

Planning and Transformation Hub (PATH)
Crescent Fort Rouge United Church

Summary Report of Congregational Consultations
May 2016

Re-Imagining Church



CONTEXT

Crescent Fort Rouge United Church, like many of our sister churches across the country, is facing a changing reality. Although we are an energetic congregation, infused with a desire to learn, share and grow in the Holy Spirit, there are challenges to our ability to continue our ministry.

Our volunteer capacity is decreasing as many who have given much to the work of the church, are finding the need to step back. Younger members are smaller in number and are unable to replace them. We have a building and sanctuary that we love, but which was designed for 900 worshipers and we now have less than a hundred on a given Sunday.

The building is over a hundred years old and requires many expensive repairs. Before we are pushed to limits of our resources and our volunteer capacity, we feel compelled to reimagine our church in a way that will allow us to thrive in the future.

CFRUC has spent considerable effort following the recommendations of EDGE National regarding a process for re-visioning the future.

1. Clarify Mission and Church identity
2. Assess property needs and potential
3. Create a re-development plan built upon No.s 1 and 2

In September 2015, it was discovered that missional clarity was incomplete and thus the forward movement on the plan for building re-development was paused. A group which named itself PATH took on the task of building on the work completed to date within the following role mandate (Sept-June 2016):

**“Our role is to provide leadership to the congregation
.....to re-imagine what church is for us”.**

The PATH committee began at the grass roots to lead the congregation in this discernment process. We started with a study of new and successful ministries within other churches. We presented examples to the congregation as “food for thought”, to help us all to consider ideas for our own future ministries.

Next, we developed a set of questions to share with members in small group discussions. From this we were able to learn what is most important to all of you about your church, the things you want to hold on to. As well, in the focus groups we shared many ideas for possible ministries in the future. The process was rewarding in that everyone had an opportunity to share their concerns, dreams and ideas. These were all recorded and later analysed by the committee.

Our analysis revealed four general areas that congregation members consider most important

- Belonging
- Worship
- Music and Hospitality to the Arts
- Outreach

We will share the essence of what was said in each of these areas, followed by specific quotes. We want to thank everyone who joined in our discussion groups. There were 83 of you, which represents an excellent level of participation. We are inspired by your obvious love for the church, your optimism for the future and for your will to imagine yourselves as partners in its new ministries.



BELONGING

Congregation members very strongly value the sense of extended church family in this congregation. Whatever we do, it is important to most that we remain together.



Your words:

- sense of family and belonging
- warmth and welcoming
- authenticity of welcome
- embracing of all ages
- intergenerational relationships
- a supporting church family to rely upon during personal trials
- connection and commitment to one another, lack of formality
- new members try us out because of enthusiastic recommendation by longer term members
- we must be intentional in welcoming outsiders who perceive the church as a place only for those who belong
- could consider removing the fence to make yard seem more welcoming.

WORSHIP

Congregation values their worship. As we move forward, we should never lose sight that first and most importantly, we are a church, and the church is the reason we are here.



Your words:

- solid worship tradition and sound preaching
- any new space should include a special place for worship
- mustn't lose the focus if we rebuild, upon first being a church, and providing challenging messages from the pulpit
- we are challenged to live rather than just to speak the faith
- the teaching and Christian education component of worship is important

MUSIC AND HOSPITALITY TO THE ARTS

We love our relationship with music and the arts both in worship and in hosting other artistic groups. Most feel this connection with music and the arts should continue as a part of our future.



Your words:

- music/hospitality to the arts is a tradition of our church
- Artsfest provides a great connection with arts community to display their talents
- choir music is spiritually uplifting
- organ and music is important in life of the congregation
- great acoustic space
- very appropriate for smaller musical/choral performances
- should consider the potential for creating a recording studio in sanctuary
- hospitality to the arts has been commended by young rock musicians who use the sanctuary, and by the artists who display at Artsfest

OUTREACH

Outreach is the focus for many ideas from congregation members. Service to our local and world community is a longstanding tradition in this congregation. We will attempt to focus on outreach ideas in categories in which they were presented.

Daycare: there is strongly repeated support for the Fort Rouge Day Care. It has been a 40 year relationship that most want to see continued.



Senior Centre: Many recognized the potential for our church providing greater support for seniors in the area. We are an aging population with needs for meaningful social interaction as well as health care concerns.

Your words:

- senior centre with social activities, cards and games, low impact exercise classes, shared coffee and refreshments, and meals
- “More fun than cooking for one” was a successful past ministry where singles cooked and shared meals

- suggested that seniors are a diverse group and more study should be done of their various needs
- should reach out to the many single seniors in the condo buildings as many may be looking for a church home

Families, youth and children: There were discussions around reaching out to meet the needs of young busy families, and providing meaningful ministry for the younger members of our congregation.

Your words:

- kids enjoy meaningful, useful tasks rather than being entertained
- consider alternate worship times to accommodate busy families
- providing space and support for youth rock concerts improves our connection with young people
- Messy Church has proven to be an excellent ministry to connect with young families, many of which are not attenders at Sunday worship
- consider afterschool daycare or “homework club” for kids whose parents are working
- good Christian education opportunities are needed by youth



Community Kitchen: Food and shared meals provide many opportunities around outreach.

Your Words:

- community kitchen is desired
- we love to eat
- good for fellowship as well as ministry to others through food
- meals for poor, elderly and for each other
- opportunities for shared cooking ministry as well as eating



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Garden/green space:



Your words:

- garden/green space is important to us
- raised vegetable beds would be appreciated by community
- well-landscaped garden with benches provides a retreat for community members
- Memory Garden is a sacred space that should be maintained
- make the space more welcoming by removing part of the fence
- compost has been well used by community



Promotion/Fundraising

Your Words:

- suggested we have pamphlets in pews about work of our church,
- advertise our pre-service coffee
- create cards and other gift items with photos of architectural features of building, and make them available for sale, both to fundraise and to raise awareness of the beautiful and unique aspects of the church
- be more intentional in making concert goers and artist groups that use our sanctuary aware of the financial challenges of maintaining the building
- renters might consider doing a fundraiser concert to support the building or asking for a collection to support building maintenance



Building

Even though the focus of our process was not intended to include the building, it inevitably was discussed. People, without exception, expressed a love for the sanctuary. For some, preservation of the building is a priority. For others, there is willingness to consider replacing it, or reconfiguring it if that is deemed necessary to continue our ministry.

Your Words:

- some want to preserve the building and build upon the back.
- concern that loss of our present building will be a hardship to arts groups and social service agencies that make use of it
- we need a building to provide a sense of space as this one has always done, a physical location where we meet and carry on our ministry
- some would be happy to worship anywhere as long as congregation remains together
- there is too much money being spent upon maintenance and utilities, money that we cannot use in fulfilling our ministries
- if we build a new space we should preserve the feel of the old and as many architectural elements of the old, as possible
- new space must be fully accessible and very multipurpose
- if we build housing we should have a very distinct chapel unlike McClure which looks from the outside like an apartment building and not a church
- we should consider amalgamation or sharing space with other congregations
- we heard concerns re parking
- people felt we should be a tenant in our building, paying rent to the owner who will be responsible for the maintenance

Easing Change

We asked the question how best to help people deal with change.

Your Words:

- fear of change is reduced with clear, transparent communication of the leadership with congregation
- need to have clear pro/con information re significant changes to help congregation members discern their level of support
- small group meetings are better than congregational meetings, more comfortable
- genuine fear if we tear down church that congregation will disperse
- experience of Deer Lodge members showed that life goes on, the Body of Christ continues its work in other congregations where the closing church members went



Other Comments

- one person joined our church because he was impressed that we always met our M&S goals.
- some mentioned they came because the church was within walking distance.
- arguments were made both for and against devoting energy to developing a clear mission statement.
- one mentioned that we should maintain at least our current level of ministry staffing into the future
- concern was expressed that we had not become an affirming congregation with respect to LGBTTQ people. Others felt that we are obviously affirming and that the official process of becoming so in name is no longer necessary
- possibility of creating a facility to provide medical/dental services which is attached to a community resource such as the daycare or a seniors' activity centre



NOTES – MY THOUGHTS:



SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Your input has provided the PATH team with the information necessary to move on to the next stage of our process which is to consult with community stake holders and to study local demographics. This will help us to learn the needs of our community, and the areas where our church may have opportunities for ministry.

After this study, we will look for connections between the priorities and ideas you have expressed and the apparent needs within our community. Where these intersections occur, we hope to be able to suggest possible broad ideas for ministry. We will present them to you to determine if one or more of these ideas resonate with you. Then, if we are given a mandate to move forward, we will engage external groups like EDGE, to help us consider the logistics of adopting these new ministries relative to our resources; human, financial and infrastructure.

If you have additional comments, please provide them to any of the committee members no later than 13 June 2016. (Kathy Desbiolles, Ian Fillingham, Doug Holroyd, barb janes and Sandi Howell).

We are honoured to be of service to the congregation and look forward to working with all of you in the next steps of the “re-imagining our church” process.



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