



Anglican Diocese of Ottawa

SHAPE OF PARISH MINISTRY CONSULTATION: STAGE II

TOOLKIT FOR THE AREA PARISH OF THE VALLEY

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INTRODUCTION

First of all, thank you very much for providing information about your parish in Stage I. By now, you will have seen the compendium of profiles for every parish in our diocese, which provides us with a good look at the shape of our parish ministry today.

The SPMC team and Bishop Shane have spent a lot of time studying the information you and other parishes have provided, and toolkits have been prepared for each parish to help us think about what the shape of parish ministry might look like in the future.

This toolkit is meant to help you explore your own situation, and to share thoughts and ideas about the shape of parish ministry across our diocese. The information you and every other parish provides will help us generate concrete proposals to be reviewed and revised in Stage III, leading to important decision-making at our Synod this fall.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Select a group of people (including clergy, wardens and lay members of synod) and circulate the toolkit to them.
2. Please complete the toolkit in whatever way works best for your parish. If you intend to meet together, you may find it helpful to do Parts 1-3 in one session, and Parts 4-5 in a second session.
3. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is important work.
4. Work through the toolkit one section at a time, and be honest and realistic as you think about your responses. Use as much space as you need when typing them out.
5. If there is a difference of opinion in your group, please tell us about it.
6. The deadline for submitting your toolkit responses is MARCH 15, 2022. Please email your completed toolkit to Heidi Pizzuto at heidi-pizzuto@ottawa.anglican.ca.
7. Your SPMC contact person will be glad to help if you have any questions.

PART ONE: Thinking about your parish profile

Make sure everybody has read your own parish profile in the compendium. Taking into account everything you see in your profile, ask yourselves these questions:

1. How does our profile, the words and the numbers, make us feel?

Reading our parish profile, we feel a little overwhelmed! There is a lot of information to take in both with our profile and with all of the profiles from across our diocese.

Recognizing that all of the attendance and financial numbers are based on pre-pandemic numbers, we also feel worried. Can we ever pick up where we left off two years ago? We're worried we have lost more people, lost momentum, that people may have filled their lives with things other than the Church and aren't coming back.

We also get worried looking at attendance and financial numbers that are dwindling. People are still attending our Sunday services, but the numbers are slowly declining. We are worried that we are losing ground, especially with younger people and even with people seeking out the Church for major life events like weddings and funerals.

2. Do our answers and our statistics in the profile reflect the same reality? If not, which are more accurate?

Yes, we do feel that our answers and the statistics in our parish profile reflect the same reality, however we also note that there have been many changes in the life of our Parish of the Valley in the last few years since those 2019 numbers.

3. What, if anything, surprises us?

We were surprised at some of the total membership numbers listed for church rolls. There is a definite discrepancy between the membership numbers and what we see on a Sunday at church. We notice that ours was not the only parish with this discrepancy. We wonder what is the point of keeping parish lists that represent dozens if not hundreds of more people than regularly attend worship? Only a few send donations.

We were also surprised at the degree to which collections (general offerings) have steadily gone up to meet rising expenses even as average attendance has gone down. This would suggest to us that there are fewer people giving much more money.

We were also gratified and surprised to see how well our Sunday attendance and offerings maintained themselves following a major congregational split in our region with the Anglican Network in Canada that happened a little over a decade ago. The churches most affected by this division, notably Holy Trinity Pembroke, maintained relatively stable attendance and offering numbers through to the end of 2019.

4. What, if anything, worries us?

Some of this we answered under number 1, above and would repeat those same questions here about recovering from the last two years to the levels the 2019 numbers show in our profile.

We are worried that we don't examine what we are doing for outreach and mission as much as we could, and we spend more time on finances and balancing our books.

5. What, if anything, excites us?

Our online efforts, both pre-pandemic but especially during the pandemic give us a lot of excitement. Through our online presence, we have had the opportunity to see the other churches in our area parish in ways we might not have been able to otherwise. Our online work and technology has kept us all connected with each other, across both the pandemic and across the geographic distances of our parish. It has been hard to have our churches closed for in-person worship so frequently for prolonged periods, especially when compared to neighbouring denominations in some of our communities, but now that we are open, some of our congregations have gained new families!

It has also helped us realize that the parish whole is greater than the sum of its parts - one single church in our parish doesn't need to be and do everything! The profile and the lists of all of the different things that each church in our parish is doing has helped us realize just how much is going on in the different parts of our parish and how much of the work of the Church is done when we are working together. Each of our churches doesn't need to feel pressure to be a fully resourced single-point parish. We can share our resources and that will make it easier for all of us to do ministry. This is exciting!

It has also helped us realize that there is a ministry/mission for each congregation in our parish, we just need to explore more what this might look like in each place.

6. What is God telling us?

We believe that this realization that there is a ministry or mission for each of our congregations to discover, and that together as an area parish we are greater than the sum of our parts, is something God is telling us.

We also have heard God reminding us just how far we have come as a parish and encouraging us to carry on the momentum that we have and to keep building. We cannot forget how far we have come. We also hear God telling us to keep going!

PART TWO: Thinking further about your opportunities and challenges

You said in your profile that financial pressures and related building concerns (cost, accessibility) mean putting a balanced budget ahead of mission, and that your population is dwindling and aging. You wish to further evolve your Area Parish model through dialogue in working tables in the parish and changes to your governance and finance structures to make best use of time, resources and finances for enhancing ministry in such areas as worship and lifelong learning, outreach, social justice, and rental of your buildings.

You are in a region where:

- most congregations have experienced an aging or dwindling parish population and declining Sunday attendance;
- there is concern around an aging and increasingly limited pool of volunteers;
- buildings are generally in good shape and well-maintained, though not all are accessible;
- many congregations are facing financial pressures, particularly around the upkeep of their buildings;
- most of the congregations in the area are grouped into one area parish;
- there is an expressed need for more trained Licensed lay Readers, especially as some churches have non-stipendiary priests; and
- A variety of common ministry opportunities have been identified, such as ministry to children, youth and families; engaging with tourists; and making more use of lay leadership.

1. What would help address the opportunities you have identified?

Being able to get back to doing some of the in-person community building and community outreach events that we did together as a parish pre-pandemic will help us better address some of the opportunities before us. We noted that we've had new members join us while being open during the pandemic and being able to resume doing some of the in-person things, like parish wide activities and events, will help.

Working to build more connections with other service providers and supports in the wider community would also help address some of the opportunities we've identified. In order to move forward with faith and social justice issues, we need to be able to have community consultations, networking, educational opportunities, and so on.

We have also noted that we do not receive as much in offerings when our buildings are closed, so remaining open will help with financial concerns. It has been hard, at various times during the pandemic, because our Anglican churches have been much more "conservative" than our neighbours with how often we have been closed due to COVID-19. We've lost some parishioners in our area parish because of that.

However, many of our congregations have noted that they are beginning to move out of "survival mode" - though it is still hard for smaller congregations to feel like we can do more than keep the door open and stay afloat! But we're starting to move out of that and having a big parish event would help us to remind ourselves of how big we are

together and would help us reimagine why God has placed both our congregations and our parish here in this place and time.

We also realize that addressing some of these opportunities takes courage to take some risks - especially when it comes to addressing some of the “boring” but incredibly time-consuming things like governance, finance and the use of buildings.

Another possible way to address some of the opportunities we’ve addressed is allowing our leadership, both lay and ordained, to live into their gifts instead of spending too much time on administration and paperwork. If we gave our clergy specific areas of ministry focus in addition to the geographic areas where they primarily lead worship, they could live-into their gifts and passions and possibly help our parish do more in areas like education, communications and social justice/outreach. This could create some really exciting synergy amongst all of our leadership, lay and ordained.

2. What would help address the challenges you face?

Our geography is a challenge. Some of the more far-flung parts of our parish would like to attend services in other churches, but it can be such a long way to go. Gas prices are rising. Being able to have parish gatherings in multiple different areas that encourage people to move around and get together in different places might help.

Many of us also keep thinking that we are a church because we have a building. We have to stop limiting our thinking in this way. We are a church because we believe. How can we start thinking about our responsibilities as Christians and as Anglicans beyond just the responsibilities to our buildings?

It could be very helpful to do some intentional work with diocesan staff who have expertise in particular areas to help us develop and work on some of our challenges: things like education around Indigenous issues, serving folks on the margins/homelessness, looking at alternative models for administration, finances and the sharing of staff responsibilities, and also networking and creating relationships with other organizations that could help us grow.

We could also use some diocesan support in imagining how we can shift structures to help us maintain a worshipping community in some of our smaller communities who are a longer distance from others and where it isn’t realistic to travel to the next-closest church every week. Some areas for reimagining include: the definitions of what it means to be a worshipping community and what that community’s financial and administrative obligations look like, how our clergy are appointed to serve, and how our churches are assessed (recognizing with the latter point that the ECOPS system has been largely good for us as a parish, because it has given us a well experienced clergy team that we wouldn’t have been able to afford otherwise).

PART THREE: Where are you headed?

Read through the descriptions in *Appendix A: Parish Ministry Situations*.

1. Which parish ministry situation best describes where you are now?
 - a. *Area Parish*

2. What parish ministry situation do you think you will be in 4 or 5 years from now? Please comment on your choice.
 - a. Area Parish
 - b. Single-Point Parish
 - c. Multi-Point Parish
 - d. Pastoral Parish
 - e. Amalgamation
 - f. Chapel
 - g. Disestablish

We had a number of different thoughts around this question.

On one hand, we would be happy to stay as an area parish as we are now. We have had success with this! Becoming an area parish has brought us together and we have met so many more people and made connections across our part of the Valley that we wouldn't have done if we'd stayed the way we before.

But we recognize that it may not look exactly the same as it does now.

So we also wonder about some form of amalgamations. Given that we have 12 congregations that may not all be able to fully support the building where they worship and the ministries they would like to do, there may need to be some amalgamations. But we would want those amalgamated congregations to remain a part of our Area Parish of the Valley.

We also wonder about amalgamations because most of our churches need to have more people at each church in order to have a critical mass to accomplish all of the jobs. Right now, many people have 2-3 jobs to do, whereas with more people they might have just 1. Having that many jobs just isn't sustainable for most of us.

We also realize that we might need to change our physical infrastructure to make it more functional, accessible, and cost effective given rising utilities.

But, above all, we feel that we need to be creative and consider all of the possibilities God lays before us.

Then we asked ourselves the question, “Do you feel your congregation is prepared to have a conversation about their building, and potentially step away from it to amalgamate with another congregation?”

Again, we heard a few different answers here:

There was a feeling that some of the lay leadership might be willing to have that conversation, but that many parishioners and some of our lay leaders are not.

There was also a sense that in some places we would be okay with people from other congregations “coming to us,” but that we didn’t want to leave our own building to go somewhere else. In some cases, we feel a very strong obligation to maintain our current building because of all of the people who came before us.

The question of our CTF monies was raised. We would appreciate some guidance from our diocesan team about how amalgamations might affect CTF monies tied to individual congregations in our area parish.

3. If you think you will be in a different situation 4 or 5 years from now:

Again, we recognize that not everyone in our parish will be in the same place about this question! And so we wanted to think about what things we might need to consider:

a. Do you want to change?

- i. Possibly - the answers across our area parish will vary widely.

b. Are you ready to change?

i. If not, what do you need to become ready?

We feel that time is very important. Any changes need to be approached over a period of time, with patience, where we can keep building relationships and trust across our area parish and where we don’t feel like we are being pushed or dictated into a particular direction. Storytelling with a view to developing relationship has served us really well so far as an area parish: for example, our newspaper *Revelations* becoming a parish newspaper and sharing stories of things of things going on in other parts of the parish, the “Meet the Churches” series on social media, the Valley Passport, etc. We need to keep sharing the stories of people’s faith and generosity across our parish.

We also need to keep having good communication that helps us know the next steps that we can work together on as a parish in our time.

ii. **If you are ready, what are your next steps?**

See below.

4. **If you think you will be in the same situation:**

We also realized that we might decide that we might be in the same position, as an area parish, in five years time, and so we thought about the specific things that we might need to do/not do in order for us to continue to grow as an area parish:

a. **What needs to:**

i. **Stop**

We need to stop worrying. We also need to stop focusing so much of our energies on maintaining group processes and structures, especially ones that involve meetings, that are holdovers from our former reality as five separate parishes. We need to consider how we can work together as an area parish more effectively and missionally, being good stewards of our time and talents. We need to stop thinking just of ourselves as individual churches and think of all of the people in our parish as our fellow parishioners. We need to stop thinking protectively about our particular congregation and how we have “always done things.” We need to think about our collective needs as God’s people in this place and let go of past suspicions of each other and any old grudges we have.

We need to stop giving into the urge to simply “play it safe” and not take any risks and steps towards change, even small, intentional ones.

ii. **Stay the same**

One of the best things about being Anglican is our openness. We need to keep the openness and diversity of the Anglican way as we go forward.

iii. **Be changed or reoriented**

We might need to change how and where we worship (as in our previous discussion of amalgamations). We need to adopt new, more effective structures for our new life as a parish. We need to learn more about each other. We need to let our defensiveness and protectiveness down.

iv. **Be taken on**

We feel we would benefit from having one parish-wide ministry focus for a discrete time-period that we can all focus on together and work together on. Something that will unite us in common mission.

We might also benefit from taking on the training someone for ministry - a student or curate. Some parts of our parish used to get summer students all the time and we haven't had any for a while.

PART FOUR: Thinking about parish ministry in our diocese as a whole

- 1. What aspects of parish work (e.g., liturgical, educational, administrative, property) could be centralized or supported in Ascension House (Synod Office), or regionalized? Please be specific.**

Administration

Some aspects of administration could be regionalized, or possibly centralized/supported by Ascension House: the filling in of forms like CRA returns, HST forms, and Diocesan statistical returns. Having a centralized or regionalized bookkeeper could also really support both our lay volunteer treasurers and our clergy.

We could also use support from Ascension House at looking at alternative forms of administration that don't necessarily require every single one of our churches to have 2 wardens and a treasurer - because that gives us at least 24 wardens in the parish!

We would also appreciate it if Ascension House staff could update statistical return forms to reflect the fact that not every church filling out a form is a single-point parish. Statistical return forms are made more confusing when they assume that we are all stand-alone parishes.

Liturgical

We have been thinking about how we could have regionalized standardized liturgy so that it isn't as much work, especially for our lay readers leading Morning Prayer, as people move from place to place to lead worship.

- 2. All Christian ministry is rooted in baptism. The ministry of laity is essential to all aspects of parish ministry: liturgical, pastoral, educational, social, and missional, as well as administrative, financial, and property needs. Well-trained Licensed Lay Readers can fill extensive liturgical, pastoral, educational, and administrative roles. Healthy parishes, of whatever size, depend on skilled lay teams working collegially with clergy. What should we do to develop, equip, and support the ministry of laity in our parish ministries?**

Zoom allows the Diocese to offer more workshops without needing everyone to drive to Ottawa to participate. Driving distances are often a huge barrier for us. Educational workshops on important lay ministries offered over Zoom would help to equip the ministry of the laity in our parish. Things like:

- A Treasurer's Day or New Churchwardens Day
- Envelope secretary training
- Grant-writing workshops
- Lay reader training events being more regionalized
- Christian education offerings (we've loved the Diocesan Bible Study over the last couple of years - more of these!)

We do also recognize the importance of being together and finding ways to be together in person, even as we have more Zoom events.

- 3. We currently fund the cost of providing priests for parish ministry through ECOPS: a system where parishes pay their share of the total diocesan cost of priestly services (excluding housing), based on the 3-year average of a parish's assessable income relative to the total net assessable income of all parishes. This system allows the bishop to appoint full-time priests to any parish based on their gifts, regardless of their seniority, but only if the parish is able to pay the amount assessed to it. Is there a more effective or desirable way of funding the cost of providing priestly services to our parishes? What would it look like?**

ECOPS works much better for us here than the old system did. We never had any clergy with experience before - not that all of our clergy were bad, but most of our congregations rarely had anyone who wasn't newly ordained. We really appreciate being able to have clergy with some experience and we don't know how we could afford that without ECOPS. But we also wonder about some sort of ECOPS hybrid model that includes a system like ECOPS but also allows for some more flexibility for particular congregational situations where a worshipping community is present and needs to be maintained for reasons like geography, but where funding a full-time, or even part-time, ECOPS base amount is not at all feasible.

- 4. It is well-established that an annual parish stewardship cycle is an effective way to encourage offerings, planned giving, as well as volunteer and lay leader recruitment. Our diocese has all the resources needed to help every parish develop and maintain an annual stewardship cycle, but less than 30% of our parishes have one. If an annual stewardship cycle was required of every parish, what resources would you need in your parish?**

It would need to be a stewardship cycle that is explicitly about more than just financial stewardship, otherwise we don't think it would get much traction across our area parish. People don't like talking about money. Maybe we all need to get more comfortable talking about money, but a stewardship program needs to involve more than just that.

A challenge for us is volunteers. Maybe a stewardship program could help with that, but we would still have the difficulty of finding volunteers to lead a stewardship program. Everyone is already doing so many jobs that it is hard to add more things to people's plate.

A stewardship program would need to be adaptable for our contexts: what does good stewardship look like in smaller, rural churches? How can we teach "give more time" when we already have volunteers taking on more jobs than they can reasonably do? Maybe a part of a stewardship program should be a Gift Inventory both of people's skills and gifts but also of the ministries going on across an area parish so that can look at ways to be better stewards of what we already have.

5. Please suggest anything else we could do to strengthen, enable, or develop parish ministry in our diocese as a whole.

See above responses.

6. Are you aware of other models of parish ministry that might work in our diocese? Please describe them (add links to websites if you can).

We are not.

7. What are your thoughts about collaborating with other Christians to share space; or, where possible, to create ecumenical parishes or congregations? Is there an opportunity for this to happen in your area? If so, please elaborate.

In various areas of our parish, we already support the outreach activities of other churches in our communities. Our clergy team also leads worship at local long-term care homes in partnership with local Lutheran colleagues (ELCIC). We support each other, we're often friendly with each other, but we don't often worship together.

PART FIVE: Looking at other parishes

Look through the compendium at other parish profiles.

1. Are there any parishes that draw your interest? Why?

Looking more closely at some of the other parishes in our region, like Arnprior, Renfrew, and Deep River might be helpful as they are also Valley Parishes and so might have some of the same dynamics and demographics as we have.

2. Are there any parishes that you might like to speak with? Which one(s) and why?

It would be good to reconvene another Area Parish Conference to pull together the other area parishes again. We would welcome another opportunity to speak with and brainstorm with some of the other area parishes, like Mississippi Lake and St Lawrence.

We would also like to speak with some of the larger single-point parishes who have multiple staff to see what we can learn from them about working in multi-staff/multi-clergy situations and how they share roles and responsibilities across their teams. Parishes like our Cathedral, Christ Church Bell's Corners, All Saints Westboro, and so on.

We have a lot of buildings! We could really benefit from talking to other parishes who have repurposed buildings to see if we have an opportunity to do some creative things with our buildings. St Clare's Winchester or St Alban's Ottawa come to mind here.

APPENDIX A: Parish ministry situations

Area Parish

A self-supporting parish comprising a number of churches across a large geographic area, with a full-time incumbent and a number of associate incumbents, who serve the parish as a whole, and work as a team with lay leaders to provide pastoral leadership and ministry to every church (see Appendix B for a fuller description).

Single-point Parish

A traditional, self-supporting parish, with one church and a full-time incumbent (sometimes with an associate incumbent or assistant curate).

Multi-point Parish

A traditional, self-supporting parish, with two or more churches in a geographic area and a full-time incumbent.

Pastoral Parish

A smaller, self-supporting parish that cannot support a full-time incumbent, but has sufficient members and financial resources to provide for some aspects of pastoral care and liturgical leadership, as well as their administrative and property needs, and to meet their Parish Fare Share and Insurance commitments. There is a need to develop a common protocol for pastoral parishes. Currently, each situation is managed at the discretion of the Bishop.

Amalgamation

An amalgamation is when two (or more) existing parishes merge to become a single parish, often in one building and possibly with fewer clergy. After careful conversations and mutual discernment, and with the consent of the incumbents and churchwardens of the parishes, the Bishop may authorize an amalgamation with the approval of Diocesan Council. (*Bylaw 5.01.7-9*)

Chapel

When a congregation no longer has the people or resources to continue, they may apply to the Bishop for designation as a chapel. The chapel would have a sponsoring body that is responsible for it. Remaining members of the congregation would receive pastoral care from a designated priest, and some worship services over the course of a year—understanding that priestly services are limited, and require the approval of the Bishop and Sponsor. (*Bylaw 5.01.22-31*)

Disestablish

When the time to close has come, a Vestry can resolve, by at least a two-thirds majority, that a church be disestablished. With the approval of the Bishop the church is closed, and all assets accrue to the central funds of our diocese. Sometimes a congregation will elect to disestablish with the intention of transferring their members or their assets to another parish. Alternatively, the Bishop may, with the approval of Diocesan Council, invite a Vestry to voluntarily disestablish. (*Bylaw 5.01.10-19*)

APPENDIX B: Becoming and being an area parish

1. An area parish comes into being after several parishes or congregations have discerned a willingness to work together in a new way, as partners in ministry and mission. By sharing the human and practical resources of several congregations, an area parish benefits from the leadership of a team of clergy, and is stronger, sustainable, and more capable of having a greater impact in the wider community.
2. When the clergy and lay leaders of several parishes or congregations indicate to the Bishop that they are willing to explore the possibility of forming an area parish, the Bishop becomes involved in the discernment. Discussions with the Bishop (including members of the Bishop's Senior Staff) will consider the pastoral, missional, administrative and financial dimensions of becoming an area parish, being sure that the advantages, opportunities and challenges are clearly understood.
3. If discussions lead to the point where the leadership of the parishes or congregations agree to a statement of intent, outlining the approach they will take to shaping the ministry and mission of the proposed area parish, the Bishop will ask that the vestries of each congregation pass identical motions saying they wish to form an area parish.
4. With the approval of the vestries, the Bishop will take advice on what name should be given to the new area parish, and will seek to appoint a clergy team to the parish as a whole, comprising an incumbent and one or more associate incumbents.
5. With the appointment of the clergy team, the clergy and lay leadership will continue to develop how best to manage all aspects of the new area parish—with a view to finding efficiencies through working together. Congregations will explore new ways of collaborating to serve their shared geographic area more effectively, while ensuring that ministry is carried out in sustainable ways in terms of both human and financial resources. Eventually, they will engage in multi-year planning.
6. While the scheduling of services, providing pastoral care, teaching and opportunities for fellowship, and reaching out in mission to the communities within the geographic area are extremely important tasks, there are some key administrative requirements that must be met by a new area parish within its first few years—at a pace that makes sense for all—such as choices about how property and finances will be managed, and basic elements like a central council, mailing address, bank account with signing officers, and a protocol for issuing tax receipts. At this time, the protocols for area parishes are still being developed.
7. Becoming and being an area parish is an exploration in faith. Apart from some key administrative requirements, the clergy and people of area parishes are encouraged to discover what works best for them, and for their ministry and mission in their communities. Our diocese is committed to creating opportunities for area parishes to learn from one another as time unfolds.