



# NEWGROUND

## *A Brief History*

diaconalministries.com/newground

In order to properly tell the history of NewGround (formerly Operation Manna), we must first take a quick look at how Diaconal Ministries Canada got its start. Diaconal Ministries Canada was formally constituted in 2001, after a group of leaders from various Canadian Diaconal Conferences came together and dreamed about merging their Conferences to form an “umbrella” organization that would oversee the training of deacons right across Canada. *(To read the full history of Diaconal Ministries Canada, click [here](#).)*

Up until 2001, World Renew (CRWRC at the time) had worked very closely with diaconates on both sides of the border, having direct conversations with deacons and speaking heavily into the work they were doing. In 1964, the All Ontario Diaconal Conference (AODC) began to assist CRWRC with food and aid in Korea. At the time, the offering was named “Operation Manna”, which resonated with the primarily Dutch demographic in the CRC at that time. *(In March of 1945, as WW2 was drawing to a close, the number of people who had starved to death in The Netherlands was around twenty thousand (or more) and so the Dutch government asked the Allies for help. After weeks of negotiating with the Germans, the Allies were granted permission to drop food from planes to Dutch civilians. On April 29<sup>th</sup> the Royal Air Force dropped the first load of supplies and food parcels in what was called “Operation Manna”.)*

This international partnership with CRWRC spread to other countries and continued until 1996. As it grew, the recipients of the offering also began to vary, with Salem Christian Mental Health Association, now known as Shalem Mental Health Network, receiving support in 1965 and 1967. During 1989-1990, ownership and oversight of the Operation Manna program still lied with CRWRC. At this time, the AODC would request funding from the Operation Manna program, with approval for funding coming from the US Board of CRWRC, since it was a bi-national, joint venture.

It was during the late ‘80’s and early ‘90’s that a more diverse group of para-church organizations serving their communities across Canada began receiving support from Operation Manna and this has continued until today.

When the Operation Manna Program became an official program of Diaconal Ministries Canada, its primary purpose was to “engage Christian Reformed Churches in community ministries that seek to bring about *sustainable* change in individuals and communities experiencing significant needs.” Because of this, many of the early Operation Manna partner agencies are still growing and thriving today! Check out [Indwell](#), formerly called Homestead Christian Care, who was an OM Partner in 2001 and 2005, and who continues to impact communities by providing (truly) affordable housing and more. [Beginnings Family Services](#) was an OM partner back in 1989 and it has grown to four locations across Ontario! In 2004, OM

partnered with [The ARK](#) in Halifax, NS, a ministry that continues to serve street-involved and homeless youth. [Manitoba House](#) in Winnipeg, MB, was a former partner from 2002 and still today they are providing safe and fun programs, plus nutritious meals, to neighbourhood kids. And this is only a few of our honourable mentions!

## Breaking New Ground

A wise man once said (okay, it was Walt Disney!): *“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”*

While we can celebrate the meaningful impact Operation Manna has had on churches and communities across Canada for over 35 years, the conversation surrounding changing the name and updating the program activities of Operation Manna has been going on for over ten years. In 2012, a brief assessment was conducted. While it was hard to measure the program’s strength and resonance with the general Canadian CRC ‘population’, the metrics used were the amount of money that was coming in through the yearly offering, the number of churches who were applying to the program, as well as numerous conversations with churches and deacons over the years. It appeared that some churches and its members were confused about what Operation Manna was, what it did, who it was for, as well as its connection to Diaconal Ministries Canada. Some still associated Operation Manna with World Renew (which would explain why a couple cheques each year are still being sent to World Renew!). Others believed it was some sort of food program, given its name and history. After much thought, discussion, and prayer, a decision to put the rebrand on hold was made, primarily due to the timing.

More recently, the conversation was picked up again as Diaconal Ministries’ staff and the Operation Manna Committee were ready to broaden the program in order to better build into leaders of today and tomorrow. So in the early Fall of 2018, with a brand new Communications Coordinator on staff, it was decided that the time had finally arrived to help clarify the purpose of the program and breathe new life into it!

**So, as of March 1st, 2019, the Operation Manna Program became NewGround.**

This program will continue to be funded primarily through an annual offering, typically held the first Sunday in May. Moving forward, as the program extends its reach and breaks its own ‘new ground’, Diaconal Ministries Canada will be seeking other revenue streams to support additional activities.

We hope you will join us in celebrating our updated **NewGround Program!**

