



NEWSLETTER

Encouragement, Reports, News & Updates

"Working Together To Build A Stronger,
Kinder and More Just Community"

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

As we entered December, we faced the largest financial deficit that the Ministry has ever experienced. At the same time, with Christmas approaching, families in our Stonegate community also faced more daunting needs.

These included -

- The ever-increasing challenge of food security
- The lack of companionship and mental support for the lonely
- The need for assistance for immigrant families housed in local motels with no food prep facilities
- Family winter apparel, especially for new immigrants
- The hope of providing a few Christmas gifts for their children and a special Christmas meal



Through God's blessing in the form of generosity from you, - our community of supporters, - we were able to provide Christmas toys and Christmas food vouchers for our Food Bank clients. Also, through your faithful giving the Ministry has been able to start the New Year, having met virtually all these needs, and also being very close to meeting our break-even target. Thank you for your faithful support!

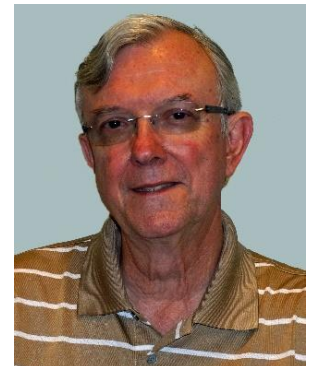
Other community organizations such as Kiwanis and the Greer-Lennox Foundation rallied to the cause, and our community of individual donors not only gave generously themselves but have also encouraged their friends to help out. Many gifts were received in honour and memory of loved ones who had always had a burden for the less fortunate in the communities we serve. Our member churches, *All Saints Anglican, Kingsway Baptist, Kingsway-Lambton United, Royal York United, Mimico Baptist, Mimico Presbyterian, Christ Church St James Anglican* faithfully rose to meet the need.

We are grateful to you all for rescuing the situation and making it possible for our clients, our staff, and our Board to look forward with great hope to continuing to make a difference in our community, and to continuing to see God's will being done!

Thank you for caring and making a difference in the lives of so many men, women and children. May God bless you for your prayers and faithful generosity,

On behalf of the staff and Board of Stonegate Ministry,

Peter Patterson,
Board Chair



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.

GOD, COFFEE... AND ME??? - what's the big deal?

Socrates once said, *"The unexamined life is not worth living"*. The Psalmist asked the Lord to *'search me and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts'*. Paul the Apostle challenged the Christians in Corinth to *examine the sincerity of their faith*. And then we see Jesus, in Revelation 2 and 3, *inspecting* the churches as a general inspects the troops.



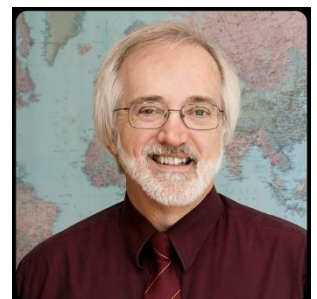
With that in mind, we posed two questions to a few of our friends who come to *"God, Coffee and Me"* as our means of 'examining' this weekly time together.

"Why do you come to the weekly study? And how has it been helpful?"

- I come because I want to get to know Jesus. What better way than to read His Word, memorize a short bible verse and apply what I've learned to my everyday life? I.H.
- We have studied God's word in sight and hearing of strangers (including some who were dealing drugs, others with serious needs). Some joined our group and have become great brothers and sisters in Christ. Others would listen to what was being talked about at a distance. Either way, the seeds of God's love were sown. A voice in the back of my mind would remind me... *"God's word does not fall to the ground or return empty"*. A.C.
- *"God, coffee and me"* is a place where I feel safe. It is where I hear the truth. It is where we can share the gospel with one and another. I once was lost but now I'm found, and it as a lot to do with this bible study. Thanks be to God for this part of my life and all my brothers and sisters around the table. I'm truly transformed. Amen. W.M.
- *"God Coffee and Me"* has been a place for us to unburden ourselves, be listened to, and to pray together for one another. The lessons are always typed up so we can refer to them at home. The group has become an extended family, centered around our study time. A few of us are now involved in the local church because of this coffee shop time together. S.C.
- *God, Coffee and Me* was where I first met what would become my Christian family. I was new to the neighbourhood, so it was an enormous blessing to encounter fellow Christians who really want a relationship with Christ that is alive with the Spirit. I truly would have been so lost without this group and everything that came from it. I thank God for bringing me there. B.V.

He's an amazing God and He is doing amazing things. We give Him praise for this weekly opportunity to meet at *Nimman's Thai Restaurant* on Lake Shore Blvd W. We are thankful for the ongoing support of Stonegate Ministry with this outreach.

Bruce Smith
On Assignment to Stonegate Ministry



CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

This community program has been running for many years and embodies features that are so often lacking in the greater community. Within the Ministry, it has often been cited as an example of how it is possible to tackle challenging situations – such as loneliness, isolation, food insecurity, and the need to belong.

A recent endorsement by a “Circle of Friends” regular shows her appreciation: *“I’m so happy to be part of this Circle of Friends. I always enjoy these weekly events organized by our three wonderful volunteers, Kathleen, Sue & Brandy, and we learn so much! Good food, great activities for mind and body – and best of all, the friendship!”*

Throughout the pandemic, the Circle continued to meet online, and even without the customary light lunch, the discussions and conversation among these friends helped offset the loneliness, isolation, and mental challenges of those times. It also strengthened their faith and gave them something to look forward to when they could once again meet in person.

Perhaps this poem, written by Jean Gural, a member of the Circle says it best:

We share good friendship, food and fun
A special time with everyone.
Some news is good and some not so,
From recent times or long ago

We pray for blessing, then we eat.
With Bible reading more complete.
Gives thought and meaning to our food,
Resolve to honor God so good

Special speakers bring expertise,
Great new facts our knowledge increase.
We sing with Bruce and his guitar,
Hear songs of Gwen our singing star

There is such need for gatherings like these. The Ministry runs six to eight community programs at any given time to provide support such as grief counselling, personal money management, and Bible studies such as *God, Coffee and Me* – see the article on page 2 opposite



We help a Youth Group graduate-
They cook the meals that we just ate.
From PACT they find new jobs, fresh ways
To live inspired, better days

We laugh a lot when we play games.
We try to win, make known our aims.
But luck is fickle, cards are drawn
You score ahead and then it's gone

So we relax, read books to share.
Acknowledge birthdays...yes we care.
So many ladies blend as one
We are together ... not alone!

for...LOVE AND FAMILY

In May 2023, in fear for their lives, David and Eunice along with their three children, fled Uganda to find sanctuary in Toronto. They were admitted into Canada as refugees and the government housed them in The Queensway Motel while their application was being reviewed.

Without much money to feed their children, David walked around the neighbourhood looking for a library to find a computer to search for resources for his family. He happened to come along Park Lawn Rd and found our **Stonegate Ministry and Christ Church St. James' Celebration Sizzler** in full swing. He excitedly called Eunice to bring the children to our event.

Held in the parking lot of CCSJ, our **Celebration Sizzler** provides free food and drinks, games, prizes, entertainment, and fellowship to the whole neighbourhood. We hold this annual event to build community and provide opportunities for people to have a free meal in a social gathering. What a relief it was for David and Eunice because that day they did not have enough food to feed their children.

Since then, David and Eunice and their children have become active members at CCSJ. The family has since moved to a shelter, but they come to Sunday service regularly. The children are involved in the Youth Group and Sunday School; David and Eunice have become active at the church and are also regular volunteers at the Food Pantry.

Last summer, Eunice gave testimony during a church service about how CCSJ had welcomed her and her family. With tears in her eyes, she proclaimed her love for the church and the people who helped her family as their own. Eunice cannot thank the people of the church enough for their generosity. They look forward to church every Sunday because they know they will see their 'family', a family that cares and loves beyond colour, race and blood. I have had the joy of getting to know David and Eunice and their 3 children. It warms my heart to know that Eunice and their youngest child Lian considers me as one of their best friends and I too, look forward to every Sunday when I can see my 'family'.

Jeannie Martinez
CCSJ Food Pantry Co-Director



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You can contribute: - Online on our website www.stonegateministry.ca

- by e-Transfer to donations@stonegateministry.ca

- by cheque mailed to 71 Riverview Gardens, Toronto, M6S 4E6

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