

This first semester here at College for Officer Training has been full of learning experiences. I especially appreciated the opportunities to step out into the community around us and see what is happening right under our noses. I understand the Field course is to help us develop an awareness of the needs around us and how we can integrate that into our ministry as an Officer. To see that God is in all situations, sometimes we have to peel back the layers to find Him, but He is there.

I have a passion for the community and it has been deepened through various activities that I have been so fortunate to participate in. I feel that these are great examples of the advantages we have in training with the College being here in Winnipeg. For such a long time many people, including me would complain about the closure of the College in NL. I am relieved to be here with a fresh new look that comes from the numerous opportunities for ministry here in Manitoba.

One of the most memorable and profound experiences for me was the Prayer Walk during the first few weeks of classes. Prayer is the most important key to all our ministries—it is our communication with God. He is the one sending us forth on His mission and so it would be essential for us to keep in tune with Him and what better way than to walk around the community where we are appointed and pray over the many obstacles, concerns, and opportunities to build relationships with the people whom we will encounter each day. This had a very real impact on my spiritual walk with God. I see the benefits of doing the same where ever I get appointed to. I like the opportunity of getting familiar with the area, but stopping and praying whenever we saw something or someone we felt needed prayer really made the walk come to life. This is life, it is not perfect. We would like everyone to be housed, loved and supported with wonderful families like we grew up with, but it is not always real for some people. The

most profound part of the walk was the bridge. I unknowingly stood at the middle of the bridge took what I thought was a beautiful picture of the river, it was very calm. The broken tree added to the character of the picture. I remember looking down and seeing a pair of jeans hung over the floating wharf and thinking how odd that was. Just moments later to find out that people live under this bridge. People praying randomly for what that place represented, the music on the radio playing “Devil on my shoulder”, all I could think is that Satan is such a liar and thief! These people are lost, they are feeling like they have no place in this world, we don’t know why or how they ended up under this bridge but we do know that they need prayer. To look through the trees at the side of the river and see the golden boy atop of the Legislature Building was such a contrast. Every day we drive over that bridge to get to CFOT. Every day I pray for those who have slept under that bridge at some time or another. Every day, I recall the picture the broken tree across the calm river which I am sure is not always calm waters; the broken tree now represents the broken lives under the bridge. There was more to the prayer walk, all very meaningful to me but this was the most touching God moment I have ever had.

The night we attended the theatre show “Souvenirs” was another God moment for me. I was impressed with the acting abilities of these two actors, but what was even more evident in the story line was that the important things in life are not the things you can buy but what legacy you leave behind in your friends and loved ones. The lodge was not what would be important to this girl; neither would the money the souvenirs would bring in, but the little things. Quality time spent with the father, learning to cut up an onion, that’s what is important—priceless moments.

As an Officer, we may not have to deal with the same situation, but I do believe that there are similar ones that will come our way and we will have to be involved. Families breaking up;

children acting out and needing attention from their parents; children turning to a life of crime, drugs and alcohol basically the product of a broken home. We will certainly need to polish up our pastoral care skills to tackle some of these situations.

Kristalnach was a different experience. I certainly had never had an opportunity to attend such a memorial as this, however I do believe it was a blessing for the Salvation Army to be welcomed to step in and witness the loss and devastation of the Jewish community through the Holocaust. In this experience, I could see that remembering is not always a bad thing, it was sad and I am thankful to have been a part of the congregation. I can see that it is very noticeable to let the community know that you care and to share in their hurt even if it did not directly affect you. Again, this is about building relationships with other religions as well as people.

I felt honoured to be included with the march around the Convention Centre on Remembrance Day. As I looked around this large building and saw so many servicemen and women, I prayed my way around the building thanking God for these people who give of their lives to fight for our rights, our safety and others rights and safety. I then prayed for us as Cadets in training and Commissioned Officers in the Salvation Army that God would also protect us and enlarge our territory as we fight the Spiritual Warfare. We too give up the comforts of having our family and friends around us; we give our all, our dreams and aspirations to the high call of Officership into battle we go, each and every day.

I was completely side swiped when it came to attending the Hope in the City Breakfast at the Convention Center. I don't know what I was thinking it was, but I did not realize who the guests would be and their contributions to the Salvation Army. I will definitely keep this event in mind for future opportunities where ever I am appointed with the Salvation Army. At first I was a little taken back by the money spent on such an event when there are so many people who

could use a good cooked breakfast in this city, but as I sat and listened to those taking part then I realized that if we didn't have the big business people backing us what would we be able to accomplish really? Their support is needed and listening to Dr. Tom Jackson was the highlight of the week. I am still on a high from that, really, a rags to riches story and the best part is that the money is not the riches that he is consumed with; he is rich in Jesus Christ.

These are all very valuable lessons, I hope I will never forget them; however as time goes by I know that my ministry will be filled with an abundance of learning experiences and God moments. I feel that in these few months of training I have grown immensely. My eyes have been opened to things I have never seen before, and probably will never see in Newfoundland. I am thankful for the positive influence these experiences have had on me. I feel that my calling has been reconfirmed over and over. Attending different events in the Community has been an experience in itself, but it shows me that the presence of the clergy, regardless of the denomination is essential to bringing people together. It shows that I care about you and it doesn't matter if you are not a member of my congregation. It shows that I am willing to go beyond my duty or my job description and it most importantly shows the love of God.

It was challenging to attend these events, sometimes because I was tired and needed to rest or do another assignment and sometimes I felt that I wouldn't learn anything from it. I was so wrong! I learned something from each event we attended, and even more importantly I found myself spending time with God in those moments.

I am sure I will always have questions unanswered. I am always in the learning mode, learning something new each day. I cannot pretend to know it all—I just give myself to God to be used by Him.