



“Missional In Marystown”

A church's journey into the heart of its community

Part 1

For two years we had been asking God two core questions: “Where are you at work in our community and how can we partner with you?” The answer to those queries propelled our congregation to launch community ministries that focused on specific family demographics outside our church. We found ourselves ministering to young families and other specific groups of people in the community. Despite the success of these endeavors, we wondered if God had something more substantial in mind.

One morning, I found myself driving up a back street in our town that was once home to three of Marystown's local night clubs. In my peripheral vision, I saw two men get off their bicycles to stand outside the door of the local tavern, waiting to gain entrance. This would not have been such an odd sight if it had not been 8:15 AM. I felt compelled to stop my vehicle and pray for the people of our community whose only hope led them to a bar before 9:00 in the morning. Surely all of our communities have hurting people like these!

As I prayed, I observed these men as they stood in the rain, as they paced back and forth waiting for the tavern door to open. I immediately thought, “There is nowhere in this community where hurting people can go to feel safe

and wanted. Nowhere.” Then I vocalized a prayer that was heard in heaven, “Lord, I wish that we could be that place.”

While our church is full of godly people who would open our church's doors in an instant to love people, our facility is unfortunately located on the edge of town, far from the hub of the community. We could not be the place of refuge that these people were looking for; we simply were located on the periphery and in order for my prayer to be answered we needed to be located in the centre.

In praying for our church to be more accessible to the community, I felt the still small voice of God telling me to “look closer.” I looked down the street and my gaze immediately fell on a former West Side Charlies building that had a “For Sale” sign placed conveniently in the window! I said to God, “Are you trying to tell me something here?” I immediately sensed that God saying, “You wanted a place, didn't you?”

A month later, I was praying that the personal effect this experience had on me would subside. However, the intensity of the episode only increased with every waking hour. One evening as I met with my church board I swallowed the huge lump of anxiety in my throat and I

said to them, “Can I tell you what God has been speaking to my heart as of late?” Before I knew it, in a way that only God can orchestrate, a personal vision had now become a corporate one!

In both the church board's enthusiasm and the congregational response, the voice of God was clear – this is where our church needs to go! There have been many peaks and valleys already in this journey, but there was one moment in particular that is perpetually etched in my memory. In order for this building acquisition to transpire, the town council had to approve the “modified use” of the West Side building to meet town zoning standards. The secretary of the church board and I attended the town council meeting with excitement, apprehension, and uncertainty. How would the leaders of the community respond to a church that wanted to immerse itself in the main corridor of its community? This was foreign to their experiences of how a church normally functioned. I'll never forget the wording of the motion as spoken by the Mayor: “A motion is before us tonight to permit *Calvary Pentecostal Church to convert the former night club at 38 Queen Street into a community ministry centre.*” Immediately there was a mover and a seconder of the motion, with smiling faces and nodding heads all across the room. There was 100% support from every councilor in the room!

It's only because of God's grace and provision that anything like this is possible. A nightclub turning into a ministry centre?! It's scandalous! But then again, the message of the cross has always been scandalous!¹ God gave us the burden, He gave us the vision, and now He has given us the keys! As we start renovations with God's Spirit leading us, we are excited and terrified, but confident that God is in control. We will keep you updated. Pray for us – we are striving to be “Missional in Marystown!”

1. Galatians 5:11 (NIV)



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