

Anglican Dialogue
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Street Minister Shares Difficult Journey

by Audrey Kilpatrick

Paul Baetz is a handsome, broad-shouldered young man with an engaging smile. He played football for years and ended up with surgery to repair a knee.

The surgery went well, but a complication following it left him with a speech impairment. He was angry and frustrated. Eventually he came to realize God was teaching him something from his struggles.

Paul told his story to the churches of the Good Shepherd and the Redeemer in Kingston last May. A friend of the churches' rector, Greg Long, since they were students at Wycliffe College, Paul explained the journey that led him to street ministry.

Once he understood that God was teaching him something, he said, he realized he was experiencing spiritual healing. From pain comes peace. We have to learn how to cry, he explained, before Christ can wipe away our tears.

At first he was fed up with people who responded awkwardly to his speech problem, or who questioned him about it. But then he began to understand the difference between pity and compassion.

Pity happens when people don't want to get too close to you because they are trying to deal with their own fears, he said. Compassion happens when you beckon someone to come closer, and they do.

He said it is easy to feel sorry for ourselves – to pray and then go on with our lives without believing we have received anything.

Paul ministers from a "street church called Sanctuary in one of the most dangerous, crime-ridden areas of Toronto. He raises the money for his own job, supported only by free-will offerings. He asked the congregation to pray for those who find their way to Sanctuary.

If you would like to encourage Paul in his work or to support his mission, he can be reached at: paulb@sanctuaryministries.on.ca.