

# NEW CONNECTIONS

## AN EVOLVING MINISTRY

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This past year saw significant change to New Connections Ministries (NCM). With the addition of counsellor/life coach Steve Prendergast in May of 2024, NCM got an added function to address the most pressing concerns that men in addictions recovery face, post-treatment. These concerns include long-term employment, housing, continuing discipleship through a local church, familial relationship issues, and any personal challenges to lasting sobriety and maturity in Christ. This is the hallmark of NCM's mission to disciple men in recovery in an ever-developing relationship with Jesus Christ as they transition back to society with a renewed sense of purpose in their lives.

Through the impetus of both one-on-one and group counselling, coupled with random drug testing for all residents, and an obligatory regimen of weekly church attendance, work, school, or community volunteerism, NCM's Board of Directors believe that this multi-faceted approach can meet these concerns with greater effect. Group recreational activities also play a part in the residents' recovery. In December, the men enjoyed a day out at a local bowling alley. This proved to be a much-needed release of leisure and camaraderie to offset the stresses of uncertainty in employment and housing that post-incarceration, recovering addicts have to manage. Prendergast believes this added dimension provides 'good, clean fun,' as a healthy alternative to substance abuse when these stresses of uncertainty rear their ugly head.

As 2025 unfolds, another dimension to ongoing recovery will be added to augment this approach. On February 1st, NCM opened its doors to a "second phase" (transitional) home for men in recovery who have completed a minimum of one year at Liberty House. Hope Horizons, located at 6 Assiniboine Drive, in Ottawa, has been in the works for awhile but finally came to fruition when an ideal home was found

to house an additional six men. This location provides another residential setting that completes NCM's twofold ministry dynamic of discipleship and transition back to society.

The discipleship phase at Liberty House (48 Pender Street in Ottawa), will continue to offer discipleship through mentoring, counselling, group biblical studies, and life-coaching for a minimum of one year, and then the residents will either move on to their own home or to the transitional phase at the new home on Assiniboine Drive. The transitional phase will be an opportunity for the men to utilize the spiritual disciplines they have developed while at Liberty House. While they're residing at the second phase home, they will still get counselling and be subject to the same standards of the Christian Walk, sobriety, and responsible living.

The idea for a second phase home was conceived from a concern the ministry had with the frightening and precarious circumstances men in recovery often find themselves in upon leaving Liberty House. A significant number of men who complete one year or more at Liberty House go on to Christ-centred lives, free of addiction. Some, however, make poor decisions, some of which may have resulted from moving to bad environments.

Winding up in 'bad environments' is a ripple effect from multiple factors. Some of those factors include pride—often the root cause—whereby an addict thinks they're delivered from their former lifestyles, and the erroneous belief that they don't need other Christians or fellow addicts in recovery to maintain sobriety. This in turn sets off a sequence of decisions that can lead them to live in the polar opposite of a morally sound environment. Other causes include men not dealing well with hardship, or some of the hurts or relationship issues of their lives that led to their addictive behaviours in the first place.

Another cause for addicts moving to wrong environments is painfully obvious: Brutally high costs of living, especially in cities like Ottawa, where rent has skyrocketed, leaving many people—not only addicts—discouraged with the lack of decent housing at an affordable rate. If the addict can't find an affordable place minus bad tenants and bad living conditions to reside in after finishing a discipleship programme, the wrong environment doesn't seem so wrong to them anymore. Sadly, relapse can sometimes be the result.

New Connections believes that a spiritually and ethically sound residence of men committed to living for Christ, spurring each other on to holy lifestyles can be a great catalyst for long-term sobriety and wiser judgment in their life decisions. As we are told to "show tolerance for one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2), so too can men in recovery learn to navigate the challenges of living with other peoples' personality quirks while they prepare to move on to their own places or to live with others.

We are thankful to the Lord for His provision of Hope Horizons, a home where men in recovery can transition to lives committed to Christ, free of substance abuse without supervision, serving each other in humility and brotherly love, holding each other accountable, as they mature spiritually.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NASB): "And let's consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

Ephesians 5:21(NASB): "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."