

To the people of St. John's:

The presentation of the Ministry Plan for Halifax Mainland and area marks the completion of the work we were tasked to do on behalf of our parish. Our mandate was to develop a strategy and plan for ministry that gathers up our congregation's best hopes for developing an attractive, growing and lively Anglican ministry for this area. We remembered what our parishioners said to each other during the extensive visioning and needs assessment processes over the past 2 years. We consulted with the many groups and committees at work in our church. We hosted a "Large Dreams Entertained" day on Pentecost weekend last Spring to introduce, and begin to integrate into our plan, best practices from growing churches in contexts similar to ours. At this event, members of St. Peter's Anglican Church and Trinity Anglican Church joined our discussions, however the people of All Saints Anglican Church declined our invitation.

This has not been an easy journey. This has been a time of directionlessness for our parish and we have felt this deeply. We often felt insecure about the purpose of the work or where our work would lead. We were too often beset by doubt and cynicism. But our task was to remember and reconnect with the vision and challenges identified by so many in our church and we committed ourselves to this task in faith. We trust that God's Spirit has been with our parishes each step of the way, and continues to go ahead of us even when we are unsure of where we are being led.

In reconnecting with our congregation's sense of vision, opportunities and challenges, even with the anxieties and doubts, we found ourselves becoming even more committed to our church's original conclusions. We cannot become the church we envision without coming together. We cannot say our mission is to invite people into the life of healing and wholeness, in relationship with God and with us as a community of Christians, when we cannot find a way to be a community together.

The Ministry Plan team believes that we need to go forward, joining our spirits, our hope, our people, and our resources. As the visioning processes discerned, we need: a critical mass of people with talents and abilities to implement new ministries; more high standard ministries and programs; financial resources; a ministry staff team with specialized skills; and an accessible and flexible facility with adequate parking in a visible, high traffic area. It is our hope that the congregation will see and grasp this opportunity to continue to move where the Spirit is calling us to go.

It is only by channeling our resources from buildings and property to people and programs that we will have what is needed to fully live our vision for a growing and vibrant ministry. If we choose the status quo, where buildings absorb a disproportionate share of our financial resources, this vision and ministry plan will be possible at best only in small part. To create an attractive, growing Anglican ministry, our buildings and facilities must be understood as something that supports our mission, rather than being the purpose of our mission. As the architect we have recently consulted reminded us: "The church is the people, which God places in His service. The building is only that physical plant which we use to exercise the talents He gives us. The building should be such to enhance our efforts to please Him and achieve His will...." (Foster MacKenzie, Harvey & MacKenzie Ltd. Architects)

HALIFAX MAINLAND MINISTRY PLAN

This Ministry Plan expresses a vision for a growing and vibrant Anglican Church ministry within Halifax Mainland (Fairview, Clayton Park, Clayton Park West, Rockingham, Birch Cove, Bedford South, Bedford West, Hammonds Plains West) and area. Its purpose is both inspirational and practical. It takes the work we have done in visioning over the past two years and hones it into mission, values, and strategy that can guide implementation and action.

It sets a longer-term vision and plan for ministry development, looking 5 to 8 years into the future.

It is inspirational, inviting people to build this ministry for the sake of those who are already committed to the church and for those who are still seeking a church home.

It builds on the deep desires of people to be part of a church that is committing resources to vital, meaningful ministry programs more than maintaining buildings.

It is our values and strategy that provide the basis for decisions such as: the size, shape and uses of our buildings, staff and budgets.

The mission, values and ministries named in this Ministry Plan reflect what we as the congregation of St. John's have said to one another through the many visioning and needs assessment discussions held over the past 2 years. These commitments are not new or ungrounded. They are rooted in our parish's history and current ministries of faithful and committed service, and they reveal hopes for the future that we share. An account of the discussions that led to the Ministry Plan can be found in Appendix A.

DESCRIBING OUR MISSION

We believe that living a Christ-centred life leads to healing and wholeness that is invaluable for people and society. Individually and together we are trying to figure out what it means to be Christ-centred in our day-to-day lives and in our churches' ministries. We believe we are Christ-centred when our lives and ministries live out our baptismal promises:

- Growing in faith and understanding of our relationships with God and with one another, and as Christians in the world today;
- Living our faith in all aspects of our lives;
- Acknowledging our brokenness and seeking reconciliation and healing for ourselves, our church and our world;
- Respecting the dignity of all people, striving for justice, and seeking to serve.

Our mission is to encourage others to enter into relationship with God and with us as a community of Christians as we seek to be Christ-centred. Mission is expressed through

- the growth and development of ministries of worship,
- programs of personal and community growth,
- outreach ministries that build and support justice,
- the stewardship of our talents and gifts.

Our commitment is to this mission and to our future.

VALUES THAT GUIDE ALL WE DO

In each of the visioning conversations the following values were heard over and over again.

- To be a growing church
- To offer a ministry where more people can experience growth in faith and spirituality
- To offer small group ministries to support people's, and the church's, growth
- To have an effective way of identifying, inviting and developing people's gifts for ministry
- To be a place of hospitality and generosity
- To be a place of compassion and justice

TO BE A GROWING CHURCH

In our visioning conversations we told one another clearly that we have a strong desire to become a growing, vibrant church that speaks to the hearts and minds of seekers. This means our ministries must be always developing. Since we are curious about how God is working in the lives of both friends and strangers, we will continue to be open to learning the questions and challenges people bring to the church. Our church will develop its worship and programs to better bring people's questions and life experiences into dialogue with scripture, history and tradition.

It will be important to continue to worship and meet together in ways that are most meaningful to our current congregations. However, it is accepted that these expressions do not often connect with seekers. So we embrace the task of offering a diversity of ways to worship, learn and find fellowship, not expecting to convince anyone of the merits of "our ways" but rather allowing the church to grow and develop in new ways that speak to today's world.

GROWTH IN FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

People grow in their Christian faith and spirituality within a community of people whose hearts and minds yearn to live as followers of Christ. Our church offers such a place. Here people can find guidance, perspective and support for applying faith to life's questions, challenges and joys.

The path we offer invites people to share their stories. What is meaningful in their lives? What are their concerns and fears? For what are they thankful? These are then brought into dialogue with the scriptures, tradition, and history of our faith and our life of prayer and service.

This attentive listening and active engagement in faith underlies all we do in our ministries such as our preaching, our liturgies, our small groups, our children and youth ministries, our adult education.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

People can find community, relationships, intellectual nourishment, and a deepened spirituality through a program of small groups. Small groups will be the means by which our vision is lived, ministry is expressed and programs are offered.

- In small groups people will be invited, encouraged and challenged to figure out what it means to be Christ-centred in our lives and ministries.
- Through small group ministries, people will be encouraged to identify and develop their God-given gifts.

People will be invited to participate in small group activities and gatherings based on topics and activities of interest. Topics and activities will arise from the skills and interests of people within the church and their desire to share and explore these with others. Groups will meet in the church, in people's homes and in public spaces. Many will include a shared meal.

IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE'S GIFTS

In a world that so often tells people they are not needed or that their gifts are not important enough, our ministries offer something completely different. Where our church leaders are identified as volunteers and too often overburdened with tasks and expectations, our ministries will develop a different way of sharing in the responsibilities and work of ministry.

We are a church that believes that recognizing and encouraging people's God-given gifts and abilities is key to nurturing a healthy spiritual and community life. Growing churches have a talent for developing leaders of all ages. People are encouraged to share and develop their strengths in both what is done (in program and administration) and how it is done. As we worship, learn and find fellowship in community, we attentively come to know one another. As we meet newcomers we are curious about what new perspectives and talents God has sent to our congregation.

HOSPITALITY AND GENEROSITY

Our church is called to live a spendthrift hospitality. We pay attention to making our church community as welcoming and easy to feel comfortable in as possible. We make it easy for people to learn what our church has to offer. We actively help people make connections with others in the community, through worship, programs, and opportunities to serve.

We are aware of our neighbourhood and show an unexpected hospitality to our neighbours. We intend to be as lavish with love for others as God is toward us.

We appreciate that table fellowship - eating together - is central to community building and ministry growth. As Christ instructed at the end of John's gospel, "Feed my sheep" and "Follow me." We make many opportunities to express our generosity and hospitality through ministries of food and fellowship that also feeds souls.

COMPASSION AND JUSTICE – OUTREACH IN ACTION

Our program of outreach to and action in the community around us is our expression of Christ's love for humankind. This outreach will be evaluated solely in terms of how closely we approximate Christ's love in the world, not by measurable outcomes or numbers of recruits.

We are driven not only by the spirit of charity, but also by a hunger for social justice. Compassion for the poor and suffering is not enough: we care deeply about how and why poverty and suffering persist in a society of wealth and abundance.

MINISTRY STRATEGIES

The strategies described in this section build on our parishes' traditional and current ministries, on what we said to one another during the visioning processes, and on the best practices of growing churches. They are strategies of

Community Welcome
Community Development
Community Action

COMMUNITY WELCOME

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

This is a crucial and top priority ministry. Our congregation will express hospitality as a tangible sign of the living faith present within the church. From first impressions through a shepherding program, we will facilitate newcomers' entry into the church community and its activities. We will also share our commitment to hospitality with our neighbours.

First impressions

Making a good first impression is the responsibility of all within the church. It involves being friendly and warm (in ways that feel right to the personality of the congregation), a good and consistent practice of greeting, bulletins that are easy to follow, and a well designed and inviting facility (from the street to the seat).

People who participate in ministries of greeting and hospitality will be part of an on-going learning, discussion and training process about the best ways to express this ministry. New greeters will be trained and prepared for their tasks.

On-going education for the whole congregation will help us become comfortable with showing our warmth and hospitality to strangers.

A 'welcome to our church' DVD can be produced to introduce people to who we are, what they can expect from our church, and how to reach us for particular questions and needs. These will focus on people, worship, our community life and our acts of service and outreach.

The website is up to date and is clear to follow.

Newcomer Shepherding

Newcomers to the church who are interested in exploring membership will become part of a shepherding program, where they will be matched with members who will help them make relationships within the congregation, become comfortable with the particular practices of the church (e.g. liturgies, stewardship) and find meaningful connections with church programs.

Newcomer events will be hosted so that new members can meet one another, and hear about parish programs and upcoming events.

Being good neighbours

The church will be an active presence that contributes helpfully to the quality of life within the neighbourhood. By building bridges between itself and the neighbourhood around it, the congregation can build relationships that make a difference in people's lives within the church and its neighbourhood.

Building bridges can include:

- Having space available for community groups and programs.
- Being open 5+ days a week with appropriate staffing (reception, custodial, pastoral)
- Hosting a number of fun events and activities throughout the year for the neighbourhood (barbeques, drive-in movies, Hallowe'en party, Vacation Bible School, March Break programming). Include a short prayer for the neighbourhood as well as some introduction to the church, its people and programs at each event.
- Invitations to the neighbourhood and specific neighbourhood people for special worship services. (e.g. Veterans on Remembrance Day, all for Christmas carols and cider).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

WORSHIP

The church is committed to being a Eucharistic community. It is a place of regular and continuous worship that praises God in ways that touch people's hearts and minds and feed their souls. We are committed to offering a variety of styles of worship that, when taken together, will speak to the spiritual questions and instincts of people of all ages. Worship will:

- Express the best of our Anglican traditions both old and new
- Introduce people to new forms and expressions of Anglican worship
- Communicate the timely gift of God's grace for the world to people unfamiliar with our church language

Liturgies offered affirm the importance and richness of our traditions, the need for a consistent and clear approach, and incorporate a strategy for new developments and expressions.

Regular, weekly family worship that is meaningful and comfortable for younger adults, children and youth is essential to building a growing church. The language, music, sermon and opportunities to participate will be designed specially to speak to seekers, families, children and youth in meaningful ways. This is a key opportunity for creative development that can be based on our current strengths and what we can learn from best practices of growing churches. Weekly traditional worship that is familiar is also essential to honour some people's needs and preferences. We intend to continue to offer that which is familiar while also offering seeker – friendly worship consistently every week.

Along with Sunday morning liturgies, regular midweek services will be offered. Some of these may include Bible study. It is also expected from time to time, other liturgies will be offered at different times during the week. These may include youth led services, those celebrating special days in our liturgical calendar, and others designed to fit into family or spiritual development programs.

All forms of worship will be well planned and well presented: leaders well prepared for their roles. To build comfort and confidence, each style of liturgy should be consistent. The 'Anglican stew' approach, where at a particular time on Sunday morning we provide a different service each week of the month, is confusing to newcomers. It runs the risk of putting them off if one week their children are welcome and comfortable, and the next they have trouble understanding the language. Resources such as bulletins and other audio-visuals will be designed to facilitate easy and comfortable participation of regular worshippers and newcomers alike. The liturgical year and other important days and events will be celebrated within our weekly liturgies.

PASTORAL CARE AND FELLOWSHIP

The church will continue to offer and develop diverse programs of inreach such as:

- visitation and caring ministries,
- shepherding,
- home communion,
- transportation,
- men's fellowship,
- women's fellowship (e.g. ACW, Ladies' Guild)
- seniors' friendship,
- personal support,
- social activities.

The church will expand the formal organization of the ministries of visitation, shepherding the congregation, and caring. A pastoral ministry coordinator will equip and support a team of lay volunteers who will provide a variety of helping ministries. These activities will range from regularly touching base with parishioners through phone calls and emails to home and hospital visits. All volunteers will be trained so that the ministries can be provided with appropriate knowledge and sensitivity.

The purpose of fellowship groups will be to focus on building community and personal support among parishioners and neighbours. Functioning as small group ministries, they will be responsive to the spiritual, fellowship and learning needs of their members. Some may wish to contribute to the program of the parish by bringing in speakers or hosting events. Others may be working groups who help out at parish functions providing hospitality. Still others may form around awareness and fund raising events to serve the church and/or community groups (e.g. Phoenix Hours, Bryony House, food bank).

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

The mission of the children's program is to provide a comfortable environment where children can learn about God through fun activities, games and stories of our faith. In addition to a children's program on Sunday mornings, the church will also offer family events to help celebrate special

occasions throughout the liturgical year (e.g. Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter). The Life in the Eucharist program will be offered regularly.

The children's ministry will be well resourced with audio-visual equipment, DVD's and CD's. The space will be bright, clean and child-friendly.

An annual Vacation Bible School may be offered to children within the congregation as well as others from the neighbourhood. Opportunities to participate in wider diocesan and Christian programs such as summer camps will be developed.

Children and their families will be offered many opportunities to be involved in the church's outreach and advocacy programs. Special attention will be paid to connecting children's existing values for environmental issues with the Christian stories and ministries of stewardship.

THE YOUTH PROJECT

Youth are attracted to churches that

- live their beliefs in ways that are active and tangible,
- take them seriously recognizing their gifts as compassionate and caring people wanting to make a difference to the church and the world,
- provide space, separate from their parents, to explore their questions, doubts, convictions and beliefs,
- make possible meaningful relationships between youth, children and the adults within the congregation.

It is accepted that our church does not have the expertise necessary to build a vibrant and growing youth ministry program. We need a youth minister or youth worker who can direct us in this endeavor, not as a distinct program of the church with only tenuous connections to the adult community, but as a fully integrated, priority ministry of our church. This way, current youth programs such as youth group, outings, participation in diocesan activities, outreach activities, and the server's guild will be expanded and enriched.

Perhaps most importantly we realize that there are significant challenges in developing a really successful youth program as long as there is a sizable gap between what we say we believe and what we actually do. Throughout the visioning we discussed how our church could better demonstrate faith in action through a stronger program of outreach and social justice. By continuing and expanding our commitment to outreach we will develop opportunities for youth to live their faith in ways that make a difference to people's lives.

ADULT LEARNING AND SPIRITUALITY

Regular adult learning opportunities will be offered ranging from single sessions to ongoing commitments. Current programs of baptism, confirmation, and marriage preparation will be offered as needed.

The focus is on spiritual nurture and growth in faith for those who want to go deeper than what Sunday morning services can offer. An open and inviting approach will encourage people to share

their interests and questions in ways that can gather others into a learning group. This can be done using a bulletin board, a web-based bulletin board, and/or in the announcements on Sunday morning.

Guided by our lay people with training in facilitating adult Christian learning, these groups may be book or film based, faith and Bible studies, programs on church practices, Christianity 101 sessions, Alpha, and sessions exploring the difficult faith in daily life questions. Retreat days and experiences such as Cursillo also may be offered.

Potential group facilitators will be identified and invited to share their gifts. A program of orientation, training and support will be established to develop this ministry.

STEWARDSHIP

Much was said during the visioning sessions about the stewardship of people's time and talents. The values that underlie the Ministry Plan and its strategies take very seriously the need for the church to take an active role in:

- helping people identify their gifts and talents as God given
- inviting people to express their gifts in ministry and in leadership

Indeed, the identification of people's skills and gifts for ministry is a core value for Anglican ministry in Halifax Mainland and area. Through this stewardship approach people can find ways to give to the church that are life-giving and spiritually nourishing. This is very different from our familiar practice – where we think of each other as volunteers and potential volunteers, and think of our ministries as jobs.

However, little was said during the visioning or needs assessment about the need for on going financial stewardship education and practice within the church. However, it is highly recommended that this be considered and developed as part of an integrated spiritual and practical discipline of the church.

COMMUNITY ACTION

OUTREACH

Outreach will be focused upon what is needed in the community, and will develop as the community continues to let us know of its need. Our initial assessment based on consultation with local experts,¹ is that residents in Halifax Mainland and area have many needs.

- Social networks and care support for isolated seniors
- Social networks and care support for isolated young mothers
- There are young people, especially in the junior high years, who would benefit from after school programs

¹ Most usefully, Diana Whalen, MLA and Karen Curry, VON nursing manager for the area

- Immigrants, and immigrant women in particular, would benefit from an ESL program that included a daycare component.
- Various community groups need meeting space beyond what the library and the big grocery stores can offer.

The vision, then, is of the church as a resource centre, in much the same way as a Family Resource Centre on a military base works: connecting individuals with others, providing information and referrals to services, offering space where groups and services can operate, and allowing programs to develop as needs are identified and resources found. To some, this will seem an almost secular project – but “they will know we are Christians by our love.”

A place to start

The strategy is to begin with a manageable project. Examples include:

- Actively seeking out community groups whose services match our values to offer meeting space. Since such groups (Amnesty International and the Halifax Peace Coalition for example) are often attractive to young people, we think that this will be one way to bridge the generation gap between traditional church and young people’s quests.
- We anticipate that the VON will be glad to run a “Breakaway” day program providing respite for the caregivers of Alzheimer patients, if the church provides facilities. Such a program would then allow caregivers to connect with one another and with church volunteers, thus building our church’s network of care and concern.
- Seniors’ programs exist at several locations in the area, but they are of the “Friendship Club” types, that meet occasionally. An ongoing drop-in centre would provide a social centre for seniors, and a place where they could connect with resources and information. A pastoral nurse, even a parish nurse, could operate from our church facility. A senior centre might also provide a rich resource for other programs, such as reading-buddy programs after school or ESL tutoring or conversational English.
- Providing facilities for programs such as a community kitchen for those for whom cooking and food preparation is a lonely, unfamiliar or expensive task. Young adults in their first apartments, mothers at home with children, and, again, seniors might all find a community kitchen program, in which nutritious meals can be prepared jointly in large quantities and then divided among the participants to be taken home.
- One other aspect of the reaching out to the community – and one related to our value of identifying and developing people’s gifts – may be a kind of volunteer bureau, where we can support volunteer training and help match volunteers to community needs.

The community outreach will not be limited to activities that take place within the church. The need for a food bank for some residents of our area is not likely to go away in the near future, but we do not think that we will need to house a food depot on our premises, other locations being more convenient for clients of the food bank. Supporting the food bank financially and by volunteer contributions will continue to be part of our service.

It is not anticipated that programs such as these could be run entirely by church volunteers but in partnership with social service and healthcare organizations. The church can provide attractive, accessible and well-equipped facilities and volunteer assistance.

HALIFAX MAINLAND MINISTRY PLAN APPENDIX A
 HOW WE GOT HERE: VISIONING & NEEDS ASSESSMENT
 PROCESSES

Dates	Activities
January 2006	Presentation to St. Peter's Parish Council – report from representatives to the St. John's/St. Peter's Joint Task Group recommending the parish proactively seek to collaborate with Halifax Mainland area parishes to improve ministry for the area. Pooling of resources could deliver better outreach, improve our mission, and maximize long-term viability.
March – June 2006	Joint visioning process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 14 Group discussions
May 26-28, 2006	Visioning weekend at the Diocesan Centre
September 2006 – January 2007	St. Peter's process for discerning their future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ October 2006 information package and building inspection ▪ 3 information sessions ▪ 3 discussion sessions
March 2007	Consolidated Needs Assessment: Parish of St. John's and Parish of St. Peter's
April - May 2007	The Ministry Plan Task Force meeting with representatives of Standing Committees to discuss their ministries and how they would like to see them developed.
April – May 2007	Standing Committees and other groups submit written answers to questions about their programs: purpose, mission, and vision/hopes for future development.
May 26, 2007	Pentecost visioning event to look at best practices for growing churches in light of the development of ministry in Halifax Mainland and area. Invitations were extended to St. John's, St. Peter's, Trinity, and All Saints' Bedford. People from St. Peter's, St. John's, and Trinity participated.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STAFFING AND FACILITIES

One of the functions of a Ministry Plan is to provide the basis for decisions such as: the size, shape and uses of our buildings; staff and budgets. In light of this, the following are suggestions for what a single parish would need to support the ministry as expressed in the Plan.

Staffing

The mission, values and strategies for ministry in Halifax Mainland and area prioritize church growth and development through new member ministries and the identification and invitation of people's gifts and skills for ministry. Many initiatives name specifically the growth and support of a stronger lay leadership. There is also a high priority for developing the church's outreach and for youth ministry. A parish wanting to take on the whole of this ministry would need a strong staff component such as:

- 2 Priests: liturgy, administration, new member ministry, leadership development, outreach, education & small group development
- Part time (perhaps retired) priest to support pastoral care ministries
- Parish musician (or 2 depending on their ability to manage both traditional and newer music)
- Youth worker
- Parish administrator, bookkeeper
- Custodian

Facilities

- Fully accessible for seniors, people with small children and people with physical disabilities
- Sanctuary with movable seating. Ability to expand the space into the gathering area for large services such as Christmas and Easter.
- Entrances to the parking lot from the street are well marked and easy to manage. Entranceways into the church are attractive, accessible and clearly signed. The grounds are well kept and safe.
- Gathering areas in the church that are comfortable, uncluttered and attractive, facilitating mingling and conversation. Decoration in these areas gives a clear picture of the ministries the church offers especially regarding children and outreach.
- Well equipped and inviting kitchen
- Dedicated nursery space.
- All children's program space to be bright and inviting to children and their parents: something a young parent would feel comfortable with. The nursery and children's program centre are easy to find. Equipment for babies and children is safe and good quality. Storage is secure.
- Dedicated youth room.
- 1 or 2 smaller rooms furnished comfortably for small group meetings or pastoral interviews.
- Large hall suitable for dinners and large gatherings

- Central reception area and clergy/staff offices
- Opening our facilities to the community will require full-time access to the premises: in other words, we will need to provide space, utilities, and security/custodial services. A related proposal will be that the church building be home also to some alternative living space: accommodation for individuals who have difficulty in finding premises to suit their needs. A residential presence will mean that the building has the security of round-the-clock eyes and ears, and some arrangements may be made for custodial services, for example, as partial payment of rent.