

Dear Armour Heights Presbyterian Church congregation,

I want to tell you the story of how my Mom, brother and I ended up staying in North York Women's Shelter this holiday season.

Over the last few months, I'd been really excited to spend the holidays with my friends and family! Being at school and playing with my friends is my favourite thing to do. I would wish I could stay there all day instead of going home where Mommy and Daddy fight all the time. Sometimes, I had to hide in my room or under the bed, so I wouldn't have to hear them...

Last week, Mommy woke me up at night and said we were going away. My brother and I had to put a bunch of clothes in our school bags. We left home and haven't gone back since. Then, we arrived to a place called North York Women's Shelter.

When we came in, there were all these nice people to help us. We were given a private bedroom and bathroom, and my brother let me have the top bunk. Things feel better here! The best part is that we've been able to keep our pet dog in our room – I would have hated to have left him behind.

Nobody is fighting, and I don't feel like hiding any more! There are lots of adults that I can talk to, who are teaching me how to look after myself when I'm feeling scared.

Will you give the Gift of Safety to vulnerable children just like me?

Warm wishes,

Alara, age 4

North York Women's Shelter is an emergency crisis shelter for survivors of gender-based violence, providing temporary housing, transitional housing support, culturally diverse meals, healing workshops and ongoing advocacy during legal and personal proceedings – all in the name of protecting survivors and making sure they have a safe, stable future. We believe everybody should be able to live free from violence.