



**M S C M**  
Montreal Southwest Community Ministries

# THE SOU'WESTER

MONTREAL-SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

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## Season's Greetings

As the holiday season rolls around once more, our thoughts go out to those who are unable to celebrate and we would like to say that **MSCM** supports you in all your efforts to return to your communities.

Our programs are now in their 11th (*Open Door*) and 12th (*MSCM*) years, and we plan to keep going strong throughout 2012.

We attempt to keep you up-to-date on the latest news and interesting articles and hope you will enjoy this fifth edition for 2011. We always encourage and look forward to receiving your feedback.

All the best to you and yours for the Holiday Season and may 2012 be a good year for all!

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### QUEBEC AND ONTARIO

#### REFUSE TO PAY FOR CONSERVATIVES' CRIME BILL

Canada's two largest provinces appear headed for a major showdown with Stephen Harper's Conservatives over the cost and content of new federal crime legislation.

If the federal Conservatives want to pass legislation, they will have to pay for it, said Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty. "It's easy for the federal government to pass new laws dealing with crime," said McGuinty, "but if there are new costs associated with those laws that have to be borne by the taxpayers of Ontario, I expect the feds will pick up that tab."

McGuinty told the Ottawa Citizen he wouldn't be doing his job if his government footed the bill for the multi-million dollar download the crime bill is expected to create. "What is the expectation on the part of Ontario taxpayers?" he asked.

"That expectation is this: I say to the feds—I demand of the feds—if, for example, you want us to build new prisons in Ontario and staff those prisons with highly trained personnel, that's an additional cost to us and it is incumbent upon you, as the creator of those costs, to come up with the money."

Crime rates in Ontario and Quebec are among the lowest in Canada.

McGuinty's comments came hours after an often emotional testimony to the House of Commons justice and human rights committee by Quebec Justice Minister Jean-Marc Fournier, who angrily criticized proposals included in Bill C-10 that call for increased incarceration of young people and accused the government of using stories about high-profile cases to justify re-writing the law.

"Quebec will not pay," said Fournier, who urged the

federal government to "take a time out and consider the best way to protect society" by taking a more collaborative approach with the provinces that will bear the financial brunt.

"We will not pay for it because it is not our responsibility to create more costs for taxpayers," he said. "It is a short-term solution—bringing back people to court again and again, to prison again and again. This is not for us." The federal government is deliberately ignoring experience, studies and statistics claimed Fournier.

"We have 40 years of experience, studies and statistics," he told the committee. "You can have it all. I encourage you all to read them. Changing course after 40 years of involvement of specialist individuals who want to fight against crime is a choice. That is not our choice, so we will not pay for that choice."

*Source: Chris Cobb, Postmedia News*

### PROVINCES MUST PAY, PM SAYS

Prime Minister Stephen Harper says his contentious anti-crime measures aren't "terribly expensive" and provinces such as Ontario and Quebec that complain about having to foot the bill for added costs should accept their "constitutional

responsibilities" keep streets safe. Harper made the comments in an interview broadcast on the debut of Global TV's *The West Block*, a political affairs show hosted by veteran journalist Tom Clark.

"There's constitutional responsibilities of all govern-

ments to enforce laws and protect people," said Harper. "I think the people of Ontario and Quebec expect that their government will work with the federal government to make sure we have safe streets and safe communities."

**The government touts the “waste” of the gun registry but is prepared to spend untold amounts on its crime bill.**

*Irwin Cotler is the member of Parliament for Mount Royal and the Liberal critic for justice and human rights.*

*He is a professor of law (emeritus) at McGill University and the former minister of justice and attorney general of Canada.*

*This article appeared in the “Opinion” section of The Montreal Gazette.*

*This recently appeared in the Letters to The Editor section of The Montreal Gazette submitted by: Michael Ashby Director National Pardon Centre Montreal*

**AN INCOHERENT APPROACH TO JUSTICE**

If there’s one thing from which the federal Conservatives’ crime and justice agenda could benefit, it’s consistency. When taken together, the omnibus crime bill and the bill to abolish the long-gun registry, paint the perfect illustration of incoherence.

With the crime bill, the government cites the support of police associations, and asks opposition MPs to heed their words. But the government is silent when it comes to the many police organizations opposed to dismantling the gun registry.

Similarly, the government advances its crime bill by stressing the importance of protecting victims; victims’ support groups have come out en masse in support of maintaining the gun registry and the information contained therein.

The government that touts the ‘waste’ of the gun registry is the same government prepared to spend still-untold amounts on its crime bill while eliminating the information contained in the gun registry, a tremendous and seemingly spiteful waste of public investment.

And whereas provinces will bear the ultimate cost of implementing the crime bill—though Quebec and Ontario has said publicly that they will not pay—provinces like Quebec that wish to create their own gun registries will be denied access to existing records that the Conservatives desire to destroy.

If there is one common feature of these bills, it’s the ignoring, marginalizing and mischaracterizing of the evidence. The government holds out the crime bill as a purported means of crime reduction, yet studies show that the resulting prison overcrowding and use of mandatory-minimum sentences will ultimately result in more crime. Similarly, whereas the Conservatives denounce the long-gun registry as an ‘ineffective waste’, studies demonstrate that it has had a tremendous positive impact, particularly in the areas of conjugal violent and suicide reduction.

Quebec’s Justice Minister, Jean-Marc Fournier spoke passionately before Parliament’s Justice Committee of the need for amendments to the crime bill, in particular in the matter of youth justice. Quebec has had 40 years of experience using its unique approach, and the

province is considered a model for jurisdictions around the world when it comes to young offenders. Why the feds would ignore Quebec’s contribution and experience in favour of an untested (but predicted by experts to be ineffective) approach is simply baffling.

Similarly, the government’s claim of an electoral mandate to pass these two initiatives is hard to follow. Simply put, the destruction of the long-gun registry records was never mentioned in the election campaign. How can the government claim a mandate to do this? With regards to the crime bill, there are sections of it that are completely new—having never been introduced in Parliament previously nor mentioned in any electoral or pre-electoral discussions. Where is the mandate for the adoption of these provisions? Further, while it is a separate question entirely, one must wonder how the government can consider that it has any sort of mandate from Quebec., in light of the last election.

A government ignoring evidence contrary to its position is not surprising. But with lives hanging in the balance, one would hope for at least a semi-balance of a coherent and consistent approach.

**SEX OFFENDERS AND SCHOOLS**

Hysteria over pedophiles working in schools is understandable but an over-reaction. If we are really concerned about safety, it would make more sense to worry about our own bad driving habits when dropping off our little ones at school. This is not to say that we shouldn’t be concerned, but we should not succumb to fear mongering that would eliminate pardons for anyone convicted of an offence involving a child. Although a learning environment is not appropriate employment for these people, eliminating the chance of finding decent work is an equally bad idea.

The sensible compromise is to leave things as they stand. Pardons should be available for anyone able to complete his/her sentence, with a flag appearing in a separate database for sex offenders. As for the safety of our children, forcing schools to perform a background check that would reveal such a flag is just common sense. Unfortunately, the new crime bill, for all its rhetoric about victims and safety, does nothing of this sort that would prevent victimization in the first place.

## IN PERSON PROFILE

*The Sou'Wester was pleased to sit down with Rebecca (Becca as she is better known) who has been a volunteer for MSCM since 2008. Becca also sits on the Open Door sub-committee.*

*Q. How did you get started with MSCM and subsequently with Open Door ?*

*A.* I was at the McGill University volunteer fair in September of my first year (2008) and I saw a woman sitting at a table by herself. She was all alone so I wandered over and ended up meeting Fiona (former Volunteer Coordinator for MSCM). I don't remember exactly what she told me about MSCM but something stuck. The following Tuesday I came to **Open Door** and found myself sitting next to Barry and Bobby watching, I believe, Discovery Channel's "Planet Earth."

*Q. How did you find yourself at McGill University and what are you currently studying?*

*A.* While looking at different universities across the United States, I swore that I would never go to school in a cold city.

I looked at probably three schools in the southern U.S. before realizing that if I went anywhere remotely warm, I would never go to class.

Someone recommended looking at McGill and so I applied and was accepted. Without knowing much about the city or school for that matter (if you asked me where McGill was located in August 2008, the summer before my first year, I would have said Quebec or Montreal without knowing the difference between the two), I decided that I would brave the cold in order to gain a cultural experience on top of an academic experience. So, I bought a winter jacket and snow boots and came to Montreal to study sociology.

*Q. From a volunteer's perspective, what do you see for the future of Open Door?*

*A.* I see that **Open Door** has really increased its presence in the community as evidenced by the large growth in the number of volunteers over the years. But, more has to be done to maintain contact with guys who used to attend on a regular basis. Their continued presence would not only serve

as a strong reminder of where **Open Door** began, but also where we could be in the future.

*Q. What changes or successes have you seen for either yourself or others attending Open Door?*

*A.* I think the growth of the program for university students has been a key change in the dynamics of **Open Door**. When I first came, I think I was one of only a few university students coming on a regular basis. The fact that now at least six or seven are guaranteed to come every week (except maybe during midterms or finals) is promising for the future and continuity of **Open Door** and prison justice and reform on the whole.

*Q. Any last word you would like to pass on to potential volunteers?*

*A.* To university student volunteers: Ask the guys for job ideas, paper topics and answers to life questions—I always seem to get the right answers.



## NOMINATIONS ARE NOW OPEN !

Nominations are now open for the Rev. Canon Peter Huish **Award of Merit** for 2011. This Award was established in 2009 to honour MSCM's founder Peter Huish. Any member of MSCM may nominate one member of the MSCM family who they feel deserves the **Award of Merit** for their volunteer contributions, displaying the passion and compassion to the principles that MSCM is based on throughout 2011. Nomination forms may be attained from Paula. Deadline for receipt of nominations is November 22, 2011 and the Award will be presented at the Annual **Open Door** Christmas Party (December 13, 2011).

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK

*“Restorative Justice requires, at minimum, that we address victims’ harms and needs, hold offenders accountable to put right those harms, and involve victims, offenders, and communities in this process.”*

Howard Zehr

*Howard Zehr has been called the grandfather of restorative justice. He directed the first victim offender conferencing program in the U.S. and is one of the developers of restorative justice as a concept.*

*Dr. Zehr is co-director of the graduate Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, Virginia). From this base he also teaches and practices in the field of restorative justice. Zehr received his M.A. from the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. from Rutgers University.*

Restorative Justice Week, initiated by the Correctional Service Canada (CSC), has been celebrated annually across Canada since 1996. Restorative Justice Week is recognized every third week of November to acknowledge the impacts and achievements of the restorative justice approach and its application in the traditional criminal justice system.

RJ Week is also a time to celebrate all practitioners involved through community organizations (such as

*MSCM*) and the Canadian criminal justice system, as well as the many Canadians who are becoming increasingly invested in restorative justice.

The annual symposiums raise public, government and justice sector awareness about the use of restorative approaches in addressing crime and conflict. This includes exploring how RJ is being used in corrections and the criminal justice system in order to assist with the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and help meet the needs of victims.

- The symposiums aim to:
- ◆ Increase awareness of RJ programs and initiatives across Canada.
  - ◆ Share resources and knowledge
  - ◆ Discuss emerging issues in RJ and new developments in the RJ field.
  - ◆ Increase government-community collaboration
  - ◆ Create opportunities for networking and partnerships between practitioners, academics, researchers, organizations and government.

*Source: CSC Restorative Justice Division.*

## RESTORATIVE PRINCIPLES\*

### TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS

#### *Criminal Justice*

- ◆ Crime is a violation of the law and the state.
- ◆ Violations create guilt.
- ◆ Justice requires the state to determine blame (guilt) and impose pain (punishment).
- ◆ **Central focus:** *offenders getting what they deserve.*

#### *Restorative Justice*

- ◆ Crime is a violation of people and relationships.
- ◆ Violations create obligations.
- ◆ Justice involves victims, offenders, and community members in an effort to put things right.
- ◆ **Central focus:** *victim needs and offender responsibility for repairing harm.*

### THREE DIFFERENT QUESTIONS

#### *Criminal Justice*

- ◆ What laws have been broken?
- ◆ Who did it?
- ◆ What do they deserve?

#### *Restorative Justice*

- ◆ Who has been hurt?
- ◆ What are their needs?
- ◆ Whose obligations are these?

**\*Source:** *The Little Book of Restorative Justice.* Howard Zehr. Copyright 2002 by Good Books, Intercourse, PA 17534. International Standard Book Number 1-56148-376-1.

## THE OPEN DOOR EXPERIENCE

When I first heard about restorative justice, it had been described as an offender/victim face-to-face. In a sense, an opportunity to make amends. Not having participated in such an event myself, I've been nevertheless able to see the rewards it brought to those offenders I know who have. First in the development of empathy and then (also related to empathy) a discernible growth in the will and determination not to re-offend. I have also been witness, albeit only on film, to the benefits drawn by the victims: a lesser sense of being labeled "victim"; grief recovery; greater closure than the only fact that the offender is behind bars; and even empathy towards the offender. The positive results are certainly to be sought—but participating in this type of face-to-face is not readily available to all (offenders and victims alike)—the reasons are many, let's call it "red tape". I wish to speak of another form of restorative justice, one available to all, and which I believe to be equally (if not more) beneficial to society long term: the *Open Door* experience.

*MSCM's* (Montreal-Southwest Community Ministries) *Open Door* project, now in its tenth year, provides an opportunity for all offenders to reconnect with society. Organized by *MSCM* and its volunteers, the weekly meetings welcome all to participate and express themselves freely in a friendly environment based on equity and respect. Participants include volunteers, members of *MSCM*, community members, ex-offenders, and inmates through escorted outings from prisons. The latter is how I got my first experience with *Open Door*.

Activities vary from guest speakers to interactive discussions and games. Personal topics and/or accounts are also presented by the participants (including inmates). On occasion, through *MSCM's* implication with community building: community building workshops are organized—I have been blessed to participate in two such workshops. The inclusive and accepting nature instills (especially for those, like me, who have spent many years in jail) a deeply needed sense of

belonging as well as a feeling of responsibility and accountability for the criminal acts we have committed.

As a long-term offender, I have come to understand that there are many victims to every crime: there is the obvious direct victim of a criminal act; the family and friends of the victim; the family and friends of the offender also find themselves victimized as one of their own is taken away; the last victim, but not the least, is community, society as a whole—not only from the enormous cost of crime, but from the intrinsic fear that criminality casts over every member of society.

*Open Door's* restorative justice model lies not in the sledgehammer effect of the offender/victim face-to-face, but rather in the slow drilling effect of repetitive exposure to community in a safe, helpful and loving atmosphere.

He who has the necessary resolve to involve himself fully in the *Open Door* process will quickly find himself reconnecting with community at a very deep and meaningful level. A level that unequivocally creates empathy. A level in which one ceases to view society as a huge uncaring machine but rather as a group of individual good-hearted human beings (of which the ex-offender is an equal partner) who deserve love, respect, and security. This change of attitude towards society inevitably improves self-esteem and elevates one's desire, willingness, and dedication to remain law-abiding—more so than the dread of returning to prison. It also encourages us to continue our involvement with *Open Door* as a means to retain and strengthen our new found values. The positive ramifications are such that many remain participants after being released from prison. I am but one of them.

Through *MSCM's Open Door* project, I have met the most kind-hearted, unselfish, peace-loving, friendly people I have ever come across in my life. People whose mere proximity blankets us with a sense of security, a feeling of well-being, and an aura of serenity. The spiritual profit one gathers from the *Open Door* experience is commensurate and, once acquired—unbreakable. It inspires us to endlessly cultivate the goodness we are capable of so that we too will naturally exude our good-nature into the lives of all those we meet in our everyday travels. And that is where the long-term restorative justice potential of *Open Door* can be found: alleviating every day some of the fear we have caused society.

Roger Letourneau

***"Crime is a community affair."***

Pierre Allard,  
Former Assistant Commissioner  
Community Engagement  
Correctional Services Canada



**MSCM**  
Montreal Southwest Community Ministries

*If we did all the things we are capable of, we would literally astound ourselves...*

*Thomas A. Edison*

Donations of time and service are also welcome. We are especially looking for volunteers who would be interested in escorting.

Please contact our offices either by phone or email: (514)244-6147

Please mail your cheques to:

**MSCM**  
1439 St. Catherine St. West  
Montreal, QC  
H3G 1S6

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Open Door Christmas Party

You are cordially invited to attend our 2011 **Open Door** Christmas Party!

**Where:** St. James the Apostle Church  
1439 St. Catherine St. West  
(metro Guy-Concordia)

**When:** December 13, 2011  
6:30 p.m.—9:30 p.m.

Come join the festivities—word has it the old geezer in the red suit may be dropping by!

**Note:**

This will be a potluck dinner and any contributions would be greatly appreciated. Food and drink can be dropped off at the Church anytime after 2 p.m., and left with Charlie or Chris.

### Open Door Schedule

Please note that there will be **no Open Door** gathering on Tuesday, December 27, 2011 due to the Holiday Season.

### Community Building Workshop

A third Community Building Workshop is scheduled for the weekend of March 9-11, 2012. If you would like to participate and are able to commit to this weekend workshop, please contact either Margaret or Peter.

### CoSA-Project Division Appointment

**MSCM's CoSA-Project Division** is pleased to announce the appointment of Teng-teng Gai as the new Project Associate.

Teng is currently attending Concordia with aspirations of becoming a lawyer, fitting nicely with **MSCM's** programs. Welcome aboard!

## PLEASE SUPPORT MSCM

**MSCM** is a volunteer organization welcoming ex-offenders back to the community by supporting them in their social, spiritual, social, emotional and practical needs. We foster restoration and accountability and attend to the needs of all those affected by crime.

**MSCM** has relied upon support from the Community Chaplaincy of Montreal (Aumônerie de Communautaire de Montréal) and individual donors like you. The stigma associated with offenders brings financial and other challenges with it. Your contribution helps.

**I support *MSCM* and their programs and am enclosing a donation of:**

- \$25
- \$50
- \$100
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Cheques less than \$50 should be made payable to **MSCM**.*

*Cheques greater than \$50 should be made payable to:*

**Anglican Diocese of Montreal, memo: MSCM.**

*Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$50 or greater.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E:mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM THE ARCHIVES: THE GAZETTE OF DECEMBER 20, 1968.**

**THERE WASN'T A DRY EYE IN THE PEN**

The big sign over the 12-piece band read, "L'esprit anime tout. Spirit is everything." Nobody paid much attention to the band. They played Jingle bells and Santa Claus is Coming to Town and I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus. But no one was really listening.

Here was this inmate tooting a toy flute and pushing a tricycle. And when he thought no one was looking, he started to cry when he noticed a little girl who had been trying to ride the bike.

An older inmate was saying, "Most of the men give but some of them don't turn up for the party. They can't. They have kids of their own and this breaks their heart."

The kids at the Leclerc Institution at St. Vincent de Paul Penitentiary yesterday were somebody else's kids. There were 30 of them, all orphans.

And Santa Claus, selected by the inmate committee, had presents for each of them.

The inmates paid for those gifts, \$600 worth. Each inmate earns 35 to 65 cents a day maximum depending on his behavior

and the quality of his work. And out of this money they donated sums from 25 cents to \$25 each for the orphans' party.

A five-man committee had been working out the details since September. The committee was made up of volunteers. Five were needed but eight inmates had decided by vote on the final membership.

The volunteer in charge of buying the gifts did his Christmas shopping accompanied by a guard.

And yesterday, Santa Claus went into town with a guard via a Mont St-Louis bus to pick up the 30 orphans, the nuns and social workers.

The sweat was streaking his makeup when he shepherded the children into the Salle des Fonctionnaires. There was a Christmas tree and a giant panda. Every child made a beeline for it.

But the big moment came when the whole party moved into the institution's gymnasium.

Hundreds of men, a grey mass, sat in the bleachers. Below them were 30 more inmates who had volunteered to serve as sponsors. They sat in a special section near Santa

and the other Christmas tree with the children, the nuns and the social workers.

Yesterday was the seventh party of its kind at St. Vincent. As far back as 1959, someone got the idea the inmates should support children through the Foster Parents plan. They 'adopted' two. That went on until 1962 when there was a riot at the pen.

The officials banned the project but there was money left to keep financing the two children for two more years.

In the meantime, the idea of a Christmas party for orphans came up. A long-term offender approached penitentiary officials with the project. The authorities said go ahead. But they also said the men wouldn't raise \$20. The first year they picked up \$300. Since then, the amount has increased each year.

Receipts have been so good in fact, that in addition to the toys and drinks and sandwiches they have each year for the children, they've also managed to give the orphanage things like a television set and a record-player.



**WHAT IS CHRISTMAS?**

*It is the tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future. It is a fervent wish that every cup may overflow with blessings rich and eternal, and that every path may lead to peace.*

*It is the personal thoughtfulness, the warm human awareness, the reaching out of the self to one's fellow man that makes giving worthy of the Christmas spirit.*



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## THE SONG OF THE SOUL

When a woman in a certain African tribe knows she is pregnant, she goes out into the wilderness with a few friends and together they pray and meditate until they hear the song of the child. They recognize that every soul has its own vibration that expresses its unique flavor and purpose. When the women attune to the song, they sing it out loud. Then they return to the tribe and teach it to everyone else.

When the child is born, the community gathers and sings the child's song, to him or her. Later, when the child enters education, the village gathers and chants the child's song. When the child passes through the initiation to adulthood, the people again come together and sing. At the time of marriage, the person hears his or her song.

Finally, when the soul is about to pass from this world, the family and friends gather at the person's bed, just as they did at their birth, and they sing the person to the next life.

In the African tribe there is one other occasion upon which the villagers sing to the child. If at any time during his or her life, the person commits a crime or aberrant social act, the individual is called to the centre of the village and the people in the community form a circle around them. Then they sing their song to them. The tribe recognizes that the correction for antisocial behavior is not punishment; it is love and the remembrance of identity. When you recognize your own song, you have no desire or need to do anything that would hurt another.

A friend is someone who knows *our* song and sings it to *us* when *we* have forgotten it. Those who love *us* are not fooled by mistakes *we* have made or dark images *we* hold about *ourselves*. They remember *our* beauty when *we* feel ugly; our wholeness when *we* are broken; our innocence when *we* feel guilty; and our purpose when *we* are confused.

## THE LAST LAUGH

*Grandma is eighty-eight years old and still drives her own car. She writes:*

Dear Grand-daughter,

The other day I went up to our local Christian book store and saw a "honk if you love Jesus" bumper sticker. I was feeling particularly sassy that day because I had just come from a thrilling choir performance, followed by a thunderous prayer meeting. So, I bought the sticker and put it on my bumper. Boy, am I glad I did; what an uplifting experience that followed. I was stopped at a red light at a busy intersection, just lost in thought about the Lord and how good he is, and I didn't notice that the light had changed. It is a good thing someone else loves Jesus because if he hadn't honked, I'd never have noticed. I found that lots of people love Jesus! While I was sitting there, the guy behind started honking like crazy, and then he leaned out of his window and screamed, "For the love of God! Go! Go! Go! Jesus Christ, Go!" What an exuberant cheerleader he was for Jesus!

Everyone started honking! I just leaned out my window and started waving and smiling at all those loving people. I even honked my horn a few times to share in the love! There must have been a man from Florida back there because I heard him yelling something about a sunny beach. I saw another guy waving in a funny way with only his middle finger stuck up in the air. I asked my young teenage grandson in the back seat what that meant. He said it was probably a Hawaiian good luck sign or something. Well, I have never met anyone from Hawaii, so I leaned out the window and gave him the good luck sign right back. My grandson burst out laughing. Why even he was enjoying this religious experience!

A couple of people were so caught up in the joy of the moment that they got out of their cars and started walking towards me. I bet they wanted to pray or ask what church I attended, but this is when I noticed the light had changed. So, grinning, I waved at all my brothers and sisters, and drove on through the intersection.

I noticed that I was the only car that got through the intersection before the light changed again and felt kind of sad that I had to leave them after all the love we had shared. So I slowed the car down, leaned out the window and gave them all the Hawaiian good luck sign one last time as I drove away. Praise the Lord for such wonderful folks!

Will write again soon, Love Grandma