

A ministry of the whole church by the whole church

Lent 1: God is Our Refuge

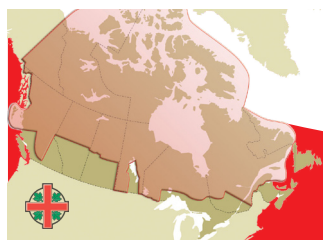
In today's readings we learn that God brought the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery into a good land, and the Psalmist calls God a "refuge and a fortress." In the Gospel reading, we find Jesus tempted and tested in his time of hunger and isolation. Where does he turn? He finds shelter and strength to endure in the promise and the law of God.

Churches across Canada's north are offering both shelter and hope for a better future through ministries of compassion, sharing Christ's love and his words of hope.

At St. Paul's Cathedral in Kamloops, an "Out-of-the-Cold" program provides a warm bed, a hot supper and breakfast the next morning for those living on the streets of Kamloops. The program runs two nights a week during the colder months of the year. "Many of the guests to our program are what we call the 'hard-core homeless.' They suffer from extreme alcohol and drug addiction and some are mentally challenged," says Bud Smith, Chair of the Board for Out-of-the-Cold. He explains that Kamloops seems to have a higher-than-average number of homeless people in part due to its Provincial Jail—upon release from jail, some have nowhere to go, and its Courthouse, which draws visitors from other towns in BC's interior. Kamloops Indian Band is also just across the river from the city, which helps to explain why approximately 80% of the shelter's guests are Indigenous.

Working with the guests is sometimes challenging, but the volunteers at St. Paul's Out-of-the-Cold continue to show up, ready to help. Some of their best rewards are comments like these: "That was great soup tonight," and "You have no idea how much I love you guys."

Prayer: "God, you have been a refuge to your people. Help us to extend that same grace and compassion to those in need in our communities. We ask you to bless northern ministries that provide shelter and hope to those in need. In your name, Amen."



Council
of the North

www.anglican.ca/cn
facebook.com/CounciloftheNorth
cnc@national.anglican.ca



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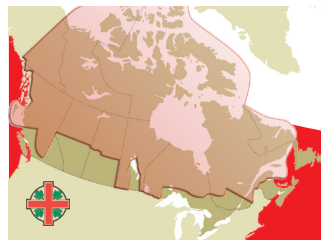
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