

REPORT OF THE SAINT JAMES MISSION AND MINISTRY TASKFORCE

MANDATE AND PROCESS

The Bishop of Huron has asked that every parish/regional ministry in the Diocese create a Mission and Ministry Plan for the 5 year period 2018-2022, to be submitted to Annual Vestry 2018 by March, 2018. The intention is to identify a way forward for every part of the Diocese, with a clearly identified mission purpose and concrete goals to support that purpose.

Given a long transition between rectors, and with our welcoming Canon Keith Nethery on November 1, 2017, the process for creating this plan was brought to our annual vestry meeting in January 2018 with the following motion:

Moved by Ken Andrews and seconded by Jennifer Meister that the Vestry of St. James Westminster empower the Rector and Wardens to form a Task Force Group to complete a Mission and Ministry Plan for the parish, using the shell format provided. The Task Force will consist of 10 people, selected for particular areas of expertise needed to form this long range plan. The first 5 members are to be nominated by this Vestry, with the Rector and Wardens appointing the second 5 to ensure all areas are covered. The Rector (or a Warden in the Rector's absence) will chair all meetings of this Task Force. A report is to be presented to a Special Vestry meeting in September or October of 2018.

Carried – unanimous.

What could have been a perfunctory submission of paperwork became a wonderful opportunity to engage in a process of storytelling, study, analysis, dreaming and visioning in order to discern our way forward, with mutual encouragement, refocused energy and a renewed excitement for all that God might be calling us to do and be in this place, our neighbourhood and beyond.

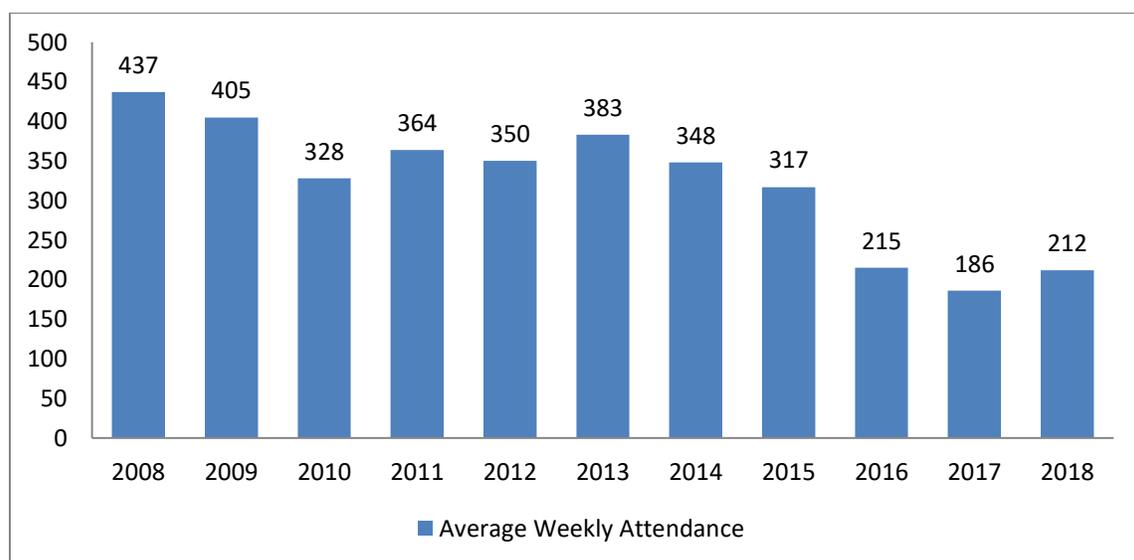
It became apparent after the first few meetings that we needed to “draw the circle wider” and invite more voices into the conversation. Over the course of the spring and summer, multiple consultations were held with members of the Parish to explore perceptions of what members valued about the church and opportunities for growth. The taskforce met regularly and synthesized the feedback into a series of recommendations for Parish consideration at a special vestry in October 2018.

It is the sincere intent of this taskforce to articulate faithful and feasible options for St James' future, in the context of the challenging realities that we face.

SITUATING OUR CHALLENGES IN LOCAL CONTEXTS AND NATIONAL TRENDS:

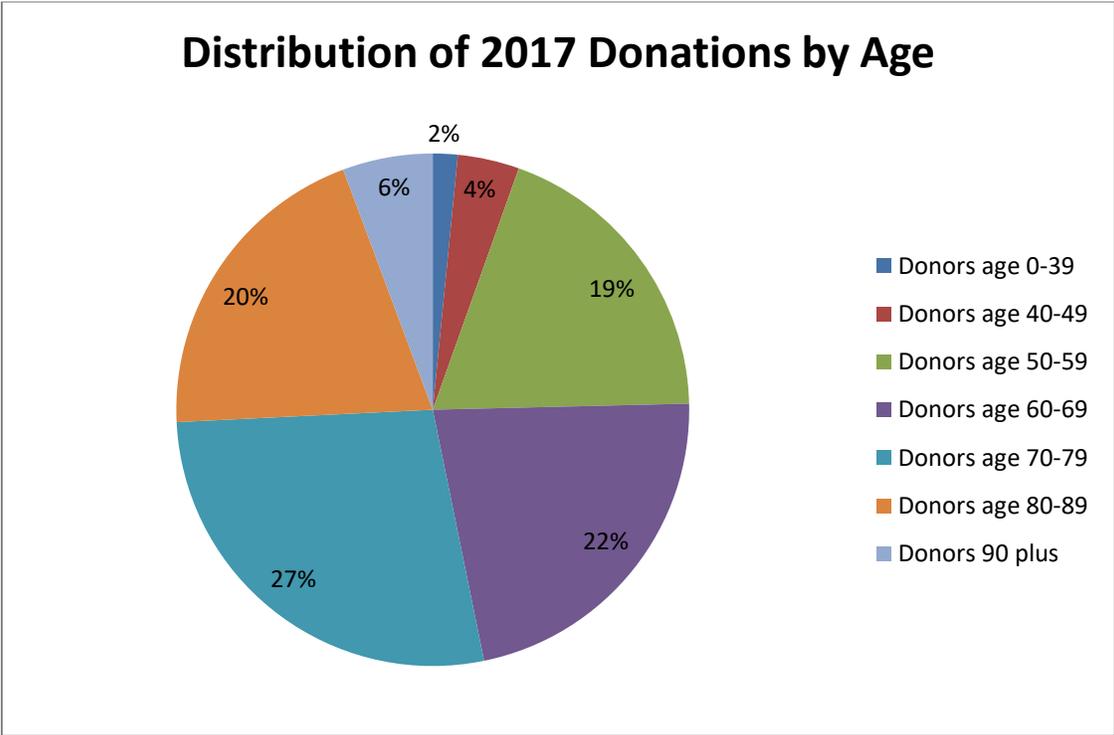
St James faces headwinds being felt by mainline Christian denominations across Canada. The country's historical association with the Anglican Church and the priority previously given to British immigrants shifted in the 1970s toward more humanitarian policies that recognized the needs and rights of a much more culturally diverse spectrum of migrants. As this happened, the birth-rate for native born Canadians declined. As Reginald Bibby, a Canadian Sociologist, states "The reality is that groups depending on natural increase are dead in the water. There's just not enough people being born to offset the number who are dying. If you have stock in the United Church or the Anglican Church, Presbyterians or Lutherans, you're going to lose a lot of money" (MacLean's Magazine, What Canadians really believe: A surprising poll, March 26, 2015). While Canada was becoming more diverse and open, disaffiliation or the "falling away" of church members became more common. In the generation born between 1947-1966, 10% declared themselves religiously unaffiliated in 1981 while that number increased to 20% in 2011. (Pew Research Centre, Canada's Changing Religious Landscape, 2013)

If cultural diversity and secularization challenged Anglican preeminence in Canada, it might create the terms for positive transformation. All is not lost. For one, the finding that four out of five Canadians are open to religious affiliation can hardly be read to signal the end of religious belief. If one takes a wider view, religious communities have not always enjoyed the credibility or the protections we take for granted. We might also remember that our parish's decline in attendance over the last decade was much sharper than the general trend; St. James' average weekly numbers dropped more than 50% from 437 in 2008 to 212 in 2018 (see the chart below). This very difficult fact has a silver lining. Our troubles may be more related to local events and practices that we can fix or at least improve upon, rather than being more distant, persistent winds of change. Yet, words like 'renewal' are easier to say than enact, and the revitalization of our parish community will not be delivered by a report or a set of recommendations. It will require sustained effort from each and all, and - we think - a willingness to pursue new practices and relationships.



The challenges of rebuilding our membership and increasing community engagement are complicated by three local factors that deserve to be named before we get to our recommendations: (1) the age-distribution of giving at our Parish; (2) the immediate needs of our physical plant; (3) the dependency we have developed on the Foundation.

Stewardship and Age: The demographics of our parish reveal that over 50% of donor contributions come from those who are over seventy years of age. It is not unusual for religious (or secular) non-profit organizations to rely on elderly persons for financial support, but our proportions indicate a clear and urgent need to revitalize membership among younger families, and/or move towards amalgamation with other Anglican parishes and/or non-Anglican denominations.



The Physical Plant: If our membership must be rejuvenated with young families, so too our physical plant is in urgent need of repairs. A study commissioned by St. James indicated in its report dated June 2017 that our parish was not at that time well-positioned to raise the \$1.5M to \$2.5M necessary for needed capital expenditures, in part because there was no Rector. The reasonable and attainable target the consultant recommended was in the \$500K range. While we are cautiously optimistic that we can exceed \$500K if we run a capital campaign, that can only be determined at a later date.

The Foundation: We have managed our membership and stewardship shortcomings by becoming operationally dependent upon Foundation and Endowment investments. Today they account for 14% of our budgeted revenue. To operate St. James without Foundation and Endowment support, each donor would need to increase yearly givings by \$310/year to make up the budget shortfall. So, not only do we need to expand our membership, our members must contribute at higher rates for the parish to meet its operational (not physical plant) responsibilities.

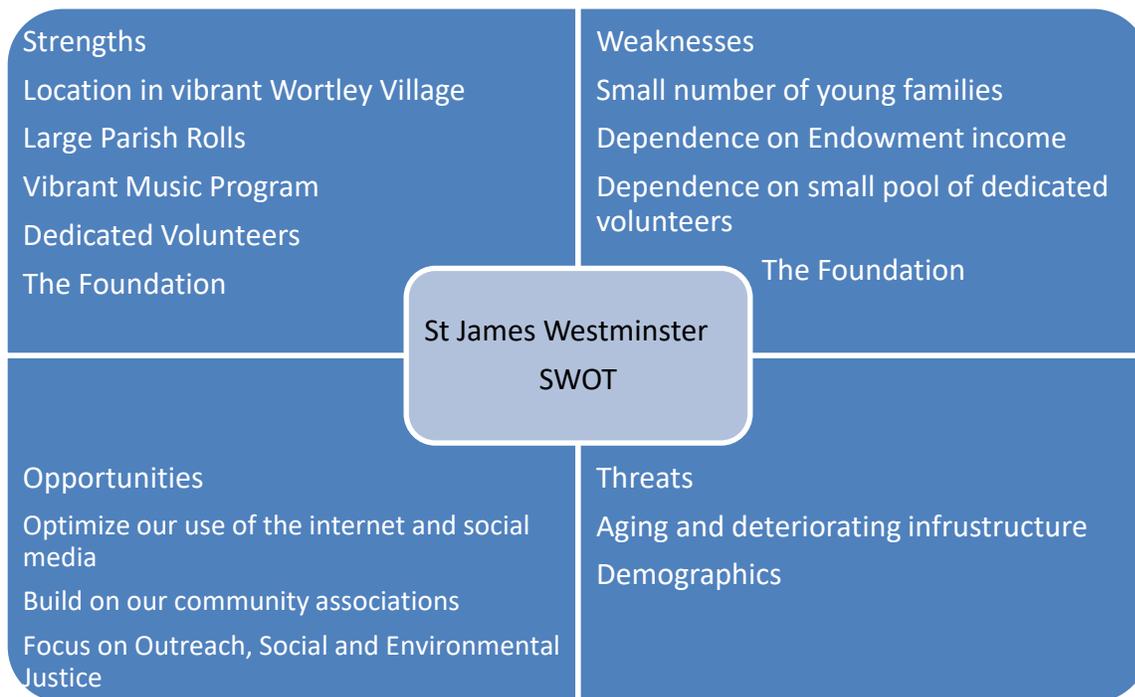
PERSPECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ‘PARISH CONVERSATIONS’:

As we explain above, St. James must build a larger membership with a grass-roots culture of giving and service in a diverse, competitive, and open context; but saying that begs a question – how? We sought answers by asking parishioners what inspired them to join, attend, and participate. What might we do as we continue and renew our efforts to be an attractive and engaging parish community?

We held eleven ‘parish conversations’ (focus groups) at the church and in the community with over 90 parishioners. Consultations with various ministry groups were also conducted. Amid confessional, professional, and geographic diversity, the parish conversations revealed remarkable consistency in two very specific perspectives:

- A) A widely shared aspiration to restore the church building proper, and a strong desire to maintain a church community in Wortley Village.
- B) A desire to improve internal communication, governance, and organization so that we can work together more effectively, build stronger relationships, and increase our presence in the community.

The summary is presented in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) matrix below.



Recommendations:

1. *Worship*

Support a diversity of liturgical expression and musical styles through the creation of a Liturgy/Worship Committee. The Committee should have representation from the Altar Guild, Server Guild, Choir, Church School, and Outreach Committee and should undertake annual planning to improve coordination and communication.

2. *Education and Family Ministry*

Support parish education by creating an Education Committee to determine priorities and coordinate educational events. The events should encompass a range of topics and approaches (Bible Study, Book Study, Life Issues) and should be led by both clergy and lay people. In order to ensure maximum participation, we should address transportation, continuity of programming through the summer, child-care and accessibility needs.

3. *Social Justice and Outreach*

Bolster the existing Outreach Committee by encouraging new volunteers, highlighting the current projects and exploring future outreach interests with engaged Parishioners. During the focus groups, congregants raised a host of issues including: food security, poverty, indigenous relations, immigrants and refugees, human trafficking, addiction and literacy.

4. *Fellowship*

Reinvigorate Newcomer events and develop other small group activities to encourage connections. Consider targeted fellowship through email or telephone chains to address isolation and loneliness. Undertake at least two large events each year focused on social connection (may be fundraisers).

5. *Organizational Structure and Processes*

Review and clarify the required committee structure and communication processes and leverage existing job descriptions, risk assessments and other resources created for Safe Church and the Renew campaign.

6. *Communication*

Create an accessible Parish Calendar that integrates both church and external events to improve coordination and planning. Develop and implement a renewed communication strategy leveraging the newest technologies.

7. *Stewardship*

Directly and consistently discuss the church's financial information while highlighting gratitude and generosity. Increasing the proportion of the membership giving by direct deposit.

8. *Community Integration*

Ensure regular representation at the Wortley Village Council and the Old South Community Organization. Utilize the community based publications and social media to publicize events. Focus on strengthening our Wortley Village bonds by hosting low cost, community building events. Highlight our activities related to social justice and diversity.

9. *The Foundation*

Evaluate the options available to the Parish related to use of the Foundation capital. While the Foundation interest is currently a significant portion of our operating revenue, it may also be a

deterrent to the parish assuming full accountability for our budget. The interest generated by the Foundation capital may be utilized for any initiative sanctioned by the Parish, however utilizing the capital would require significant legal changes. We acknowledge the sensitivity of many parishioners to alterations in the functioning of the Foundation but strongly recommend that we determine how best to leverage the Foundation in view of the trends identified in this report.

THE PHYSICAL PLANT

A number of committed members of our community repeatedly drew the Taskforce back to discussing challenges posed by the costs of repairing our physical infrastructure, the relationship between these buildings and our ministry and programs, and the difficulties we face building membership and sustaining a culture of stewardship. We believe that the questions associated with prioritizing building repairs, determining how the funds will be raised or borrowed, lay beyond the scope of this report. Yet, we do believe it is our responsibility to reflect upon the problem, and to make recommendations for discussion at Vestry and for consideration by our governing Wardens and Rector.

First, it makes no sense (to us) to fix the buildings if there is inadequate funding for the pastoral staff and a weakened energy for engaging parishioners in the Christian mission, fellowship, and education for which the buildings exist. We have to balance our efforts – and we don't think the community has balanced the situation well in the past. We also wonder if the past practice of relying on volunteers and retirees to manage and care for the physical plant is sustainable over the long-run.

Second, we believe that the difficult financial and technical issues of building renovations should be pursued with an eye on accessibility for all and a willingness to reorganize the liturgical space. Much like the first issue, the challenge is not merely to do what is practically required for the soundness of the buildings, but to do these things to improve the human and spiritual purposes of the spaces. Our parish conversations and consultations make it clear to us that this is an important dimension of parish renewal and that it is not one that we all agree upon.

The taskforce did not arrive at a single recommendation to solve the dilemmas posed our aging buildings, but we have compiled a list of courses of action, some combination of which, we believe, will be required to balance building renovation with the difficulty of increasing membership and stewardship in the contemporary Canadian context.

Potential Courses of Action on the Physical Plant:

1. Investigate amalgamation with other Anglican churches in London and/or non-Anglican denominations in Old South.
2. Launch a capital campaign to raise funds for the needed repairs.
3. Seek a loan on favorable terms from the Foundation.
4. Repurpose and develop the current buildings while preserving the Church proper.

5. Renovate the Church proper, repurpose part of it for offices, and demolish the hall and offices, and downsize the ministry of the parish in a way that is financially sustainable.

SUMMARY

The Mission and Ministry Task Force is thankful for everyone who contributed their feedback, stories, concerns, questions and ideas.

St. James confronts a more diverse, free, and secular Canada than existed when the cornerstones of the buildings were set in the nineteenth-century. The country is better, but less can be taken for granted, and more is demanded of those who would build a Christian community. And we have stumbled amid these challenges; we have suffered losses in membership and relationships. Yet, ours is a faith of renewal and of transformation. It is not one that ends with lamentation and regret. Yes, we must attract new members who are not Anglican from the 'cradle,' (especially young families, perhaps by joining with another congregation) partly because we are an older congregation. But, age is also a source of wealth and strength; it provides for us what being older has for generations - an opportunity to make a difference. True, our physical plant problems can no longer be ignored. We must address them by campaigning, borrowing, renovating and/or repurposing our use of space. These decisions will not be easy. But our options are not closed, so long as we remain committed to each other. The foundation of our community is not in the buildings or even the donations – though both must be sound – it lay in our liturgical celebration, in our caring for others, in our fellowship together, and passing on Christ's message of forgiveness, tolerance, and love.

May God bless and inspire our efforts.

The Mission and Ministry Taskforce

Membership

Patrick Ryan – St. James member since 2005, Faculty Kings University College.

Laura Manias - St. James member since 1984, teacher for Thames Valley District School Board.

David Partridge, CPA, CA is a lifelong Anglican who recently joined St James when he and his wife moved to London for family reasons. Over his life, David has been an active member of six different Anglican parishes. David is now the Chair of St James Stewardship Committee, and he also serves on the Financial Review Committee.

Judy Jones - Member of Saint James since 1987. Retired from Children's Mental Health (Manager)

Donna Hefferton- Active member of St. James for 14 years. Retired Nurse

Julia Marchesan-Member of St James since 1993, former Parish Council member, Warden and Synod delegate. Healthcare leader

James R. (Jim) Sercombe -Member of St. James since 1988. Former Member of Parish Council, Elementary Teacher with Thames Valley District School Board.

Jim Mays-Long time member of St James. Lawyer

Gerry Adam- Deacon, member since 2011, Christian Educator, Director of Huron Church Camp for Diocese of Huron

Marcus Hahn-Long time member of St James and property expert

Pam Hill-Lifelong Anglican and new member of St James. Former Warden and Parish Council member