

Ministry Reflection - Xavier House – Corner Brook, NL, Canada
Sister Kay Rex – Looking back from June 2021



Xavier House, Corner Brook, NL

Xavier House, previously Xavier Convent, the home of our Sisters who lived and worked in the Corner Brook area, opened its doors to a new ministry in 1985. It is now a supportive home for women and men suffering from complex mental health issues.

As our NL Provincial Leadership Report of 2020 states: “As part of our ongoing ministry among those made poor, this ministry creates an atmosphere of love, healing, and joy, in which all receive respect, dignity, and professional care.” This is the only ministry of its kind in Newfoundland.

While Xavier House is operated by a Board of Directors, the Presentation Sisters still hold the licence and subsidize the operation for the benefit of the residents. To quote from the Leadership Report of 2020, “We have enlarged the Board with directors of varying and necessary expertise and plan to move from the position of Chair as soon as we plan for our continued sponsorship of this vital ministry which has been close to our hearts for over thirty-five years”.

Over these years, our Sisters worked and volunteered here at the House. It was work like none other as they built on the gifts of each individual resident. Cards, painting, bowling, darts, sing-a-longs, dancing, you name it, all is intended to involve the residents and make them feel good about themselves.



Xavier House "Community" time together



Xavier House Celebration Time

Birthdays, Christmas, and other milestones are celebrated in great style. Some of the newer residents are emotional as they have never had a celebration of their birthdays before, and they break down with tears of joy. As so many of the staff admit, they themselves come in with a smile and leave with cheerful hearts. There is a lovely positive air here at all times. We have our ups and downs, of course, but staying down is not who we are here at Xavier House.



Sister Kay – "Sing me a song!"

While I don't work here, I'm involved with all their major activities and eat with the staff each day. That, too, is something peculiar to Xavier House. They have their own Dining Room and after the residents are served first, they gather for the lunch that is provided for them. Sometimes, that's where the most meaningful conversation takes place.

So why would I share all the above? I'm not part of the staff but live in an apartment close to Xavier House. I mix among staff and residents and experience the above from day to day. Anyone writing up the purpose of Xavier House would probably not include these little touches but that's what makes the House so special and different from other workplaces. Students who come here for their work terms just fall in love with the place and the residents.

When COVID restrictions are not in force, I'm ministering to the sick and elderly at the Long-Term Care Residences and other Seniors' Homes, often leading Sing-a-longs or visiting the sick in their own family homes. Being the choir director and organist at the Cathedral keeps me in touch with the lives and concerns of the choir members and the congregation at large.

When COVID is over, we'll be able to continue with our plans for liturgies for the residents. One of the residents sings with the Adult choir and looks forward to Sunday morning. He has a nice voice and blends in with the other members. He just wandered up to the choir one morning and took his place among the others. Thank God, he can sing in tune and we could welcome him sincerely. So, that is why my Presentation presence at Xavier House here in Corner Brook is so life giving and special!



Xavier House - "Come aside and rest a while"!