

Problem: Big Picture, Christianity

Western society has moved from an obligation and duty-based worldview to a choice and preference-based worldview. This shift has happened over the last hundred years in Western culture.

In the midst of this move, there has been a crisis of legitimacy - a loss of trust in the Christian church. Our faith tradition no longer holds 'pride of place' in current culture. This is because it has failed to meet the needs of people in a very real way and made large missteps in common culture, particularly in the last century.

The result is that people no longer feel that the church cares about the important challenges of our time - economic disparities, environmental uncertainty, increasing violence, both domestic and societal, and near pandemic mental illness.

In the midst of this public humbling, perhaps out of fear for its future, the church has forgotten that it does not serve itself but the vulnerable, the maligned, and those pushed to the margins of society - aka Jesus' friends and family.

Our failure to recognize this, in combination with the increasingly overwhelming needs before us, has resulted in the abdication of our original calling to be 'People of the Way', the way, being the way of love as lived out by Jesus of Nazareth. Instead of facing outwards towards the community to serve, the church has turned inward thinking only of its own survival.

Problem: Local Picture, in the Shelburne/Primrose Community

Shelburne is the fastest growing community in Ontario.
It has the highest level of poverty in Dufferin County.
Addiction to drugs and alcohol is commonplace.
Over this last summer there were six local youth suicides in our immediate vicinity of which we are aware, and doubtless more.
The racial/religious demographics are changing so radically, the long-standing white, protestant farming community is having trouble adjusting.
There is racially instigated violence in the local high school.
In the local elementary school, illiteracy is on the rise.

Problem: Specifically, Within Our Churches

There is a long history of focus on Sunday morning service as a measure of the wellness of the church community.
Attendance is dwindling as a long-time members die, or move to be close to their children, or into nursing homes where they watch Sunday service on television.
As the financial model for church support has long been based on tithing - tied into Sunday morning service - the financial model no longer works.

Problem We Wish to Address:

Our churches no longer serve in the traditional role of offering sanctuary, compassionate care and spiritual nourishment to the community at large. They are disconnected in a very real way from the staggering problems that face the communities in which they are situated. Even as they wish to serve the greater good, they do not have the skills, connections or financial or Human Resources to do so.

Solutions: Big Picture, Christianity

The teachings of Jesus on non-violent revolution, income disparity, the importance of understanding the belovedness of each person on this earth has never faltered in its wisdom.

If we can leave the era of dogma and doctrine behind and engage at last with the ‘deep magic’ of Jesus’ offerings and access the messianic spirit that enables all of us to render service to the world, we will have much to offer.

The end of Christendom means, hopefully, the end of theology of triumphalism, and the entering of the theology of the cross, where we stay faithful to our love of the divine, and attentive to what we are asked to do in our little place in this world, serving, just where we are, with what we have.

Solutions: Locally, Within Our Churches

There are those who do look outward.

They understand the digital world and the modern context in which culture are exists.

They love the ethics of Christianity and recognize that it has a place to play on the world stage.

They understand that the local church must be reimagined in order to take part in the larger conversations concerning humanity at the same time it serves the local and immediate concerns of the community.

They have energy, expertise in a wide variety of areas and see partnership with others not only as desirable but as an exciting, creative prospect.

Solutions: Within Our Immediate Community and Beyond Through Digital Technology

Within the immediate communities of the church are people imagining creative solutions to problems of wellness as well as creative opportunities in the arts, and enlightened education interfaith dialogue. They are seeking out a place to gather and offer their solutions.

In the larger world the digital opportunities are endless, as is the array of programs being developed worldwide that desire, as we do, to serve the larger good with courage, compassion, grace and creativity.

They are looking for places to connect.

And so are we.

Our Mission

Our mission is to become a fully implemented community hub providing compassionate care, spiritual nourishment and graced sanctuary. To do so, we will be partnering with all those who, like ourselves, desire to serve the community in a spirit of radical, generous hospitality.

We seek to *engage the spirit* through enlightened education and interfaith gatherings and *nourish the spirit* through creative engagement with a wide variety of art forms.

We desire to offer *compassionate care locally* to the immediate community by companioning with them through the various stages of life and to extend that same care into the wider world through *socially active initiatives* that deem all people to be of infinite value.

Outcomes:

Long Term: Changing Conditions

- The Shelburne Primrose Area will be a model of interfaith tolerance
- Our community will feel more inclusive, cohesive and gentle.
- We will begin to recognize the loving opportunities to give and receive outside of economic exchange and therefore more able to imagine new economies
- We will be part of the shift in humanity that is moving from a domination paradigm to a communal paradigm, where the worth of each person is valued.
- In the larger arena of choosing political leadership and directing economic growth, we will see the importance of including ecology as a major voice at the decision-making table and all aspects of the interconnectedness of all matter, human and otherwise, as part of the equation.
- The idea of a community hub devoted to spiritual wellness will be a respected and beloved concept
- the sustainable practices in the buildings and their inherent beauty will uplift the civic population of the town through visual example
- the community will value the importance of spiritual knowledge and practice and see the centre as a vibrant part of the whole richness of human experience

Midterm: actions (e.g. behaviour, practice, decision-making, policies)

- The community will be able to make more measured compassionated decisions collectively and individually
- People will feel less anxious and have begun to develop spiritual practices that nourish their own personal wellness and shift their behaviours towards one another
- People will live and breathe the life-giving values they have learned through music, art, theatre and other art forms.
- The centre will have developed a new model of financial framework so that it is sustainable and stable.

- The buildings will be as much off the grid as they can be, reflecting sustainable practices and the hospitality that they offer, lovely to look at and beautifully maintained
- People would be able to discern behaviour that is life giving, from that which is destructive to their well-being – and thus the well-being of their children
- People will bring their compassionate gifts and opportunities to the centre to share with others.
- People will begin to see the church as a place where they can go with their needs and troubles, practicing at home some of the things they have learned at various gatherings and workshops

Short Term: learning (e.g. knowledge, awareness, skills, attitudes, opinions, aspirations, confidence, intent, motivation)

- People will experience various kinds of spirituality and will be exposed to a variety of faith traditions in open conversations
- People will experience various art forms that help them understand their own humanity more fully and their relationship with others in a creative way.
- There will be a growing awareness that the church is a place of worth
- We will continue to learn of new partnerships, as we deepen our understanding of the value of those we already have in place.
- There will be a growing awareness of a full mapping of the community to see the specific needs of the community, who is there to offer guidance, and all those who want to participate.
- We will gain knowledge of a wider circle of digitally connected sources of wisdom to be shared with the community and acquire skills in the area of communication/social media
- The buildings will be working one area at a time as they are rebuilt and refurbished to reflect their mission statement and new level of use.
- Those who have been at the church a long time and are wary of change, will have a shift in their thinking and see the values of the partnerships we are establishing.

Activities and Outputs:

Connecting with Other Faiths and Spiritual Leaders in the Community

of people on the completed list of possibilities
 # of phone calls made and conversations had
 # of meetings set up and taken
 # of firm partnerships made
 # number of hours leadership spent on this pursuit
 Amount of money spent on meetings, travel, connections

Connecting with Other Faiths, Spiritual Leaders/Organization online

of people on the completed list of possibilities
 # of phone emails made and communications engaged in
 # of phone meetings set up and taken

- # of firm partnerships made
- # number of hours leadership spent on this pursuit

Offering on Going Worship Services

- # of services on Sunday's
- # of services in the community beyond Sunday
- #. of special spiritual gatherings
- # of people that attend the various services
- # of people that attend the interfaith gatherings, special yearly services, joint services etc.

Finding and Meeting with Other Potential Partnerships

- # of possible connections
- # of researched web sites
- # one on one meetings
- # of files put together on a potential partnership

Forming Partnerships

- # of partnerships actually up and running
- # of partnerships that did not work out for various reasons
- # of gatherings that are in the church every week with various partners
- # of participants in each group outside the church proper

Gathering Knowledge on all our Participants

- # of people who use our facilities
- # of people who come into the church every week for emergency or crisis needs
- Amount of money given out in benevolent fund
- Amount of money in the budget used for various ministries and outreach

Creating a Fully Integrated Communications

- # of forms of communications being covered
- Measured analytics from the website
- Measured analytics from Mail Chimp
- # of mail outs throughout the year with various campaigns or thank you notes
- # of newsletters distributed

On Going Pastoral Work

- # of monthly visits to people's homes by the lead minister
- # of pastoral visits by pastoral teams and church members
- # of funerals, baptisms, weddings, celebrations of life
- # of hospital visits

Finding and/or Hiring Skilled People to Run the Core Hub

- # of resumes
- # of interviews
- # of people we have met with and or contacted personally
- # of people hired

of hours that each person works on this, whether paid for or volunteer

Updating Technology in the Building so that Various Hubs can function

of upgrades we have done

of estimates we have acquired for updates needing to be done

of people we have contacted to consult with

Reworking the Financial Model as Framework

of webinars attended

of people involved in this operation and the # of people they have met with, corresponded with, phoned

of grants that have been considered

of grants that have been applied for

number of grants that have been given

Listing and Organization of All Potential Sources of Income

of regular tithes at the church

of casual givers

of unsolicited gifts

Understanding the amount of money from new sources – Canada Helps for example

of givers and amounts of money given in the last five years

of different fundraisers in the last five years and how much they raised

of people in each age group that give, and how much do they give.

of graphs that will give us a picture of how the money works – and doesn't work

Understanding the Ways People Support the Church

of ways people support the church other than financial

of people who support the church with gifts in kind

Updating Both Buildings from the Ground Up – well that's a big one, but **let's just get a start...**

Putting together the design Work for Reconfiguring the buildings

of meetings that have taken place to work this thing through

of hours spent by the lead people taking this on

and names of design companies approached, designs offered

of people with environmental knowledge we have contacted

Amount of money spent on exploratory figures and designs

Assumptions

- That there is a need for compassionate care and spiritual nourishment in the community
- That people outside the church would be able to overcome their dislike of religion in order to enter the church building if that was where things were being offered

- That people inside the church are able to let go of the fear that keeps them stuck in the “Sunday Morning Mould/Mold”
- That we will be able to ‘soften’ the hard boundaries that define what church is and what church isn’t
- That initiatives connected and partnered with the church proper need not take place inside the church building
- That there are initiatives that will want to partner with current – and future - leadership to work together in a productive way
- That we can learn to be kinder more noble beings than it would currently seem we able to be
- That in their hearts, people desire a richer, more equitable life
- That there are enough people with enough money to share who would like to support the idea of an integrated community hub offering what we are offering: spiritual nourishment and compassionate care
- That we will be able to imagine a new financial model that allows the hub to be sustainable into the future
- That the church can yet be reimagined into something alive and fine and wonderful
- That as long as we are faithful to the vision, the right people and resources will present themselves as we need them.
- That always, God is there to support us, to direct us, to see the work done.
- That Habakkuk is correct to direct our vision to the horizon when he says, *“Look at the nations, and see! Be astonished! Be astounded! For a work is being done in your days that you would not believe if you were told.”* Habakkuk 1:5

Inputs:

Human Resources:

There are two areas where human resources are needed: in Leadership with each of the 8 areas making up the whole of the community hub and in the tighter core that holds the hub together as it expands. These places of leadership could be a combination of paid positions and volunteer positions, full or part time configurations, possible clusters with other churches or entities, in as varied an array of possibilities as could be imagined. Currently we are covering all these areas in a hap hazard way, but this is an area of weakness as we are over extended and do not have all the right skill sets where they should be.

Eight Areas requiring Leadership

- **Engaging the Spirit** - UCC Ordained leadership with skills in interfaith dialogue and communication/partnerships keeps the connection with UCC and their support
- **Nourishing the Spirit** - a person of creative, organizational, production value abilities with experience working in the arts/communication

- **Compassionate Care Within** - a parish nurse would be ideal, as they combine UCC spiritual ordination with practical nursing skills. But it could be a person known for their compassionate nature who desires to serve in this way who is gifted in the ways of the spirit and called to this position.
- **Compassionate Care Extended** - a person with social justice and NGO experience, grant writing knowledge, with skills working in the charitable sector and a nature inclination to work well with others.
- **Space and Spirit** - a person with property management knowledge who can also work with designers/builders and has a sense of beauty, architecture and imagination
- **Communications** - a creative, gifted communicator who can reflect the spiritual vision in all vectors, from print through the full social media range, as well as photography and video
- **Partnerships** - a person gifted with people skills to forge strong alliances with municipal/existing/developing initiatives
- **Finance** - astute financial manager/company/council who can set up an overview of all financial possibilities, someone with business experience, charitable status understanding

Core Group to keep the Community Hub Running Smoothly **** note that these positions might overlap in some of the areas above.

- Office/building manager keeping the building organized and well run
- Custodian cleaning and caring for the building
- Outside person looking after gardening, snow removal, leav
- Bookkeeper/accounting secretary keeping on top of the weekly financial inputs and outputs
- Communications co-ordinator – see above, but person that is on site as well as digitally connected to answer phones and speak to people in person.

Custodian/Hospitality Centre

- All supplies needed to maintain the building inside and out
- All utilities paid and kept

Physical organizational Hub/Office/Centre

- Physical area laid out with desks, computers, working boards that allows the bub to work in a fully integrated way
- All the necessary office supplies, software etc. to do this work

Communications

- Accounts set up with various social media sources

- Outside community board that is digital and can be changed and accessed from anywhere
- Inside board – digital or otherwise – to manage the co-ordination between all the various groups

Financial Resources

- Yearly budgets that run the churches and pay for full time ministerial leadership, upkeep of buildings etc.
- Granting from a wide variety of sources
- Granting from Embracing the Spirit to test out our little ‘church within a church’
- Software program for integrating all the finances
- Money to pay for the leadership and staff
- Money to pay for the on-going expenses of the buildings Bookkeepers/accounting firm/advisory group to help with the big picture switch over in finances

Technology/Equipment

- Three Apple computers that do the bulk of the communications etc. owned by the current minister
- Microphones, overheads, sound systems in the main sanctuary are all needing replacing
- No place to watch movies!!!!
- Needing computer screens/projectors in all the workspaces and potential places for renting

Facilities

- Currently have two churches
- They are both old
- For the Primrose to move successfully into its 145th year of existence it needs to be physically moved. It is a lovely historical building in an area where people value that, but it is filled with mould and the road allowance has encroached so that its .2 acres does not allow for a septic system or small kitchen. The highway will widen soon, then noise will be a problem. The visioning group for Primrose is putting together a vision for the community of moving the historic building to a more suitable location where the building can be reconfigured and rebuilt in order to allow for all the initiatives they would like to entertain.
- The Trinity building is located in downtown Shelburne, walking distance from the local schools, boarding homes, food bank and downtown area and is therefore in many ways well situated, though it is close to the main road. All its heating systems need up grading, ditto the windows. There is no insulation in the part of the building that was done in 1978. The entire building needs a re do. But for the moment it is holding together.
- We have our little You Belong Here room that we are experimenting with. All the new partnerships want to use it.