

STONEGATE MINISTRY



Newsletter

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

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR



One of our highlights every Fall is the opportunity of meeting so many of our friends from every congregation of the Stonegate Ministry churches at our Fundraiser Gala.

Often the event takes place in one of our member facilities- where around 120 guests gather at the reception, enjoy a glass of wine as they meet old friends and look over the Silent Auction items, before sitting down to a delicious meal, followed by musical entertainment and presentations from our program leaders.

Without the generous support from our faithful supporters at this annual event, the Ministry could not continue for long

in providing services that make all the difference for many marginalized families living in desperate straits in our community. Through this generosity, the Ministry is able to provide food security, inexpensive and clean seasonal clothing, guidance in financial management, programs for those fighting addictions, get-togethers to combat loneliness, and prayer for any that request it. These are available to all, delivered with respect and love in the name of Christ.

This year, during the pandemic, this assistance has been needed as never before! One measure of this can be found in the increase of over 50% now attending our food bank. Many food banks across the city have been forced to close, while our food bank has persevered, due to the great support from our community of donors and volunteers.

What has thrilled and encouraged us is the incredible way that the Stonegate Ministry supporters have rallied to attend our online Fundraising Gala that took on a very different format this year. With



no reception, no delicious meal, no enticing Silent Auction, and no chance to visit with old friends, more than 100

friends of Stonegate attended our online event on November 7th.

They enjoyed a lighthearted quiz about the Ministry, heard some great presentations by Staff on the impact of their innovative programs during the pandemic, and heard and watched musical selections from our member churches

that were recorded in response to the pandemic restrictions. We are so grateful for this support!

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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.

(continued from page 1) We know that many of you, who have supported the Ministry in the past, were not able to join us that evening but you can watch a **YouTube video** (about 40 minutes) of that evening's event in one of two ways - on our website (stonegateministry.ca), you will find the link under the "About Us / Videos" tab; alternatively, you can enter this URL address in your computer browser:

<https://youtu.be/as2U-T4INNg?t=612>

Feel free to encourage friends and family to learn something of our work and commitment to those in need by watching the video.

If you missed the fundraiser, you can still donate by clicking on the DONATE tab on the right side of our website menu, or by sending a cheque payable to **Stonegate Ministry** to our old address (it will be forwarded to us) at:

Stonegate Ministry, 2358 Lake Shore Blvd. W., Toronto ON M8V 1B6.

Again, thank you for your prayers and for your financial generosity to those in need of our services – we recognize how blessed we are by your faithful support.

Peter Patterson, Chair Stonegate Ministry Board



JEANNIE'S UPDATE



Last year at this time, our thoughts were on the upcoming Christmas season, being with family and friends and having get-togethers, anticipating a new year filled with our usual events and the possibility of exciting adventures and opportunities.

At the end of last year, my son and I were able to travel outside of the country for **the very first time** to vacation with family, most of whom my son had not seen since he was a toddler. It was such a memorable experience we decided that we would make every effort to travel more regularly to visit family and friends. Little did we know that a pandemic would upset our plans.

With the onset of Covid-19, so many changes and uncertainties have unfolded in our lives. We have had to adjust to city-wide lockdowns and business closures such as our own Great Finds thrift store. We have even had to restrict our contact with family and friends and for some, we have even had to deal with sickness and the passing of someone close to us.

The Christ Church St. James Food Pantry became even more essential during the pandemic due to the number of families desperate for help. The number of families being helped has increased over 50%, with new ones being added. While many of the programs have been able to continue by moving online, the food pantry requires personal attention to service our clients and provide the support and resources to families in need. **The gratefulness and relief we see** in the eyes of many of the families shows that our continued service makes an enormous difference in their lives.

Though times are uncertain and can be discouraging at the moment, I am blessed to be among people who continue to do God's work in their everyday lives. I am blessed to be working with dedicated volunteers who commit their time to serve those in need. I am blessed to meet and greet many donors trying to make a positive difference. I am also **blessed to be amongst those families in need**, who continue to smile and give thanks even though their lives are filled with challenges.

I am grateful to see acts of love every day and I would like to take this time to pass on my love to you all. May you continue to keep hope in your heart and see the blessings and love around you and know that you are not alone. Merry Christmas as we celebrate Christ's advent, and many wishes for good health!



Jeannie Martinez, Great Finds Manager & Food Pantry Co-Manager

GOD COFFEE AND ME: a peek into our gathering

The *"God, Coffee and Me"* folks are well into a study of the Book of Revelation. This was preceded by a long walk through Mark, John, The Acts of the Apostles, and Philippians.

Presently we are looking at the 7 churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

The blessing of gathering around the Scriptures together is to be able to practice a dual listening:

- a sensitivity to the Spirit of God (what is the Spirit saying to us) and
- an appreciation of the insights being shared by others.



During our most recent study, we landed at the church in Smyrna. The discussion took us to ask what Jesus means when He refers to Himself as *'The First and the Last'*. Many excellent observations and thoughts were shared.

Benny piped in: *"Well to me, if Jesus is the first and the last, then it's good we're here in the middle. He's got us covered"*.

Benny was saying (in a much better way than I can summarize here) that Jesus was faithful in our past; He is faithful right now; and He'll be faithful to the end. Nothing escapes His view; nothing escapes His heart.

Our little group has been through it recently. Family members have suffered sickness and death. Yet even in this pandemic, they are there for one another, praying, dropping off help at the door, sending gifts of support. Again, nothing escapes His heart.

This is a 'holy cluster' of men and women. **This really is 'church'**. This is for real. The 3 marks of discipleship in the gospel of John say it best:

1. "By this shall all people know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another".
2. "If you continue in My Word, you are My disciples indeed"
3. "This is how My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples".

Genuine love, eagerness to learn, and a desire to make a difference. I see it all in this team around the coffee table.

We've welcomed new folks recently into the circle. We would love to welcome even more.

Tuesdays. 3pm. On zoom. Please send me a quick note if you'd like to join in.



Bruce Smith, on assignment to Stonegate Ministry

PROGRAMMING DURING THE PANDEMIC

The year is coming to a close and our programs are wrapping up for the season and as I reflect on the year, I'm acutely aware of the opportunities God has presented us - despite the challenges we have faced. The pandemic has served as a catalyst, pushing people to band together and find new ways of staying hopeful. I'm impressed by the resilience of the community and am grateful for all the support our programs have received.

We have recently started a new program on Grief and Loss called **"Anchors for the Soul"** in partnership with Christ Church St. James. As Christmas approaches and the pandemic looms on, loneliness and feelings of loss are more evident. People are grieving not only the pandemic, the loss of jobs, their sense of security, but also losses experienced before the pandemic such as spouses, parents, and friends. We felt that presenting a 10 week Zoom program during this time was one way to open our doors and say, *"we are here, and we are listening."*

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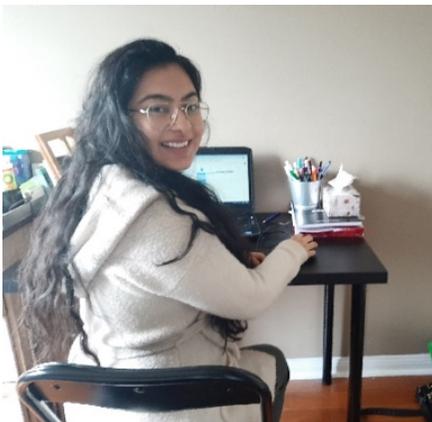
(continued from page 3) During our very first night, one of the participants shared an unbelievable story, one that took me by surprise and left me at a loss for words. It was a story of a lifetime filled with death, loss, and pain. I had no doubt that night that God had brought this person to our group. They were brought to be given a space to grieve, to find listening friends, and the hope of a future with healing and promise.

All our programs in 2020 were able to function because of the hard work and dedication of our special and loving program facilitators. Thank you to the facilitators of: **God, Coffee, and Me; Circle of Friends; Ladies Circle; Homework Club; Get Reading!;**

and Anchors for the Soul. Thank you to our **Prayer for You team** whose faithful prayer for our programs has encouraged me and supported the work of the ministry. Thank you to those in our community who have reached out to me this year and been brave enough to suggest creative ideas and strong partnerships.

I'd like to leave you with a couple of our **current and new-year needs:**

- We are looking for volunteers to knit or donate hats, gloves, and scarves for clients in need at the food bank. Additionally, you are welcome to donate hygiene kits (soap, shampoo, toothpaste, etc.)



Samantha Coelho, Director Ministry Programs

-We are looking for another volunteer to support our "Get Reading!" Program. If you would be willing to occasionally distribute books to parents during Food Bank hours, please let me know.

-Our programs are always open to new participants, if you know someone who may be interested in joining any of our programs, feel free to pass on my information.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Wishing you and your loved ones the peace of Christ this season,



CONTACT US

Your Donation is important to maintain our outreach during this difficult time. You can contribute either:

By cheque mailed to **Stonegate Ministry, 2358 Lake Shore Blvd. W. Toronto, M8V1B6**

OR

By going to our website <https://www.stonegateministry.ca> and clicking on the "Donate Now" button.

All donations are promptly acknowledged and a receipt will be sent at year end. Thank you for your prayers and ongoing financial support, and may God bless you and keep you safe during this trying time.

Contact us at 416-500-0253 or office@stonegateministry.ca

Stonegate Ministry is a registered non-profit charity.

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