



# Moments of Grace

from Bishop Geoff Peddle

The Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador

## A House becomes a Home

January 23, 2015

I visited Ronald McDonald House today. I went with Archdeacon Sandra Tilley and was greeted by her brother, Calvin, who volunteers there. Two of the staff, Annette and Christine, gave us a tour lasting an hour or so and we were privileged to meet some of the families staying there. As you probably know, Ronald McDonald House in Newfoundland and Labrador is part of a chain of such homes (more than 800 now!) that provide care to children and their families during a time of medical need. For a nominal price those in need can be assured of a safe and supportive place to live close by their hospital. What I saw in St. John's this morning was a friendly home that really does live up to the image one has for such a place. The staff impressed me as very professional and caring and the ready smile on the faces of the parents and children whom I met told me they felt safe and cared for.

It is not my purpose in these few words to endorse Ronald McDonald House or any other non-profit organization for the benefit of children and families in need. It is my purpose to affirm the good things I saw today. There are thousands of charities in Canada today offering assistance and care to all sorts of persons, sometimes independently, sometimes in partnership with other charities, with government, or with faith communities. I strongly affirm such partnerships because the real beneficiary is not the charity but the person in need. In talking with the staff at Ronald McDonald House today I was impressed by the large and growing number of volunteers who uphold their work. It was clear that the presence of so many who give of their time and talents enhanced the quality of the home. In speaking with Sandra's brother, Calvin, it was also clear to me that such work is a natural part of his faith as a Christian. Part of his Christian faith is invested in the life of his church; part is given outward to the community.

Groups like Ronald McDonald House now fulfill many of the roles fulfilled by churches in the past. There is nothing inconsistent with Christian charity and hospitality in what these organizations do and their work is worthy of our support in so many ways. Indeed, many people who volunteer in such charities are motivated by their Christian faith. Christianity demands a rich relationship with God that is lived out in community with others. Jesus linked the two perfectly when he told his followers to *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength ... [and] ..."*

*Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.” We are to love God, neighbour and self properly through our discipleship and ministry.*

I passionately believe that a measure of a healthy Christian community is the degree to which it gives to the world around it rather than being primarily concerned with its own survival. A healthy church cannot be about preserving what it has or simply about maintaining its buildings and property. I saw my church at work today outside of its walls and organized places of worship. I saw my church at work today in Ronald McDonald House in the person of Calvin (and his wife!) who, like thousands of other volunteers of faith, make a difference in this world. That’s the kind of church I am proud to belong to. When believers are motivated to go beyond the safe and familiar into the not so safe and familiar I know that the Gospel is being heard and put to work. Jesus referred to his followers as both “salt” and “leaven” and in both cases the intention was clear: a little can flavour and change a lot. People of faith can bring positive transformation whenever they come in love. And it doesn’t take many to do that.

There’s an old saying that a house is not a home unless there are people who love each other living within. I don’t think I’ll look at Ronald McDonald House the same any more. After what I saw today it’s become more like Ronald McDonald **Home** to me.

Because love lives there.

Blessings,  
**+Geoff**



***Bishop Geoff (left) visited Ronald McDonald House in St. John's with Archdeacon Sandra Tilley (centre) and her brother Calvin Taylor (right) who is a volunteer at the facility***