

The Church Transforming - March 10th

Executive Summary: Key messages from the V.Rev Andrew Asbil

- Learn your history – “the more you look back the easier it is to see the future”
 - Know the history and keep telling the stories of St. Matthews
 - What are the elements that draw parishioners to the church, build resiliency
 - Identify what “sticks”
 - Understand the DNA of the church and others will be attracted to it
- Horizontal relationships – community, welcoming,
 - Welcoming is everyone’s job
 - Critical element of the cross
- Experiment – try some new things
 - not all changes need to be big, start small and see what the uptake is
 - recognize that “the next person who walks in the door may have the answers”
- Stewardship – “cheerful givers”
 - Don’t be afraid to ask; there is likely more capacity than you know

Participants

1. Leslie Jones
2. Marni Crossley
3. Rick Trites
4. Mollie Stokes
5. Melody Conlon
6. Colin Lay
7. Marjory Lay
8. Jane Oulton
9. Julia Lipinska
10. Tony Maxwell
11. Judy Maxwell
12. Allen Box
13. Marilyn Box
14. Verna Wilson
15. Valerie Needham

16. Peggy Nankivell
17. Ian Glen
18. Virginia Lindsay
19. Lois Rumsey
20. Barry Curtis
21. Kitty
22. Harvey
23. Randi Goddard
24. Leonard Surges
25. Kevan Pipe
26. Helen Griffin
27. Claire Brama
28. Gregor Sneddon
29. Claudia Sanmartin
30. Paul Tweedale
31. Charles Nixon

Observations

1. Plenary Session: Andrew encouraged us to recognize and value our history. By identifying our cornerstones we can understand the DNA of the church community that has kept us going; elements that would attract others.
2. Small Group Session: participants were divided into 5 groups, made up of a range of newcomers to veterans of the St. Matthews community. The following is the feedback from the questions discussed by each group. The Asterix (*) indicates the number of times a particular theme or topic was mentioned by one of the small groups.
 - a. What was it like when you came? What brought you here?
 - Children's education and families****
 - Proximity (in the area, close to where we live)**
 - Music program *** and choir, congregational participation in music
 - Theology and sermons that had content rather than just emotion, sound preaching
 - Looks like a church, architecture
 - Welcoming, community and hospitality
 - Found connection with people (sides team and rector), some individuals extremely welcoming

- Action and outreach in the community (ie. Harmony House and Cornerstone and FACES)
- Familiarity of liturgy and ritual*
- Able to engage and get involved with outreach
- knew the priest (both past and current)
- open Christmas morning
- blessing of the animals conveyed a sense of humour
- neighbours invited to get involved with Syrian refugees in late 90s
- good fit around St.M's mission and theological outlook
- were looking and were made welcome here
- recommended by others
- personal connections

b. Why did you stay?

- Music**** “Came for the music, stay for the sermon”
- Outreach***
- Connections, friends, sense of belonging
- Good fit**, spiritual comfort
- spirit of volunteerism, ability to get involved,
- hospitality, ie. souper Sunday, food & drink
- appetite for change
- felt like home**, presence of God’s Spirit, underlying comfort and confidence in faith and values, acceptance
- sound teaching and leadership
- Food = Love; this is the genius of the Eucharist
 - gentle peer pressure through friends
 - dedication to mission
 - sacred space
 - website and email alerts kept me connected
 - outreach programs
 - opportunity to engage & participate as able and interested, not 'boxed in'.

c. How do our neighbours see us?

- Presence that gives them comfort and certainty, part of the community and its history
- Space for events, hosting concerts, community organization rentals
- Presence in community publications (e.g. Glebe Report)
- Music program and children’s choir, choral music
- Presence at Glebe Garage Sale, hosting the auction
- Doors Open

- Outreach to various social support organizations (Harmony House, Cornerstone, food bank, Angels with backpacks, FACES)
- Seen as a “good thing”
- “I don't know”
- “as a good thing, but don't know how”
- good things happen here, but others do not come and worship
- “financially stable pillar”

d. Where are we going? How do we see our future?

- Link community activities to church
- a safe environment for families and children
- connect to/**minister to** socially lonely people
- Keep focus on our Mission
- Remaining a community
- Music
- a leader in environmental sustainability
- better use of space
- more attractive to people, especially young families
- outreach activities in the Glebe, for the spiritually poor
- unsure, some degree of uncertainty
 - open to all, inclusion
 - remaining a church
 - open to change, “not the status quo”, open-minded
 - being vital in the community
 - leader in environmental sustainability
 - being a relaxing, comfortable, safe, rich environment for all
 - include families (“bring them in”), experience a demographic shift
 - stay with traditional music
 - community support network
 - “respect transition --> transition to living neighbour”
 - strengthening connections with area churches
 - link community activity to church
 - want to see the church thriving, filled with life
 - untapped “unusual” outreach
 - a viable place for people to 'search' for answers
 - space is utilised more

3. Plenary: Inquisition about “church-land”. More and more there are people with NO connections to the Christian church. The gospel is not being preached or

heard... it is silent. The status quo is not sustainable. What we know “inside” is not what we (as Anglicans) know “outside”. How do we reach out to the world, in love and service?

4. Small Group Session: “Blue Sky” Brainstorming. What can we do if money is not an issue?

| Area/Theme | Ideas |
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| Building/Space | reconstitute and update the space to be more useable and adaptable** upper room project, upstairs worship, downstairs useable space; adaptation of church space as is now to allow for flexibility in function |
| | Make our space a carbon neutral building |
| | Develop outside space (gardens, benches) that is attractive and reflective |
| | Improve outside use of space in an intentional way: community vegetable garden, or labyrinth. |
| | improved lighting**, including lighting up the stained glasses (in and out) |
| | install air conditioning |
| | Replace the elevator |
| | Remove red carpet from chancel |
| | Create a church hall/activity centre |
| | Buy new organ and piano |
| | Fill church with different things: bookstore, rest area |
| | See the building generating income through different uses |
| | Option to move choir and organ |
| | Improve lighting and exterior attractiveness of building; taking out stained glass? |
| Hospitality | more hospitality (food and drink offerings to those inside and outside of St. Matthew’s)** |
| | More space (appliances and kitchen space) |
| | More people/staff * |
| | soup kitchen** and lunch programs, non processed food, other food programs |
| | Meal/supper programs so that condo dwellers don’t eat alone |
| Worship | buy a new organ |
| | Children’s messy church |
| | hold more frequent worship services |
| | music expanded beyond choir/choral tradition |

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| | Update bible stories to make them relevant to today's people |
| | More attractive forms for young people |
| Programs to serve Glebe Community (and wider community) | after daycare meal and message |
| | establish affordable housing/ co-housing for older adults to age together, also for younger adults with few connections to a community |
| | Music camps/school/lessons: singing and guitar |
| | children and teen programs, "school break" care, meet-ups, after school programs, affordable daycare |
| | yoga and meditation church |
| | establish a community centre; could include medical staff, counselling, advocacy (e.g. Legal aid) |
| | Ways for learning and reconciling and embracing and moving forward with indigenous peoples (can fit in more than one category here) |
| | Take church to the people (other locations, e.g. apartment buildings) |
| | Collaborate with other churches |
| | Reach out to those who consider themselves "spiritual" but perhaps not "religious" |
| | Increase opportunities for members of the Glebe community to get involved |
| | Offer services 24/7 |
| | Get people in the door with signage, different kinds of programming, all sorts of music |
| Pastoral Care and Outreach | hire more staff**, both lay and clergy (including for youth, hospitality, communications) |
| | support the middle-age demographic, baby boomers: lunch and learn, book clubs; more opportunities for adult Christian education |
| | hold community events that expose people to the atmosphere of a church |
| | More and expanded outreach in St.M's community |
| | Multi-faith co-operation |
| | Pub nights |
| | Opportunities to draw people in |
| Communications | Spend more money on marketing and promotion |

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| | raise awareness, to take St. Matthews to the people (but need to know what we are marketing, spiritual vs religious vs community)** |
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5. Remarks from Andrew, concerning “Blue Sky” ideas.

- Andrew Encouraged Us to let our ideas “percolate”.
- Evangelism: where one poor beggar tells another person where to get bread.
- If we don’t take risks we will not progress.
- Give permission to progress, not dictate by process.
- Be prepared to consider that change takes 6x longer and is 10x more expensive.
- How do we make our space relevant to the next generation.
- Get creative as to how God is leading us into the future.
- Consider how the Anglican church applies the Book of Common prayer (est.1962) and the B.A.S. (est. 1985). Liturgy to be honoured and continued, versus variety in worship beyond.
- Public Singing = breathing together = renewed breathing and breath. Ya (in) Weh (out)

6. Plenary: Money and Giving

- So when money is an object, how to we focus opportunities to give in time, talent, and treasure?
- “He who sews sparingly will reap sparingly” ... “for God loves a cheerful giver.” the Apostle Paul, from 2 Corinthians Chapter 9.
- How do we move from “that’s mine” and the object of money to the practice of giving.
- Like giving/donating as a child – we took our Parent’s allowance to give.
- “The soul grows by subtraction not by addition”, Henry David Thoreau, American philosopher and naturalist during the early to mid 1800s
- Consider what we can learn from Noah (thanksgiving offering) and Jacob (introduced giving 1/10th); to know that all that we have is from God (Chronicles...)
- The challenge of tithing: what percentage and based on what amount? Giving 10% is the goal, but there are times in our lives where we cannot meet this giving goal, and other times when we can surpass this. Give until it feels good, feels right.
- Who are the cheerful givers? Where do we find them?
 - People who believe so much that they are eager to give.
 - People who have received much charity, a chance to give-back.
 - A way people can financially say “I am in”.
 - How does the Anglican church ask? Through our relationships.
 - Next stage is for us to consider becoming a cheerful giver.
- Consider the question what am I giving now, and where do I want to be in the future concerning my giving? How do I have the conversation with church leaders to talk openly about money and giving?

- Consider our personal history and upbringing concerning money and how it was talked about? In general, it has not been modelled in our homes and upbringing how to talk about money, so it is no wonder that as Anglicans we have a hard time doing this. Consider giving money and generosity as part of our call.
- How can St. Matthews establish partnerships in the community to raise money. Be bold to ask. It is important to ask. Ask not only to give, but ask others to come to church and worship services.
- For a stewardship plan, understand our community and know who has the capacity to give. Teach those who are new, how to be a cheerful giver.
- Use Vestry to send the message to declare fundraising goals and suggested giving increase. Encourage people to understand the commitment level desired from the congregation. Consider having cheerful givers speak from the pulpit. Consider Biblical language, so that people understand that generous given is part of our faith ancestry. It takes courage to put the vision out and to put the ask out.
- At church of the Redeemer, for a period of time congregants doubled or tripled their previous givings. Its not about raising the money, but living out the vision. Acknowledge legacy gifts and giving to a specific purpose, but open giving is still needed. Be careful not to depend on a small number of large givers.
- How do we make decisions about how to spend the money, especially undesignated? Rely on a 3 to 5 year strategic plan. Encourage congregants' trust in the leadership to use money in a wise way. Formula for managing income: capital, new initiatives, ongoing stewardship.
- How do we ensure the ask is not clothed in guilt or shame? How do you ensure when we are asking for money that a guilt-trip is not given. Know your congregation so that we are not applying pressure – be open and invitational in accordance with the church's vision or mission. Don't just do the ask but do some follow-up with thank-you letters, hand-written notes, or phone calls. Take the time to say and give thanks to those that give and serve.
- How to we balance a general ask versus a specific ask? Communication methods should be varied. Provide a scale of levels of giving. Consider one-on-one requests, as well as legacy gifts. Campaigning for specific things depends on your relationship with the donors. Run a major financial campaign every 5 years. Consider asking large corporations.
- \$1700 per household is St Matthews monthly giving average. \$1200 per household is the national average.
- How to we play our part in Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) in order to respond to the call to action? We could have events 2 or 3 times per year to hold an event and listen to our First Nations community. Eg. All our Relations committee in the Diocese.