

St. Matthew's Strategic Plan Project

What DOES God See at St. Matthew's in 2032?

Summary Report to Vestry

February 26, 2017

ST. MATTHEW'S

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE GLEBE

<http://www.stmatthewsottawa.ca/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St Matthew's has developed and implemented two strategic plans over the last 10 years that were successful in bringing change and improvements to many aspects of our church.

Just the same, there are a number of factors that suggest incremental change may not be sufficient to ensure that St Matthew's will thrive well into the future. These are:

- The average age of our parish is climbing and while we have attracted new and younger families it hasn't been enough to ensure renewal.
- St Matthew's is fortunate in having a stable financial situation presently. However many of our major supporters are among our older parishioners. We need to ensure we will have a bright financial future.
- The Diocese has launched "Embracing God's Future" as a roadmap for the future. This is our future too.
- Simply taking our current strategic plan and updating and refreshing it will not be enough to secure our future and so we need to think boldly.

These reasons speak to the need to look out more than five years, to 2032. This is not so far that we cannot see the future yet it is far enough to allow us to make the changes required to get there. This is our first step to envision our future; the second will be to map the first five years of change to help us on our way.

The Strategic Plan Project (SPP) team has obtained input through a number of different ways and sources from the parish, the Anglican community and other churches and community groups in our Glebe neighbourhood.

We can report that we as a parish are ready for change. There is support in the church for what we do, however there is a recognition that we almost certainly need to change how we do things. We have good people in the parish to help with change. Those outside the parish are also open to change. We will need to work collaboratively with other churches and organizations, and improve the awareness of what we do in the community.

What *Does* God see at St. Matthew's in 2032? Based on our findings, He sees a vibrant, inclusive, serving community inside and outside; worship that is faith-based and music-filled; learning opportunities that are challenging and searching; a physical presence that is affordable, multipurpose and connected. He sees an open, seeking, relevant, adaptable and compassionate community. He sees His Church.

Four key themes emerged that can be guideposts for further work on the strategic plan. The themes are:

1. Worship: "an adaptable parish, where tradition and innovation meet";
2. Learning: "a focal point for seekers";
3. Community in- reach and outreach: "an active and compassionate community caring for those within and serving those without"; and
4. Sustainability: "a stable financial and resource footing to sustain operations into the long term".

The report provides more detail on these themes and outlines some next steps including:

- recognizing that changes will likely be required in the way we organize ourselves to move ahead;
- launching work to develop a vision statement and updating our mission statement; and
- launching work to shape the strategic plan for the first five years.

"May he give you the desire of
your heart
and make all your plans succeed."
Psalm 20:4

BACKGROUND

Strategic planning was introduced formally at St. Matthew's in 2007. Since then, two Strategic Plans (2008-11 and 2012-16) have set out the goals, strategic objectives and activities of the parish in a document intended to guide its forward progress. With the sun setting on the most recent plan, the Parish requested development of its next five year Strategic Plan (2017-21). At the February 2016 meeting of Vestry, members of a Strategic Plan Task Force were named and were asked to carry out a review and renewal of the St. Matthew's Strategic Plan (2012-16).

During the early planning stages, discussions and document reviews were conducted leading the Task Force to recommend that the parish take a longer view and first challenge itself to imagine a vision of the parish 15 years from now. St. Matthew's, like other Anglican parishes in Ottawa, faces several challenges including an aging congregation and fragile if stable resources. While these challenges may not pose an immediate threat to our future, they will continue to challenge us more and more as we move forward. And so we asked ourselves, *What Does God See at St. Matthew's in 2032?*

With the parish's agreement, St. Matthew's embarked on its Strategic Plan Project (SPP), with two related goals: *imagine its future 15 years from now, and develop a strategic plan to begin to move us in that direction over the next five years.* The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the process and findings related to the first goal and to set out the themes and strategic directions that can guide the development of the second.

WHAT WE DID: THE PROCESS

To discern our 15 year vision, the SPP team sought and obtained input from a variety of sources and groups. We began with our parish, then extended our work beyond our walls to seek input from surrounding church communities, both within and outside the Anglican community, as well as our neighbourhood community, using a range of methods including document review, survey, visioning session, Chapel chats and extensive consultations.

August 2016	October 2016	November 2016	December -January 2017	February 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan Project outline • Document review - SPP Backgrounder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the <i>Case for Change</i> • Launch of SPP • Parish Survey • Chapel Chat: Widening the Lens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey Word Clouds • Visioning Day • Chapel Chat: St. Matthew's and Embracing God's Future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations – internal and external 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Report to Vestry

We used the [SPP Backgrounder](#) -- a review of key parish and diocesan documents, including [Embracing God's Future](#) -- to assess such matters as relevance, currency, alignment, inspiration and clarity so as to determine the nature and scope of change that may be indicated for a new strategic plan. This set the stage for the [Case for Change](#) and taking a longer, wider view to determine a future vision.

We conducted a survey to gather input from parishioners on several key questions including - *What are the strengths of St. Matthew's that will take us into the future? What are the things that must change at St. Matthew's to make us a flourishing church long term?* Approximately 110 parishioners responded directly on [survey cards](#) and an online survey instrument resulting in a response rate of about 40%.

Some facts about St. Matthews:

- 55% of parishioners are 65+ years of age;
- 63% of identifiable givers are 65+ years of age; 18% are 80+ years of age
- 68% of church revenues are generated by those 65+ years of age

We held a [Visioning Day](#) with approximately 34 parishioners lead by the Reverend Monique Stone to challenge us to look at our readiness to change, deepen our understanding, contribute ideas and share views with our community as we sought to address the key question of the day, *What Does God See at St. Matthew's in 2032?* From this session emerged a series of themes to inform our future vision.

Finally, we launched a series of consultations within and outside the church. Internally, we met with church leaders, committees and interested parishioners of all ages to obtain feedback and input on the initial themes of the future vision. Externally, we consulted with the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, selected parishes in the Deanery of Ottawa Centre and beyond, and with non-Anglican churches in our neighbourhood to learn more about how others see us, what long-term vision and plans may be afoot in their respective organizations and where there may be future possibilities to address common concerns.

Some facts - The Glebe (2011)

- Average age of Glebe residents is 40.7 years; 25% are 65 years of age and older;
- 43% of households include children, 70% of these with kids under 14 years of age;
- 35% of Glebe residents 65 years of age and older live alone

Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 Census.

We also consulted community organizations to gauge their knowledge, awareness and perception of St. Matthew's. Conversations with people inside St. Matthew's and outside our walls were essential to identifying the parish's strengths, challenges, opportunities and potential threats. These can ground our discernment of the long term future and the changes we will need to make to get there.

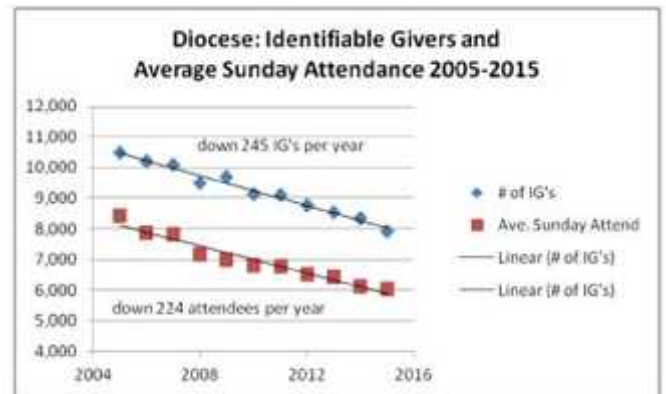
For more detailed information regarding these documents, analyses and inputs, please consult the St. Matthew's [Strategic Plan Project](#) webpage.

THE CHALLENGE: THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Anglican churches in the Ottawa Diocese and worldwide are facing similar challenges – aging parishioners and declining resources. For many parishes, these challenges have created a perfect storm threatening their viability and financial sustainability, often leading to closures.

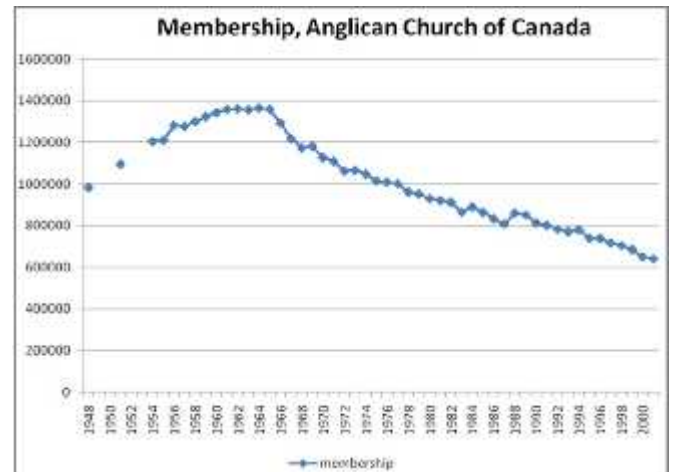
St. Matthew's has, to date, been able to weather the storm. However, as we look out 15 years, there are a number of factors that suggest only incremental change may not be sufficient to ensure that St Matthew's will thrive well into the future. These include:

- The average age of our parish is climbing and while we have attracted new and younger members and families it is not enough to ensure long term renewal;
- Most of our ministries and activities are challenged to find enough volunteer leaders and participants to keep our human resources healthy and fulfilled;
- Our stable but fragile financial situation depends heavily on the fully two thirds of our supporters who are 65 years and older; and
- The Diocese has launched "Embracing God's Future" as a roadmap for the future, setting milestones along the way that include stewarding our buildings, reshaping parish ministries and engaging with the world beyond our parish walls, with other parishes, communities, businesses and non-profits. This is our future too.



Graph 1 - Note the parallel drop in number of IGs & Ave Attendance

Source: <http://www.stmatthewsottawa.ca/images/Strategic-Plan/EGF-since-2016-Newsletter.pdf>



Some facts - Changing face of Canada – By 2036...

- Immigrants and second-generation individuals combined could account for nearly one in two people;
- Number of non-Christians could almost double to between 13% and 16% of Canada's population;
- Number of unaffiliated people would continue to increase - could represent between 28.2% and 34.6%

StatsCan: A look at immigration, ethno cultural diversity and languages in Canada up to 2036, 2011 to 2036.

READY FOR CHANGE?

While the case for change is strong, actually making the change depends on how ready we and others are to act. Understanding and assessing this readiness is critical. Our findings indicate that we are ready to build on our strengths and tackle our challenges.

Overall, there is support for *what* we do. Community in-reach and outreach, music-filled worship and projects in pursuit of social justice are the aspects of St. Matthew's that we most love. However, there is also increasing recognition and openness to changing *how* we do things to meet our future resource challenges, both human and financial.

Most feel we are well positioned to take on change recognizing the importance of doing so with attentive care. Our human resources were identified in our consultations as a key strength of St. Matthew's, described as *open to change* and *very capable, inclusive, friendly, and welcoming*.

The parish, then, is alive to the inevitability of change and is thoughtful about its direction. People recognize the importance of respecting, attending to and investing in our current state while we continue to work towards the long-term vision from a position of relative strength.

"...the most notable [convergence] we see is the number of individuals who see themselves ready to be 'Influencers', connecting and leading the way forward as a community of practice in an emerging new system"
– Rev. Monique Stone, Visioning Day 2016

Those outside our parish are also open to change. Within the Diocese of Ottawa, the strategic directions outlined in *Embracing God's Future* and related task force reports set a course for doing things differently. We are called on to look beyond our parish walls and reach out to others within our neighbourhood and across the Deanery and Diocese to forge collaborations and partnerships to achieve collective goals.

Embracing God's Future – 5 Diocesan Priorities:

1. Buildings and the shape of parish ministry –
2. Engagement with the world –
3. Lifelong formation –
4. Worship and hospitality
5. Communications

Our Anglican and other church consultations ([Summary of Consultations: External](#)) revealed a strong and consistent conviction that we need to work collaboratively to recognize our commonalities and address our shared concerns to achieve a sustainable, long-term, vibrant and relevant future. Sharing resources to develop ministries and launch or renew and refresh ongoing projects; looking beyond our separate entities to identify opportunities for sharing resources and spaces; developing centres of excellence and/or program delivery were among the possibilities cited.

“There is a need for active collaboration: amongst parishes, within deaneries, across the diocese, amongst dioceses, ecumenical partnerships, and business and community partnerships” – Engaging the World Task Force: Action Plan (August 2015)

Our efforts to consult our secular neighbours in the Glebe ([Summary of Consultations: External](#)) revealed a decided lack of awareness of St. Matthew's and what it offers to the community, with the notable exception of the building. We are known and recognized by the church's physical structure and, to a limited extent, the spaces within that are rented for activities and programs. One or two discussants mentioned FACES,

“...to increase our outreach efforts in the future... [we must] develop a stronger presence in the local community and find new ways to connect with our local community and partners.” – Parish Profile, 2016

having read about this refugee settlement initiative in local publications like the Glebe Report. While somewhat disheartening to learn of such a low level of awareness, we can nonetheless seize the high degree of building recognition, for example to focus our branding and profile-enhancing efforts.

It will require concerted leadership and effort to move towards a vision 15 years from now. We will need to adapt within our community and beyond. Stewarding our resources and assets (including our building), and increasing our engagement with our community and partners outside the parish foresees an important cultural shift at St. Matthew's ([Summary of Consultations: Internal](#)).

WHAT DOES GOD SEE AT ST. MATTHEW'S IN 2032?

Based on these findings, here are some emerging hallmarks of St. Matthew's in 2032:

A vibrant, inclusive community in the church and beyond. Worship that is faith-based and music-filled. Learning that is challenging and searching. Physical presence that is affordable, multi-purpose and connected. A reputation for being an open, seeking, relevant, adaptable and compassionate community. God see His Church.

Four key themes emerged, each with a suggested encapsulating guidepost plus related strategic directions. These could inform a first five year strategic plan (2017-21):

1. Worship

"An adaptable parish, where tradition and innovation meet."

Potential strategic directions:

- I. Pursue more flexible arrangements to accommodate busy lives and different tastes.
- II. Consider different service times, orders of service, music, target demographics, to ensure maximum participation.
- III. Build on our tradition of Anglican choral music, recognizing that our brand is unique among Diocese of Ottawa churches, while being open to evolving and emerging forms of expression.
- IV. Where possible, add to, rather than change, existing practices, recognizing strong value placed on tradition, and the need to grow and maintain the existing congregation.

"Music is our strength and will propel us into our future. We must cherish and build on our tradition of choirs singing music in the Anglican choral tradition" – SPP Survey 2016

2. Learning

"A focal point for seekers."

Potential strategic directions:

"[We would like to] blend our Sunday School classes with other churches' classes so we can meet new friends; to go on field trips e.g. to a rural church; to hike in nature; to see new places." – Consultation conversation with parish children age 4-11

- I. Focus on education at all ages and stages in order to understand and express our faith and its role in the evolving world.
- II. Offer a wide-range of learning models, formal and informal. Build a reputation as a virtual and physical place for inquiry, debate, searching and growth.
- III. Collaborate with other churches to enable more effective and sustainable offerings.

3. Community In-Reach and Outreach

"An active and compassionate community caring for those within and serving those without"

"...reach out to draw in the people who don't yet know us but need us" – SPP Survey 2016

Potential strategic directions:

- I. Recognize and build on the interdependence of a thriving community inside and a serving community reaching out to serve the needs of those beyond its doors.
- II. Work to foster a culture of community within the parish by practising "active hospitality", closing the gap between "new" and "belonging" (e.g. welcoming, getting to know, mentoring and discovering right fit for the contribution and fulfillment of each person).
- III. Target all age groups to maintain and grow the congregation.
- IV. Work to foster a culture of community beyond our doors to achieve common goals as evolving and practising Christians, cementing our place in the community.
- V. Promote an external focus on social justice (e.g. building coalitions with our church and secular community neighbours, developing shared ministries, projects and spaces).
- VI. Build on our strengths as convenors, incubators, enablers.
- VII. Use our building as an enabler of community and outreach, offering a safe and sacred space.
- VIII. Learn from current successes (e.g. FACES) and from the experiences of other parishes.

"...focus on activities appealing to small children and especially the youth of the Parish that engage and keep them interested" – SPP Survey 2016

"We need to give ourselves permission to change how our building is used while also respecting how any such change is managed." – Consultations Summary: Inside St. Matthew's 2017

- IX. Develop our interrelationship with and within the diocese to pursue common goals and support our distinct yet often mutual interests.
- X. Harness technology to build up our active community.

4. Sustainability

“A stable financial and resource footing to sustain operations into the long-term”

Potential strategic directions:

- I. Focus on sustainable finance: implementation plan must acknowledge the demographic and economic trends and realities and make provision for smaller donation amounts.

“We need to ask ourselves, does our building enable the people to be the Church? Are our many doors, both physical and not, truly open, welcoming, inviting, accessible, enticing?” – SPP Survey 2016
- II. Seek to expand multi-use of building to increase revenue.
- III. Seek church partners beyond the parish to collaborate in new and ongoing projects and ministries to support, sustain and refresh our human resources and share the financial burden.
- IV. Be strategic and measured in fundraising, recognizing the potential for collaborative arrangements while acknowledging the real possibility of donor fatigue.

“St. Matthew's has mobilized lots of volunteers to achieve some exceptional results but needs to sharpen its focus. It is good at recognizing and responding to new needs but its efforts are too diffuse. We need to do fewer things, faster and more effectively.” – SPP Survey 2016
- V. Encourage planned giving (wills, bequests, investments).
- VI. Ultimately, reduce reliance on traditional bricks and mortar to manage costs.
- VII. Foster a culture of transparency and accountability around financial decision-making.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We look forward to Vestry's reflections on this report of responses to the overarching question *What Does God See at St. Matthew's in 2032?* Thoughtful consideration of the results, themes, possible strategic directions and implications for implementation will require time. Pace and scope of initial actions will be important.

We offer three sequential steps to move forward:

1. Recognize that changes will likely be required in the way we organize ourselves to move ahead on this work. Corporation/ECPC may wish to:
 - Decide on a go-forward structure and process
 - Task the appropriate parish leadership group, new or existing
 - Determine the role for the SPP Team going forward
2. Launch work to:
 - Develop a compelling vision statement
 - Refresh the current mission statement
3. Launch work to shape a strategic plan for the first five years (2017-21), considering:
 - Strategic areas of focus
 - Strategic directions
 - Pacing: what do we tackle now vs medium and longer term"
 - Timelines
 - Duration

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11

Aligned with its mandate, this report is respectfully submitted to Vestry by the Strategic Planning Project Team:

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February 26, 2017