For 119 years, Fred Victor has been a road home for people living in poverty. It has paved the way for thousands of individuals to make changes in their lives. Fred Victor has done this by meeting basic human needs for food, shelter and connection with others, and by engaging social change networks toward a common cause — a more equitable society. Today, we offer employment and training services, permanent affordable housing, housing access support services, emergency shelter, health services and community programs.

You can trace Fred Victor’s early beginnings to 1886. A pragmatic and visionary woman named Mary Sheffield began the first work of what became Fred Victor. She started a Sunday school for "rough and neglected" boys.

In 1894, manufacturer and financier Hart Massey, a member of Metropolitan Methodist Church, built a beautiful, new building at the corner of Queen and Jarvis Streets in downtown Toronto to house the mission. He named it after his youngest son, Fred Victor, who died in his early twenties.

During the 1930s up to the early 1960s, Fred Victor Mission was known for its “Mission of the Air” — a church service radio broadcast with Reverend Wesley Hunnisett at the helm. During that time, the Mission was also a shelter for homeless men where they could get a meal and a bed for the night.

In the late 1960s, the new superintendent of the Mission, Keith Whitney, launched a transitional housing project, the Short Term Community, which provided the stability and privacy that men needed to find employment, get medical attention and overcome their addictions.

During the 1980s, Fred Victor co-operated with other downtown anti-poverty organizations through the Single Displaced Persons Project to develop a response to the urgent need for permanent, affordable housing for homeless and low-income people.

Fred Victor closed its short-term men’s hostel and senior men’s home in 1988 and replaced them with 194 units of supportive, permanent, shared housing for adults. This required a large renovation to the original site at the Queen and Jarvis Street corner.

By 1993, three support workers were operating out of the same site providing group activity, education and one-on-one counselling from a Drop-in. Friends Restaurant, a cafeteria that offers affordable meals opened in 1990.

In March 1997, Fred Victor opened a hostel for homeless women on Lombard Street, just around the corner from the main Queen Street East location and the Women’s Day Program opened a program space on the main floor at the Adelaide Resource Centre for Women on Adelaide Street East in 1999.
Employment and training programs were given their own location on Lombard Street in 1997 and moved to Queen Street east of Sherbourne Street in 2010.

Housing Access Support Services that help homeless people to find affordable, appropriate housing opened their offices on Lombard Street in 2000.

In 1999, Fred Victor began operating a 32-unit affordable housing project at Woodbine and Mortimer that provides a home to families and individuals on low incomes. And in 2007, Fred Victor opened 48 more renovated units in Toronto’s east end on Dawes Road.

In 2007, a partnership with Bethlehem United Church (Apostolic) and Fred Victor saw the opening of a 60-bed, pet-friendly emergency shelter in the northwest part of the city. In 2013, beds increased to 70.

Fred Victor housing workers provide assistance in daily living to 14 women who live in an apartment complex on Dundas East Street as well as supports to a Toronto Community Housing site on George Street (2012).

In 2006, a capital campaign raised funds to redesign and rebuild the main housing and community services site at 145 Queen Street East — the same Queen and Jarvis corner where the Mission stood so many years ago. That work was completed in fall 2011.

By 1980, the Mission was incorporated as a registered charity and later in 1986 the United Church Council transferred land title and the Mission became Fred Victor Centre, a corporation of the United Church of Canada. In 1999, the Centre amalgamated with Keith Whitney Homes which was located at the same site and became a single housing and community services site.

In October 2012, the Provincial Government announced that Fred Victor would own and operate one of the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am legacy 108-unit buildings as affordable housing in the new West Don Lands neighbourhood. It is currently under construction and will open to new tenants in spring 2016.

Today, Fred Victor’s 10 different sites across the city are supported by individuals, churches and temples, corporations, foundations and all levels of government. Collaboration, health and well-being, equity and access, and respect are the core values the organization strives to embody.

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