



nourish
hope



Gratitude for a year of blessings



Julian Daly, CEO, Our Place Society

We can't do all of this work without you! We are truly grateful to everyone who contributes to Our Place and helps us nourish hope in our community. Consider donating today – make a onetime donation, become a monthly donor, leave a legacy in your will, or make a donation of time by giving us a call at 250-940-5060, emailing us at donors@ourplacesociety.com, or visiting us at ourplacesociety.com/donate.

December is a time when I often count my blessings and look back on the past year with heartfelt gratitude.

Nobody knows what a year will bring, but since arriving at Our Place, I have come to know that the staff and volunteers here are incredibly dedicated to making sure that, above all else, we never lose sight of the vulnerable people we care for.

In 2021, that hard work and dedication meant that some 500 people who were struggling without housing were moved indoors. It also meant that our team grew as we took over management of numerous hotels, shelters and kitchens.

And when people moved into their new room or shelter bed, that's when the real work started. The work we do isn't just about providing a warm, dry bed – although that is incredibly important – it's about meeting individual needs, helping folk improve, even transform, their lives. For some that is giving them space

to rest after months or years of struggling to survive. It's about providing proper nutrition to build back their bodies and clear the fog in their brains. It's about dealing with addiction issues, which often means keeping people alive until they're ready to turn the page, and then providing support as they enter detox and therapeutic recovery.

For others, it's assessing their mental health needs; making sure if they have a diagnosis that they're getting proper medication or supporting them in finally getting a medical diagnosis.

In short, we build community.

When I look at the transformation of a hotel into a home or a parking lot into a tiny home village, I can't help but be amazed. The compassion that I see on a daily basis warms my heart.

Communities aren't born, they grow from a seed. And like a garden, it needs to be tended carefully. There

are some people who find a hotel room too isolating, so we need to move them to a community setting such as a shelter. There are some whose mental health has disintegrated to the point where they need more complex care than we have the ability to offer, and so we work with our health partners to find other solutions. And there are some who simply need time to find their way.

We aren't perfect, and I see people every day who are still struggling. I see men who have lost all trust in others, and I see women too afraid and traumatized to seek shelter.

But I know, we won't stop trying to reach them. It's not in our DNA to give up, so we'll keep soldiering on, reaching people where they're at and trying our best to give them all the support they need. And through it all, I know and appreciate all of the support our community and donors provide. Without that support our job would be impossible.

Thank you!

NOURISHING HOPE IN LIVES TODAY!

To donate to Our Place Society please call 250-940-5060, email donors@ourplacesociety.com, or visit us at ourplacesociety.com/donate



TV SCREEN INSIDE

Seniors find connection and companionship in the Our Place 50+ Club



“I really enjoyed this morning. I've signed up for the pizza party, and now I'd like to sign up for the Art Gallery and the exercise machines at the park. It's so nice to actually meet with others. Can't thank you enough!”

Kirsty is the Seniors Program Coordinator at Our Place where she's the driving force behind the '50+ Club', a program geared at bringing seniors who are our family members together to build connection and a sense of belonging. “At the core of the 50+ Club is how important community is to us and how getting together, just being together, however we can be, is the main focus,” says Kirsty.

Seniors who participate in the Club are often some of the most vulnerable in our community – **the average age of mortality of people experiencing homelessness in BC is 47**. For many seniors, Our Place provides all of the social interaction, health care, food, and access to services that they might receive in a year. The 50+ Club fills a void in serving seniors that would otherwise fall through the cracks because of limited resources and barriers that restrict them from participating in social, recreational and educational activities.

“Social inclusion programs are particularly important for impoverished seniors because they are at greater risk of isolation and depression than others,” says Patricia O'Byrne, Community Engagement Program

Manager at Our Place, who started the 50+ Club in 2018 to address a need she saw missing. “The 50+ Club improves morale and wellbeing and ensures that this group has access to the services and information that they need. We're there for them when sometimes no one else is. That connection is the most critical aspect.”

Kirsty plays a vital role by providing seniors with a caring listening ear, one-on-one companionship and support, and advocacy assistance. She's also their key contact in Victoria for all things 50+, filling a service gap for our family members and helping to open doors for people who aren't sure where to turn.

And, because of donors and grants from the City of Victoria, the federal New Horizons for Seniors program, and the United Church of Canada's Seeds of Hope stream, the 50+ Club was able to continue its service to seniors despite the pandemic, which brought feelings of relief and gratitude to Club members, knowing there was still a safe, welcoming and fun place to be during challenging times.

The best part of the Club? Kirsty coordinates fun outings and activities, always with proper safety protocols in place, like wearing masks, staying outdoors when possible, and having a sign-up system for events.

During this past year, the 50+ Club enjoyed picnics at Willows Beach, exercise class in Central Park, going out for a pizza or taco lunch, and gardening together in two plots in the Yates Street Community Garden. The 50+ Club also brings in guest speakers to provide information on topics like fraud prevention. In 2020, 682 seniors attended 93 Club events.

“It's really neat to see them forging bonds, making friends and learning things from one another,” says Kirsty. “It's an age group that's already socially isolated at times, and it's hard enough to make new friends. Pile on the many other circumstances that they're dealing with, and you really see how important it is for people to have access to a program like this one.”

Adds Patricia: “In the past year we heard from people that they weren't really as afraid of catching COVID. What they were really afraid of was the deep sadness and loneliness they'd feel and what that might trigger for them. We were so grateful to be able

to carry on the program throughout the pandemic, which would not have been possible without our donors and funders. We're grateful, and we know the 50+ Club members are too.”

Programs like the 50+ Club nourish a sense of hope and belonging for people and are only possible because of your support. Those few hours spent connecting with someone like Kirsty can make all the difference.

We're thankful for being able to help seniors in our community, and **with your support we can do even more to protect our vulnerable seniors**. You help nourish hope in so many this holiday season and throughout the year by supporting programs like the Our Place 50+ Club for seniors.



“Kirsty 'dragged' me out and into the hot sunlight and fresh air to see some new and old friends. She arrives with such a positive spin, lunch kits with fresh veggies and always a topic or activity of interest, mixed with laughter and understanding.”

From its humble beginnings as a simple downtown Victoria refuge, Our Place has grown from an inner-city community centre to employing 275+ staff and 250+ volunteers who operate a continuum of critical services in locations throughout the CRD.

- 919 Pandora Avenue
- Muncey Place on Blanshard Street
- Capital City Centre Hotel on Douglas Street
- Howard Johnson Hotel on Gorge Road
- Tiny Homes Village on Caledonia Avenue
- Russell Street Shelter
- My Place Shelter on Yates Street
- First Metropolitan Church Shelter
- Pandora Night Shelter
- New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal
- Jaymac Place Recovery Home
- Our Workplace on Quadra Street

Spiritual Care at Our Place

Meet Maria Green, Manager and Chaplain of Spiritual Care



“Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion. Practicing spirituality brings a sense of perspective, meaning, and purpose to our lives.”
~ Brene Brown

The concept of spirituality – of having an inner belief in hope, and faith – in supporting recovery is nothing new to Our Place Society. Founded on Christian traditions and the Open Door and Upper Room outreach of two United Church inner-city congregations more than 50 years ago, Our Place has taken those core values and evolved into an inclusive environment where all versions of spirituality and humanism are accepted, respected, and celebrated. Hope comes in many forms. Just one of those ways is providing spiritual care for people facing trauma, poverty, mental health, addictions, and/or homelessness.

That’s why spiritual care is a critical part of the range of supportive services we offer at our Drop-in Centre at 919 Pandora, led by new Manager and Chaplain of Spiritual Care, Maria Green. Maria joined Our Place in September, and she can already see the potential for growth in this area of care. She brings a Master’s in Divinity from Regent College and 15 years’ experience in outreach work. She spent 10 years living in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, working in roles at the Union Gospel Mission and the Salvation Army. Maria has seen first-hand how spirituality can have a powerful impact on a person’s ability to find hope in any situation, no matter how dire it may seem.

“Spiritual care is supporting people in their journey of connection and healing” says Maria. “What we try to do for people is nourish hope, because if they have that, they can face almost anything. Everything may seem so bleak, but if they have that inner hope, that inner faith, a plan, and support, they can believe they can make changes.” For Maria, spirituality can involve some religious aspects, but it shouldn’t be the focus. “Spirituality is anything that connects you to something greater than yourself, but also connects you to yourself, like love, and community. We’re all holistic beings – we’re all whole beings. We all have that spiritual aspect in ourselves, which means

something different to everyone. At Our Place we really want to create the most inclusive environment possible to allow people to find what that means to them.”

Right now, spiritual care services are based at 919 Pandora, and Maria has begun outreach into all 11 of our sites, especially New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community and various transitional housing locations where people are now in a more stable environment.

Thanks to government support, more people are now housed. Maria adds, “People are now given meals and other supports, and some of them are in a place where they are able to think beyond survival. That’s where Spiritual Care can come in. We are here to connect with people, to encourage connections with themselves, and with something greater than themselves, whatever that means to them.”

Maria’s vision is to recruit a team of spiritual care staff and volunteers of different faiths who are available to support people throughout Our Place. “Our plan is to start a coffee or hot chocolate and smudging station at each of our sites – same time, same place, same day each week. It takes a long time to build trust with people, and it has to be consistent. It’s about holding that space for people, opening up the positive energy for people to walk into, that can remind people of the hope that’s inside them.”

Our Place would like to honour and express deep gratitude to the more than 300 faith-based organizations that are loyal supporters of the meals, volunteers, and the recently successful tenant starter kits program. Season’s greetings to all who light the way and walk their faith through service and philanthropy!



SPONSOR AND SERVE A MEAL!

WE ARE SO EXCITED TO WELCOME YOU BACK TO OUR PLACE

BREAKFAST STARTING AT \$500

Imagine how important a morning meal is for someone waking up scared, hurting and hungry.

LUNCH STARTING AT \$600

With all meals, Our Place will acknowledge your organization for its generous partnership.

DINNER STARTING AT \$750

Our Place serves hundreds of meals per day and your donations ensure continued support for the most vulnerable citizens of Greater Victoria.

CHANGE A LIFE

If your group would like to sponsor a meal, (or meals) or you have questions please contact stevens@ourplacesociety.com or 250-940-5064

Help us **nourish hope**

Use your credit card to donate any time:
**[ourplacesociety.com/
donate](https://ourplacesociety.com/donate)**

or call us weekdays 8:30am–4:30pm:

250-940-5060

or mail us the enclosed donation form today!

Save the Date: Saturday, February 26th, 2022

Warm hearts on the Coldest Night of the Year!

Our Place Society and Pacific Centre Family Services Association (PCFSA) have once again teamed up for the 2022 Coldest Night of the Year two and five kilometre walk for charity. Together, we are proud to offer families, faith, work, and community groups the opportunity to walk in solidarity and raise awareness and funds to help serve the hungry, homeless, and hurting people in our community.

- Enjoy family friendly activities both before and after the walk
- Join hundreds of compassionate members of our community participating in Canada's Fastest Growing Peer-to-Peer Fundraising campaign
- Warm up with hot food and drink on a cold winter's night
- Have the option to walk virtually and show support from your own neighbourhood.



We will have volunteers on hand to help ensure health and safety protocols are in place.

Last year, you helped us raise over \$150,000 between our two walk locations. With your support, this year we think we can beat it! Please consider gathering a team together and join us Saturday, February 26th either in person or virtually.

To register yourself or your team, please visit one of the following websites (those planning to walk virtually may visit either website):

Victoria Walk:

<https://cnoy.org/location/victoria/Pandora>

Westshore Walk:

<https://cnoy.org/location/victoriawestshore>

Both our organizations will be hosting a Zoom Information Session for the public to learn more on Friday, January 7 at 4pm. All those interested in attending are asked to please email: stevens@ourplacesociety.com

Presently we are seeking sponsorships from businesses, faith, and community groups. Sponsoring Coldest Night is the perfect opportunity to showcase

your group's core values while making a greater impact as you lead the community for a brighter tomorrow.

Thank you to last year's team captains! Your commitment helped make last year's event such a success and we hope you can lead your team again in 2022. Please let us know how we can support you this year.



If you are interested in captaining a team, sponsorship, or have any questions, please contact:
Steven Seltzer
Phone: 250-940-5064
Email: stevens@ourplacesociety.com

An effect of the pandemic has been the increase of people accessing our programs and services. Our Place and

PCFSA are here for individuals and families facing extreme challenges – regardless of the reason. Your support will ensure that we can continue to be a beacon for our friends and neighbours experiencing tough times.

We will see you out in the cold!



coldest*night

OFTHEYEAR.ORG

Take a big step with local families, businesses, community and faith groups and walk with us to help those struggling with poverty and homelessness

Saturday, February 26, 2022

stevens@ourplacesociety.com

www.ourplacesociety.com/events/coldest-night/