



St. Matthew's Anglican Church  
**Strategic Plan**  
Winter 2020-2022



## *A Note from Rev. Stephen+*

In its recent history, St. Matthew's has expressed a strong desire to build on the legacy of 70 years of vibrant ministry in Central Etobicoke. Various changes have been implemented in worship expression, faith formation, and outreach initiatives, with the intent of carrying on God's Kingdom work for at least another 70 years. Meeting the diverse needs present in our current congregation is no small task; it involves worship and Christian education that invite maximum participation from our young people, while also respecting the traditional means that have nurtured our senior members for decades. We have worked diligently at striking this balance, but also realize that in doing so, we have often neglected to move outside our walls and into our community to reach those who have never darkened our doors or heard Christ's Gospel of Hope. Recent modest successes have given us hope, hope that needs to inspire us to act now as we face a precarious future given our aging demographics and the demographics of the surrounding community.

This is not the first time in our 70-year history that the people of St Matthews have been required to take a leap of faith, to reach for goals that appear out of reach, in order to meet a challenging future head on. The original building of the church, the decision to significantly alter the building to make it physically accessible to all, the development of lay ministries, and the continued evolution of our worship space all serve as examples and reminders of what is possible for God's people when they act courageously and faithfully in step with God's mission.

So once again, the people of St Matthew's need to take bold action to meet the changing needs of our time and community. The structure of our strategic plan follows a spiritual growth pattern common among many disciples of Jesus Christ. For most, **'belonging'** occurs before **'believing.'** That is, most of us came to faith by first becoming part of a faith community that was welcoming, nurturing, and offered opportunities for us to explore faith questions. **'Believing'** occurs when one engages in relevant Christian formation ministries, be they Bible Study, Discussion Groups, Christian Basics courses, Sunday worship, or the like. As we mature in our walk with Jesus, we learn how to **'behave'** as Christ-followers. This includes growing in the fruits of the Spirit through practicing the spiritual disciplines, finding our own particular ministries, being faithful in stewardship, and reaching out to others, proclaiming the gospel in word and deed.

As we grow in Christ, we are graced with a deeper love not only for our Lord and our faith family, but for the wider community around us. We look for practical ways to love our neighbours individually, and we engage in larger, unified projects aimed at meeting the needs of the people God has called us to serve.

In the pages to follow we will outline what this can practically look like for our St. Matthew's family over the next three years. Grace & peace be with us all!

*Steph +*

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“*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*”

*~Matthew 28:19*



# Mission & Vision

## Mission Motto

“Sharing Jesus’ Love”

## Purpose Statement

The Parish of St. Matthew’s, Islington exists to ‘share Jesus’ love’ as a welcoming, inclusive, and diverse community where individuals and families grow in their knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, and learn how to practice their faith at home and in the world, for the purposes of partnering with Christ in growing God’s Kingdom in Central Etobicoke.

## Vision

To be a growing, diverse Christ-formed faith community that loves and respects one another and creatively and compassionately loves our neighbor. We strive to offer inspiring worship, engaging faith-forming ministries, and meaningful social justice initiatives. We aspire to be a church that is known for its vibrant and practical faith and is both visible and integral to the well-being of our neighbourhood.

# Goals

Individual Faith Journey: Belonging > Believing > Behaving



***“Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith.  
Be courageous. Be strong.  
And do everything with love.”***

*~ 1 Cor 16:13-14*

We are crafting our 3 Goals with the belief that our faith community’s journey mirrors an individual’s spiritual path. None of the three goals can stand alone. They feed one another because the community is a living, breathing organism that exists and grows through symbiosis.

- **Belonging:** Increase in church membership and affiliation with each one feeling deeply engaged, strongly connected, and a personal ownership for the fulfillment of St. Matthew’s vision.
- **Believing:** All members are nurtured in their faith formation as an ongoing part of church community life. Each member will experience a personal challenge for following Jesus according to their unique situation.
- **Behaving:** St. Matthew’s aspires to grow in our love, ministry, and witness to Jesus Christ evident in growth in stewardship (including volunteerism) and leads at least one major outreach project that addresses an urgent community need.



## (1) BELONGING

***“Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” ~Romans 15:7***

Most churches believe themselves to be warm and welcoming faith communities. Sadly, this opinion is not always shared by those who visit! Crucial to effective gospel ministry is cultivating a genuinely hospitable, loving, and caring environment where people at every stage of their faith journeys may hear and experience the love of Jesus Christ.

For more than 70 years St. Matthew’s has achieved varying levels of success in being an open and loving faith community that welcomes newcomers and provides opportunities for all to grow in their faith lives. We desire growth – to see more and more people taking steps forward in their commitment to Jesus Christ – but in order to bear this fruit we know we must intentionally develop welcoming ministries, continue to experiment with a variety of worship experiences, and extend our presence beyond our church walls.

**We believe we can become a growing Anglican community within Etobicoke by being more inviting and accessible with our worship and more relevant in our programs. We will measure this in the following ways:**

### **Attendance:**

- Increasing our Average Weekly Attendance by 20% over 3 years. This is roughly equal to 6% growth for each of the next 3 years.
- Including all worship “touchpoints” in the attendance measure. (Currently this includes 3 services on Sunday morning, one midweek service, regular Messy church

events, and soon it will include St. Matthew's Table events. We will also add home communion and communion services in retirement homes as worship occasions. Also, we continue to explore new worshipful experiences in the community, such as "Ashes to Go".

- Continually evolving the worship offerings in format, location and timing to keep reaching new people and existing members more frequently.
- Developing more unique, needs-based worship occasions, such as Blue Christmas services and the Blessing of Pets.

By offering more options for worship, we expect an increase in people attending weekly worship, with some attending more than one worship service per week. We also expect to attract and engage new people by providing more ways for them to enter into worship. (Some of these worship touchpoints may not be at the church but in a pub, park, or in partnership with other Anglican churches.)

## Proposed "Belonging" Actions in Year 1:

- Develop a 'Welcoming Ministry' that helps newcomers connect with current membership. This ministry would also include helping long-time parishioners, whether they be weekly or occasional attenders, become more engaged in parish life through the development of personal relationships.
  - The first step will be to create a more detailed database of members that identifies the attendance level, e.g. regular, occasional, lapsed, shut-in and so on. This will let us customize communication and contacts with each segment of members.
  - We will build on the resources provided by the Growing Healthy Stewards Program and seek to meet the needs of our specific newcomers.
- Improve our visuals/images in the gathering areas of the church
  - As a first step, we will explore the creation of a testimonial board featuring photos and expressions of faith by various parish members.

To meet our goal and take the actions suggested above, we need to broadly engage all members of our parish in some active way. We will look for more ways to empower our children and youth to lead the way in showing us how we might grow in our hospitality. We will invite all members to reflect on these goals and choose where they might contribute to welcome and engage with others. We recognize this will require some new behaviours for almost everyone!



## (2) BELIEVING

***“Continue to live your lives in Christ, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”***  
~ Colossians 2:6-7

This goal echoes the Westminster Shorter Catechism that recognizes that our primary purpose is to love and know God and ‘enjoy’ God forever. Encountering the gospel of life in Jesus Christ in word and action is life changing. As disciples of Christ, we know that each of us is called to grow in our faith. St. Matthew’s aspires to be a faith community that provides a myriad of opportunities for its members and newcomers to be challenged and encouraged in their spiritual lives. We live in a tumultuous world and face unique personal challenges as we journey through life. Given the shifting sands so often beneath our feet, we are constantly needing new ways to understand God’s purpose for us individually and collectively. We need to meet together to discuss our needs, share our experiences, and study Scripture together to find the Spirit’s leading forward. *In creating this strategic plan, we have placed a great emphasis on, and set high expectations on ourselves for, pursuing faith formation.*

**Formation Goal:** 75% of our congregation (by Average Weekly Attendance) participates in at least one formation program or event per year.

## Proposed Actions to meet these goals in Year 1:

- We will offer programs of Christian Formation and issue-based learning events and programs which present Christian perspectives on topical issues. These may be parish-based or Area-based events and programs.
- We will host the Alpha program (e.g. with the Bishop)
- Continued evolution of faith formation groups (Bible studies/book studies/teaching the spiritual disciplines)
- Offer leadership learning opportunities, with particular emphasis on empowering our children and youth to take on larger roles in parish life.
- Offer time-defined programs so people can sign up without a perpetual commitment
- Offer opportunities for people to celebrate faith progression as part of public worship. This includes baptism and confirmation rites and other renewal and testimonial expressions.
- Share our faith stories at least quarterly in worship settings
- Provide opportunities for St. Matthew's (and the community around us) to ask questions about specific matters of faith and Christianity. This feedback will determine the development of at least two annual initiatives that tackle these issues from a Christian perspective (e.g. a sermon series or a community event hosted at St. Matthew's).



*“... let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven”*

*~Matthew 5:16*

*“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.”*

*~Galatians 6:9*

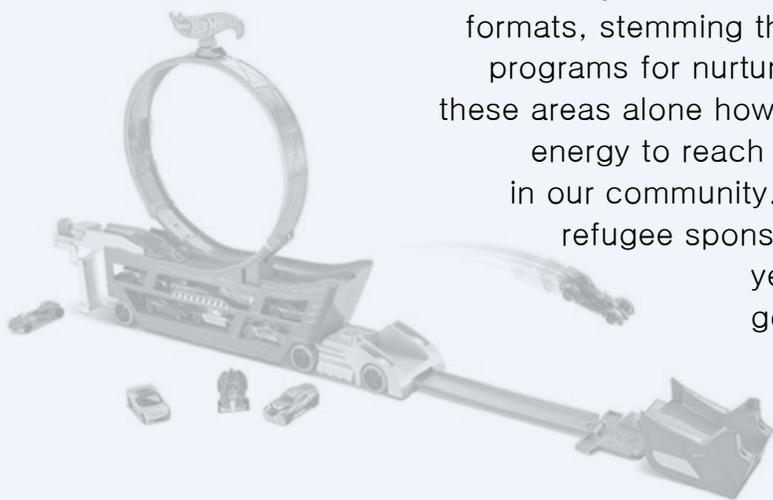


## (3) BEHAVING

This goal adds a critical imperative to the faith journey – where the ‘rubber hits the road’ so to speak. As one encounters the Spirit of the Risen Christ in a welcoming, loving faith community, one is invited into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Growing in Christ results in manifesting the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.), becoming faithful stewards of God’s gifts, and embracing our own unique ministries. Additionally, we believe it is not sufficient to invite others into a worshiping community as an end goal. **We want to use this community as a platform from which we can be Christ in the world, to serve the needs of others whom God calls us to love.**

The image that came to us as we discussed this dynamic was that of a ‘Hot Wheels’ toy car track. We are like the car that starts out on the track (Belonging), is energized by exciting faith growth (pictured as the loop on the track), and then propelled forward into dynamic ministry and mission.

In recent years we have made notable progress with new worship formats, stemming the decline in membership and expanding the programs for nurturing faith. We could easily keep our focus on these areas alone however we feel our base is strong and we have energy to reach out to address urgent and compelling needs in our community. We have had success with Out of the Cold, refugee sponsorship and various mission projects over the years. We want to keep growing in mission by going into our communities to listen and learn about people’s lives: their hopes, goals, and needs.



As a first step, we must invest in the listening and exploration of community needs before we can decide where to focus our energies. We also need to find the right partners who can work with us to make the kind of difference in the world that we seek. Equally important is the inclusion of all members in some form of service and mission. We are particularly mindful of the social conscience of our young people and we will provide opportunities for them to help show us the way forward. We recognize that each and every one of us has some talent that can be used to grow the Kingdom of God. “Finding Your Ministry” will be a key component of this strategic goal.

## Possible Issues to Address

- **Ministry with seniors to reduce social isolation.** Within our own membership we know that aging can reduce mobility and autonomy in ways that cause isolation and a shrinking of social contact. Studies have shown this to be a chronic problem in many parts of the world with various governments taking actions to reduce social isolation. Given our own demographics and the nature of life in the mega city we sense that we might be called to address this need.
- **Social and community development of youth.** Our area is one of the poorest served areas in the GTA for community spaces and youth programs. It is also an area of relatively high child poverty and gang crime.
- With the aid of our **St. Matthew’s Indigenous Issues Working Group** we will continue to work on the goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Report within the parish and seek opportunities to share this learning with our neighbours.

## Action

We don’t yet know what God is calling us to do. We need to enter a purposeful time of investigation and discernment before presenting a plan to the membership of St. Matthew’s. We will:

- Form a Mission Task Force to undertake a community needs assessment, and congregational asset mapping.
- Make a recommendation to the congregation of their “Big Behaving Goal” by June 2020.
- Create a compelling strategic plan for operationalizing the goal.
- Start at least two projects by June 2021; one major and one minor.
- Continue to evolve and develop our Social Media presence as a way to attract and inform people regarding all the programs and activities of the parish.

## Ideas for First Phase Learning Projects

- Pilot a PD day program for children in our church. We know that many lower income parents struggle to find suitable childcare for these days. We have a facility for such a program, and this could address a need for young families and children in our neighbourhood.
- Be present as congregational reps at community consultations and events.
- Assess current ministries offered to seniors and determine how this ministry can be effective both inside and outside the parish.

## Stewardship

One of the first stages of discernment is to take stock of our gifts and assets so that we might match these with the needs of the community. We do have valuable space, great music offerings, and a diverse network of community workers who rent our facilities. Assessing the match between needs and capabilities is part of the work ahead for those who take on the discernment of needs and possibilities over the next 12 months.

Part of engagement and belonging is taking responsibility for the sustainable health of the church community. This means being responsible for the finances and the work required to create the worship experiences and programs that nurture us all. We will measure deeper stewardship in the following ways:

- We will increase the number of regular givers by 2% per year for each of 3 years. (This recognizes that we need more givers in total as well as increased average amounts per giver to meet our financial goals.)
- We will increase our givings and other income to balance our operational budget
  - In year I, our goal will be to stabilize givings at the current level. In years II and III our goal will be 5% annual increases.
  - We will explore specific targets for each type of giver: PAG, offering envelopes, special donations, and irregular contributors.
- We will increase our legacy pledges by improving our communication of Legacy Giving and the variety of ways one may contribute to these funds before death.
- We will increase the talent-based giving of parishioners by 10% each year as measured by the % of parishioners who are active in programs and church operations.

# Proposed action to meet these stewardship goals during year one

- Continue the Growing Healthy Stewards program, including the relay
- Investigate fundraising annually for ‘ministry project funding’ to be done in the parish and community.
- Develop 3 healthy funding streams; regular giving, ministry project funding, legacy giving.

***“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God’s purpose.”***

*~Romans 8:28*

# Implementation Timeline

*(First 12 to 18 months)*

## The Belonging Goal: Building a Community of the Kingdom

1. Increasing our Average Weekly Attendance (AWA) by 20% over 3 years. This is roughly equal to 6% growth for each of the next 3 years.

Task	Start Date	Team
Begin tracking all worship touchpoints	September 2019	Rector, Admin
Assess AWA Progress	March 2020	Rector, Admin

2. Re-Form a Worship Committee to develop our current worship format and experiment with one new form of worship per year over the three years. To increase participation, we will hold open ‘Town Hall’ sessions in the Parlour twice a year (Fall & Spring) to assess our progress and make recommendations to new worship expressions.

Task	Start Date	Team
Hold Worship Town Hall	Fall 2019	Rector
Hold Worship Town Hall	Spring 2020	Rector

- Intentionally reconnect with people who are not currently regular attenders (attend worship less than once per month)

Task	Start Date	Team
Develop detailed parishioner database	Fall 2019	Admin, Hospitality
Contact lapsed members	November 2019	Rector, Hospitality

- Initiate a welcoming ministry for newcomers with intentional peer-to-peer relationship building

Task	Start Date	Team
Assess current welcoming ministry	Fall 2019	Growing Healthy Stewards (GHS)
Implement recommendations	Christmas 2019	GHS, Welcoming Ministry Team (WMT)

- Develop age-appropriate fellowship opportunities to strengthen community

- Improve our visuals/images in the gathering areas of the church

Task	Start Date	Team
Assess appearance of entrances & gathering spaces	Fall 2019	Wardens & Clergy (W&C), WMT
Create 'Faith at Work' picture boards with Testimonials	Fall 2019	W&C, Disc Assoc (DA)
Develop plan to enhance visuals in key areas & begin implementation	January 2020	W&C, DA, WMT
Complete enhancements	January 2020	W&C, DA, WMT

## The Believing Goal: Forming a Kingdom Community

1. 75% of our congregation (by Average Weekly Attendance) to participate in at least 1 formation program or event per year.
2. Offer time-defined teaching series regularly that includes feedback to determine growth & new offerings:

Task	Start Date	Team
Host Alpha program	Fall 2019	Alpha Team
3-week Alpha follow-up program	Winter 2020	Alpha, MT
Lenten Series	March 2020	Rector
Christianity 101	May 2020	DA
Create at least one new Bible study group	Winter 2020	MT
Create feedback mechanism for sermons & teaching series	Fall 2019	MT

3. Promote spiritual growth through encouraging faith-sharing.

Task	Start Date	Team
Provide opportunity for faith-sharing (Picture board, Matt's Media, during Worship, etc.)	Fall 2019 & ongoing	Ministry Team (MT)

## The Behaving Goal: Living God's Kingdom

1. Increase ministry involvement throughout the parish so that at least 75% of our membership can readily identify their unique ministry in the parish
2. Improving our finances (lead by the ongoing work of the Growing Health Stewards Team and Clergy & Warden Team)
  - a. We will increase the number of regular givers by 2% per year for each of 3 years.
  - b. In year I, our goal will be to stabilize givings at the current level. In years II and III our goal will be 5% annual increases.
  - c. Develop 3 healthy funding streams: regular giving, ministry project funding, legacy giving.

3. Form Mission Task Force (MTF) to perform a community needs assessment, congregational asset mapping, for the purposes of developing new, effective outreach initiatives.

Task	Start Date	Team
Form MTF	Fall 2019	DA
Complete needs assessment with recommendations for major outreach	June 2020	MTF
Complete Mission Action Plan for operationalizing the goal	Fall 2020	MTF
Start at least two new outreach projects (1 major, 1 minor)	June 2021	MTF
Continue to evolve social media presence	Fall 2019 & ongoing	DA

## Conclusion

For more than 70 years, St. Matthew's has been a centre of faith formation and compassionate care in Central Etobicoke. The strategic plan as presented is not an exhaustive description of all the ministry and activity of our parish. It sets out key goals and objectives that we believe need to be a priority over the next three years. There is room in the plan for adjustments and continued evolution of our priorities, with key work assigned to the Mission Task Force to suggest ways we can more effectively reach out to our community. **But the success of this plan will depend solely on the degree to which each member of our parish family takes ownership over its goals and objectives.**

Please ask yourself: What one or two things gets you excited about this plan? What needs to happen for it to be successful? What part you can play in ensuring its success? Would you pass this plan along to others in the parish and discuss how you can get involved?

Together, let us move boldly into God's future for our parish!

*Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.*

~Ephesians 3:20,21

**BELONG.  
BELIEVE.  
BEHAVE.**





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Appendix

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE AND OFFERTORY GIVINGS  
2009 TO PRESENT

YEAR	AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	OFFERTORY GIVINGS
2009	185	165	\$272,308.00
2010	123	141	\$262,728.00
2011	131	158	\$257,956.00
2012	121	141	\$243,577.00
2013	119	136	\$218,756.00
2014	131	149	\$243,072.00
2015	125	140	\$220,701.00
2016	113	140	\$224,935.00
2017	105	129	\$215,677.00
2018	90	118	\$216,398.00

