

The Gathering Place is Growing

On May 31, 2023 a simple, yet profound event took place in the bare-bone space of the former Mercy Convent in St. John's, Newfoundland. A ceremony was held to announce the transformation of the Mercy convent.

The former Mercy Convent (constructed in 1857 and serving as a convent until 2021) has, over the past months, been stripped to its foundational structure. The renovation work has begun to transform it into a shelter and supportive housing structure that will accommodate 90 persons in need of temporary and transitional housing. It is hoped that the project will be completed by June 2024. Day to day support services will be offered by The Gathering Place.

The Sisters of Mercy and the Presentation Sisters, as well as church parishes in the area, (Roman Catholic, Anglican, United Church of Canada, and Presbyterian) along with other groups concerned about hunger, health, housing and social isolation of a large population in the central area of St. John's joined forces in the early 1990s to envision a centre to serve the population in need of care and services.

The Gathering Place opened in 1994 with basic food provision and social centre located in a vacant school building that had been refreshed for this new purpose. Since that time space and services and those seeking help increased exponentially and continue to do so. Now permanent supportive housing in this renovation project has been added to the services of The Gathering Place.



Left to right: Paul Davis, The Gathering Place, Sr. Diane Smyth, Sisters of Mercy, Patrick O'Callaghan, Paula Boucher, John Abbott, MHA and Joanne Thompson, MP

Further Reading and Viewing

CBC text: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/gathering-place-two-million-dollars-new-housing-1.6860584>

NTV Broadcast: <https://ntv.ca/former-mercy-convent-soon-to-be-converted-into-shelter-for-the-gathering-place/>

VOCM Coverage: <https://vocm.com/2023/05/31/gathering-place-converting-former-mercy-convent-to-expand-operations/>

Mercy Convent: Before and After <https://vimeo.com/780861682/04f8c30f55>