

In light of confusing media reports about food services in the Downtown Eastside following the departure of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, the Archdiocese of Vancouver is providing this list of questions and answers.

Q. Was it the Archdiocese of Vancouver's decision to cancel the sandwich service at the Sisters of Atonement's convent?

A. No. The Sisters of Atonement decided to move on and ended the food program on their own. The Catholic Charities soup kitchen right next door – The Door is Open – is accommodating the demand. The Sisters' leaving has had no detrimental impact on other charities or those being served meals.

Q. What about the clothing service that was provided by the Sisters?

A. The Door is Open has some clothing available. In addition, there are several other charities in the neighbourhood that provide clothing.

Q. Will the Missionaries of Charity take over the Sisters of Atonement's food ministry?

A. The Missionaries of Charity are moving into the convent and the neighbourhood and want to familiarize themselves with the area's needs before deciding what they are called to do in the community.

Q. Why didn't the Archdiocese take over the Sisters' food ministry?

A. While being committed to remaining in the DTES, duplicating the work of the Sisters might not be the best way we can serve the neighbourhood. We committed to ensuring the services provided by the Sisters would not be allowed to disappear, and they haven't. The Door is Open operates directly beside the Sisters, providing food every day, and has not experienced much higher demand in the wake of the Sisters' departure.

Q. Does the Archdiocese plan to remain involved in the Downtown Eastside?

A. We're going to become even more involved than we currently are. We're going to work with our partners in the neighbourhood to reassess the needs there and provide service every bit as valuable as what the Sisters were doing.

There is a renewed emphasis in the Downtown Eastside on improving the nutritional value of food provided in the Downtown Eastside. As one charity serving the neighbourhood says, "there is a misperception that there is a great deal of food available in the DTES, when in fact what is available is meager, often inadequate and/or has no nutritive value and for the most part the methods by which food is distributed are both inefficient and lack the dignity that all individuals deserve, regardless of their socio-economic status." That's an area the Archdiocese of Vancouver will be looking at.

Q. Is there any connection between the Sisters leaving and the sale of the archdiocesan offices at 150 Robson St.?

A. No. The two happening at the same time is coincidental.