



NEWSLETTER

Encouragement, Reports, News & Updates

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

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Not surprisingly perhaps, springtime is always one of the Ministry's busiest seasons, and this year is no exception – as one can see by the topics covered in other articles in this Spring Newsletter.

Some of these are very traditional ministries, such as the food bank, although the rapidly increasing number of vulnerable families is certainly something new, and the *Celebration Sizzler* which has been going for decades but is adapted each year to meet the current needs of the surrounding community.

We have added other activities to our ministries during this period to help our community cope with challenges that have flared up due to societal changes: these include mental health issues, hopelessness, and grief caused by housing costs, isolation, and uncertainty. Reverend Hugh Reid's ministry of listening and counseling has been enormously helpful to many of our clients. Our 'Get Reading' program, overseen by Sue Iaboni, encourages reading by making appropriate and interesting books available, cost free. It is especially valuable for newcomer families who have little access to reading materials.



Other teams have assembled 'kitchen kits' for the dozens of newcomer families who are placed in motel rooms in our community with none of the equipment necessary to prepare meals, and no knowledge or funds to find and purchase these life necessities.

One of our longtime ministries, which augments those mentioned above, is our provision of clothing, toys, small appliances and other basic family needs to needy families at minimal cost through our thrift store, **Great Finds**.

We are frequently asked about Great Finds which has not operated as a store for three years after our lease was not renewed during the pandemic. Since then, we have visited over a dozen sites that were possibly available for lease on Lake Shore Boulevard, Royal York Road, and The Queensway. During and since Covid, the asking price and demand for store space, especially along the Lake Shore, has increased dramatically, driven by inflation, the proliferation of cannabis stores, and the "Condo Creep" westward from Park Lawn Road.

While this has been frustrating, we have continued to believe that God has a plan for Great Finds and we continue to look for available space.

Recently, an opportunity has developed with a partner of the Ministry that would provide all our needs, not only for store floor space, but also for meeting, office and even programming space. While it looks promising, it will depend on certain required approvals that are awaiting approval by the City.

All these ministries have been made possible by your support, both financial and through prayer, and we welcome whatever you can do to enable them to continue.

With gratitude, Peter Patterson, 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.

WHEN WE BELIEVE...

Quilene spent most of her life on her own. She went in and out of foster care and battled through abuse and addictions growing up. Eleven years ago, Quilene's only chance to live was to get a new kidney. Neither kidney was functioning, and she went through dialysis 6 days a week, 3 to 4 hours a day while she waited on the transplant list for a new kidney. It was a dark time in Quilene's life. She was a single mom with two young daughters who depended on her. The pressure and stress were a heavy burden.

Quilene didn't grow up with close friends or family who could support her, but somehow through this stressful period she ended up hearing the Word of God and it changed her. She started to attend church regularly at Christ Church St. James and her children began participating in youth services. With God in her life, she no longer felt alone in her struggles and her life was turning around.

Quilene finally got a new kidney in 2017 and her health improved dramatically. Today, not only does she help lead youth ministry at CCSJ, she is also an integral part of the registration and administration process at the Food Pantry. She knows almost all the food bank clients by name and helps them with their appointments. She now spends her time giving back to the family she has acquired. It is not a family of blood - but a family of Faith.

I asked her what sustained her as she went through the struggles and challenges in her life, and she said that it was her children and prayer that had enabled her. Quilene is important in my life because every time I see her, she reminds me that no matter what life throws at you, when you have faith in God, you can get through anything. In the dark times of life, prayer can be powerful, bringing healing and encouragement.

Thank you Quilene for teaching me about prayer and for being my friend.

Jeannie Martinez, Food Pantry Co-Director



Meeting the Challenge - Have you ever had family meals in a motel room? Every day?

Refugees are pouring into the Stonegate and Lakeshore area, and most have not been equipped for the harsh Canadian winter or the challenges facing families living in a government-supplied motel room with no fridge, no utensils and only a small microwave.

Here is how Stonegate Ministry is helping these newcomers:

- Most of their food must be nonperishable and easily microwaved. In addition to food supplies, the Christ Church St. James Food Pantry has been able to provide *can openers* for food preparation, and *dishware* that can be heated in a microwave to meet their unique circumstances.
- *Thistletown* and *Humber College Culinary* generously prepare individual pre-cooked meals, and PizzaPizza regularly donate dozens of pizzas. We are so grateful for their donations.
- Over the past winter, our **Great Finds** thrift store dug into their stored clothing and, along with other churches and the Kiwanis Club, provided warm clothing to help these families through the winter.
- Emergency kits containing toiletries, cooking and eating utensils, hats and mitts have been prepared by local churches and distributed to the refugees.

These everyday items and nonperishable food help our newcomers manage their difficult circumstances and ease some of the anxiety as they begin a new life in our country.

Gord Glandfield, Food Pantry Co-Director

A Welcome Addition to the Food Pantry



CCSJ's Food Pantry and Stonegate Ministry recently welcomed Reverend Hugh Reid to their army of volunteers. Hugh will provide ministerial support and counseling for food bank clients, volunteers and staff. His previous role as Coordinating Minister at Kingsway-Lambton United Church and his current role as part-time Minister at Central United Church in Weston have prepared him well for this valued support for the Food Pantry.

We asked him to reflect on his experiences of the last few months.

HUGH'S REFLECTIONS

I've found my time with the foodbank humbling and awe inspiring. The group of volunteers is so kind and generous and there's no judgement of those who are there for support. But there's sometimes frustration. People are people wherever you go. I have been asked to listen to a number of clients who are going through grief and the kind of grief and anxiety that comes with dislocation and an uncertain future. Some clients have requested prayer, and some want a prayer every week. I have also found myself supporting the volunteers and staff, both in the way of giving affirmation and appreciation that is well deserved, and in some counselling for other issues in their lives.

Often, I've been asked to fill in at one of the distribution stations when volunteers are short. When I'm not occupied with that, I'll make the rounds of the stations learning about some of the stories of the volunteers and most often I'll be at the entryway welcoming clients. I've picked up a number of Ukrainian phrases, from the many who are Ukrainian refugees. My accent must be improving because I'm starting to be pulled in to translate for people. The usual reaction is a surprised smile and the greeting returned.

When I'm in attendance, I begin each of the sessions with a bad joke and then a prayer. It puts things in context, and I can sense from the responses of the staff and volunteer team that they know they are participating in a great calling of grace and mercy and they like that to be expressed publicly and to receive assurance that Jesus is with them in their work and their frustrations.

Hugh Reid, Minister



Building a “More just community” .. and a joyful one, too!

Anticipation – whether it is a little child preparing for a birthday party, holidays beckoning, or a surprise gift arriving in the mail, will it be as meaningful as we hope? Will it match or exceed expectations? *Anticipation* can bring both excitement and wonder.



Well, we are anticipating something wonderful again, not just for ourselves but for the *entire community*, namely our annual ‘**Celebration Sizzler**’.

This ‘**Good News party for the neighbourhood**’ has become a joyful tradition. In partnership with Christ Church St James, we are delighted to invite families, couples, and singles, young and old, from all over the area to an afternoon of music, games, activities, BBQ, as well as ‘**Great Finds**’ – our store under the big blue sky!

In the past we’ve welcomed as many as 400 people to this gathering. Why? Because good news is for sharing, and we have great news to share. As you zip through the gospels, it is clear that Jesus loved parties! It seems he was the very LIFE of the party. Why? Because he loved people and the average folks truly loved being around him. What a joy it is for us to make this annual effort in expressing that love through a party...no strings attached. No cost. There will be children’s activities, square dancing, jazz and gospel music, free hot dogs and ice cream, and a huge welcome to all who wander off the sidewalk and into the mix.

Where and when: **Saturday May 25th, 1-4pm, 194 Park Lawn Road (Christ Church St James).**

Can you join us? Will you pray for this event? Would you like to pitch in and help make it all happen? We’d love for you to come and help us continue to build a ‘*just and joyful*’ community together.

Bruce Smith,
On assignment to Stonegate Ministry



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- by e-Transfer to donations@stonegateministry.ca

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

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