

# St John the Evangelist, Locke St, Hamilton—Parish Profile *[April 20, 2023]*

## *Part 1: Hopes and Dreams*



### **Playing our part in God’s mission**

The Church of Saint John the Evangelist is a parish where **we define our life together by participating in God's mission.** Our Mission Statement says, “God calls us to help people become followers of Jesus, equipped for ministry in the church and in the world through nurture, evangelism, worship and service.” We are a congregation of people drawn together by our common desire to see our faith in Jesus transform ourselves and mean something useful to our community.

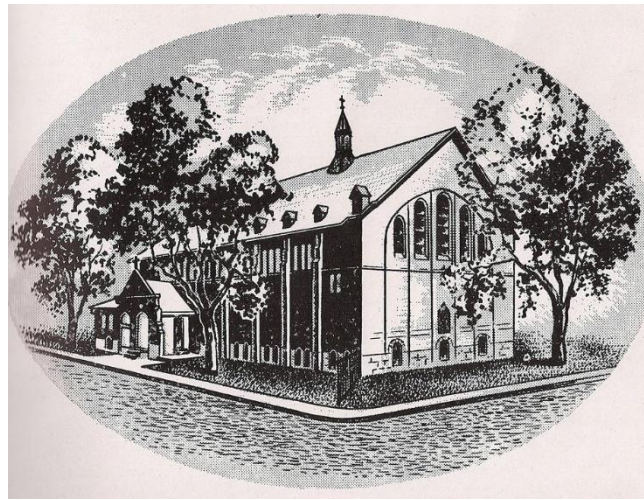
We are Anglicans, who understand that our faith is part of a 2,000-year-old tradition of Christian worship and practice. While we value historic liturgy and worship styles, we also attract new parishioners from across the denominational spectrum seeking an expression of faith that is theologically orthodox and culturally contemporary. At our best we are defined by an ongoing congregational dialogue on Christian faith, teaching, and living rooted in Scripture.

We embrace our Niagara Diocesan vision to be “Called to Life - Compelled to Love.” We are a “doing” church, motivated to be incarnational, relational, discipling, and transformational. This takes expression within the parish community and neighbourhood, but also within the diocese and internationally.

### **What is special about our parish?**

From its beginnings in the 1890s as a church plant from a “downtown” church, St. John’s has been a

parish that embraced **variety and diversity**. (\* [See a brief introduction to the church's history, at the link below.](#)) Our current congregation has members from each decade back to the 1940s.



*An early picture of St John's church*

Today's parish is made up of both life-long Anglicans and many people drawn from other Christian traditions. We have become known as an accepting and inclusive congregation, where the Spirit's presence is calling people willing to grow and change. Since its founding, St. John's has had rigorous debate about worship styles and liturgy. This is presently expressed through three Sunday services of different styles, and a Wednesday eucharist.

Community life as a congregation is important to St John's. During the pandemic, we lost many of the activities we previously valued, so our congregation is seeking to renew our parish life and fellowship, deepen our discipleship and faith, and engage in outward ministry in new ways. We have completed the Mission Action Plan process (a Diocese of Niagara initiative, encouraged and resourced for all parishes) and set strategic priorities as outlined in the MAP appendix.



*Outdoor Carol-walk with local churches, December 2022*

## Future plans and dreams

The pandemic has taught us all the word “pivot”. Out of this experience we are open to re-evaluating many of our activities, practices, and other expressions of congregational life together. We want to hold onto our willingness to experiment with new ideas, perceive the Spirit’s calling, respond quickly without a lot of bureaucracy, and dream about what God has planned for our present and future. Some of these plans and dreams could include:

- further develop **ministry to children and youth**: can we nurture the children of the congregation and broaden engagement with others in the parish?
- **encourage every church member to belong to a small group**: renewing existing relationships and welcoming newcomers could be key to nurturing and equipping parishioners. How can we become a congregation with greater spiritual depth rooted in Scripture and the Anglican tradition?
- **embrace different styles of worship**: our congregation has valued diversity in worship expression since our founding. How can we evolve our current expressions to reflect this generation’s desires and attract new worshippers, while continuing in the rich tradition of Anglican liturgy and worship?



*A meeting of the Middle Ground small group, fall 2022*

- **revitalize our Anglican expression of evangelism**: can we reimagine our Discovery service or create new venues intended primarily for outreach and discipleship of unchurched and dechurched people, perhaps including students or others who are in the parish impermanently?
- **capitalize on the diversity of parishioners from varied denominational backgrounds**: many members are not cradle Anglicans (we have members from Presbyterian, Baptist, United, Lutheran, Christian Reformed, Catholic, and various evangelical churches). There is a shared desire to understand the Bible, live out Christ-shaped mission, and reflect an inclusive expression of Christian faith in our Canadian context.
- **consider restructuring our internal church organization**, perhaps learning from other traditions or denominations to empower lay leadership with more pastoral responsibilities.

- **re-evaluate how we use our space:** how can we use our facilities to enable community-building expressions of the Peaceable Kingdom? How can we address accessibility and environmental sustainability as part of any physical changes?
- **express our character as a neighbourhood parish church:** we have historically been a neighbourhood-rooted church, so what can we do to impact local realities, and attract new neighbours geographically surrounding the church?
- **take spiritual leadership in tackling contemporary crises:** how might our congregants' expertise and passions lead to broader church and community action on homelessness, climate breakdown, refugee and immigrant settlement, and Indigenous reconciliation?

### Priorities for our New Leader

We pray for a new leader who has a **vibrant faith** expressed in their daily life—someone who will transparently share their faith journey to inspire and accompany people on their own paths.

We are a capable congregation with many parishioners with academic training and professional experience who are expressing their faith through their lives. We desire a priest who seeks to empower **missional leadership** by a well-equipped laity, while confidently functioning as the caster of a **parish vision** which is jointly and prayerfully discerned by the whole congregation. We are also looking for a relational **connector** and an **engaging teacher/preacher**, rooted in the Gospel and passionate about our mission to share God's transforming love with a spiritually hungry world.

We will welcome someone who **prioritizes pastoral care** in the parish, **encourages varied liturgical worship experiences**, and **promotes social justice advocacy**.

We are aware that our congregation's desire to impact the world for God's mission can outpace our capacity in time, finances, and volunteers, and encouraging guidance from our leader is desired. We look for someone who can delegate, can negotiate relating to quirky or difficult people, and will respond in a timely fashion to requests from the congregation. A lively sense of humour and empathetic listening skills will enable our priest to build relationships across our congregation and within the community.

Overall, our fundamental desire is that our new leader guide us in our mission to **live the Good News and build God's Kingdom**, grounded in our parish experience.

*\*A Brief History of St John the Evangelist Church, updated 2021:*

<https://dq5pwpg1q8ru0.cloudfront.net/2023/01/29/19/04/34/c9fec001-a14f-42c8-acc6-bb9a80beb8af/A%20Brief%20History%20of%20SJE%20updated%202021.pdf>

## ***Part 2: Location and Membership***

Saint John's is an Anglican parish in the Diocese of Niagara, located at 320 Charlton Avenue West in downtown Hamilton's southwest Kirkendall neighbourhood. It is truly a local church, with many parishioners walking or biking to St John's, and most parishioners living within a 15-minute driving radius.

The congregation's demographics are summarized in the diocesan information attached as an appendix. Many members have lived in the parish for generations, with others moving into the neighbourhood in more recent years. The rapid appreciation in local real estate prices has begun to impact parishioners' ability to purchase or rent homes in the immediate neighbourhood.

St. John's is easily accessed from major (Highway 403) and arterial roads (Main St. East, Aberdeen Ave.) connecting to Locke Street South. There is no on-site parking, so street parking is used by anyone driving to the church. It is relatively close to McMaster University (4 km: 8 min. drive, 15 min. cycle, 45 min. walk). Mohawk College is walkable through the connecting trail network. Redeemer University is a 10 min. drive away in Ancaster. Students have often been attracted to joining worship and small groups, although there is potential for targeted outreach to increase student engagement (both undergraduate and graduate).

The Kirkendall neighbourhood's built environment is dominated by housing stock built between 1860-1920, with a range of multi-storey apartments interspersed in pockets throughout the neighbourhood. The Durand neighbourhood immediately to the east is one of the highest density in Hamilton, with many high-rise buildings amidst historic homes; the Anglican mission of All Saints Church is in a newly-built condo tower, and Church of the Ascension is surrounded by high-rise apartments. Both neighbourhoods have historically had a relatively high proportion of renters, as students, newcomers, and younger households choose the relative convenience, accessibility, and variety of housing options locally.

The neighbourhood is well situated for outdoor activities, being adjacent to the Bruce Trail, the Radial Trail and Iroquois Heights, and the municipal Chedoke Golf Course following the Niagara Escarpment. It is also served by a range of bike lanes and public transit, including inter-city GO bus service.

## ***Part 3: Worship***

Since St. John's founding, worship has been at the heart of congregational life. The original desires and debates were similar to today's, when various liturgical expressions are offered weekly:

- *Book of Common Prayer*: Sundays at 8am (in the chapel) and Wednesdays at 10am (in the sanctuary). These are said liturgies, with small congregations attending (always under 10)
- Discovery Service: Sundays at 9:30am with the Discovery Praise Band and various orders of service over the years. The Communion table is in the church crossing; the music consists in praise songs; no liturgical vestments are worn; and the preaching is generally in a more informal

style. Those in attendance consist of a combination of long-time members with newer ones and families with children, currently averaging 45-50 people. Live-streaming reaches a small but grateful viewership averaging < 20 (viewings may increase during the week).

- Choral Service: Sundays at 11:00 with *Book of Alternative Services* and *Common Praise* hymnal: celebrated at the high altar, with our organist conducting the parish choir. Attendance at this service also averages around 45, with the choir accounting for half that number.

During the summer and on other Sundays when the full parish is called together, an alternative worship schedule with 8am BCP and a 10am service is followed (musical leadership decided based on context). Summer attendance reflects the reality that many parishioners are out of town during July and August.

The congregation is open to reviewing these formats and practices, consistently expressing a desire to build relationships amongst parishioners across services. This has been particularly noted post-pandemic, as promoting parish culture was an identified MAP priority. There is particularly growing interest in refreshing the Discovery service to restore its original intent to reach out to unchurched folks, rather than simply being a contemporary version of the choral service (which it has become over a decade).

St. John's history has included significant children's ministry. Camp Artaban was established in the 1960s and for thirty years attracted significant youth engagement before winding down in the 1990s. A newly-appointed (2021) Children's, Youth and Family Ministries Coordinator has re-established programming for children after the pandemic lockdowns. There are presently (early March 2023) approximately 15 children who participate in programs, with several toddlers and newborns added recently (and another two on the way!).

In the past, youth and children have been involved in reading, offering prayers on special Sundays (e.g. Scouting Sunday), and greeting. The newly re-established children's choir has been presenting music every month for the main Sunday services. We presently have very few youth (teens) in the congregation, but would welcome more involvement when their numbers increase again.

The priest is responsible for overall guidance in worship and the sacraments and preparation of the liturgy, but St John's has a tradition of **strong lay leadership**. We have a higher percentage than normal of members with postgraduate degrees, including several with higher degrees in theology and religious studies. A number of these people are regularly asked to preach. There are also a number of other gifted leaders in the congregation who have taken key roles in teaching, discipling, mentoring, visitation, prayer, and mission. At the same time, we have frequently been blessed over the last dozen years with **candidates for ordained ministry** doing a placement at St John's. They have provided rich and varied additional resources for the congregation. There has been discussion about restarting a Worship Committee which could coordinate planning across the main Sunday services, but this has not begun.

We have two licensed Lay Readers. Both are regularly involved in readings, intercessions, and eucharistic delivery on Sundays, and are available for other involvements (e.g. preaching, organizing special services) as needed. One lay reader has episcopal permission to take communion to shut-ins, and also leads classes for Confirmation and first Communion.

The pandemic disrupted regular attendance at St. John’s, where adherence to public health guidelines was generally willing and high. Services are recovering slowly, but as yet (April 2023) there are still reduced numbers attending services (2021-2022 statistics attached).

Special event Sundays, Holy Week, Easter, and other traditional events in the church calendar do draw modestly higher attendance, particularly to choir-led services. The main feasts of the liturgical year are observed on their nearest Sunday. Dates for Christmas and Holy Week are observed on the actual days.

The parish has hosted several traditional services: Choral Evensong and Devotions; Carol services; Ash Wednesday and Good Friday special services. More experimental liturgies, e.g. Taizé, Fresh Expressions, Jazz Vespers, have only been occasional, but there is openness to new opportunities.

Messy Church was a going concern for seven years, but ceased before the pandemic as attendance was reduced and renewed leadership energy was needed.

#### **Part 4: Organizational Structure**

The governance and overall leadership of St. John the Evangelist (SJE) is shared by the collective body of the Wardens and the Rector (with the Treasurer invited to attend) –together called the Corporation. The Corporation is responsible for all activities in the parish, as well as the parish finances (being signing officers), physical property (being keyholders), and non-diocesan staff. As the leadership team of the parish, all members of the Corporation are expected to model Christ-like servant leadership. Outside of extenuating circumstances, the Corporation meets monthly.

##### **Wardens**

The wardens (or church wardens) include multiple members. At minimum, there is always one warden appointed without election by the rector (the rector’s warden), and one warden elected by the parish at the annual vestry meeting (the people’s warden). There may be multiple deputy wardens (appointed or elected) to assist the Corporation. Currently there are two wardens and two deputy wardens. The main distinction between warden and deputy warden is the term of office.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Term Length</b>	<b>Nomination</b>
Rector’s warden	2 years (very flexible)	Appointed by rector
People’s warden	2 years	Elected at Vestry
Deputy rector’s warden	1 year	Appointed by rector
Deputy people’s warden	1 year	Elected at Vestry

##### **Treasurer**

The rector and wardens will together nominate a treasurer, who will be responsible as the primary advisor on financial matters and regularly attend Corporation meetings. Though the treasurer does not have “final say” on financial matters, he or she provides the backbone of planning, advice, and implementation in this area. The treasurer’s term is not currently fixed.

## Parish Council

At St. John's, the Parish Council has served an important role as an advisory board to the Corporation. In this respect, it is not, canonically, a decision-making body. However, it exercises a vital role as the Corporation consults with the Parish Council on important decisions. The council is kept aware of the goings-on across the parish as a means of effective coordination of our ministries and efficient information dissemination.

There is no fixed number of positions on Parish Council; parish members may be nominated to have their names stand on a slate of candidates, to be voted on at the annual vestry meeting. A number of PC members are "ex officio," e.g. the wardens, the treasurer, the chair of Stewardship, the chair of Climate Justice, the Synod representatives.

Parish Council meetings are typically held once a month, being chaired by a warden.

## Paid Staff

### Office Administrator

- Part-time employee, presently 9 hours/week.
- Reports to the Corporation.
- Works closely alongside and is supported by the rector and the treasurer.
- Responsible as single point of contact for all inbound information to the parish, maintaining the parish financial books, and assisting the Corporation as well as other staff with all other administrative duties.

### Honorary Assistant Clergy

- Licensed by the bishop to conduct services in assistance to the rector, when needed.  
Presently one Honorary Assistant Minister

### Choral Service Music Director

- Part-time employee.
- Coordinates musical worship for the traditional liturgical service, as choirmaster.
- Plays the organ, purchases music for the choir, assists with the children's choir.

### Discovery Service Music Director

- Part-time employee.
- Coordinates musical worship for the contemporary service.
- Leads weekly practices, guides the volunteers in the band, participates in the band, and coordinates the audio-visual volunteers.

### Child, Youth, and Family Coordinator

- Part-time employee.
- Responsible for overseeing all activities related to children and youth ministries.



- Responsible for coordinating volunteers, planning events, and maintaining a weekly program to suit the needs of the current church demographics.

#### Cleaner

- Part-time contract employee, rather than on parish staff as such.
- Reports to the Corporation.
- Responsible for ensuring that a fixed scope of cleanliness is maintained in the physical building.

The Rector is an office-holder, appointed by the bishop, and a member of Corporation at St John's. As well as being responsible for guiding the worship activities at all services, the rector is the primary leader in pastoral care, the spiritual development of the congregation, and the parish's mission and outreach ministry. The rector is also charged to assist Corporation with church governance, providing a vision for the future of the parish, as well as any other duties within the scope of the duties and responsibilities of Corporation.

## ***Part 5: Programs and Organizations***

### **Ministries for children and youth**

"Children are welcome to be children" is printed on the front of St John's weekly service bulletins.

About a decade ago, several pews were removed in our worship space to create a child-friendly play area. Our youngest are invited to remain with their parents in this area during worship. An unsupervised nursery is available downstairs for any parents wishing to use that space with their own children.

There are currently \_\_ babies and toddlers and \_\_ younger children in the parish, so ministry for them is becoming a renewed priority area for St John's. A **Child and Family Ministry Coordinator** position was created in 2021, with this person taking responsibility for volunteer recruitment, screening, and management of this ministry, and special programming such as the annual Nativity Pageant and parish picnic.



*Nativity Pageant, December 2022*

**Children's Church** is supported by the Coordinator, offered during the 9:30 and 11am services by a rotation of volunteer teachers who currently use the SPARK curriculum and have access to the well-stocked craft closet. At present, one class is offered at each service for all children aged 3-10. There is capacity for growth in terms of both space and potential volunteers. We are particularly looking to develop a nursery program for all the new babies and toddlers.

The **Children's Choir** is a community outreach program that helps children to learn about God and Jesus through music. The children's choir touches the hearts of those who are listening, drawing both listeners and singers closer to God through the singing. This program teaches the children about music, and helps them to develop excellent performance skills and learn about being on a team. Currently 4 of our 9 choristers are from the community beyond the church.

A **Scattered Children's Library** was created in spring 2020 at the start of the pandemic. New books were purchased for children aged 2 to 10 years to expand the Church School library. Books were delivered to families, then picked up and exchanged with a new set of books. With the reopening of the church building in 2022, the library contents have been absorbed into the new parish library.

St. John's encourages children to receive Holy Communion as they mature and show signs of wanting to be included in the family gathered at the Lord's Table. When children reach the age of six or more, they are encouraged to participate in an orientation program led by experienced lay people in the parish, using the Anglican Church guide *Life in the Eucharist*. For four to five weeks, parents and their children gather to learn about Baptism and Holy Communion, as well as church furnishings and fun facts. With homework each week and group activities when they gather, children connect the life story of Jesus with what happens in the Eucharist. They learn more about the importance of having a prayer life, and how prayer surrounds all ages and stages of life in a Christian community. The final gathering is a rehearsal to practise receiving bread and wine and to learn the etiquette involved in the full participation of worship when gathered for Holy Eucharist. The program is usually offered during Lent, with the expectation that the child's first full communion will be on Easter Day. There have been eight children from three families participating in Spring 2023.

**Youth Ministry.** St John's had a vibrant youth group for many years, covering middle school and high school ages, with weekly meetings and several summer mission trips not only to other cities in the US and Canada, but also to Cuba, Romania, and Puerto Rico. Pre-pandemic, our youth participated in several diocesan youth gatherings. Parish demographics led to a decrease in youth numbers from the late 2010s to the present, but a small group of committed leaders and youth continued to meet virtually and occasionally outdoors through the first year of the pandemic. At present, there is no organized youth ministry.

**Scouting at St John's.** St John's sponsors the 147th Scouting Group which has Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers, and Rovers sections. Scouting has been a presence at the church since 1944. Until the onset of the pandemic, a special Scouting Sunday service was held every February. The 147th uses the Activity Centre space two evenings per week and occasional weekends. They have a dedicated storage space for camping gear and other equipment. There is a "Scouts' Corner" at the chancel crossing of the church where flags and awards are displayed.

## Adult Faith Nurture

St. John's has identified Nurture as one of the four compass points in its ministry description (Nurture, Evangelism, Worship and Service—N.E.W.S.), and continues to name it as one of its three focuses in our recent Mission Action Plan (MAP). We are life-long learners in the faith. We believe adults need nurture in order to continue growing as Christians in their various stages of life—confirmation classes are not the 'finishing school' in the faith!

For several years, we offered **Anglican 101** as a primer for un-churched, de-churched and re-churched adults. There is interest in this type of orientation again, as numerous congregants have joined the parish from outside the Anglican tradition. More recently, we engaged in **Revive** as a whole parish. Having begun Module One in the fall of 2019, we continued into 2020, but postponed offering Module Three after the pandemic began. We did repeat Module One online in a videoconference format in spring 2021, and found that the program could be easily accommodated to this format. Many parishioners enjoyed the Revive curriculum and would like to see it offered again.

Several parishioners have participated in **Cursillo** over the years, initially as a weekend gathering and then continuing in small groups for support afterward. Cursillo offers regular opportunities for spiritual and faith growth through its programming, though this program is not widely advertised in the parish.

**St John's Church Library** <https://www.rockonlocke.ca/programs/st-johns-church-library>

One good thing that came out of the pandemic during the spring and summer of 2022 was time and space to reorganize our library. Thanks to gifts from parishioners, there are now almost 500 books catalogued under a dozen different categories, ranging from "the big questions" of faith to the Narnia stories, and from books to help understand the Bible to books on the spiritual life by writers such as Henri Nouwen and Philip Yancey. These are all intended to be helpful to parishioners in developing and growing in the Christian faith.

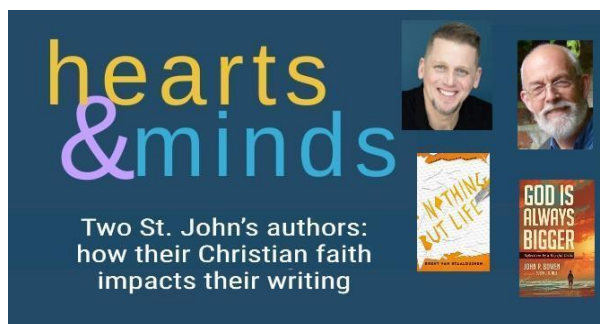


*St John's Church Library reorganized, summer 2022*

**Book Study Groups.** At least once a year a book study occurs, with topics ranging from latest best-sellers to a title from the Bishop's Lenten book list. In 2021, Lynn Twist's *The Soul of Money* gathered a group of people online from conversations begun in the Stewardship Committee. It was followed in the spring of 2022 by Katherine Hayhoe's book *Saving Us*. In Lent 2023, people read Martha Tatarnic's *Why Gather?* Such book studies are based on the initiative of parish members, usually attracting six to eight members at a time.

**Hearts and Minds** is an informal group meeting monthly on a Friday evening to hear a member of the congregation or an invited guest respond to the question, "How do you live out your faith through your

daily life and work?” Hearts and Minds has met consistently since 2012, and continued online right through the pandemic. This group enables the sharing of faith journeys in an intimate setting, as well as often acting as a catalyst for new experiences or ministries. Since there is no expectation to attend regularly, most people choose to attend based on the specific topic of the evening; this makes for a variety in clientèle, which we see as a good way of fostering community between different groups in the church.



*A Hearts and Minds session from June 2022*

For specific roles, such as Servers included in the **Servers Guild**, we offer in-service training and refresher courses. **Lay Preachers** have been a hallmark feature of St. John's for the last decade or more, partly because our parish membership draws faculty and students from McMaster University and Redeemer University, including a number of people discerning a call to the priesthood. This rich population of academics empowers people to preach in the formal setting of a Sunday liturgy and enriches the parish immensely. St. John's also attracts professionals from a broad spectrum of life, and often these people are invited to share the pulpit.

**Quiet days.** Over the past few years before the pandemic, the Prayer Team sponsored a half day on a Saturday with instruction and meditation led by an experienced person. Plans for 2020 had included a full-day event as previous sessions had been well attended and people were asking for more time to develop these disciplines. We have typically offered these on a Sunday afternoon, too, featuring instruction on different kinds of prayer and time to practise them. Monastics, clergy and laypersons have led such events.

**Retreats.** Though these have not been part of St John's ministry for a while, in the past they were a going concern and perhaps could be reinstated. In the early 2010s for about five years, our Parish Council conducted a "weekend away" at a nearby retreat centre, to develop community norms and a vision for our parish and its work in the community. The parish also held **Frosty February Getaways** from the mid 1990's until 2012, when Family Day became a statutory holiday on the weekend traditionally reserved for our parish event. We had strong participation from families for both overnight and day-only events. Punctuated by prayer and worship, this activity was a strong way to integrate new members and build community over the course of a weekend together.

**Prayer Team and the Prayer Chain** are two groups which try to match the needs of our parish with the skills and disciplines of those in our midst. Ranging from prayer warriors to those committed to praying whenever they can, people can be part of the Prayer Team and/or the Prayer Chain; several people are members of both groups. During the Discovery and Choral Services, Prayer Team members are regularly scheduled to pray in pairs at the back of the church for any individual need brought to them. Those who are on the Prayer Chain are notified by email to pray for a specific need for a period of time. These

requests go through the clergy and Prayer Chain co-ordinator first, but, as needs arise, anyone on the Prayer Team can initiate a prayer request.

Several **small group Bible study and fellowship groups** flourish at St. John's. **Bibles and Bagels** is a weekly women's group that meets on Saturday mornings to study a Bible passage (normally the Gospel reading appointed for the next day) using the *lectio divina* method. Members share prayer requests with each other. **Saturday Stuff for Guys** is more loosely organized, happening bi-weekly and using the next day's readings for its texts. Fellowship and prayer play important parts in its gathering. Although it began for young professionals, **Middle Ground** is a Sunday night gathering for individuals and couples and covers a range of ages. It gathers bi-weekly around a communal meal and studies scripture or engages in a book study. Every two weeks, **BeHive** currently meets on-line to study scripture thematically prescribed by a text.

**Visitation and outreach to shut-ins:** In addition to clergy visits, a number of initiatives were undertaken during the pandemic to reach out to shut-ins and persons living alone. These included periodic phone calls through a phone tree, regular phone calls to let people know when they are being prayed for in the parish cycle of prayer, and delivery of cards and chocolate on Easter weekend. In February 2023, as part of a Diocesan leadership program, a parish youth worked with kids to paint rocks to be delivered to various shut-ins.



**Wednesday Crafters Group.** Over the last decade or more, a group of people has gathered on Wednesday afternoons at the church to work on crafts together. They offer help to one another and mutual support while knitting, crocheting or doing other crafts for two hours every week. This group ranges in size from eight to ten, depending on weather and availability. People who enjoy the company of others while taking time to work on their own crafts are welcome to join any Wednesday.

## Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee works to promote discipleship related to how parishioners use and share the gifts they have received from God towards caring for and blessing the world. Over the past year, we have been emphasizing that stewardship is part of our faithfulness, including supporting the congregation's vitality.

The committee meets regularly and plans a year-round program focused on time, talent, and treasure. Our team has been working on seven areas to create a culture of stewardship in our congregation: stewardship education, shared decision making, community building, engaging volunteers, expression of thanks, financial requests, and prayer and discernment.

Over the past few years, year-round programming has included short, personal faith talks by parishioners during worship services; sermons; book studies; a fall mailing focus on pledging for the coming year; and two food drives for St Matthew's House.

When the budget deficit from the main pandemic period became apparent at a September 2022 Special Vestry meeting, the Stewardship Committee struck a working group that embarked on a new parish initiative: a Gift Day campaign.

A Gift Day encourages one-time giving focused on a particular Sunday; in our case, this was Reign of Christ Sunday at the end of the liturgical year. The Gift Day campaign was launched in the fall annual stewardship mailing and regular updates were shared via various parish communication channels. The Gift Day campaign officially ended on December 31, after raising a total of \$58,879.95 from about 50 donor households.

**Volunteer Screening and Management.** People find meaning and connection in using their gifts in service to others and to the church, and so supporting and enabling volunteers is an important stewardship focus. A Volunteer Resources Working Group was struck in August 2021 to improve parish practices around volunteer management. The working group was convened to identify and collect various resources needed for effective volunteer ministry. The final report in January 2022 contains sections on Diocesan Policies and Procedures, Organization Chart, Job Descriptions, Volunteer Recruitment, Volunteer Training and Orientation, and Volunteer Appreciation.

A related Volunteer Resources Implementation Team met in April 2022. Its objectives are to meet diocesan requirements around volunteering (namely the submission of a mandatory parish report in Spring 2023) and to implement the recommendations of the volunteer committee. The team has been building, formatting, and revising 50+ ministry job descriptions. The team is in the process of identifying vacancies and gaps in our current parish roster, with plans for a Spring appreciation event and a ministry fair in September.

## Community engagement and outreach

Encouraged by our former rector, and given our strategic location as a community church within the growing Locke Street neighbourhood, the parish has sought to develop ministries that connect us to the community. The SWANS (Southwest Area Neighbourhood Survey) process around 2012, in partnership with New City Church and First Christian Reformed Church, interviewed local leaders (school principals, business owners, city councillor, etc) to discern neighbourhood strengths, needs and gaps. Parishioners were encouraged to prayer-walk the neighbourhood. This sowed the seeds for the **concert ministry** and **Messy Church** as well as the **Hill Street Community Garden** a few blocks from the church, of which St John's was a founding sponsor. It subsequently won a "Greening Sacred Space" award. A number of parishioners continue to be involved in the community garden.

The **Climate Justice Committee** aims to promote living more sustainably as individuals, families and a congregation, and working for environmental and social justice through prayer, education, action and advocacy. Our Climate Justice Facilitator works with other parish leaders to help the parish respond to climate change with modifications to our buildings and our lifestyles. We are encouraged to challenge governments to enact laws that promote sustainability, and to build infrastructure that will transform buildings, transportation and agriculture.

**Neighbourhood greening.** Several members of our congregation are founding members of **EcoLocke**, the Ecological Churches of Locke Street - which includes five congregations in the neighbourhood. In 2022, we partnered with Green Venture to create a **Rain Garden** in our front yard. This has engaged numerous community members through volunteering, as well as parish children planting seeds. St. John's has regularly sponsored various community workshops on environmental issues.



*Dedication of the Rain Garden, May 2022*



*Kids' cold-weather seed-planting, February 2023*

**Concert Project.** Community engagement identified the need for affordable event space in our neighbourhood, as Kirkendall is home to many artists, many living precariously. The Concert Project created processes to host concerts in our worship space and to support local artists by renting our space at very reasonable rates. Prior to the pandemic, St John's was hosting a wide variety of classical and contemporary concerts, and became the practice home for a youth orchestra. This is gradually returning as people return to in-person events.

Connecting artists to audiences is part of our commitment to the common good of our neighbourhood, city, and human flourishing. People appreciate our beautiful space, our welcoming volunteers, and our willingness to open our church home to many different kinds of music. We attract these artists because we are affordable; we are affordable because of the volunteer support we have to host these concerts.

In 2019, St John's hosted a concert fundraising for the legal costs of a family facing deportation; they were successful in staying in Canada. This led to a busy year of hosting concerts and an alternative jazz music festival. We now have groups, including the Canadian Brass, using our space for rehearsals before performances. Two groups use the building weekly, and we have requests from others, pending space

and time. 2023 looks to be a busy year for concerts, with events happening every week or two through the spring. It may also hold potential to diversify the revenue streams of the parish.

A free **income tax clinic** launched at St John’s in 2009 to fulfil these objectives:

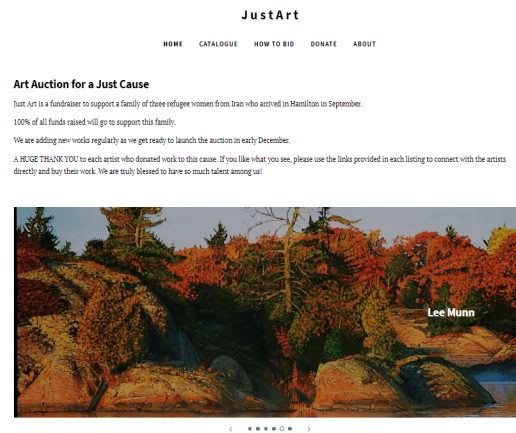
- help people with low to moderate income file their taxes
- help people qualify and maintain access to benefits such as rental assistance, Ontario Disability Support Program, HST rebates, Climate Action Incentive, Trillium benefits, and other assistance
- avoid the expense of paying a for-profit tax-filing service
- build new relationships within the community, particularly with marginalized parishioners.

Approximately 100 to 150 tax returns are completed each year by volunteers, individuals approved and trained by the Canada Revenue Agency. The program has been online-only since the pandemic.

**Support for vulnerable immigrant families and refugee sponsorship.** In recent years, St John’s has successfully advocated for three families facing deportation. Parishioners contacted government officials, demonstrated outside the federal building, and creatively fundraised towards legal fees.

The parish also sponsored **two refugee families**: a Syrian family of four who arrived in January 2016, and an Iranian mother with two grown daughters in September 2020. In both cases, our sponsorship team was responsible for raising funds to support these families during their first year in Canada, finding housing, helping them connect to services and supports such as healthcare and language instruction, showing love and welcome, and helping them to establish themselves in Canada.

Many people brought diverse gifts to the table, from the provision of temporary housing to cat-sitting; from orienting to public transit, to finding employment and permanent housing, to language translation, to setting up their apartments.



Two fundraisers raised significant funds for the project—**JustArt** (an online art auction held December 2020) and **JustDinner** (an initiative supporting local restaurants)—while elevating the profile of our parish in the community. St. John’s was able to fully fund these sponsorships, meaning that diocesan funds for refugee sponsorship were available for future refugees seeking a new home.



**Outreach and Missions links.** St John’s supports various outreach and missions organizations, both locally and further afield.

Each year until the pandemic, our Youth Group and other parishioners ran a highly successful Hallowe’en Food Drive in the area for **St Matthew’s House**. During the pandemic we held three food drives: a May 2020 drive raised \$8600 and collected 1500 pounds of food; a 2021 drive collected another \$2000 and 630 pounds of food; and in March 2023 a Fresh Food Drive raised 1350 pounds of fresh food in two weeks, to match what was raised simultaneously by Melrose United Church.



*Hamilton Spectator* article about St John’s Food Drive for St Matthew’s House, May 2020, early in the pandemic

**MARCH 3-16**

**FRESH FOOD DRIVE**

A COLLABORATIVE VENTURE OF  
**Melrose United Church**  
 AND  
**THE ROCK ON LOCKE**  
THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Order your Fresh Food Items from  
 Fiddes Wholesale Produce, 60 Ewen Road  
 -ph. 905-570-7900  
 -Tuesday-Saturday 10am-3pm  
 -Pay by cash, e-transfer, or debit

Orders from St John’s go to St Matthew’s House.  
 Orders from Melrose United go to Mission Services. Fiddes will deliver all on March 17.

St John’s also supports:

- **Hamilton Out Of The Cold**—a mission that provides meals to the homeless
- **Micah House**—a home for refugee claimants
- **Mission to Seafarers**—a committed presence on the Hamilton waterfront
- **Mission to Migrant Workers**—caring mainly for farm workers in the Niagara region

- **Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund**—supported regularly through the purchase of Christmas cards and calendars, but also more intermittently through giving to other PWRDF initiatives
- **Hopital Albert Schweitzer, Haiti**—a mission where a number of St John’s parishioners have been on service projects over many years.
- **TrueCity initiative:** parishioners have been involved with “churches together for the good of the city.”

During the pandemic, several of these connections were less visible at St John’s, but we have started up again in 2023, and each mission has a St John’s rep to keep the congregation informed on opportunities.

There is regular support for various outreach and other ministries on a periodic basis; there is a strong desire to be involved with and address issues of poverty, homelessness, and meeting basic human needs within our neighbourhood and the broader community.

**Artaban Non-Profit Homes** was founded by St. John’s in the 1990s and built 29 apartments onto the church building, replacing the parish hall after a fire. Parish members have served on Artaban’s board since, and are helping to assess the future options as the initial government contracts come to an end in the next few years.

Parishioners have volunteered with **Indwell** for the past number of years, primarily through youth group and Bible studies. These engagements have fueled interest in St. John’s taking an increasing role in calling for justice and long-term solutions for neighbours facing homelessness amid the housing crisis.

## **Part 6: Finances**

Since its very founding, St John's has been a congregation which puts **"ministry over mortgage."** Parishioners took over 50 years to pay off the original \$1800 mortgage, prioritizing parish life and community outreach over debt reduction. This tradition continues, as special projects to support a specific need, e.g. sponsoring a refugee family, contributing to outreach activities, or priorities like St. Matthew's House, are supported much more quickly and more significantly than meeting baseline budgets. The church's endowment funds are minimal, with <\$100,000 in investment funds.

Some parishioners are understandably concerned about church finances and the importance of being able to consistently meet our annual budget. A significant percentage of parishioners, or 37 households, contribute through Pre-Authorized Giving. This provides reliable income, although these parishioners sometimes forget to review their pledges annually and need encouragement to increase their giving targets.

We have in the past six months appointed a new church treasurer who is doing a stellar job of clarifying and regularizing our finances, after several years of this being handled by the rector – a role not expected of our new priest. Last fall we held a successful "Gift Day" campaign to erase the parish debt coming out of the pandemic. We raised over \$58,000 in two months, paying off a line of credit and returning some equity borrowed from our Endowment Fund. This was presented as a special giving campaign to rebuild our financial footings, rather than an annual campaign to meet the budget. However, the 2023 budget was recently approved projecting a \$30,000 deficit, reflecting a need to broaden and deepen the financial support of St. John's ministry from regular parish offerings in order to sustainably operate the church.

Historically, St. John's has generously embraced opportunities to contribute financially to compelling special projects, e.g. refugee sponsorship, outreach projects, Indigenous reconciliation, and periodic renovations, etc., whereas meeting annual budgets or contributing to endowments have needed routine diligence. The Stewardship Committee has worked hard to encourage a culture of generosity where parishioners' time, talents, and treasures are valued, linking the practices of giving to our growth in faith. They are currently reviewing ideas to further engage the congregation towards improving this discipleship, ideally reflecting positively in baseline financial stability.

*Please see the attached financial documents in the Vestry report later in this package.*



## **Part 7: Property**

The original church building dates back to 1890 with two small additions in the mid-20th century. Artaban Place, an affordable housing complex, was officially opened in 1994 following the loss of the original parish hall to fire. The property includes a small street-facing lawn and gardens, but no on-site parking.

A decennial inspection was last completed in August 2014 to meet the Diocese of Niagara requirements.

Other property-focused reports include:

### **1. Age-Friendly Assessment**

Completed by the Hamilton Council on Aging and McMaster University, July 2013

Scope: Safety of walkways; respectful relationships; accessibility of buildings and public transportation; and signage to assist visually impaired persons.

### **2. Green Audit Report**

Completed by David Patterson on behalf of Faith and the Common Good

Scope: Suggest ways to improve energy efficiency; water efficiency; kitchen and washroom equipment and practices; air quality; property management; selection of green materials for construction; monitoring energy use including heating fuel; electricity and water use.

### **3. Building Condition Assessment**

Completed by McCallum Sather Architects, January 2017

Scope: Water Infiltration of basement windows; cracks in plaster and lifting floor tiles; consideration of redesigning and rebuilding interior staircase between the north side of the church and crypt; and providing barrier-free access to the basement chapel.

It was noted that the last two items would involve major changes to the structure of the building and would be very expensive. Therefore, a detailed examination of these items did not occur.

Each of these reports has details that can help the assessments of the Decennial Inspection, and should be carefully studied to see how they can be made to mesh with that inspection.

The **Property Committee** has maintained a repair and maintenance schedule that divides actions into short-term (<2 years), medium-term (2-5 years), and long-term (+5 years). Under the leadership of this Committee, a number of repairs and upgrades have been made in the last seven years:

1. Painting church proper [2018]
2. Toilet replacement [2019]
3. Air conditioning: two 5-ton units replaced [2019]
4. Lead and galvanized water supply replacement [2022]
5. Lighting upgrades [2022]
6. Water diversion/pollinator garden installed along Locke St. frontage [2022]
7. Exterior masonry repairs [partially completed]
8. North fire exit stairs replaced [2022]
9. Grounds work, reducing need for upkeep and increasing utility

10. Repairing power doors and buttons
11. Shingle replacement on low sloping roof of north stairwell
12. Repairs to ventilation in washrooms
13. Downspouts

Use of church space:

We have no long-term space agreements in place, but 147<sup>th</sup> Hamilton Scouting Group has a charter from the church which is renewed annually; St. John's sponsors this troop without remuneration.