills like cooking and other things that would be helpful for him. We also referred him to Eden Place which would be a social place for him to spend a bit of time and we advised of housing that would be available perhaps to him as he was constantly losing a basement apartment in homes and finding himself homeless all the time.

We were thankful to be able to help a mother who came to us in great distress as she was working two part-time jobs and still finding it very difficult to support her children, not knowing how much money she was going to be making week to week and having no benefits of any kind. Her son had gone to school in September and came back with a note that he was obviously needing glasses and she also said that he had a list of school supplies that she had no way of being able to obtain for him. Once again, we were thankful to Lenscrafters for helping us with glasses for the young man and to the many people who came by with school supplies for us in September. We were therefore able to outfit him with a backpack and the much-needed supplies for his classes.

A mother who was supporting a daughter and a son found herself in very difficult circumstances as she was diabetic and her foot had become infected. She was unable to work. She and her daughter and son were sleeping in one bed in a cold basement room. When we offered to get another bed for them, she responded by saying that there was no room to put another bed. We were able to provide them with a microwave oven so that they had something to heat food in and we gave them clothing and a large blanket and they came for meals at The Open Door and food from our food cupboard. They were having difficulty with their immigration and so we connected them to an agency that we felt might be of some help to them. The mother asked us to pray with her as she was really trusting that God was going to help them with this difficult situation. We were thankful to be of some help to this little family.

A lady whose husband died of cancer started coming in. She was seeing a bereavement counselor once every two weeks, but really needed support. So she came in for prayer and hugs. She was very emaciated as she wasn't eating properly any more at all and so we invited her to our dinners. She began to come and enjoyed the fellowship, at first barely eating at all, but now starting to enjoy her meals in the company of others. It is wonderful to be there for her in a time of loneliness and bereavement.

A lady was referred to us by Distress Line Peel, (we actually get a number of referrals from them) and we were able to connect her to Peel Family Services and also gave her the number for Interim Place for a transitional worker to get in touch with as she was still in her home, but in a very difficult situation.

We also had a good talk with her and a time of prayer and we connected her to a place where she would be able to get some counselling if she wanted it.

We had a very beautiful happening that helped a lot of people. A gentleman approached me who had heard me speaking at a church and said that he would talk to his boss and see if it would be possible to get diapers for The Open Door. We received a call from the boss saying that we needed to be there within the next two days and that we had to come with a cube van because they would be needing to load the diapers on in skids into the truck. So we immediately began to search for a way to rent a moving truck. We had already called around to no avail to different people to see if they knew of anyone who had one. After placing quite a few calls we managed to get a moving company who said that they knew The Open Door. In fact one of their people had volunteered here and they offered us a cube van free of charge other than the gas, but we had to pick it up early in the morning and have it back by noon. Because all of the places we had called were charging a fairly large sum of money and The Open Door doesn't have money, we really were thanking God for this great opportunity. Now we had to find somebody to drive the truck. By now time was running out. Then one of our volunteers said that he would help by driving the truck and he took the morning off work to do it. I went with him and we arrived at the company after picking up the truck early in the morning and loaded up. We were amazed at the skids that they gave us full of diapers and headed back. The only problem is that when we got back, we realized there wouldn't be anyone to help and so there we were in the truck tunnel unloading by hand all of these diapers. Once the mall opened, we sent for help to The Open Door and there was a young man who was unemployed who had dropped in and volunteered to come over and help unload with us. We managed to get the truck unloaded by noon, but we continued to work until 3:00 or so in the afternoon to then move everything into the storage room. This young man worked so hard and when he came back, someone had brought in a suit. It was still in a garment bag, but I suddenly thought of him and asked him if he had any need for a suit and he said yes because he was looking for a job, but it was no use trying to find one because he's so tall and skinny, the suits were too short in the arms. He was just very difficult to fit. I said, "Well, I haven't had a look at this, but let's just see what's here," and opened the bag and much to all of our amazement, the suit fit him perfectly. It was perfect for his job hunting and we said, "It looks like God really wants to thank you for all that you did to help today."

We were able to provide diapers for so many moms who were struggling so hard, some of them working two part-time jobs, never knowing how much money they were going to get, others on their own, struggling to provide for a child on limited income. Some had children with developmental and other physical problems who, even though the children were older, were desperately in need of large size diapers for them. Diapers are so expensive and so this was just an amazing blessing for so many people and we are only now just running out as we have nothing but newborn size left. We are hoping that there might be a possibility of getting more diapers in the future. Blessings from the Lord go everywhere. It turned out that the man who was our initial contact was still grieving over the loss of his wife and I had a beautiful opportunity to pray together with him and he said that it was very meaningful to him and told me that his boss had a wife who was having a third round of chemo and asked if I might talk with him and pray for his wife as well. We truly thank God for all these wonderful blessings.

The hospitals often refer people to us and in this case, it was a couple who were both diabetic. The husband had been in the hospital, had just been released and they were losing their apartment as they

were too far behind on the rent. He hadn't been able to work and was needing help in trying to figure out where to go from here financially. We were thankful to be able to provide some grocery vouchers so that they could get some fresh foods that they needed and also to refer them to people who could help them to look at their situation to decide the best course to take.

There are so many stories to be told and these are only a small sampling. We are truly in awe of the way Jesus truly is "*Emmanuel*", God with us.

Lynne Culham
Executive Director