

# Jane Finch Community Ministry



Annual Report  
2017



# History & Mission



The Jane Finch Ministry is a community ministry of Toronto Conference's South West Presbytery with the United Church of Canada. 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 2017

by Barry Rieder

In describing this year it was one of transition and uncertainty for the ministry as well as the Firgrove community. In mid December of 2016 the residents of the Firgrove social housing community were invited to an emergency meeting and were told that tenants in half of the stacked townhouses would have to move since the buildings were deemed inhabitable for humans to live in. Not many attended the initial meeting but it was followed up in February with another meeting in which an angry and confused crowd packed the Firgrove Learning Centre with all kinds of questions for Toronto Community Housing (TCH).

About a year and a half prior to this, the Mayor came to the community and announced that 27 million dollars was approved for a Reset project in Firgrove to make improvements to the community. A resident team did outreach to the community to find out priorities and come up with designs. When the architectural designs were brought to engineers it was determined that the buildings, due to years of decay from lack of maintenance, were not fixable and in fact not fit for humans to live in. A proposal was sent to city council in April and regrettably city council approved the demolition of 134 housing units and that tenants would be evicted and rehoused all over the city in vacant TCH units by Sept.. The community was ripped in half and resident households were forced by a lottery system to relocate all over the city. At the end of 2017 there was no concrete plans to rebuild and the units are all boarded up.



All of this stems from the lack of funding passed down from the province and federal government to build new affordable housing and maintain existing housing stock.

Being that the community ministry was housed in a vacant unit in the Firgrove Community we also were forced to move. Luckily we were able to negotiate space in the local Firgrove school and now occupy space in the Model School office.

Unity BBQ, an event that promotes Unity and ending of gun violence, also faced uncertainty for its 8th annual BBQ. It had earlier secured space at the Azzurri Youth Soccer Club, but due to circumstances out of our control we had to change the venue just weeks before the event. Luckily we were able to secure space at the Yorkwoods Plaza just across from Firgrove. The community felt that it was the best event ever.

One thing to celebrate is that the Passport to Employment Program received an extension of their funding for three years to provide youth trainings.

Due to restructuring of the United Church set for January 2019, the Community Ministry was on somewhat shaking ground. Fortunately the South West Presbytery, renewed its commitment to the ministry and have agreed to provide bridge funding into the new regional structure until 2022. In addition to the current chaos that Firgrove faces and recognizing all of the challenges the Jane Finch community endures I am grateful that the United Church continues to stand in solidarity with this community.

# 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 Painters Union and Firgrove Tenant's Association

- ♦ 1,100 backpacks were given out to children and youth
- ♦ Five \$1,000 youth scholarships provided

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

- ♦ 382 pre-employment trainings for youth: first aid, customer service, high five, food handling, smart serve, fork lift and job readiness

The Black Creek Micro Credit program worked with 20 clients in assisting them develop business plans and with workshops provided business info to 150 people

With the support from North York Harvest Foodbank and dedicated volunteers

- ♦ 30-40 families a month were helped with food needs

Through the support of the Charter Accountants Association

- ♦ 101 Individuals had assistance in filling out tax forms

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

- ♦ 151 parents and children attended the Festive Season Celebration which included a meal of curried goat, chicken (Jerked, BBQ'd, Stewed and baked), several rice dishes and salads as well as baked goods. At the event 91 small gifts were given out to children
- ♦ 86 families given 232 gifts for children for Christmas day

In July the ministry provided 32 Eid gifts for Islamic children in Firgrove.

Also during the summer the ministry made it possible for

- ♦ 30 children and parents to go on a beach trip to Innisfil, Ont.
- ♦ 60 children and adults from the Tenant Association to attend a retreat at Sparrow Lake camp





# Initiatives of the Ministry

Community development initiatives that the ministry provided financial and in some cases organizing support to include: Firgrove Tenants' Association Retreat, the Firgrove Learning & Innovation Community Centre's afterschool and summer program, Community Empowering Enterprise, P.E.A.C.H., Kiddy Caribana, Somali Summer Camp, Jane Finch Church Coalition, Unity BBQ.

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

- ♦ Black Creek Community Collaborative
- ♦ Black Creek Micro Credit program
- ♦ Black Creek Financial Action Network
- ♦ Grow Our Grassways
- ♦ Jane Finch Crisis Response Network
- ♦ Neighbourhood Action Youth Employment Committee
- ♦ Jane Finch Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy



Church Involvement:

- ♦ Co-Chairing National Community and Social Justice Ministries Reference Group
- ♦ 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.), Beverly Dwyer, Marilyn Quashie, Hazel Reis ( Food Day Coordinators), Donna May ( Income Tax Coordinator), Abdul Mohamed ( Small Business Resource Development Worker), Faduma Mohamed ( Passport to Employment Coordinator) Andrea Tabnor (Founder of Jane Finch Unity ) and Mahad Awale (Coordinator of the Back to School Drive).



Thanks to the Jane Finch Steering Committee and the South West Presbytery Community Ministries Commission for its support, guidance and governance.

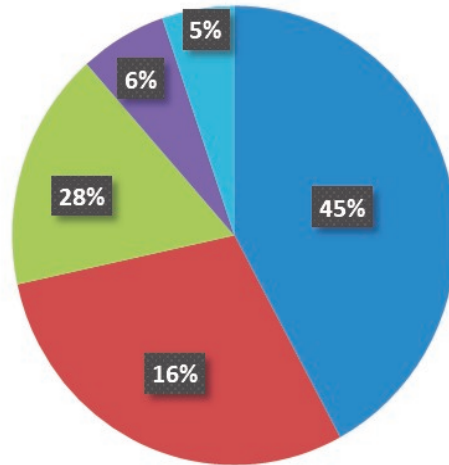
Also special thanks to the South West Presbytery for creating and supporting ministries like this and for the core financial support from the Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corporation as well as the United Church Mission and Service Fund which allows this ministry to happen.



Thanks to all for making a difference

# Funding

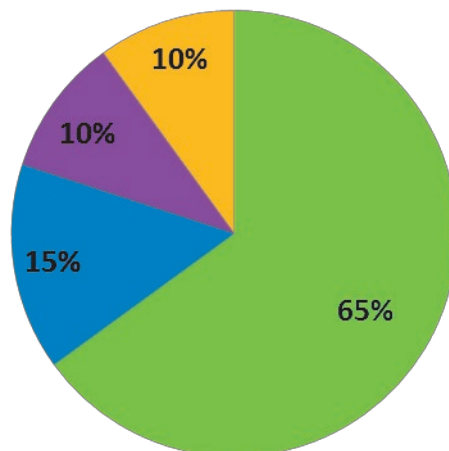
## How Jane Finch Community Ministry is funded - \$292,339



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



## How Jane Finch Community Ministry uses funding



- Community Development
- Networking
- Pastoral Care
- Advocacy

# Funders & Partners



With support from  
54 friends of the



## United Churches

Bloordale  
Humber Valley  
Lansing  
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St. Bartholomew's  
St. James



Jane Finch  
Community  
Legal Clinic



Human Resources and  
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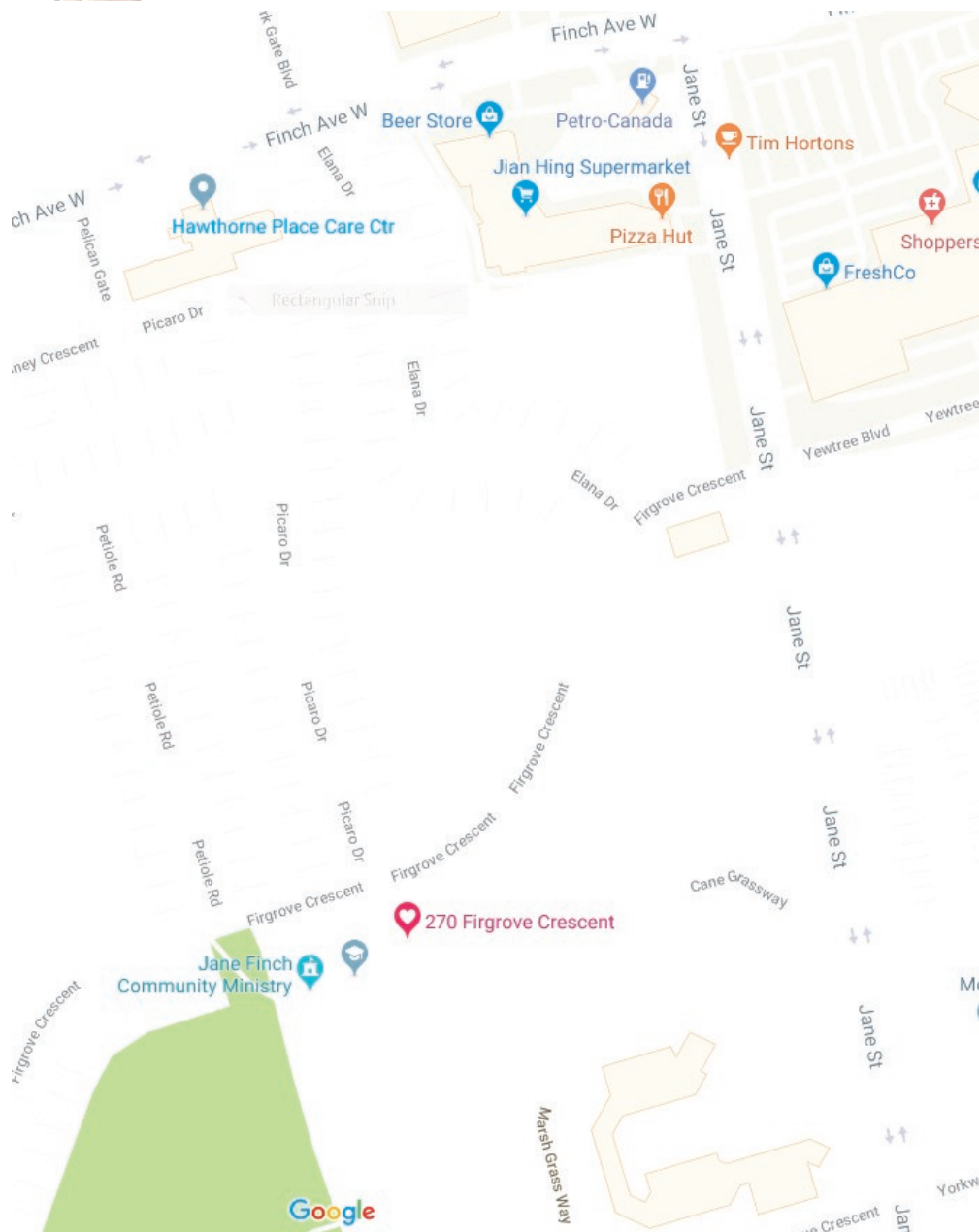
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Toronto Community Housing



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