

Report on St John's Parish Council Retreat – March 13-14, 2009

This report provides a summary of the discussion and decisions made during the parish council retreat. The agenda and material distributed are attached. Also attached are the notes from the “visioning” sessions on Saturday.

We began our retreat on Friday evening with a delicious dinner prepared by Graham Smith. After dinner, we introduced ourselves to each other by saying where we were born and how we came to Ottawa and St John's.

Ron Chaplin provided an overview of governance for the Anglican Church and for our parish. He distributed a page with a map showing the dioceses in Canada on one side and a summary of the role of parish council on the other side. Ron's presentation sparked an interesting discussion of parish council's role as an advisory body and parish council's relationship to corporation and the various committees and groups in the parish. Members of parish council were keen to have a better understanding of the work of the various committees and improved links among the committees and between committees and parish council. Suggestions for more business-like parish council meetings were accepted.

While the “visioning” part of the retreat was scheduled for Saturday, the discussion on governance led to suggestions on St John's mission and programs. We agreed to review the parish profile, which was completed in March 2008 as part of the process to find a new Rector, and use it as a starting point for our session on Saturday.

We began our Saturday session with the Eucharist. Before we began our discussion on “visioning”, Dana noted that she wants parish council to have four “visioning” sessions during the course of the year. We then turned to consider the “big picture” by providing input on “Blessed are we when we “ i.e., identifying our vision/goals for St John's.

We then returned to the discussion on governance and considered how the key committees relate to each other and to the parish, vestry, parish council and corporation. We considered how to improve communications between the key committees and parish council.

Decisions: Ian Culbert will chair parish council meetings and Emmy Verdun will be the secretary. Draft minutes of parish council meetings will be posted on St John's website shortly after the meeting to improve communication between parish council and the congregation. Committees will be asked to provide a short monthly report to parish council for information and to help parish council provide advice as appropriate (e.g., to ensure committees do not work at cross-purposes due to a lack of communication). Members of parish council will also be a member of another committee and act as a liaison between the two. A photo of each Parish Council member will be posted in the hallway so that parishioners know who their members are.

During lunch, the input from the morning's session was grouped under the following headings: Justice, Fearlessness, Openness, Community, Beauty, Searching, Charity, and Stewardship. We then turned to the question of how we will know we have reached the vision/goals identified in the morning.

The last "visioning" session considered how we can move forward, focusing on:

1. Priorities (top 3)
2. One thing we do now that advances this proposal
3. One new and easy thing we could do to advance this proposal
4. One thing we must do if we are serious about this proposal

We ended our retreat with the doxology and a blessing.

Attachments:

1. Role of parish council from the regulations of the Diocese of Ottawa
2. Schematic of the links among vestry, parish council, corporation and key committees
3. Roster of Parish Council members on key committees
4. Visioning Session Notes

Visioning Session I: Big Picture Thinking

Blessed are we when we:

1. Hunger and thirst for justice
2. Welcome the marginalized, alienated, and stranger
3. Are poor in spirit (i.e., humble and open to God's call)
4. Are open to those struggling with their faith
5. Speak out against injustice
6. Find our prophetic voice
7. Have many people with ideas
8. Have patience and graciousness – especially with those who disagree with us
9. Love all God's creation
10. Strive to understand God's purpose for us (i.e., "wrestle with God" as Jacob did)
11. Make a difference in the community outside our parish (i.e., "hit the streets")
12. Are fearless, in love, as we provide a forum for change
13. Embrace those who misunderstand/revile us on account of our Christian mission
14. Take care of each other
15. Express our gratitude by giving
16. Act out of faith
17. Are community that fights fear
18. Recognize that we are all one
19. Are diverse
20. Engage people in good faith
21. Are questioning
22. Are kind
23. Don't make assumptions about others
24. Have a global outlook
25. Create beauty e.g., with music

Themes:

1. Justice	
2. Fearlessness	
3. Openness	
4. Community	
5. Beauty	
6. Searching	
7. Charity	
8. Stewardship	

Visioning Session II: How Will We Know?

1. Justice – How will we know we are hungry and thirsty for justice?

1. Hunger and thirst for justice
2. Welcome the marginalized, alienated, and stranger
5. Speak out against injustice
6. Find our prophetic voice

A. Take action on the Millenium Goals (e.g., link to newcomers from Africa, etc.)

B. Engage in theological issues related to justice

C. Bless same-sex marriages

D. We have more affordable housing

E. We contribute to peace and reconciliation with Aboriginal people

F. We welcome transgendered people

Priority	<p>#1 #1 #1 #1 #1 #1 #3 #3 #4 #4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Take action – have a time line * Explore Millenium goals * Move toward marriage ceremony, not just blessing * Bless same-sex marriages * Affordable housing * St John’s continues to strive for justice
One thing we do now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Welcoming GLBT and working toward blessing same-sex marriages * Proceeding with same-sex blessing
One new and easy thing to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Name the issue
One thing we must do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Intentionally welcome the marginalized and immigrant * Make official contact with native groups like Wabano Centre and others * Put down an action plan

2. Fearlessness – How will we know when we are acting in fearlessness and love?

- 3. Are poor in spirit (i.e., humble and open to God’s call)
- 12. Are fearless, in love, as we provide a forum for change
- 13. Embrace those who misunderstand/revile us on account of our Christian mission
- 16. Act out of faith

A. Encourage a multi-faith dialogue

Priority	#1 #2 #2 (1-unspecified) *That there is a new emergence
One thing we do now	* Diverse music way/method * Proceed with same-sex blessing * Welcoming use of our space by groups not participating directly in church life
One new and easy thing to do	*Link this (multi-faith dialogue) to adult education program * Consult with groups and ask what they need, and how we can connect * Just do it? Listen to the response
One thing we must do	*Action plan *Must have one or more people to take initiative *We must find opportunities for dialogue with those who disagree * We have to listen to people and find ways to accommodate their needs in church

3. Openness – How will we know that we are open?

- 4. Are open to those struggling with their faith
- 7. Have many people with ideas
- 19. Are diverse

- A. Encourage interchange with other faith communities**
- B. Bring in people who aren't like us**
- C. Have an increase in GLBT members**
- D. Encourage multi-faith dialogue**
- E. Welcome/invite members of AA, NA**
- F. Welcome/invite women from The Well**
- G. Welcome/invite transgendered people**
- H. Minister to the needs of our neighbourhood (esp. young singles)**
- I. Reach out to non-St John groups**

Priority	#1 #1 #1 #1 (1-unspecified) *Late night coffee * St John's is known as an open church * Find out who is in our neighbourhood and what are the issues
One thing we do now	*Already have groups coming in from surrounding neighbourhood * Interchange with multi-faith groups * Minister to needs of neighbourhood * Offer integrity mass/service
One new and easy thing to do	* Get the word out * Advertise in CapXtra for Sunday services * 9 pm – midnight coffee house * Late night coffee * Contact GLB community and advise transgendered to attend our church * Conduct branding exercise to clearly define St John's offering * Open house with coffee, donuts, music for youth, after pubs close
One thing we must do	* Set clear agenda and tell people *Advertise *Stop thinking that we have to operate in the old way, wanting people to come to church/to us, and never exploring ways of taking church outside of the church bldg. * Set up youth worker * Engage community groups -communicate * Finalize comms strategy and implement * Adopt policy and attitude of attraction not promotion

4. Community – How will we know that we are a community that fights fear, loneliness?

- 14. Take care of each other
- 17. Are a community that fights fear
- 22. Are kind

- A. Explore opening the church to other faith communities e.g. African groups**
- B. We are known as the church of “the sign”**
- C. We are open to chamber music festivals, etc.**
- D. St John’s in mentioned in the media**
- E. Terrific Tuesdays could become food for the poor, homeless**
- F. We work with other groups in our ministries e.g., local/national/other churches**
- G. Our community includes youth**

Priority	#1 #1 #2 #2 #3 (3-unspecified) *St John’s continues to be caring * Change our behaviour on Sun. morning * Youth openness * Children’s choir * Media awareness
One thing we do now	* Terrific Tuesday * Greeters at back and at coffee hour
One new and easy thing to do	* Open doors on Thurs and Sat for movie night with refreshments * Ask musicians to step forward (for children’s choir) * Create more “terrific Tuesdays” * Communicate with concert goers – tailor-made brochures in pews * Appoint people with special talents * Stop talking parish business with people we know on Sunday mornings
One thing we must do	* Be open to other groups and in our ministries * Make contact with local newspapers, e.g., Centretown news, Buzz, etc. * Open parish doors to come in for food and coffee * Articles about St John’s in newspapers * Be intentional in our welcome * Consistently reach out to others each week and help them network * Address the fears, attitudes“

5. Beauty – How will we know that we respond to God by creating beauty?

25. Create beauty

- A. Listen to everything around us**
- B. Have beautiful music made by children**
- C. Integrate artists into our worship e.g., poetry, music, piano**
- D. Support Art Credo**
- E. Have lunch-time concerts**
- F. Create icons**
- G. Have beautiful flowers, linens, etc.**
- H. Embrace the beauty of our chapel**

Priority	#1 #1 #2 #2 (2-unspecified) * Beauty in the church * Become more open about value of diverse creative expression * Focus on enhancing liturgical beauty * Lunch-time concerts * Worship leading to closeness to God – we do it very well!
One thing we do now	* Lunch-time concerts * Liturgy – consistent and beautiful, uninterrupted communion * Art Credo, poetry, variety of music
One new and easy thing to do	* Celebrate the beauty of our church and the music that fills that space * Coordinate music, bells, prayers, hymns, readers * Begin a stitching arts group in coordination with Altar Guild * Develop our theology of creativity and meaning of creative expression and beauty
One thing we must do	* Have church open during lunch hours for quiet reflection * Be consistent and predictable to free worshipper * Be intentional * Put up a sign inviting people to make suggestions about what would enhance or stimulate worship experience

6. Searching – How will we know we are searching to know God’s purpose for us?

- 10. Strive to understand God’s purpose for us (i.e., “wrestle with God”)
- 21. Are questioning

- A. Explore theological issues e.g., related to justice issues**
- B. Welcome others (including inside and outside our parish) and ask: What are they looking for? How do we find out? How can we respond?**
- C. Consider using the Diocesan program which provides funding for community consultations.**

Priority	#1 #1 #2 #3 (1-unspecified) * Deepen our willingness to be vulnerable about our spiritual life
One thing we do now	* Some prayer “discipline” groups in parish * Sophisticated adult education program/ guest speaker program * Heretics Anonymous (HA) * Community consultation
One new and easy thing to do	* Bible study/ Lenten prayer session/adult education program (book study, discussions about faith) * Survey target groups re needs first * Have a check in, in context of every committee meeting, which focuses on spiritual journey
One thing we must do	* Listen to others * “Wrestle” more in adult education programming * Make sure there is a group from the church to follow through with having an “open house” for youth * More opportunities for parishioners to come together to discuss the Bible, faith (i.e. the discipline), missions, etc. and contemporary issues in a faith context * Slow down

7. Charity – How will we know that we are truly charitable?

- 8. Have patience and graciousness – especially with those who disagree with us
- 18. Recognize that we are all one
- 20. Engage people in good faith
- 23. Don't make assumptions about others

Priority	
One thing we do now	
One new and easy thing to do	* “We are all one” We need each other -- whatever the message is, communicate it as widely as possible
One thing we must do	* If we have a specific project that we own * We must welcome <u>intentionally</u> those who disagree with us

8. Stewardship – How will we know that we are good stewards of God’s world?

- 9. Love all God’s creation
- 11. Make a difference in the community outside our parish (i.e., “hit the streets”)
- 15. Express our gratitude by giving
- 24. Have a global outlook

A. Share our space with people of other faith/traditions

B. Build our future i.e., youth

Priority	#1 #1 #1 #1 #1 #1 #1 #2 #2 (2-unspecified) *Reach out to young people in the community * Sharing space * Find a way to talk to people about their fears re money, etc.
One thing we do now	* Existing educational/social activities like church school, youth group *Heretics anonymous (HA) * Dialogue with newcomers, refugees * Stewardship committee
One new and easy thing to do	* Identify what makes us unique – Dana’s idea of a human community where actual human connection occurs * Posters in the neighbourhood *Consult “youth minister” * Provide/share space with a cultural group seeking a place to worship but not ready to assimilate into St John’s fully * Schedule more “open house” activities for young adults *Bring back stewardship workshop people
One thing we must do	* Create a consultation with young adults * Open church hall * Make website attractive to young people * Recognize we are one choice among many – what makes us unique is our message of love * Open parish hall Fri. nights * Signage asking youth to join us *If we’re serious about building community we need to share our space recognizing that we’re also enriching our own faith community * Social events *Create a safe space by taking off pressure to give