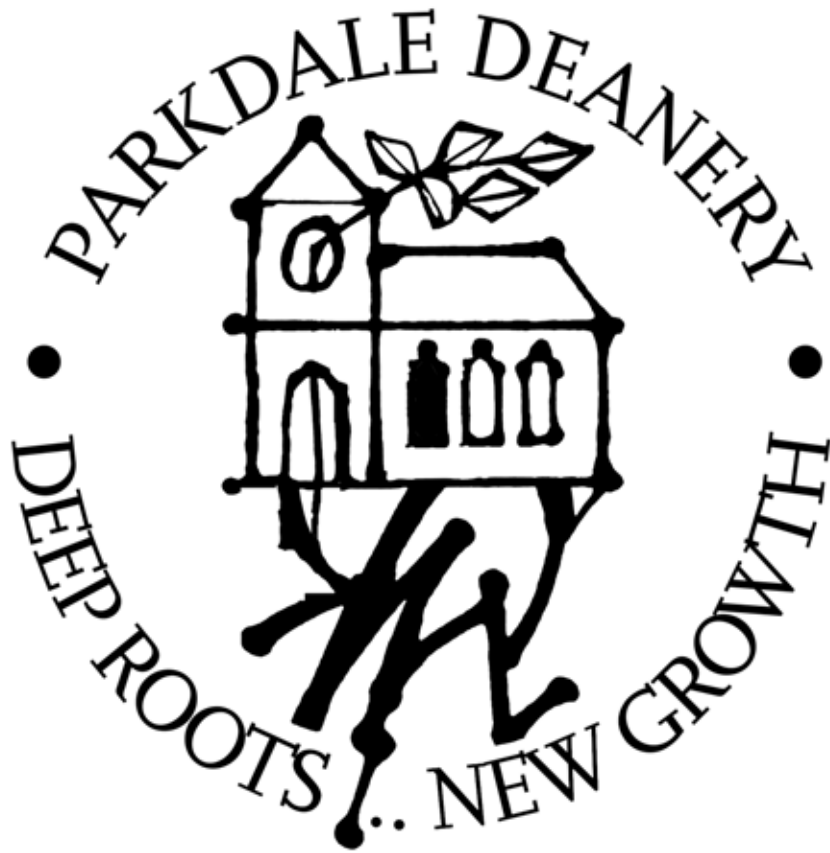


Supporting Materials
Evangelism
E.3



E.3.1 Evangelism Update

This working group had a somewhat open mandate, and we chose not to focus directly on the issue of church growth. Rather, we took our cue from the challenge raised by the first working group, to focus on mission rather on the institution, and to start sketching out a kind of evangelism, and a way of incarnating a Christian presence in the city, that will work for the Anglican churches of Parkdale.

We felt that we could almost take for granted the desire to work together as a deanery more effectively. Many of our ideas depend on the assumption of more cooperation and collaboration between our parishes; even those which could or should be carried out by individual parishes would benefit from a more cooperative model.

We began with some underlying values or assumptions. It is clear that the Parkdale churches are not, and should not be, comfortable with a kind of evangelism that we perceive as coercive, as “hitting people over the head with the Bible. Instead, we need to develop ways of engaging with the world that are based on inclusiveness, and on meeting others as equal members of the body of Christ, and work towards a more open, visible and accessible presence. The churches in Parkdale generally feel strongly positive about our worship and liturgy. We need to take this perceived strength, and bring this spirit into our outreach and evangelism, understanding all our engagements with the world as liturgical acts, inseparable from our worship. Particularly given that a large part of our demographic is the “unchurched” or “disaffected”, we have to look at ways to explore faith as a narrative or journey, not as a one-time-only commitment or a matter of isolated moments. We have to develop the idea of churches as “safe space”; and finally, we need to be prepared to take risks and accept change.

We then looked at ways of using these key assumptions to develop a more vivid Christian presence, often in areas where existing programs are perhaps not accomplishing as much as we might wish. We considered our ability to reach out to and address the needs of vulnerable groups, including the homeless, the elderly, youth, the developmentally disabled, and people with mental health issues/psychiatric survivors. In particular, we tried to consider ways that our “social work” can be more fully integrated with our liturgical and theological lives, rather than isolated programs often carried out at a distance (whether physically or psychologically) from what we see as our church life. While the fact that many of our parishioners live outside the area poses some particular dilemmas, nevertheless we did see the potential for creating more relational, more fully incorporated programs.

Suggestions ranged, quite widely, from developing specialized liturgies--whether “mini-Mass” for mothers with young children, or special liturgies for developmentally disabled adults--to examining how to integrate meal and accommodation programs for

the homeless more fully into parish life; to creating peer support groups for youth and the elderly; to looking at ways to make our liturgical life more open to vulnerable and “atypical” people without losing our special strengths at worship; to converting our church buildings into affordable housing.

We also looked at several other areas for exploration. We discussed the arts as a vehicle for exploring faith, going beyond just renting our space to arts groups and working more directly with “secular” artists, encouraging them to engage with us in creatively investigating our spaces, our texts and our traditions (St Thomas's Nuit Blanche programming was put forward as one example). It is worth repeating, as the working group on social context pointed out, that Parkdale has the highest concentration of artists in the entire country, so this is a singularly important area for this deanery.

We also suggested that we have to learn to make better use of the internet, since this is increasingly how seekers start the search for a church. A well-maintained web page is a minimum; we need to develop podcasts, bulletin boards, discussion forums and other internet-based forms of community and communication as well.

David Julien also presented a brief explanation of “Spirit Remix”, a project that aims to “deconstruct” the church building, placing the various parts (narthex, nave, sanctuary, etc) within non-traditional contexts, for instance commercial venues like shopping malls.

All of these suggestions would clearly have implications for staffing, funding and building use – some rather small, some radical. We felt that we needed to start by identifying our priorities for outreach and Christian presence, and then move from there to looking at what we would need to change, as parishes and as a deanery, to address those priorities.

Parkdale Deanery Evangelism & Mission



Community building
Evangelism research group
Buildings

Think of a conversation about 'coming to faith' in the past 6 months ...

- What were the motivations?
- What role did other people have?
- What role did the congregation have?
- Anything else you've learned?



Ministry development in Parkdale Deanery

- Context & social needs
- Congregational life, finances & buildings
- Evangelism, mission & church growth
- Partnerships & models



Future ministry

- Build upon present values & identity
- Who we are leads to who we are to become
- Creating a shared picture
- Honesty about strengths & challenges



Diocesan policy

- Any proposal will need to connect with diocesan policy on sustainable and strategic parishes & ministries
- Acceptance
- Resources
- Opportunity to make a case for ministry in Parkdale within diocesan policy guidelines

Are We Sustainable Now?

Sustainable parishes

- Have active clergy and effective lay leadership
- Have adequate energy and resources
- Make provision for future
- Are primarily supported by their members
- Safeguard capital reserves and assets

Unsustainable parishes

- Use capital assets for current expenses
- Can't maintain property
- Lack reserves for future property needs
- Survive by cutting staff
- Rely heavily on sources of funding outside freewill offering

Are We Strategic Now?

Strategic Parishes

- Make a difference to their members and to their community
- Are mission focused
- Are aligned with Diocesan priorities and area ministry strategy
- Are outward looking

Unstrategic Parishes

- Are not designed for a strategic ministry
- Are not mission focused
- Are not aligned with Diocesan and area ministry priorities
- Are inward looking; make little difference to their surrounding communities

Evangelism & Mission - background



- Starting points from parish profiles & focus groups
- ‘20 propositions on church growth in urban settings’
- Any comments?

Evangelism & Mission - presentation & discussion



- 1st reactions - red, yellow, green
- What is worth pursuing?
- What are the implications?
Staffing? Buildings?
Organization? Other?

Our buildings ...



- 1st reactions
- What are the implications for the long term? Being sustainable? Being strategic?



**Mission
Presence in
Parkdale**

In the beginning...

- Missional Theology
- Eight Key Assumptions
- Eight Areas of Exploration

A Missional Theology

- So What is the Issue ?
- Spirituality and Consumption
- The Shift to a Missional Theology

So What is the issue?

In 2004 the Church of England produced the document Mission Shaped Church. It “attributed the Church’s decline, ‘neither [to] the irrelevance of Jesus, nor [to] the indifference of the community’ but to ‘the Church’s failure to respond fast enough to an evolving culture, to a changing spiritual climate, and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.’” It argued that the “impulse for mission cannot be church-centred, as though the primary concern is perpetuating the institution’s survival.”

(Wayne Brighton, 2005)

Spirituality and Consumption

- What forms of faith have emerged then in the post-Christian context like Canada?
- The “death of Christendom” in the global north is being paralleled by an increasing awareness of spirituality that is part of the post-modern/late modern worldview that is, foundationally, characterised by the value of consumption.
- In this context the notion of consumption is extended to include those aspects of society that we think of as encompassing the sacred.
- Christianity has moved from being the dominant worldview to a selection of “consumer choices” around spirituality and faith.

The Shift to a Missional Theology

- “Mission is seen as the movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in the mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love towards people, since God is the fountain of sending love.”
- The *mission Dei* is God’s activity, which embraces both the church and the world, in which the church may be privileged to participate.” (Bosch, 2004:390-391)
- The church was no longer perceived primarily as being over against the world but rather as sent into the world and existing for the sake of the world. Mission was no longer merely an activity of the church, but an expression of the very being of the church.” (Bosch, 2004:493)

Eight Key Assumptions

Assumptions One

Visible and accessible to
both the un-churched
and the disaffected.

Assumption Two

Operate from a co-operative model that is contextual for Parkdale - appropriate and effective.

Assumption Three

Have a relational component that is inclusive but not coercive.

Assumption Four

Life As Liturgy / Liturgy As
Life - Address the
persistent lack of
engagement between
liturgy and everyday life.

Assumption Five

- Encourage the exploration & formation of faith in both individuals & groups.
- Faith as a narrative of pilgrimage and journey

Assumption Six

Communicate clearly and publicly that our facilities and programs are “safe”.

Assumption Seven

Effectively manage
change in the lives of
existing parishes.

Assumption Eight

Live in a corporate culture of experimentation, exploration, and risk-taking.

- High Risk Culture = Missional
- Low Risk Culture = Maintenance

Eight Areas of Exploration

The eight areas of exploration of ministry need to be understood:

- within a framework of missional theology
- with the eight assumptions as starting points

Area One

The Disabled & Inclusiveness

-psychiatric survivors

Area Two

The Arts & Exploring Faith

-Imago

Area Three

Homeless

Area Four

Elderly

Area Five

Detached Youth ministry

- Finding connections and building relationships
- and the exploration of appropriate liturgy

Area Six

Exploring Faith with young families:

- New parents and “mini-mass”
- Young families exploring the Eucharist – “Life in the Eucharist”

Areas Seven

Church planting and non-traditional congregations

Areas Seven

Technology

- "Missional Blog"

- "Alt. Worship"

Areas Seven

Partnerships

-Existing Agencies

Area Eight - SpiritRemix



- Unpacks the symbolism of the church building;
- The sacred in the marketplace;
- The Arts as context for faith exploration;
- Church planting

Area Eight

- Solomon's Porch
- The New Monasticism
- Mega-Churches as Malls
 - The Meeting House

3.4 Twenty propositions on church growth in urban settings

1. 'Church growth' means the number of people who participate in the life and activities of a congregation measured over a period of time. (There are other types of 'church growth' e.g. spiritual, organizational.)
2. Note the differences between three types of measurement: affiliation (what people say on a census form), membership (what churches say about who is on a list and who isn't), and participation (the various ways in which people show up to church activities – we usually just measure attendance at worship). These are very different forms of measurement, and shouldn't be confused or compared with one another. There's lots to debate even within each category.
3. Many urban churches have a moderate or high turnover of participants. They may not 'grow' in terms of overall numbers, but they may replace people so that their numbers remain constant over time.
4. Some churches feel that their median age increases or decreases ('we have more young families than we used to, although the overall numbers are pretty much the same'), and see this as an indicator of growth or decline.
5. Self-perception is often different from other forms of measurement. A small congregation of forty people may 'feel' that it is growing because a family of four has shown up three times in the last two months. However, a statistical measure over a period of five years may reveal that the average attendance has declined by 20%. (The term 'growth' has a high emotional content for churches. There is not just one way in which we use the word.)
6. Numbers mean very different things to different churches. A church that is supposed to close because it has 20 people in worship has a new interim priest. In six months the congregation swells to 40, an increase of 100%! For a church with an average Sunday attendance of 200 with an annual turnover of 10%, 20 new people have to be incorporated each year just to remain the same size.
7. There is another, larger view, which is to look at denominational affiliation, church membership and participation over time within a geographical area. 'Church growth' (or stability, or decline) is measured in terms of overall numbers for all the churches in that area, perhaps over a period of 20 years, using all three categories to get a larger picture.
8. Church size is important because it helps determine the capacity of a congregation – capacity to be financially self-sustaining, to employ staff (in terms of paying them and giving them meaningful work), to attract and incorporate new members, to engage in programs such as worship and outreach.
9. There are two factors that have a large influence on church growth: demographics and size.
10. The religious affiliation of people who live in the neighbourhood of the church (numbers which are derived from the census every 10 years) is one major factor in whether that church will grow, decline or remain stable. Generally speaking, the number of Anglicans (and the percentage of Anglicans relative to the population) has been decreasing in Toronto settings over the decades. However, there is a wide variation in present affiliation by neighbourhood, from less than 1% to more than 10%.

11. Churches can attract a considerable number of their congregation from their neighbourhood, if the demographics are favourable. For example, one church on the Danforth found that their neighbourhood was changing dramatically with an influx of young, upscale, WASP families. These people were not particularly religious, but the church was able to attract many new participants by hiring a second minister with a focus on youth, children and their parents. (There are of course, other issues in attracting such people to a congregation – their values around participation and stewardship are very different from those of long time members.)
12. Urban neighbourhoods often have a high degree of diversity in many ways (not just religious affiliation). This diversity affects churches – they may say ‘all are welcome’ but in fact they will probably appeal to people who are pretty much the same as their present congregation (and this group may not be well represented in the surrounding neighbourhood). This situation is not limited to the ‘inner city’ by any means; however, newer suburbs often have a more homogeneous population that is easier for churches to ‘read’ and respond to.
13. Most, but not all, ‘growing churches’ in urban settings draw at least 50% of their people from nearby. (‘Growing’ means actual numerical growth or replacement.)
14. Most urban churches of all sizes draw a considerable number of their participants from outside their neighbourhood, some of whom come from a distance. Sometimes the proportion from outside can be higher than 80%. We often speak of ‘destination’ churches to describe these churches. Contrary to popular perception, smaller churches (for example, with fewer than 50 participants in worship on an average Sunday) that are described as ‘neighbourhood churches’ simply because they are small, are often really ‘destination churches’ drawing the majority of their members from a distance.
15. The reasons for people coming from a distance to a church are various: i) strong personal and family associations with the congregation and its people; ii) the identity of the congregation that makes it a good fit; iii) the program of the congregation (e.g. music, preaching, outreach, education, or a combination of program strengths).
16. Small congregations usually attract people from a distance for the first two reasons (i & ii); larger congregations for the last two reasons (ii & iii).
17. It is virtually impossible for small urban congregations to grow in the sense of showing a significant increase in the number of participants over a period of time. Nearly all the factors are against growth. (For example, one internal factor is that the congregation’s chief strength is its ‘community’ and this is usually a tightly knit group of highly committed people. This is a very difficult group for a newcomer to break into, despite protestations of ‘friendliness’. Also, a large proportional increase – e.g. 50% - would be very destabilizing to the congregation.) They may be able to maintain their current size for quite a few years. There are a few notable exceptions where congregations ‘started anew’, but these churches also were well resourced through some unusual circumstances, such as a major windfall from the sale of air rights.
18. A few urban congregations in Toronto have grown over the last 10 – 20 years. These increases are usually modest when shown on a graph (and there may also have been times of steep decline). These congregations are all medium to large in

- size (175 – 500 in worship on an average Sunday). They will typically have many strengths: strong identity; good programming for which they are known, a strong team of clergy and other program staff; strong lay leadership with a sense of ownership for their role in the church; a good sense of shared mission and planning; resourcing of new initiatives to move the vision for ministry forward. For the most part these congregations are both destination and neighbourhood churches. (Again, notable exceptions apply.)
19. There are some myths about what makes a church grow. One of the most common is that people will come because we're friendly. (It's not a great idea to be unfriendly to newcomers, but they probably haven't come through the church doors primarily looking for the superficial 'friendliness' that comes with Walmart training.) Another myth is that people are attracted primarily by the music. This may be true in some cases, and certainly it is only the larger (or well endowed) churches that can afford a quality music program. However, if by 'church growth' we extend our meaning to include the idea of 'becoming disciples of Jesus Christ through meaningful participation in congregational life' a high quality music program that attracts a lot of musicians and their supporters may not produce the kind of 'church growth' we really have in mind. Also, churches have a lot of blinkers when it comes to music: they fail to see that there are quite a few other churches offering high quality music very similar to theirs. How many people are there to be attracted by this type of church music? Are we looking for an audience to listen to music or for active participants in our congregation? (The role of music in congregational life is complex and very important, and I don't mean to degrade its contribution in any way.)
 20. When all is said and done, the three most successful strategies by far for attracting new members into a congregation are by marrying them (or developing a significant relationship), giving birth to them and befriending them. This again is the reason why larger, vibrant churches have a better chance of attracting new participants than smaller ones. There's more going on – you can ask your spouse or friend to sing in the choir, to participate in an outreach program, to come to a social dinner, to contribute to a learning program. People can be attracted by the activities or offerings of such a congregation; but the reason they will stay is that they can develop meaningful relationships and that participation makes a real difference to their lives.

These propositions come from working with and observing over 100 congregations (Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Salvation Army, United) in the GTA over the past decade. They are intended to help us think clearly and realistically about church growth and its close relation, evangelism.

Paul MacLean, March, 2007