



December 2023

Dear Friends,

Hope, peace, joy, and love to you this Advent and Christmas season.

Here at Restorations, it is a busy season as we prepare for holiday festivities with our entire community. We had an in-person dinner with those engaged in our [Peer Advocacy program](#), and another virtual gathering for this community a little closer to Christmas. Since we support survivors who live far and near, our virtual party is always a lot of fun since we send them pajamas and gingerbread houses to decorate during the virtual party. At [Nancy's House](#) we will have a "Sleep Tight" day (you can read more about this tradition from a post I prepared for Faithward that will be published later this month), and our Program Manager and other staff have thoughtfully collected gifts donated by community partners for the residents.



I am so grateful that Restorations was featured in this year's [Gift of Hope catalogue](#). Did you know that \$75 provides a resident at Nancy's House with groceries for a week? With access to specialized programs and services, individualized and holistic care, wrap-around services, and a sense of belonging and community amongst other survivors, Nancy's House provides a safe and supportive space for residents to heal, reclaim, and restore. Providing nourishing food for survivors allows them to focus on other recovery activities. We don't just provide groceries but actively involve residents in going to the store and selecting their food which helps increase their tools and skills for planning healthy meals, making choices, and budgeting their allocated money each week. These are essential skills that we are helping residents develop so that they can flourish when they graduate from Nancy's House and transition into more independent living.

When we first launched our Peer Advocacy program in 2020, we were best situated to provide support and care for adult survivors over 18, but increasingly we have received requests from community members to help them support youth who are experiencing trafficking or at risk of being trafficked. We have recently received a grant from the Canadian Government to expand our Peer Advocacy program to support youth! We hired an additional Peer Advocate last month, and with three Peer Advocates now employed by Restorations, we can officially say that 50 percent of our staff are individuals with lived experience. This is so important to me and to Restorations. One of our values is "Survivor Voice" and in that "we recognize the essential knowledge of survivors as critical to our program and delivery and seek to amplify their voice(s) and encourage them in their right to self-

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determination." I am so honoured to be working alongside colleagues who are passionate about using and transforming their own experiences to support and mentor their peers.

Speaking of Peer Advocacy, you may have noticed a slight shift in our language. As we grow and adapt to better serve a community of survivors, we are excited to announce a shift from "Peer Support" to "Peer Advocacy." Our new name emphasizes the comprehensive nature of our support. While peer "support" is part of our work, "advocacy" speaks both to the individualized mental health, addiction, and wellness care that our Peer Advocates provide as well as highlighting the support focused around the impacts of injustice that each of our participants have experienced in their pasts. This shift might seem small, but it is meaningful to many of the survivors on staff and those they support and speaks to how we approach this work. I am reminded of 1 John 3:17-18, "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." I am so grateful for our Peer Advocates who do the incredible work of coming alongside their peers, providing encouragement, and advocating *with* and *for* them as they navigate systems of support.



Our Thanksgiving feast during Canadian Thanksgiving in October 2023

At Nancy's House, we celebrated some big milestones over the last few months including a birthday, recovery anniversaries, and the halfway mark of a resident who is expected to graduate from our two-year residential program in fall 2024. In our region (and across the country), affordable housing continues to be a real issue, especially for those who are experiencing violence and could benefit from stable and supportive housing as they address challenges in their lives, so we are honoured to be in a position to provide housing for survivors in our community.

2024 is going to be exciting and full of growth! And it wouldn't be possible without the support of individuals and churches across Canada and the United States. I am in the process of seeking additional funds to ensure that my budget is fully funded for 2024. I ask that your congregation prayerfully consider increasing your support to continue the work of serving survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. There are so many

ways to support charities in the important work they do! Check out a blog post I wrote for the Christian Reformed Church in North America's *Do Justice* blog: [My Grown Up Christmas List](#).



Mark and me at a Restorations fundraiser in October 2023.

FAMILY LIFE

Family life has been busy and a little overwhelming with health issues experienced by some extended family members. We continue to pray and hope for the best.

We are a little bit in "hibernation" mode this season, and we are hopeful for some quiet time together this Christmas season while I have a little bit of time off from Restorations.

On behalf of everyone here at Restorations who benefits from your support, encouragement, and prayers, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

PRAYER REQUESTS

- For the residents of Nancy's House, for this time in their lives as they work towards greater independence and achieving their goals.

RCA Global Mission does not receive denominational assessments or covenant shares. We depend on the faithful generosity of churches and individuals.

- For the survivors we support through our Peer Advocacy Program. Journeying alongside individuals means celebrating with them and navigating challenges with them. There is one survivor in particular who is grieving the profound loss of the death of her infant, and we grieve with and for her.
- For our Board of Directors and Jennifer as they lead the organization in developing a strategic plan.

With gratitude,
Jennifer & family