



# jacob'sWELL

November 2012



## A Beacon of Hope — *By Dawn Humphreys (Jacob's Well Staff)*

I first got to know Helene about seven or eight years ago when she lived at the Jubilee Rooms, a three-storey boarding house located above the Jacob's Well storefront. She now lives in an apartment in Bridge Women's housing in the DTES with two pet female rats (one of which gave birth to nineteen babies the other day). This summer we sat down to talk about her life, and a recent trip she took.

Helene is a vivacious, boisterous and direct person, as much in words as in dress, and through the years it has been a privilege to know her. Her story is one of great hardship and great joy. The biggest joy in her life by far is that she is now the very proud grandmother of two grandsons whom she loves immensely and sees regularly. They are currently in foster care because her son and their mother are not able to look after them.

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Helene is the youngest of nine children, having lost her brother Herman from an aneurysm a number of years ago. For many years Helene struggled with addiction to alcohol, and then twenty-three years ago she decided to give it all up. It was a hard journey but she was dedicated and committed to the process and decided something must change, so she joined Alcoholics Anonymous. She attends meetings regularly and has done so for twenty-one years. She does



this to remind herself of where she has come from and how God's goodness and mercy have helped her. And she does it to support those who are just beginning on the journey of sobriety, or who need encouragement when things are tough.

This summer she took a trip to Newfoundland, in Eastern Canada where she grew up. She had not been back in twenty-seven years, and had not seen many of her relatives for about the same time. A highlight of her time was seeing her brother, who had been addicted to alcohol when she lived there. He cleaned his act up some twenty-three years ago, just a year earlier than Helene! She told me that her brother kept commenting on how much she - his sister- had changed for the good, and how amazing it was that they were both sober, because of the power of God in their lives and the strength of the communities around them.

As we continued to talk about her trip, she shared a vision she had had a number of years ago that she has clung to through thick and thin. She remembers praying one day, not long after she had become a follower of Jesus and given up alcohol, and seeing a clear vision of Jesus. He was holding the Book of Life in his hands and pointing out her name, etched and written in the pages. She even remembers that it was in the top left hand corner! She recalls being overwhelmed by the sense that God loved and cared for her and had not forgotten her. This image has often comforted her over the years. She joked with me that this vision was the second of two visions that she believes God has given her over time, and that if she gets a third one, she may be destined for saint-hood!

Many of my friends on the DTES share that they struggle to find a sense of purpose, value and belonging, feeling like their lives are "train wrecks". Helene stands as a beacon of hope of what God can do when we are willing to take that leap of faith. Her journey of transformation has been a long, hard road. She still has many struggles and hardships in her life, but she also has immense joy, not least because of her adorable grandsons, but also because she knows what it is to be known and loved by God and others on this journey of life and faith.

## Some rich moments in our community over the past few months.....

"You guys are a stepping stone to my recovery. People like me need people like you."

- A friend, in a very uncharacteristically vulnerable conversation with us around the table.

"This is my very first surprise birthday party... and I'm glad it was thrown by my family. You guys are my family."

- Robyn, when we said "SPEECH!" after giving him his birthday cake.

"I thank you for being my friends even though I put you guys through a lot with my emotions and confusions. I think I found my spirituality. Took a little time but I'm grateful for coming clearer on the path of rejoicement."

- E-mail from another friend in recovery.

"We gathered together after about one and a half hours of creating on our Wednesday afternoon art time. "Freedom" would be the theme for the time, and the jumping-off point for our creativity. I encouraged our group to think about the concept of freedom and to decorate the outside of the box with what freedom meant to them. Talking about our boxes was one of the most significant times of sharing that I had ever experienced. A new woman joined us that day and shared what freedom meant to her as she grew up in Iran and escaped the fear, oppression, and violence of the revolution, finding refuge in Canada. Tears streamed down another participant's face as she shared about God releasing her from the pain and confusion of growing up without parents. Vintage pictures adorned the outside of her box, representing the home God had created for her and the past he had redeemed." - Kat's description of a Wednesday Art Time.

# Transformed Through Friendship

— By Kat Callaghan (former intern at Jacob's Well)

It is very difficult to put into words what you guys and Jacob's Well have meant to me, but this is an attempt. Before coming to Vancouver and Jacob's Well, I took for granted what it meant to have a family. Then coming here, I ended up being very far from my blood family. In these last four plus years, you guys have been like family to me and have reminded me what a gift consistent relationship is. While I've been up here in Canada, hard times pertaining to family and community have crept into my life and I have longed for healing in these areas. But you have shown me what a gift from God each one of you is, and what a gift family truly is. You have redeemed the word "family" and embodied it for me in so many different ways.



During my time at Jacob's Well, we spent time celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, and employment. We played games like Big 2 together. We had long conversations, often interrupted, about God, politics or even candy. We cried with one another. You always accepted me where I was at, whether tired, quiet, excited, or silly. You allowed me to be vulnerable, and you were vulnerable with me and others. We shared tea, coffee, and baked goods around the table. We mourned sickness, death, and loss together. I was privileged to meet your loved ones and get to know your culture. I watched you share your gifts: snacks, washing dishes, painting, cracking jokes, hugs, smiles, books, or event flyers. You have expanded my picture of the goodness, rawness, honesty, forgiveness, and fullness of being together through good and bad. You have asked me how I'm doing and really cared about my response. You have gone to God in prayer on my behalf and on behalf of others. You have been honest with your hurt and anger and allowed me in. We have played music and worshipped God together. We have created art together, expressing ourselves as those valued by God and created in his image. We have gathered in this beautiful place just to be together. Some of these things I did not experience in my own family. I will miss you. I will miss you in this place...but I will pray and pray and pray for you and I will take you with me in my heart as I go to L.A.

Jacob's Well is now on  
Facebook & Twitter!

Please follow us, like us, and spread the word!

You can find us at [www.facebook.com/jacobswellyvr](http://www.facebook.com/jacobswellyvr)

And on [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

(Our handle is @jacobswelldtes)



## The Upside-Down Nature of Change

— By Timothy McLeod (Friday Team)

3 years into my time at Jacob's Well, and I still feel as though my journey is just beginning. One unique characteristic about beginnings is their humble nature; you cannot really know what you are getting yourself into, neither can you know what you are going to bring to the community.

It seems to me that I bring less to the table than I had originally planned. In some ways I have felt like a failure, because I am in my nature greedy and prideful; I tend to prioritize bettering myself instead of others. But our loving gracious God sees me in a different way than I see myself. Though I am broken, he sees me as whole, and in Him I am made whole.

A sermon I heard recently helped highlight an example of how God chooses to use us despite our weakness, and in so doing transforms us from being lost to being saved. 2000 years ago the region of Galilee was looked down upon by the bigger neighboring towns and cities; people saw it as a border town and a wasteland. To be from there, or to live and work there, was not something you would want to bring up when meeting your girlfriend's parents for the first time! Now let's bring down the social status even more by considering the way that society looked at fishermen: they saw them as participants in one of the lowest and dirtiest professions around. What's worse, consider how you would feel to be a fisherman from Galilee who failed at catching any fish!

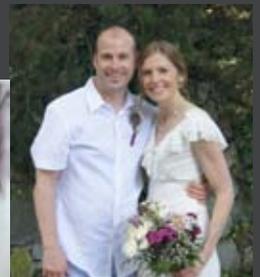
Simon Peter was this very person in the twenty-first chapter of John. Jesus did not look at his list of achievements or his social status to find out if he could be used; he used him the way he was. In so doing He did not remove his humanity, but enhanced it. This is what he wants to do with all of us: enhance our humanity (character/personality) and transform our weakness to his strength.

I would like to have a deeper understanding of the reality that God has called me (and us) to be faithful regardless of our worldly success. The world tells us that success looks like money and power, and the Kingdom says that the last shall be first. They are not the same thing at all. Just like Simon Peter, it is not up to me what this looks like. I bet you that when he was not catching any fish, he did not think that he would end up being a pillar in the most important movement the world has ever known.

It is not up to me how it ends up looking, but I am learning that even in my failures God can transform me and use me to do his will. So I will move forward step by step, surrounded by brothers and sisters on a similar journey, knowing that we can share the truth together, rejoicing in all things, and celebrating God's unconditional love for each one of us.

## Celebrating With Community Members

- We want to celebrate with Amy and Aaron Wilson-Roberts! Their daughter Beatrice Wilson-Roberts was born on June 22 (9.5lbs).
- Mark and Jen Hasiuk (Community Kitchen team) got married on July 28. Congratulations on your new life together!



## A Door of Welcome

— *By Mia McKay (Our Board Chair)*

I have always been fascinated by doors – thin shabby ones, colourfully painted ones, wood and glass, simple and ornate. Often a door gives a glimpse of the keeper. And there is something promising about a door. A door offers the hope of a welcome. In my youth, some people in our neighbourhood left their doors unlocked, even when they weren't home. Our door had a lock and a buzzer because our house had been converted into a small apartment block, but I liked how I could walk in and out of the homes of many of my playmates. This was on 5th Avenue, one block east of Main Street. If you walked in the area now, there would be no unlocked or even open doors, and probably metal gates would be installed to keep homes and businesses 'safe'. When I started visiting Jacob's Well, I liked the idea of reconnecting with streets that were part of my early life – I remember going to a meat shop not far from the Well, and we often took a 7 minute bus ride to Woodward's. Now when I go into the downtown eastside, most buildings have gates and bars to stop up doorways and hide the insides from view. Seeing Jacob's Well with its two big glass doors – and the windows – makes me glad. Even when locked, this door is not a barricade. It says, "Welcome. Look in and see if someone's in

the kitchen. Notice the living room and tables, where we can eat and talk, paint or play cards. We may not be in right now, but come back when we are, because we'll always be glad for a visit." When I do drop in, even if there is no community activity, I feel welcomed. While there, I might hear the doorbell tinkle, and someone pokes his or her head in with a greeting or a question. Often a friend from the community is looking for Beth, Berto, Jane or Dawn, to share the latest news on a search for shelter or a job, about a project or plan, about a fight with a buddy, or a request for prayer. I am surprised at how candid people are, telling how life is in all its vivid colour and difficulty. And our friends don't wait to speak; once eye contact is made, out come the details, delivered by strong or gentle voices, revealing something of the message and the teller. Folks seem to know they're welcome to be who they are, and staff seem glad to share a conversation. It's all part of life, a day at Jacob's Well. Another tinkle of the door bell, and a person has slipped out – hopefully encouraged by the visit. Certainly glad that the door was open.

## A Community Kitchen Martha

— By Hannah Klassen (Community Kitchen team)

I've always been more of a Martha than a Mary. Although I know Jesus praised Mary for sitting and listening at his feet, my tendency is to be task-oriented, like Martha who busied herself to get everyone fed (Luke 10:38-42). Even when trying to change my pragmatic nature, I have tried to do it from my Martha way of seeing the world; I try to *do* things to be more relational, rather than simply *be* in relationship. This is something God has been transforming in me through the community of Jacob's Well.

Last January, my husband Dave and I took on the Community Kitchen leadership role. I am inspired by the vision of CK: to build relationships by sharing cooking tasks and eating together family-style. I understand the purpose of CK is much greater than just the food, yet the responsibility of planning and preparing food every week can often make me feel anxious. However, when my thinking shifts away from myself and onto how I am connected to a community, working together to build relationship over a meal, my anxieties lessen.

I received a blessing one week when Daniel, a friend from the neighbourhood who has trained as a chef, offered to take on the leadership for a meal. We sat together and made a list of ingredients for one of his specialties—stuffed peppers. The following week he directed the team in creating a beautiful meal. I really enjoyed the break from planning. This was an opportunity to relax, to be more like Mary and enjoy the company of others, without the distraction of all the preparations. I think Daniel had fun too.



I'm grateful to those who have stepped in, offering cooking knowledge, stirring a pot, chopping some veggies, allowing me to step back and be relational and to play a round of 'Big Two' with Tony, Ron, and Sang. The community of Jacob's Well has taught me so much about myself, and these have not been easy lessons: my prideful nature, my incessant need to control things, and how my desire to help in actuality can be harmful. I have come to realize that I use my anxiety to make myself feel needed—lies I tell myself to feel important and in control. Through God's work I have begun to let go of some of my Martha-isms, and to receive the joy that comes not from *doing for* others, but from truly *being with* others. I can hear Jesus' invitation to Mary directed at me: "Hannah, Hannah you are worried and distracted by many things, but only one thing is important. Come, be like Mary, rest at my feet and listen."

## I Knew a Man

*A poem by our 96-year-old founder Pauline Fell*

I knew a man who was so poor  
His soul was shriveled from his need

I had so much that I would share  
Not of the fruit but just the seed

There is no cost. It's free I said.  
To him who will prepare a bed  
And nourish it with love for all  
And grace to help the ones that fall.

# Reuniting with Family After Thirty Years

An Interview with Tony Doan — By Dawn Humphreys



Left to Right: Tony's Mom, Tony, his sister and his Aunt.

**Tony, this summer you went on what you consider “the trip of a lifetime”. Tell me how this dream began?**

For many years I have had a longing to go back to Vietnam to see my family. I have not been back to Vietnam for thirty years since I was fifteen years old. I left at that time and became a refugee.

**Tell me a little bit about what has happened in your life in the past thirty years since you left Vietnam?**

When I first left Vietnam I was in a refugee camp in Indonesia for five years. Many times I wished I could go back to Vietnam. Vietnam was hard, but being a refugee was harder, and I was lonely and really missed my family in the early years. After Indonesia, I went to Singapore for a short time before coming to Canada. I moved to Toronto in 1987 and in 1994 I became a Canadian citizen – I am very proud to be Canadian!

**Talk a bit about your time in Toronto and how you have come to be living on the DTES of Vancouver?**

In Toronto I got married but things became very difficult. My wife and I had some struggles, and when things were not going well I began to take drugs along with my wife. I don't know why I ended up doing this, but I think it was because I wanted to escape the pain of my relationship and the hardship of growing up without a family. Then a number of years ago my wife and I moved to Vancouver to try and break from our past and make a fresh start. But our troubles were still with us, and the addiction continued. It was also during this time that we had three children. A few years ago, I finally hit rock bottom and ended up in the hospital with some mental health issues. I lost everything – neither I nor my wife could look after our kids. It was the hardest season of my life. Then I met Jesus.

Just over three years ago, I met some people who believed in Jesus and really had faith that I could become free from addiction. I was desperate to get my life straightened out and have my kids back, so I began a relationship with Jesus, and this was a turning point for me. I started to attend regular meetings with a group called Celebrate Recovery, and, with the help of my doctors, I stopped taking drugs and reduced my medications. It was also around this time that I became involved in Jacob's Well as a volunteer, and then not long after that I also started attending the Strathcona Vineyard Church in the DTES.

**So things really began to change for you?**

Yes, in a big way! God really helped me. My life still has struggles and I have to choose to follow Jesus every day, but some good things began to happen. I began to have access to my family and can now see my kids regularly on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Earlier this year, I was able to move out of the rooming house where I was living, which was comprised of a very small bedroom and a shared washroom and shower with 25 other residents. I moved into my own apartment, where I can cook for myself (and my kids when they visit) and where I can have my friends around. God has been very good to me.



Left to Right: Hwa, Mae Lon, Tony, and Anthony (Tony's Kids)

***So how did going back to Vietnam fit into all this?***

Well, for the past few years I have been praying that there would be some way for me to see my Vietnamese family again, especially as my mom is getting older. I also really wanted to see my sister again and meet her husband and children. So I prayed for a long time, and eventually Dawn saw an opportunity for me to go to Thailand and join the Bangkok Vineyard on a ministry trip to Vietnam. Berto came with me as support for my trip.

***What were some of the challenges and highlights of your trip?***

I was anxious, but everything went amazingly well. I got food poisoning once in Thailand, but after my new Thai friends from the Bangkok Vineyard prayed for me, I got better, and within 24 hours was fully recovered! The highlight of my time was seeing my family and enjoying some good Vietnamese food with them. They wondered why I had not been back in thirty years. I shared honestly about my past troubles with addiction, my hospitalization, and not having much money, but also that God had really changed my life and was continuing to help me every day.



*Tony and his mom.*

***Tony, what is your hope for the future?***

My hope is that I will do well and stay strong as I hold on to Jesus every day. I hope one day to be able to have my kids with me at home all the time. I really love my kids, and I love God with all my heart.

**As you begin to think about Christmas, we thought we might share our  
Jacob's Well Wish List**

***We love visits!***

- \$10 buys a round trip pair of bus tickets to go visit a friend at St. Paul's hospital.
- \$10 buys gas for a trip outside the city to see a friend who has intentionally left the DTES.
- \$15 buys coffee for three at a neighbourhood joint.

***We love food!***

- \$40 lets us take a friend outside the city out for lunch (Whitespot Surrey, anyone?)
- \$50 supplements a Community Kitchen dinner for 45 people (all planned and cooked by our community and neighbours).
- \$150 buys Community kitchen dinner if the food bank didn't have anything helpful for us.

***We love (well sort of) office work!***

- \$100 Tweet this: pay for our website hosting for the year.
- \$500 would buy our CFO Beth a new computer (ahem, Windows 95 is not cutting it).
- \$1000 You a techie? Computer geek? This pays for our phone and internet for the year.

***Other fun stuff!***

- \$25 would cover coffee and some great treats for our weekly Friday coffee time.
- \$50 would restock our art supplies for Wednesday Art time.
- \$600 in twelve \$50 cheques would help us create a more sustainable income base.
- \$1700 would pay the salary of one staff person for the month.



**Recently Joined**

Welcome our new community members, JC, Joanna and Erin (clockwise from left). If you are interested in becoming a community member, please let us know, we'd love to get to know you better and talk about how you could fit into our community!



## About Jacob's Well

Jacob's Well is a faith community located in the downtown eastside of Vancouver, Canada. This neighbourhood has complex difficulties, some of which are extreme poverty (the poorest postal code in Canada), drug addiction (more than five thousand needle users), widespread disease (highest HIV & AIDS infection rate in the western world), and prevalent mental illness (estimated more than 50% of area residents). It's also a neighbourhood full of beautiful, caring people who have much to give.

We have a relational approach to sharing life with residents of our neighbourhood. We seek meaningful friendships where we both give and receive from one another. This guiding principle we have inherited from Pauline Fell, who founded our community in 2001. She is a remarkable ninety-six year-old woman who has spent over thirty years building friendships with countless people in this neighbourhood.

We spend our days visiting people, gardening together, gathering around the table, worshipping, praying and serving. If you would like to know more about our community, we encourage you to visit our website or Facebook page, or give us a call and arrange a visit in person.



**jacob'sWELL**

Visit our website:  
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**Giving:**  
 To make a donation please mail us a cheque or donate online by visiting [canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org).

Visit our website for more information. We are a registered non-profit charity.

### Life in the Margins Workshop

This is a weekend workshop where we explore God's heart for people on the margins of society.

We will examine stories from the Bible and talk about the theological mandate to seek relationship with marginalized people, who bear God's image. While we will speak out of our experience from life in the downtown eastside, we will discuss how these principles apply to all the places where we live and work.

**Next Workshop:**  
 Friday, February 8th, 2013 (7 – 10 pm)  
 Saturday, February 9th, 2013 (10 am – 4 pm)

Cost: \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door.

All participants must pre-register by emailing [workshop@jacobswell.ca](mailto:workshop@jacobswell.ca).

*Please join us!*