

Visioning

News

Working towards a New Vision for Southminster United Church - Issue 6

Our Final Visioning News Report!

The vision is about building upon the personality of this community - flaming the heart of the existing community - to help the congregation to embrace and live out its vision through the work of renewal and rebirth.

Our Identity Statement

Southminster United Church is a multigenerational Christian faith community in Old Ottawa South that seeks to offer a variety of ways to:

Seek Justice
Love Kindness
Walk humbly with God.

Mission Statement:

At Southminster we are called to:

1. **Seek Justice:** Recognize that we are rooted in Jesus' relationship with those on the fringes, we embrace a vision of "right relationship" in our dealing with one another, with community and with the world.
2. **Love Kindness:** Celebrate our hospitality through an open and intentional welcome and through our care for one another and community.
3. **Walk Humbly with God:** Open opportunities for faith exploration that speak to diverse needs and interests and time availabilities.

Models of Change

At the outset of the visioning process, the group looked at three models of change: problem, developmental and frame bending:

Problem: The congregation is doing well but has a problem that needs adjusting.

Developmental: The congregation is doing faithful ministry appropriate to its context. It has ample resources of time and talent and is embracing its community and is seen as relevant. It just needs to build on what it is currently doing.

Frame Bending: The congregation is currently doing ministry that does not effectively address its context. The congregation needs to reassess its purpose and call from God.

Three Questions

The group believes that Southminster was in the "frame bending" stage when it entered its transitional stage six years ago. Much has shifted over these six years and some "frame bending" has begun. However, a frame bending shift is much more involved than the other two forms of change. It takes 12-18 months to assess and discover new



visions and the process needs repeating every 3-5 years. This kind of change asks the questions:

- **Who are we?**
- **Who is in our neighbouring community?**
- **What are we called to do?**

The task of our visioning team has been to struggle with these questions.

Who are we?

We have studied this by looking back into the vibrant history of Southminster looking for its “personality”. We have poured over the work of transition. We have looked to the identity of the United Church of Canada, which our congregation reflects. We have asked you to reflect on “what are you looking for” and to name Southminster’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. And we have looked into our own hearts while engaging in conversations with other attenders and members of Southminster. We believe that Southminster is:]

- **Rooted in the United Church of Canada:** with an abundance of members who are committed to embracing and promoting values of inclusion and peace, social justice, global awareness and environmental stewardship.
- **Non dogmatic:** interested in engaging in faith conversations and encouraging one another to explore faith together. A community more interested in conversations, dialogue than in creeds or dogmas.

**Live Faith:
Embrace Change**

- **Multigenerational:** the intergenerational mix is one of the great strengths articulated by all ages but particularly by young parents in the congregation. This strength has not been fully developed or even named.
- **In transition** from a community offering predominantly traditional worship and music to one opening up more alternatives in worship, faith and music.
- **Caring Community:** we are present to one another in trouble and in joy by listening, praying, helping, responding, and by sharing self and sharing faith.

Who is in our neighbouring community?

- **A broad range of ages** in the immediate neighbourhood -- including a high number of seniors and a growing percentage of families with young children. This mixed demographic speaks to a neighbourhood that chooses to be multigenerational and for whom that identity is important.
- **Families of many shapes and sizes:** Many in this demographic are away from family and may look to the church for a sense of extended “family”. These are looking for a congregation where young and old mix in worship, work, pastoral care and outreach.
- **Seniors:** some new to the neighbourhood, some long term

- **Carleton Community:** This exciting academic community has relatively untapped ministry potential. From students we have heard an embrace of values consistent with Southminster's: open theology, faith sharing, a passion for inclusion and social justice but they are also looking for a more fluid and open style of worship that includes them in dialogue, music, art and engaging in social justice initiatives. Much of our information comes from Tom Sherwood's work on "Listening to the Echo (generation)" and from conversation with Chaplain Wayne Menard and our own students.
- **Committed to Environmental and Social Justice** - our neighbours often speak with admiration of the work our congregation does for others -- particularly "Out of the Cold", Stephen Lewis Lecture/Concert, Rainbow Flag on sign, peace rally, presence at Capital Pride.

What are we called to do?

There is interesting overlap between the gift of who we are and the faith and social values of many in the surrounding community.



Seek Justice

Recognizing that we are rooted in Jesus' relationship with those on the fringes, we embrace a vision of "right relationship" in our dealing with one another, with community and with the world. We live out our spirituality in concrete, caring ways:

Continue to be a voice for justice and peace: through continuing commitment to mission and outreach (like M&S Fund, Out of the Cold, Center 507 etc)

Develop a yearly outreach theme consistent with our sense of calling and invite the community to partner with us in the activities we embrace, thereby increasing a sense of partnership and engagement in faith.

How: Yearly theme developed by LNGO and approved by council

Create networks to share our passion for justice to inspire others. Southminster has a number of committed people working in a variety of social justice ministries. But rarely do we share this passion with one another. **How:** Ask LNGO (Outreach) committee to create communication tools to support and encourage and share wisdom. (possibly through church announcement time, coffee conversations or through another networking tool) **Time frame: 2-3 months.**

Be more intentionally "affirming": following Jesus' example of care and compassion for all people especially the marginalized, open ourselves to creating caring community for those most marginalized by faith communities. We believe that if Southminster is safe space for people of all sexual orientations to explore their faith, that it will also become safer space for others who feel marginalized. The visioning team feels that Southminster is *already* affirming in practice. What is needed is to "own" that reality and communicate that we are that "safe space." and to continue growing in our ability to live that fully as a congregation. **How:** we have already been living this reality. Name ourselves as affirming and grow into our name by publicly saying so. Begin a series of conversations to help address any questions that members have or to speak to any worries that might be present as well as to sensitize heterosexual members to the spiritual crisis that has driving gay and lesbian Christians out of the church.

Time frame: One session will be incorporated into the pastoral care workshops (see below) in the fall. Invite qualified members of our Presbytery to lead additional sessions with the congregation subsequent to the pastoral care workshops concluding.

Embrace and Articulate who we are by using signage, media, public events

Love Kindness

Celebrate our hospitality through an open invitation to all to explore their Christian faith in diverse ways.

Ensure that our building is not a barrier, but rather a beacon of welcome, accessibility and sanctuary (safety/refuge).

How:

- **Develop our Caring Community:** *offer a series of workshops for the entire congregation on pastoral care topics such as: dying, grief, accompaniment, job loss, creating space for newcomers, being sensitive to cultural difference, inclusion of children, living with progressive chronic illness (Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Dementia, Mental illness) Encourage broad attendance and sense that all have something to contribute and begin to work more effectively as a faith community. How: working group to plan pastoral care symposium. time frame: held in Sept/October. Funding: learning fund + registration fee*
- have "valet" style parking for people with mobility issues, address access to the elevator and chancel from the sanctuary, improve signage throughout building) (add valet role to usher duties especially in winter months, mandate property to address access issues, create temporary signs to better direct inside "flow") **how:** add to duties of ushers or add an usher. If well used, increase ushers available to do this work. **Time frame:** immediate
- Put automatic door openers on the ramp door on Aylmer **time frame:** immediate
- **Create** adaptations to create full access to meeting rooms from sanctuary , and access to offices **time frame:** 1 year
- **Accelerate improvements to acoustics and sound system: time frame** - ask property to investigate options and report back
- **Continue to open our building to use by and for the community** (through property committee - *time frame: continuing*)
- **Open Sanctuary for people who want to sit and pray throughout the week: time frame:** September with support of a committed team.
- **Design a consistent community response to world/local crisis events** - make sure that church is

automatically open whenever natural disaster happens, signs, etc letting people know they can come together to pray, plan and respond. **How:** ask Music and Sanctuary to tackle this and develop a protocol. **Time frame:** 3-4 months.

Walk Humbly with God

- **Continue** to evolve our current worship style as a distinctive ministry that blends traditional music with more contemporary music, opens room for lay leaders to offer musical, dramatic, visual art a variety of sermon styles, evolving rituals... (**time frame:** *ongoing through evolving worship team, minister and musician*)
- **Create an alternative / contemporary worshipping community** with its own funded ministry/music position to -- in partnership with the current ministry position -- **how:** appoint a working group to further analyze the envionics study and write a proposal for United Church Funding for New Ministry Initiatives. **Time frame:** **to be complete by January.**
- **Resource a variety of opportunities for spiritual growth** (faith exploration, book clubs, meditation, spiritual practices, discussion, conversation, un-conferences), **how:** with congregational approval form a *working group more clearly define the shape of such an outreach. Time frame:* group to begin work in the summer and report to council in the fall. **Funding:** the learning fund
- **Grow our inclusivity:** be responsive to needs: offer workshops on grieving/ cancer / separation / support / sexuality/spirituality/social justice (short term groups with childcare) **How:** small leadership teams of gifted lay leaders. Develop a list of resource people who can. **time frame:** as need / passion intersect. **Funding:** the learning fund.

