

# The Jeremiah Project

*fostering fresh expressions of the Gospel in an historic parish  
for the peace and prosperity of the city*



## *What is a Intentional Missional Community?*

An 'intentional missional community' is a small group of individuals committed to sharing a common 'rule of life'. This community is organized around the call to be missionaries in our own post-Christian culture, proclaiming the Kingdom of God according to Jesus' sacrificial and Incarnational life, while showing particular compassion to those in the neighbourhood who are the least, the last, and the lost in the eyes of the culture. This is done by sharing common prayer, practicing hospitality and seeking justice. In the process, the intentional missional community will also build up other servant-leaders who don't live in the intentional community but who are also missionaries to the culture.

## **JEREMIAH HOUSE**

*A New-Monastic Missional Community of Church-Planting Servant-Leaders*

The goal of Jeremiah House is to creatively re-imagine what it means to be Church. Our mission is to live and work as church-planting servant-leader disciples who will grow together in the Holy Spirit as we serve the Parish area of St. Anne's Church (the North Parkdale / Dundas West Neighbourhood of Toronto). We will seek to live simply so that we may humbly model the Kingdom of God within and to a post-Christian and consumer culture. We will seek to have accountability to each other and to the wider Body of Christ of which we are a part. We will work together and with the wider community in the neighbourhood/parish to:

- learn, teach & truth-tell
- break bread and practice hospitality
  - share in a life of prayer
- resist evil and repent of our own evil
- proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ in the neighbourhood
  - seek and serve Christ in all persons - loving our neighbour as ourselves
- strive for justice and peace among all people and to respect the dignity of every being (and the dignity of God's Creation)

We will seek, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the words of Peter Maurin to "build a new society in the shell of the old".



*A missional order will gather together people and will commit to being a body who will embed ourselves in this location. We will seek to incarnate Christ in this location. We will build relationships with those who are hurting. We will look for “the poor”. We will look for “the struggling”. We will look for ways of connecting.*

*A missional church planter is certainly of a different order [than the church planter of the Christendom era]. It requires a different mindset, a long-term mindset for long-term survival. It requires a place for mutual love, grace, generosity, unity in diversity, support, celebration, edification, speaking truth in love, encouragement and discernment.*

*- Adapted from the words and writings of David Fitch, Missional Church Planter*

## **Jeremiah House:** **A Primer for Interested Live-in Members**

*Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.*

*Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. - The Prophet Jeremiah 29.7*

### **Another World Is Possible!!!**

The Hebrew prophets called God’s people to repentance in an age of idolatry. They called God’s followers to praise, to justice-seeking and to peacemaking in a time when the people had turned their backs on God. We believe that it’s possible – indeed that it’s necessary – for today’s Christians to live in ways which seek to be the Kingdom – which is both among us and is to come. Thus, Jeremiah House is one way for servant-leaders to gather and live together in a small cluster of 6-12 people in order to ‘seek the peace and prosperity of the city’ for ALL of its inhabitants. It’s one way for us to be positive exiles in a culture of consumerism and secularism; as we commit in small groups to live by a ‘rule’ that shapes our common life of creativity, prayer, justice-seeking, hospitality and simplicity. Jeremiah House is a group of people who, like St. Francis, have heard the call to ‘rebuild My Church’. Thus, as part of holistic mission within and to the neighbourhood, we will seek to re-imagine what it means to be Church. Our principles resonate with the New Monastic Movement (see [www.newmonasticism.org](http://www.newmonasticism.org)) – and we find strength and inspiration from the many Saints who have lived life differently in order to seek first the Kingdom of God.

The Jeremiah House is the ‘first movement’ in the symphony of the wider Jeremiah Project, which is a project that is sponsored by the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, and is housed at St. Anne’s Church Rectory. Though our ‘tribe’ is Anglicanism, committed Christians of all stripes are welcomed to be part of the residential and extended community in various ways.

### **Are You Called to Community?**

We invite you to prayerfully discern if you are called to be part of Jeremiah House -either as a live-in community member or as an associate and friend of the house (the associate/friend part is less defined at this point!).

*...Our world is desperately in need of lovers... people who are building deep, genuine relationships with fellow strugglers along the way, and who actually know the faces of the people behind the issues they are concerned about.*

*- Shane Claiborne*

If you might be called to live with us, this little pamphlet is for you. Read on. If you see yourself and others see you as a servant leader with some gift or passion that could serve the North Parkdale / Dundas West community of Toronto – particularly around missional living (reaching out in simple serving ways to the neighbourhood) and church planting (starting and sustaining a fresh expression of church that is focused on and in the neighbourhood) - this may be for you. Likewise, please consider this if you have a ‘growing maturity’ in your faith life.

Whether you work in ‘the market’ or not... whether you are single or married (with or without children)... whether you are an introvert or an extrovert... whatever ‘tribe’ of the Christian tradition you are part of... there very well may be a space for you in the house.

If you’re open to living in a common house (with your own space for you/space(s) for your family)...If you’re open to living with children...If you want to have more day-to-day connections – to pray, work, live and eat in your neighbourhood; to have more shared meals, a stronger accountability in prayer, a greater ability to challenge the spirit of the age then Jeremiah House may be for you!

### Five Characteristics for a Missional Community:

- **Bless.** We will bless at least one other member of our community every day.
- **Eat.** We will eat with other members of our community at least three times a week.
- **Listen.** We will commit ourselves weekly to listening to the promptings of God in our lives.
- **Learn.** We will read from the Gospels each week and remain diligent in learning more about Jesus.
- **Sent.** We will see our daily life as an expression of our sent-ness by God into this world.

### What We Are Not:

Though we are a community that is called to live radically and differently - and though we will aim to pray and break bread together often as well as to share some things in common (in the Spirit of Acts 2: 42-47), we are not a free-form commune. We encourage couples and families to have space to build their relationship and/or raise a family in a healthy, sustainable way. We encourage all members to have a strong sense of accountability and self-discipline around boundaries. As we grow, we'll decide together how we share our common spaces – as well as how food and the parts of our economic lives that are shared will work out. No, we won't be 'piled in' or losing our family or individual identities in Jeremiah House. We'll be free to have and maintain our own jobs, possessions, bank accounts, social lives, family times and living spaces – while we contribute as we are able to the life of the community. We will, of course, seek to live radically and justly and challenge the individualism, over-consumption and consumerism of our age – and we will have some clearly defined commitments to the house. Finding the balance in all of this will take some work and learning. If that challenge excites you then let's keep talking.

### Getting 'On The Same Page' - Some Commitments:

There are several commitments that we feel are important to note - so that we are starting on the same page. We ask folks who are considering being community members to consider these things. You should:

- Be able to recite the Apostles Creed as the story of our faith.
- Have a commitment to Christ and a growing maturity in this relationship (as well as in social relationships).
- Prayerfully seek to live with love, grace, gratitude and joy amidst the beauty and suffering of the city.
- Be willing to use our God-given individual and collective gifts and passions to build 'cluster-groups' of hope in the neighbourhood – as part of planting and re-imagining what it means to be church (rooted in the Anglican tradition but with a vision for ecumenical Christian witness) and to build up other servant-leaders as part of an extended neighbourhood-focused community of faith, hope and love.
- Seek to model radical stewardship by living together simply in either the designated community housing – or other designated spaces in the neighbourhood commencing in early January 2009.
- Seek to be accountable to God, the community, ourselves as individuals and to the various forms of leadership of the community.
- Be genuinely called to live in community and to offer servant-leadership in our incarnational living and church-planting
- Be willing to journey in faith with others – even in the messiness of life.
- Be able to strive to live generously with others, and to receive with a grateful heart.
- Have a love for Christ's universal church, even with all its warts and divisions – and a desire for unity.
- Be able to live with social diversity in the community (but not necessarily accepting all of it) as well as cultural diversity, intergenerational interaction, and intercultural living (we need all ages and cultures to truly model the kingdom!).
- Be willing to adventure and celebrate – as well as struggle, lament, mourn and grieve – as a community.
- Seek to live with healthy personal, sexual & emotional boundaries and to honour and respect covenantal commitments (such as marriages, commitments to chastity, etc.) in community. In this to seek to be accountable to self, the intentional community members, community and parish leadership and, by extension, the Episcopal authority of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto.
- Be able to challenge ones self to live simply, justly, prayerfully and in the 'boiler room' of community life.

A more detailed timeline will be developed in conjunction neighbourhood needs, community rhythms, hopes and dreams.

## **Overall Length of Commitment:**

You may be asking yourself 'how long would I have to commit for?' There's no simple answer to this. What we know is that we're starting with a 5-year goal (and funding) for this little project (beginning January 1, 2009) – knowing that, for various reasons and circumstances some will have to leave us after a year or two, and some may be looking for an even longer commitment. On top of a discernment and selection process, there will be a process for exiting and closure, should one need to leave at any time. The hope is that folks can envision 1-5 years of commitment as a starting point – and that we all see where the Holy Spirit leads. What we do ask is for you to set a goal early on and keep in conversation with the various folks in community and leadership as plans change.

## **Weekly, Monthly and Yearly Commitments:**

No, you don't have to quit your job and give up your social life to be part of Jeremiah House. However, there are some commitments that we ask you to make. In terms of community time, this amounts to a minimum of about 2 nights a week, plus part of the weekend (some of the weekend time is Sabbath/personal/family time).

### **a) weekly commitments:**

As part of our commitment to the community and its ministry, people are asked to put aside some time in their schedule. This is a basic layout of how it will look – though it may be revised at our first retreat in the spring:

- One or two nights a week for community gatherings. These nights will involve some combination of prayer, creativity, song, hospitality, shared meals, teaching, art, Bible Study, reconciliation (confession!) and Holy Communion/Eucharist. They may also involve community meetings and dealing with the more 'day-to-day' matters. The community will decide how these evenings look
- One day a week for personal or family 'Sabbath' .
- Sunday afternoons, when possible, for community 'Sabbath' (being together).
- Several hours during the week for the missional work (relationship building) and Church Planting in the neighbourhood.

### **b) monthly commitments:**

- To have an appointment with an outside Spiritual Director / Mentor (1 hour). The Director/Mentor is a person outside of the missional community who offers a sounding board and direction for your spiritual life.
- To have a monthly check-in with a Jeremiah Project leader (1 hour). This meeting is primarily to allow either party to reflect on issues that relate to the community but might be difficult to raise in a large group. This leader may be the Parish Pastor, The Minister of Intentional Community, or others the community decides are called to this role.
- To contribute to the rent of the rectory (around \$3-450/month for individuals and \$6-750/month for couples/families – depending on the number of folks in the rectory as well as our utilities). This is somewhat subsidized when compared with market rent in Toronto.

### **c) yearly commitments:**

- 2 weekends a year for community retreats (fall, spring)
- 1-2 weekends a year for individual retreats
- Arranged time to take a personal and/or family vacation, pilgrimage and travel seeking to respect important events happening in the community

## **Accountability:**

Intentional community can be a difficult thing to live in and, at its worse, it can be toxic. We want to ensure that there are good mechanisms in place so that we can have deep accountability and reconciliation as part of our lives in order to live a healthy common life. Here are some of the levels of accountability (noting that these may evolve):

- To ourselves – to love and be loved as God loves us as individuals. To strive to have good boundaries, self-respect and self-care in community.
- To each other to live as a healthy and accountable with deep respect for each other. This will be fostered by non-violent and regular communication mechanisms (house meetings, individual and group check-ins) to resolve conflict and unhealthy dynamics.

They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.

Everyone around was in awe— all those wonders and signs done through the apostles!

And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

- From Acts 2 (The Message)

- To our individual Spiritual Directors/Mentors who provide a lifeline outside of the boiler room of intentional community / parish to share our spiritual joys and struggles (each member will meet once monthly with a Director of their choice).
- To the Minister of Missional Community who will provide servant-leadership within the community house and may be a resource to resolve conflict within the community/house.
- To the Jeremiah Project's Pastor, (who is also the priest-Incumbent at St. Anne's) and lives outside of the community house and provides important outside leadership that is 'arms-length' though supportive and connected with the life of the house.
- Other outside persons, as recommended by the Project's leadership or the Diocesan Bishop – especially to deal with larger situations of conflict, or an expressed need for greater diversity (gender, age, etc) within the leadership structures of the house.

### What's This "Church Planting" Stuff?

St. Francis was alone and deep in prayer amidst the ruins of a little chapel. Seeking to discern his calling in life, Francis heard a voice say to him, "Rebuild my church." So Francis looked around at the crumbling chapel of San Damiano, gathered friends together and rebuilt it. Then they went out and started other restoration projects on church buildings in need of repair. It was only later Francis realized that "Rebuild my church" meant reform the institution, re-animate the people, restore the idea.

- from a website about St. Francis

The 'church planting' part of Jeremiah House is a central part of our missional identity – and if you're going to live in the house, you'll have some part in this. However, we should note that when we say 'church planting' we're not talking about creating an 'attractational' model of church which moves rock stars into the neighbourhood and has worship (be it modern, ancient-future or traditional) as its starting point. Though there may be attractational elements to how we live church (as well as elements of modern, ancient-future and traditional), and 'church' will certainly involve worship of God, we believe that relationship-building through community and missional living are the central aspect to BEING church when engaging a secular post-Christian culture with the redemptive story of Jesus Christ! We should also note that we don't want to build a church that 'attracts' people from other neighbourhoods or churches because it's cool, or because there's good consumer content. We want to re-imagine what it means to be church that is an indigenous neighbourhood expression of the one, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic church! Part of the work of Jeremiah House will be to know the neighbourhood so that we can BE church in the 'hood.

### Without a Vision...

We've created a whole other document which starts to brainstorm some of the ways that we might live our common life together. However, to give you a snapshot of what your role might look like, here are a few examples:

- Consistent hospitality through open meals (even overnight hospitality with those in need – having a "Christ Room"?)
- Starting a micro-enterprise such as a fair-trade coffee shop, a recording studio for neighbourhood youth, or a bakery (say, in partnership with the Dufferin Grove Bread Oven).
- Food preparing and purchasing for our common life – and preparing meals.
- Art projects linked with community witness.
- Going door-to-door on a Saturday morning to meet our neighbours and offer our services at no cost
- Fresh expressions of worship within or beyond existing parish building(s) - with room for creativity and exercising of our gifts and passions.
- Starting a simple living group, or a daily prayer group that's open to the wider neighbourhood.
- Evangelism ministries with children or with folks from various communities which make up the diversity of Parkdale.
- Offering child care and creating a child-friendly community – maybe starting a child care cooperative.
- Creation and maintenance of 'third spaces' for evangelism (such as presence in a pub, cafe, shopping centre, art drop-in, recording studio, etc.).
- Other mutually accountable and discerned uses of our collective and individual gifts and passions.

### Don't Forget to Laugh:

Reading over this, it all seems so serious and perhaps a bit intense. Of course, the Kingdom should be a party! An intercultural, intergenerational party reflecting the diversity of God's amazing creation! So if it this primer has been a bit intense, lets not forget this is ultimately about freedom and 'life more abundantly' for the whole neighbourhood.

We know it's an audacious goal. All of this we seek to do (and can only do) by the power of the Holy Spirit. As a community we'll aim to live each moment with grace, celebration (including some healthy laughter!) and generosity (to self and others). We seek to prayerfully and diligently live according to the spirit of these commitments, rather than merely the

(very wordy) word by which they are written! In living out this call, let's not miss the point entirely! This is about celebration and joy as we grow in the loving discipline of a faith-full community.

### **TIMELINE: Phase One**

We realize that the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry.

However, this is a rough timeline of our first six to eight months together:

- Individual Discussions and Discernment (on part of individuals, families and leadership): October to December 2008.
- Discernment Retreat: November (likely 21-23) 2008.
- Final decision from leadership on community membership: November 30 (Advent I – the waiting begins!)
- Community House Work Parties (and painting our individual rooms!): Throughout late November and December in the Rectory.
- A New Years Eve Party and Vigil Together? – could be fun!!!
- Launch: Re-locate into housing to begin the missional community presence in the neighbourhood – after January 1.
- Weekend Evaluation Retreat: Spring 2009.

### **Let's Talk:**

Thanks for reading all of this. If you've received this, it likely means you're on our radar as a person who may be called to do this. If parts of this resonate, but you're not called to live in the house, we hope you can journey with us in some way – there will be lots of room for non-resident extended community members! If so, now the mutual discernment can begin. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask us. This conversation is just beginning. We're excited!

### **Further CyberReading - Surfing Sites for Missional Community:**

There are many models of missional community, intentional community and church planting missional community that are emerging. Here's an incomplete list of resources that may help give a sense of what we're up to with Jeremiah House:

- The Order of Mission: <http://www.missionorder.org/>
- Church of the Apostles: <http://www.apostleschurch.org/community.php>
- New Monasticism: <http://www.newmonasticism.org/12marks/12marks.php>
- Church of the Savior: [http://www.inwardoutward.org/?page\\_id=2](http://www.inwardoutward.org/?page_id=2)
- Missional Order of St. Fiacre: <http://www.reclaimingthemission.com/2007/10/missional-order-of-st-fiacre-at-life-on.html>
- The Off Ramp Community: [http://www.theofframp.org/missional\\_comm.html](http://www.theofframp.org/missional_comm.html)
- The Simple Way Community: <http://www.thesimpleway.org/community/commitments.html>
- Northumbria Community: <http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/WhoWeAre/whoweareThe%20Rule.htm>
- Inner Change: <http://www.cmlleaders.org/ministries/innerchange/inside-innerchange>
- Basilea Community (L.A.): <http://www.basileiacommunity.com/>
- Common Union: <http://commonunion.org>
- The Catholic Worker Movement: <http://www.catholicworker.org/aimsandmeanstext.cfm?Number=5>
- Contemplative Fire: <http://www.contemplativefire.org/index.htm>
- Church of the Sojourners: <http://churchofthesojourners.wordpress.com/>
- The Community of St. Jude: <http://www.stjudeschurch.com/menu.htm>
- Urban Monastery (Calgary): <http://www.urbanmonastery.ca/>
- 24/7 Boiler Rooms: <http://www.boiler-rooms.com/cm/resources/26>

No one asked us to do this work. The mayor of the city did not come along and ask us to run a bread line or a hospice to supplement the municipal lodging house. Nor did the Bishop...ask that we...help the poor. No one asked us to start an agency or an institution of any kind. On our responsibility, because we are our brother's [and sisters] keeper, because of a sense of personal responsibility, we began to try and see Christ in each one that came to us... The smaller the house, the smaller the group, the better. Ever to become smaller--that is the aim.

–Dorothy Day

Have more questions? Let's have a conversation:

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