

Jane Finch Community Ministry



Annual Report
2020



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 2020

by Barry Rieder

As for most of you 2020 is a year that we most likely would like to forget.

The year began with many of us trying to organize supports for the residents of 235 Gosford who experienced the tragic fire in November 2019, in which hundreds of them were displaced. On Feb.13th we had an organizing/support meeting on a cold winter night. Later that evening the recreation centre in Firgrove caught fire. Unfortunately due to the fire and resulting smoke and water damage it was beyond repair. Being that the Firgrove community is in the process of being redeveloped it will be years before it will be rebuilt. This has been devastating to the community, in that the Centre was the heart of the community where people came to gather for programs and celebrations. Most impacted has been the Firgrove Learning and Innovation Community Centre which occupied the space. Eventually they will be housed in the newly renovated space at 5 Needle Firway.

On the evening of our last income tax clinic, news hit the world about international flights being banned and sports venues cancelled due to Covid. Days later on March 14th we were locked out of our office located in the local school. As we all entered into lockdown we adapted finding new ways working from home using zoom. Some were saying that we are all in the same boat but recognizing the economic challenges of low-income communities like Jane and Finch this is not so. Many residents are outside the boat clinging for their life and like the United States, we saw Covid cases in racialized low income communities like Jane and Finch rise. This only heightened the advocacy efforts of the many coalitions and networks to fight for systemic changes to create a more just society.

One essential service we could not do by zoom was providing food security. I highly applaud all of the staff and volunteers that continued to provide food banks, delivering food boxes and providing hot meals in this challenging time. Through the generous support of donations and our base budget we were able to provide over \$8,000 worth of food gift cards and food boxes.



For safety reasons we were unable to engage our host of volunteers to assemble the backpacks full of supplies this year. But with the capable hands of our summer student Mahad Awale we were still able to administer the program.

The Passport to Employment program adapted and provided many of our pre-employment trainings for high school and out of work, out of school youth. Trainings were on line for high five, food handling, customer service, resume building and smart serve. Fork lifting training took place in person. The talented coordinator, Faduma Mohamed, went back to school in September but was replaced by the capable Tamara Jeremie when her contract with the Black Creek Collaborative ended.

Unfortunately the gun violence in the community did not disappear with Covid. On one evening there were three separate shootings. In helping the community grieve, I conducted two vigils as well as a funeral for victims this year. I salute Andrea Tabnor for her tireless efforts through Jane Finch Unity in trying to curb the violence and bring peace and unity.

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 and Toronto Community Housing

- ◆ 200 backpacks with supplies were assembled and given out to children and youth in Firgrove and Shoreham
- ◆ In addition the Ministry provided support to a Jane Finch wide back pack program in which 489 backpacks were distributed



With the support of Ontario Trillium Foundation we provided, through the Neighbourhood Action Youth Employment Committee,

- ◆ 208 pre-employment trainings for youth: 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 all other trainings were done on line

With the support from North York Harvest Foodbank and dedicated volunteers

- ◆ 30-40 families a month were provided food support

In addition to this over \$8,000 was provided in gift cards or good food boxes to support people impacted financially by Covid factors

Through the support of York University and 3 Charter Accountants

- ◆ 52 Individuals had assistance in filling out tax forms before the program was interrupted by Covid lockdown

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

- ◆ 34 families were provided Xmas gifts for 97 children

Initiatives of the Ministry

Community development initiatives that the ministry provided financial and in some cases organizing support to include: 235 Gosford fire relief support, sponsorship for basketball camp, Black Creek Farm Good Food Boxes, Firgrove Learning & Innovation Community Centre's fire relief, Jane Finch Action Against Poverty Day of Action, Community Arts Hub Press Conference, Guaranteed Livable Income Vigil

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
- ♦ Jane Finch Action Network (Economic opportunities working group)



Church Involvement:

- ♦ United Church's Dismantling White Privilege Working group
- ♦ 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 (Food Day Coordinators), Donna May (Income Tax Coordinator), Faduma Mohamed (Passport to Employment Coordinator) Tamara Jeremie (Black Creek Collaborative Coordinator) and Passport to Employment Coordinator, Andrea Tabnor (Jane Finch Unity) and Mahad Awale (Coordinator of the Back to School Drive).



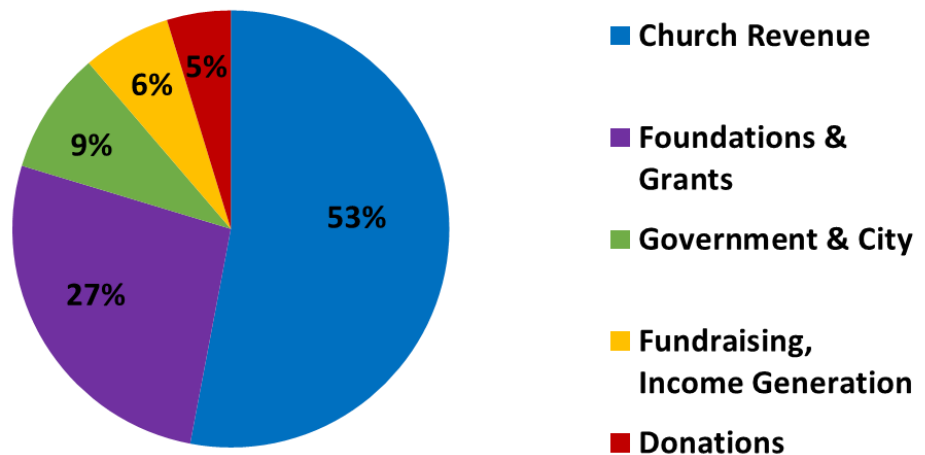
Thanks to the Jane Finch Steering Committee and the Board of the Community Ministries for its support, guidance and governance.

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.

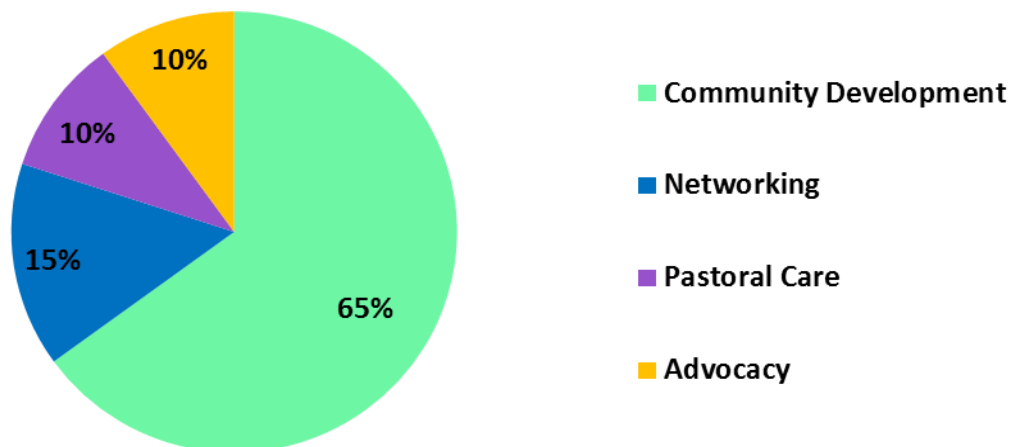


Funding

How Jane Finch Community Ministry is funded \$284,505



How Jane Finch Community Ministry uses funding

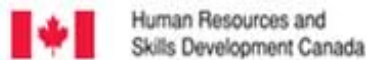


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