

STONEGATE MINISTRY



Newsletter

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

A WORD FROM THE BOARD



In past years, the summer months offered an opportunity for Stonegate Ministry staff and board to take a brief hiatus to refresh ourselves and our programs. But this year the effects of high inflation and a growing summer Covid wave have meant only one thing – a *growth in the needs* of the marginalized in our community- and therefore not a time for easing back!

Whether it is food security programs such as our *food bank*, or youth activity programs in concert with the *Jean Augustine Centre*, or mental and spiritual support programs like *Prayer for You and God, Coffee and Me*, these have never been needed more than they are this summer.

Despite the continuing effects of Covid, the impact of more expensive food and rents, and the increasing number of people affected, government assistance is no longer available – leaving us serving *more clients with fewer resources*.

Fortunately, and not surprisingly, our own support community of individuals and churches has not wavered and has always risen to meet the need – and we know that this will continue.

What would help us greatly would be financial support **right now** through the summer, rather than later in the year as often happens.

With the number of needy clients having almost doubled from this time last year, some financial donations, large or small, would literally be a God-send right now. For our faithful regular supporters, would you consider **monthly support** rather a year-end donation? That would be helpful to ease our cash flow and this can easily be set up through our website (stonegateministry.ca) or simply your cheque(s) through the mail.

One of our other key goals for 2022 has been to find a new location for our Great Finds thrift store. It is missed by many who found not only affordable quality family clothing, but an oasis where they felt the love and acceptance from our caring staff and volunteers. Unlike some parts of the city like the downtown core, demand for space is very high due to the condo creep and expectations of redevelopment, so we have been faced with both few opportunities and substantially higher rents.

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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) So please continue to alert us of any vacancies that arise, and more importantly, *please pray* for God's leading in our ongoing search, and continue your generous financial support to enable us to serve our neighbourhood while we bridge this difficult period.

Thank you for standing with us and may God bless all of you,
Peter Patterson, Chair Stonegate Ministry Board

BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY . . .

Editor's Note: Bruce is currently on a camping vacation in the Maritimes enjoying a well-earned rest from his many ministries on behalf of Christ Church St. James and from his leadership of "God, Coffee and Me". His regular articles are always heart-warming and inspiring as he relates how the truth of scripture studied at "God, Coffee and Me" is shared each Tuesday. Despite being assured that he has earned a 'pass' for this summer issue, he has contributed the following article and poem. We are grateful for Bruce's dedication and continue to be blessed by his faithful service.

These words, written 48 years ago on the west coast of Vancouver Island, came to mind while camping on the east coast this summer. They express our earnest hope for all our friends who join us around the coffee table each Tuesday at **Nimmans Thai Restaurant**.



Feeling so warm now; feeling alive
 No longer alone now, no need to hide.
 Scanning the shoreline, new steps in sand
 Trusting what's now mine to guide my hand.

Remembering times before the Song
 Remembering life before the eyes were one
 Thanking God for what has come
 And thanking Him for what has gone.

Bending the knee now, washed by night rain
 Finally see now there's such life to gain
 Caught by a breeze now, ready to fly
 Really believe now this can never die.

Carry His words inside my mind
 Like a bird that's flown into my hand
 Of a life that's entered mine
 Like an ocean wave to the sand.



Looking forward to regrouping in September,
Bruce Smith, on assignment to Stonegate Ministry

Getting Together – *IN PERSON*

The last three months have been a particularly busy season for Stonegate Ministry programs. One of our goals was to create opportunities for us to get back together *in person* and share our presence. We were able to both renew and make many new and lasting memories with our clients and our community. We continued to raise the banner high for literacy positivity with our first *Teddy Bear Picnic* hosted by the *Get Reading* Program. It was a delight to have two local authors, Mickhallia Clarke and Barbara Patterson, share their books and wonderful reading tips and guides with the children and their parents. We enjoyed a lovely lunch together, and each child went away with a teddy bear-themed book, a goodie bag, and an awakened imagination.



Another great event was our first Stonegate Ministry / Jean Augustine Centre *Oscar Awards* ceremony. The young girls who were enrolled in our *Amplified* program presented their final projects with the rest of the girls at the centre.



They were able to present a short film and a speech dialogue; they celebrated with a pizza party and were finally awarded with a trophy. The smiles and excitement of that day were truly remarkable as we acknowledged the importance of claiming young women's voices in the media world of today.

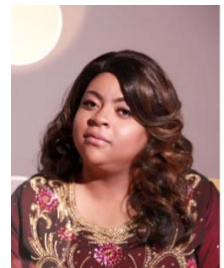
There were many great moments to remember, but one will have a lasting mark. On a challenging day at the food bank when the heat had exhausted everyone's patience, a client's embrace will not be forgotten. As I handed her a *cross of prayer*, which was a memory of a prayer that went up for her and others during my visit to *Dinner Church By the Lake* with Martin Luther Church, she couldn't believe

how timely it was that she was given this gift. She was experiencing challenges in her personal life and was on the verge of giving up hope. This moment reminded her that God remembered her and cared about all she was going through.

God uses people to touch and heal different areas in our lives. Often, we are so busy that we overlook the simple opportunities to bring healing to someone else. The very things that one may be desperately seeking often lie within our own hands.

I am grateful to all the open arms that have never refused me when I needed a shoulder to cry on, a touch of comfort, a warm embrace, or an encouraging smile. They helped me see Christ actively in my life every day—a reminder that his love for me is never-ending and never-failing. The goal of Stonegate Ministry's programs is to love each person with that same passion and in that same manner, so that we may also exemplify the love of God.

Natalie Sharpe,
Director of Ministry Programs



THE NUMBER OF FOOD BANK CLIENTS ON THE RISE AGAIN

Christ Church St. James Food Pantry is one of three agencies under the auspices of the *Daily Bread Food Bank* serving southern Etobicoke. It is part of the South Etobicoke Food Network. Located at 194 Park Lawn Rd., CCSJ Food Pantry has been serving the community for over 30 years and is open 3 times a month – the second Saturday and the last two Wednesdays.

Depending on the family size, we provide approximately 3 to 5 days of food each food bank day. The more donations of food and money we are given, the more generous we can be in extending that period.

The strain of another year dealing with the pandemic continues to affect families' financial, mental, and emotional health and well-being. Prior to COVID-19, we served *six to eight* hundred individuals each month, providing a value of *over \$250,000* annually. By the end of 2021, the number of clients attending our food bank had increased 40%. Currently, we are seeing an increase of almost 50% in the number of families we are serving as compared to the period prior to the pandemic. The effects of COVID combined with inflation and soaring prices of gas and groceries has caused even working families to seek the help of our food bank.

Financial or food donations are greatly welcomed and appreciated. Items that are most needed include:

- Canned meat or fish
- Cereal/Oatmeal/Granola
- Crackers and Cookies
- Flour and Baking Products
- Soup
- Canned vegetables or fruit
- Granola/Snack/Protein bars
- Sugar/sugar alternatives, spices
- Beans (either dry or canned)
- Pasta/Tomato Sauce
- Powdered milk/ milk alternatives
- Rice
- Tea/Coffee
- Nutritional Supplements (Ensure, etc.)



Thank you for your continued support,

*Jeannie Martinez,
Food Bank Co-Director*

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@stonegateministry.ca

Stonegate Ministry is a registered non-profit charity.

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

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