

Davenport Perth Community Ministry

A Community Ministry of the Shining Waters Region of the
United Church of Canada

You belong here

Davenport Perth Community Ministry is located in the Dish with One Spoon Wampum covenant territory – an agreement to both maintain sovereignty and peaceably share and care for the land around the lakes. The covenant was made and renewed between Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples and later included settler parties, who made a commitment to take only what was needed, to leave something for someone else and to keep the dish clean.

DPCM shares its space with both the Davenport Perth United Church and the Davenport Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre in a building that linked the old Church and the Manse, creating a mixed-use community centre and a public internal street that brought in sunlight. This sunlight encouraged the growth of plants and trees, and sometimes, the curiosity of birds and squirrels.

In another year of COVID, we continued to meet in whatever space we were allowed to gather, both in-person and on-line. We continued with Tracing Gede-Onigaming Routes, with young people tracing the stories, the histories of the people who found a home here. Through funds such as those from Seeds of Hope, we ran workshops on Container Gardening with Lara Lucretia Mrosovsky of Minikaan and Using Food to Dismantle Racism with Jacqueline Dwyer of Toronto Black Farmers and Food Growers Collective. Our community members persisted with Pelham Meals-to-Go, with sharing stories and food, with continuing to share joys and sorrows.

I remembered that on my way to my first day at DPCM, picking up a plant from the garbage and bringing it to work. After urging it back to life, someone thought of bringing it under one of the trees by the reception where others can also give it ministrations and admiration. There it took in more light and it bloomed. It belongs to that space under that tree at the reception of 1900 Davenport.

When asked whether you have eaten, or how you are, the question is not what you own but to accept the hospitality given with words saying, "You belong here."



Reflections from a student in Contextual Education at Emmanuel College

As I examine the last three months with Davenport-Perth Community Ministries, I consider not only the ways in which I grew, but also the ways in which I have been called to deeply engage the church in society. I often think of what Tina Conlon (Minister to DPCM) first talked with me about when we were deciding on DPCM as my site placement. She shared with me the complexity of issues facing the members of DPCM and how, almost like peeling an onion, I would discover a community ministry that engaged people in ways where many social maladies facing their lives intersected, leaving them without autonomy or advocacy in the society around them, and that DPCM was one avenue for them to be heard, seen, and engaged in the community's context.

In these first three months, some of the people I encountered include: a mother who works retail, volunteers at the Meals-to-Go Program and still struggles with housing inequity and food insecurity, a man around my age who struggled with substance use disorder and desired a better social location so that he could live a life where he was loved by someone fully as himself, and a man who lived with mobility issues which caused him to not be able to get to grocery stores or other spaces easily. Each of these examples, have provided me an opportunity to re-examine why I am committed to social justice through a Christian context, as I wonder more deeply about the role of the church in the lives of the community, and how Christian activism is not about a politic of rescuing or saving, but rather journeying with and ensuring that our presence is one that instigates hope, reflection, and communal action.



Carting to Pelham (photo by Sura Rogers)

As I consider how I am developing my own spiritual praxis of justice, the one on one conversations with Tina have been extremely helpful. I find Tina assists in my exploration by providing context, but also, wisdom from years of engaging in this work.

Through intentional loitering, I have found myself mapping the community in a way I had not expected before. It is one thing to get to know people, this is valuable and important, but it is quite another to understand the landscape in which they live. I believe this too is spiritual. So often I have heard from affluent Christians that getting into 'nature' is where they experience God. So, I wondered, as I walked around the Davenport-Perth area, where is God experience? How is God present amongst the sounds of trains passing by, concrete and limited green space? I think this is something I will continue to consider throughout this time of placement, and I may not have the answer fully, maybe not ever – and that is okay, as I think Urban Theology and Spirituality is extremely important. I wonder, if, as Christians, in seeking justice in urban spaces we may also seek spirituality that grounds us in the recognition that the space we live in is often rapidly changing by interests beyond our control (international developers) and as such, it is in find peace, hope, life in this changing environment that we may also seek justice? – Still working on this goal very intentionally.

Meet our placement students from George Brown College

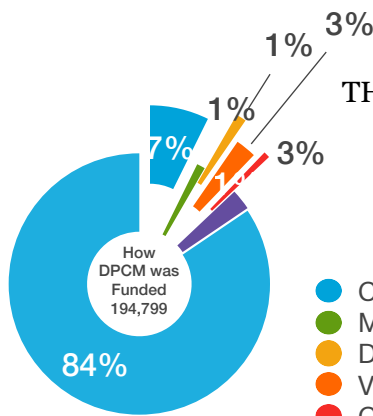
As placement students coming into DPCM during a global pandemic we weren't sure how the experience would unfold, however it was evident that there would be

opportunities for growth and learning. Right from the start DPCM displayed its commitment to fostering community growth and collectivism. Being involved with two main programs that DPCM provides and supports, really created an opportunity for further insight into the diversity and richness of the community and it is evident that fostering meaningful relationships is a key aspect in connecting clients with DPCM. So far, we have had the privilege of working alongside the volunteers that run a meals to go program for the Pelham Park community. This food program is completely tenant run and truly demonstrates the power of community members uplifting one another. From our very first day the volunteers that run the meals to go program welcomed us with open arms, showed us the ropes of the program they are running, and introduced us to community members using their program. Never have we encountered a program run solely by community members and it is evident that the skills, expertise and deep understanding of the community is seen and valued, with DPCM simply supporting any needs indicated by the experts—the community members themselves. The volunteers demonstrate a deep love for their community and a desire to address and dismantle systems of power that are leaving so many residents in their area hungry. One of our biggest takeaways from working at the Pelham meals to go program is that communities are often willing and ready to take action and support one another; however it is society that often creates barriers that prevent this. Regardless, community members show resilience and strength by facing food insecurity in their community head on, displaying their passion and willingness to fight against oppression and marginalization.

Additionally, in the senior's programs the aim is always to empower, and while the program is facilitated by Davenport-Perth Community Centre staff, the focus remains the same—foster meaningful relationships and facilitate a program that is centred around the needs of the clients, which they have indicated for themselves. While there are many challenges that community members are still facing and will continue to face—especially in these unprecedented times—witnessing community members, clients, and staff in action makes us realize that through collective efforts and empowerment social work can be that much more meaningful and impactful for both the service provider and those receiving services. Overall, experiencing all of the amazing programs while having a chance to get to know community members in the hope of creating connections, has made us feel hopeful for a future in social work and hopeful that if we continue approaching our work with the aim of coming together as one, services and supports will continue to make a difference for clients and community members.

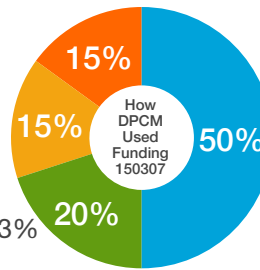


Sura Rogers & Luma Chaves



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- Vision Fund = 2.6%
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- Seeds of Hope = 2.6%
- PTCC = 84.5%



- Pastoral Care
- Community Development
- Advocacy
- Networking



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DPCM 2021 Staff

DPCM thanks its exceptional staff, students, office and volunteer team:
 Dominique Brown, Jahdyah Adams, Kevon Alexander, Luma Chaves, Jeff Dale, Olivia de la Cruz, Henry Lu, Max Phan, Sura Rogers, Whyishnave Suthagar, Ayesha Meher and Tina Conlon.

To Connect: Join our Facebook Group,
 Davenport Perth Community Ministry and
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 Community Hub

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To Donate: On line donations can be made in
 support of DPCM at [Canada Helps](https://canadahelps.org).