

# PENNIES AND SPARROWS

Central Saint John Community Ministry - Terence and Jasmine Chandra

## New Program!

In Partnership with Inner City Youth Ministry we are beginning a new program: "Family Connection". This program will deliver boxes with food, board games, crafts, books, and discussion cards for families to eat, play and spend time together. The first boxes are going out at the end of January 2021.



## Waterloo Village

The Waterloo Village neighbourhood, where Stone Church is located, is one of the priority areas in Saint John. Jasmine has recently been appointed the chair of the Waterloo Village Association. Working closely with the community navigator has helped Jasmine keep up to date on the concerns of the neighbourhood and help work on solutions and potential projects.



## Welcoming the Unwelcome in Unwelcome times

Behind the cloth face-mask I know for certain that Manuel is smiling. I can tell from his eyes that it's a broad, guileless smile borne of a pure and utterly authentic sense of delight— spontaneous, innocent and totally unfeigned. Rarely does one see such an expression in the face of a man in his mid-fifties— let alone a grown man *with a criminal record*, recently released from incarceration and presently serving time at a halfway house. And yet, this radiant smile seems to be Manuel's fixed and natural expression— an expression that remains unchanged even as he hurries out the main doors of our church, anxious to get back to the halfway house and sign in lest he find himself in violation of parole.

Under normal circumstances, Manuel and folks like him would be able to access a variety of community services and programs— programs that would provide him with support and a sense of belonging as he makes his transition into a new life outside of prison. However, in the Year of the Virus, many of these programs have been scaled down, simplified, put on hold indefinitely or terminated. For this reason, people like Manuel receive significantly less support thereby putting them at a greater risk of reoffending. In fact, I'm aware of at least two men who have violated parole within the last three months and have found themselves, once more, in jail. But we do what we can to help.

When Manuel first arrived in our church sometime in mid-September, he was immediately drawn to the large conga drums, resting at the foot of the chancel steps. Still sporting that wide, guileless grin, Manuel explained that, in another life, he once played the congas with an afro-cuban musical troop and that he desperately missed the simple pleasures of being able to



## Stone Church Laundry

Stone Church offers the use of 2 washers and 2 dryers for free. Detergent and dryer sheets are also provided. During Covid we have had to move to offering the service by appointment only. Carl, who uses the laundry regularly told us recently how much it helps alleviate some of the stress in these difficult times. He mentioned that he had to throw away clothes when we were closed due to COVID 19. It's for people like Carl that we continue this service while doing all that we can to keep the process clean and safe for everyone.



## Sophia House

Jasmine was welcomed back to Sophia House Recovery Centre to do a session on prayer beads. The session focuses on looking at our relationship with God and praying through the good and bad times we face.

bang out a rhythm. So, he wondered, could he come to the church every once in a while to practice? Naturally, I said yes. Therefore, at least once a week, Manuel will sign-out of the halfway house and spend the entirety of his pass in our church chancel, going crazy on the congas while I sit in my office, trying to concentrate on the text of my next sermon. Before he finishes up, we usually sit down for a few minutes in my office to chat about life. Without fail, he asks me to pray for him and, without fail, I comply, being sure to end my prayer with a blessing — making the sign of the cross in the air above his bowed head (a gesture that, I hope, resonates well with his Catholic upbringing).

I like to see this as our unique and humble way of offering musical therapy to an ex-convict in desperate need of something to do with his time. More importantly, however, I see it as a way of expressing welcome and hospitality to a person who, because of his complicated past, finds himself unwelcome in many social settings.

To me, this is what this season of incarnation is all about; namely, welcoming Christ into our homes and into our lives by welcoming people like Manuel. After all, if there is anyone who comes to us in need as a stranger it's Jesus. And, if there's anyone who knows what it's like to be turned away, brushed aside and rejected, it's Jesus. As the author of John's Gospel writes, "He came to what was his own and his own did not receive him" (John 1:11). And, as we all know from our earliest childhood recollections of the Christmas story, when a tired and desperate Joseph and Mary finally arrive in the little town of Bethlehem they find, much to their consternation, there was "no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

But there are those who *have* welcomed the Messiah. The Lord, for example, found himself a frequent guest in the humble home of the sisters, Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. Indeed, as it says in John's Gospel, "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12). May we all be called "children of God" this Christmas season by welcoming people like Manuel into our churches, into our homes and into our lives. *By Rev. Terence Chandra*

## How our Teams have Welcomed Others

Over the course of the past few months, we have continued to run the Emmaus Way— a program we created roughly three years ago which places teams of support around individuals and families struggling through unstable life circumstances. For the most part, these support teams consist— not of professionals— but of ordinary people like you and me: grandparents, neighbours, friends and churchgoers. At present, there are 3 Emmaus Way support teams running:

1. A team of support created to help a recovering alcoholic remain sober. This team offers him prayer, moral support along with regular transportation to A.A. meetings and recovery groups. The core member of this team (i.e., the person receiving help) is even considering looking into a longterm, residential treatment program.

2. A team of support created to help a single mother with a new baby. Like the team mentioned above, this team also provides basic care and emotional support. They help get groceries and other essential items, provide both mother and baby with regular drives to doctor's appointments, go for walks together. The team has been really wonderful at providing emotional support, encouragement, and when asked - advice.
3. A team of support created to help a refugee family. This team consists mostly of people from our church community— volunteers who have devoted a great many hours to the complicated task of helping a large family of 8 begin the process of settling into a new country. They've lined up housing (a very difficult task given the current state of the housing market!), helped them find a family doctor, taken their children to the dentist appointments and filled out pages upon pages of government documents. Special thanks to Jacqueline Derrah, from the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, without whose help this support team would be impossible.

Presently, we are looking into the possibility of launching 2 new Emmaus Way teams: One around Manuel (the man whose story I recounted above) and another around a man who goes in and out of homelessness and who is struggling with addiction.

### The Importance of Food Security

Food Security has been an important part of meeting the needs of the people in Saint John. While there are Food Banks and daily meal providers, ensuring people get healthy nutritious food is a complex problem. The Food Purchasing Club has been a great program to be part of. It provides fresh produce at reduced pricing. The orders are packed and delivered out of P.U.L.S.E an organization that serves the South End of Saint John. Their pantry also helps supplement food needs. There is still much to be done from looking at how to source food locally to ensuring that people have the tools and skills to cook healthy meals. Through discussions with groups and individuals we are able to provide support in looking at long term solutions to the food needs in Saint John.



*Groceries  
being packed  
for the Food  
Purchasing  
Club*



## Ministry to Newcomers

Over the course of the past few months, Terence has continued his English language ministry to newcomers. Most of this ministry takes place online, whether through Zoom or Google Live. Every Tuesday morning, for example, Terence volunteers with the Saint John Newcomer's Resource Center, hosting a virtual English conversation group for students of all levels. This year, for obvious reasons, the number of participants has been a bit lower. However, the conversations have been just as lively and interesting as they always have been.

Terence also continues to run his weekly English Language Bible Study— a ministry which provides an opportunity for English language learners to not only hone their conversation skills and build their vocabulary but learn more about the scriptures. Recently, Terence had the surreal experience of hosting a Bible Study wherein one participant was halfway around the world— quarantining in China! She had been living in New Brunswick for several months but needed to return to home on business. Whilst there, she missed the Bible Study group and— at 6:30 AM Shanghai time— actually managed to join in the discussion via Zoom. Regardless of which generation you were born in, you have to be amazed at the nature of this technology.

## TO SUPPORT PENNIES AND SPARROWS

We appreciate all those who have committed to praying for us - and we welcome your prayers for ways to keep connected during this time when many are isolating or withdrawing. Please pray for the mental health of the community and the well being of individuals and families in Saint John.

While we receive some funding from the Diocese of Fredericton and Stone Church, we largely rely on donations to make our work possible. Thanks to generous donations we have met our financial goals for 2020. We are very grateful for God's provision! Thank you to all who make our work possible!

We still have plans and projects that will need funding for 2021. If you feel that this is something that you would like to help with, tax receiptable donations can be made to the Anglican Diocese of Fredericton with a note that funds are to go to Pennies and Sparrows. This can be done through Canada Helps (using the drop down tab on the page) <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/13778>, by cheque sent to Stone Church - 87 Carleton Street Saint John NB E2L 2Z2, or by phone (506) 459-1801. Feel free to contact us at any time: [jasminechandra@gmail.com](mailto:jasminechandra@gmail.com); [tjchandra1@gmail.com](mailto:tjchandra1@gmail.com)- (506) 721-8053.

