



Hampers a labour of love

“...by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said; 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'”. I'm sure the Apostle Paul didn't have preparing and delivering Christmas Ham-pers in mind when he gave us these words, but they were once again proven true as Hughson distributed 278 hampers in the North End and a few to other areas of Hamilton.

During the week of December 16 to 21 about 200 different people, from 11 different churches, helped us give toys and boxes of food to individuals and families. It truly is a wonderful blessing to be a part of this very practical ministry each year.

Preparation starts long before this week of course, but on Monday the final touches are put to our Toy Shop which is open on Monday & Tuesday evening and Tuesday afternoon. Toys, both donated and purchased, for children from babies through age 12 (13-18 year olds receive a \$25 gift card to Giant Tiger) are put on display. They are arranged according to age, gender, and identified with our “points tag”.

We also have puzzles, books, cards, stuffed toys, small games and other assorted small items for stocking stuffers. Another table has new hats, mitts, and a host of other donated knitted items for babies. Parents are welcomed into our hospitality suite as they wait for their turn to shop. While waiting our Hughson hosts invite them to have some refreshments and engage in conversation. Then it's off to shop. For each child they have 20 shopping points, stocking stuffers and clothing if needed. Before leaving they can have it all specially gift wrapped by our team. What a blessed din of noise, confusion and overall happiness!

Almost 200 children received toys this year and we had some great conversations with parents about what Christ-mas really means to us.

Wednesday and Thursday evenings are when the boxes of food are put together. An amazing human assembly line is formed as people carry boxes from station to station filling them with canned and dry goods. Several churches collect items for this assembly line each year, and many financial donations are given so that we can order enough items to fill each box. On Friday another crew sorts the boxes out for delivery, and on Saturday we're ready for delivery! On the way out the door our delivery team picks up a turkey, a bag of potatoes and a bag of apples for each family. What a blessed bounty! This is the really fun part when people get to see the delight in people's eyes as they arrive with their special Christmas package.

And we're not finished yet. Everyone who received a hamper also received an invitation to a series of Bible Studies introducing the basic ideas of the gospel and Christianity that will run in February. We are just starting to follow up on those invitations. Pray with us that the fruit of our labours will be seen as new people enter the Kingdom of God very soon.

God is at work in the lives of our youth

In the beginning of December our church was able to celebrate the work God has done in the life of Rick, one of our Sr. High students. Rather than tell you his story, Rick agreed to let us share his testimony from his baptism so that you can read about the greatness of God in his words.

“Hello church family, my name is Rick Chang. I am 16 years old, and I go to Westdale Secondary School. I was raised in a Buddhist household with my single mom and my three siblings. My parents are divorced, and my dad struggled with alcohol and gambling. My journey with God began in third grade, where I spent my Friday evenings at one of Reach Forth's programs called Sports Night.

I didn't start going to church until grade 7. That's when my friend Mike invited me to his church, Streetlight. I spent a lot of time at the church. I spent my Mondays at their cadets program, Tuesdays was for catechism, Wednesdays was volunteering, Fridays was a Bible study and Sunday was for morning and evening service.

In Grade 8, I started to idolize other things in my life: basketball, school, a good reputation, secular success, and romantic relationships. I stopped going to Streetlight, and I was distant from God. During that year, I really did believe I was the best basketball player in the city. I was waking up at 5:00 am to train and spent my weekends at McMaster playing against college students. I felt at the top of the world. I was registered to Sir Allan Macnab, I kept in touch with my future teammates, we wanted to create a super team, get scholarships, and just change our lives for the better.

“Put all your eggs in His basket and just watch Him work in your life. Things might not end how you want them to but God has a bigger and better plan for your life.”

Everything changed when I broke my arm. I broke it two weeks before graduation. I will never forget that moment, because it was a blessing in disguise. I spent the weekend at the hospital and when I got home I felt so empty and unfulfilled. I lost everything I cared about, and I just felt the Holy Spirit telling me to turn to God. But I never had the courage to go back to Streetlight.

As you would imagine, it was difficult to grow in grade 9. But last year, one of my closest friends, Chloe, invited me to a Friday Night Live event. Ever since then I've grown and grown in my faith in God.

Now I am ready to commit my life to God. The gospel in my life is God making a way back to Him after all of my idolatry and disobedience. I wanted everything that the world tells you to chase. Go make a million dollars, go buy that mansion, chase after that job promotion, go buy that expensive pair of shoes, go get that scholarship, go talk to 50 different girls.

I wanted that abundant, lavish, perfect lifestyle but I swear nothing compares to living for God. He created you, he loves you, he has plans for you, he wants to bless you and he wants transform you. He will give you the Love, the Truth, the Purpose, the Identity, and the Joy you are looking for through other things. You don't need to have it all together to follow God and it is all possible because of his son, Jesus Christ. If he can forgive me, he can forgive you.

Maybe you're in a similar position as I was in grade 8. Maybe, just maybe, you are feeling unfulfilled and your life is falling apart. I'm telling you to turn to Him and trust Him. Our strength is nothing compared to His. Put all your eggs in His basket and just watch Him work in your life. Things might not end how you want them to but God has a bigger and better plan for your life. He used something as small as a broken arm to reshape my life. He can do the same for you. Before Derek drowns me, I want to thank God for His endless provision, His amazing grace, and everlasting love. I'm ready to declare Jesus as my Lord and Saviour and let my actions reflect His love for us. God has been sooo good to me and I pray that He uses me for His glory. Thank you for listening to my testimony and God bless. Let's do this Derek!”

Isn't God amazing. Please pray with us as we rejoice what God has done, and anticipate all that He will continue to do in the life of this remarkable young man.



Rick shares his testimony at our recent Hard Hat event

Continued from front page

We thought of 'Susan' who was a single mother with two children who has moved to another part of the city for more affordable housing whose children didn't fit in well at the new school. The closest store to her was now was a Shoppers Drug Mart instead of a Food Basics so her food costs escalated. The transit in that area makes infrequent runs. Physicians there seemed unwilling to tackle her family with their complexities, so they continued to travel downtown for care.

Indwell gently told us that we could talk all we want about the properties we don't own but to ultimately make a difference now, we needed to talk about the property we do own. As a congregation we halted our project and decided to put up a new building that would allow for 45 apartments in the building for those that needed affordable and supportive housing. Neighbours and friends who have been under housed and have struggled with homelessness can move in as well as some who've been displaced.

As God has called His people to be more concerned with Creation Care than anyone else on the planet, this building is being built to a



Passive House design where we are told the average apartment will only need to spend between \$28 and \$32 annually on heat. It will be one of the most environmentally friendly buildings of its kind built in North America when it is finished. That impact will be in the environment with less toxins being emitted, as well as by the residents, who will experience a warm place to live at a fraction of what they've paid previously.

Now over 320 people gather to worship with us on a weekly basis and we are ministering to over 400 individuals and families a week through ministries and programs where they hear the gospel.

We believe God will expand our ministry to the neighbourhood with this new facility. Adding in housing initially raised the cost of the building to \$16 million and then to \$21 million with escalation and tariff wars. We are amazed that God has provided \$15.8 million so far and are praying for the remaining \$5.2 million.

We are praying God will use this facility as a place where He will be worshipped, where believers will grow, where unbelievers will hear the gospel and be saved, where some of the city's poor can be housed, where other ministries can come to see a model of ministry for their community and where urban church planters can be trained to reach the urban cores of the cities of Canada.

Thank you for your partnership with us! We could not minister and care the way we do without partners like you.

The Hughson/Indwell passive house church with 45 units of affordable housing designed by Invizij Architects is coming together. Most of the Klear-wall windows have been installed as well as the air/vapour layer. Next up – six inches of mineral wool insulation and then the cladding in the exterior. We can't wait for you to see it at our upcoming Hard Hat Party on February 27.

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Donations will be used as restricted with the understanding that when the need has been met or changed by the HSBC Board, the remaining funds will be used where most needed.



PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Hughson adapts to and accommodates changes

Changes. When I arrived at Hughson St. Baptist Church in January, 1995, this community, according to stats Canada, was the third poorest in the country. The North End was neglectfully and catastrophically poor. We witnessed heartbreak around us daily. There were about 50 of us meeting at the church, reaching out with a variety of programs, into this poor community. We handed out Christmas hampers to 20 families and started a soccer league with 50 children.

Part of the building was over 150 years old and the church rested predominately on a dirt basement. We began to grow. God was at work saving some people and others came to join in mission. Our passion was to be both a place where people could experience God and He would save them predominately through relationships built with ministries and programs, as well as being a place where believers could grow in their faith through the preaching of the Word, small groups, seminars and classes.

Several of us moved into the neighbourhood as we longed to live near those we were ministering to. In 2005, we realized we needed to do something that would be both sustainable and long-lasting as there were about 140 of us meeting in a space that held 140 in a facility that needed extensive work.

Every architect and engineer we brought though the building advised us it wasn't cost effective to renovate it. We grew to 180 using an overflow system and then began meeting in the local school.

Our community was also changing at the time. There were plans for waterfront development. Rents increased. Torontonians began to move in. Some of the working poor and cyclically poor families, who had lived in the community for generations, were being forced to move out to other areas where the supports they depended on either didn't exist or were unfamiliar to them.

There are positives and negatives to centralized poverty. One of the positives is that supports the poor need to survive are at a close proximity.

The North End has an outstanding Health Center focused on caring for the marginalized, food banks, housing supports, programs around debt management and budgeting as well as translation supports and great public transit. As people were being displaced throughout the city, they didn't know how to navigate the changes from a neighbourhood where the school their children attended didn't care about designer clothing or own electronic devices at a young age to schools where clothing brands are important and most children had the latest devices. Many wanted to move back.

God had provided the finances so we could purchase a property at 500 James St. We were going to renovate the building into a 400 seat multi-purpose worship and ministry centre and had the permits in hand when we asked Indwell the question about how to care for those being displaced from our neighbourhood.

We thought of 'Frank' who had now moved to a distant part of the city where there were no food banks or programs to help him cope on a day to day basis as he faced a variety of mental health issues and kept busing back to our neighbourhood to be a part of the programs here.

continued on back page



Join us for our fundraising
Hard Hat Party on February 27th
at 6:30 pm at 500 James St. N.
(see enclosed invitation for details).
You are welcome to invite friends.