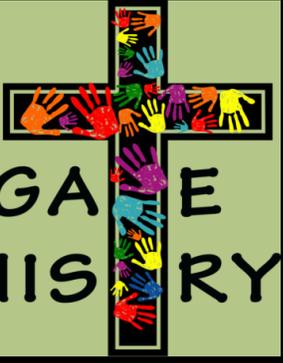


Spring 2018

Newsletter

“Working together to build a stronger,
kinder and more just community”



STONEGATE
MINISTRY

Editor's note: So many 'good news' stories are emerging from our ministry programs that we are featuring four of them in this issue – two by **Ejay Tupe**, our Stonegate Interim Ministry Director, one by **Bruce Smith**, the Mission Coordinator, Christ Church St. James, (as well as a faithful friend and program leader of several of our ministries), and one from **Jeannie Martinez**, our Great Finds store manager.

Gospel & Life “...I was in prison and you came to visit me” Matthew 25:36b



It may surprise you to know that the second largest prison facility in Canada, and the largest in Ontario, is right on our doorstep. The South Detention Centre on Horner Avenue houses as many as 2,000 inmates and is the site of our newest ministry – “Gospel and Life”, a program suggested by an inmate who valued the opportunity to learn life skills through the lens of scripture. Ejay, our interim Ministry Director has experience in prison ministry and relates this tragic story about one of the inmates.

“In one of my early visits, three men responded to the invitation and joined me to spend time in the scriptures, to learn and to pray. I had met Chris (not his real name), over ten years ago and remembered him as a gentle and kind soul but learned that he had become homeless, then recovered, got a job, got married and had two children. Then, six years ago, his newborn **baby boy tragically died** in his sleep. Overcome with grief, he made some bad decisions and turned to substance use, losing his housing, then his job and then his wife through divorce. Just recently he learned that his ex-wife had **died from an overdose**.

Chris expressed his hope that his life could change and lamented that he had missed the last three of his daughter's birthdays and prays that he can become a 'present' father. We prayed together and he now has hope that his broken heart and soul will begin to mend and his time of being in and out of jail will be over.”

Chris was released recently and Ejay, as promised, was there to help.

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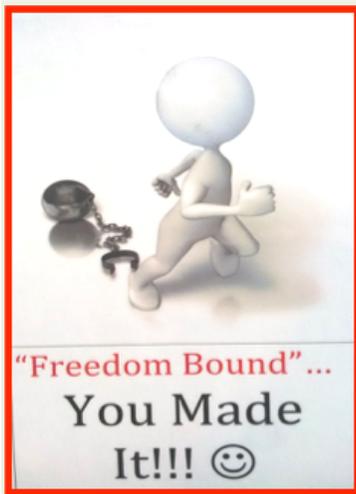
OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Stonegate Ministry is an alliance of local Christian churches working in partnership with the community through shared resources, offering programs and opportunities to build healthy relationships, strong families, a sense of belonging and a deeper relationship with God. We endeavour to address the needs of the whole person and families to bridge toward a better life and to be a faithful voice to ensure everyone in the community is treated with justice and Christian compassion.

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“After some fervent prayer, Chris’s case was resolved last week at College Park Court where I met up with him. He was deeply grateful to be met by a friend and was able to resist no less than **eight offers of drugs** as we walked the short distance from the courthouse to the ODSP office. After meeting with his social workers, I drove him to **Great Finds** where Jeannie, our store Manager, had a parcel of clothing for him, and then on to the South Detention Centre to pick up his few belongings. He was extremely grateful that in the span of a couple of hours we were able to get some money, some new clothes, and pick up his belongings; tasks that would have taken him a whole day by TTC. For Chris, **temptations will never be far away**. Please pray for Chris that he will be strong and will be able to make a fresh start.”

Ejay Tupe



Freedom Bound...Freedom Found?

Someone has said if we '**think more**' we will '**thank more**'. The old hymn writer reminded us to 'Count our blessings, name them one by one'. Our "Freedom Bound" ministry brings many reasons to express thanks to our Lord. It is my joy to share some of those reasons with you now.

Freedom Bound is an informal gathering of people who believe that **tomorrow doesn't have to be like today**. They are people who share a **living hope**. They joke that 'God isn't finished with me yet'. They agree that life can be tough, if not cruel, and that in many ways, life has been difficult and costly for them. All would identify with hurts, hang-ups or harmful habits from which they have longed for freedom. This is why they 'signed up' for these bi-weekly times together. They are people of integrity, honesty and faith, and they are people whom I am honored to call my friends.

This particular group of friends has met faithfully now for over a year at Christ Church St. James, always in the context of a meal and with a growing trust in the Great Liberator, Christ Jesus. It has been quite a journey, but most have stayed the course.

And the result, thus far? ***Freedom Found!***

Two of our members have very kindly offered these words:

1. "***Freedom Bound*** helps us have a closer personal relationship with God. We share in private and confidential stories of life experiences and how it has affected our journey in the past and the present. Through this experience I have begun to see the positive changes in my mind, body, and soul-spirit - a true healing journey that Freedom Bound has given me."
2. "***Freedom Bound*** helped me stop smoking with the Christian-focused program it offers. Through this program I'm learning to rely on Christ to help me with every aspect of my life including the habits that seem impossible to overcome. It's a supportive and caring group where we can share safely and without judgment."

A final word:

We all qualify for 'Freedom Bound'. Everyone needs freedom. Please join me in praying that all who take the step to be a part of this little gathering will soon know '***Freedom Found***'.

Bruce Smith



COMMUNITY CORNER at Great Finds



Since opening in December 2014, Great Finds has been received with welcoming arms from the Lake Shore/Mimico community. During that time, we have become increasingly involved in the community that we serve. Though Great Finds consistently provides gently-used clothing and housewares at affordable prices, we have, over time, become more than just a **great store** to shop in. Great Finds has become a **meeting place** for the community.

Friends meet at the store just to chat. Families come in together to shop with the children heading directly to the toy section to see what's new. There are also those who just come in to say hello on their way to and from doing their errands.

To strengthen that community feeling a table and two chairs were added by the front window of the store. On the table sits reading materials including a bible and our current newsletter. The table and chairs give customers a chance to come in to take a break or find a quiet moment to relax. Some use it to wait while their significant other is shopping, and some to sit and talk with staff volunteers. Others even use our community corner to read before going to work. There is also a subtle sign on the table that says we want to know if the reader **has not had a meal** all day. Whatever the use, we at Great Finds want to make those who come in feel welcomed and safe. Drop in anytime to say 'hello'.

Jeannie Martinez



CAP MONEY COURSE



Stonegate Ministry began **another new program**, a personal finance series called **Christians Against Poverty (CAP)** at Christ Church St. James Anglican Church in February. We had 17 participate in this video-based program that assists people to understand their personal financial situation. We shared a lot of stories and experiences of money issues, with laughter and enjoyment, discovering we are not alone in our money mishaps and learning together a manageable system to use our money with purpose.

Besides freely discussing money and how to truly control it, the other highlight was sharing supper. And what a supper! The food was catered by a **Syrian mother** we met through Great Finds. Her cooking talent was so enjoyed that many wanted her recipes, and some even told the Stonegate Community Health Centre that they would like her to do a cooking demonstration of Syrian dishes. I bet the purple beet salad festooned with green parsley and shimmery red pomegranate seeds would be first on that list of dishes.

Encouraged by the interest for this opportunity to help people get a grip on their finances, Stonegate Ministry plans to run the next course in the first 3 weeks of June, every Monday, the 4th through 18th from 4:00 to 6:00pm at Christ Church St. James (CCSJ).

If you want to see what it is all about, attend our "**CAP Money Course Reunion & Info Night**" on Monday, May 28th, at CCSJ with refreshments, when folks can learn about what's involved in the CAP Money Course and register as well.

We look forward to meeting you there!

Carol-Anne Foty and Sumitra Robertson





“LOVE YOUR (HOMELESS) NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF” Luke 10:27b

Two weeks ago, I was researching our neighborhoods when Eleanor, one of our faithful volunteers, asked if I could assist a young man who had come into Great Finds and was in dire need and was suspected of being homeless. I was more than happy to see him and took him to 'Mimico Bagel and Coffee' where he shared his situation over a coffee and donut. While we sat, he disclosed his name, that he was a heroin **addict and was indeed homeless** in the neighbourhood. He said that he usually tries to find an apartment with a laundry room where he could spend the night. Unfortunately for the past several days he had been unsuccessful in finding a warm and sheltered place and he hadn't slept for 48 hours, which was why he seemed inebriated despite not having had drugs for the past week. This was during one of our very cold spells so I invited him to sit down with me in the office while I contacted the 'Street Helpline' to try to find him a shelter bed. I knew I would be on hold for a while, so I suggested that he take a quick nap while I waited for the city staffer to get to my call. After 30 minutes, we finally talked to someone and were able to secure a bed for him. After waking him he was now more alert in spite of only having a short nap, and I invited him to 'shop' in the store for a much-needed jacket and backpack. He expressed his gratefulness for the clothing and the kindness shown to him as he headed for his new found bed for the night. Another 'good news' story of our store and ministry programs **working together** to serve our neighbours in need!

Ejay Tupe

YOU CAN HELP KEEP THIS VITAL MINISTRY GOING ... IN THREE WAYS

PRAY

Please pray for our staff and program leaders – **Bruce Smith, Ejay Tupe, Emily Slotegraaf, Carol-Anne Foty, Jeannie Martinez** and **Kathleen Mahaffy** for safety, strength and direction as they serve the Lord through this ministry.

DONATE TO GREAT FINDS

Great Finds welcomes quality clothing and housewares **any time** but is especially in need of the following items to meet the needs of our clientele.

- Swimwear (Mens/Womens/Childrens)
- Shorts (Mens/Womens)
- Summer shoes & Sandals (Mens/Childrens)
- Housewares & Small Appliances
- Sheets & pillowcases (All sizes)
- Towels

GIVE GENEROUSLY

While the store proceeds cover most of the operating costs of the store, the **ministry programs** rely on **your financial gifts**. Like everyone, our costs are increasing and we ended 2017 with a small shortfall. Please prayerfully consider a gift, no matter how small, so we will continue to hear the 'good news' stories like the ones in this issue. You can mail a cheque to the address below or click on the link below to connect directly to the **Stonegate Ministry- Canada Helps** site. Thank you for your ongoing support of the ministry.

PLEASE DONATE

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/stonegate-community-ecumenical-ministry/>

*“Easter Blessings as we remember the death and
celebrate the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
He is Risen!”*



Great Finds store and Ministry office address – 2358 Lake Shore Blvd. W. Etobicoke M8V 1C3

Contact us at 416.255.6282 or stonegateministryoffice@gmail.ca or stonegateministry.ca

Stonegate Ministry is a registered non-profit charity.

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