

2019 Year of Conversation: A Living Document Saint Andrew's United Church

History

Saint Andrew's Church has been a vital faith community in Halifax's south end for almost 100 years, being formed in 1925 by the union of Methodist and Presbyterian congregations. For generations it has supported spiritual care and character formation for leaders in many sectors: medicine, education, government, business, and multiple volunteer sectors. It has also long provided support to marginalized members of society through the Sunday Suppers (which we have hosted every week for 35 years, feeding over 200 poor and homeless people), refugee sponsorship (which began with Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s), and environmental and social justice initiatives.

Saint Andrew's has also been a hub for the arts community and for many social service groups. With fantastic acoustics, our sanctuary has been the site for countless concerts over the decades. It has long been the home of Symphony Nova Scotia's baroque series and has hosted countless other choirs, chamber orchestras, organ recitals and classical musical performances. Our hall, usually for no fee or a small donation, has been the home base for dozens of groups doing good works. They range from Alcoholics Anonymous to seniors' exercise classes, to Scouts and Girl Guides, to cultural gatherings like annual celebrations for the Ethiopian and Sri Lankan communities.

Recent History and Current Ventures

In the last ten to fifteen years the ways St. Andrew's engages the larger community have remained true to this history, but with a progressive turning toward *interfaith engagement* and the *pursuit of social justice within a web of vital partnerships*. Here is a sampling of some of our ventures in recent years:

- Shared spiritual practice and teaching with the Shambhala Buddhist community.
- Membership in an Interfaith Coalition for Climate Justice.
- Reciprocal invitations with the Ummah Mosque. Each has had its leaders speak during weekly worship. This has included messages of reconciliation after killings in worship places in Quebec and New Zealand.
- Joint exercises and healing initiatives with the Mi'kmaw community. St. Andrew's was very engaged in Atlantic Canada in the Truth and Residential Commission on Residential Schools and has hosted many events like the Blanket Exercise.
- Sponsorship of Muslim refugee families from Syria, Iraq, and Somalia.
- A mission partnership on the Lebanon-Syria border that runs a school and medical clinic for refugees there.
- The welcoming of an Afro-Caribbean charismatic church into our building as a co-locating congregation.

Over this time our worship, both on Sundays and for special celebrations, has become much more inclusive of diverse musical and cultural styles and more welcoming to non-United Church and non-Christian people.

Progressively, St. Andrew's is coming to be seen by the city at large and its leaders as an important place of intersectionality and the breaking down of historical barriers. Its ministers are frequently invited to speak to or cooperate with diverse faith communities, schools and universities, social enterprises, and NGOs.

Coming to see that this intersectionality was a key strand in its DNA, in 2017 St. Andrew's engaged in a re-missioning process and identified the following as its mission priorities:

1. **responding to the spiritual hunger** in our community. While our society is wealthy in many ways, it dwells in profound poverty in others.
2. **creating communion** across religious and social borders. We seek to bring together diverse perspectives that intersect in our community.
3. **standing for justice**: social, economic and environmental
4. **developing alternative, transformational leadership** within our city - and supporting leaders in various fields. We note the need for strong leaders who will respond to the challenges our society is facing.

Following this process, St. Andrew's engaged the social enterprise Common Good Solutions for an extended piece of research on the three challenges of: advancing this mission of intersectionality, attending to our sustainability challenges, and best using our property to the benefit of the larger community. CGS also helped us with a consultation process with about 50 community organizations and faith groups. What emerged was a proposal to create the Centre for Social and Spiritual Innovation (SASI). More about that below, but first a word on our sustainability challenges.

Money, the Building, and the Sustainability Situation

Like almost all churches today, St. Andrew's has sustainability challenges. We have been fortunate to maintain the size and vitality of our faith community, but can no longer cover our expenses with Sunday givings alone. This is a reality for almost every urban congregation in Canada, no matter how vital the life of their church. Patterns of joining and of giving have altered dramatically in recent decades. Deficits have been growing. On top of that, our building, with its stone and mortar exterior, is very expensive to maintain in this climate. We have a growing list of repair projects that will cost us well into six figures in the next five years and into seven figures in the next fifteen to twenty. To address these structural liabilities, our *endowment will be depleted within five to ten years.*

Below is a table created by our treasurer, John Gunn, that predicts (based on a series of educated guesses about revenue streams and expenditures) St. Andrew's financial position in the coming five years if no revenue is gained from a development of part of our property:

St Andrews financial outlook to 2024 if no property development in the period

2020-2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	(\$,000)	(\$,000)	(\$,000)	(\$,000)	(\$,000)
Financial assets (net) beginning of year	1,420	1,030	900	800	690
Cash in					
Congregational offerings	440	460	480	500	520
Rentals & other fundraising (net)	140	150	160	170	180
Philanthropy receipts	50	50	50	50	50
Investment income (net)	50	40	40	30	30
	680	700	730	750	780
Cash out					
Staff compensation	(500)	(530)	(540)	(550)	(560)
Property - major maintenance	(300)	(30)	(20)	(20)	(30)
Property - operations	(120)	(120)	(120)	(130)	(130)
Operational costs	(70)	(70)	(70)	(70)	(80)
Mission expenditures	(80)	(80)	(80)	(90)	(90)
	(1,070)	(830)	(830)	(860)	(890)
Financial assets (net) end of year	1,030	900	800	690	580

The leadership of the church has come to understand that, to meet these challenges, a multi-pronged approach is necessary and have been shaping an appropriate strategy. The elements of our strategy are:

- Improving stewardship.
- Increasing revenue from both the sanctuary and the hall.
- Seeking targeted donations for certain repairs or alterations.
- Working to redevelop some part of our property.
- Using the redeveloped property to open SASI, providing another revenue stream.

Let's look at each of these in turn.

In 2019 a new and impressively active Stewardship Committee has been formed and has already run one stewardship campaign. This resulted in a significant number of people joining our pre-authorized remittance (PAR) programme and church members pledging an increase of over \$25,000 in annual givings. There will be another stewardship initiative in November.

The move to flexible seating in the sanctuary has increased rental interest sharply. Based on market research and dialogue with current and potential renters, St. Andrew's decided to build a stage at the front of the church and improve our washrooms. These changes should increase both the number of rentals and the fees we can charge for rentals. Symphony NS has pledged significant support for this project.

Targeted asks for donations for specific projects have not yet begun.

Redevelopment of a Portion of Our Property

For more than a decade, St. Andrew's has been exploring the possibility of redeveloping its hall space. A Site Renewal Task Group was formed in 2007 and researched church redevelopments in Halifax, Montreal, and Toronto. Out of that research came a exploratory discussions with a developer. These discussions were terminated when economic conditions changed dramatically after the 2008 recession. The Site Renewal Task Group was disbanded some years later.

About three years ago another developer, RIDC, approached us about the possibility of redeveloping the church hall footprint and adjacent land for a student housing complex. Conversations were carried out with RIDC and Halifax Regional Municipality for the course of eighteen months to two years. While the prospect of redevelopment looked to be at least potentially possible for a period of time, the extended process of drafting and approving HRM's Centre Plan was making clarity about the feasibility of moving ahead with the proposed RIDC development difficult to obtain.

Council decided that, in order to more carefully manage our exploration of development, a new task group called the Site Development Task Group would be formed. We were very fortunate to appoint congregational members with strong expertise in development, city planning, real estate management, and real estate law to the task group. John Young, chair of Trustees, Eric Roe, past chair of Council, Robbie Shaw, our Business Manager and Russ Daye, our lead minister, also sit on the task group.

An early decision of the task group (agreed to by council) was to step back and engage professional help to research the value of the St. Andrew's property and its potential for development. It was felt that as much background information as possible about options for development was needed to help St. Andrew's now that its sustainability situation was becoming more acute and it was no longer clear that developing the hall space alone (under the restrictions provided in the draft Centre Plan) was sufficient. The planning and design group ekistics was to engage to research three possible options for development of the church property. These options are:

1. Option 1 - Keep sanctuary, remove back hall and infill with a residential development.
2. Option 2 - Keep walls of the original sanctuary but fill the whole site with new development.
3. Option 3 - demolish the entire site and start fresh.

Assuming that the development would be residential, and *working within the restrictions upon our property included in the current draft of the Centre Plan*, ekistics concluded that the three options for development could be expected to look like this:

1. Option one could produce 53,784 square feet of space
2. Option two could produce 97,200 square feet of space
3. Option three could produce 138,888 square feet of space
- 4.

With this information in hand, St. Andrew's then engaged Altus Group to research the market value of the property under each of the development scenarios. Below are their results. Keep in mind that these are values from the summer of 2019 and *do not include demolition costs or the costs to St. Andrew's of buying back a part of the property for its use and the establishment of SASI*:

Scenario	Description	Market Value Conclusion
1	Retention of the sanctuary / demolish the hall with development potential of 53,784 sf	\$2,950,000
2	Retain a portion of the sanctuary stone facade /demolish the remainder of the structure with development potential of 97,200 sf	\$6,320,000 less extraordinary cost to retain facade
3	Complete demolition with development potential of 138,888 sf	\$9,000,000

The decision of which development option to select, if any, is definitely a decision that requires the *engagement of the entire congregation*. This is one of the major goals of the Year of Conversation (more on this below). Based on the research carried out by John Gunn our treasurer and by the Site Development Task Group as well as initial feedback from church members in the first rounds of congregational consultations, the following *tentative* assumptions are beginning to emerge:

- There is some openness in the congregation to development option one, especially if such a development protects the sanctuary for future use.
- There is a good deal of resistance in the congregation to the demolition of the sanctuary.
- It is unlikely that development option 1 alone would generate enough revenue to meet our sustainability needs if the current restrictions on developing our in the draft Centre Plan of HRM were to hold.

As a result of these emerging perceptions, council has tasked leadership, with Robbie Shaw taking the lead, to engage HRM in a conversation about an alteration to Centre Plan or a development proposal with an exemption.

Depending on the outcomes of these conversations, and feedback from the congregation in a series of multiple focus groups in September, St. Andrew's Council may or may not be in a position this fall to consider a Request for Proposals on one of the development options.

The Centre for Social and Spiritual Innovation (SASI)

There is a broad understanding within St. Andrew's that SASI is a centrepiece of our mission going forward, what some folks don't know however is that SASI is also *designed to contribute to solving our sustainability challenges*.

This is how SASI has come into being. Following our re-missioning process in 2017, it became very clear that being a place of intersection – for people of different faiths, races, and cultures and people working on a range of social justice initiatives – has become a core part of St. Andrew's DNA. It also became clear that St. Andrew's had been pursuing the two tasks of advancing our mission and improving our sustainability situation (perhaps through property development) on parallel paths that rarely intersected.

Council decided to move forward in a way that brought these two tasks into greater intersection and, hopefully, mutual reinforcement. To assist us we engaged the social enterprise Common Good Solutions for an extended piece of research. This research was supported by a grant from the United Church of Canada. The research produced several options for moving forward with our newly-identified mission priorities and with renewal of the building in a way that both generated revenue and advanced our mission goals.

To help evaluate these options Common Good Solutions helped us to with a consultation process with about 50 community organizations and faith groups. What emerged was a proposal to create the Centre for Social and Spiritual Innovation. The plan for this centre has two core components:

1. A hub space for diverse faith groups and social justice organizations. We see this hub as including these elements: office space for co-locating partners and faith groups; a common work space; gathering spaces for interaction and cross fertilization; a number of rooms available for spiritual practices like prayer, meditation, yoga, or reiki; availability of the sanctuary for large gatherings, musical and dramatic performances; and multi-media presentations. This hub space will require redevelopment of a portion of our property.
2. The Transformational Leadership Initiative (TLI). This initiative is forming a network of emerging leaders and changemakers from communities and sectors that have been historically isolated from each other in Nova Scotia: African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw, rural/urban, immigrant, refugee, European descent, LGBTQ, etc. Working with Indigenous and African Nova Scotian partners and with Windhorse Farm TLI gathers emergent leaders from these communities for an initial four-day retreat process, with emphasis on resilience,

spiritual and mindfulness practice, and the formation of support networks. TLI then nurtures these networks through gatherings and online connection. The TLI is already well underway with the support of a very generous grant from the United Church of Canada.

This proposal was then workshopped with congregation members in a series of focus groups and congregational consultations. There were many questions asked and issues identified, the overall response was highly positive.

As for helping with the sustainability equation, Component 2, the TLI, is not seen as a net revenue generator, but it is expanding our network of relationships in a way that helps us to identify potential partners for component 1. It is hoped that Component 1 will generate revenue in the following ways:

- Co-locating partner organizations (other faith groups, social enterprises, social justice oriented NGOs, arts organizations) will move into a redeveloped space at St. Andrew's/SASI, will occupy office space and will share use of the renewed sanctuary, spiritual practice spaces, and the hub work space and will pay rent for this use.
- Other partners will rent hub work space, meeting space, the sanctuary space, and spiritual practice spaces.

It is also hoped that both components of SASI will attract grant money from foundations and donations from philanthropic sources. Initial responses to SASI and, especially, the TLI's early success have been encouraging in this regard.

Currently SASI is led by a steering group of volunteers made up for St. Andrew's members, plus representatives of Muslim, Buddhist, and Indigenous communities. Russ Daye and Robbie Shaw also sit on the steering group.

Of course, there are many issues to be worked out as SASI moves forward:

- What will be the formal relationship between St. Andrew's and SASI, both in terms of mission and use of property.
- Under which model should SASI be incorporated.
- Who will be the co-locating partners.
- What relationships should it develop with funders like governments, private foundations, and philanthropists.
- What will be the staffing model of SASI and will any staff be shared with St. Andrew's

Answers to many of these questions will depend on St. Andrew's development conversation.

The Year of Conversation

At the last annual general meeting of St. Andrew's it was acknowledged that the congregation needs to go through an extended period of deep conversation and sharing of information to best make decisions about how to move forward on all of the opportunities and challenges and ventures mentioned in this document.

To date the following consultations/conversations have taken place:

- The AGM and a consultation to begin conversation before the AGM.
- A Sunday morning extended worship and consultation with the whole church community.
- A series of smaller consultations open to the whole congregation in early summer.

Currently there is a steering team for the Year of Consultation made up of council members and other lay leaders and all three ministers. They are working on a series of focus groups to take place in September. Some of these will be open to everyone and some will have targeted invitations based on demographic groupings or skill sets. Based on feedback gained in these consultations, the steering team will be making recommendations to Council on steps forward on St. Andrew's array of initiatives.

Our hope is that all members of the St Andrew's will participate in these focus groups and the further consultations that will be designed for later in the fall.

Governance

Here are some answers to FAQs related to governance at St. Andrew's.

Who Owns Our Church Property

The church property is owned by the United Church of Canada and held in trust by the Trustees for St. Andrew's. The UCC's Regional Council is tasked with making decisions on behalf of the UCC on congregational property matters.

Who Makes Final Decisions on Church and Property Matters

The congregation as a whole makes decisions on 'spiritual' matters like the hiring of ministers or the changes to marriage policy to include same sex marriage. The St. Andrew's Church Council makes decisions on matters of administration, finances, and property but its history has been to consult widely with the congregation (and perhaps even call for a congregational vote) on matters of greatest importance. That continues to be the disposition of council. The Trustees make decisions on property held in trust like the land and physical property and endowments, but the Trustees understand that they are to take guidance from Council.

Who Sits on Council and What is the Executive?

Council is made up of an elected Chairperson, an elected Vice-Chairperson (incoming chair) and the immediate Past-Chairperson as well as the church Treasurer and the Chairpersons of various committees like the Trustees, Worship and Music, or Social Action. Members at large are also elected at AGMs and the ministers and Business Manager sit on council in an ex-officio capacity.

The Executive is made up of the three Chairpersons (past, current, incoming), the treasurer, the ministers, and the church secretary. Here staff are also ex-officio (no voting privileges). Any significant decisions made by executive are understood to be recommendations to council for approval at the following meeting of the full council.

Who Can Vote at Congregational Meetings

Only full members can vote but those members can pass a motion extending voting privileges to adherents except on certain matters.