

child. "My brother wanted to play the tuba, but we convinced him not to," she says. The Eagle clan also meets regularly at the family oasis, a cottage in the Muskoka region where they unwind by enjoying canoeing and wilderness communing. Joining the Eagles there is Susan's husband, Free Press reporter Joe Matyas.



Susan Eagle gives Trevor Greenwell a hug at one of the many community meetings she attends.

To renew her faith and the vitality that flows from it, Eagle draws spiritual nourishment from her colleagues as well as her family. She meets regularly with four other women who work with London's poor and refugees: Cassie Ticknor, co-ordinator of social services at St. Paul's Cathedral; Beth Tellaeche, of the Cross Cultural Learner Centre; Sandra McNee, community worker at Limberlost public housing; and Beth Porter, a worker at St. Peter's coffee house. The five, who call themselves Leaven, share spiritual faith and a commitment to social justice.

The women meet regularly for a fellowship meal, where they share frustrations, triumphs and support each other in their work. Still, put that many organizers together and it seems inevitable they'll organize *something*. Turns out, they have: a workshop in May with Sister Mary Jo Leddy, a Roman Catholic sister from Toronto well-known for her social activism.

Eagle also participates — schedule willing — in a weekly meeting of ministers from several Protestant denominations who use the common lectionary, a standard guide to Bible readings for Sunday services. The host minister provides tea and coffee, the ministers brown-bag lunch and together they pray and discuss the Bible passages they all will preach about the following Sunday.

You won't find any Community of Concern United Church ministers at Eagle's lectionary group. Franck Meadows says their group "is as much a

son, the Anglican rector of Bishop Cromlyn Memorial Church usually attends, as do United Church ministers Ken Martin of Siloam United and Jonathan Chute of Trinity United — a roll call of London's left-leaning clergy.

At a recent meeting devoted to Holy Week readings, the good-natured debating and discussing is sprinkled with laughter: they argue over the correct pronunciation of "Bethphage," a place named in one of the biblical passages; Eagle is teased about going to the wrong church the previous week for the meeting; and the United Church ministers exchange gallows humor jokes about the demise of the United Church and their pensions along with it.

After the lectionary group finishes with a whirl of cup-rinsing, Eagle heads to the Church of Christ on Huron Street, a non-denominational Christian church in the heart of Eagle's east-end ministry. While not an official sponsor of her ministry, Church of Christ gives Eagle free access to the building and use of the church hall for outreach activities.

From the parking lot, you can see the infamous Cheyenne apartments, where repairs are finally being done. By the church steps, early daffodils bloom amid mud and concrete.

Eagle's ELUCO ministry has centred on women, she says, "because we just have more poor who are women. The feminization of poverty is really quite blatant." As well, women in the low-income community want to make changes and are willing to become political "because they're parents. As mothers, they have a vision for the children of a different kind of life."

In the past two years, Eagle also has become involved in refugee concerns, drawn in through her advocacy work for the Cheyenne buildings where many tenants are Cambodian or Vietnamese refugees.

This particular spring afternoon, she brings together a public health nurse and a Cambodian translator for a meeting about an area family who may need assistance. While they consult, Cambodian women from the neighborhood meet in the church hall for English classes. The women's preschool children do your basic kid-in-the-afternoon stuff: have a snack, play with toys and impatiently wriggle when the day-care supervisors zip them into jackets for an outdoor break.

While the ESL program is sponsored by the London board of education and day care provided through the Ontario ministry of citizenship and culture, Eagle sits on a committee that administers these community-based ESL classes in East London. When teacher Judy Frederico finishes her class downstairs, she and Eagle consult with the Cambodian translator, Lam Vong, about possible meeting times for the community board. Out comes Eagle's ink-drenched calendar, again.

It seems a never-ending round of battles with those who control the money to help those without. All the meetings and pickets and committees haven't lessened the need for emergency food cupboards. Poverty and injustice sometime seem immune to social activists' well-mounted attacks. One wonders if, at the end of long days, Susan Eagle feels like she's taken two steps backward for every step forward.

"Clarke MacDonald (a former United Church moderator) said we're called not to be successful, but to be faithful," says Eagle in a quiet, gentle voice. "If our goal is to be faithful, not successful, we're not worried about measuring sticks... Caring for society and loving our neighbor are big enough jobs without saying that if I can't see the solution at the end of the road, I won't get involved." ♦