



Newsletter

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



A WORD FROM THE BOARD

Given the health challenges faced by several of our key Ministry leaders, we begin with a prayer of thanksgiving for the recent improvements experienced by our Food Bank management team, Gord and Jeannie; a prayer of hope for Natalie, our Director of Ministry Programs; and a prayer of gratitude for Carol-Anne, our ‘Prayer for You’ leader. We pray that Gord’s and Jeannie’s recuperations will continue to bring relief. We pray particularly that a way forward will be found for full restoration of Natalie’s vision.

In light of these losses in leadership, we are so grateful for the people who have stepped up to fill these gaps, enabling essential ministries to continue

to serve those in need. Exacerbated by inflation, the arrival of refugees from the war in Ukraine, and other factors, the numbers needing help have grown exponentially.

Many new volunteers have offered to assist in the Food Bank, not only to handle the increased demand, but also in time for the extra Christmas programs – ‘Toy Mountain’ for food bank children, food vouchers for meals, and turkeys for food bank clients – which are all in full swing.

In Natalie’s physical absence, many of our program facilitators have kept their much-appreciated programs functioning. We are thankful and blessed by the faithfulness of Kathleen Mahaffey and Sue Hill for ‘Circle of Friends’, Bruce Smith for ‘God, Coffee & Me’, and Sue Laboni for ‘Get Reading’. Despite Natalie’s illness and loss of vision, she has been able to keep other programs going online instead of in person.

The welfare of the Ministry itself has also been affected, as we have incurred unanticipated costs and were forced to cancel our annual Fundraiser event. As a result, we anticipate a substantial financial loss in 2022 unless we receive significant year-end support.

So we ask and encourage you to consider a generous donation to the Ministry at this time. Any contribution would be exceedingly helpful, and of course an official tax receipt will be provided for income tax purposes.

- Cheques can be mailed to: Stonegate Ministry, 71 Riverview Gardens, Toronto, Ontario, M6S 4E6
- Or you can donate online by credit card on our website stonegateministry.ca
- Or take advantage of our latest way to donate: by e-Transfer to donations@stonegateministry.ca

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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) Whether or not you are able to help financially, please pray for the Ministry and members of our leadership team mentioned above.

Thank you for your prayer and financial support of the Ministry. We are most grateful.

We also want to wish you and your family a blessed and joyous Christmas as you remember and celebrate the coming of the Christ Child.

Peter Patterson, Chair Stonegate Ministry Board



JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD HAS COME, LET EARTH RECEIVE HER KING!

It is truly a time for joy, peace, and love. And with that thought, I would first like to thank everyone who has taken the time to say a word of prayer, send an encouraging message, or share a supporting thought during my time of challenge. It has certainly been trying, but I am happy to report that I am progressing: I have gained back much of my sight and continue to hold on to the hope of full restoration.

James 5:16 "... pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

This verse has proven to be a comfort these past couple of weeks, as many have shown their love and concern for me. Thank you so much.

Sometimes it takes special circumstances to highlight areas of our everyday functions. Although some of the programs are placed on hold, there are a few that are still functioning at full capacity. I would like to acknowledge the wonderful facilitators and volunteers who have stepped up during this time, ensuring that their programs are still functioning and moving forward despite the circumstances. Truly, they are a testament to their commitment to serve others with the love and compassion of Christ, the true mission of our organization.

I was delighted to receive an unexpected call this week from a previous client of the *Life Coaching Program*. She expressed her gratitude for her experience with us and noted that even though her sessions had concluded, what she gained has transformed her life and prepared her to effectively deal with the challenges that she finds herself currently facing. There are many other testimonies of lives that Stonegate Ministry has touched through the programs we offer.

Your financial support and volunteering initiatives help to make our vision of compassion and care possible. Thank you for believing that we can all work together to fulfill our mission – ***"Working together to build a stronger, kinder and more just community"***

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you a blessed time as we celebrate the coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.



Natalie Sharpe,
Director of Ministry Programs

Click here to watch Natalie's Ministry Update video.

<https://youtu.be/D7yOS7CB3cg>

CHRISTMAS 2022 AT CHRIST CHURCH ST. JAMES FOOD PANTRY

Last year at this time, our thoughts were on the upcoming Christmas season and having to deal with the new Covid-19 variant called Omicron that was on the rise, causing many businesses and services to close again.

Prior to COVID-19, the Food Pantry served six to eight hundred individuals each month, a value of over \$250,000 annually. Today, the number of families attending our food bank has more than doubled and we are seeing more working families in need due to the rising costs of food, gas and supplies. In addition, the food bank has welcomed many Ukrainian refugees, many of whom have young children.

This increased demand, along with inflation and supply chain issues, have resulted in donation shortages from our regular donors such as Toronto Daily Bread and Second Harvest. As a result, we have had to *buy additional food supplies* on a regular basis and to *extend our hours of operation* to meet the increased needs.

This year has been a challenge. The stress can be seen in our suppliers as they try to provide us with as much food as they can. We also feel the stress as we struggle to provide enough food and volunteers to serve the increasing number of families needing our services. *Most significantly, the stress can be seen in the eyes of the families needing our food bank.*



Many families are experiencing difficulties – financial, emotional, mental, physical and health struggles that affect their lives. What keeps us going is the hope that we can somehow get through this difficult time. We at the Food Pantry work diligently to instill that hope as we continue to do God's work in our community. Dedicated volunteers, hard-working staff, guidance from Board members and continuous support from donors and suppliers are crucial to spreading hope and joy to those in need. With the upcoming Christmas season approaching, we are busy organizing our Toy Mountain for the children of our food bank families and ordering turkeys and chickens for their Christmas meals.

On a personal note, I am grateful for the love and support that I feel every day. I would like to take this opportunity to pass on my heartfelt appreciation to you all. This past year has been a year of health concerns for me. Going through three surgeries in one year has challenged my strength, energy, and spirit. Through it all, I have received so much love and support from everyone. Thank you very much for your thoughts and prayers. I am on the road to healing and will be returning soon for the Christmas season.

May you continue to keep hope in your heart, see the blessings and love around you, and know that you are not alone. Happy Holidays and many wishes for good health!



Jeannie Martinez,
CCSJ Food Pantry Co-Director and Great Finds Manager

GOD, COFFEE AND ME... STILL SHARING THE GOOD NEWS AROUND THE COFFEE TABLE

It all began as a *six-week experiment*, way back when the Stonegate Ministry Store was up on Berry Road - **more than 30 years ago**.

The thought was simple:

- *gather with friends who frequented the store for an informal "Christianity 101" series.*

Well, it is safe to say that this has been the longest and most rewarding six weeks of my life! 😊 Since those first few times together, we've likely met and shared with well over 50 people, basically asking 3 questions all the way through:

Who is Jesus

What has He done?

What might my life look like if we became more acquainted?



The weekly gathering has migrated over the years, from the Stonegate Ministry Store to a donut shop, then to another donut shop, and presently at Nimman's Thai Restaurant on the Lake Shore. And the community has grown, not only numerically but in depth of friendship and faith.



We thank God for the opportunity to welcome people as a Stonegate Ministry outreach and we pray many more men and women will pull up a chair in 2023 around the coffee table with us.

Bruce Smith, on assignment to Stonegate Ministry

CONTACT US

By phone 416-255-6282 or by email office@stonegateministry.ca

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

- By cheque mailed to 71 Riverview Gardens, Toronto, M6S 4E6
- Online using the "Donate Now" button on our website stonegateministry.ca
- By e-Transfer to donations@stonegateministry.ca

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

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