

**St. Matthews Church**  
**Worship Working Group Report**

**26 November 2017 - Summary**

The following comments were recorded at the worship session in the Chapel:

1. Changes in the parish worship space could create a lot of division within the parish. Any change must be managed carefully with a strong emphasis on regular communication and building support and clear endorsement in the community. The objective, benefit and cost of change initiatives should be clearly articulated.
2. Be prudent in decisions about maintaining tradition and making change. Our tradition has survived; change is uncertain.
3. Our parish should focus on a few well-articulated areas of strength. Our core values should be clear and we shouldn't try to 'do it all'.
4. We should confirm what others outside the parish family see as our strengths or appreciate about St. Matthew's.
5. We should place a high priority on collaboration with parishes, churches or other partners on any aspect of worship, mission, community-building and hospitality or fund/revenue generation. We should articulate anticipated benefits of proposed change.
6. SPP 2.0 should place all reports and notes on the intranet so that readers can appreciate the actual discussion of working groups, now and going forward.
7. In general the idea of more inclusion in worship, music, mission, community, and learning was supported. This needs to be developed as a cross-cutting strategy.
8. There was a discussion about the Rector's authority to change or create new services. There is some discretion here for more contemporary services or services that could appeal to non-churched seekers. The extent of this discretion should be explored.
9. There was an interest in ensuring that traditional worship is maintained as demographically needed, and that in the near term, changes in worship are additive to our existing services.
10. There was an interest in ensuring that existing traditions in worship and choral music are maintained as feasible. The demographic trajectory of the choirs, organ, and organist in terms of sustainability needs to be understood and accepted.
11. The current state of the organ capability is understood to be significantly compromised. An electronic/hybrid solution might be considered as part of the worship space redesign. Removal of carpeting could be an interim measure to improve acoustics.
12. Accessibility should be a consideration in any redesign of worship or other building space. The demographics suggest this will become increasingly important in the next 10-20 years.
13. It was recommended that a change management strategy be adopted that includes charrettes (Trinity Church, Wall Street); regular updates and consultation within the parish on change initiatives that could produce new or changed proposals fairly quickly.

## 28 October 2017 - Details

### Introduction

Meetings were held on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of October. Asha Kerr-Wilson, Cathy Simons, Elizabeth Macmillan, Gregor Sneddon, Judith Maxwell, Mary Glen, Leonard Surges, Rick Trites, and Kevin Flynn attended. Inputs or articles were received from Barb Grisdale, Judith Maxwell, Mary Glen, and Kevin Flynn. This report has been circulated to working group members.

### Background

The WG discussions started with the premise that the parish is open to significant, well considered and implemented change which enhances the parish worship experience.

First, we should consider the strategies for worship identified in the Strategic Plan created through extensive parish consultation:

- Pursue more flexible arrangements to accommodate busy lives and different tastes.
- Consider different service times, orders of service, music, target demographics, to ensure maximum participation.
- Build on our tradition of Anglican choral music, recognizing that our brand is unique among Diocese of Ottawa churches, while being open to evolving and emerging forms of expression.
- Where possible, add to, rather than change, existing practices, recognizing strong value placed on tradition, and the need to grow and maintain the existing congregation.

Second, we should consider the Principles created by the SPP Working Group to help ground discussions in building out strategies and plans.

- The Church is the People of God, We gather around Font, Word, and Table expressing our relationship to God in Jesus Christ, to one another, and our mission to the world in the Holy Spirit.
- Worship and mission are one. Neither are to be “observed”; both are transforming activities. We serve the world when we glorify God and we glorify God when we serve the world. Whether in corporate worship or serving the community, the church building is an important enabler.
- Formation of new Christians and life-long conversion is our primary calling: mission is the first fruit.

- Radical hospitality and relationship building is the means. We always keep the stranger in mind. By welcoming all, meeting people wherever they are at, we engage seekers and develop a sense of belonging.

These strategies and principles will help answer the question “why” when proposals to enhance our worship experience are presented and discussed.

### **Worship Working Group**

At our first meeting each person was asked to describe their best worship experience. Although the experiences seemed very different, there were striking similarities: worship, praise music, and silence can touch us deeply when they work well together and feel authentic. Feeling spiritual presence in worship can evoke feelings of peace and connectedness, a sense strengthened by the community bond of shared worship and mission.

The group brain stormed a number of ideas for enhancing our worship experience. The ideas are listed in Attachment 1. The group received written inputs from Barb Grisdale and Mary Glen, and can be made available upon request to Rick and the authors. To note, the following article may be consulted on preparing for redesign of worship space:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/doing-the-theological-work-before-the-spade-work-designing-worship-space>

In the second meeting we discussed creating a Vision for Worship. Gregor described his vision for worship and offered to draft a description. We also discussed the importance of clearly articulating the “why” of proposed changes in short, medium and longer term actions.

Rev. Gregor’s draft of the Vision for the Worship Space is contained in Attachment 2. Each proposal is preceded by a description of why the change would strengthen our worship and position our community for the long-term. The focus of the vision is on revamping our worship space and building which would in turn enable new worship services, practices and activities to strengthen the community. It is important that we understand and reflect on a Vision, and make changes as needed, so that it can be communicated broadly and specific proposals are supported and accepted.

Like any vision, these goals are ambitious and may not all be achievable. Some of the proposals could be undertaken together, and the resources, sequencing and timing should be carefully assessed. Taken together they represent investments of time and money over many years.

A brief summary of each proposal follows:

- Redesign the Chancel/Nave to bring all worshippers together around Font, Word and Table
- Create a redesigned Font and place between the chancel and narthex so the community can gather there

- Redesign Altar on raised/extended chancel to bring all worshippers closer to celebrate the Eucharist
- Create a single pulpit or lectern so that the proclamation of scripture and preaching are in the same place with good sight line and acoustics
- Research repairs of the organ and piano and redesign the chancel to bring worship music closer to Word, Font and Table and create more flexibility space for concerts
- Research options to improve the flow and flexibility of our worship space (fixed-high sided pews constraining) to bring worshippers more into communal contact and provide for flexible reconfiguration of space
- Design a hospitality space at the rear of the church for parish meals, and to use as meeting and rental space
- Reposition Icons as prayer and art space in the side aisles of the church by removing pews, positioning lighting and creating a walkway for contemplation and prayer
- Modernize the church sound system; add better recording capability for services, events and performances. Update inside and outside building lighting
- Replace wooden entrance doors at the back of the church with glass doors and a more open and welcoming breezeway
- Rejuvenate basement with repairs, new drywall and painting to make it more attractive for the parish and for rentals
- Consider the long-term use and operating costs of the church in moving all church activities and functions onto the main-floor and balcony. Look at more permanent uses of the basement area, including the crypt, as possible enhanced sources of stable revenue

### **Strategy Ideas**

- Using the worship strategies, Principles, and draft Vision as a starting point prepare a 'requirements document' that describes in some detail the worship experience that we want to achieve.
- This document will help us to seek advice and recommendations from experts, for example in architecture and acoustics, and from parishes that have made this kind of change, perhaps over a period of several years.
- Communicate and educate within the parish. Understand the balance needed between tradition and innovation. Adjust to feedback
- Identify short term priorities with medium and longer term proposals that may require more consultation, study or resources.
- Identify and communicate with parish committees, and with interest groups in and outside the parish. Understand and plan for linkages with Learning and Community streams.

### **Next Steps**

- Communicate the draft Vision, perhaps segmented into short-medium-long term proposals, supported by the worship strategies/Principles, and get parish feedback.
- Identify proposals that should be included in the 2018 plan and budget and prepare detailed plan/budget.

Rick Trites for the WG  
28 October 2017

## **Attachment 1**

### **Notes from Working Group Meetings**

#### **Meeting 1, Sharing best worship experiences**

- Being a part of singing “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God” in rounds and a sense of spiritual community
- Being in a church setting which was unconventional (a school) which was warm and welcoming. Where worship, singing, leadership and working seemed to work together. The strength was community worship and working together.
- Being part of a mass choir, the beauty of the music and silence. The beauty of the organ music extending the choral music. The words, the music, the preparation, the tradition. Liturgy and music that complement each other.
- Being part of a church service and experiencing the music and moments of silence. Being part of a Christian rock concert, participation, a shared feeling of sacred presence.
- Shared prayer experience after Alpha in a small dark church setting, sense of shared spiritual presence with communing parishioners, when assisting at the Table and in Communion ministry, alone, being peaceful and praying in a cathedral of tall pines.
- Youth experience in a neo- gothic cathedral, the scale and beauty, the hymns, the culture. Easter Vigil, the diversity of people and culture & language.
- Patronal festival communion in a circle, worked beautifully.

#### **Meeting 1, Brainstorming what best experiences could be like at St. Matthews**

- The community should participate more fully in praise music. The example of the Sanctus Benedictus was given but this idea should be given broad consideration to types of music selected being accessible more broadly to worshippers.
- We should consult experts in architecture, acoustics and perhaps other disciplines with a description of what we want in our worship experience to obtain options on reconfiguration of the 3 church rooms and the balcony, the altar, the font, the pulpit and lectern, the seating, the choir accommodation and the organ. The point is to have a comprehensive view of changes that would enhance our worship before making decisions on some or all.
- Consider the range of possible worship (and other) uses of the rooms and the balcony in the main church. They should be flexible and capable of re-use for different activities like concerts, meetings....
- Consider uniting in one focused space the worship focal points of Altar, Font, Pulpit and lectern.
- Consider how the worship experience can be enhanced to promote a sense of community and fellowship, for example a circle for seating and in communion or building in more laity driven worship participation. By extension the practices should draw in seekers/ non-traditional church goers.

- Consider options for the organ that fit with c. above. Options should recognize that traditional organ music may have a practical lifetime in the future of this parish. This may involve some kind of hybrid solution that can be used for different activities as described above.
- Consider moving the seating of the choir to bring them closer to the centre of the worship experience, and in line with acoustic considerations.
- Both organ console and choir seating should be considered as a part of the overall worship space re-configuration.
- We should consider alternative services and timings like Saturday or other days to recognize busy family lives. Alternatives should consider offerings that don't presume baptism or communion but could attract seekers. This could include Taize or other spiritually inspired services. Offerings could include a stronger family focus such as meals, childcare-crafts and Messy church activities. We should consider service timings and conflicts with kid's sports activities and tournaments.
- We should consider a family survey in the community-parish to get a sense of styles, times, activities that would be appealing to busy families. Youth and families in the parish should be involved in this and ideally lead it.

## **Meeting 2, Ideas on Vision for Worship**

- The Font-Word-Table and clergy-choir-servers- congregation are together in a focused worship space.
- The church building enables worship and mission in terms of sight lines, sound, seating, and flexibility for community and rental uses.
- The choir continues to be open to and explore forms of innovative musical worship, including full community participation. The future-location of the organ is an integral part of this change.
- Be clear why is this is both important and urgent. The example of incremental approach with the Nave Altar could be helpful. If we hold to our Principles then strengthening our worship experience is vital to our future. We need a strategy/plan with the necessary resources to move forward, recognizing it make take several years, but starting in 2018.

**Attachment 2**  
**A Vision for the Worship Space (Draft)**  
**The Reverend Gregor Sneddon**

As the people of God, our worship reflects our identity, the “way we pray is how we believe.” The way we gather and stand before God not only expresses who we are, it shapes us into the people God is calling us to be. Seeking God, Discovering God and assuming a Christian identity is a life long journey of conversion marked by rites of initiation (baptism) and ongoing transfiguration (Eucharist) and the cultivation of an identity whereby we become the story we tell (word). We are to actualize the purpose of creation in becoming the hands and heart of Christ in the world God loves.

We look to these four principles as guideposts to our shared action in becoming the Church, and in how we worship.

1. The Church is the People of God. We gather around Font, Word, and Table.
2. Worship and Mission are one.
3. Formation of new Christians and lifelong conversion is our primary calling: mission is the first fruit.
4. Radical Hospitality and Relationship building is the means.

The following is an exploration of the refurbishment of our worship space (and building) and engagement in our worship in support of these principles and our Strategic Plan themes. This is not an exhaustive list and it is understood that there are short and long term implications and that initiatives will require planning and research. All of them require resources, financial and otherwise, that need to be carefully discerned.

### **The People**

As the People of God, a royal priesthood, we uphold the dignity of all the baptized and look for ways to avoid a hierarchical worship experience and seek as many ways as possible for the gathered to participate in a way that highlights our common identity as the People of God gathered together. We gather *around* font, word and table.

Proposal: The Chancel be redesigned to extend into the nave, with handicapped accessibility in mind as well as the ability to move the organ console and grand piano as well as flexible configurations of choir and presiders. This will also enable the space to be used for concerts and other performances and worship.

### **The Font**

Christians are called to a life of conversion marked by the commitment made in baptism. Baptism marks one’s death and new life and is the beginning of a lifelong relationship and transfiguration. Baptism is the mark of a claimed Christian identity.



The Font, possibly designed for full submersion baptism, should be crafted with beauty and have a central position among the gathered, pointed towards the entrance of the Church, suggesting its initiating function. The entire community should be able to gather around the font and have a clear presence.

Proposal: A beautiful font be designed and placed between the chancel and the narthex.

### **The Altar**

As the baptized, we live into our Christian identity by gathering at the Altar where, together, we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. As such, the attention of the community rests on one another and the altar around which we celebrate and receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

Proposal: An movable altar be designed to rest on the extended chancel which would be a focal gathering point for worship

### **Word**

The Liturgy of the Word is where we proclaim the Word of God in the scriptures. The scriptures are realized in their hearing among the assembly. They are realized in their “*eventness*”. Likewise, the homily or sermon is proclaimed to unpack the scriptures and to connect the Word to our baptism, the world and the transforming participation in the Eucharist.

Proposal: Proclamation of Scripture and preaching be located in the same place. A single lectern or pulpit be designed in a location around which the people gather, with good site lines and acoustics.

### **Music**

Music is a rich part of the tradition of St Matthew’s that serves the people of God in worship. We strive to find a balance between listening to our choir sing beautiful music as well as participatory singing and movement of the whole assembly. St Matthew’s is challenged by the enclosed chancel which limits the acoustic value and volume of the choir. The chancel is carpeted and there is a liberal amount of wood that further restricts the acoustic value and restricts the flexible use of the space. The Organ is in need of significant repair as is the Grand Piano.

St Matthew’s has the potential to serve as a world-class concert venue.

Proposal: The necessary repairs be researched and made to the organ and piano and the redesign of the chancel include the necessary adjustments for a movable console, and grand piano as well as concert flexibility (i.e. positioning of choirs, orchestra, etc.) The worship focus is around the font, word and table and the former sanctuary and high altar is retained, like the font in the baptistery with dignity in memory of the past.

### **Choir**

Particularly central to the music of St Matthew's is its choirs. The Choral tradition of St Matthews is a great treasure and every avenue should be taken to preserve and grow this gift. Like most Anglican communities, St Matthew's is faced with diminishing singers particularly in our mens' and boys' choirs. We find ourselves in a culture that is often 'church-averse' and a limited interest in choral music. Even so, there are now many choirs competing for committed choristers with fewer and fewer people with a background in choral singing. St Matthew's needs to engage this 'market' with an entrepreneurial and creative spirit.

Proposal: A task force is created to explore ongoing initiatives and programs to recruit, grow, and replenish the choirs and make recommendations for its resourcing. Resourcing may include staffing, enhanced communications, community engagement and performances outside of the church, as well as faith development, increased hospitality and ongoing intentional relationship development with choristers and their families.

### **Flow and Flexibility**

The fixed pews at St Matthew's with the high sides prevent flexible use of the worship space, and foster a somewhat private worship experience. Further, we are restricted in our efforts of hospitality with the limitations of creating space. To allow for the exploration of different worship styles in the future, to support our gathering around Font, Word and Table, and make room for activities such as yoga, parish gathering, rentals, dancing, parish meals and hospitality, we will move towards a flexible way to use our space

Proposal: Explore options to allow for a flexible use of our worship space and to further encourage gathering around Font, Word and Table.

### **Hospitality**

St Matthew's currently could not welcome the parish for a common meal or reception. As a concert space and meeting space, access to hospitality equipment and facilities would expand our capacity to offer our space as a revenue source.

Proposal: A hospitality area be designed for the rear of the church

### **Icons, art and prayer**

St Matthew's is home to an astonishingly beautiful collection of icons that are currently not accessible as a means of prayer. We have valuable wall space on the sides of the church that are not used and the side aisles of the church do not offer good site lines for worship and are rarely fully used with the exception of large concerts or events. There is opportunity to make better use of this space and to make available the treasured icons of St Matthew's for their intended purpose.

Proposal: the pews along the two side isles be removed and the icons repositioned with well-designed lighting in the aisles on walls and pillars. The aisles would serve as contemplative

breezeways for prayer and contemplation. This could also serve as seasonal art shows and other exhibitions. Chairs would be available on an as needed basis.

## **Sound and Lighting**

St Matthew's Sound System and technical recording capacity is insufficient. Often people are not heard, or the sound is distorted and garbled. We also miss opportunity to record and video our various events and services. Our lighting system is non-functional for setting and enhancing different experiences of worship or other gatherings including musical performance.

Proposal: Lighting and sound engineers be resourced to design an effective sound system and video system and an adjustable, user friendly light system for the church. This would include lighting of the building at night, inside and out.

## **Entrance**

St Matthew's boasts two beautiful wooden doors that sometimes remind us of a castle entrance. This entrance way and narthex is dark and not reflective of a community proud of its inclusivity and warm welcome.

Proposal: Glass Doors and/or a glass breezeway be designed to replace the front doors.

## **The Basement**

St Matthew's is a busy place, our space being used by a variety of renters as well as our own community. The renovations that occurred some time ago are now showing their age. The basement is in need of some "refreshment." As Mission and Worship are one, our entire space should reflect our intention towards beauty and warm hospitality.

Proposal; The basement have an aesthetic rejuvenation including repair to drywall, painting and upgrading/repair of some facilities.

## **Long Term**

As St Matthew's, like the whole Church grows into the future we must anticipate that our context is changing. The cost of operating a large church building with a declining membership must be considered. Any changes that are made should be undertaken with the understanding of the possibility of moving church functions including rehearsal space, hospitality, meeting rooms and offices onto the main floor. This may include renovations to the area under the balcony and the balcony itself. We also may wish to explore how to take advantage of our main asset, our building, and look to renovating the crypt and our downstairs area to further revenue opportunities, hospitality offerings, and mission.