



Evangel Hall Mission

A community of compassion. A place of hope.™

March 20, 2020

Dear Friends,

On Monday, I informed you that ehm would be temporarily closing community programming until April 6th. This was a difficult and necessary decision for everyone involved.

On Tuesday, the last of ehm's prepared food was handed out at the Drop-In door and 150 people were informed the doors would be temporarily closed going forward.

We know there are questions about what is happening at ehm, and, as importantly, what is going to happen to people who are homeless during this public health crisis. While ehm does not have all the answers, I can share the following with you.

So, why did ehm close the Drop-In?

While ehm, thanks to the generosity, resilience and commitment of our donors, volunteers, staff, partners, clients and residents has a deep capacity to provide a wide variety of services to assist people facing homelessness, we simply were not in a position to safely continue our regular Drop-In services during this pandemic.

Four weeks ago, ehm began pandemic planning. This included contingency planning, increasing hand sanitizers around the building (although we could not access the alcohol-based sanitizer required for COVID-19), slowly reducing programs, increasing cleaning protocols, taping off proper social distancing spaces where staff and clients meet 1:1, and staying up-to-date with the public health directives.

The situation with COVID-19 started changing exponentially and it became clear we had significant health and safety gaps. We sought the personal protective equipment necessary for anyone working with homeless individuals and, like many organizations, were challenged to secure them. Even our suppliers were unable to source alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Many individuals who are homeless are in the highest risk groups for illness and workers need to wear protective equipment to help prevent transmission to participants.

At the same time, food sources were becoming severely limited as volunteer groups, churches, and charitable food organizations alike, had to reduce or restrict drop offs. We were cancelling volunteer activities in order to reduce the risk of transmission. Organizations across the City were closing or reducing services. Staffing levels in the Drop-In were drastically and suddenly decreased as student placements were all cancelled and staff faced childcare challenges due to daycare, school and camp closures.





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Systemic changes were happening across the City, directly and immediately reducing the resources needed to safely operate the Drop-in.

On March 16th, we opened with a number of modifications to try to meet Public Health directives. While these afforded some protections, it was clear that we could not, in good conscience, continue to operate the Drop-In. We would be putting clients and staff at risk.

And so, we decided that the Drop-In Centre needed to be closed in order to re-group and find a way forward through these uncertain and difficult times.

But this is only a temporary closure, a pause, to work out where ehm fits into the City's response to COVID-19 and how we can safely provide services to people who are experiencing homelessness during this pandemic. And we've already found ways to resume some services.

So, how is ehm helping people who are homeless?

Staff have found creative solutions to provide services on a one-to-one basis. The Spiritual Care Program is working to provide supports over the phone. The Voluntary Financial Trust Program, Tenant Support, Maintenance and Development continue to operate with some reductions in service. In addition, we are supporting families of Drop-In clients.

And senior management continues to work ceaselessly with the City of Toronto to re-open our space as soon as possible and best meet the current needs of individuals experiencing homelessness during this pandemic.

So, how can I help?

Many of our residents are medically and economically at high risk during the pandemic. You can:

- Volunteer in a telephone ministry to provide safe, encouraging, social contact
- Create messages of hope or draw pictures
- Mail \$10-\$20 Loblaws gift cards, including Attention: Cards of Hope in the address.
- Also, please pray for the protection and health of participants and residents. And for wisdom as the senior management team makes decisions through this difficult time.

You can contact us at cindy.han@evangelhall.ca for more information.

With deepest thanks for your support and understanding,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Ainsley'.

Ainsley Chapman
Executive Director