



Summer 2015

The LIGHTHOUSE

Helping People | Changing Lives

1008 Bathurst Street • Toronto • ON M5R 3G7

416-535-6262

An Unlikely Journey

Tiffany Kwok

Orphaned at the age of 15 during the Cambodian Civil War, Louis* and his four younger siblings journeyed on foot from Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, to Vietnam, despite the unsettled political conditions there. On June 1st, 1975, Louis and his siblings crossed over the border into Vietnam as refugees.

I met with Louis at The Lighthouse on May 11th 2015, while the Monday morning food bank preparations and Vietnamese women's group bustled in the background. Louis laughed and commented, "Wow, The Lighthouse has changed a lot since I've been here." Louis was one of the many Indochinese refugees who came to Canada under church-sponsorship, and he received assistance from The Lighthouse.

"We didn't even know that our parents were dead. It was our neighbour who told us and urged us to go to Vietnam to save ourselves. When we recognized the clothing on the [dead] bodies as the same ones that our parents [wore] earlier that day, it became obvious to us that our parents were gone, so we just got up and followed our neighbour. We walked for a long time before arriving in Vietnam." From June 1975 to 1981, Louis and his siblings

lived in Saigon. In 1981, refugees in Saigon were concentrated into camps. Louis and his family entered Camp 979B in Tien Giang province, and then were transferred in 1983 to Camp 979A in Songbe province, where they stayed until June 1, 1992.

To survive in the camps with their limited resources, Louis taught English to fellow refugees and sold miscellaneous goods to earn some income. Life in the camps was extremely difficult. "As a refugee, you don't belong anywhere, you have no rights, and you have nothing. It was a hopeless situation." One day in 1984, Louis heard from a friend in the United States about The Lighthouse and its work with refugees. "I figured I had no hope and nothing to lose, so I wrote a letter to The Lighthouse asking for help."

"I really did not expect a reply. So when I received a letter from Dirk Jongkind (former Executive Director of The Lighthouse) encouraging me and promising to help, I was so shocked and overjoyed that someone cared and wanted to help me from all the way on the other side of the world." The Lighthouse connected Louis and his



sister with a sponsoring church and provided them with resources to assist in their immigration and transition.

Despite receiving reassurance and support from The Lighthouse, Louis was still nervous that he would not be approved as a refugee in Canada. The application process was arduous and cumbersome, there being many legal and financial obstacles to overcome in order to leave the refugee camp. For Louis and his sister, this process would take 8 long years. managed to secure our sponsorship to Canada."

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*Names have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals.

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“In order to leave the refugee camp and Vietnam, we had to apply for an exit visa. This cost \$120 per person. I had to save for half the year before I had enough money for just one person.” Finally, on June 2nd, 1992, Louis arrived in Canada with one bag of belongings and \$5 in his pocket. With the help of The Lighthouse, Louis was able to find housing and a steady job at a supermarket. He also began to attend night school classes at George Brown College. “The Lighthouse helped me so much; [it] provided me with a bus pass, food and clothes. Back in the day, Rita used to keep clothing donations in the basement, and she would always have a package for me.”

While settling in Toronto, Louis resided at 1010 Bathurst Street right next door to The Lighthouse. He joined All Nations Christian Fellowship, a congregation led by Pastor Pat which regularly met at The Lighthouse to connect, support and pray for fellow refugees. It was during these meetings that Louis encountered a God who truly understands suffering, and a Saviour who suffered for his sake. He was able to see that, in the midst of his helplessness and despair, God was actively guiding him and many others, using The Lighthouse and All Nations Christian Fellowship, to the light and grace of Jesus Christ.

Today, Louis is married to a fellow refugee from a Saigon refugee camp, and is a proud father of two wonderful teenagers. With his education, Louis was able to find secure employment in the field of aircraft manufacturing. He continues to support refugees from UNHCR** camps in Vietnam. “I could not imagine a life like this when I first entered the refugee camp; and without the intense support from The Lighthouse and the church sponsorship I received, I would not be where I am today.”

** The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, is the world’s leading organization aiding and protecting people forced to flee their homes due to violence, conflict and persecution. UNHCR provides shelter, food, water, medical care and other life-saving assistance to refugees around the world.

Power of the Word

Tiffany Kwok

Originally from Peru, Lacey’s* mother was connected to The Lighthouse through the Bloor Information and Life Skills Centre, which used to be (about 20 years ago) located next door at 1006 Bathurst Street. Speaking to Lacey over the phone, it was clear that Lacey retains a deep fondness for The Lighthouse. “My mom and I were at The Lighthouse at least two to three times a week. From volunteering at the food bank to cooking and cleaning for the different Hispanic programs, The Lighthouse was our second home.” She laughed, “I remember bringing my boyfriend at the time to help, so we could spend more time together.”

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Correction: In our Winter 2015 newsletter, we misspelled Michael’s last name. The correct spelling is Wybenga. The Lighthouse regrets the error.

For more information on fundraising initiative with The Lighthouse, email info@lighthousecentre.ca or call 416-535-6262.

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We Believe Riding Our Bikes (or Walking) Can Change The World



On October 3, 2015, The Lighthouse is participating in the annual Ride for Refuge bike-a-thon and new this year is a 5

KM walk for those who like to walk. This event will take place at different locations in Canada. You can participate by riding for The Lighthouse at a location near you and the money you raise from your sponsors will go to its ministries. This is great opportunity to enjoy a morning of riding with your friends and raise money for a great cause The Lighthouse. For more information contact Rob at rob@lighthousecentre.ca. Check out www.rideforrefuge.org to register.



Meet This Year's Summer Students!

Misa Chihara



Zoe Russell



To find out more about this year's summer students go to our website at lighthousecentre.ca

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One of her most treasured memories of The Lighthouse was attending the Sunday afternoon Bible study organized by Samia Saad (Hispanic Counsellor and Program Coordinator) with her mother. "I was 16 at the time, and my mom and I would attend this Bible study every Sunday afternoon for over two years. It was at this Bible study that I heard God's Word for the very first time." As a mother of two young daughters, Lacey was recently asked by her children how she heard about the Word of God. "I knew right then I had to bring them to The Lighthouse and let them see for themselves the special place where I had been introduced to God's Word. Samia's Bible study planted the seed for my personal encounter with God years later."

Today, Lacey and her husband currently serve at their church as Awana Club youth leaders, teaching and mentoring middle school aged children in studying the Word of God.

Upcoming Events

October 3rd - Ride for Refuge

November 7th - Annual Dinner & Silent Auction

November 28th - Benefit Concert in Woodstock

From the Desk of Rob

During the past year and a half, I participated on a Refugee Justice Task Force for the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue, along with Samia Saad (LH staff) and Jeanette Romkema (LH Board Chair) and others. On this Task Force, we worked on developing tools and resources to aid individual Christians and churches in understanding how to welcome, support, advocate and befriend refugees in Canada.



The Task Force produced a 90-minute interactive workshop called "Journey with Me: Refugee Stories that Change Lives". Our hope is that this workshop will help you and your communities work with and for our refugee neighbours for justice.

We also produced a refugee justice toolkit including: children's books, movies, sermons, prayers, articles, adult books and other workshops. There is variety of resources for church groups, Bible study groups, young people groups, children's Sunday school classes, your Sunday church service and other interested groups.

While The Lighthouse has a long history of working with and for refugees and immigrants in Canada, we all have much more to learn. Join us in continuing our learning journey and challenging those around us to see the importance of this work. Refugees are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we need to work harder to show this in our day-to-day decisions and conversations.

Go to the "Journey with Me" toolkit www.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_toolkit.cfm and select one resource for a group you are involved in. Contact me with your questions, ideas, and concerns rob@lighthousecentre.ca. Donate to The Lighthouse to help continue our ministry in the GTA and beyond. Together, we can make a difference!

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Helping People Changing Lives

Thank you for being partners with us in this ministry.



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- PAR PreAuthorized Remittance
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The Lighthouse
1008 Bathurst Street
Toronto, ON M5R 3G7

Receipts will be issued in the New Year.
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