

St. Philip's Church, Envisioning Discussion Paper

Since Stuart's arrival as Rector, you've probably heard talk about a 'vision' for St Philips? So, what is going on? This 'envisioning' paper intends to flesh out what a possible vision for St Philip's might look like moving forward...

Dunbar is a thriving community. According to the last census 45% of Dunbarites are under the age of 40, 80% are under the age of 64 and over the last 10 years the number of families in Dunbar has increased to over 6000! Despite our community being largely unchurched, a 'West Coast' spirituality exists, people see themselves as spiritually aware and socially active. To use a biblical analogy, the harvest is ripe!

A new model of church

Our challenge is to engage a new model of church to serve our Dunbar community. God is always at work in our community, we need to 'partner' with God and all those who share God's values of love, justice and reconciliation. This new model is based on mission and engagement, that builds on our tradition of being open and welcoming. What is proposed is to reimagine ourselves as an Anglican church that is also a Centre for Spirituality and Social Action. So, what will this look like? Let's look at four key areas; Worship, Social Action, Spirituality and Community Engagement.

Worship

In addition to the three wonderful services that we currently provide, we would also like us to start three additional services, to serve our community's needs.

1. Messy church - aimed at parents of young children, messy church has become a staple for mission and evangelism. While the children play and do activities, parents come together to find friendship, form community, and discuss faith.

2. Soul Space - aimed at those who would call themselves spiritual, but not religious - this 'service' draws inspiration from a wide range of spiritual practices, (Christian meditation, mindfulness, etc)! Stuart has done similar things successfully before and feels it would work well in our context. This would happen on Sunday evenings each month alternating with...

3. The Iona Service – The spirituality and worship of the Iona Community is based on social justice and care for the environment. Marilyn Hames has agreed to help facilitate this service in the future...yey!

Social Action

Part of what we do already, it would make sense to make social action the focal point of our discipleship as a church community. We propose exploring three areas of engagement.

1. Just Faith – a regular study group that will engage us in Christian discipleship focused on issues of Justice, Non-Violent Practice and Social Action. Each program lasts for eight weeks, the first, 'Living Compassionately - Caring for the Poor, will form the basis of our Lent reflection. Two further study programs, 'Living Justly - Caring for Each Other and 'Living Simply - Caring for the Earth', will follow in the summer term and in the fall.

2. Truth and Reconciliation - Meaningful engagement with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations is an essential part of us committing to be a good neighbour to our indigenous brothers and sisters. Some of us have already taken part in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise and we plan to do it again later in the year, so that more people can take part too. The Anglican Church of Canada is fully committed to this process, and we need to take the lead within our community.

3. Outreach – We currently support a large number of charities - local, national, and international. If we partnered with a handful of charities, we could engage them in a more meaningful relationship, one which would not only transform them, but also transform us.

Spirituality

St Philips is ideally placed to facilitate a spiritual search for those within our parish. We propose three areas of engagement.

- 1. Music Options** - To expand our music programme to attract a wider audience. Michael is currently exploring this and hopes to bring flamenco and folk music to St. Philips very soon!
- 2. The Labyrinth and other spiritual practices** - With a re-ordered church, we could provide space for more people to experience spiritual practices such as our labyrinth on a regular basis!
- 3. Spirituality and the Arts** - We have many talented people in St. Philips who are involved in the arts and culture - artists, potters, writers, actors, cultural attaché, who, if given the resources and the appropriate space would love to offer their talents to help others engage and explore their spirituality.

Community Engagement

We could take more of a lead in our community. In partnership with other groups such as the Dunbar Residents Association and the Dunbar Business Association, Stuart is keen for us to initiate a 'Dunbar Community Leaders Forum' which would help build community, increase social cohesion, empower our community in decision making and be a strong voice to advocate for our community.

Repair, Renew, Reorder

Our most prized asset is our church, but it is only used for 1½ hours a week! In order to achieve this vision, we need a flexible church space. The proposal is to replace the pews with high-quality, comfortable and stackable chairs. Derek Simpkins has researched and sourced the two chairs you will see in church. These chairs are used in St. Paul's Cathedral and many other cathedrals and churches. They are comfortable, durable and they stack very easily - 40 of these chairs stack just 4 feet high! Replacing the pews for these chairs will allow us to, not only put on our usual Sunday Services, but allow us to introduce new forms of worship, as well as expand our music and art programs.

Things to consider?

- We would need to hire another priest to work alongside Stuart, whose focus would be on Community Development and Mission.
- Our Director of Music post may need to become full-time.
- New chairs are expensive, but so is renovating our current pews.

Conclusion

All food for thought! So what next? Prior to the Vestry meeting we will be facilitating two workshops, one on Sunday 10th Feb after the 10 o'clock service and one in the evening of the 13th Feb. During both workshops we will all have the opportunity to question and discuss the merits of this proposed vision for St Philips. After all, this is your church and none of this will happen unless you feel that it is the right direction of travel! So, for now, think and pray about what is proposed and bring your questions and thoughts to one of the workshops. What is important is that we all feel part of the vision together. Love and prayers,

The Rector and Wardens of St Philips.