



St. Mark's United Church

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Progressive, Inclusive, Life Affirming

Living Faith Profile – 2019 Telling Our Story – Ministry Articulation Profile

The Mission Articulation Profile was developed by the congregation of St. Mark's in 2018 and approved at a congregational meeting in December 2018. An update is provided here for Goal #1.

Ministry at St. Mark's

St. Mark's is called to be a progressive, inclusive, life-affirming Christian faith community in The United Church of Canada that is committed to engaging faith, scripture and tradition in progressive ways, seeking to be inclusive of all regardless of ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, race or sexual orientation and striving to affirm the inherent blessing of life found in all Creation.

St. Mark's Ministry Categories

Growing in Faith

We are a progressive / engaging church that steps outside of the norm in our services and we are not afraid to try something new. We consider ourselves to be a ground-breaking community of faith exploring ways to grow into our neighbourhood and wider surroundings.

We have many different levels of knowledge about theology in the congregation; we learn from others and are comfortable with this.

We have a Sunday school group of varying ages that has used a variety of curricula, including Deep Blue Sea and for the younger group Whole People of God and Finding Jesus Under the Sea. In fall 2018, the group will follow lessons on parables that will match the fall sermons. Our Sunday School Superintendent is an integral part of our staff team. The teen group meets monthly to share in a video series. In total we have 15 regular attendees with guests quite often.

Adults are provided with opportunities to explore and deepen faith through bible study groups. About 25 people met every other Friday evening from January to May in 2018 to discuss “Beyond Religion” by His Holiness The Dalai Lama.

We have goals in **Growing in Faith** as follows:

- Have connections with others in our immediate neighbourhood and the wider community and to explore ways to connect and grow with them in our spiritual beliefs
- Create a thriving youth ministry program.
- Improve our connection with the wider United Church, including generating greater awareness of the activities and initiatives at all levels and extending into the global ‘community’

Outreach and Sharing the Good News

Outreach is at the core of who we are as a faith community. We are ready to participate in outreach projects when we have identified a particular need. We would like to be recognized as a “compassionate church”.

One of the initiatives we sponsor is “Holy Chefs”, an adult group of people with intellectual disabilities who meet at St. Mark’s weekly to socialize and participate in a cooking class. We also support the Circle of Friends, a group of individuals with intellectual disabilities that meets weekly at St. Mark’s to socialize, play games and participate in crafts.

We are consistently responsive to the community in these ways:

- We participate annually in a drive to fill backpacks with school supplies for some of the children in need who attend G.B. Little School, right next door to us, as well as Galloway Road School.
- We participate in the Out of the Cold program.
- We have a Christmas Hamper program, providing gifts to those in need through the Boys’ and Girls’ Club.
- We reach out to the community through events such as our Annual Yard sale, which includes donations to families in need, the Bike Safety Rodeo and Community Movie Nights which are extremely popular.
- We have a yearly ‘Mitten Tree’, donating much needed winter wear to G.B. Little and Galloway Road Schools.
- We run the St. Mark’s Milk for Youth Program. The program provides a once weekly serving of milk to 415 boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 16 to supplement the snack program in 15 locations in this organization’s after school program.

We hosted a community round table in October 2017 to find out what needs exist in our community and to think about ways we can partner with community organizations and make a difference in our community. We also hosted a vision day in January 2018.

We are an affirming congregation and strive to be welcoming to all who attend worship at St. Mark's.

We have goals in **Outreach and Sharing the Good News** as follows:

- Deepen our relationships with our existing partnerships so that the following programs can be explored and the most promising, developed and implemented. These may include:
 - improving transportation for church members and others
 - developing a program with the neighbouring school
 - holding a community bonfire
 - making stronger connections with the foodbank and addressing food security issues
 - connecting with families in our community
 - offering programs for family finance planning
 - providing space for other groups in a partnership rather than a transactional relationship
 - being an effective voice for social justice within our neighbourhood.
 - participating actively in the exploration of the use of the former Church of the Master site.

Leadership

We have a strong group of active leaders. The Board is comprised of the Chairs of the various teams. Succession planning is very strong within the teams and we move people into increasing responsibilities. Members are nominated to committees and serve a two year commitment at which time they rotate to another committee or take a break from church work via ongoing dialogues. We encourage people to develop their leadership skills and recognize talent and their gifts as well as provide mentorship to help people grow into new roles.

Being actively involved in the church leads to friendships and the development of new relationships. We feel that we are the church and we need these connections, and that “you get out what you put in”.

Our summer services are led by lay people.

We have goals in **Leadership** as follows:

- To continue to develop leaders through the coaching and mentoring of lay leaders

- To host an event with other churches to provide lay leadership training. Funds are available for lay ministry courses and training, but people do not use the funds and/or may not be aware of them
- To recognize the efforts of our leaders and thank people more effectively
- To communicate between various ministries
- To acknowledge our successes better

Wider Relationship

We have relationships with a wide range of groups including:

- Girls and Boys Club
- Storefront
- GB Little School
- Galloway Road School
- Holy Chefs
- Circle of Friends
- Girl Guides of Canada
- Other churches in area - Good Friday shared services
- Curran Hall Community Association
- Curran Hall Parks and Recreation
- Community Living Association
- Gardening - special interests
- Cooking classes
- Agincourt Community Services
- Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities (SCHC)

We provide information on our website and regular updates on our Facebook page. We also record and post our Sunday services for people to watch.

We see strengthening our relationships with our surrounding neighbourhood as being essential to our development as a faith community. We would like to understand ways in which our presence in the community can strengthen others' spiritual beliefs and strengthen their faith, along with our own.

We have **Wider Relationship** goals as follows:

- To strengthen our youth ministry through reaching out to them on social media and holding events that are relevant to their everyday lives.
- To build and deepen relationships within our neighbourhood through:
 - Continuing to develop relationships with groups coming into the church for other activities

- Exploring how to create partnerships identified through the community round table and vision day
- To explore a deepening relationship with other churches and interfaith communities.

Pastoral/Spiritual Care

We have a large and active pastoral care team with 17 members. They are active both within and outside of the community of faith. Some of the work that this committee undertakes includes regular phone calls as well as responding when a loved one passes and implementing a telephone tree when the need arises. Our office administrator is very approachable.

We have **Pastoral/Spiritual Care** goals and areas in which we could do pastoral care training better, as follows:

- Notifying the pastoral care person if someone is in need of care.
- Providing special care for our aging population
- Knowing from whom to seek help if an issue is more complex
- Being diligent about the pastoral care calls and strengthening the relationships that are being developed
- Providing more clarity about the roles of pastoral caregivers

Belonging, Extravagant Welcome and Wellness

We are a progressive, inclusive, life-affirming Christian faith community. We welcome all people readily and try to create a sense of belonging and wellness. We have welcomed members from two other congregations as well as welcomed new members who have come through our doors and stayed to become part of our worshipping community.

We take care of each other without being judgmental. Our welcome brochure is really helpful. We truly care about others; as one recent newcomer noted, “we know how to be church here”. We are a family.

Many of our welcoming activities centre around food, including our turkey dinner, pancake dinner and coffee time. We do not stand on a lot of pretense and people are comfortable coming dressed casually if they wish.

Another member observed that at St. Mark’s: “the warm, friendly atmosphere, informal and yet worshipful, [that] proves to me that indeed I am not alone while at St. Mark’s.”

We have **Belonging, Extravagant Welcome and Wellness** goals as follows:

- We would like to continue to keep trying to get people involved in the life of the church and create a buddy system for newcomers
- We would like to improve on diversity and neighbourhood representation

- We would like to be intentional in the way that we welcome other faiths regardless of their backgrounds and to be accepting of the way they pursue their faiths

Stewardship

We have an annual letter campaign and appreciate the generosity of many individuals. Many in the congregation contribute through PAR which helps with our financial planning. We are grateful as a congregation for the donation of time, talent and resources of our members.

We seek community involvement in our projects, such as our dance, golf tournament, yard sale, dinners, and bazaar. These events could benefit from earlier promotion and additional advertising. Outside contributions are provided and appreciated. We plan to hold a three-week stewardship campaign in the fall.

We have a **Stewardship** goal as follows:

- To have an effective stewardship campaign and to be good stewards of the church's resources.

Worship

Worship services are a blend of traditional and contemporary with prayers, readings, reflections and music thoughtfully integrated into a meaningful time of worship. There is space for our personal reflections and prayers, lots of music and challenging and inspiring sermons. We really enjoy the excellent music that is provided which is innovative in its approach. Our music director has incorporated a variety of styles into services, including multilingual hymns, jazz, ballads, and rock music. We sang the music from the musical *Wicked* during a Palm Sunday service.

Worship is participatory and inclusive in both word and gesture and includes interactive discussions. We appreciate the variety of approaches to the services.

Services are available on Facebook. We worship in the round and our multi-purpose space is flexible and can be rearranged for worship which is “freeing”.

Sunday school classes are held for children to join if they wish after the first ten or fifteen minutes of the service. A nursery is also available.

We understand that God is experienced in different ways and are open to and embrace those differences. We engage in multi-faith services and practices to better understand different faiths, including:

- Sikh turban day
- National Aboriginal Day
- Chinese New Year service
- Muslim faith service

- Muslim prayers following Yonge Street attack

We have **Worship** goals as follows:

We would like to continue to have:

- multi-faith services
- intergenerational services
- lay leadership leading worship services
- extraordinary music worship
- a progressive approach in our ministry, consistent with our theology

Priorities

In 2018, the congregation of St. Mark's set priorities for the 8 ministry categories as follows:

1. Wider Relationships
2. Stewardship
3. Worship
4. Leadership
5. Pastoral/Spiritual Care
6. Belonging, Extravagant Welcome, Wellness
7. Justice, Outreach & Sharing the Good News
8. Growing in Faith

Short-term Goals and Plans

GOAL STATEMENT #1:			
To develop a culture of stewardship by investing in mission and by creating a consistently balanced budget by having the church’s annual givings cover the church’s operating expenses.			
Actions to be taken	Action	Date	Responsible
	Establishing and growing a culture of sustainability. Starting with a Stewardship program. Written invitation to giving, follow up calls, witness testimonials during services.	Sep, 2018 launch with Board	F&S
Resources to be committed:	A group to execute the program. Guidance from our minister. Putting together the written invitation with current givings information by our administrator. Cost of mailing.		
Who will take the lead? Who else will be involved?	Lead: Chair of Finance & Stewardship. Working group members: subset of the Finance & Stewardship team plus interested volunteers from outside of the team		
How will progress be measured?	Pledges received – goal is 80%. Increase in pledge - goal is 3%		
How often will progress be reported? How and by whom and to whom?	At F&S and Board meetings by program representatives. Congregational meeting for finance will also be an opportunity to report.		
Status of this goal at time of annual review:	<p>In 2017-18, we had 31 returns of the pledge forms with a few adjusting their giving.</p> <p>In 2018-19, instead of doing this at the end of Feb., we made October/early Nov. our stewardship campaign period. Via formal spiel, individual letters, reminders and phone calls, we collected 72 pledges from the 100 sent out. Of the 28 no returns, we were able to calculate their offerings from the past and use these figures as a guide to givings this year.</p> <p>We added 4 new people to PAR (our total is now 53). We have increased offerings from 25 donors to PAR and have an increased projected revenue. Members were asked during the stewardship campaign to consider joining PAR and those already on it were requested to increase these donations to the extent they felt comfortable.</p>		

GOAL STATEMENT #2: To become known as the compassionate church by increasing our presence in the community, innovating and establishing ourselves as a Regional church.

	Action	Date	Responsible
<p>Actions to be taken</p>	<p>Increase diversity and openness to other faiths and cultures. Choose activities that allow us to build relationships with our neighbours such as Storefront, other churches' faith groups, children in the area (GB Little School). Activities might include: attend a neighbourhood event at a school or community centre, provide English classes or food support, create a document for community services support around: "Where do I...?", give space to a neighbourhood or community association or social service agency, seek partnerships with businesses to run programs in the community, establish a community garden.</p> <p>Continue the following ministries or activities, that are focused on our connections with our neighbours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backpack with clothing drive • Knapsack with school next door • Our outreach projects that support the community - e.g. backpacks for the schools • Movie nights • Circle of Friends • Holy Chefs • Relaxation groups • Continue to offer programming space and support • AA • Community garden • Yard sales • Realtors - recognize that this could be an opportunity for ministry by meeting spiritual needs in times of stress <p>Discontinue ministries or activities that are no longer effective or appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach that is cheque writing (without a tangible connection to the church) • Connections with groups that are not responsive • Christmas hamper 	<p>Within next 9 months</p>	<p>Innovation Team</p>

Resources to be committed:	Establishing an Innovation Team in cooperation and consultation with EDGE for congregational renewal. Through the Edge network, the United Church has funded 250 new non-traditional ministries in just two years.
Who will take the lead? Who else will be involved?	We will draw people into this team who are not currently active or are on the margins of church life.
How will progress be measured?	Progress will be measured through our implementation of pilot projects, feedback from the community and those involved.
How often will progress be reported? How and by whom and to whom?	The team will update the board as the concept is developed, the plan is to be able to run a pilot project at some point in 2019.
Status of this goal at time of annual review:	Will be done at the time. Currently this program is on track.