




Victory Foundation

7012 Ogden Road SE

Building a heart in the heart of Calgary



Pastor Don Delaney

HIGHER GROUND

One of my favorite stories is about a farmer in Nebraska who wanted to move his barn to higher ground. He needed to do this because every year during the rainy season it would flood in and around the area his barn was located. So his son began devising a plan that would effectively move the barn about three hundred yards up the hill to higher ground.

In order to save money, the plan would be undertaken by an army of volunteers. The son was able to calculate the weight of the building to be about seventeen thousand and five hundred pounds (17,500 lbs). With this calculation, the son figured that in order to distribute the weight evenly at fifty pounds per person, three hundred and fifty volunteers would be needed.

After attaching the tubing to the barn frame, individual hand grips were measured out and everything was ready to go. Three hundred and fifty friends and neighbors were invited out for the big event. When

everyone was in position with their hands gripped to the tubing, the barn was raised off its foundation with one harmonious lift. Together as a team, they marched the barn three hundred yards up the hill to its new foundation on higher ground.

Bringing the homeless to higher ground is something we have endeavored to provide for Calgary's less fortunate. It is a task that not one individual can ever accomplish alone. Whether it is housing, addiction groups, church services, volunteer events put on from various service groups, clothing, furniture donations, hampers at Christmas time, building material donations or volunteer labor; it all requires selfless individuals putting their hands to the task. With each person carrying their fifty pound load, a daunting task can be accomplished with a community coming together to help bring the homeless to higher ground.

Last November we kicked off our **"MAKING HOMELESSNESS HISTORY"** campaign. This is the final phase of our goal to completely renovate

fifty rooms at the Victory Manor (Ogden Hotel) and add ten more. When we are finished, we will have a total of sixty rooms that will be used to help the homeless transition off the streets and out of the shelters. It now looks like we are on track to have the entire renovation completed for the building's centennial anniversary in 2012.

The final phase budget is \$1,200,000. To date, thanks to your generosity and a grant from the province, we have raised \$808,000. In the coming weeks we will be sending out a flyer to help raise the final \$392,000. If you have not yet had opportunity to give in this campaign, we hope you will consider helping us at that time.

I would like to personally thank everyone who has put their hand to this task (financially or otherwise). Together, we have begun to bring the homeless to higher ground. Psalm 113:7 says; "He raises the poor out of the dust and lifts the needy out of the ash heap".

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Higher Ground 1
- The Heart of a City 2
- Debbie's Testimony 3
- Special Thanks & Contact Info. 4

Visit our Website at www.victoryfoundation.ca



Pastor Tom Maxwell

“I wonder what will happen to the heart of our city when we continue to make decisions based on bottom lines and by-laws and discount the human factor.”

THE HEART OF A CITY

The slogan for the Victory Foundation is; “Building a Heart in the Heart of Calgary.” These words accurately describe what the heart and soul of the Victory Foundation really is all about. It is the mandate of the Foundation to establish a home base within different neighborhoods throughout Calgary and bring a positive influence that will help build a stronger sense of community. We have done this in Odgen by purchasing a building that was once filled with crime and violence, and have turned it into a building that is now a refuge and a haven for individuals wanting to turn their lives around. A building that was once known for its crime rate is quickly becoming known for its success rate in helping individuals transition off the streets and out of emergency shelters to regular housing.

When I was growing up in the 1960’s, I remember Calgary as a big prairie city with a small town heart. As Calgary grows in size and population, I wonder if we are not slowly losing this “small town heart.” Recently I attended an appeal hearing with the City of Calgary regarding the approval of another liquor store in Odgen. The location of the liquor store was to be directly across the street from the Victory Manor. The City had originally denied the application for the liquor store citing parking and signage concerns. However, the company that wanted the liquor store appealed the city’s ruling and won. This was in spite of the objections of the Millican Odgen Community Association and the Victory Foundation.

The Community Association did not want another liquor store in the community because there are already plenty of them; and the Victory Foundation did not want the liquor store across the street from the Victory

Manor for the obvious reason of it being in direct conflict with the recovery program currently operating in the building. (Someone wanting to deal with their alcoholism does not need to be looking out their apartment window at a liquor store sign).

In spite of the objections from the Victory Foundation and the Community Association, the City of Calgary reversed its decision to not allow the liquor store. To them, the only issue was the parking and signage concerns. When these issues were addressed, they reversed their decision and allowed the liquor store to go ahead. The human factor and the voice of the community association had no bearing on their decision.

I wonder what will happen to the heart of our city when we continue to make decisions based on bottom lines and by-laws and discount the “human factor”. Currently, the by-law of the city states that a liquor store can be considered, providing that it is no closer than three-hundred meters (or 984 feet) to another liquor store. This is the equivalent of three hundred and twenty-eight yards which is barely the length of three football fields. Decisions based only on this criteria will mean that we will see more liquor stores in our communities than we have ever seen before.

I have seen the devastating effects alcohol can have on individuals and families. Daily, I work with people who are caught in the trap of alcoholism. They have lost family, friends, jobs, income and self respect. One of the questions on our intake form is; “Where do you see yourself in ten years if you are not able to manage your addiction?” Many times the person answers with “In jail” or “Dead.”

I am not advocating for prohibition, but I wonder if we should not have better regulation on where a liquor store can be located. Some

disturbing statistics* from the Federal Government state that the average age of children who try alcohol for the first time is 12.4 years of age. This report also states that the average age of first-time intoxication is 13.2 years of age. Reports and surveys also show that those who begin drinking at an early age are more likely to develop an addiction to alcohol. Yet with all of this available information, the City of Calgary accepted a proposal for a liquor store just one block from a high school in the northeast part of the city.

In 1993, Alberta had the dubious distinction of being the first Canadian province to privatize liquor stores.** Before privatization there were eight hundred and three (803) liquor outlets in Alberta. Today, we have one thousand eight hundred and two retailers (1,802). The revenues for the government have increased substantially over this same period of time. Their revenue from alcohol sales in 1993 was four hundred and four million dollars (\$404,000,000.00). The 2009/10 revenue was seven hundred and sixteen million dollars (\$716,000,000.00). Nationally, the government makes over fifteen billion dollars in alcohol revenue while spending over seven billion on alcohol treatment programs and over a billion dollars on enforcement.

My point is this; when we continue to make decisions based solely on bottom lines and by-laws, we will end up making decisions that become detrimental to our cities and communities. The balance in making decisions that affect the heart of our communities is to add the “human factor” to the equation. Until we do this, we will continue to lose our small town heart piece by piece.

* 1998/99 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth

** Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission website.

DEBBIE'S TESTIMONY

By Debbie Forcier

What a long strange trip it's been. I have seen both sides of the "fence" and am more than happy to be where I am today. I started with drugs and alcohol at the "average" teen age. Just another normal kid. Had good grades, a loving family. No rape or abuse issues. No excuse to end up where I did.

I had a career in banking for fourteen years; a brand-new condo on a lake in Vancouver; a fancy new car; everything I needed...or so I thought. I started to smoke crack. Not just dabbling with it either! It got to the point of me actually smoking dope at work on coffee & lunch breaks! It was too hard to get to sleep at night because I had been smoking too much, so I started to do heroin. I thought that was ok because I was just smoking and snorting it (I swore that I would never use needles). Like every other addict, the drugs took over my life. I lost everything; the career, the condo, the car, my family etc. I found myself homeless, living in a car, with pneumonia. I beat myself up for years for losing it all. "I'm such a loser, that this must be what I deserve."

The hopelessness eventually led to me living in Surrey, BC shooting up "speed-balls" (cocaine & heroin injections). I was now a "junkie" with a \$500 a day habit. Obviously I had to resort to crime to support my habit. Surprisingly I wasn't caught (yet) or went to jail (yet).

This went on for many years, until I finally moved to Calgary. I came here with a very abusive man whom I finally left. Only to find myself hanging out in crack shacks. Lo and behold I meet my boyfriend, Ronnie. He was a drug dealer very well known in all of Calgary, especially Forest Lawn. All of a

sudden I was drawn into this strange world. I became a dealer as well. I would walk up and down 17th Ave SE selling drugs. I would go for days on end. Sleeping once a week, eating twice a week. Ronnie ran the crack shacks while I would "trench" on the streets. I found myself in and out of jail constantly. The police would "jack me up" three times a day on average.

This too went on for many years. Then one day I realized that I was pregnant. "What am I going to do?" I was too far gone in my life style and addiction to really know or care.

Ronnie went to jail (again) and I took over one of his shacks, as well as running one of my own. The drug scene seemed to change. I was seeing more and more violence. My shack had been raided by gang members. In another situation I was robbed at gun point. All of this happened while I was seven months pregnant!

I was also facing two years in jail for drug trafficking. I pleaded with the judge not to put me in jail because of the baby. I was sentenced to eighteen months house arrest and court ordered treatment. This didn't even stop me from using. I continued to smoke and sell drugs until I was eight and a half months pregnant. Finally the fog lifted and I realized that I needed to do something. I checked into detox three weeks before my baby was due. In my mind I thought "I'll just clean up and have the baby, get a little apartment and live happily ever after." As if! How would I ever do this on my own? Then I remembered a couple of church ladies who used to feed me while I was on the street. Their names were Pastor Pat and Mary. "They're from a church so they must be able to help me". Mary would bring me food, and with tears in her eyes, asked me to clean up. While in detox, I went into labor. While in labor the

SWAT team raided my houses looking for me. Obviously I couldn't go back.

My beautiful son was born October 21, 2008, exactly one week after I cleaned up. Fortunately, yes I said fortunately, Child Services took my newborn son away and put him into foster care. Pastor Pat & Mary came to the hospital and "kidnapped" me and put me into the church's women's recovery house. Ronnie got out of jail shortly after and went to a church recovery house as well. We both agreed that we would do whatever it takes to get our son back. We went to treatment, phoned in every day for drug testing, went to meetings, and most important...we went to church.

When I first came to Eastside Victory I thought to myself "Oh no! What have I got myself into now?" Here is a bunch of people who want to love me and not for what I could give them. The biggest revelation...God loves me! Wow, how profound!

God has performed miracles in my life. I have now been clean for over two years. Ronnie has a great job working on pipeline. We have custody of our son. I have my family back. God blesses me everyday. I have never been more grateful.

I now feed the addicted and afflicted in Forest Lawn by delivering the sandwiches and feeding the homeless. If feel that God works through me by living by example. "If I can do it, anyone can...with God's help."

By the way, we named our son Chance. The chance this little guy would be born healthy was slim. God has truly blessed us with a healthy, bright son and a second chance at life. Without God, I know that I wouldn't be alive today.

Special Thanks & Contact Information

Special Thanks To Our Supporters!

Victory Outreach Centre thanks:

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Springbank Community Church

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