

## **WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? WHAT HAVE WE DONE?**

“Transforming Futures” is a diocesan initiative designed to foster hope for the future and action to sustain the ministry of the church through an inclusive process of visioning conducted by each parish. This project was developed thoughtfully and approved by Synod in 2018. Each parish was encouraged to imagine its future as an active and vital faith community assuming, just for a moment, that money or other resources pose no issue. Once a parish identified and approved the objectives that fit its own sense of its being and mission, it would then put in place a fund-raising programme dedicated to pursuing those objectives.

So, beginning in June 2020, our “transformers” group was formed and began by first reviewing the past work of the “Quo Vadis” group (2014), the Building Development group (2016), “Why Day” parish conversations (2018), and the Parish Strategic Plan (2019). We then formulated a list of questions on which to base a series of meaningful conversations with members of our congregation and also with St. John’s neighbourhood groups.

We have engaged in 46 group conversations within our parish and numerous individual conversations involving over 100 people who call St. John’s home. We asked parishioners how and why they engage with St. John’s and what they value about the parish. We also asked what a future St. John’s might look like and how it could engage more effectively with its community. Finally, we asked what we could be doing at St. John’s if money were no object.

In addition to conversations with congregants, we conversed with 13 neighbourhood groups to ascertain how we might be better neighbours. The process employed with these groups included mutual education about what we each do, and how, if at all, we might better work with each other on addressing social justice and other urgent needs within our community. It has been an interesting and enriching experience for all of us, and it is our hope that it leads to some meaningful “transformations”.

Reports have been presented to Vestry 2021 and 2022 detailing the processes we have employed and outlining next steps.

As we prepare to consider high-level ideas, it may be useful to consider the 2019 Vision Statement.

### **ST. JOHN’S VISION STATEMENT (*from 2019*)**

The Anglican Church of St. John the Divine seeks to be an affirming, welcoming, inclusive, spiritual community. Rooted in Anglican tradition, we are progressive, open, questioning, and nurturing. We want to be a reconciling and reconciled community, to be advocates for social change for the betterment of all people, to connect with our local community, to celebrate the arts, to share a sense of joy, hope and life, in worship which is both grounded in liturgy and informed by contemporary thinking and expression. As a loving, hospitable community we wish to be a safe space, in which healing may occur and people are cared for, affirmed for who and what they are, and can grow, learn, and be challenged in their thinking and in their journey of faith, and in their calling to be disciples of Christ.

## SUMMARIZED IDEAS

Ideas and options related to Transforming Futures are provided **for review and open discussion** regarding the merits of each idea without limitation, precondition, or veto.

The themes of **underutilized space**, the **need to strengthen community**, and the **need to increase income** are present throughout the ideas presented. Safety considerations for the parish and St. John's Court will improve with increased intentional use of church premises; a busy church is a safer church. The parish community needs to be strengthened if our church is to thrive in a changing neighbourhood. Long-term financial viability must be addressed while the parish has flexibility and time.

Ideas are presented followed by brackets showing **broad categories** that are consistent with interim reports from this team. The categories are Operations, Worship, Outreach, Partnership, and Financial. Many ideas cut across more than one category.

## SOME TRANSFORMATIONAL IDEAS

1. Obtain authorization from parish council, parish leadership, and diocesan leadership to open a dialog with other parishes (especially those in the immediate neighbourhood) regarding possibilities of sharing space. Other parishes also face financial challenge, and St. John's building is underutilized. [Financial, Operations]
2. Evaluate the costs and expected benefits of transforming the nave worship space into a more flexible worship space and more rentable performance space.<sup>1</sup> This includes the removal of pews in favour of chairs which could be accomplished at one time or in phases. Engage with musical partners to assist with the fundraising for such an endeavour which offers mutual benefits to the parish and the partners. [Operations, Worship, Partnership, Financial, Outreach]
3. Evaluate the costs and expected benefits of remodeling the parish house<sup>2</sup> to be used more extensively by others. Seek partners to use building spaces in the provision of services to the community, for non-profit office space, and for rental income. [Operations, Financial, Partnership, Outreach]
4. Evaluate the costs and the expected benefits of remodeling the lower hall<sup>3</sup> for long-term use in the provision of childcare, teen drop-in centre, adult day care, or another similar use with a community focus. This option would require identification of a partner to rent the space and provide the relevant services. [Outreach, Partnership, Financial, Operations]
5. Consider relocating the Food Bank at St. John's to a ground floor, accessible space, possibly a remodeled space in the parish house or sharing a portion of space in the nave. Pursuit of idea #4 may trigger consideration of this idea as well. [Outreach, Operations, Financial]

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<sup>1</sup> Space transformation includes improved washrooms; also, plans should reference the final report of the Church Building Development Group (2016) chaired by Tony Barlow.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

6. Engage with the Diocese to undertake a thorough review of St. John's operations from leadership and staffing, to demands on staff time, to building use, to outreach programs, to financial viability. [Operations, Financial, Partnership, Outreach, Worship]
7. Renew and expand learning and socializing opportunities for people of our parish and of the neighbourhood. Members of our parish need worship, but we also need spiritual, educational, and social opportunities to strengthen and rebuild our community. The resumption of such opportunities is an important inflection point for our parish's future. [Outreach, Operations]
8. Encourage, sponsor, and fund (employ) vocational deacons with community outreach and social justice central to their calling and our parish's needs. [Outreach, Partnership, Operations]
9. Strengthen the delivery of pastoral care. As a congregation with an older demographic, it is important that pastoral care outreach be central to our parish and clergy's mission. [Outreach, Operations]
10. Engage with congregants who have become less visible in the life of our parish but who remain in the area. If possible, identify and address issues which may warrant attention. [Outreach]
11. Strengthen communication tools and sources of information through more active use of the web site, expanding social media use, providing better signage, and communicating regularly with other organizations that have extensive reach, especially the North Park Neighbourhood Association. [Operations, Outreach, Partnership]
12. Reopen the dialog regarding liturgy, music, and service options. Members of our worshipping faith community should be included in periodic dialogue regarding service options. Listen widely to the quantity and intensity of responses, and act to address them if warranted. [Worship, Outreach]
13. Develop the garden as a usable and rentable area for appropriate events including coffee hour, short concerts, weddings, and other celebrations. [Operations, Financial]
14. Open the church space more often, perhaps daily, with volunteers providing staffing for monitoring and safety purposes. [Operations]

### **WHAT DO WE DO WITH THESE IDEAS?**

Members of our parish and community have engaged willingly and genuinely with the Transforming Futures Team, and it is essential that we **communicate and discuss our recommendations**. This should be done widely and openly, prominently on the web site, in small groups, in person and via Zoom, in the Divine Connection newsletter, and/or in a Sunday sermon. Communication and initial reflection should end by late summer 2022.

**Some ideas can be implemented quickly and easily** as they fall within the purview and responsibilities of Parish Council and parish leadership. Each idea that is clearly supported by Parish Council should have a person identified to lead implementation and report monthly on steps planned and taken. The parish should be updated at least quarterly starting by year-end 2022.

**Other ideas will require clear support before further development.** The high-cost items involve a rethinking of the nave worship space (#2), remodeling of the parish house (#3), and/or remodeling the lower hall (#4). These ideas need clear support for the concept provided, then cost-benefit analysis<sup>4</sup>, a project manager, estimates, Vestry support, financial commitment and fundraising if pursued. For some building projects, diocesan support will also be needed. Transformers stand ready to assist with sharing and vetting ideas, gauging support, advancing ideas with cost-benefit analysis, and if pursued, some of us will assist with obtaining financial commitments to determine whether to proceed.

### **Communication responsibility should be shared between Transformers and Parish Council.**

Transformers have spent hundreds of hours collectively on this project. We will gladly listen with Parish Council members to the reactions shared by members of our parish. We will help to summarize and prioritize the responses given. However, the **action steps will belong to Parish Council and to church leadership.**

Respectfully submitted,

### **TRANSFORMING FUTURES TEAM**

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