



September 2024

Dear Friends,

I deeply appreciate September! In addition to celebrating our wedding anniversary (15 years on September 25!), there are so many things to love. The milder weather days and the slow shift of seasons reflected in the beauty of autumn plants and the changing leaves. September also feels more like a “new year” to me than January with back-to-school rhythms and routines, and a renewed vigor of programs and activities here at Nancy’s House.

As youth started school again at the beginning of the month, we celebrated the recent accomplishments of a survivor living at Nancy’s House. She has been working over the last couple of years to achieve her high school credits and she finished her last course this summer! We held a celebration to honour her hard work, dedication, and achievements. She is now planning her next steps of professional development and career options, and we can’t wait to see her achieve her next set of goals.



In previous letters, I’ve shared about our Peer Advocacy program which employs survivors of trafficking and exploitation as “Peer Advocates.” Through the program, Peer Advocates use their lived experience to extend hope and help in our community. In recent years, Peer Advocates have provided direct 1-1 and group support to survivors living in our community, facilitating virtual and in-person opportunities for connections and mentoring survivors individually. As a team, I have learned a lot about how to deliver this program sustainably and what it means to be a leader who can support survivor staff well. With the skills and expertise of our current Peer Advocates and reflecting on the toll it takes to lean on their lived experience, we have decided to focus our energy and resources on developing a toolkit to equip and empower caregivers—both professional and personal—to better support survivors. All survivors I have worked with have shared individual stories of hurt and harm as they try to leave a life of exploitation. Counselors and therapists who, in the middle of therapy, seek to be educated about trafficking or become emotionally overwhelmed themselves. Healthcare professionals who lack compassion. Other helpers—in their community and sometimes in their families—make comments that place blame on victims rather than traffickers or exploiters. While we have seen the tremendous value that Peer Advocates have had in the lives of their peers by providing mentorship, we also recognize that the onus

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shouldn't be placed on survivors to help other survivors. We all have a shared responsibility to support people well. Empowering others to feel more equipped to provide support well can have a ripple effect with a wider impact. We are in the process of developing resources that are completely survivor-led. In September, we are hosting a Survivor Forum to bring together survivors to share stories and inform the toolkit. Stories are powerful, and we are grateful for the ways that survivors will trust us with their experiences.

Earlier this year, a church that supports my work with Restorations asked if I would consider filming a sermon for their church. I was very grateful not only for being asked to "visit" their church in this way but for sparking the idea that I could provide a sermon online for any supporting church to access and utilize. I invite you to [check out the video](#). Please let me know if you choose to use it because I would love to send a quick personalized video update for your congregation as well! *(For those who are reading this via printed letter, here is the link: <https://youtu.be/SWUFEXPSdy4>).* The following is an excerpt from the sermon:

In 1 Peter 2:10, we read: "Once you were not a people... Once you had not received mercy." The Contemporary English Version says "Once you were a nobody. At one time no one had mercy on you."

When I sit in these verses alone, apart from the rest of the passage, this feels so isolating. This feels very hopeless. I work with people who know what it means to be cast aside, to feel like they don't belong, to feel that they have not received mercy, to feel that they are on the fringes. In fact, those who are victimized by trafficking don't just experience these feelings while being exploited - many face isolation and exclusion prior to being trafficked, which leaves them that much more vulnerable to the tactics and grooming of traffickers.

But there is hope. We aren't left here with the message that we are cast aside. We are told that we are God's people, and God has treated us with kindness, with mercy. Because we have experienced what it is like to not belong, and then belong in Christ—to not receive mercy, and then to receive mercy from Christ—we are called to use those experiences in extension to others.

Thank you for the ways you have prayed for my mom's health as she continues to fight breast cancer. We enjoyed time together at a cottage, perfectly timed for the week after she concluded her radiation treatments. She is now on an immunotherapy and chemotherapy regimen until early 2025.

Malcolm, who is turning four in November, started school this year (junior kindergarten). Born during the pandemic, he is our very extroverted kid and is really loving school (the first weekend after school started, he shed some tears because he didn't understand that teachers do not teach seven days a week and need a break...). Amy (turning 11 in December) started grade 6 and is still at the same school as Malcolm, which is a relief to me and Mark. She helps him transition to big kid activities like taking the school bus.



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.
- For our Program Manager who is reviewing applications to accept a new resident to Nancy's House.

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- For Peer Advocates, that they feel supported in their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health so they can continue to be beacons of hope in our community.
- For new volunteers to mentor residents at Nancy's House and fill various Board of Directors/committee spots.
- For Jen's mom (Jacqueline) as she continues to cope with cancer treatments.
- For Malcolm and Amy as they continue to adjust to life in junior kindergarten and grade six.
- For Jen and Mark as they celebrate 15 years married!

In partnership serving in mission,

Jen Lucking