



## ***Blythwood Road Baptist Church Volunteer Guide***

*(Updated October 2019)*

See Blythwood and other sites profiled at  
<http://dixonhall.org/housingservices/ootc/>

### **Welcome to Out of the Cold!**

Out of the Cold is an emergency program that provides our homeless guests with a safe overnight place to sleep in churches, synagogues and other public buildings across Toronto. Our overnight guests are joined by others seeking a welcome and a warm meal.

As a volunteer, you play a key role in reducing the risk to those who lack shelter during winter. You also help offer warm, safe and friendly human contact that for many is even more important than overnight shelter and food.

**Blythwood Road Baptist Church** hosts the program on Saturday nights from November through March. We began in January 1995.

### **Our Guests**

Thousands of people live in the city of Toronto without permanent shelter. The guests of Out of the Cold are people who are homeless and who have been living on the city streets.

During the winter months, several churches provide a warm, safe place to sleep on different nights of the week. For many people who are homeless, these churches provide a welcome refuge. There tends to be more male guests than female, and the ages range from 20-60+.

Before coming to Blythwood, our guests may or may not have already tried to find shelter in one of the permanent facilities in the city. In many cases, the guests have had such bad experiences in these shelters (such as assault, theft, or rude treatment) that they prefer to “take their chances” on the streets, where they feel safer.

The attraction of the Out of the Cold program for many of the guests seems to be its non-judgmental atmosphere, and the friendly interaction between the volunteers and guests.

### What we provide

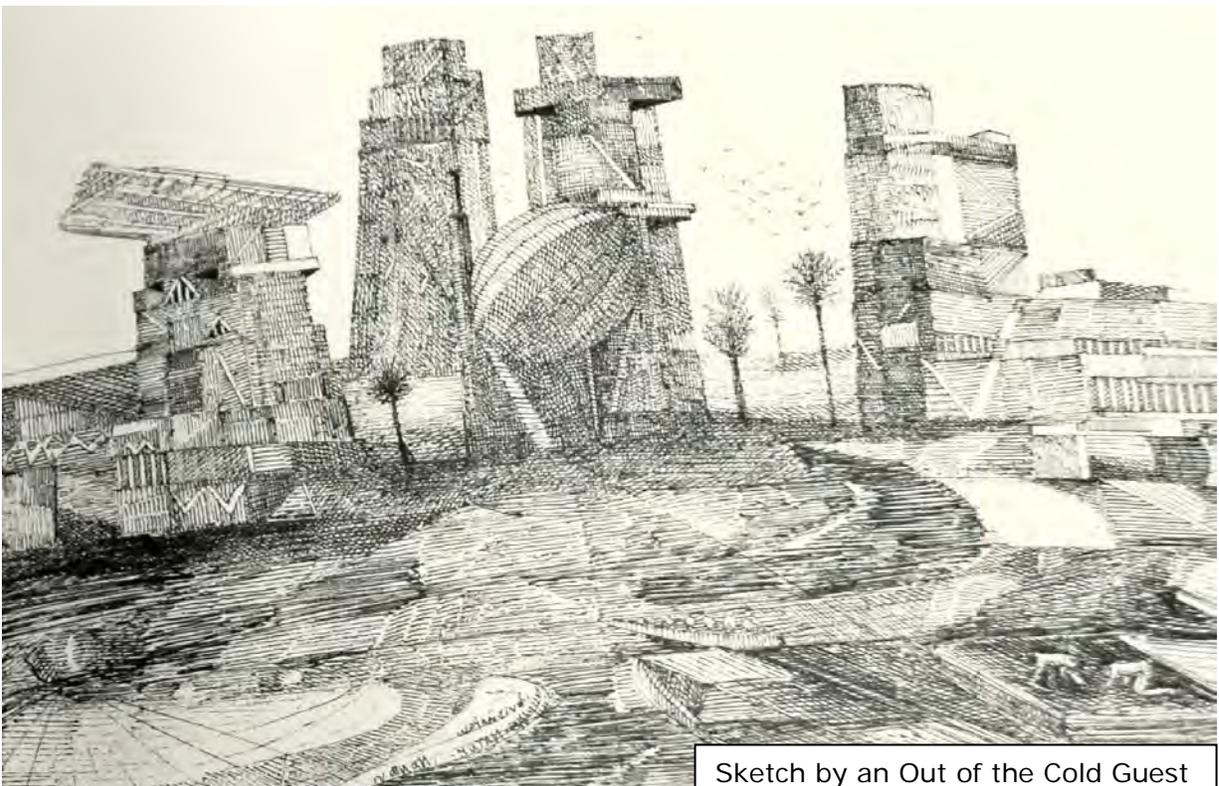
Since we first started in 1995, Blythwood opens its doors for on weekends for five months each fall, winter and early spring. We welcome guests in on Saturdays at 6 pm, providing them with a hot meal beginning at 7 pm, as well as a breakfast on Sunday morning. Our guests receive:

- a warm and friendly welcome
- a hot dinner, hot breakfast, and bag lunch
- a safe, quiet place to sleep
- access to clean used clothing
- access to a public health nurse
- access to a housing worker
- available CMHA mental health workers
- periodic outreach by an eye clinic
- a TTC token (for overnight guests – dispensed by staff of Dixon Hall)

### What we require of guests

For the safety of other guests, volunteers, and other users of the building, our guests must agree to the following rules while they are on the premises:

- No smoking indoors
- No alcohol or drugs
- No violent behaviour
- No weapons
- No wandering beyond the program areas (elsewhere in the building).
- Smokers can smoke outdoors, (door at the front east corner of church).
- Anyone carrying alcohol or a weapon is requested to give it to the shift Coordinator or to Dixon Hall staff (who will label the item as the property of that person and return it when the owner leaves.)
- Anyone who persists in disobeying the rules is asked to leave.



Sketch by an Out of the Cold Guest

## High priority: mixing and mingling

Perhaps the most important aspect of volunteering is talking with our guests.

- Sitting and chatting conveys an everyday humanity and respect for one another – something all too often missing for our guests, who experience constant rejection and scorn on the streets.
- You do not have to be able to solve their problems – indeed you cannot. Remember: the primary goal is to provide a safe warm place out of the cold. Keep this in mind if you start to feel overwhelmed by the problems of our guests.
- Some guests may make provocative statements: avoid arguing with guests; rather, simply listen respectfully and keep the conversation neutral, with non-committal responses.
- Get to know as many guests as you can - by name.

When you are comfortable mixing and mingling with our guests, you will greatly contribute to an atmosphere of calm and peacefulness – this will help to avert any problems which could arise. And you will find it tremendously fulfilling. It is hard to do – but only at first. Take the first step.



## Tips for all of us

### *About food*

Food is a great tool for welcoming guests.

- Handle food safely to protect our guests. (The trained kitchen coordinators will direct you in the basics of food safety.)
- We are as generous as possible. But some food you see is held for late arrivals and breakfast. Just ask.
- If a guest asks for specific help with food, we try to assist if it doesn't disrupt meal service.
- Don't snack from any dish or container used to serve guests.
- If your hair is long enough to tie back, please do so. (We have extra hair elastics in the kitchen.)
- Wash your hands regularly.

### *Preserve goodwill & respect*

- Avoid bringing items for specific guests; all other guests are watching.
- If you tell a guest you'll come back to another time, please make sure you come – even though our guest may not.
- Dress appropriately for the setting and our guests. Emphasize comfort, safety, and easy-to-laundry clothes. Don't display expensive items. (Pro tip- leave handbags at home.)
- Be really here when you're here. Pay attention, join in. (For example, we discourage wearing ear buds.)

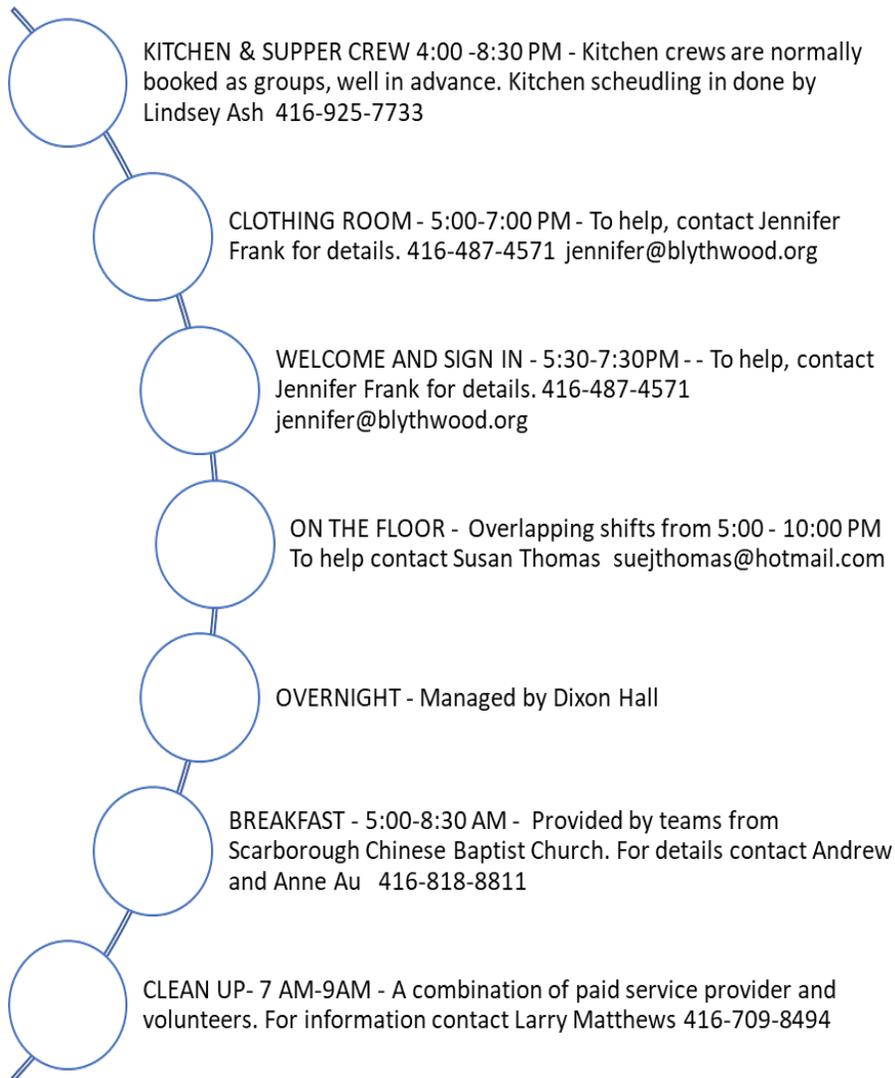
### *Protect yourself*

- Make sure your coats are UPSTAIRS in the closet next to where guests sign in (NOT in the back room or kitchen).
- Don't leave keys, wallets etc. in coats.
- Do not give out personal contact or address information to guests – *very important for female volunteers.*
- Do not give anyone money while you are at the program (If you see someone on the street away from Blythwood, then help as you wish).

## Dividing up the work

It takes a lot of volunteers to operate Out of the Cold – so thank you! We appreciate our loyal volunteers, who make a regular commitment for specific shifts.

When you arrive, let the coordinator know you are there. Shift teams are responsible for orienting new volunteers and ensuring that all the tasks are covered adequately. New volunteers should report any difficulties to the coordinator.



### **Your time here is important!**

*Please come if you said you would. It causes real problems when shifts are understaffed.*

***If you cannot attend your shift please contact appropriate person (see left).***

*We'll try to find a replacement.*

*But that's a tough job at the last minute so please come if you're scheduled.*

## ***Are you a “floor volunteer?” Here’s the evening to-do list***

*(Guests are usually admitted around 6 pm)*

### **5-7 pm**

- Refreshments made and table set up
- Coffee mugs brought out  
Towels put on refreshment table
- Water, juice ready by 6
- Replenish as needed

### **6-8 pm**

- Mingle
- Welcome guests
- Supervise drink table
- Move dinner dishes into kitchen
- Clean up any spills
- Help with other tasks as asked

*(The kitchen crew usually serves dinner at 7 pm.)*

### **7 pm -9 pm**

- Mingle
- Scrape dishes
- Move dishes into kitchen
- Wash pots/pans, etc.
- Load/unload dishwasher
- General clean-up of tables
- Clean up of kitchens
- Help take down some tables and move some chairs to storage
- Dry mop floor
- Put out extra mats
- Welcome and feed latecomers

### **8 pm- 10** (coordinators stay later)

- Complete and maintain clean up
- Serve latecomers; set up extra food for overnight use
- Take down the tables and chairs (except for those used at breakfast)
- Leave kitchen clean, ready for breakfast crew

*Dim most lights by about 9 p.m. and turn them off no later than 10:00 p.m. Any guest who came for dinner but is not staying the night should be asked to leave before 10, at the latest.*



*Clothing - Generally the same people each week deal with clothing and have access to the clothing storage. If guests request clothing needs, direct them to those operating the clothing program.*

### ***Washroom monitoring***

- Washrooms are located immediately below the registration area, on the first landing below the Narthex.
- If necessary, remind people that smoking is not allowed.
- Periodically volunteers may be asked to check the washrooms to ensure they are clean and supplied with soap, paper towels, and toilet paper. Wear gloves.
- If cleaning is needed speak to the coordinator on duty. If you help, wear gloves.
- The showers are not functional.

## Health, Hygiene, Fire, Emergencies

Our guests face many health challenges. A useful overview can be found at <http://homelesshub.ca/blog/what-are-top-10-health-issues-homeless-people-face> The Homeless Hub itself is a great source of insight.



Blythwood Church is concerned about the health of everyone involved in the program and stays up to date on best practices. Communicable diseases. TB, hepatitis and HIV, may be of primary concern to volunteers. However, they are quite hard to contract. Hepatitis and HIV require direct blood-to-blood contact and TB is much more a concern for guests themselves than for volunteers.

The following simple guidelines help to ensure that proper healthy and hygienic conditions are maintained in the building.

### Cleaning

- wear household rubber gloves if you are doing general cleaning and sanitizing
- always wear disposable gloves when cleaning body fluid spills
- always wash hands after cleaning
- follow directions of coordinator or experienced fellow volunteers for cleaning and sanitizing products to use

### Areas we clean and sanitize

- bathrooms;
- gym (includes floor and vinyl mattresses);
- kitchen
- tables and chairs the guests use

### Regarding the flu

Influenza is always a concern, and in some seasons, the risk of flu is highly publicized. The Ontario Ministry of Health addresses flu prevention and treatment in general. As well, the site recommends flu shots for everyone. Out of the Cold has no recommendation on getting such shots. <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/publichealth/flu/>

### Regarding TB

People who are homeless are more likely than most of us to develop TB disease because of the risk factors inherent in being homeless: possible sustained contact with people with untreated TB, poor access to nutrition and health care, difficulty in keeping medical appointments or completing TB treatment, and effects of addictions and substance abuse.

For detailed information visit: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/tuberculosis-tb/tuberculosis-tb-and-homeless-service-settings/>

### **HANDS UP!**

Hand sanitizer dispensers (using non-alcoholic foam) are located at entrances and elsewhere.

***Use them, for everyone's sake!***

### How can we prevent the spread of TB at our Out of the Cold site?

- Encourage guests to cover their coughs and sneezes; provide disposable tissues
- Improve ventilation by ensuring fans are running.
- Know the signs and symptoms of TB.
- If you suspect TB disease in a client, consult your coordinator to refer to medical care
- Place each mat or cot as far from neighbouring mats or cots as possible.

### Regarding bed bugs

Bed bugs are often in the news. The City of Toronto and private-sector pest control companies provide extensive information. Yet no one has come up with a way to be 100 per cent protected from bed bugs — apart from *never* leaving your home and never allowing *anyone* else in or out of your home. Even offices and five-star hotels – anywhere with high turnover of occupants – are implicated in the spread of bed bugs.

Meanwhile, crowded conditions in year-round round shelters for people who are homeless are of particular concern. We

- sanitize sleeping mats
- professionally launder blankets used by guests
- discard all clothing left behind by our guests

Thankfully, bed bugs cannot jump or fly. They do not like to be disturbed, they spend most of their time hiding, and they avoid light. As we receive instructions from the City or through Dixon Hall, we alert everyone who volunteers at Blythwood Road.

<http://www.toronto.ca/health/bedbugs/>

<http://pestcontrolcanada.com/INSECTS/bedbugs.htm>

## **Fire**

Fire exits around the church are clearly marked with illuminated red “EXIT” signs. Each room in the church (including the gym) has a notice listing emergency fire procedures. Fire exit doors are equipped with “panic-bars” for quick escape.

The church is equipped with smoke and heat detectors throughout, and the alarm system is directly connected to the fire department. If the fire alarm sounds, the fire department will quickly arrive at the church.

Fire prevention is the best protection. Note that no smoking is permitted on the premises at all. Those who wish to smoke should do so outside the East side front door, and should use the smoking receptacle provided. Volunteers should carefully monitor all areas used by the guests to ensure that smoking does not occur within the building.

## **Detox, hospital emergencies, opioid overdose**

Detox - guests often are able to verbalize their need to go to a Detox Centre. They may exhibit shaking, increased hunger, increased fatigue. Any referral to a detox service will be made by the visiting nurse or by staff of Dixon Hall.

Medical emergencies- if you see anything that looks like a medical emergency or you are alerted by guests to a medical situation please speak to the coordinator on duty or to a staff member of Dixon Hall.

Opioid overdose - Dixon Hall staff are trained to recognize overdose symptoms, such as reduced breathing. They are equipped with naloxone kits to temporarily relieve the effects of an overdose, until emergency personnel can arrive.

*Note: No one apart from the Blythwood shift coordinator or the designated Dixon Hall staff should contact emergency services or try to arrange transfers or referrals of guests.*

## **Insurance**

Blythwood Road Baptist Church carries property and liability insurance which covers church members and volunteers should an incident involving bodily injury or property damage occur, and a claim made by a third person (e.g. guest). The insurance policy covers the building for fire, among other perils, and we have a fire prevention plan in place to help guard against fire.

We ask all volunteers to exercise normal care and diligence in helping keep the Out of the Cold site and our Guests safe from harm.

## **Help from the City through Dixon Hall**

We are fortunate to have significant help from the City of Toronto, which has contracted with Dixon Hall, a well-known social service agency, to provide services to Out of the Cold sites. You'll know who's from Dixon Hall because they'll be wearing a vest and identification.

Through Dixon Hall, we are provided with trained staff trained in safety, social assistance, nursing, housing and general assistance. They are paid and have job descriptions, and work in collaboration with the coordinator (a Blythwood volunteer) for each shift.



Dixon Hall is a multi-service agency that has been offering programs in the east downtown area of the City of Toronto since 1929.

*For more information on Dixon Hall and OOTC browse <http://dixonhall.org/housingservices/ootc/> or call 416.863.0499 or email [ootc@dixonhall.org](mailto:ootc@dixonhall.org)*



## FAQ

### ***Are there showers for guests?***

No. Showers in the washrooms are not to be used. The plumbing is turned off. We cannot keep them clean enough for health regulations, nor provide towels.

### ***Do guests receive blankets?***

We do supply one blanket per overnight guest each Saturday night. Blankets are collected on Sunday mornings and sent to the laundry so they are clean and fresh each week.

### ***When may people eat?***

We serve dinner at 7 p.m. and breakfast around 7 a.m. But food is available throughout all hours we are open.

### ***Where do you get food?***

Much of it is donated, often by the churches or groups that prepare meals. The balance is purchased by Blythwood Road Baptist Church. Cash contributions are welcome.

### ***Do only guests eat?***

Guests, volunteers, Dixon Hall personnel, van drivers – we feed everyone who wants to – as long as guests have their meal and we have ample food for them.

### ***Where are other OOTC sites?***

See next page. (Also, you can go online to <http://dixonhall.org/housingservices/ootc/>)

### ***What about transportation?***

Transportation for guests can be very difficult especially on Saturday night. Dixon Hall coordinates any available services to help guests, but most guests must use the TTC. Because we cannot afford to give free tokens to all dinner guests, only overnight guests receive one token each as they leave on Sunday morning. Tokens are given out by Dixon Hall staff.

### ***What information do we have for guests about other services?***

The best information we have are the staff from Dixon Hall, who are highly informed about what is available in the city. CMHA staff are periodically on site as well.

### ***What is the City of Toronto doing about homelessness?***

Quite a lot. You can dive into the topic here: <http://www.toronto.ca/housing/guide.htm>

### ***What's the best I can do?***

Get to know our guests as people.

**OUT OF THE COLD SITE SCHEDULE 2019 – 2020**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>St Patrick's</b> 139 McCaul St. (Dundas/McCaui) 80 Guests Nov 17 – Mar 29 4:00pm – 7:00am	<b>Out of the Cold in the Beach</b> 140 Winewa Ave (Queen St & Winewa) 25 Guests Nov 4 – Apr 13 3:00pm – 8:00am	<b>Evangel Hall</b> 552 Adelaide St. (E. of Bathurst) 30 Guests Nov 5 – Mar 31 Tickets @ 1:00pm 4:45pm – 7:00am	<b>Yorkminster Park Baptist</b> 1585 Yonge St. (N. of St. Clair) 60 Guests Nov 6 – Apr 3 Tickets @ 5:15pm 7:00pm – 8:00am	<b>Holy Blossom Temple</b> 1950 Bathurst St. (S. of Eglinton) 45 Guests Nov 7 – Mar 26 5:30pm – 7:00am	<b>OOTC at Eastminster</b> 310 Danforth Ave. (W. of Chester) Nov 9 - Dec-55 Guests Nov 1 – Mar 27 5:00pm – 8:00am	<b>Blythwood Rd Baptist</b> 80 Blythwood Rd. (N. of Yonge/Eglinton) 55 Guests Nov 2 – Mar 28 Tickets @ 4:30pm 6:00pm – 8:00am
<b>St Mathew Our Lady Peace</b> 3962 Bloor St W/Shaver 27 Guests (Men only) Nov 17 – Mar 29 5:00pm – 8:00am	<b>Lakeshore @ St. Margaret's Church</b> 156 6 <sup>th</sup> St. (Elmington/Birmingham) 25 Guests (Men Only) Nov 18 – Apr 6 2:00pm – 8:00am	<b>Beth Shalom</b> 1445 Eglinton W (Allen Expressway) 60 Guests Jan 7 – Mar 25 Tickets @ 4:30pm 5:15pm – 7:00am	<b>First Interfaith @ St. Matthew's</b> 729 St. Clair Ave. W (West of Christie) 60 Guests Nov 7 – Apr 9 Tickets @ 4:00pm 4:00pm – 8:00am	<b>Knox United</b> 2575 Midland Ave (Midland/Sheppard) 25 Guests Nov 1 – Apr 10 6:30pm – 8:00am	<b>All Saints Kingsway Anglican</b> 2850 Bloor W (Royal York) 20 Guests (Men only) Nov 22 – Apr 3 6:00pm – 8:00am	<b>NEED HELP? CALL CENTRAL INTAKE FROM ANY PAY PHONE</b> 1-877-338-3398 OR 311
<b>St. Brigid's Annex</b> 1099 Danforth (Donlands/Danforth) 70 Guests Nov 18 – Apr 14 4:00pm – 8:00am	<b>Beth Emeth</b> 100 Elder St. (Wilmington/Sheppard) 30 Guests Jan 6 – Feb 24 6:00pm – 7:00am			<b>Chinese Gospel</b> 450 Dundas St. W. 15 Guests (Men only) Jan 2 – Mar 26 6:00pm – 7:30am		<b>Out of the Cold Resource and Support Services</b> provided by Dixon Hall are funded by the City of Toronto.
<b>Out of the Cold</b> is a volunteer initiative by Toronto area synagogues, churches and Faith communities to serve as Host Sites that offer shelter, hospitality and refuge to people who are homeless in the City of Toronto. <b>Out of the Cold</b> host sites reach out to marginalized individuals and extend a warm invitation to enjoy food, shelter and hospitality. This is made possible through the dedication and support of the many volunteer groups that offer their time, energy and perseverance.						
				<b>Mosaic Interfaith York Region</b> 1-866-332-3777 416-948-6652	<b>Dixon Hall Resource and Support Out of the Cold</b> <a href="mailto:books@dixonhall.org">books@dixonhall.org</a>	

Any changes to this schedule can be found at <https://dixonhall.org/housingservices/ootc/#Site-Schedule>

# "World class?"

By Dennis Bruce

You'd think things would be getting better in our "World-class" city. They're getting worse. The poor are not only always with us but their numbers are growing and, in the shadow of every glass tower and on street corners, they plead for help.

Some say that the reason there are so many poor and homeless in our affluent society is a failure of the imagination – most of us simply cannot imagine what it must be like to be poverty stricken let alone homeless. So, imagine you are poor, unemployed, struggling to pay your rent, worrying over every penny, just making ends meet on the meager allowance you get from the government?

Yes, you tried to get a job. Tried to get many jobs. Sent off dozens of resumes into the void. Not a word in reply. You follow up with calls and all you get is voice mail. Your self-confidence begins to desert you. Depression settles on you like a blanket. You feel useless. A drain on society. A bum. Your friends begin to avoid you. They're embarrassed by your failure. When they look at you, they see what they could easily become; you make them afraid. You find yourself hating yourself. You no longer feel in control. Your whole body is wracked with anxiety. You burst into tears for no reason at all.

In the middle of the night you wake sweating. You turn on the TV. A man in a dark suit is selling government cuts. Says they're absolutely necessary. "Gotta pay down the deficit. Can't go on living like there's no tomorrow. No more welfare bums." That's you he's talking about, welfare bum. Why don'tcha getta job? Cut. Slash. The thread you're holding unravels and you fall, tumbling, turning into the abyss. Suddenly, there you are, homeless.

This story was repeated thousands of times as government cuts ripped the social fabric of our



once fair province. We have not recovered, little progress on housing has been made, and prospects for the next few years are grim.

One of our guests said to me: "Dennis, I've been on the street for three years. Some of these other guys have been longer. We've developed the skills to survive. This winter, there will be people on the street for the first time in their lives. What will happen to them, I don't know. They just don't have any survival skills."

The cold hard face of reality in Toronto means that we, as volunteers, must make a place for such people in the warmth of our hearts.

So, I thank God for all those who work selflessly with the weak, the sick, the poor, and the marginalized in our society. Some of you labour unheralded and unsung, sacrificially giving your time with no thought of recompense. You mingle with our guests, work in the kitchen, lay out secondhand clothes, make sandwiches and casseroles and cakes behind the scenes, and write cheques. I am enormously proud to be associated with you.

On behalf of our guests, thank you, each for your willingness to lay aside schedules, social times and personal responsibilities to come and help.

***If*** there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbour. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. ... I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.'

-- Deuteronomy 15: 7-8

## Want to help?

- You may be able to volunteer. Email Susan Thomas at [suejthomas@hotmail.ca](mailto:suejthomas@hotmail.ca) or another committee member listed below.
- We also accept donations. We spend \$15,000-\$18,000 (approx.) on Out of the Cold each season – NOT including the food that some of our partner groups and congregations provide and pay for themselves – for which we are VERY thankful.
- We are entirely volunteer run and volunteer dependent. (We do receive some staff support from the City of Toronto via Dixon Hall.)
- 100% of all gifts made to OOTC through Blythwood Road Baptist Church are used by Out of the Cold and qualify as charitable contributions for tax purposes.



## BLYTHWOOD OOTC CONTACTS

### **Host Church: Blythwood Road Baptist Church**

[www.blythwood.org](http://www.blythwood.org) 416-487-4571

*Minister* The Rev. David Thomas

*Associate Pastor:* Pastor Abby Davidson

### **Key Partner Churches:**

#### ***Lawrence Park Community Church***

Contact: Cecilia Akeyempon 416-494-6026

#### ***Eglinton-St. George's United Church***

Contact: Arlena Hebert 416-877-0035

#### ***Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church***

Contact: Andrew and Anne Au 416-818-8811

### **Saturday Evening Meals**

Lindsey Ash 416-925-7733

### **Volunteer Scheduling & Coordination**

Susan Thomas [suejthomas@hotmail.ca](mailto:suejthomas@hotmail.ca)

### **Clothing Room Coordination**

Jennifer Frank 416-487-4571

### **Other committee/ coordinator contacts**

Lindsey Ash 416-925-7733

Sarah Benson 647-716-0407

Dennis Bruce 416-482-6245

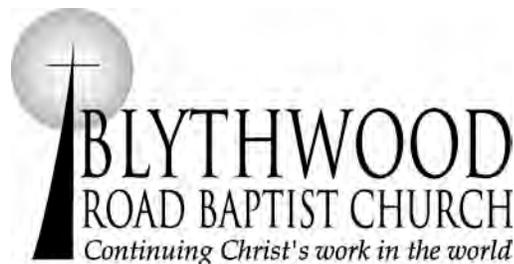
Tim Brummell 416-888-3653

Larry Matthews 416-461-0667

Trevor & Lucyna Mongal 416 523 8222

Rosanna Rassat 416-817-7995

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