



Seasons Greetings! the open house



SHARING OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE WORLD

each other, and are speaking and living God's truth in the places they live, work, and play.

Since the last newsletter, *toh* has been involved with various activities and events. Last summer, we had three interns (Amber A., Amber H., *(continued page 4)*)

Where we're at now...

When *the open house* began in October 2005, it started off as a team of three. Eventually, it grew into a small group where the small group met weekly in a home to share a meal, pray, and study the bible. Some of the group also began to connect with the community through volunteering in local service opportunities. Connecting with each other as followers of Christ and connecting with the local neighbourhood have been the primary expressions of the church community. *the open house* has grown from three to over 40 people who are, not only active in the church itself but, engaged in serving the community of East Vancouver.



2nd Sunday venue, Wise Club Hall, East Vancouver. photo Andrea Rinsma

Presently, *the open house* has several weekly gatherings that alternate between homes and a local cafe. It also meets as a combined group in a once-a-month public gathering called 2nd Sunday where attendees explore traditional and ancient practices of the church through

music, visual arts, prayer and the teaching of the Word. What has proven most exciting is how each of these gatherings has become springboards into gospel sharing and community involvement. Those committed to *toh* are taking what they are learning from the bible and

Summer Orientation at Rivendell Retreat Centre, Bowen Island (Bruce Caplinger, Kyle Martin, Amber Holt, Chase Burns, Amber Ayers). photo Kristin Cato



Dried tomatoes, used for soup mix, will be sent mainly to orphanages overseas. photo Kristin Cato

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a missional community walking in a Jesus-direction

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Project 51

By Kyle Martin

This past October Anna and I had the privilege of traveling to the Bahamas for our 5 year wedding anniversary. It was quite the experience as we engaged the culture through traveling around the surrounding islands, eating seafood, lying on the beach, and contemplating life. Although we both had a lot to think about, I do not think we would have predicted what God was going to reveal to us while we were there.

The original reason for going to the Bahamas was to attend a conference called Soularize. After some relaxing time with Anna, I set off for the conference, joined by our good friend, Deric Moen, who is also from *the open house*. Although, the conference had so many great thinkers and speakers, it was not the paid keynotes that rocked my world, but the other participants.

Through many of these new relationships I was able to process some next steps for *the open house*. One of the major issues on my mind was money. I was having trouble reconciling what our church needed financially to continue what we were already doing and what we believed God wanted us to do with our resources. I wondered how we could achieve sustainability. It was my new friend Nick who helped me break through by offering a proposition, albeit a very challenging one.

Nick shared how he had been fired from a church for his insistence that churches should give away more of their money to causes outside of their own. This caused me to re-evaluate our dilemma since we were losing a significant portion of our funding this January. He shared about an idea where churches gave away 51% of their tithes and offerings in order to support local and global issues and set a precedent for what a church could be like.

And it hit me. Everything that I wanted to see in my church at such an early stage sat firmly on this number...51.

As I drove back to our place that night, I turned to Anna and Deric and said, "I think I have to do the most irrational thing as a leader of the open house and propose that we give away 51% of our tithes and offerings." At a time of survival, we seemed, at first, to be taking a step backward yet it felt entirely like what God had in mind for us to do.

This will be a work in progress. We are in a transition and our goal is that, as leaders, we want to find outside work that will take-pressure off the church; that we would be freed

up to explore different ways of generating income, as well as, give us opportunities to meet new people. Utilizing "51" is our way of saying to our community, both locally and globally, that as a church, we exist for the benefit for the world around us. Our desire is to give away more than we take in.

We are taking a risk with these decisions, but these are the risks that have made *the open house* what it is today. It is going to be an exhilarating and, at times, hard journey ahead, so we ask that you please pray for us as we dream about how to bless our neighbourhood, our city, and the world.

The Cure for Growth

By Joey Armstrong

Despite first appearances of superhuman-like qualities, Kyle and Kristin actually were not able to physically or emotionally keep up with the (recent) growth of *the open house*. Therefore, Kyle's solution to this dilemma was to find people who were already serving the church community and hire them to do what they were already doing. The people he found were Joel and Andrea Armstrong. These siblings had been serving *tob* for the past year, not only with their musical and artistic talents, but also by creating strong connections with people through their service and leadership.

Joel and Andrea officially became Semester Missionaries with the North American Mission Board this past Fall. Their responsibilities pertain to church planting which involve interacting and connecting with fellow students at Capilano College, taking leadership roles within *tob*, and contributing to *tob's* media, including web design and the newsletter.

Joel is in his 2nd and last year of an Interactive Web Design program and Andrea is in her 3rd and last year of an Illustration and Design program. Keep them in your prayers this year as they balance their service to *the open house* along with their intensive course loads, health, and family.



Andrea and Joel Armstrong.



Ministry Spotlight: Three Links Care Care

By Kristin Cato

When I was a child I was part of a girls club at my church where we learned about missions and how to serve others in our community. I had my first experience with spending time with the elderly at Hilton Villa, a seniors care centre in Surrey. We sat with people, helped hold hymnals, and contributed our voices in song. Basically we were warmbodies amongst (*continued page 3*)

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(continued from page 2, "Ministry Spotlight") the small congregation of residents who participated in our humble and simple church services. This carried on into my young adult life where I continued to join the services at other extended care facilities participating in church life with a group of people that is often overlooked and forgotten in society.

I have learned during my time in East Vancouver that the marginalized have many faces. The elderly community is one such group in our communities. Of course, there are varying levels within this particular social group; not every elderly person is "needy." There are those who can still get around on their own, have access to community centre programs, socialize at local legions, or have family and friends that visit them. But there are many who are not able to get around, nor have anyone visiting if they are restricted to their home or care facility.



Three Links is located at 2934 East 22nd Ave., Vancouver.

For the past several months I have been involved with a local care facility called Three Links Care Centre. Three Links is a residential care for seniors, that also provides special care for people with Alzheimers or

other dementia. One of the components of care that the centre endorses is spiritual care hence the incorporation of a spiritual care department. A non-denominational facility, the facility recognizes that the spiritual well-being of their residents is just as important as their physical and emotional care.

I met the pastoral care director, Sister Margaret Laffey, at a monthly ministerial meeting in East Vancouver. I had been interested in chaplaincy, specifically in medical services, and during our first conversation, she offered me the opportunity to get involved with Three Links. Several months later, my volunteering has turned into part-time work as an on-call chaplain for Three Links.

I do pastoral visitation with residents, focusing on those who are in palliative care or those who do not have much or if any visitation from outside people. I have organized church services led by our various volunteer teams which the residents have enjoyed, especially having the chance to interact with young people. As well, I had my first opportunities to conduct memorial services at this centre, mainly to allow staff and residents of Three Links to have closure with the passing of those who had become so dear to them. I have discovered that choosing to work in this particular care facility takes a great risk knowing that those you invest in are there often because they are dying.

I admit, I often go with a bit of apprehension because, first of all, I feel incredibly inadequate as I had no previous experience in chaplaincy, not to mention, no experience working with people with dementia. Second, I do not know what I will encounter in a day, whether a resident is having a hard day with dementia, if a resident's condition has taken a turn for the worse, or if one has passed away.

However, those moments tend to be

overcome by the ones that make it all worth while, such as, singing old show tunes with Norma, painting nails with Noreen, looking at black and white photos with Ruby, teasing Mr. Chan about his "girlfriends" who visit him, holding Olga's hand while she sleeps, reading psalms to Boris, praying with Clara and her husband, Peter, or talking about the Christian life with Violet and how she is grateful for the Lord's faithfulness. I could go on as the good moments are so numerous. Because in the end it is about the people and their stories, and that God sees value in these wonderful people.

My experiences at Three Links reminds me of Psalm 68: 4-6, which says:

Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,
extol him who rides on the clouds;
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.
God sets the lonely in families,
he leads out the prisoners with singing;

I think of those who make Three Links their home, whether they choose to be there or not. In a way, some of these folks are orphans, who no longer have family because they have become disconnected for some unforeseeable reason. Expectedly, many are widowed. There are many who are lonely or are imprisoned by their illness. Yet, it is obvious from the psalm that God looks out for those in hopeless situations; therefore, I count it a privilege and responsibility to be a part of this community which allows me to experience precious kingdom moments.

CONTACT

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(continued from page 1, "Where we're at now...") and Chase) from the U.S. who spent six weeks hanging out on The Drive, building relationships, investing in the community, and being



Volunteers from the Lower Mainland and Alberta spent a week cutting up tomatoes. photo to Kristin Cato

stretched in their Christian walk. Also in the summer, Kristin and another member, Andrea, drove to Oliver, BC to volunteer with Okanagan Gleaners, an organization run by volunteers who dry vegetables and fruit that cannot be sold in markets, and then get sent to various countries in need.

The men got together for a weekend camping trip. *toh* has also been helping out regularly with Out



Tim Cooper takes in the view. photo Kyle Martin

the Cold, a program run out of another local church where a meal and shelter is provided once a week. We had our second annual church retreat at Crescent Beach, this time complete with an 80's dance party.

Transition

As the church community develops, the leadership is considering a couple new practices, for which they are asking God to give clarity, direction, and wisdom. First, they would like to propose that the church commit to giving 51% of all of its offerings to mission projects, people and ministries, locally and globally. This commitment to allocate a large portion of the funds to service projects is connected with the next practice, which is serving and helping practically with the needs of the community. This means that many of the weekly gatherings are going to be replaced with active service in the community where

people can live out their faith more radically. Kyle, Anna, and Kristin have been faithfully supported as full-time church planters for the past two years, but have felt led to transition into bi-vocational ministry. They have thoroughly prayed about their situation and are excited for where this will lead us as a church.

Partnership

Please consider helping *toh* during this transition. *toh's* goal is to be entirely free from outside financial support during the next four to six months. In the meantime, Kyle, Anna, and Kristin need 15,000, or \$2500/month, over the next six months as they make the transition from being subsidized to self-sufficiency. We hope we can count on you to partner with us in this continuing and exciting journey.

Melanie Read and Jared Wilson decked out in classic 80's attire. photo Matt Corey



The team senses God leading this church to live a more radical Christian life. Many of you have continued to faithfully pray for and with *toh* and during this time of transition and God has reminded us of what He called us to when we first moved into this neighbourhood. He called us to be a missional community walking in a Jesus direction. Therefore we are asking you to partner with us as we pursue where we sense God is taking us in the upcoming months.

If you would like to financially support the ministry of the open house, you can make a tax-deductible donation by sending a cheque payable to "CSBA (the open house)" to 3274 William Street, Vancouver, BC V5K 2Z1. If you are a donor from the U.S., please send your donation to our US collection point, make the cheque payable to "Denton Baptist Association" and designate/memo it to *the open house*. Send the cheque to Denton Baptist Association, 1406 N. Corinth Street, Suite 408, Corinth, Texas 76208, USA. You will receive a receipt from Denton Association (phone: 940-498-5200; fax: 940-498-5204). If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Kyle at 604.209.8298 or kyle@theopenhouse.ca.

Prayer Points

- *For clarity in vision, direction, and the resources to accomplish God's plans.
- *For Kyle and Anna - in the midst of house renovations, for emotional and relational strength as a couple during this stressful time; for increased vision for the church.
- *For Kristin - in process of finding secondary employment; for wisdom in decisions for work, church life, possibilities for overseas service (in light of school debt)
- *For a restful time for all of us during the holidays.