

# Making Good Things Together at the Bell Tower Community Café

by Matthew Kreider

Climb the stairs to the Bell Tower Community Café and you will find a large, soulful space where folks like to eat, drink and make good things together.

Bell Tower opened its doors last November after a number of local musicians, businesses and nonprofits decided to partner with an army of volunteers to create a unique and welcoming urban space in the second floor concert hall at Westminster Church (745 Westminster Avenue).

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— REV. DR. GREG GLATZ

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The event, which boasts free food, beverages, and music for all, meets every second Friday night from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

“We’ve made this about people coming together to create an experience,” said Rev. Dr. Greg Glatz, who directs the event alongside coordinator Meaghan Pauls.

That experience of “coming together” allows organizers to offer more than a great night out for friends and

family. Volunteers have teamed up with Winnipeg Harvest to help disrupt hunger by providing food hampers full of fresh produce and packaged goods to hungry people in the West Broadway and Wolseley area.

Some hamper recipients have families with young children. Others are elderly, disabled or among the city’s working poor. Some visitors are transitioning between jobs while others are struggling to pay rent and put food on the table.

This past spring, average attendance has been 150 people per night, which includes approximately 55 food hamper recipients plus their family and friends, 35 volunteers as well as people attending out of general interest. Volunteers sometimes drive people home with the hampers if there are mobility issues.

Glatz, a pastor at Westminster Church, believes one of Bell Tower’s most meaningful successes has been its ability to offer a vital neighbourhood service – without dividing people into categories.

“It’s not a food bank only. We want to avoid that distinction between the helpers and those being helped.”

To help remove any stigmas associated with food banks, visitors to Bell Tower interact in a casual café setting as opposed



*Dawn Beirnes, one of the Bell Tower Community Café’s many attendees (Photo by Nathan Poole).*

to waiting in long lines. Everyone who attends wears a name tag, including volunteers. This sends a message that, at Bell Tower, everyone’s identity matters.

The environment seems to work, according to Glatz. Folks at tables mingle over great coffee and food, while others, even children, often dance together beside the stage.

Local businesses including Stella’s Café and Bakery (116 Sherbrook St.) and

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Tall Grass Prairie (859 Westminster Ave.) add to the menu by providing pastries, cookies and other baked goods. Thom Barga Coffee & Tea (64 Sherbrook St.) regularly donates quality pour-over coffee.

The café offers a diverse and eclectic range of local entertainment. Past performers include Dan Frechette, The B-Side Apostles, and Jelly B and The Kmart Shoppers.

“We are grateful for community sponsors and individual donors who have generously and consistently provided food, drinks, and music free of charge,” said Glatz.

“It’s all about great people coming together to make good things happen.”

*For more information, contact Meaghan Pauls at [meaghanpauls@belltowercommunitycafe.org](mailto:meaghanpauls@belltowercommunitycafe.org) or call 204-250-6768.*