

Summary of the Highlights Spoken of in the 8 Groups at the AGM

Question 1 – Two highlights from the past year (or weeks if you are new) that make you enthusiastic about being part of James Bay United Church.

1. **Music**- all eight groups commented on the music. People noted that they have been loving the music this fall, love Christine's piano playing, the diversity of music, the quality of music from Christine and Gordon's leadership, and the guests. A highlight for several is the community choir. "I feel like the music links people and makes us one." A couple of groups noted that they are tired of the exploration and want "some sense of familiarity in order to feel at home," some repetition but upbeat.
2. **People** – people in six groups noted their highlights are connecting with a wonderful mix of people, especially in-person again. They like learning and building community. New people are welcomed. "I like the minister and her partner." "The people are what make me enthused about being a part of this congregation."
3. **Worship** – people in six groups commented on worship--Karen's reflections, her ability to make scripture readings relevant and reflections that speak to everyday life right now. "The sermon always gives me something to focus on for the week." Some people liked the quality of the services on-line; others liked the in-person worship. Advent, Christmas, Lent – planning and packages—were good. People from three groups also noted Season of Creation worship and Field Trips connections as highlights.
4. **Unhoused** – people in five groups noted a highlight of being involved with support to the unhoused in Irving Park and Beacon Hill/Meegan Park and appreciated that a core group from JBUC was willing to get involved and the support from Karen & Gordon. Others noted the socks to the homeless at Christmas, that there is so much compassionate care and engagement with the guests when the church is used as a Warming Centre.
5. **Reconciliation** – five groups commented on highlights of work on issues of with First Nations people, the TRC Scavenger Hunt, Land Back discussions, Indigenous justice and anti-racism education.
6. **Personal** – Two people noted "I can follow my own ministry path and get support" especially feeling supported in following own social justice goals. Another finds spiritual guidance. Another's highlight was being able to sing at the services (and hopes she will be asked again.) Another mentioned his highlight was being a videographer on Sundays.
7. **Zoom** – people in three groups noted the highlight of being able to do things on Zoom, being able to talk to people over Zoom. Some liked the

Sunday morning Zoom sessions after worship finding more in-depth conversation than coffee time downstairs.

8. **Connecting with James Bay community** – Two groups commented that they appreciated the sense of commitment and connection with the James Bay neighbourhood and were glad that JBUC is appreciated in the community.
9. **Thrift Shop** - people in two groups also mentioned that the work of the Thrift Shop ... how the volunteers become part of the wider community; how the volunteers are themselves a community, and create excellent relationships.
10. Two groups noted the theme of **opening doors** ... how it is carried through in so many different aspects of the congregation's life/ ministries –being welcomed into Sunday morning worship; the experience with Thrift Shop volunteers that was so supportive; the welcome Tuesday Night Jazz at the Church; the welcome and sense of bonding with folks in the Lent book study. The warmth, caring ...the consistency of experiencing the opening doors theme. Gordon's work and encouragement of the congregation to be outward looking and forward thinking.
11. **Life Long Learning** two reports mentioned the Advent video series and discussion that Karen conducted.
12. **Volunteering** including pivoting through COVID at the church and Thrift store with staff and congregation rising to the challenges, getting involved at the church and the Board, and stepping forward to help with tasks around the church and grounds.
13. **Pastoral Care** - Larry the Church Mouse (and all the other church mice too!)

Question 2 – What's on your heart that you would want us, as a church, to be about as we move forward?

- a. **Indigenous Reconciliation** – Seven groups spoke of the importance of this feeling we need to move forward. Specifics were strong support of the reconciliation fund (City Hall) and working with Mayor Helps to seek reconciliation with the tax collection, have a relationship with an indigenous person/elder with our Board, antiracist and Reconciliation projects, learning, activities and outreach.
- b. **Ethos** – Four groups spoke of the need to continue to be outward facing and making sure that people feel at home when they come. One group suggested we should make sure our space is such that anyone who comes in the church (e.g. on Tuesday nights) can they tell from our space that we are inclusive, open, safe, loving. "Maybe I have never been in a church....what does this

one's space say to me?" JBUC pushes us sometimes into uncomfortable places, expanding the envelope, going to places never thought before—in a good way. There was a suggestion that the Thrift Shop volunteer training and information sheets like some other thrift shops to be sure people sheltering in the area of the church are welcomed by the volunteers rather than being sent away in order to keep the emphasis on inclusion and welcome.

- c. **Connections with the unhoused** – People from five groups also appreciated the church being a warming centre, that Kathie Putt and Joanne Keelan have made hot meals these last 10 weeks for people at Irving Park (with access now to the church basement for this gathering.) Before the pandemic there was monthly potluck and movie night organized by Gary – open to anyone, and people would like it to return. Some want to see some type of meal that invites everyone, unhoused and all ... so that there wouldn't be a sense of US and THEM. They would like to see this renewed when safe. People want us to find more ways to help with the homeless and barely housed people in our neighbourhood and the vulnerable or those living with mental illness.
- d. **Community involvement**. Three groups spoke of this. One person noted that she had signed up for the "visioning weekend" that had to be cancelled and is looking forward to being part of it when it happens. People want to keep up the connections with the many groups in James Bay that Gordon has worked especially with the Arts in this community. "The church has gotten more connected with the community in the past two years—keep up the collaboration with our neighbors."
- e. **Sharing meals and conversations** – four groups noted how sharing a meal brings people to the table, both literally and metaphorically. People are eager to get back to social events, inviting new people and giving space where people can open up to each other. Everyone in one group agreed that general hospitality events like Shrove Tuesday pancakes are a great thing to do! Another person told that, "At a previous church we had 'Soup for the Soul' – one person would bring the soup and bread enough for everyone and there would be open conversation during the meal and then exploring the Sunday scripture reading together." People generally want check-ins to see each other and just talk more often.
- f. **Zoom** – Three groups commented on the on-line presence of JBUC. "Who knew we could get into small groups for discussion while on Zoom!" Others said we need to expand on our online ministry and keep on with virtual services.
- g. **Music** – Two groups would like to see the music ministry leadership position settled as it feels like it's dragging on too long. The Music ministry is important.

- h. Two groups talked about becoming more involved in **climate change**--what can we do personally/ individually and in agitating the governments about policies.
- i. Two groups also stressed the importance of **global care** - An explicit / obvious public naming of our support of Ukraine, Palestinians, Iraqis, Syrians & Yemeni. Antiracism work against White Supremacy and support for Muslims and non-whites. Connecting with non-churched folks who are interested in justice for marginalized peoples and the earth.
- j. **Arts ministry** – another two groups spoke of the importance of beauty - Visual Arts (community engagement - workshops? Indigenous artists? Shows? Exhibits?), expanding our arts ministry to include knitting or fabric expressions, to involve new immigrant in the arts (very white right now), more food / drama / music.
- k. **Individuals** also spoke of the importance of connecting with young people and young families, about getting to know each other and connecting (like at the Lenten study), support for veterans, a seminar on work/life balance especially during the pandemic, more activities outside of work hours, Yoga.
- l. Point out the **donate button** more often so more people will donate.

Question 3 – In light of Gordon's retirement, what kind of church staff do we need for these visions to happen?

1. Five groups noted that **two people are needed**—one for communications and one for neighborhood engagement.
2. Four groups suggested need for a part time social media person for **communications**, with technical proficiency, very good communication skills and understanding who we are as a community of faith. We need technical skill for communications piece, but also theological congruence for the writing piece of this job.
3. **Neighborhood engagement** - Someone who builds on what Gordon has built, to keep the doors open to and in the neighbourhood. Someone not afraid to speak out and act for social change and justice. Ideally a young person of colour who could organize non-churched people in a common vision of spiritual practice and justice for BIPOC, Indigenous and poor folks including the unhoused. Three people said we need a staff person for Neighbourhood Outreach emphasising that it should be someone who lives in neighbourhood.
4. Some to help us as a congregation step more into the neighborhood work, someone who can coordinate and encourage us, help us educate ourselves and find our direction.
5. Someone to help us focus on hospitality.
6. Someone who helps us find ways of addressing climate change as a community and neighbourhood.

7. Someone (with skills to deal with challenges that may occur) in the sanctuary with drop in hours so that people can come in to pray or talk or listen to someone play the piano. This would be coupled with a more welcoming entrance and appearance of the church.
8. Someone to do more work to connect with First Nations people and traditions.
9. **Arts Ministry** – keep up the music /jazz events and expand beyond just music.
10. **Attributes** - Outgoing, open to suggestions about a range of activities/ directions. Someone with wide interest ... people person, someone who can encourage others to take up the work. Someone with energy ... so maybe we're looking for young person. A person who is community driven, music appreciation, tech wizard, creative, a church visibility when dealing with Social Justice and activism, an extrovert, above all a Spiritual person, interested in reaching out to the community and making relationships.
11. a **volunteer coordinator** who invites people to do small "do-able" things. Often if you do one thing you are asked to do a dozen more things and it is overwhelming.
12. One person suggested a part time **Thrift Shop person**. Another person added, "Just the fact that our Thrift Shop is known as a compassionate place speaks to who we are. I often wonder how we might expand that "connection" with folks in the community. It feels like a natural opportunity that we don't currently have time or resources to respond to as fully as we might."
13. **Budget** – The Board needs to assess what has happened over the time Gordon has been in the position and needs to take budget into consideration ... what can we