

# Central Saint John Community Ministry

## Annual Report

*July 1st 2018 - June 30th 2019*



Rev. Terence and Rev. Jasmine Chandra

## Repairing Social Fabric

Who do you turn to when you are going through a rough patch? Who do you tell first when you get good news? We hope that the answers that you give to these questions bring to mind names and faces that bring you joy - for truly our relationships have a lot to do with our sense of satisfaction, fulfillment, and safety.



The city of Saint John has one of the highest poverty rates in the country and we frequently wonder how this is possible with all the organizations and people and resources available to help. Why are poverty rates (especially among children) going up? Why are only 17% of our youth going on to higher education? While there are some obvious reasons we can see - the need for better and more affordable housing, the need for a living wage, the need for better mental health care - these only crack the surface.

It would seem that the true root causes of poverty in our city can only be tracked one person, one family, and one situation at a time. The reason for this is that in many cases physical poverty is rooted in a poverty of relationships - at least in the kind of relationships that are supportive, caring, and mutual. This relational poverty extends beyond the poverty lines, to those that we don't count statistically, but who also suffer exclusion.

As we wrap up our 5th year at Central Saint John Community Ministry, our role in the community increasingly focuses on repairing this torn social fabric. We do this by forming support groups around people who are going through unstable circumstances, by providing safe places for people to get together, by helping people connect to God and each other, by teaching kids that they have an essential role in our community, and by supporting other organizations and groups that are doing the same.

We could not do this work without God's provision which is fulfilled by: our amazing volunteers (Steve, Rick, Mary, Anthea, Marny, Louise, Margo, Corey, Allen, and those helping with Emmaus way teams), office and program space generously provided by Trinity church, and the funding received from individuals, churches, Stone Church, and The Anglican Diocese of Fredericton. Thank you all!

Rev. Terence and Rev. Jasmine Chandra

# What We Do!

## **Emmaus Way - Support for people facing unstable circumstances**

Over the last year we have gone from 2 to 4 Emmaus Way teams and we hope that more are on the way. Each Emmaus way team consists of a group of people gathered around a person who, for various reasons, may be living in unstable life circumstances. They meet together each month, share a meal and talk about how best to achieve their goals. Thanks to the volunteers on these teams support is being provided for 2 single moms, someone being treated for cancer, and our first member who is now at a nursing home. We have had several conversations with individuals, churches, and non-profit organizations about how the Emmaus Way program could help them better care for the people they work with and we hope to see more teams form soon.

## **Drop Ins:**

Our Thursday afternoon community Drop-in has been operating since January 2016 with no sign of slowing down. We keep it running all year - the only exception being the week of Christmas. Those who volunteer and those who attend this program have become close friends. From time to time someone new will come needing help or prayer and we've gotten to know a number of people in the city thanks to this open space for the community.



*Celebrating a  
birthday at the  
Thursday Drop-in*

In addition to Thursday afternoons we were invited by the Brunswick Drive tenant association to provide a monthly drop-in for them in their community room. We've been there 4 times so far and after a break for the summer we will start back in September. There are about 95 units in the building which is designated for seniors. Every time we go we see new people there. Our friends Allen and Keith have come with us to volunteer and play games. We provide light refreshments and draw for door prizes.

## **Prayer and Bible Study Groups:**

English Language Bible Studies: This year we moved from one English language Bible study group to two. The first group meets on Tuesday evenings and explores different themes in scripture. Strong friendships have formed through this group with occasional Pot Luck meals and lots of laughter. The second group meets at the Public Library and is made up mostly of Chinese Immigrants who are curious about Christianity. In this group Terence has worked through an overview of the Old Testament and plans on continuing with the New Testament in the months to come.



The Art of Prayer at Sophia House: Jasmine has kept up an ongoing ministry at Sophia House - a centre for women in recovery - teaching various prayer methods. While being in different phases of faith or recovery the members all share one thing in common - a desire to be closer to God. Connecting to God can be a challenge amidst the din and distractions all around us. It is an immense privilege to take an hour a week and pray together through visual art, music, movement, and the words of those who have gone before us. Through the participants Jasmine has learned a lot about recovery and addiction and continues to be awed by the openness and strength of the women of Sophia House. A big thanks to Ann Gauthier the program director who helps make the Art of Prayer possible. After running 4 sessions of the Art of Prayer, Jasmine looks forward to running #5 in the Fall.

Youth Discipleship group: This group of teens has been meeting for a couple of years now. Not all of the youth who attend have the opportunity to engage in a church on a regular basis, so this time together is both social and theological. Corey Fairbrother and his family have been an integral part of this group. From providing games to sharing cantaloupe and pizza they have helped this program feel like family fun night! Thank you!



## **KIDS LEAD! kids doing community leadership now!**

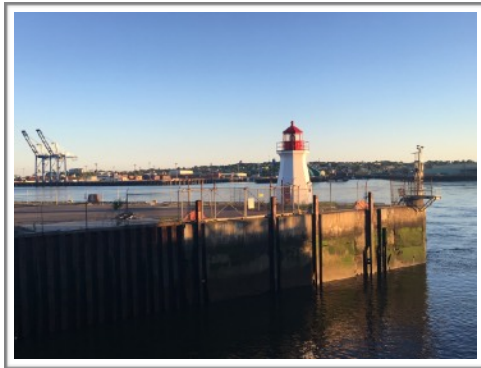
Our pilate program for Kids Lead ran from January to April 2019. We had 9 children participate from various neighbourhoods. We visited and heard from 7 non-profits in the city. They each 'pitched' a project to the kids. The kid chose which projects to help with, we then helped them formulate a plan to help the organization, prepared the plan, and then they went out and served their community. The projects included: gathering food for the food basket, making post cards to support Creative Connections, collecting lunches at a Catapult Coffee shop for Outflow's mens shelter, collecting books and clothes for the Elizabeth Fry Society, helping with a new reading program, and cleaning up a beach and other environmental challenges. At the end of the 12 week program we gathered all the organizations, parents, grandparents, friends, together along with the Bishop of the Diocese of Fredericton and MP Wayne Long to celebrate the kids accomplishments. We are currently looking at running 2 more Kids Lead programs in the near future as well as partnering with the Boys and Girls Club to offer something similar for a leadership program they are starting in the Fall.



## **Partnerships:**

Inner City Youth Ministry: We are blessed to share an office space with both the Elizabeth Fry Society and the Erin Rideout the director of Saint John Inner City Youth Ministry. Our close working proximity has made it easy to partner together on a number of programs and support each others ministry. Erin has helped on Kids Lead! As well as being on the Inner City Youth board, Jasmine helps with the weekly Fit, Fun, and Fierce group that meets at Saint John the Baptist and King Edward School. This mentoring program for grade 5 and 6 girls is definitely a weekly highlight. Of course the greatest joy this year at sharing in Erin's life and ministry was attending her wedding where Jasmine also had the honour of preaching.

Saint John Newcomers Association: Terence has now been teaching English for 3 years at the Saint John Newcomers Association. Through his teaching role he gets the chance to meet Newcomers and Refugees who are looking to improve their English. Some are curious about why he wears a clergy collar and this often creates opportunities for him to talk about his faith. Many of those who attend Terence's English Language Bible Studies first got to know him through his English class.



Safe Harbour: Jasmine continues to be on the Board of Safe Harbour. This year they have looked at how to address the housing gaps for youth aged 19-24. Thanks to the partnership with Housing Alternatives and the tireless work of Kit Hickey, we are looking at being able to house 6 youth through transitional housing in a shared home setting. This housing option will be contingent on the youth receiving support services. There is still ongoing need for emergency shelter access for youth.

Waterloo Village Community walks: We try to be present in Waterloo Village and the South End as much as possible - walking the streets, eating at community meals, and talking to those we encounter. Once a month these casual walks become more focused as we join with various organizations through Avenue B and set out wearing neon vests with "Street Outreach" printed on the back. At these times we are out to see if there is anyone in the Waterloo Village area who needs help. We hear of people with housing needs, health concerns, relationship issues, and those who just wonder why we are walking around in yellow vests. During the walks we refer people to organizations and try to be a presence of safety in the community.

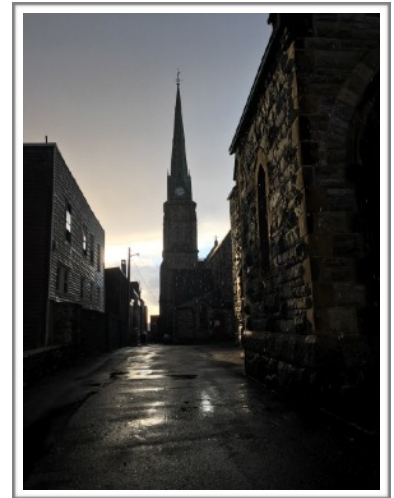
A Community Response to Sexual Harm: During one of our walks around Waterloo Village a conversation came up with Nick Brotherhood (the community Outreach worker for Safe Harbour House) concerning the high percentage of people that we encounter who have experienced Sexual Harm, many as young children. We immediately reached out to other organizations to see if this was their experience as well. These conversations have led to a committee looking at how we respond as a community. The group has decided to focus on making training for Front Line workers available as well as promoting awareness in partnership with the Saint John Sexual Response Team.

Food Security: Jasmine continues to pack groceries for the Food Purchasing Club (affordable fresh produce). It is a good chance to catch up with the activities of P.U.L.S.E (a neighbourhood organization for the South End). Jasmine has become the official grocery bagger and after 4 years of working together the team is so efficient they can pack 20 orders in under an hour.

## **Role in the Diocese of Fredericton and Beyond**

We continue our wonderful partnership with Stone Church. This is where our family attends services and where we preach and celebrate on a monthly basis. This church community really feels like family and we are so grateful for their ongoing support and care.

We also fill in at various churches around the province. This helps us to connect with a number of congregations and keep them updated on our work. This year we have celebrated at churches in Grand Bay, Cambridge Narrows, Gagetown, Woodstock, East Saint John, Trinity Church Saint John, Mission Church in Saint John, Renforth, Rothesay, Sandy Cove Nova Scotia, and Gondola Point.



From time to time we meet with other young people who are interested in the kind of work we are doing and how we are funded. We find these conversations encouraging as we see new opportunities for the church to reach into the community. It is our hope that the kind of relationship and community centred ministry we are doing would spread to other neighbourhoods. We are always happy to meet with individuals, speak with groups or churches, or any other opportunity to share what we do.

## **Support and Funding**

We began our ministry on July 1st 2014 and since then our financial year has run from July 1st to June 30th. This has created a few complications as the Diocesan and parish contributions see the year as ending on December 31st. We decided that we needed to adjust our dates so that our financial year ends on December 31st. As we were able to meet all our financial goals by the end of December we felt that this year we could start our financial year on January 1st like everybody else. Each year we receive \$20,000 from the Diocese of Fredericton and for 2019 we will receive \$11,000 from Stone Church. This funding helps us have a secure base and also helps us to feel connected to the mission and purpose of both Stone Church and the Diocese. We are very grateful for this ongoing support. We are then left with \$54,000 left to raise each year. The money we receive covers both the employee and employer amounts of our salary as well as housing, benefits, and a discretionary fund which we use to run our programs and help individuals who are in need.

**As of July 1st 2019 we have received \$20,100 in donations. We have a further \$5500 that has been pledged, leaving us with \$28,400 left to raise by December 31st 2019.**

If you feel that this ministry is something you would like to contribute to, you can do so through the Diocese of Fredericton by specifying that the funds are for Central Saint John Community Ministry.

For online donations, the Diocese has an account with Canada Helps: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/13778>

Cheques can be mailed to The Anglican Diocese of Fredericton at 115 Church Street, Fredericton NB E3B 4C8 or call (506) 459 1801.

When Jasmine was a child, she would follow her parents around to different churches as they updated them on the mission work that they were doing. She remembers being approached time and time again by strangers who said that they were praying for her. It was a powerful thing to think that people who had never met her before or who didn't know her were willing to spend time every day praying for her. Now as an adult Jasmine still feels at sense of wonder at having amazing privilege of being supported in prayer. Thank you to all those who pray for us and please continue your prayers as we seek by the grace and freedom of Jesus Christ to repair the torn social fabric of our city of Saint John.

If you would like to donate to specific needs, consider the following:

\$20 Supports prizes and refreshments for Brunswick Court Drop In.

\$25 provides Art supplies for 1 session of the Art of Prayer.

\$30 provides material and snacks for 1 participant in our Kids Lead! Program.

\$40 helps with transportation costs for one participant to attend our programs for a month.

\$100 provides emergency care for someone in need (groceries, rent relief, clothing for winter).

\$250 provides material for one round of the Art of Prayer.

\$300 provides snacks and material for one round of Kids Lead!

\$300 helps us send a kid to camp Medley for one week in the summer.

\$1000 would help us provide RESP's for one round of kids participating in our Kids Lead! Program.

\$3000 would help us train Front Line workers in the city on how to help those who have experienced sexual harm.

\$5000 supports one month of our work.



## On a Personal Note



This year has had its challenges - especially with the death of Jasmine's Grandfather and Liza Jackman (the caretaker at Stone Church), dear friends facing challenging illnesses, the uncertainty that goes with trying new things, rejected grant applications, juggling busy schedules and making sure we are engaged and attentive to Naomi and Sam, the unmet housing needs in Saint John (especially the lack of effort to accommodate young families Uptown), the constant frustration of seeing those in need remain in need year after year like the friend who left a violent relationship only to return again.

But we have also seen many hopeful things develop! We are so grateful to be in this ministry as a family and to see our children growing up right in the middle of it. We have amazing neighbours who care for us and who keep the children stocked in treats. We have found joy in a number of things. The Kids Lead program taking shape and the wonderful experience of seeing kids understand the community better. The individuals in our Emmaus Way teams are forming deeper friendships and are being cared for. A new committee formed to respond to those who have experienced sexual harm in our community is making progress and looking to bring much needed training to front line workers in Saint John. And somehow through it all we see glimpses of answered prayers, moments when God has somehow been able to work through us. We are thankful for our extended family who share their wisdom and support. We are so grateful for all the people in Saint John and beyond who walk with us through our ministry, those who eat with us, take time with us, yell out to us from street corners and passing cars, and those - like you - who read our newsletters and long annual reports. Thank you for making another year possible!

**We are turning 5!**



**Come Celebrate 5 years of ministry  
Uptown! You are invited to join up  
on September 22nd 2019 to celebrate  
the 5th anniversary of Central Saint  
John Community Ministry. More  
Details coming soon!**