

## **Incumbent's Report**

St James Anglican Church, Caledon East

Annual Vestry Meeting A.D. 2020

The Rev. Chris Dow

*We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

Ephesians 4:15-16 ESV

### **2019 - Year-in-review**

I am thankful to God and to all of you for a wonderful first year here at St. James, Caledon East. I was initially appointed by Bishop Anderson as priest-in-charge for a period of two years, but I am delighted to have been named incumbent as of 1 January 2020. This essentially means that I will serve as priest here for an indefinite, longer period of time. Amy and I have purchased a house in nearby Mono Mills and we hope to settle down and be here for many years to come.

In last year's report, I identified 'passionate spirituality' or spiritual growth as our highest priority as a congregation. This assessment was based on the results of both a Natural Church Development (NCD) survey and a town hall meeting with the Bishop in 2018. Passionate spirituality is what drives the church and what makes us a distinct people called by God and formed by the Holy Spirit into the full stature of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:13). Our life in Christ is a call to continuous spiritual growth. To this end, in 2019 we studied four Christian education resources together: Tim Keller's Prodigal God, Gisela Kreglinger's The Spirituality of Wine, Tim Keller's Prayer: experiencing awe and intimacy with God and Ann Voskamp's The Greatest Gift. We also developed and completed a Christianity 101 course that presents the basics of the gospel message and invites participants to believe in Jesus. Also, in order to facilitate holistic parish education programs, on Sundays we now (with the Bishop's approval) deviate from the Revised Common Lectionary in favour of sermon series that coincide with our weekday studies.

This commitment to spiritual growth has corresponded with numerical growth in our congregation. Our average Sunday attendance (ASA) increased from 47 in 2018 to 50 in 2019. Our attendance at Easter services increased from 63 to 85 and at Christmas from 153 to 180. We have been delighted to welcome eight new members. Our new Sunday school (Bible Adventure

Club) began in September and in July we hosted a Vacation Bible School with 19 children from the community.

The overwhelming success of our roof restoration campaign demonstrates the commitment of our members to ensuring that St. James continues to grow as a vital centre for gospel-ministry in the heart of this village for future generations.

## **2020 – Year ahead**

Passionate spirituality or spiritual growth must continue to our driving force; again, it is what forms each of us as disciples and all of us collectively as the body of Christ. It is what gives us purpose and direction, propelling us in the mission to which God calls us. Thus I propose that our primary goal in 2020 should be to discern and define this mission more clearly and begin to carry it out intentionally.

We have begun the process of crafting a new mission statement – one that will be clear, concise, easy to memorize, specifically Christian, action-oriented, aspirational and particular to the character of St. James. My hope is that members will be able to cite this mission statement when explaining to others why St. James is special to them. Among other things, I feel strongly that this mission statement must include an aspiration to be an evangelizing community. In the words of the first two of the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion, we are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus and teach, baptize and nurture new believers. We ought to expect that St. James will be a place where new believers will come to faith on a regular basis.

To this end, I intend to develop a sequel to our Christianity 101 course entitled: Following Jesus: first steps along the Way. This six-week course will explore the essentials of Christian discipleship: Bible, prayer, community, ministry, worship, and stewardship. This course will be offered for the first time in the Easter-Pentecost season (late April-May) and I would greatly appreciate your participation and assistance in developing the curriculum. These two courses will be offered annually going forward – the idea being that seekers will take Christianity 101 course, make a decision to follow Jesus here at St. James and then learn the basics of how to do so in the Following Jesus course.

My goal for 2020 is 10 new members and an ASA of 60. This is admittedly ambitious, but I would rather aim high than low. The Diocese is increasingly interested in average weekly attendance (AWA) - i.e. the total number of people at all services throughout the week – so a significant increase here would also be a success. How will we achieve these goals? I propose at least the following four ways:

- Retention of visitors by improving the overall Sunday morning experience;
- Baptismal formation and retention of the newly baptized;
- Fostering a culture of invitation. My hope is that members will feel confident and comfortable in inviting their friends and family to St. James.
- Promotion of our Christianity 101/Following Jesus courses, Bible Adventure Club, summer VBS and two new initiatives: the Alpha Parenting Course and a worship service specifically for young families (see the report of the Children and Family minister for more details).

Our ongoing consultation with the Bishop's North Peel Task Force will also help us to discern our mission, reach out to the community in new ways and achieve our goals for growth.

All of the above will not be possible without your continued support of St. James through your volunteer work and financial giving, for which I am deeply grateful. The financial reports presented to this vestry underscore the need for an increased commitment to general purpose contributions. Building on the success of our roof restoration campaign, in 2020 we will begin the work of establishing a perpetual maintenance fund. This will essentially be an endowment for the upkeep of our facility that would free up our tithes to fund ministry and mission. Members will be invited to contribute to the perpetual maintenance fund primarily through planned legacy giving.

I am greatly encouraged by our growth and vitality and excited for the future that God has in store for us in 2020 and beyond.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "CDow" with a small plus sign to the upper right of the "w".

The Rev. Chris Dow  
Incumbent