



NEWSLETTER

Encouragement, Reports, News & Updates

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

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR...

Stonegate Ministry has entered 2025 buoyed and blessed by the generosity of our supporters!

The Ministry's food voucher program and our participation in the toy giveaway program over the Christmas season were enormously successful. We were able to distribute toys and gifts to over 200 children! We are grateful to Jennifer Smith, who spearheaded the 'Toy



Mountain' setup and distribution as well as to Roberta, Fern, Marilyn, Marie, Dave, Ryan, Owen, Ann, Sue, Victoria, Sara and many others for their assistance. We thank the members of Alderwood United Church and Kingsway Baptist Church, who conducted toy drives, as well as the many donors who dropped off toys for our bountiful collection. We would also like to acknowledge Geosync Consultants Inc., Elisa House, and the Prayer Shawl team from St.

George's on the Hill for providing winter hats, gloves, mitts, scarves, socks and slippers for food bank clients.

In addition, Stonegate Ministry was able to distribute over \$11,000 in grocery gift cards to Food Pantry clients in December, thanks to the generous supporters who provided donations targeted to our vouchers program.

Many people have stepped in to maintain the Ministry's community programs during Natalie's absence. Sue Hill, Kathleen Mahaffy and Brandy Ribeiro have done a stellar job organizing and running the Circle of Friends' activities on the Ministry's behalf. Bruce Smith and Reverend Hugh Reid warmed our clients' hearts over the Christmas season with their continued ministries (Bruce as leader of the 'God, Coffee ... and Me?' Bible study group, and Reverend Reid as Volunteer Chaplain of the Food Pantry.) Thank you both for your caring and compassion!

Due to the Christmas activities happening at the Food Pantry over Christmas, our 'Get Reading!' program was quiet in the final weeks of 2024, but Sue laboni, Jessica Crawford, Anne Somerville and Catherine Bowes were back to work in January, collecting, sorting and giving away much-appreciated reading material to Food Pantry clients. Thank you, Sue and team!

The coming year promises change and growth for Stonegate Ministry. We continue to pursue promising leads for a new store location. We will carry out a visioning project early in the year to fine-tune our purpose and direction. As well, Stonegate Ministry bids farewell to Natalie Sharpe in early 2025. We wish her good luck and good health in her coming ventures.

Over the past few months, we have been blessed with the generosity of our friends and supporters, and by a loving God who lives among us in these kind hearts and moments of grace. We thank you, our supporters, for being such an important part of Stonegate Ministry's vision for a stronger, kinder and more just community.

Moira Grant,
Board Chair



Condo Compassion...

The CCSJ Food Pantry is noted for being a community-supported food bank. Stonegate Ministry is a critical partner providing most of the leadership, volunteers and financial help. However, there is a very special group of supporters that have been quietly supplying food, toys and funds, and it is time that we share their faithful support for the Ministry.

A few years ago, while collecting leftover food from the local school's day care programs, one of the volunteers referred us to her condo building – **The Grange**, on the West Mall, which was considering doing a food drive. When we contacted them, they were excited and grateful to find a needy recipient for the food contributions from their condo. That was *four years ago* and every year since, thanks to their kind and caring generosity, Stonegate has received both toys and food from them requiring multiple trips to pick up.



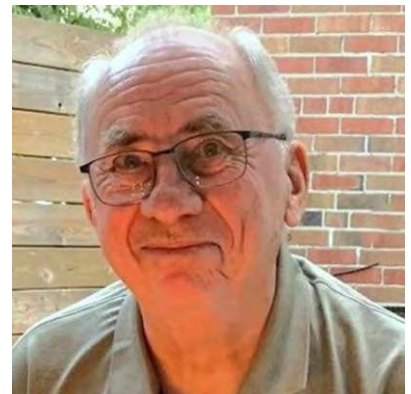
Similarly, *five years ago* we were contacted by **Parc Nuvo** condo near Six Points, who said they had a “box of food” which had been donated by the residents, and could we use it? – *(a question that we love to hear)*. When we arrived, we were surprised to find it was not a cardboard box, but a large crate brimming with food donations. It took two vehicles to take it all away and the residents of **Parc Nuvo** have been faithful in generously donating every year since, the volume always requiring a second pickup.

Ten years ago, one of our faithful food bank volunteers, David Edwards, decided to do a food drive in his building, **Old Mill Towers**. He put a box in the lobby with a sign “For the Food Bank”. When it was full he phoned Daily Bread and said he had a box of food for pickup. They said their minimum pickup was 300 pounds, and since David had no idea what 300 pounds of food looked like, he contacted us and arranged to deliver it. The next year he did the same thing and in addition to the food, two or three residents gave money. The following year he decided to deliver a letter to each of the residents’ mail slots asking for donations. Much to his surprise he received over \$4,000. Ever since that day we have received increasingly generous donations of food and now close to \$11,000 annually from them. What a great example of care and compassion by the residents of **Old Mill Towers**. Bravo David!

These are **three examples** of caring supporters who felt compassion for the needy in our community and simply asked their neighbours to help. It is so good to hear stories of ordinary people caring and giving some relief to our fellow citizens who find themselves in need, often for a short term as they work to get themselves reestablished, but all too often seniors or handicapped who are unable to support themselves - or single parents who struggle to provide healthy meals for their children.

We at Stonegate Ministry are privileged to deliver your donations and hear the words of thanks and sometimes see the tears of gratitude for which we, in turn, thank you with our heartfelt appreciation.

Gord Glandfield,
Food Pantry Co-Director and Stonegate Ministry Board member



THE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Every Tuesday, Circle of Friends welcomes about 14 senior ladies from the Stonegate area to luncheon meetings that feature food, fun and Christian fellowship with activities such as Bingo, book reports and special event celebrations. Stonegate Ministry provides the meals and meeting resources.

The Circle of Friends recently reflected on their experiences with the group:

- “I love the variety of programs ... they are fun. Thanks for helping me...”
- “I like to come to meet with other women, get rid of the stress...and forget my problems.”
- “...a supportive group of good friends... with educational talks or guests and teams.”
- “You feel very welcome with Sue, Kathleen and Brandy. Good food... exercises and talks.”
- “...Extended family, love and friendship.”
- “I enjoy the conversation and fellowship and feel the love in the room.”
- “It’s a wonderful welcoming group...sharing conversation and a meal with others.”
- “I always look forward to Tuesdays with the ladies... I enjoy the fellowship, the friendships...”
- “We have become best friends, sharing each other’s joys and concerns...”

Stonegate Ministry thanks Sue Hill, Kathleen Mahaffy and Brandy Ribeiro for providing a warm and welcoming place in which their guests can gather.

SO WHAT’S SO GOOD ABOUT THE GOOD NEWS?

- a quick update from “God, Coffee and me??”

It’s the fastest hour of my week. No exaggeration. Gathering around the gospel with a great bunch every Tuesday afternoon seems to be a recipe for time travel. Time flies!

Why? Because there is just so much to discover together.

‘What’s so good about the good news?’ That is the overarching weekly question. Once our coffees have arrived, we dive into another episode of the life of Jesus and receive more answers than we could have possibly anticipated.

Most recently we’ve tried to imagine ourselves in the sandals of those first disciples. We’ve been awestruck with the authority and the peace of Jesus. We encounter a man with leprosy, another who is paralyzed, another being severely tormented; we find ourselves straining at the oars during a life-threatening storm; we feel the desperation of a father who has a child on the brink; we ache for a woman who had been marginalized for 12 years....and then we stand back ...as Jesus steps in!

The ‘awe moments’ are many. We pause. We think of people in our lives who are struggling, hurting, or facing enormous challenges. Perhaps it becomes a bit more personal for some of us around the table: job loss, health concerns, problems at home, depression, fear, worries. We find ourselves listening, caring, praying - right there together - in *Nimmans’ Thai Restaurant* on the Lakeshore.

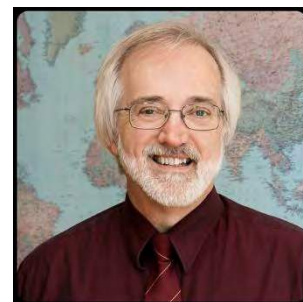


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‘So what’s so good about the good news?’ It is so very personal, so very practical, and so very possible! The gospel reminds us that “Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever”. In knowing that, life suddenly becomes all the brighter and all the lighter.

With you I give thanks for Stonegate Ministry’s continued support and encouragement for this weekly ‘church around the coffee table’. May this little light continue to shine every week, out in the open at Nimman’s Thai Restaurant.

Bruce Smith
On Assignment to Stonegate Ministry



WHERE HE LEADS, I WILL FOLLOW

At the beginning of each year, I used to tell myself all the things that should happen for the new year. I would make assumptions that all the things that *I* want to happen should happen according to how *I* deemed it to be. It took 2024 to make me realize that it doesn’t work that way. What happened throughout last year did not even come close to how I thought it would be. How arrogant I was to think that I could control life that way.

At our last food bank, I was speaking with one of our food bank clients named Mallory. She always greets me with a smile and a hug whenever I see her. She’s open about her life and does not hide her story of struggling with addiction. There were years when she was clean, working in rehab centers and sponsoring other addicts but she again found herself back feeding her addictions.

This past November, Mallory checked herself into rehab. What followed was over two months filled with discovery and recovery.

Her parents didn’t have any religious faith, and she was raised with atheistic and agnostic ideas. Mallory had struggles, questions and doubts, but in rehab, she found God. Mallory started going to Bible study. She started reading the Bible and hearing His Words. She said, “We’re all walking home, and I veered off the path. Now I’m back on it.”

Mallory’s parting words to me were, ‘We’ll see what God has in store’. I’ve come to find peace in that. This is the first year wherein *I* didn’t make plans, *I* didn’t list all the things that *I thought* should happen. Like Mallory, what happens this year is up to the Lord. Where He leads, I will follow.

My prayer for both Mallory and me is to learn from His Word and rely on His guidance.

Jeannie Martinez
Food Pantry Co-Director



CONTACT US

PHONE 416 255 6282

Email office@stonegateministry.ca

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