

MAP Consultation on Adult Faith Formation

The following are the comments collected from our Mission Action Plan consultation on Adult Faith Formation. They have been collated to group comments by the various questions posed in the consultation. They have been edited only to remove personal information.

What are we doing as a parish that is currently deepening your own faith? (From the chat)

- lots
- Bibles and Bagels
- Bible study
- Sermons
- ReVive (pre Covid)
- Middle Ground
- Middle Ground
- Revive
- Middle Ground Book Study
- Worship services
- Hearts and Minds, and Bibles and Bagels
- Welcoming all who wish to attend
- Choir
- Revive
- Messy church / Sunday worship
- gathering tonight....also the children's concert.
- sermons
- Music
- Revive
- Revive
- sermons
- Revive, children's programs
- parish council
- involvement with distant missions
- Community
- parish community
- Revive
- Prayer retreat
- refugee sponsorship
- Zoom church
- Hearing the gospel proclaimed by different friends and others
- encouragement to think beyond just our own church
- Stewardship Team
- Parish newsletter

Question One: What are we doing to help people to become disciples of Jesus and grow in their discipleship?

- First two people started with “lots”
- People get information from the newsletter. But not all things are reported e.g., new students came to our church yet we did not get info on them so that we could not help them get integrated more easily with us.
- But not sure of all things going on in the church so more communication is needed to see what is available. e.g. St Matthews, Bibles and Bagels, crafts. Not everyone’s knows all the parts and where they can go to join when they start at St John’s.
- Miss the coffee hour where much info is spread word of mouth.
- N and his media have helped us stay connected. Thank goodness for N.
- Good donations were given to get the good technology.
- choir,
- refuge sponsorship,
- bibles and bagels, etc.
- We do quite a few things that are not specifically Bible-focused, but are still ways for us to live out our faith. Small groups. Coffee hour.
- We provide an inclusive place, especially people belonging to gender and sexual minorities. The About Page, specifically touches on affirming theology, and some sermons seem to gesture in that direction, which helps people to feel safe, and free to grow in faith. How can you grow in faith when you don’t feel like you belong?
- While we are very good at growing in discipleship, we might not have many practices that help people come to faith in the first place. What might we do to “reach out” and make “new disciples,” and to practice this as one aspect of growing in discipleship ourselves?
- Having a mentor -someone who has strong faith and takes someone new and befriends them, brings them to Christ. Small groups very important - started w/ a Baptist group before we had them at St. John’s! If you can’t find what you’re looking for, reach out for another area! Started with 6 in a Bible study, really grew over the years. “It’s one thing to know about Jesus, another to really know him.”
- when we first attended, overwhelming invitations to be involved in small groups, Messy Church, etc. Real strength - congregants are really open to people being new, not afraid to invite to participate. Opposite of “cliquey-ness” - inclusivity. Also lots of respect to the intent (or lack yet) of new people- finding out if visitors are staying long or not before bombarding with getting involved.
- At St. John’s we actually talk about faith and prayer; fearless and shameless!
- as somewhat relatively newcomers, found St. John’s as a welcoming place - one of the biggest attractions. Were at another church and unsure; visited St. John’s and heard N preaching about discipleship. Really felt welcomed - could see himself inviting other people to this church too. Tempted to answer very simplistic and theological - we’re helping others become disciples because we are good disciples - we have been discipled ourselves!
- as a recent member, had similar experience to Luke - people very welcoming, received more invitations than could accept! Joining during COVID was a different experience - no kitchen to meet people, lots of coincidental meeting; Middle Ground special for formation even if attending irregularly. Sunday services important - never attended Sunday school or

any formal religious education. Learning from good preaching and other leaders in the church has been really positive experience.

- adult faith formation classes of some sense a la Sunday school
- N - recalls invites to "Quiet Days" (one-day getaways; Sisters-hosted usually) - day-long retreats for folks - most inexpensive
- Small groups, H&M, Beehive; helps with bible knowledge
- Our approach is low key and non directive
- Welcoming of all types, easy to find one's way in:
- Services help see things in a different light
- Much variety
- One on one conversations
- Interns different perspectives

Question Two: What could we be doing to help people grow in faith that we aren't yet doing?

- Have a get together, get introduced to each other especially the new people who came to Church during the partial shut down. All three service groups need to get together and meet as one.
- Book studies
- Speakers such as Mr Turkstra as new resource.
- Since we can't have a real concert, do a live stream.
- Small groups have been so successful and positive during the pandemic. Evensong service. Include more music in service, more interactive. Use technology to bring more people the service, speakers as well.
- We need a place of safety to talk about deep things of faith, in a place that feels like home.
- Weekly small groups can be too much of a time commitment. More events or meetings that have a limited timeframe: a matter of weeks, like limited series, short terms, in-and-out kind of things.
- Short term, academically oriented theology or Biblical studies: potentially led by N (MA in theology). A four week class, say, on the Dead Sea Scrolls, with textual criticism, etc.
- Building on N's study, we could look at the gifts of people in the congregation who are able to lead in specific ways that could help in faith formation. Look for volunteers, who have specific talents or training, ask them to offer some kind of limited series (short term events) in their "wheelhouse."
- Spirituality: a group that gathers to pray, either in the church or via zoom. Practicing spiritual disciplines beyond learning.
- Open discussion group with indigenous people to cooperate on social justice, reconciliation, and environmental justice related discussion and action. Speakers, discussion, etc.
- "Anglicanism 101:" some sort of introduction to Anglican Tradition. Consider doing tours of the church with background info, stories, local history. Any newcomer would be delighted to hear to story of how someone once cut off the swords from the St. Michael and St. George statues!
- Look to work with groups beyond religious or ideological boundaries to work together on some common work or project in the community, as a way of doing good together despite

difference. This allows for a kind of unity where there otherwise isn't unity. Working on a common project is often more fruitful than dialogue.

- One on one mentoring opportunity
- Encouragement to get into groups
- Ask people what they need to learn, what's holding them back
- Invite people to come with us and preview what we are involved in
- Basic Christianity courses e.g., six weeks on a Bible book or the creed
- Help people read e.g., books in church library (with regular reviews) or blogs
- Encourage Cursillo

Question Three: What types of faith practices do you feel God might be calling St. John's to explore more as a community?

- Actually being more socially responsible and active. Social justice. Don't be afraid to speak out politically. From the pulpit, and more. Work on social justice.
- academically oriented classes or book studies dealing with scripture (Revelation) or a book study. Bringing the academic world into the life of the church.
- The environment, working toward greening things not only in the church but in our communities, parks, etc. This is the practical application of looking after God's creation in our community.
 - Take a hike with people we otherwise don't have relationship with.
 - Bring in a fellowship aspect.
 - Partner with people outside of our community on climate action, as a source of unity and shared reality.
- Have some more focus on the absolute basics of faith. Why should I believe this?
 - Q&A integrated into service or Sunday morning.
 - Its scripture: training in the catechetical side of belief. What are the beliefs again? Why do we believe them? We need re-freshers.
- Monastics: teach us the spiritual practices of piety. How can we have an appreciation of the monastic backgrounds of our Anglican spirituality? Practicing the presence of God, lectio divina, chanting the psalms, fasting, silence, etc. How can we foster an openness to our traditions, as an educational process and practice?
- Create opportunities for communion with one another. Eating together! Making crafts together! Fellowship & Hospitality. Coming together, healing from the isolation of the pandemic.
 - Revive: a great way to get to know more people in the church. Have another program similar to revive that is open to anyone in the church.
 - A more public invitation to something like Alpha or the above things.
- There are an awful lot of small groups, but unless you know someone in them, you have no way of getting into them. We need to better advertise and welcome new-comers and those with few relationships within the church.
- Use technology: videos or other ideas for introducing people through the website.
- social justice issues worth focusing on more strongly - esp. with Indigenous peoples, climate change, poverty/homelessness

- what we have to offer is a certain perspective on these issues that we've not always taken as a congregation - some individuals, yes, but opportunity to advocate collectively - this is how it would be a faith practice, by engaging communally
- one of the reasons landed in the parish is support of non-profit housing; lots of things the parish could do; fear is: problems are so big! How can the parish participate in a meaningful way? Second: how do we reconnect the choir back into the parish? How can the choir be more meaningful within the life of the congregation? Discussing pieces - meaning, etc.? Theologically decipher pieces in community.
- we have many areas the church says it supports, but really just a few individuals. Refugees a good example of the whole congregation coming together, but few other examples.
- sees as trend - always new/younger people that seem to be staying! When we aren't in lockdown, should have some way of welcoming that's more deliberate (formal or informal)
- deliberate intergenerational ministry - drawing on experiences of huge diversity already in our church
- A lot more interaction in discovery service in previous times
- diverse use of space - music, public forums, etc. - vibrant life of the building itself - community coming to the church (seconded by Luke)
- called to engagement in community - called to involvement in the world through our relationship with Christ, and is known for doing it - a unique church for not being inwardly focused - one of our biggest calling already in light of recent extremist Christianity in North America, and now in Canada
- group prayer services
- cultivating thankful generosity - understanding how generosity connects to faith - putting language to our practices already

More from the chat

- We spoke about small groups; the environment and reconciliation with indigenous people. Walks led by an indigenous leader and small groups also led by indigenous peoples.
- Love the stories in the Anglican Journal about how parishes support special projects through PWRDF. Would love to make that part of our parish activities.
- I think Taize services would be GREAT at SJE! Hadn't thought of that before!
- special liturgies that involve youth and other demographics coming together to create the worship experience - quarterly combined services
- Services for people who like the old liturgies. like the BCP
- In response to comment: why not aim to have quarterly youth services with all the churches on Locke St, and not just SJE?
- Apologetics training.
- possibly a online calendar or events/groups. Could be set up through Google Calendar so links to contact the group would be easy to access
- Locke St. Shuffle
- short term groups, or groups that meet less often
- How about a reading of, e.g., Dicken's Christmas Carol with music
- fellowship priority coming out of the pandemic
- Shared Climate Justice Activities
- how to reawaken hospitality within the congregation
- I'm interested in anything that involves the wider community

- Quiet evening prayer/Taize
- opportunities to learn from each other in small short-term groups - we have so much faith knowledge within our small community
- I'm very energized by the idea of short 4-6 week courses/groups offered on a regular basis every year, maybe Oct/Nov, Jan/Feb, April/May. Different topics, different levels, but every year. Led by all kinds of different people.
- Faith Formation at St. John's = more education about what our faith is and what it means
- Indigenous spiritual involvement
- Really like the idea of maintaining a library at church
- I fear lest we just are just adding more and more activities to an already busy parish life. And surely that is not the point of discipleship. I don't want to sound simplistic but all we need really is for each of us to start each day by asking, "How can I follow Jesus today?" The rest will follow.
- Reconnecting with the choir and learning how to be more mindful of how singing, and understanding what we sing, informs my faith, the faith of the choir, and the faith of the parish.

Top Three: What types of faith practices do you feel God might be calling St. John's to explore more as a community?

short term groups

- Most groups run on for a longtime and can be difficult for a newbie to jump into, so there may be a desire for short term groups, 6-8 weeks. They are interested in a sprint not a marathon. People need to know what is available for them and in joining new groups, they get to meet new people. This could be seasonal and come back again next year.

book programme

- This programme would be used for all ages in the church. It could be children's books which could be tied in with the Sunday school ministry programme as well as the youth. Adult books can be for individual enjoyment and learning or can be a guided reading group. This could be mentioned to the congregation for financial support. If someone is interested in running an after school programme for 90 minutes, the books would be an integral part.

become more visible in the community

- Our poll showed that we made a strong outward choice of doing for others than for our own spiritual groups.
- Perhaps we need to show the community more of who we are at St John's. In good weather having part of our service outside, going for neighborhood carol walks on Locke Street or around the block. Supporting neighborhood's causes such as the pantry at Blessings and working with four churches for children's Locke street festival.

Social Justice and Environment

- Practical workshops for green lifestyles
- For individuals and households
- Working with other groups in neighbourhood or city to encourage rain gardens, clean air, any there green venture.

- Education for adults and young people.
- Reach out for partnership with Indigenous People

Community and Healing from Isolation

- Growing in monastic practices of spirituality
- Eating together
- Doing crafts or art projects together
- Inviting community outside St. John's to eat, have fun, get to know each other.

Making our Existing Groups and Series Accessible to Newcomers

- Currently, unless you know someone involved in any given group, you don't know how to get connected—you hardly know what is going on.
- Comment from Alex: "possibly a online calendar or events/groups. Could be set up through Google Calendar so links to contact the group would be easy to access"

Social justice activities - whole church - talking our faith out through advocacy

Thinking through intergenerational opportunities - hospitality - creating "home" in the church across the generations - worship services planned to be led by youth/other groups

Recapturing the musical strengths of the church - concerts, possibilities for maize, public talks on music; more combined services?

Other Comments Added (not necessarily responding to questions)

Attitude. St John's need to do a better job of welcoming new people. This is a big job but needed by many if not all to participate in.

Culture of Gratitude: Such a simple, friendly thing to do but what an impact it can have. A few words, a high five, thumbs up, a hug. Whatever fits your comfort wheel.

We used at SJE to have a prayer group that met before the 9.30 a.m. service, but this became more and more difficult as the band needed to set up and practice, etc. I think it would be good to put a group like this back on the table, as an important part of "faith formation." We used to pray for the services that day, in all their various facets, but also for whatever else was on the prayer-sheet for the day -- and we would start with a time of adoration or praise or thanksgiving before going to petition.. Others would come on different Sundays, but those are the regulars that I recall. Anyway, whatever the future of such a group might be, it seems to me that it was pretty key for the energy of the church as well as for faith formation around prayer.