

# Strength to Strength 2.0 in Review

A whole-parish vision weekend

Friday May 26-28

St. Augustine of Canterbury Anglican Church

## Introduction

In late May 2023, the whole parish of St. Augustine's church was invited to participate in a decade visioning event for the church.

***Main Goal: To capture what gifts we have received from our history, who we are now, and where we are going as a parish in the next 5 years.***

At the outset, our prayer was that:

- We leave with a deepened sense of God's work in us.
- We free ourselves to stop doing the unhelpful things that tire us out.
- We free ourselves to begin, in common, to act according to our God-given passions and gifts.
- We continue with a common choice to follow after the Spirit in sharing our gifts in community.
- We leave with the joy of being together.
- We leave knowing that we are learning, in a new way, "to live Christ in community through service"

## Background

The matrix behind the event is asset based development, or seeking to live in abundance rather than scarcity. Scarcity focusses primarily on problems and how to fix them. Abundance focusses on gifts, assets, strengths, abilities and how to leverage them to meet the needs and mission of an organization. The Spirit always works abundantly. Nothing can be build with a scarcity midset.

## Friday "Where we have been"

Friday evening, following a lovely Simple Supper with the wider neighbourhood community, we gathered in the church sanctuary to hear Sheila New, Lauretta Howard, Pat Jameson, and Sherry Prokopuk speak about the parish story through the years. While they were speaking, the listeners were invited to note what strengths they were hearing in each of the categories below. Together we gathered up these strengths from our history:

### Physical Gifts

- Sunshine Community Garden
- Two church buildings, both with new roofs, for church life and rental alike
- How the church presents itself as architecture and land together
- Beauty of handmade altar dressings
- Sound Opportunity Choir's grand piano

## Church Culture

- A warm, cozy, and welcoming community pattern
- A history of people just willing to help out
- A focus on music
- Small group history: Book club, Coffee Shop gatherings, Encounters
- People willing to be open
- Kids being included throughout our history
- Long history of involvement in the neighborhood
- "rule breaking" (ie. Moving the altar for the Joseph production without permission)
- We have been able to hold a variety of experiences and perspectives

## Key Experiences

- Gatherings like this vision weekend!
- How online services were ready and running right away during the pandemic
- Simple suppers/rummage sales/coffee hour
- People learning how to become gardeners because of the community garden; gardeners teaching non-gardeners how to garden
- Fundraising events: medieval choir banquets, pancake suppers, and Simple Suppers
- Meditation teaching on Sundays and retreats led by Bob Wild
- Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat production (including a tour to Calgary)
- The Encounter's group that met between the services

## Spiritual Gifts

- "There must be something in the soil for that garden to grow so well"
- "stick-to-itness" (e.g. group willing to go house to house to build a church)
- Open minds and willingness to try new things
- Participation of everyone in services
- Kid's Time
- Joy
- Hospitality to create a spiritual home for so many
- A deep history of strong spiritual mentors - not only from our ministers, but from our wise congregation that embody Christ's spirit
- Embroidery/art work/woodwork
- Musical gifts
- Creativity (seamstress, carpentry)
- Sense of humour
- Sculpting/mural artistry

## Saturday Morning – "Who are we?"

Saturday, while we enjoyed some yummy snacks from the community, we explored who we are. After a fun exercise to experience some of the diversity of the people in the room, we also looked at the results

of the recent St. A's survey. These are some of the key points we noticed about the 25 people who responded to the survey:

- None of the survey respondents considered themselves part of a racialized group in Canada
- We have become relatively mixed age-wise (36% are between 70-84yrs; 12% between 55-69yrs; 24% 40-54yrs; 20% 25-39yrs)
- We are from a broad range of Christian denominational background – only 40% consider themselves cradle Anglicans
- Our largest Enneagram categories are: 2,1,9 – Helpers, World Changers, and Peacemakers
- We have a large number of Apostles and Shepherds in the 5-Fold ministry matrix
- Over half of respondents (53.8%) arrived at St. Augustine's after the year 2020.
- 50% of respondents live within 5km of the church
- The largest section of respondents (34%) came to the church because of a friend or family member connection
- Our highest two life 'pressures' were Health of Self and dealing with Life Balance.

As a result of Friday's gift gathering and our exploration Saturday morning, we crafted the following words:

***St. A's has always been:*** hospitable, a worshipping community in SE Edmonton, a gathering space for many groups; a learning and teaching centre; outreach focused; friendly and accepting; non-fussy and real; engaging within and without; a place of spiritual nurture and presence shaped in authentic liturgy and inspiring music; a place where you can have fun and joy; a place where children are welcome in worship; a homey comfortable place

***We are now:*** continuing to grow from healthy roots; a safe place: open to people to support their faith; Both traditional and innovative; regrouping from COVID and welcoming new members; limited in our broad artistic expression (memories of dancing on Pentecost, theatre, and other arts); vibrant and ready for new challenges; excited about the future; a committed and accepted participant in the local community; a place of hope within hopelessness around us; opening our doors to dynamic and diverse community interactions; The children of God just waking up!; life-long learners.

## Saturday Afternoon with Anna Bubel

Following a lovely soup, bun, and rhubarb crisp lunch, we welcomed Anna Bubel who brings much experience in general community development and church renewal. She is currently helping MacDougall United to become a multi-faith community hub in downtown Edmonton.

Similar to our whole visioning process, she focused on what our community assets are, but helped us focus on the specific needs of our neighbourhood.

Intending to spark our imagination for St. A's, she brought quite a number of creative ways that churches across Canada are meeting the needs of their neighbourhood. She emphasized that we should never assume that every idea will work in our area, but to be discerning about what is the right fit for us. She led us then through an exercise that emphasized the dynamics between Investment and Impact. Investment is how much an activity draws from your resources, Impact is relative to how many people

the activity is addressed to. We (generally) avoid High-Investment Low-Impact activities, and seek Low-Investment high-impact activities. The community produced these lists of our current activities, and our future ideas. Anna noted how different people scored some of the same activities differently

### \*Current Activities\*

#### Low Investment/Low Impact

- Music events
- Simple suppers/pancake suppers
- New international congregations celebrating in space
- Visioning group
- Leasing existing spaces to other groups
- Hosting other worship groups
- Ignatian exercises/spiritual direction

#### High Investment/Low Impact

- Ignatian Exercise

#### Low Investment/High Impact

- Online streaming of services
- Food box
- Using land/garden to reflect our values (Rewilding, community garden, chokecherry medicine wheel, fire pit)
- Rental of space
- Updating website
- Community gatherings
- Memorial garden
- Musical events (hosting)
- New international congregations celebrating in space

#### High Investment/High Impact

- Community garden
- Architecture of building (maintenance)
- Kids programming
- Maintenance of annex and roof

### \*Future Activities\*

#### Low Investment/Low Impact

- Host lecture series
- Food rescue and education

#### High Investment/Low Impact

- Secondary suite (rental)

#### Low Investment/High Impact

- Concerts in the church

- Creating an arts venue (fringe site)
- Find someone else to create a non-for profit hub (community artists, poets, musicians) to be held in annex
- Host tea parties
- Enter partnerships with EPL
- Replace pews with chairs (host greater variety of events)
- Host concerts in church basement (Beerfest, anniversary/birthday parties)

#### High Investment/High Impact

- Turn annex into multipurpose hub (5 votes)
- Complete upgrading of lower hall
- Coffee shop
- Use commercial kitchen to develop into collective kitchen
- Rewilding side lands

## Sunday

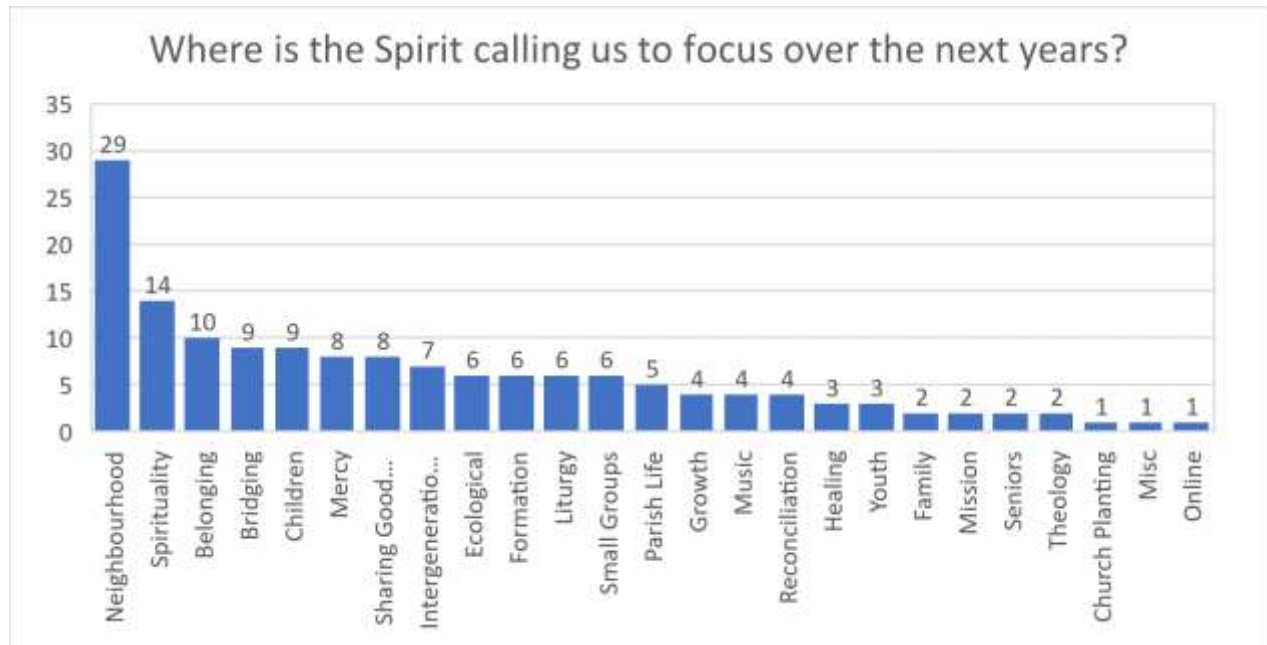
### Morning worship question

Sunday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 in the church year is Pentecost Sunday, Anglican Communion Sunday, and the patronal Feast for St. Augustine of Canterbury. It is a beautiful weekend for us to have held a visioning event. Pentecost especially reminds us how God is always renewing God's church by the Spirit. The same Spirit that birthed St. Augustine's church in the 1950s is still active with us and moving us forward and deeper into God's being.

As part of sermon time, Rev. Jonathan invited the community to ask the following question,

***"What three areas of focus do you believe the Spirit is inviting us focus on as a church over the next 3-5 years to achieve God's dream in us?"***

Everyone in-person was given three sticky notes and folks online were invited to email their responses in that morning. During lunch, general categories were outlined to help us see what areas of focus seemed most right for us to direct our energy to. The following chart outlines the categories that arose from the church community's input:



Notes:

- *'Belonging' responses had to do with creating space for people to be welcome at St. A's in their own individuality.*
- *'Bridging' reflects responses that had to do with overcoming and building community through difference of opinion, denomination, and general human diversity.*
- *'Mercy' reflects responses that had to do with caring for human need – food, shelter, health, etc., in our area and beyond.*

Afternoon work

We spoke for some time about these areas. In particular we noted a broadening concept of church and community with fewer boundaries. (Since we were struggling with words at the time, Jonathan wondered later if the word "Communitas" captured what we were talking about – a porous community that is linked to other communities and has a high level of movement in and out.) We also spoke about being 'with' the community rather than acting 'to' the community as though somehow better. Beautifully, we found ourselves returning to the first part of our existing church mission statement: Living Christ in Community. These words speak to simply being who we are in Christ in this particular place. We are Jesus people and there is no hiding that, but we can choose how we live that reality out with our neighbours.

And so, a following question arose from the work of the whole weekend:

***Cognizant of our gifts and needs in the neighbourhood, what will this mission look like for us in the next 3-5 years?***

Over the next while we brainstormed the following initiatives and then weighted them according to how they moved toward our main goals (foci) and how doable we thought they would actually be:

- Involving youth in their areas of skills (12 votes)
  - Tech and media
  - As servers
  - Other involvement of youth in worship
  - Music/preludes
  - Note: can others please invite rather than parents initiating? It works better that way.
- Small groups & bible studies (11) [See Val]
- Outdoor services with ice cream! (10)
- Build Labyrinth (9) [See Jonathan+]
- Jr./Sr. High safe gathering space (8)
- Connect and Enable people with similar interests and skill sets they can share (i.e. pickles, pie, sauerkraut, etc.) (8) [See Christa M.]
- Supports to parents of adolescents (8)
  - Partnership with mental health
  - Lecture series? [see Jodi H.]
  - Social Media skills
- PD days projects (7)
- Community Needs Survey (include QR code) (7)
- Open House (6)
- Ceremonies (e.g. Healing "Circle") (6)
- Expand Pet Blessings (5)
- Connection to Kings College (5)
- Music groups (5)
- Parent Hub @ coffeetime (5)
- Host community clubs (i.e. Scouts, Young Life) (3)
- Using the website/Newsletter for more communication (2)
- Specific liturgies (1)
  - Survey which clubs are still active and where are they located?
- Looking at how to welcome newcomers (manual? Does it need to be updated?) (1)
- Community Baby Shower/Welcome
- Introduction to Spiritual Direction skills
- Seniors' Drop-In events
- Having combined services with Church of South India (CSI), New International Community, (include outside church services)

## Closing

These initiatives will move towards the Vision Group and folks in the community who have taken up charge of one of these.

We ended our time on Sunday, and of the whole Vision Weekend by crafting together the following prayer:

**Wise Creator, Provider, Holy Mystery,  
You have brought us through these last three years of COVID and kept us connected.  
You have brought us, all together, back to the beginning and inspired us to reimagine and**

**reilluminate our mission. You have opened our minds to new possibilities and given us many new gifts and new energies. Give us courage, hope, direction, guidance, perspective, and clarity, so that we may act boldly, confidently, kindly, and prudently. And to actually get things done. Through Jesus Christ our companion and guide on the way. Amen.**