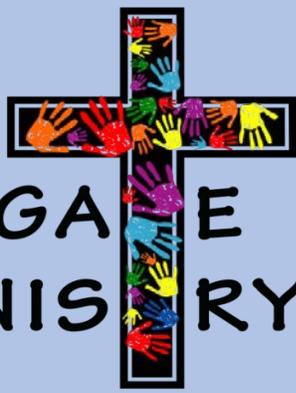


Spring 2021

STONEGATE MINISTRY



Newsletter

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

FROM THE EDITOR

We are all painfully aware of our personal need and desire to get back to ‘normal’, to meet person to person, to share meals with friends and to embrace our loved ones. The ministry of Stonegate is no different. Our ministry is a **person-to-person ministry**, or maybe we need to add - “...was...before the pandemic”. And yet, our staff have found ways to *virtually* come alongside many through Zoom, and have regular, but limited person to person communications at the CCSJ Food Bank. Jeannie has taken on the major management role of the food bank during Covid and Samantha has taken the opportunity to make contacts with the food bank clientele while assisting on food bank days.



We had hoped that in this Spring edition of the Newsletter, we would be able to answer the question that we are continually being asked - “**When will Great Finds reopen?**”. Even some of our customers have said they are looking out for vacancies on our behalf. As a board we are actively searching and have investigated three locations that could have provided the needed space and amenities, and two offered promising potential. However, only one invited us to put in an offer which unfortunately was not accepted in preference to the offer of a ‘business’ over a charity. This has been very disappointing, but in spite of this, we are blessed that God has provided a way through this time of pandemic, allowing the ministry to maintain our faithful staff and keep us in a solid financial position.

In addition to providing much needed family clothing at very low cost, *Great Finds* has been a sanctuary for the lonely, and where those craving friendship and acceptance have experienced many expressions of God’s love. We are anxious that this important ministry be re-established and we are continuing to actively investigate every potential location. However, we have also been reminded, that if we truly believe that God wants the *Great Finds ministry* to continue its mission, then He will provide - *but in His timing, and not ours.*

(continued on page 2)

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.



We are humbly grateful for the faithful and generous financial support from our member churches and from our growing individual and corporate supporters. We are also aware, and are thankful for your prayers for the ministry. Could we ask that you **pray with us**, that God will open the door to a location on the Mimico Lake Shore in His timing that will allow His ministry of Great Finds to continue?

Thank you for partnering with us in this ministry.
Graeme Quigley, Editor

Editor's Note

Just before going to press, we were sorry to receive Samantha's resignation from her position as Director of Ministry Programs. Samantha has accepted a position with a charity serving the under privileged in her hometown of Brampton. We are sorry to see her go as she has executed her responsibilities well in spite of the frustrating restrictions of the last year. We wish her every success as she takes on her new responsibilities."



A MESSAGE FROM SAM

As the pandemic continues to loom, and with the hope of the vaccines, many of us are at a point where we can visualize an end to all of this. In many of our programs, talk about the vaccines seems to be the favourite topic. The thought of being able to one day resume in-person programming makes us all very hopeful. Over the past three months, I have had the opportunity to interview program participants and clients at the foodbank. I have been able to hear their stories, their requests for support, and the struggles they continue to face. I have heard parents tell funny stories about entertaining their children at home, and others share stories about housing instability and the possibility of homelessness, and new health diagnoses such as cancer which have profoundly affected their families. It has been an important reminder that while we hope and wait for the pandemic to lift, there are still very real challenges that our community members are facing - *crises like housing and chronic illness that will not disappear* post-pandemic. Our community continues to need practical support such as referrals, and emotional support such as the encouragement to keep going.

This past season, we also finished our first series on grief and loss titled, "*Anchors for the Soul*". This program was one way that could offer the support and comfort needed for grieving individuals. It turned out to be a wonderful experience where God's presence was felt and where people felt listened to. I would like to share with you a few of the comments made by the participants:

- "It really helps being a part of this forum, it *gives me rest*"
- "I think this group has silently, subtly done healing in me...*I'm learning how to grieve in friendship and in Christ*"
- "I get more out of this than being on group therapy, being on Zoom makes it easier to *speak and not cry*"
- "I *felt very welcome* from the first time I showed up, thank you so much for that"

All of your donations, prayers, and support are what make these kinds of healing experiences possible. Thank you for your continued support. As always, if you have questions about our programs or are looking to get involved, you can reach me at samantha@stonegateministry.ca

Samantha Coelho, Director, Ministry Programs

THE LIGHT IS SHINING

During these last 15 months or so, we've been overwhelmed by numbers. We see an ever-increasing number of covid-19 cases, along with numbers of closures, restrictions, stay-at-home orders, and more. Then there are the numbers of friends and family who have suffered and struggled in so very many ways. The numbers add up. We feel the weight, the concern, the pain. For many, this includes countless numbers of tears.

Yes, it has been dark.

Thankfully, there is *another* way of counting, - namely the many good and encouraging numbers that shine with hope through these dark times.

Here are just a few that spring to mind:



1. **Jeannie at the foodbank.** Throughout this pandemic, the ministry at the foodbank has not missed a beat. In fact, the work has become all the more streamlined and effective. The organizational skills are only matched by determined faith and love. Most recently, this has included helping Christ Church St James prepare and bring groceries to 16 men who have been isolated in a Correctional Center facility due to the pandemic. For 3 consecutive weeks, Jeannie and Gord have gone the extra mile in providing and packing groceries for men who have been struck down with this disease and have no other means to access the basics for meals. ***This light is shining*** in great numbers.

2. **Samantha**, also at the foodbank while leading weekly gatherings of support. Every week, the Tuesday friendship group welcomes 20 women for an afternoon of support and encouragement online with Sue and Kathleen providing additional leadership. Samantha has also been working alongside the pastoral team at Christ Church St James to offer an online support program for those who are grieving. On top of that, she continues to be there for individuals who reach out for help. ***This light is shining***, in great numbers.

3. And then there is the '**God, Coffee...and me?**' bunch - the weekly gathering around the Scriptures that has pressed on and grown during the pandemic. Not only have these folks opened up the Bible together, they have opened up their lives to God and to one another. People pray for one another; people connect during the week to check in. People care. ***This light is shining***, in great numbers.



A verse from 1 John 2 reads "*The darkness is disappearing; the true light is already shining*".

Paul encourages believers with these words: "*Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights*"



"And in the most difficult of moments, may these words from Jesus do their work in our hearts and minds: "*I am the Light of the Word; the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life*".

Stars *do* shine brightest in the dark. As 'children of light', may more and more candles of faith and love shine in the darkness of this moment, far beyond our ability to number. Amen?

Bruce Smith, on assignment to Stonegate Ministry

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS



It has been over a year now since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic changed our very way of life. As the months of uncertainty and concern of the Covid-19 pandemic continue, we wonder how much longer we can manage our way through this pandemic.

While *Great Finds* is closed, my responsibility as Co-Director at the Christ Church St. James Food Pantry has grown. As the city continues to move from lockdown to lockdown in order to curb the rising number of infections, the closure of businesses continues to affect many jobs, putting pressure on our food bank to have adequate levels of food and supplies to accommodate the increase in food bank clients. Currently we serve 650

individuals including over 100 families every month.

Many days seem bleak and discouraging. What keeps me inspired is the number of people that have come together to make lives better through their generosity. Volunteers continue to dedicate their time, risking their health in order to serve clients at the food bank or at our various programs. Without these volunteers, we could not continue to minister to the community.

We are so appreciative to our supportive individual donors and groups like the *138th Toronto Group Scout Troop* and *St. Mark Catholic Elementary School* who held food drives just before Easter in order to help families in need. We also received a donation of Easter candy packaged by *Royal York United Church* that were handed out to children and adults alike for Easter.

Even though *Great Finds* is temporarily closed, many donors decided to knit hats, scarves, and mitts to help keep our food bank clients warm throughout the winter.



Many people are finding different ways to come together to make a positive difference. We are truly grateful and thank you all for caring and for your generosity!

*Jeannie Martinez,
Great Finds Manager and Co-Director of CCSJ Food Bank*

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 <https://www.stonegateministry.ca> and clicking on the "Donate Now" button.

All donations are promptly acknowledged and a receipt will be sent at

By going **to our website**

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.

Editor – Graeme Quigley

Layout and Graphics – Priscilla Knight

This newsletter is available by email or hard copy. To change your preference, or unsubscribe, contact the office.