

Jane Finch Community Ministry



Annual Report
2021



History & Mission



The Jane Finch Ministry is a community ministry of the United Church of Canada within Shining Waters Region. Since 1982 it was situated in the middle of Toronto Community Housing's Firgrove Community. In the spring of 2017 one third of the 380 units were deemed inhabitable, due to disrepair and slated for demolition. Being that the unit the ministry was housed in, was one of them, the ministry office had to move to the adjacent Firgrove Public School in the fall of 2017. Although Firgrove is the immediate catchment area, the ministry provides support and is also involved in initiatives taking place in the larger area of Jane and Finch.

Although the community suffers from issues related to poverty and social exclusion, it is rich in culture with over 70 different languages and dialects spoken and representation from 110 nations. With the United Church's historic involvement in the Social Gospel movement and its commitment to social justice the Presbytery, through this ministry has tried to stand in solidarity with the Jane and Finch community in their struggles and issues since 1982. It is a ministry of presence that journeys with the community in their pain as well as hope and celebration of a more just society.



The role or mission of the ministry is to provide community development and community organizing support, offer pastoral care and do advocacy through coalitions and networks. The Ministry works quite closely with the Firgrove Tenant's Association. Many of the programs and initiatives of the ministry are done in partnership with others and we are grateful for this collaborative approach in building upon the strengths of the community to meet the deficit needs.



Minister's Reflections for 2021

by Barry Rieder

Well, it's been another year in which we have all had to adapt to Covid with myself and staff mostly working remotely by phone and by Zoom. One essential service we could not do remotely was providing food security. I applaud all of the staff and volunteers that continued to operate the food bank and deliver food to those shut in. Through the generous support of donations and our base budget we were able to provide over \$18,000 worth of food gift cards in addition to the boxes of food given to residents of Firgrove.



I must say that this year has been marked as a year of death. In addition to my father passing away in August, previously I conducted funerals for two young men who tragically died the same week, and witnessed the passing of three community icons later in the summer. The one young man died from stab wounds and the other from heart failure. Anne Marie Chow was a community mom/black activist in the community who I think fed half of Jane and Finch at one point in time. She passed away from health-related issues in her mid-50's. I was privileged to be part of a group of people who did a eulogy at the celebration of her life where hundreds attended. Clinton Burke, also a long time Jane Finch friend, died in his mid-50's from health-related issues. A week after his passing, a vigil was put on by Andrea Tabnor and others outside his apartment in which in true Jane Finch style hundreds honoured and celebrated his life. Andrea and I were asked by the family to do the eulogy for this larger than life icon. Just prior to Clinton's death, an incredible young man by the name of Sam Boakye was fatally shot in the Yorkwoods community. A few years ago, Sam started a social employment enterprise in which he hired and trained local youth in construction. This senseless killing hit me and the community really hard.

As violence in the community has continued to escalate, in addition to responding with vigils and pastoral support, the Ministry has continued to look at root causes and spending efforts in trying to increase the economic stability of the community. The Passport to Employment (PTE) program, done in conjunction with the Neighborhood Action Youth Employment Committee, provided 529 certificate trainings for youth. Although Ontario Trillium funding ended in June we were able to garner support from TD as well as the Tippet and Gooder Foundations to keep the program going. In addition to this program, we are part of a Youth Collective Impact project that is trying to refine pathways to employment and careers for young people in the neighbourhood.

This year's festive season event was different due to the Omicron variant outbreak. We handed out boxed meals and gifts at the renovated community space at 5 Needle Firway. Severe winter winds knocked out power in the area. Luckily, with a back-up generator we could hand out the food but residents in the building had no power. Dyanne Marlok, a student doing a Social Justice placement with the ministry, had this reflection on the day. "With each visit to the Jane Finch neighbourhood, I am learning to recognize the resilience, perseverance, and inner strength members of this community have. Although they are marginalized and oppressed people, their hardships and challenges are not what define them." I am blessed to work with such incredible volunteers from the community. It is their strength and perseverance that provides me with the energy to continue to stand with them and work towards a more just and equitable society.

Initiatives of the Ministry



The Ministry provides information and referral to people who drop by the office or phone in. A variety of issues are dealt with such as legal matters, immigration, housing concerns, employment, schooling, skills training, parental support, conflict mediation, access to food, translation, etc..

Pastoral care includes supportive listening, crisis counseling, grief counseling, hospital visitation, conducting funerals, vigils or memorials, house blessings and naming ceremonies.

With support from the United Church's Gift with Vision

- ♦ 200 backpacks with supplies were assembled and given out to children and youth in Firgrove, 2999 Jane St. and Shoreham
- ♦ In addition, the Ministry provided support to a Jane Finch wide back pack program in which 837 backpacks were distributed



With the support of Ontario Trillium Foundation and later TD, Tippet and the Gooder foundations we provided, through the Neighbourhood Action Youth Employment Committee,

- ♦ 529 pre-employment trainings for youth in 5 schools as well as youth out of school and out of work: customer service, high five, food handling, smart serve, fork lift and resume building. With Covid we were not able to provide first aid training and except for fork lifting and one in person customer service training all other trainings were done on line.

With the support from North York Harvest Foodbank and dedicated volunteers

- ♦ 55 families were provided food support with our monthly food day

In addition to this over \$18,000 was provided in gift cards to support people impacted financially by Covid

With support from the Chum CP24 Christmas Wish Foundation, and Humber Valley United

- ♦ 30 families were provided Xmas gifts for 73 children

This year for the Festive Season celebration we provided 140 boxed meals that people could take home and 53 gifts bought for children

Initiatives of the Ministry

Community development initiatives that the ministry provided financial and in some cases organizing support to include: Firgrove Learning & Innovation Community Centre's summer camp, St. Vincent Volcano Relief, Community Arts Hub, Guaranteed Livable Income Vigil and Lawn Signs and Bumper stickers, JFAAP's Fighting White Supremacy webinar, Funeral support for Sam Boakye

Coalitions, Collaboratives and Networks that the Ministry was involved in:

- ♦ Black Creek Community Collaborative
- ♦ Black Creek Financial Action Network
- ♦ Jane Finch Crisis Support Network
- ♦ FOCUS Toronto (Black Creek table)
- ♦ Community Arts Hub Organizing Committee
- ♦ Neighbourhood Action Youth Employment Committee
- ♦ Youth Collective Impact
- ♦ Jane Finch Action Network (Economic opportunities working group)



Church Involvement:

- ♦ United Church's Anti-racism Common Table
- ♦ United Church's Guaranteed Livable Income campaign
- ♦ Sparrow Lake Camp Board

Thanks to all who have contributed either time or financial support for the work of the Jane Finch Community Ministry.

A special thanks to Halima Abdela (Office Coordinator), Lorraine Anderson (Firgrove Learning & Innovation Community Centre's E.D.), Marilyn Quashie, Hazel Reis, Donna May, Margaret Nti, Carlis Dunbar (Food Day Coordinators), Tamara Jeremie (Passport to Employment Coordinator), Andrea Tabnor (Jane Finch Unity) and Mahad Awale (Coordinator of the Back to School Drive) Dyanne Marlok (Social Justice Placement Student) .



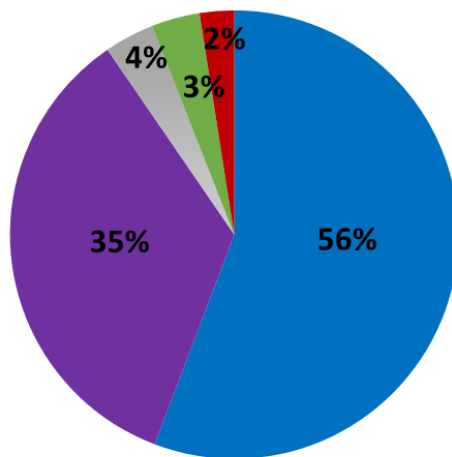
Thanks to the Jane Finch Steering Committee and the Board of the Community Ministries for its support, guidance and governance.

Also special thanks to the former Toronto West and South West Presbytery for creating and supporting ministries like this and for the core financial support from the Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corporation as well as the United Church Mission and Service Fund which allows this ministry to happen.



Funding

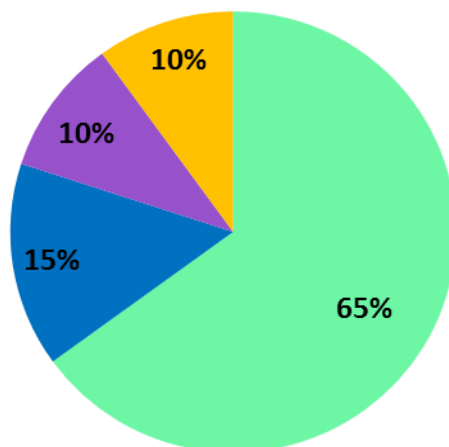
How Jane Finch Community Ministry is funded \$324,290



- Church Revenue
- Foundations & Grants
- Fundraising, Income Generation
- Government & City
- Donations



How Jane Finch Community Ministry uses funding



- Community Development
- Networking
- Pastoral Care
- Advocacy

Funders & Partners

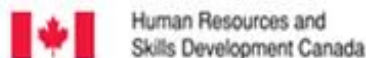


United Churches

Bloordale
Bolton
Grace
Humber Valley
Humbercrest
Kingsway Lambton



Neighbourhood Action Youth Employment Committee



Tippet Foundation



Gooder Foundation



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