



Pete Wierenga

PETE'S PEN

It's clear that everyone has been touched by the Covid-19 challenge and Niagara Christian Gleaners is no exception.

In mid-March, when things were escalating, we had to make the difficult decision to suspend volunteer involvement until a later date. Although our food plant met all the criteria as an essential business, the wisdom was to pause and make a plan for a restart that could protect our valuable volunteers and staff. Probably the most difficult part of this "shutdown" was the obvious growing need for food aid on the global scene as well as domestically. With limited replenishment opportunities we soon saw over 2 million servings of food aid in our warehouse be depleted as we made some significant shipments. At one point we were down to less than 6 pallets of food in our warehouse that wasn't committed to!

Thankfully, through creative ways, NCG never really did shut down completely during the 6 weeks that the volunteers were absent. We were able to bring in fresh mushrooms in larger numbers than before. The mushrooms require limited handling and with the quantities we were receiving we were often running our dryer on a daily basis. The familiar hum of the dryer was encouraging and the fact that meaningful work was still happening at the plant supported the message that "doing something was better than doing nothing". All of this in the context of the growing need for food, particularly in those parts of the world that are hardest hit by the pandemic. We were also able to share some of our "surplus" fresh produce with some local food banks who were also feeling the strain of growing food requests. A joint shipment with Southwestern Ontario Gleaners sent 1000's of

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FOCUS ON TRANSPORTATION

Niagara Christian Gleaners (NCG) has been incredibly blessed by some key corporate partners who have impacted us in various ways.

One of the key "pieces to the puzzle" in our operations is the fresh produce transportation. At the very beginning NCG began making plans to either purchase a truck of our own, or rent one as needed. We fully expected to have to do this because we felt this may be the only way we would be able to receive the produce donations that were being offered to us. Thankfully that has not been the model that we have been fortunate enough to work under. In this issue of our newsletter we'd love to share the story of two of these generous mission partners and how they have contributed to the success of NCG to date.

BOSTON CREEK TRANSPORT

Providentially, I was introduced to an amazing family business before we began operations in the spring of 2018. I met John Van Doorn and his wife Helen at a Grandparent's Day event at the local Christian School. They, along with 4 of their 5 grown children, own and operate Boston Creek Transport, based in Hagersville, Ontario. In conversation with them we got around to talking about the upcoming plans for NCG. It sparked their interest mostly because they have more than 40 years experience in the produce transportation business. With 20 trucks and more than 150 reefer trailers, they meet the needs and demands of

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pounds of our fresh potatoes to some of our Northern Ontario and Manitoba communities that are challenged with food security.

With some rather stringent new volunteer guidelines we were able to have a few of our volunteers rejoin us beginning Monday, May 4, 2020. As an effort to protect those more senior volunteers whom we love, we had to impose a temporary age cap. We know that for some, this restriction is very difficult because of their desire to be part of the special work that the gleaners do. The beautiful experience of community at NCG is another thing that is sorely missed by many. We are praying for the day when things might normalize and we can involve as many as possible in the work of the gleaners and to do it as safely as possible.

Probably the most noticeable restriction at this time is the cap we have on the number of daily volunteers at the plant. We have pegged 40 as the most manageable number that allows us to somewhat keep our distance without any unnecessary crowding. It is amazing what we still accomplish with the lower volunteer numbers. We've been able to ramp our dryer loads almost to max once again. With the help of some great produce donations, our incoming produce numbers continue to track ahead of last year - even with the Covid-19 slowdown. Our fellowship time at 10:00 every morning continues to be very special. We are regularly sharing a good laugh, the atmosphere is joyful and God is glorified in the body of Christ we represent. Our desire is to show the gospel in action in a place that is unified in our love for each other and our neighbors. Blessings to you all, PW

BOARD REPORT

Here at Niagara Christian Gleaners, the last 3 months have been interesting times for all of us. It has been a great time for many to reflect on what we really need and what our priorities are. The general consensus is that most of us have more than we need. Thank you to all who continue to support our work of sharing our food and time resources with those less privileged. We ended up reducing our operation for just over a month in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are thankful that during this time, our management staff of Pete Wierenga, Rick Batenburg and Warren Hoeksema kept our dryer running with produce that required less manpower, such as mushrooms. You can read more details in Pete Wierenga's report.

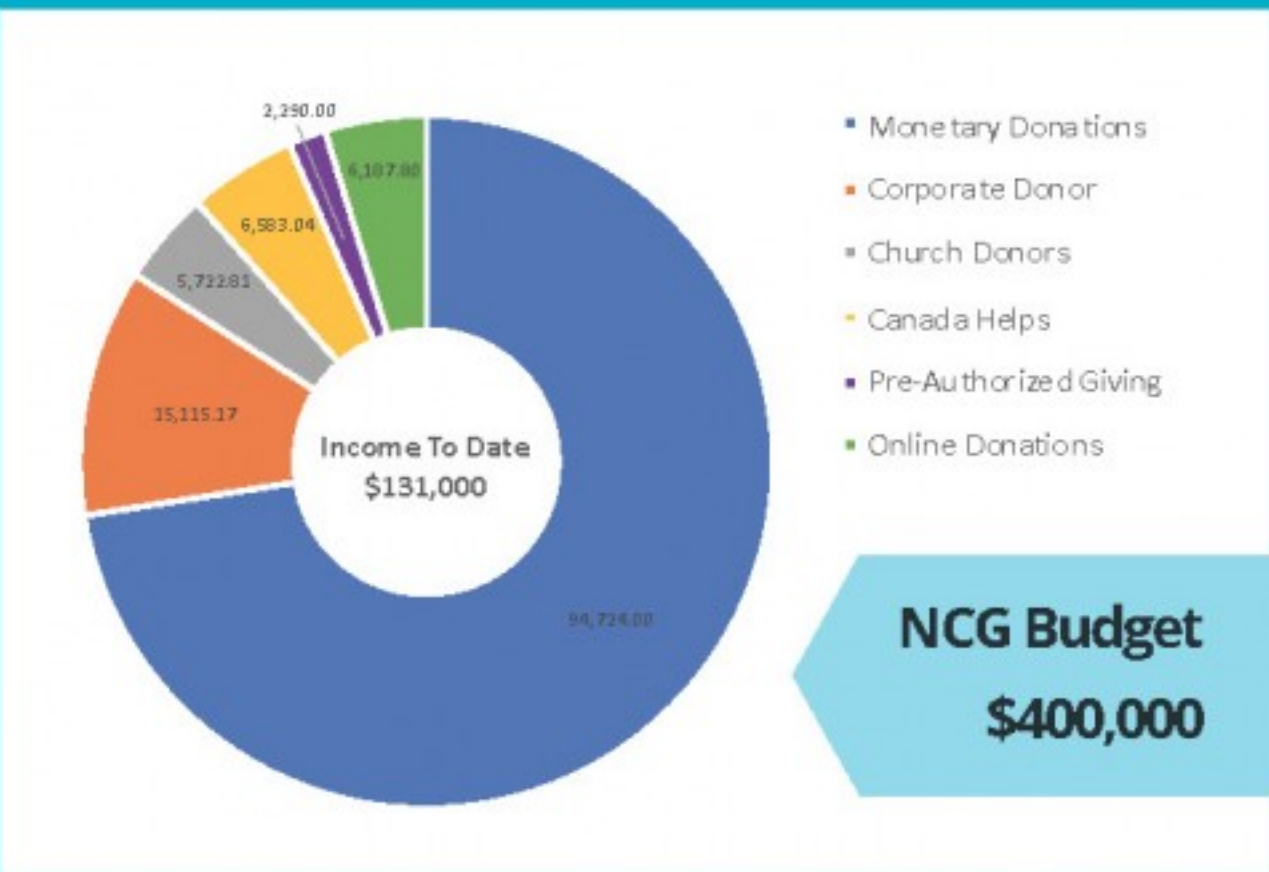
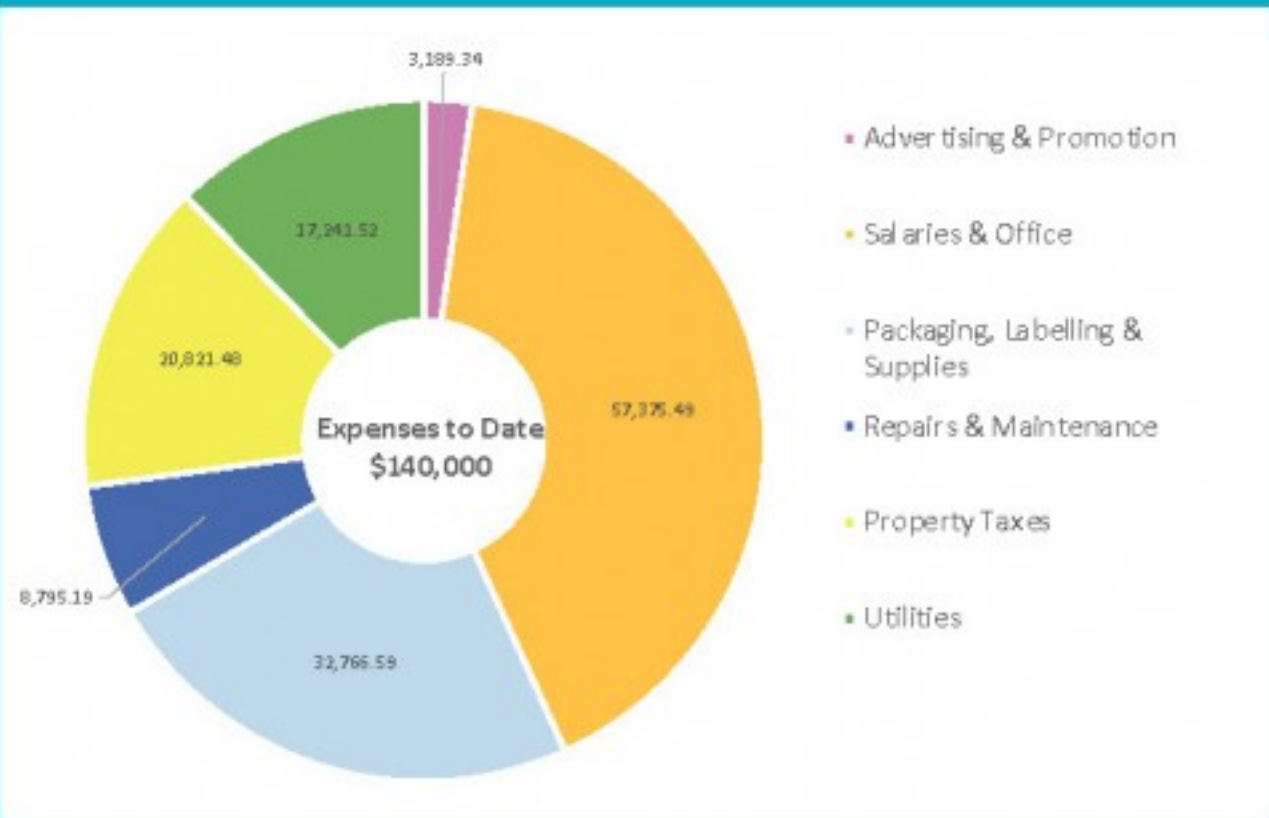
Since May, our volunteer numbers have gradually increased so that we are peaking at our limit of 40 per day for the last few weeks. A number of these volunteers are new to our vision, and we welcome them. We trust the Lord to provide a time soon when our volunteers over 70 can come again regularly and be hands in this Kingdom work. We hear how they miss the opportunity that had become a part of their weekly life, and we have been missing them too.

The Lord has blessed us with an abundance of good produce as well as the finances and support to meet our budget expenses. Please note that our fundraising dinners that were planned for March are postponed to November 6 and 7. These dinners are great opportunities to hear how the Niagara Christian Gleaners are having an impact in peoples' lives, and how the gospel message is expressed locally and abroad through this work.

"We thank God upon every remembrance of you, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it, until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:3-6

May you also experience this confidence in faith.
Sincerely,
Arthur Struyk
NCG chairman

6 MONTH 2020 FINANCIAL PICTURE



**NCG Budget
\$400,000**

FOCUS ON TRANSPORTATION BOSTON CREEK TRANSPORT

fresh produce and flowers all across Canada and the United States.

With a follow-up visit and tour of our plant, which was still under construction, it didn't take much for John to say that he would love to help out where he can. By December of that year we had received our first trailer

load of produce that John picked up for us from a farm in Bradford, Ontario. That first load marked the beginning of something quite extraordinary. Since then John and his team at Boston Creek Transport have hauled more than 2 million pounds of produce for NCG. There were times when this would be 2 trailer loads in a week. This has all been done as a generous gift to NCG and has helped us stay on our focus - drying surplus produce as a blessing to those who need it most in a hurting world.

When I sat down recently with John and daughter Melissa at their head office in Hagersville I asked them why they love the gleaners the way they do. John said that he knew right away that the approach of the Gleaners, to take surplus produce from growers and do something meaningful with it, was simply the right thing to do. His 40 years in the produce business had him witness the frequency of the food waste issue and the challenges that growers, particularly large growers, have when it comes to dealing with their surplus. The gleaners concept presents to the growers a viable option that they can understand and support with their food donations. John's thoughts on his role in the mission of NCG is this: "I do what I can because I can". Perishable Transportation is their expertise and to extend that knowledge, experience, and network of contacts to the Gleaners is a natural thing to do. With an incredible, humble heart, he'll be the first to say that their family has been blessed by the Lord in countless ways over the years, and helping the gleaners in this tangible way, as impactful as it is, is simply their offering of praise.

For anyone who meets Dirk Vrugteveen for the first time, you'll quickly notice that Dirk is a man living large for the Lord. His contagious, cheerful spirit permeates all he does and you'll sense his passion for things he loves to get involved with. Dirk's business adventures are varied and, probably the one he's having most fun with at the moment, is running Niagara Pallet with his sons, Fred and Mike.

There was no need to convince Dirk about the goals of NCG as he was involved with our Produce Acquisition Team even before our plant was started. Early on I made a few road trips with Dirk to visit potential produce partners and it seemed that there wasn't anyone that Dirk didn't know in a personal way.

Similar to Boston Creek Transport, Niagara Pallet has come alongside NCG as a blessing simply by doing the things they do best; the things that are natural for them. When we discussed pallet needs for our plant, and occasionally for shipments, Niagara Pallet generously provided all that we needed without cost to the Gleaners. In the area of transportation, Niagara Pallet first introduced us to Lincoln Mushroom Farms as a food donor, but things have gone much further than just the introduction. Since the fall of last year, Niagara Pallet has handled all of our mushroom order pickups. We can't say enough about the professionalism of the dispatch team

FOCUS ON TRANSPORTATION NIAGARA PALLET



at Niagara Pallet and their willingness to go out of their way to get the produce we need in a timely way.

CHEERFUL CHOPPERS VOLUNTEER PROFILE



We asked Wilma Janssen if she would tell us a bit about her experience at the Gleaners as a volunteer. She has been involved in the production of dehydrated food since our early days. Wilma accepted a position on the NCG board in January and is currently the NCG's secretary.

Here are her thoughts:

'More than 10 years ago I heard about the Gleaners operation in Cambridge and thought, "That's the kind of place I would want to serve at". The concept of intercepting food waste for the needy was near and dear to my heart. Once I retired in 2018, I began volunteering at the Niagara Christian Gleaners in December.

The wonderful part of volunteering at the Gleaners is the community of like-minded folks from so many different backgrounds and ages. Most have, or are presently, volunteering in many different capacities, either locally or abroad. The "servant heart" is evident in others no matter what task you are given at NCG, so it is great to work alongside anyone there on a given morning. We all care about the disenfranchised and hungry in our world, and recently, that has been amplified greatly because of the global Covid pandemic. The other advantage of this volunteer opportunity is that there are so many varied options of service. Even when I was recovering from an arm injury, there was a place for me to be of service. Since Covid, lots of new volunteers have come and it is fun to see how they fit in so easily and enjoy the morning activities.

Come try a morning at NCG... You won't regret it!



**NIAGARA CHRISTIAN
GLEANERS**

FUNDRAISING DINNERS

**November 6 & 7
West Niagara Fairgrounds Hall**

7402 Mud St. W., Grassie • Doors Open at 5:45pm

Menu

hors d'oeuvres, punch, garden salad, prime rib beef, braised chicken, rolls/butter, garlic mashed potatoes, vegetable medley, beans, pavlova with cream & fruit, coffee/tea. (gluten free available)

Chef: Jan-Willem Stulp

Reservations

For Friday November 6 contact: ncgfriday@gmail.com

For Saturday November 7 contact: ncgsaturday@gmail.com

OUR FUNDRAISING GOAL IS \$200,000

NIAGARAGLEANERS.ORG

PRE-AUTHORIZED DEBIT FORM FOR NIAGARA CHRISTIAN GLEANERS

Name _____ Address _____ City _____

Prov _____ Postal Code _____ Phone (_____) _____ Email _____

Donation Information: Monthly Donation Pledge: \$ _____ Donation taken each 15th day starting _____ Month _____

Authorization: I/we hereby authorize you to debit my/our account each month in the amount shown above and for such amount to be payable to Niagara Christian Gleaners. Your treatment of each payment shall be the same as if I/we had personally issued a cheque authorizing you to pay as indicated and to debit my/our account accordingly. This authorization may be cancelled at any time upon written notice by me/us.

Date _____ Authorized Signatory _____ **Please include a void cheque along with your form.

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