

Deacon David Blair Smith's Vision: Feed the Hungry of Napanee
the chronology of events
from
Full Plate
to
Morningstar Mission

compiled by
Frances L. Goring-Koch
historian, the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Napanee

David Blair Smith became a member of the St. Mary Magdalene family in 1988. Feeling called to the Diaconate, he completed the required courses at Wycliffe College. He was ordained Vocational Deacon at St. George's Cathedral, September 16th, 2001. He became our Deacon at that time, and was quickly being called Deacon Dave as he immersed himself into assisting the incumbent of that era, Rev. David F.D. Smith with worship and pastoral care.

Quoting Deacon Dave: "Many young children in our community regularly go to school on an empty stomach, and as many go to bed hungry. Also, hunger is a prime cause of family strife. It is our responsibility, as Christians, to attempt to alleviate these situations in any way we can." He made a promise to himself, while studying for the Diaconate, that he would launch a Napanee-based initiative designed to do just that.

Consultations with the local Salvation Army, other community churches, and social service agencies indicated a clientele base of 50 to 75 individuals in need. Deacon Dave envisioned a program to bring a weekly hot, nutritious meal (roast beef based) to these individuals. This meal was to be prepared in our church's newly renovated kitchen, our hall being used as the dining area. Saturday from 4:30 pm to 6 pm. was chosen as the time.

Financial donation support for the program was solicited from local businesses and private, church, and service organizations.

The cadre of volunteer support needed was sought out, and quickly developed from within our church family. The opportunity to volunteer was also offered to local youth as a way of completing the 40 hours of community service requirement for earning a high school diploma.

Deacon Dave's "Feed the Hungry" program, which quickly became known as **Full Plate**, was launched late in January 2001. Deacon Dave fondly remembers the anxiety of: "Would anyone show up?" of the first meal. Some did! And the numbers steadily grew as that year progressed. By its end 1500 meals (which of course included feeding the volunteers) had been served.

2002 – The clientele population became 30 to 40 people (some children) per week. Volunteers beyond the church family came on board. There were also youth from the high school getting involved. More community organizations contributed financial support. A refrigerator dedicated to Full Plate appeared in our church kitchen.

2003 – The clientele base had become 40-80 per week, swelling to 100+ on special occasions like Thanksgiving and Christmas. One of those clientele was Richard Morningstar. This quote

of his indicates how well the program was being received: “Mary Magdalene’s Full Plate is just that, a full plate. We get treated to an excellent meal that is very healthy, prepared and served by concerned volunteer staff; we get to socialize with our peers; and we get the benefit of Divine Presence. Having to exist on a provincial pension, the Saturday full plates are a welcome necessity.”

2004 – A real team effort had become essential. One person simply could not handle it all. A committee took over the operating of the program. Leaders of this team were Carol Irons and Nathan McCready. Other members included congregational members: Pam Zatterberg, Tim and Leigh Devine, Dave Thompson, Jim and Joyce Clark. The client group coming to these dinners coalesced to a “family”, feeling safe, helping out, being nurtured. There was a wedding among them. Also baptisms. Some were now attending bible studies. Guidance/counselling/prayer, which was where Deacon Dave was now concentrating his efforts, were working for them.

2005 – Clientelle were numbering about 100, weekly. Twenty “Meals on Wheels” for distribution by the Senior Outreach Services of Napanee were also being prepared. **Mary’s Mission**, a Tuesday lunch program targeting students from the nearby schools was launched. This program served about a dozen, weekly. It had its own cadre of volunteers, led by the retired Rev. Canon Cyril Betts.

2007 – **Full Plate** had, quite simply, outgrown the facilities available at St. Mary Magdalene. Deacon Dave, a member of the Odd Fellows, negotiated a new location for the program, the now vacant Odd Fellows Hall on Water Street. **Morningstar Relief Mission, Inc.** was established by October, the new name memorializing Richard Morningstar, one of the original clients. The move was made, and the program became independent of St. Mary Magdalene’s. We gave some substantial financial support to facilitate this move, including financing electrical upgrades to the building. Our legal obligations now at an end, we continue to provide financial and volunteer support.