

STONEGATE MINISTRY



Newsletter

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

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR



As we finally begin to move toward warmer days, it is with great relief that opportunities are increasing for those who are isolated to become more mobile and to participate in-person in Ministry programs, especially activities that are outdoors or otherwise safe from Covid. The women in the *Circle of Friends* program have welcomed the chance to see each other again, sharing stories of a difficult winter, but feeling mentally and spiritually refreshed by simply being together. Many in financial straits delight in enjoying a meal that does not come out of their own budget.

As Bruce mentions in his article, *God, Coffee and Me* takes place both in person and online. All are looking forward to the day when everyone will be safe in meeting at the restaurant together, but meanwhile upholding each other in prayer.

Participants in Natalie’s *Amplify* program for girls and her *Life Coaching* program for adults, find themselves becoming more self-confident in very challenging circumstances as they learn techniques for coping and becoming leaders.

We are grateful for answered prayer for Jeannie as she has coped with significant health issues while still providing outstanding leadership to the Food Pantry. The Food Pantry has pivoted many times during the different phases of the pandemic. Even now there are further changes afoot as the process transitions from a tedious but safe menu selection approach to allowing food bank clients to once again be able to choose their own items off the shelves.

While providing these services to those most in need in our community is very heartening, much of the Board’s attention has continued to focus on locating and leasing an appropriate storefront for *Great Finds*. This will allow the Ministry to once again provide a key necessity for our clientele – inexpensive clothing.

Although some storefront space has become available during the pandemic over the last couple of years, many of these sites have been snatched up by the marijuana industry. This has driven prices higher and limited supply. Our Board has employed creative approaches to enhance our offers, but we do not want to overpay for the retail space as this could endanger the viability of the other Ministry programs that are also desperately needed in our community.

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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 continue to keep our eyes open for any opportunity, particularly in the Mimico area where *Great Finds* would be easily accessible for most of our clientele. We also would welcome any assistance from our supporters, certainly with your prayers, but also with alerts to available retail space opportunities.

Many thanks for your continued support – God bless!

Peter Patterson, Chair Stonegate Ministry Board

“AND THEN IT HIT ME”

When the request came for an update on the weekly coffee shop ministry known as “*God, Coffee and me?*”, this familiar one-liner came to mind:

“I was wondering why the ball kept getting bigger and bigger... and then it hit me.”

The ball that ‘hit me’ was how much better it would be if this article did not come from me but from those who faithfully join in each week around that coffee table. *THAT* would be an article worth reading. Oh well... hopefully next time. Watch this space.



Nonetheless, here are a few comments shared over the last while that *HAVE* hit me. In fact, they are a great encouragement to Stonegate Ministry to ‘keep on keeping on’:



“Being here helps me appreciate I’m not alone. I came as a stranger, but now I have new friends”.

“I sensed a real need to understand my faith. Though raised in the Church, I knew so little about Jesus. This really helps me appreciate what Jesus is all about”.

“I’ve had some big questions about God, to say the least. For whatever reason, I couldn’t ask anyone about them in my church. But around that coffee table, I feel we can just ask anything without being judged. It feels safe to be honest here”.

“I’d had some harmful experiences with churches in the past and vowed never to go to one again. What a surprise it was to discover that around that coffee table I was actually IN church! I really love it”.

Other folks have shared how that little gathering has often been a support team, just at the right time, be it through illness or loss.

The pandemic has made it challenging. A few of our friends remain understandably reluctant to come to *Nimman’s Thai Restaurant* for the ‘in person’ gathering on Tuesdays at 2:45pm. We are so happy to be able to offer the same study gathering ‘online’ each Tuesday as well, from 11 a.m. to noon.



A final note: there is always a spare chair at that table. It looks like it has your name on it. Come and enjoy a coffee (or a ginger tea) on us; make a friend or two; walk through the gospel together. Perhaps something surprisingly meaningful will hit you too.

Bruce Smith, on assignment to Stonegate Ministry

“...put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Colossians 3:12



Compassion: “Sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it (Merriam Webster, 1828”

How does one gauge one's impact in this life? How do we really know that we have made a difference? A cohesive answer would be a definite challenge for our world today, mainly because there are so many different needs, so few responses to those needs, and not enough connection to those who are in need.

In the above definition of compassion, my attention is focussed on the phrase '*consciousness of others*'. Seeing the tell-tale signs of how we are impacting our community just takes a little effort to look more closely and to connect consciously with those whom we 'love'. That's how I found my answer.

I saw it through the smile of an elderly lady coming back in person for a *Circle of Friends* meeting as we embraced with a warm hug, prepared for a time sharing a meal, good conversation and an entertaining activity. The room is filled with smiles, laughs and the occasional sigh of relief as these ladies can once again immerse themselves in this moment of fellowship, friendship, understanding and community that brings healing, restoration, and joy to their lives.

I saw it through the tears of a client participating in our *Life Coaching* program as they poured out their frustrations and were offered helpful life tips to restore balance and strengthen their confidence and tenacity for their journey in life. In their own words,

“I want to thank you so much for all your help and time.” ... “I really enjoyed meeting with you, getting to know you, and learning more about myself” ... “I want to thank you for your time and all the wisdom you've poured into my life”.

As I got closer to each person, I was not only able to see the needs on the surface, but I began to be conscious of a deeper need that is so easily overlooked in our world today. *“You remember my name! I love that!”* they said with a great big smile as they set their appointment for the upcoming food bank day, and before going into their weekly update on their grandkids and the family.

Our world tends to forget that we are *all people who desire connection* with each other. Many times, those in need become just another number, just another case, just another person. Stonegate Ministry has shown me time and time again that we can create opportunities to change this in our world, to have an impact in our community by becoming a part of *their* story of life. This simple expression reminds me that a *heart of compassion is awareness of others*.

The goal for this season's programs at Stonegate Ministry is to **embody the mission of compassion towards our community**. Whether it is spending Friday afternoons interacting and helping young girls stand strong in their individuality and teaching them how to share it using the tools of media during our *Amplified* program; or walking through the Lord's Prayer again to help strengthen and encourage each other in our faith as we desire to use this fresh understanding to intercede for others through the power of prayer. How does one gauge one's impact in this life? I have learned that it is by actually **taking an active part in the lives of others**. You can contact us via email NatalieS@stonegateministry.ca - Instagram: @Stonegateministry or Facebook: @Stonegateministry. I would love to hear from you.

Natalie Sharpe, Director of Ministry Programs



EASTER AT CCSJ FOOD PANTRY

As many families and individuals got together to celebrate Easter, Christ Church St. James *Food Pantry* was able to provide turkeys, chickens, and roasts for our food bank clients. Easter is not normally a time when we hand out turkeys, chickens, and roasts; however, we were blessed to receive turkeys from a generous benefactor. This private benefactor has donated turkeys to our food bank every Christmas for the past several years. Sadly, he passed away in January. However, he bequeathed that the tradition of donating turkeys to the Food Pantry be continued and so we gratefully received turkeys for Easter. In addition, we were able to purchase whole chickens for smaller sized families. We are deeply honoured and grateful for this blessing and we thank him and his family for their generosity.

As we go through continuous waves of high Covid infections, the *Food Pantry* continues to experience food shortages due to the increased number of clients. The number of clients needing our food bank services has increased over 50% since the onset of Covid and it is challenging to keep up with the growing demand. To supplement what we receive from *Toronto Daily Bread* and *Second Harvest*, we must purchase additional food and supplies. Donations, either financial or food goods to the food bank are greatly welcomed and appreciated. These are the Items that are most needed:

- Cereal/Oatmeal/Granola
- Soup
- Canned vegetables or fruit
- Canned meat or fish
- Beans (either dry or canned)
- Granola/Snack/Protein bars
- Pasta/Tomato sauce
- Crackers and Cookies, Flour, Rice
- Nutritional Supplements -Ensure, Glucerna, Boost etc.
- Sugar/sugar alternatives, spices
- Tea/Coffee
- Powdered milk/ milk alternatives
- Personal and household supplies (Soaps, Shampoos, Disinfectants, Wipes, etc.)



Thank you for your continued support,

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

CONTACT US

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

By cheque mailed to **Stonegate Ministry, 71 Riverview Gardens. Toronto, M6S 4E6** OR

By going **to our website** below 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 416-255-6282 or office@stonegateminstyry.ca

Stonegate Ministry is a registered non-profit charity.

Donations may be made by cheque or online at www.stonegateminstyry.ca

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