



ST. MARY'S ROAD UNITED CHURCH PURPOSE AND VISION

Having a purpose for our church allows us to focus our time and resources on what we are here to do. It helps us make choices, build programming, and engage our community and each other. In short, this is what we are about.

In October 2014 the congregation appointed a Vision Team consisting of Joan Boone, Adam Gerhard, Twila MacNair, Pat Adams, Leanne Douglas and Jon Seguire. We enlisted the help of Lesley Harrison from the Edge Ministry of the United Church. The vision team consulted with the congregation in numerous ways including a Vision Day, the United Church IMNA survey, discussions and letters. Through this process, and faithful reflection, this vision emerged.

A vision document is a forward looking document. It is not a script or a plan, but rather a goal for the future upon which plans are built. Like a compass, it doesn't tell you *how* to get there, but it tells you where you

are going and points the way. It is written in the present tense, as if we are at the goal. Words like "is" and "are" in the vision statements paint a picture of what we will say about ourselves when our vision is fully lived.

This document needs to be used. It needs to be referenced and understood and lived into. There will be times when decisions need to be made, and this document will form the framework of those decisions.

The vision itself is simple, and seems almost obvious. But the impact is deep, and will be something that we need to work at diligently and faithfully to achieve. In the end, however, the work will be the important part, and we will be changed by it.

DISCIPLES ACTIVE IN THE WORLD

“Preach the Bible every day. If Necessary Use Words.”

– St. Francis of Assisi

“Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.”

– Matthew 28:16-20 *The Message* translation

“Uniting God, you call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship...”

– That all may be one. Prayer celebrating the full communion of the United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ

“We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit. For the sake of the world, God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.

In the church,

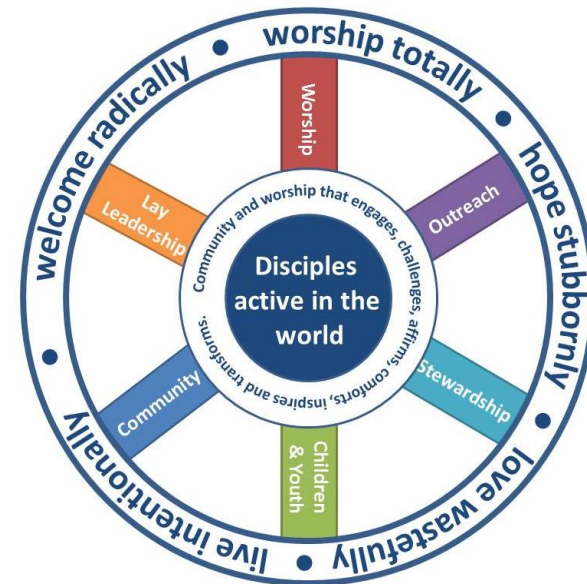
*some are called to specific ministries of leadership,
both lay and ordered;
some witness to the good news;
some uphold the art of worship;
some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;
some build up the community of wisdom;
some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.*

To embody God’s love in the world,

*the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship
of all believers.”*

– A Song of Faith, *The United Church of Canada.*

As a community of faith, our purpose is to create disciples that are active in the world. We do this through community and worship that engages, challenges, affirms, comforts, inspires and transforms.



In Matthew 28 Jesus gives the disciples the Great Commission: to go out and make disciples of all the nations. *The Message* translation of this is to “Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near in this way of life”. Fundamentally this is the purpose of church. We prepare, train and support disciples to do God’s work in the world.

Discipleship at its heart is following the teachings of Jesus. People do this in many ways. Some are loud and overt, others are quiet and intensely personal. Your discipleship is not my discipleship. How we

follow is ours alone, and responds to our own gifts. But that we follow is ours together. Our community and our worship is our touchstone. It builds us up so we can go out.

Discipleship is about our growth as Christians – as a people of faith. We believe that our faith drives us to action, but faith – the grounding in the Christian context and relationship with The Holy – is the foundation. At the most fundamental level we must develop disciples, through education, training and community. We need to give people opportunities to explore their faith, deepen their faith, and challenge their faith.

Beyond this core, the Vision is described and lived out through six pillars: worship, outreach, pastoral care, children and youth, community and lay leadership. The idea of discipleship has different meanings and impacts for each of these areas. While these pillars appear to stand on their own, fundamentally they share many principles and practices such as prayer, Christian education, faith development and caring for the community.

WORSHIP

“In all that we do, in all that we are, we embody worship. By our actions, simple and profound, we incarnate the love of God. We find new ways to be community, to explore faith and to be God’s people. But at the heart of it all, we centre ourselves in the Holy Spirit.”

– SMRUC Vision (2007)

What We Heard

You said that the church impacts your views on social issues, values and your personal faith. You believe that faith comes in many forms. Music is very important to how you express and explore your faith. And you believe working to promote social justice is very important to your faith.



You said that our top priorities for worship are:

1. Children and youth to grow in their faith
2. Develop mindset of hospitality – welcoming
3. Increase number of adults
4. Grow and deepen faith

Weekly aspects of meaningful worship include

1. Congregation singing
2. Preaching
3. Prayers offered by lay people
4. Offering as an act of worship

What you need to increase your engagement:

1. Being encouraged to grow in your faith
2. Hearing inspiring stories about how mission/ministry has changed people lives
3. Receiving pastoral care
4. Being inspired to engage in Gods mission.

In Reflection

Worship is the vehicle by which we share and explore our common faith. It is our touchstone, our base. It is where we start.

Fundamentally, worship should be a shaping and transforming experience. Your life should be different because you attend worship. Worship needs to be a meaningful experience. One that engages, challenges, affirms, comforts and inspires. This does not mean that all worship experiences are all of these, and not every person will experience these in every worship. However people should *expect* this as part of their worship experience.

Different people are engaged, challenged, affirmed, comforted and inspired in different ways. Worship should explore different expressions to find ways of doing this. At SMRUC we have 3 core paths to achieve this. We have named these paths *the Journey, the Tree of Life* and *Rainbow*.

Worship needs to recognize that people are at different points in their faith. Many have a strong faith, many have no faith. We also recognize the wisdom of **belong, behave, believe** – belief can come after a sense of belonging and choosing to behave in a certain way.



While worship is a communal act, it is an individual experience. Worship is also one of the key entries into the community. It should be built intentionally so the newcomers feel welcomed and included.

Music is a key way people experience meaningful worship and is an important way we connect emotionally. It is also one of the fundamental ways our worships are different.

Many voices in worship leadership can expand perspective and enhance the experience. Personal stories add meaning and depth to worship.

The Vision

- Worship is one of the core functions of our church.
- Worship at SMRUC **engages** our minds and hearts; **challenges** our perceptions of the world; **affirms** us as children of God with gifts worthy to be shared; **comforts** us when we are down; **inspires** us to action; **transforms** us
- We have more than one service and more than one style.
- Music plays a key role in worship with different styles explored in different services.
- Worship is accessible, with particular attention to the newcomer.
- Worship involves members of the congregation in many ways, from leadership to personal stories etc.

STEWARDSHIP

"Ever since Adam, we humans have been assigned the tasks of stewardship: growing gardens among thorns and thistles; tending the animals; building civilizations. As a species of sub-creators made in God's image, we are charged with bringing order out of chaos."
- Philip Yancey, *The Question that Never Goes Away*

What We Heard

Gifts of time, talent and energy.

You said that the strength of St. Mary's Road United Church is the people, sharing their God given gifts with others in the church and the community. It was noted that there is great diversity in the gifts of time, skills and resources, and that each person has unique gifts to share. You said that this is an important resource in that people – both lay and clergy – are seen as having a passion for, and the skills to offer for the work of the church.

The survey identified that:

65% of the respondents gave time as volunteers in the church in this past year,
48% helped with worship,
23% participated in SMRUC small groups.
44% of the respondents were involved in volunteer activities outside of church. Approximately 11% wrote to a Member of Parliament.

Gifts of financial resources:

You said that money is seen as both a challenge and as a resource in St. Mary's Road United Church. It was noted that there is a need to gain a perspective with regards to the connection between donations and membership.

The survey identified that:

92% of the survey respondents made donations to the church this year.

In addition 47% donated to M&S and 56% donated to the church to meet the needs of outreach.

In Reflection

As a church we appreciate the value of all our God-given gifts and with gratitude respond to God's grace as we both nurture and share these gifts with others. We learned that this is as important to our individual growth as Disciples of Christ as it is to the well-being and growth of Christ's church.



With regards to our financial resources, we have learned that we must create many opportunities to talk about money; why is it seen as both a gift and as a challenge. We must not just talk about the money that is donated to St. Mary's Road United Church, but how we are stewards of this gift each and every day. Howard Dayton tells us that financial "stewardship isn't just how you handle the tithe, but how you handle the other 90% of your income."¹

The Vision

Since all God's children have been given gifts:

- We support and encourage everyone to nurture their God-given gifts and, in gratitude, share them.
- We talk about the gift of money, how we are stewards of this gift in all aspects of our lives.
- We talk very directly about our church's financial needs and ask for what we need.

¹ Source: <http://www.stewardshipcentral.org/posts/a-call-to-stewardship>

OUTREACH

“to live with respect in Creation; to love and serve others; to seek justice and resist evil”

- United Church of Canada, A New Creed

The church is only the church when “it exists for others...the church must share in the secular problems of ordinary life – not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell people of every calling, what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others”.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer after John Longhurst, WFP, 4/2015

What We Heard

The IMNA results reveal that 43% of respondents say that addressing needs beyond our church is very important with 48% of respondents considering it somewhat important.

Furthermore, 1/3rd of respondents consider working to promote social justice is very important while again almost 50% of respondents consider it somewhat important.

When asked to consider how important it is for the church to work to protect the environment, 29% indicated it was very important with another 43% indicating it was somewhat important.



In Reflection

Outreach is an essential aspect to help fulfill the experience of being a church. Outreach happens locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

Outreach reflects what SMRUC and its members and adherents commit toward peace, social justice, human rights and environmental issues.

Our church, through our members, will be involved in many outreach activities. The activities will change over time as the passion and efforts of our members change, and the needs of the communities we are involve in change.

SMRUC will play several important roles in outreach: We will help nurture and develop people to have passion for outreach; we will empower and enable people to take leadership roles in doing outreach work in and through our community; and we will form a community that is engaged and supportive of outreach work.

The Vision:

- We offer opportunities that allow our members and adherents to go out to perform Outreach and to be inspired.
- We nurture the many gifts and talents of our members and adherents through training that will promote going out and doing good work.
- We develop passions for Outreach by fostering their development within the church.

COMMUNITY AND PASTORAL CARE

“One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn’t as individuals.”

- Jean Vanier

“Every person is defined by the communities she belongs to.”

- Orson Scott Card,

“The church exists primarily for two closely correlated purposes: to worship God and to work for God’s kingdom in the world... The church also exists for a third purpose, which serves the other two: to encourage one another, to build one another up in faith, to pray with and for one another, to learn from one another and teach one another, and to set one another examples to follow, challenges to take up, and urgent tasks to perform. This is all part of what is known loosely as fellowship.”

— N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” - Matthew 18:20

“Welcome Radically” - SMRUC Statement of Faith

What We Heard:

We heard that you want to be a welcoming community. We heard that developing the congregation to a mindset of real hospitality, to help make your church a truly welcoming place for all is a priority. We also heard that you want to welcome people but don’t feel you have the skill and are unsure what to say. Community extends to those in need, with pastoral care being a strong component of a faithful community. We

heard that you want to grow in faith and spirituality. This was seen as a key part of growing our church.

In Reflection



There are two main areas of focus for community: Nurturing what we are; and growing to what we will be. To nurture our community we focus on fellowship and pastoral care. Fellowship is where we nurture, support,

challenge, affirm and transform each other. Pastoral care can be described as “a friend in need, is a friend indeed”. It is about us being intentional friends to those who need it for any number of reasons. It is about being aware, corporately, of need in our community and responding.

Growing our community is about evangelism and welcome. As an affirming congregation we have done intentional work on welcoming. But we need to move even beyond affirming to truly inclusive and welcoming place. This means being open to respond to the needs of people. And being a place where



people feel they can raise their needs. Evangelism really means telling our story. We do that in worship, but also through other avenues like our website and social media and personal conversations in our day to day lives. We also need to look at how we welcome newcomers. From

how our services are structured to how we greet people to what programs we have. Welcoming is a commitment: It is more than just saying “come and be part of us”, it is saying “come, and together we will be something new”.

This congregation does many things REALLY well. We need to see them, name them, and believe them. If we focus energy on the things we do well, we will be strong for our community.

The Vision

- We focus on welcoming by giving people tools and strategies to welcome the newcomer
- We focus on evangelism, by giving people the tools and confidence to tell their story
- We focus on pastoral care by expanding how we care for each other and giving people the tools and opportunity to be a friend.
- We have intentional programs for pastoral care that ensure all members have access to support and counselling from ministry staff and trained lay people.

LAY LEADERSHIP

“Where no counsel is, the people fail; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” - Proverbs 11:14

“If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don’t have to be pushed. The vision pulls you”. - Steve Jobs.

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” - 1 Peter 4:10

What we heard

You, the congregation, have expressed that you feel a high sense of belonging to your church, a low sense of involvement, and a moderate sense of connectedness.

You said your church makes you want to share your gifts with others and put energy into working for peace and justice in the world. Addressing needs beyond the church walls is important to you.

You feel our current lay leadership is strong... but SMRUC is weak at recruiting and training new leaders and needs to do more to avoid burn-out.



43% of people surveyed do not consider themselves leaders. The other 57% divide themselves between formal and information leadership roles – more informal than formal.

You said you want a church that values the presence and

contribution of people of all ages- children to senior. An ideal church offers opportunities to get involved in church activities outside of worship. Lay participation in worship and lay people leading prayers are two of your top 7 priorities for meaningful worship.

You said that in order to increase your engagement in our church's mission and ministry you need to:

- Be encouraged to grow in your faith
- Hear inspiring stories of how mission has changed lives
- Receive pastoral care

You want our ministers to have the ability to delegate jobs and responsibilities to others and share decision making with lay people.

You said we should cultivate our volunteer base, that asking people directly will yield results and that we need someone to play the connector role.

In Reflection

Disciples are leaders by nature of the job, even if they are quiet leaders. Everyone should be seen as a leader. This doesn't mean we all lead all the time, but it does mean that we let our passions lead us to action. We can choose to be leaders; we don't need to seek permission to act. This is core to our model of church: the church nurtures disciples, the disciples act in the world.



Small group ministry leaders need training to know our mission, foster a feeling of community amongst their group members and lead their group members to become disciples.

The Vision

Since all God's Children have been given gifts; and SMRUC sees all people as potential leaders;

- We help people discover their gifts and find ways to offer their gifts for service.
- We ask people directly to serve at manageable tasks
- We train our leaders in fostering discipleship and community
- We offer our leaders inspiration, pastoral care and opportunities for renewal.
- Our ministers delegate tasks and share decision making with others who have the appropriate gifts.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." — James Baldwin

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see." — John F. Kennedy

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." — Proverbs 22:6

"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." — Deuteronomy 6:5-7

What We Heard



We heard loudly that children and youth programming is important and is a key part of our identity (what makes us unique). One of our highest needs identified in the survey was need to offer opportunities for children and youth to grow in their faith.

We also heard that people want a greater sense of belonging, and a connection between faith and daily life. This is true of children and youth as much as it is adults.

You said that we want a church that is inviting and welcoming to everyone (9.6/10) and we value the presence and contribution of all ages (9.2/10).

In Reflection

The idea of *Belong, Behave, Believe* is particularly apt for children and youth. First and foremost they need an accepting, nurturing, challenging community to belong to. Over time they understand the processes, rituals and stories of the community and faith, and begin to find meaning. Through this and through the community, they can come to faith.

Children and youth programming exposes young people to, and fosters an appreciation for, faith, church and worship. It can be a place that ignites them into action in the world. This is the place to have hard conversations about values and morality; to explore the meaning of existence; to talk about things like friendship and bullying and activism and justice and love and hurt – all those things that kids need to talk about. And we get to do it in a context of faith and talk about why and how faith speaks to all of it.

Children and Youth ministry is one of the most important things we can do to have impact. As JFK said, this is an investment for a time that we won't see. But it is crucial.

Children and Youth ministry involves many of the same aspects of Adult ministry, but with some notably different focus. This includes worship, community and how we build disciples. It also means that we need programming and structure that will keep young people engaged through their 20s. The idea of programming that engages children at all ages is key.

Community is the most essential theme for youth and young adults. Providing and fostering their sense of community and providing them opportunities to build and explore that is crucial. This includes a community amongst themselves, community with the congregation, and community with the wider church. Some of the most meaningful experiences and faith development moments can come from participation at youth events because of the intentional community that is built. These should be encouraged and fostered in every possible way.



The Vision

Creating Disciples

- We offer age appropriate programming that engages children, youth and young adults at all ages
- Our programming teaches about faith and how that can apply to daily life challenges (how to respond to bullying, etc.)
- Our programming explores the SMRUC mission and what it means to live up to it within and outside of our church

Worship

- Worship uses a lot of story telling
- Worship balances discipleship programming and worship
- Youth and young adults are involved in the planning and design of their worship and programming
- Children and youth are given opportunities to participate in and to lead the SMRUC community in worship (as individuals and as a group)

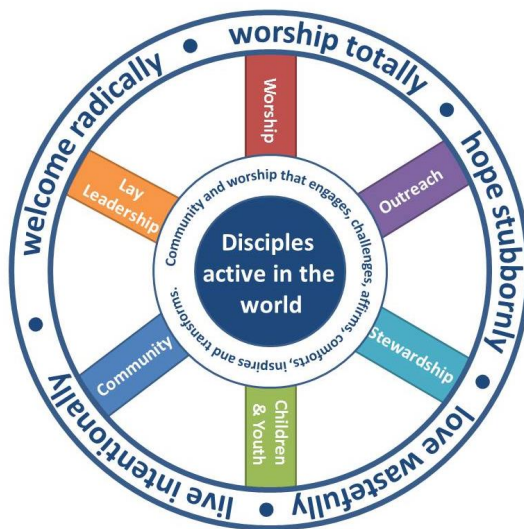
Community

- We foster and support the development of community for youth and young adults.
- We support connection to the wider church for youth and young adults.
- We help develop a sense of stewardship for children and youth.
- We leave room in our children and youth programming for the spirit, for unstructured play, and for community to happen.

ST. MARY'S ROAD UNITED
CHURCH

PURPOSE AND VISION

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- Worship is accessible, with particular attention to the newcomer.
- Worship involves members of the congregation in many ways, from leadership to personal stories etc.
- We support and encourage everyone to nurture their God-given gifts and, in gratitude, share them.
- We talk about the gift of money, how we are stewards of this gift in all aspects of our lives.
- We talk very directly about our church's financial needs and ask for what we need.
- We offer opportunities that allow our members and adherents to go out to perform Outreach and to be inspired.
- We nurture the many gifts and talents of our members and adherents through training that will promote going out and doing good work.
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- We focus on welcoming by giving people tools and strategies to welcome the newcomer
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- We focus on pastoral care by expanding how we care for each other and giving people the tools and opportunity to be a friend.
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