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Summary of Overall Impressions

The pandemic created space to acknowledge longer-term patterns of declining attendance and aging congregations in many parishes, and to express urgency around retaining and recruiting parishioners. Lay participants identify attracting younger participants as key to the survival of their parishes. They want someone else, such as the diocese or another church, to tell them the right thing to do to get younger people to come to church. The underlying transactional assumption is that the church must identify the needs of younger people, and that meeting these needs will bring them back into the church, which will in turn meet the needs of the church. Participants presume this will require changes to worship style (especially music), to programming, or to the use of technology. They understand coming back to church to involve attending regularly, volunteering in leadership, and giving financially. Many participants nostalgically envision full pews on Sunday, thriving children's ministries, and the church as the centre of the life of the wider community.

From my perspective as a scholar of religion in Canada and a theologian, this is not a realistic prospect for most parishes nor is it a suitable framework for a bold transformative vision for the diocese. However, understanding the attitudes and assumptions that lay participants bring is a crucial background for developing, communicating, and implementing a bold transformative vision for the future of a church—a church that will necessarily look different from the past.

Through the pandemic, lay participants have learned that change is possible and may even be positive. Many indicate openness and even enthusiasm for change, although they are primarily interested in change to attract more young people and other newcomers to the church, not for the sake of their own faith and practice.

Liturgy is the focus of many suggestions for change with an underlying desire for more energetic and relevant worship that connects liturgy and everyday life. Music is described as central to this shift. Participants also emphasize changes to the relationship between the church and the wider community, especially in terms of more deliberate efforts to meet local material, social, and spiritual needs. With some exceptions, change in both areas is framed in relation to a desire for church growth; however, both liturgical vitality and strengthened relationships with the wider community could be pursued as ends in themselves.

Lay participants have high expectations of clergy whom they see as essential leaders in effecting change. Some long for a larger role for lay leadership, while others lament the burden lay leaders bear. Participants look to the diocese for resources and to facilitate greater collaboration among parishes, across Christian traditions, and with community organizations.

While there are some concerns about technology, there is broad appreciation for the ways that technology has facilitated parish life in recent years and widespread affirmation for the ongoing importance of technology in the future. This changing relationship with virtual and physical space may also inform ambivalence toward church buildings, which are viewed as both a burden and an opportunity to better serve the community through the repurposing of space, particularly for social services and affordable housing.

Visionary minority voices depart from the dominant narrative of change for the purpose of survival. They reflect on why they are part of the church as a starting point for naming key values. They share moments when the church has been particularly significant in their lives. They express a desire for spiritual connection with God and to go back to the basics of the Christian faith. They name a need to be the church beyond Sunday by living as disciples of Jesus every day.

Process

- I received 45 sets of notes from lay listening groups that represent between 400 and 500 lay people in the Anglican Diocese of Toronto. Individuals were invited to participate in the groups by parish clergy.
- I read through the notes carefully and added codes to each point using MaxQDA. I used the approximately 75 codes developed in the process of coding the clergy data as a starting point and added about 25 additional codes in the process of coding the lay notes. This resulted in 100 distinct codes and more than 3,700 codings. The notes vary in length and complexity with the number of codes applied to each document ranging from 22 to 182 codes with an average of 83 codes per document.
- I determined which codes appear most frequently overall and most consistently across listening groups. These dominant themes are a starting point for the analysis. In addition, I considered visionary minority voices within and beyond these themes.
- I review all segments associated with each theme to identify patterns in terms of how participants address key topics. Selected examples are included in the report.
- Key quotes that highlight distinct or contrasting perspectives are highlighted throughout.

Central Themes

Table 1 summarizes the central themes that were the focus of the listening groups.

The left side of Table 1 presents the 20 most frequently used codes by number of coded segments. These top 20 codes account for 60% of total codings and therefore represent the dominant themes in the listening group discussions.

Note that “Younger People” is the dominant theme by a significant margin, with almost 50 more codings than the next most frequent code of “Change / Flexibility / Newness.” “Younger People” occurs 3.5 times more than “Naming Jesus.” “Younger People” is a relatively unambiguous theme to code (compared to “Discipleship” or “Spirituality” for example); however, even taking this into account, younger people are clearly a central concern for lay participants.

The right side of Table 1 presents the 20 codes that appear in the largest number of documents, which approximate listening groups. These 20 themes were discussed in two thirds of the 45 documents and therefore represent the dominant themes in the listening group discussions.

Note the significant overlap in themes between Table 1 and Table 2 which suggests a consistency in focus across groups. Participants in groups also make significant connections among these top themes.

Table 1: Central Themes in Lay Listening Groups

Top 20 Codes by Number of Coded Segments		Top 20 Codes by Number of Listening Groups	
Code	Segments (3,700 total)	Code	Documents (45 total)
Younger People	241	Change / Flexibility / Newness	45
Change / Flexibility / Newness	193	Online / Virtual / Technology	43
Online / Virtual / Technology	180	Younger People	42
Liturgy	180	Relationships with the wider community	40
Evangelism / Outreach	157	Covid / Pandemic	40
Relationships with the wider community	145	Liturgy	40
Growth / Decline / Size	127	Stability / Continuity / Resistance to Change	38
Covid / Pandemic	111	Growth / Decline / Size	37
Buildings	102	Evangelism / Outreach	37
Stability / Continuity / Resistance to Change	100	Community / Relationships	34
Older People	75	Music	33
Social Service / Justice Ministries	75	Social Service / Justice Ministries	33
Music	72	Buildings	33
Community / Relationships	70	Role of Diocese	32
Role of Clergy (Including Deacons)	68	Older People	32
Naming Jesus	68	Reflections on the Passage	32
Role of Diocese	62	Naming Jesus	30
Why go to church?	58	Why go to church?	30
Listening	58	Invitational / Hospitality / Welcome	30
Collaboration	53	Role of Clergy (Including Deacons)	29
Total	2,195		

Analysis of Central Themes

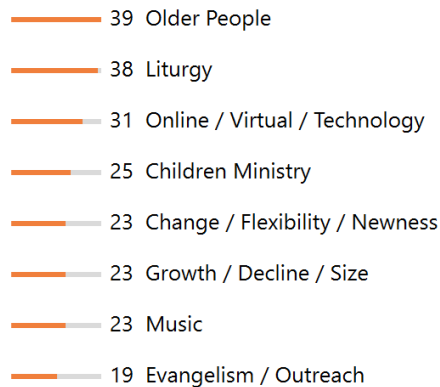
Points in the discussion below are quotes from the listening group notes. In most cases, a selection of examples is provided rather than a comprehensive list of excerpts.

The central themes of “Change/ Flexibility / Newness” and “Stability / Continuity / Resistance” are not addressed as distinct categories but instead relate to many of the themes examined in greater depth below which provide more nuanced insights into the widespread appetite for change, as well as cautions toward stability.

Younger People (and Older People)

“Younger People” is a starting point for this analysis because for many participants this is the idea governing their approach to other themes and their vision for the future. This code overlaps with many of the other most frequent codes and therefore offers a framework for the sections that follow (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Most frequent code co-occurrences with Younger People (241)



Participants in focus groups frequently refer to “young people.” While at times this is a reference to a specific population, it often seems to point toward children, youth, young adults, and young families broadly, and is defined primarily in contrast with “older people.”

Participants name that **most churches consist primarily of older people:**

- Only older people attend church.
- I am the sexton at our church; its just a lot of octogenarians and the numbers are shrinking in our church.
- We are a church of “Cradle Anglicans” with an age of 60+years. There are no young people or young children. Our Interim priest is retired. In 5 years I can see the church shrinking to half of what it is now.
- Getting younger people in; average age now over 70. Lost a generation or two. Lost more than we gain.
- Parishioners are older and it’s harder to come up with ideas and to implement them.
- We are all 70+
- Our own old age is a barrier – the people who are left try but we can only do as much as we can do and its not as much as we did 20 years ago. How do we up the energy?
- I’m 56 and I’m one of the youngest people at my parish.

An alternative perspective:

One exception: Had an older demographic but seeing new, younger people lately.

There is a desire for more **younger people to be involved in the church**. Almost every discussion of a vision for the church of 2028 includes description of young and vibrant congregations:

- In 2028... We have energized teens; youngsters attend our church by offering their volunteering. Groups of youth are playing guitars and providing some music and some others sing our services. We have Messy Church that brings in families to do crafts and hear scripture. We share food to eat and we keep these young folks engaged. They keep on going and we are intentional about keeping young folks.
- Found new ways to find vitality with youth, not just limiting your program focus to those older; rather the church has attracted young families, new generations actively using the church as their home base.
- There were younger families, children from the immediate neighbourhood. Happiness, fellowship, vision. As new energy becomes available to others, that energy can be taken outside to help others.
- In 5 years hope to have a much younger congregation, passionate with children and youth.
- I'd see younger people in the church in 2028.

Most participants focus on the involvement of younger people in relation to **the survival of the church**:

- We have developed an urgency when we go to church now. The new reality is that our church is aging we don't want the end of the church.
- Crisis for us too, seeing a decline gradually. We are in crisis mode. We have to do things differently to attract more people, especially the youth. Have to think of ways to get people in the pews. The time is NOW. We have to do it NOW.
- I think we don't just try to get people come back to church but should invite new people to the church. We don't have people under 50. Looks like the whole demographic is missing. ... We need to find people from the next generation; otherwise the church will die off.
- Biggest thing is a lot of gray hair, if they want a future, must get the children, people are getting older.
- We are tired, 70 years of age. We need younger people to take over, but they are not there.
- Can't think of any future if church cannot reach out to people aged 19 to 30.
- Church cannot afford to lose the young generation.

There are important exceptions, who express concern for the **spiritual, psychological, social, and material wellbeing** of young people:

- In 5 years time, we would have that focus – not on ourselves, on numbers, but on the young people themselves – and encourage them to come in.
- It's important and foundational to relate to younger generation how wonderful it is to have Jesus in their lives. Must instill knowledge of Christ in our children.
- I largely work with young adults (though some of them tend to be more youth than young adults). I would hope that this group in 2028 would be more involved in Church worship, passionate about Christ.
- Younger generation can benefit from foundational knowledge of Christ in times of crisis.
- What is the right way to reach young people? There's a huge void, they want to experience spirituality, but do not know how to experience it. Opportunity for church to build bridge to connect with them in the right way.
- There was concern growing over Covid, the feeling was sensed by young people. Was an overall sense of heaviness in society, being separated from each other and loss of hope and renewal.
- We have to find a way to reach those young people. Young people today are crying for help but how do we reach them? As we're aging, we have to find language and attitude to corral people back into a Christian community.
- Family ministry took a hit in the pandemic; need to recapture that; offer solace and peace in these trying times; be there for you and with you; establish community.
- I see during the pandemic we've taken ourselves further away from providing community support and backup for young people who do not have the village support. I see this as negative. The young people, young mothers,

fathers, children, grandchildren are struggling to find support. There's a lot of negative energy that is not being turned. How do we do it differently but do it the same?

- People that need the church are those that are hurting – economy; what the church can do is to combine these resources we have across communities to really solace to those that need it. Worst time in my life that are suffering; 20s & 30s needing help.
- We all want young families but they are edged out of living in the community. So how do we roll with this challenge? How can we be responsible partners to participate in finding solutions? We need to advocate and not just centre on worship. We need to be with God in this.

An alternative emphasis on the role of families:

Parents and grandparents' role in introducing children to Christ and church. Not just to be entertained and socialized but to actually develop a relationship with Jesus.

There is a desire to **hear from younger people directly**, particularly regarding what they need or want from the church:

- Go to unchurched and youth in community and ask them what do they need from the church/from us to support their journey.
- The demographic is changing, and we must think out of the box to talk to young people. Develop trust and less judgment. I need help to do this.
- Stop inviting the six of us but invite people under age 25 – hold focus groups involving young people. Things might not be relevant for those of us now in 2028. Is it more relevant for the future that we see people 20 to 23 who will be 25 to 28 then? Get their input on the table.
- We must look at not just getting people back, but getting new people in, we're missing a demographic—young people. As human beings, we should want to worship with other age groups. The young people are not finding what they need to have their children come to church and find the value. Cast the Net is to find a new generation.
- Whatever we are doing, obviously, we cannot continue to do what we are doing. People will die off. Have to do things differently. Otherwise, will have no one to carry on. Even my children are not coming to church. Have to find out why. May be what we have been doing is not engaging, too far out of dates, no changes in the last 50 years.

However, participants primarily hope that someone, such as the diocese or other congregations with established best practices, will **tell them what to do to attract younger people**. This question is a repeated refrain:

- What can we do to encourage youth who will be in the church in 2028? What are we doing to encourage them to come?
- We know we need families. How do you attract new families?
- How to get more young families in church?
- Diocese can give us some good ideas to attract younger families – no cold calls, but marketing ideas.
- It's difficult to bridge the generations—we need to learn from what others are doing that's working.
- We need a plan to get the younger generation back into the church. The older generation – us – we used to be young with our young kids. We see the very young ones but once they are in high school, we don't see them again.
- Different ideas and where we want to go. I am feeling a little lost. e.g. Messy Church, why were we not successful? How do we get people back in the pews and new people in?

Alongside the overwhelming focus on younger people, there are a few participants who emphasize **reaching and retaining older people**:

- Do not just look at young families, retirees are moving into cottage country and are church shopping, what do we have to offer.
- Revitalization – before pandemic, no young people so concentrate on needs of ‘old’ people – retirees need spiritual and cultural needs met.
- We need to reconnect with the elderly. They were in our church long before we were and feel disconnected.
- Our vision for the future includes electronic media—we have found that the virtual coffee hour has brought people in their 80s and 90s into a sense of community; they would have been otherwise isolated.
- How can we welcome young people and not alienate older people? “Let’s not welcome new people at the cost of existing people.” Older people/existing people like the Anglican traditions. We can’t compromise on that.
- Don’t forget the older population as you try to bring in the younger people. They should be valued just as much.
- Maybe in the 5 years that have passed so swiftly, we looked around and discovered that we had too much real estate, so we got government grants to build retirement residences, then we got the parish and community members involved in planning, building, outfitting and helping to operate retirement residences, which turned out to be a hugely successful community building exercise.

There is a hope that the church will serve both younger and older people, and **bring generations together**:

- A church should be a place where different generations come together (one of the few places where you see interactions between the generations).
- Meet needs of all parishioners – families with young children, elderly.
- Try new things but keep traditional for older members/new things to catch younger people/offer the variety.
- Perhaps seek out ways where there is a unique partnership with the elderly and children in storytelling or sharing faith stories.
- Set groups up with a mix of young people and seniors.

In the analysis that follows, participants share a variety of thoughts on **how to appeal to younger people**, often focused on changes to worship style (especially music), to church programming, or the use of technology. Sharing leadership with younger generations is also a repeated theme. However, there is one participant, described by the notetaker as a “youngerish man,” who offers a compelling perspective that can counter and frame the analysis:

[Youngerish man responding] I grew up not in the Anglican church – in the Christian Alliance Church. It’s community that drew me to God and community defined by love, kindness, and inspired leadership. Youth outreach is fine but do not lose sight of our core values – what is attractive is love, inherent in a congregation, not tech. It’s by finding a loved community. There’s no abuse of power – that happens across all denominations. The conversation is relevant, and people find trusted leadership that shows love and inspiration. Welcoming is intentional and genuine.

A Note on Demographic Context of Religion in Canada

An important step toward a realistic bold and transformative vision is recognizing the demographic realities shaping religion in Canada:

- 1) The Canadian population is aging. Even if Anglican parishes had retained all the participants from the mid-twentieth century (and they have not) congregations would be older now than in the past.
- 2) Younger Canadians are more likely to be new Canadians and very unlikely to be Anglican. Many new Canadians identify with non-Christian religions. Those who are Christian are more likely to be Catholic or Free Church.

Regardless of their tradition, New Canadian Christians often and understandably prefer to worship with their own cultural and linguistic communities.

- 3) Generational religious change is shaping the religious landscape across the Global North. Over the past century, each generation has been successively less religious than the preceding generation in measures of affiliation, practice, and belief. These are large-scale patterns in survey data yet also patterns that participants can often see in their own families.

While there will be individuals who are exceptions to these patterns, and there will be certain congregations that defy these trends, it is not reasonable to expect an individual, a clergy person, a congregation, or even a diocese to redirect these powerful and sweeping social forces. It is crucial to have reasonable expectations of what a vibrant and flourishing Anglican parish can look like today and in the years ahead.

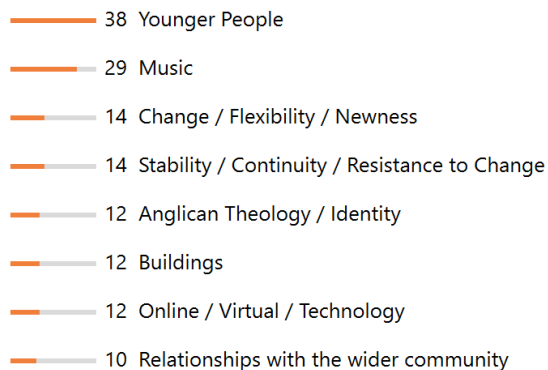
Additional resources about religious change in Canada, generational religious change, and youth and religion:

- Brian Clarke and Stuart Macdonald, *Leaving Christianity: Changing Allegiances in Canada since 1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).
- Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, *Religion, Spirituality and Secularity among Millennials: The Generation Shaping American and Canadian Trends* (New York: Routledge, 2023).
- There is a vast literature on youth and religion.

Liturgy (and Music)

Participants suggest changes associated with many aspects of liturgy, including style, language, preaching, space, time, length, and especially music. The following discussion frames these concrete suggestions with an analysis of the underlying principles for liturgical change and what participants perceive to be the purpose of change.

Figure 2: Most Frequent Code Co-Occurrences with Liturgy (180)



Principles for Liturgical Change – Energetic Affect, Relevance, Linking Liturgy and Ethics

There are three principles implied directly and indirectly in many of the comments related to liturgical change.

The first is a desire for liturgy that is more **energetic, informal, and emotionally engaging** in terms of its overall mood and feel:

- Church has to be fun; church spoke a lot about joy but never was joyful, too constrained by tradition or pessimism, joyful church is contagious.
- We need to update ourselves, break away from the traditional form of worship, introduce more fun stuff that raises you up. New music that is uplifting.
- Something to excite people and bring them into the building. Something that's not boring.

- I have 5 grandchildren and they like to be with me but they are bored in church when I bring them. They prefer their Dad's church where they participate in every part of the service.
- Exciting new ways to do liturgy – more 21st century hymns (not saying we need guitars, etc....), contemporary elements in the service for a contemporary society.
- Church should be full and noisy – you don't have to sit still and be quiet. There should be no judgement for making noise or moving about the room talking to each other – we should operate as one family. There should be an open and welcoming atmosphere that brings people in.
- It's not engaging, too formal.
- Make liturgy more engaging for people new to the church, it isn't necessary to change it in a big way – but explain the traditions – don't be so serious about everything.
- We need to have music that leaves people with a good feeling. We need to update ourselves, still Anglican but may need to breakaway from traditional services.

An alternative perspective:

Need some vibrancy for all Anglicans not just young people.

The second is a desire for worship that is **immediately relevant** to the concerns of the community:

- The Sunday services will need to be more lively and reflect concerns of parishioners and neighborhoods.
- We would have updated how we present the liturgy and talk about the Bible so that it is relevant to young people (20+ crowd).
- Modernizing the service – more to today's standards; not quite so old fashioned; way of presenting the service; give younger people more relating to them than to the past.

The third is a desire to **connect liturgy and an everyday ethic of compassion and justice**:

- We've got this church issue - where do we stick with tradition and routine and liturgy and language and where do we live Christ's life?
- Traditional ministry and worship can be good, but we are more than the formalities of worship. We are made up of ex-evangelicals and are drawn some of us to liturgy and the is good. But we need to be better at creating community and cooperation, being acts of mercy.
- I'm finding in my own family that they were raised Anglican, they have a deep spirituality and bonding with the natural world. They are worrying about creation and the environment. They are uninterested in following a doctrine – that's why they don't go to church. They care deeply about caring for each other and their children and the community. Hymns and prayers don't appeal to them. They live a Christian life without practising Christianity. We need to tap into the real concern about the world we live it and frame it in a way that isn't the traditional liturgy approach.
- Sometimes while sitting in our church at worship, looking at the beautiful stained glass and seeing all the money that we've spent here, and then thinking about the church's role in Residential Schools I wonder, 'do we need to renounce all our wealth?'
- Christianity is more than worship – its also the works of the people in the church. And how can we be Anglicans without the Eucharist? Well we can work in the community and get involved in peoples' lives and continue Christ's work.
- If we don't go out to the community, they only look at us as an institution, the building and our rites and traditions. Only when we are out there, the community sees us for what we are, and our compassion.

Purpose of Liturgical Change – Attracting New Participants

Most participants advocate for liturgical change for the purpose of **attracting new parishioners**, usually either younger people or newcomers to the Anglican or Christian Tradition. In this way, they encourage the church to “put people before rituals,” in the words of one participant.

- We have to learn to become more creative in attracting people to come to worship and become part of the community: community is essential in whatever we do!
- We have to distinguish by identifying the core, important things in our church life and expressing them effectively. Most obvious is worship. We need good liturgy, music, sermon. But it’s also about doing good outreach, tied to music and worship. And doing that well.
- Change what we are doing, people are comparing churches – so need to attract with worship, music.

Liturgical change with **younger people** in mind is the dominant focus:

- There needs to be a generational change in music, style of dress, informality (bring coffee with them): it’s like Ward and June Clever meet Will and Grace; or Archie and Edith Bunker meet Modern Family!
- 2028: We have a vision of our church filled with families with children—we’ve attracted them because we have changed our ways to do things to appeal to families through our music, language, and style of worship. We have learned how to be more appealing!
- Young people are looking for more contemporary worship, not the traditional type—would this attract people back?
- Service modified to suit younger people.
- We really have to look forward, what change will bring people to us. We don’t want to change the Anglican service totally, but need to change and find ways to bring in the younger people. We need to encourage the young people and ask them what do they want. Many have not heard about God before and have to find ways to interest them to come to us. Find out what the young people want. Young people don’t know about God these days, as they don’t get it from the school anymore.
- Music plays an important part in worship on Sunday; appeals to every soul; not forget about Anglican songs; incorporate contemporary styles; Kenya – same prayer book but different music! Church is vibrant; use that a platform to reach others; sacrifice our worship practices for the younger people.
- Young families with children – bring them in a way that appeal to them – music, language of prayers

Liturgical change with **newcomers** in mind is a secondary focus:

- To reach people who have been away from church for a while, or never gone to church, there is a strong need for teaching and education, along with meaningful worship.
- The traditional rituals (liturgy) mean less to them especially non-Christians. Feel less connected.
- Special service to meet needs of seeker – informal service – sense of spirituality to meet needs not just fishing.
- Formal and traditional Sunday worship no longer appealing to the people especially the unchurched.
- How to welcome people into our worship even if they don’t come from an Anglican tradition.

Areas for Liturgical Change

Participants put forward suggestions for changes to liturgical practice in many areas.

Some suggest changes to **liturgical style**, usually framed as juxtaposing a more rigid and structured “traditional” style with a more informal “contemporary” approach. It is noteworthy that a “contemporary” approach is often described as supplementing rather than replacing a “traditional” approach and it is therefore unclear which service participants would intend to attend themselves.

- Carry 2 different worship services – contemporary and traditional – can we achieve a blend? Or update the BAS?

- Hopefully a new kind of worship service. Not to replace our BAS service but something new in addition that will connect with people in a different way. I see the non-denominational community / family churches that seem to be full of life and energy and wonder what they are doing that we might adopt and add to our own ways of doing things. I feel there are a lot of people who believe, but are looking for different ways to worship and be in community with other believers.
- Early traditional service with choir; next service open door with band, no communion, casual service/more laid back service at 10.
- 2 services – one with rock n roll group with rock songs that fit with scripture.
- Don't water-down the message but provide different types of services.
- In a larger group we can still have a traditional service and a sister church hold up what younger people need – different music or services.
- Different types of services, traditional, non-traditional, children friendly.
- Came to Anglicanism for the liturgy, love to sing but the church can move away from being rigid to try different things like biblical storytelling or music like gospel bands.
- Give up some traditional ways (including Anglican liturgy).
- So maybe we do have to give up traditional services – sometimes only 1 person comes out to the 8 am.

Many participants suggest updating **liturgical language**, often in line with the principles and purposes outlined above:

- As at Pentecost – people hearing in a language they understand.
- Make the language more functional in today's context. The worship is stilted, no room for engagement and interaction.
- Our priest uses The Message to make our readings more accessible but lots of people resist it.
- Get rid of ancient language – modern message & language.
- When I grew up I did not like studying Shakespeare and the language – but that is the language in our hymns and in our prayers all those 'thees and thous'. Our Church language (liturgy) doesn't speak to the young people. Change some language to fit them in. Our priests sound like Shakespeare to them. Hillsong music is direct, and they understand it – it speaks to my grandchildren about joy, mercy, and goodness.
- Modify prayers in BAS to be more appealing to younger generation.
- I think there's an opportunity for reform of some of the language to make it appealing for more people.
- Explore using non-gender terms for God.
- Get rid of the repetitiveness.
- We can start by changing the language of our prayers and hymns.
- Praying for the Royal family, the Queen (or now the King) may not be necessary. It evokes colonialism. The prayers should be more local to our daily lives, pray for our Prime Minister and in our words. The current prayers of the people, the liturgy may be too structural. We should allow more personal time to pray from everyone to participate as they wish.
- Other creeds might resonate more to express creation story – more modern, easy to understand language – simpler language.
- Get rid of parts of the service (get rid of Nicene Creed -keep Nicene Creed).

Participants point to a desire for **preaching** that is relevant and interactive:

- I applaud my priest. Every sermon I hear from my priest is applicable to what is going on today in my life – he knows how to preach – it's not just Jesus said this and Jesus said that – it's about how you can use what Jesus said to transform your life and make it better. Will that attract more people? I don't know.
- The way that we go to a church service and we are given the facts about scripture and that's it. We need more ability to ask questions at that time and get a better understanding of these questions. Young people can get

instant gratification on their computers – we’re not going to attract them if we’re saying the same things over and over again and they can’t ask questions. We had the minister do the “hot seat” and people could ask him questions and it became dialogue instead of strict oration.

- I would like to hear more references to current events at the pulpit.
- Let go some of our staid ways of doing things; tend to not be exuberant; using more music; telling the gospel, using the oral tradition; more interactive sermons; invite people into the conversation; flexible space.
- Period of reflection and discussion after every scripture reading – relaxation
- Sermons – new way of talking about message and having dialogue, not how people see Christianity.

Participants recommend changes to the **length** of liturgies, specifically recommending shorter services:

- Our church services need to be shorter too, and energetic. 100% the governance piece is too much.
- A new structure is needed – activities should be more concise - keep it Bible based but respect the time people have – meet them where they are.
- Shorter service – one message, one prayer.
- In addition to alternate times and alternate lengths of services – kids’ attention spans are getting shorter every year – immediacy of feedback, impact and excitement drives kids – shorter services, different ways of engaging music – organs and old hymns are not attractive to young people. In the 2028 idea we can engage in church from home – young people might not be able to afford cars, they have short attention spans, they want exciting stuff – shorter services might be part of vibrancy.

Some suggest worship in **physical spaces** in addition to or instead of church buildings, or making changes to existing liturgical spaces:

- Two different services – traditional service in sanctuary, one service out of sanctuary.
- Getting outside the church building, have had outdoor services, some parishioners stayed in their vehicles, but at least they were there.
- Last year I was part of a Good Friday walk. We went into the playground at the church and did part of our service there and people in the community stopped to listen. Then we went to a nearby park to finish the service. It shows them who we are and attracts them to us.
- We have accepted new ideas. In a new church space we have not put in pews so we can arrange the seating to meet the needs, e.g. in a circle.
- Can we just keep a piece of the stain glass? Not enough room for all the old “stuff” with the new.
- Too stuck on sanctuary – use auditorium instead of sanctuary.
- Learn to worship in different spaces -this will lead to worshipping in different ways.

Numerous participants suggest alternative **times** when worship gatherings could take place to appeal to a wider diversity of potential practitioners:

- Bring Church to people. More options for services besides on Sundays.
- We need service times better suited to young people.
- Not necessarily a Sunday service maybe a Saturday evening or afternoon service
- Saturday service @ 5pm to draw upon people coming to cottage for the weekend.
- Have services specifically for the youth to get young families back in church perhaps a Wednesday night service.
- Yes 8 & 11 on Sunday don’t work with hockey – can we move it to Thursday evening? Find something that has more compatibility with/for our neighbours.

An alternative perspective:

People don't want to go to church to worship. Not just about time.

Eucharist

It is noteworthy that the **eucharist** is not generally a focus of comments on liturgy, apart from an appreciation for a return to reception in person and a desire for access in rural areas:

- When my husband and I went back to church we were excited to have communion again.
- When our churches finally opened, it was like the disciples eating together with Jesus by the fire – so much joy in taking communion and being together again for the first time.
- Promote in person worship to receive Eucharist.
- A new couple said the church needs to modernize, it is too ancient. They don't like the common cup and would prefer individual cups.
- Less attachment to liturgy/eucharist.
- Trent-Durham is the biggest area who put a ban on deacon mass while churches are struggling with budgets. ... The cost is so challenging for a Eucharist in our neck of the woods.

Liturgical Music

Music is discussed in 2/3 of the listening groups and is one of the top 20 most frequently applied codes. Mentions of music are present throughout this analysis of liturgy and music. The dominant theme is a desire to change music to be more modern with the intention of fostering church growth, especially among younger people. There are very few concerns regarding musical change.

Participants name a **desire for change** to musical practices toward more vibrant and modern music:

- Our music has to change. We need new music, vibrant modern worship and music.
- Music is changed regularly so that the music that's heard is "new" each week. Change up the liturgy.
- Not be a traditional church. There is strength in the liturgy, but change the music.
- Exciting new ways to do liturgy – more 21st century hymns (not saying we need guitars, etc....), contemporary elements in the service for a contemporary society.
- Bring in incredible music.
- Good music is essential. (All participants agreed!)
- We need more music and more kinds of music [nods of agreement].

Participants describe specific **characteristics** of the new music they envision, at times referring to examples and instrumentation that imply contemporary worship music, and in other cases suggesting a broader interpretation of uplifting contemporary church music:

- Music – introduce drums, guitar.
- No more organ music - all different instruments e.g., fiddle, guitar, keyboard.
- Engage in different types of music (e.g., bands, young people dancing) – it will bring new people into the church and bring it back to life. Music is a big part of something new.
- Going back to the music, church has brought in drums and have a guitarist. Can also invite primary/ junior school/ music school grades to perform.
- Introduced a "Gospel Sunday" one Sunday per month. Intention is to get a different group of people to join, to reach a new set of people.

- Come to mind is the music, not just gospel music, more fun stuff, raises you up, uplifting music.
- Yes, steel drums – the steel drum band though was all old folks though – we need young people – everyone enjoying the music.
- Our church has a 3rd Sunday for praise music with upbeat music but using the old hymns.
- The way our hymns are sung – if they were more upbeat or more inviting. You can still do the same meaning and lyrics but to a different beat that would be more engaging to the younger generation. I've been watching service on the Islands and they have steel drums and are more lively. This is not a boring church; people are having fun.
- Change music. Add other music in addition to traditional hymns.
- I'm 56 and I'm one of the youngest people at my parish. Our 'new' music comes from the 1980s.

Many participants suggest musical change with the goal of **attracting new and especially younger people**:

- Ways to attract new people with music.
- We are trying to make a very attractive music program to engage new people. I see that as a big ministry in the future.
- Upbeat music can draw young people. They come to our church, and they don't feel anything.
- Upbeat music and different instruments help attract young people.
- Our music does not appeal to young people.
- Draw music from Christian artists to meet needs of young people.
- Groups of youth are playing guitars and providing some music and some others sing our services.
- Music should appeal to young people. Use more gospel hymns.
- I see pews full of people, mostly those who are 15-30. I'd love to see that with them bringing all their energy. Baptist church drawing hundreds of people, with their rock n' roll band! We have to get young people in.
- We need to adopt this practice and be very involved in the community as a church in local efforts and supports like an exceptional music program. Music is up-tempo and it is attracting the young people. Yet having said that I am not a praise and worship person but I think we need to find their secret.

An alternative perspective:

That kind of stirring music can get people more committed – even elderly parishioners.

Cautions regarding Liturgical Change

Alongside the dominant call for substantial liturgical change, there are certain participants who offer a note of caution: acknowledging potential resistance, advocating for continuity, encouraging balance or a gradual rate of change, or suggesting teaching rather than changing traditions:

- Our aging also means resistance to change. When I have to sing a new hymn, I am not happy about it.
- Maybe it's childhood and memories and feeling safe but many of the rituals are what I enjoy about church.
- Do something in a different way—but be careful, changing the nature of Sunday church services...many people—even millennials—like tradition.
- I think we need tradition as well – that's the anchor that keeps you going. There has to be something we repeat and expect with liturgy and behaviour in the church – otherwise it seems like a fly-by-night thing.
- No dimming down of liturgy, be creative. Be cautious about alienating current generous supporters.
- Keep liturgy for those who like it – there is depth to liturgy.

- [What would you need to give up?] The high point of my spiritual life is high Choral Eucharist in my comfortable liberal, modern 21st century parish. Kids need to have values not just social justice conversations. This is key and crucial but it's a difficult conversation.
- Must learn a way to blend our historical possessions with the new things that might be more useful. (This was said many different ways.)
- Gradual change from tradition to contemporary. It should be a process and a balance till all becomes gradually contemporary.
- Organic continuity – we have to keep growing, and where new life will come from is to be determined. We have to distinguish by identifying the core, important things in our church life and expressing them effectively. Most obvious is worship. We need good liturgy, music, sermon. But it's also about doing good outreach, tied to music and worship. And doing that well.
- Ask myself, why do I worship as an Anglican? Liturgical style is beautiful in all my senses. We have to reach out to different people. Educate people in our pews why do we do certain things – celebrate Lent or advent. Focus on exploring faith with all our senses; why do we do things – saying the creed etc. love us to hold on to the tradition – make the old new and have deep teaching. Apply faith to life through teaching. Beautiful to have a tradition and pass it along in a fresh view.
- Let go of our tendency to gatekeep and of using knowing how things work as a way of determining the 'ingroup'. We need to be open to explaining how things work, do things in a way that is more transparent, and make church less of a mystery.
- Liturgy is an introduction to Christian faith – and we do that well. Congregation participates in liturgy, and that's going well for us.

A Note on Liturgical and Musical Expressions and Outreach

There are at least three literatures to keep in mind in relation to the assumptions lay participants make regarding the relationship between liturgical/musical practices and outreach. Each of these sources challenges the underlying assumption that changing the style of music will lead to church growth and increase the diversity of participants in terms of background and age—this approach is almost certainly misguided.

- 1) Many participants appear to be evoking a 1980s approach to seeker-sensitive worship associated with the church growth movement. They presume that worship is or should be a context for evangelism that fosters church growth and that this is achieved through stylistic changes that target certain populations, especially through music. Leaders and congregations associated with this movement have now moderated their approach.
- 2) Many participants assume that style of music is key to shaping more diverse congregations, intergenerationally but also culturally. Gerardo Marti's research with multiracial churches makes a strong case that it is certain practices associated with music making, such as weekly choir rehearsals that build relationships and visible diversity represented in leadership, that shape multiracial churches, not a specific style of music. It would be reasonable to consider how this also applies intergenerationally.
- 3) Younger people are attracted to a range of liturgical practices, including traditional liturgical forms. Winfield Bevins explores this in various publications. I am not arguing that this is what will attract younger people to the Anglican Church. However, I am cautioning against the assumption made by participants in the listening groups that younger people are necessarily attracted to contemporary worship.

Additional resources:

- Lester Ruth and Lim Swee Hong, *A History of Contemporary Praise & Worship: Understanding the Ideas that Reshaped the Protestant Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021).
- Gerardo Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

- Deborah Justice, *(White)Washing Our Sins Away: American Mainline Churches, Music, Power, and Diversity* (New York: SUNY Press, 2022).
- Winfield Bevins, *Ever Ancient, Ever New: The Allure of Liturgy for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

Relationships with the Wider Community

Much of the preceding discussion of younger people and liturgy connects with the theme of how the church relates to the wider community, as does the analysis of virtual and physical space that follows. However, there are three specific dimensions of this theme that are beneficial to examine in more detail. “Evangelism / Outreach” and “Social Service / Justice Ministries” are both Top 20 themes in their own right and are often difficult to disambiguate in the data. The perceived “Public Image” of the church is part of the context for considering relationship with the wider community.

Figure 3: Most Frequent Code Co-Occurrences with Relationships with the Wider Community (145)



Evangelism / Outreach

Outreach is often framed in relation to two directions: 1) reaching out in terms of communications and making connections in the community, and 2) welcoming in terms of being hospitable to newcomers. The focus of the analysis below is reaching out.

Evangelism or outreach is envisioned as primarily targeted toward these four groups: 1) parishioners who have not returned following the pandemic, 2) young people, 3) new Canadians, and 4) the “unchurched.” However, certain participants offer a broader understanding of who may be the **target of evangelism**:

- Need plans that bring back those who stopped coming during Covid AND also new, unchurched people, youth – maybe we have to accept that it’s difficult to keep people in their late teens and twenties, but we can plant the seed to encourage them to come back once they settle and have families.
- The focus shouldn’t be on bringing people back – as one door closes, another opens. Canada’s change in immigration policy will bring a new wave of immigrants. That brings a lot of opportunity – people who are not Christians. We’ve lost parishioners but have gained new immigrants – people migrating out of Hong Kong and settling in Toronto. We could be helping them brush up resumes and job-hunting skills – bring people into our pews not just catering to people who left.
- If children have fun at church and friends at church and they’ll bring their parents & grandparents (not the other way around) – children’s ministry is often neglected part of the growth strategy, but it really works.
- Our whole community is not just who we are but includes marginalized people, folks with mental illness and those who struggle with food security. We had an Environics study and marketing is great but it has to be more than that. Better. An electronic sign will not cut it – it does not speak to who we are or to our neighbourhood stakeholders in the community. That will not bring traffic to our church.

- To find the ‘seekers’ look at people who have gone through difficult times—consider having services for people on the ‘autism spectrum’....
- There’s lots of development going on in the Don Mills area, condos are going to be built in front of our church. There’s lots of growth, lots of potential. It will be the proverbial knocking on doors, trying to attract the younger generations. The potential is there, if we work hard we might see the growth.
- The disciples were feeling defeated: we were spreading the news for a couple of years and we’ve caught nothing. We saw Jesus on the beach and there was renewed hope. We’re finding the same thing. Where do we go from here? It’s up to us to invite people to come back. We can’t just come to church every Sunday and say okay I’m feeling renewed. How do we reach out to the people who are feeling defeated? That’s where society has lost a great deal of helpfulness - casting the net deeper and helping with the anguish. Lots of organizations are feeding the hungry but how do we feed the souls? How many people do we catch and feed that soul? That’s what people are missing.
- Unchurched – how do we reach the unchurched?

An alternative perspective:

It’s not going to happen though until we reach our own kids and get them to come into church – our adult kids – they are not here.

Some participants express **enthusiasm for evangelism** in terms of sharing the Christian faith boldly:

- An exchange:
Bold Anglicans? I don’t want to say evangelism; go to people where they are; serving their needs; another way of doing our mission work; permission to think differently.
Why not say evangelism? Jesus said to make disciples of all peoples. His love is for everyone! It is my opinion that every parish, and our diocese, should have an intentional program of evangelism.
- Missional work – don’t wait for people to come to us -go o them, be more missional.
- We need to ask the question, “What can we do? What can I do?” Let us talk to people and be proud of our faith
- More evangelical activity – more expressive of what we are feeling inside.
- What I would like to see by 2028 is my parish embarking upon an intentional program of evangelism (for example, Alpha). By 2028, that should be successful if we are faithful to Jesus and we will be having mass baptisms of new believers.
- We need to be more charismatic and draw people into our church, to converse with us and people will know what it means – that it means a lot to you and that will spread the word.

Others describe **barriers to evangelism**, especially in terms of a lack of capacity to articulate their faith and a desire to learn how to do:

- Parishioners were afraid to talk about faith, the power of the Holy Spirit to their own lives.
- Many are hesitant to talk to non-believers about Christianity – need help and better ways to talk to non-Christians about what it is to be a Christian.
- Getting comfortable to approach other people and talk about church.
- How do we speak to a scientist and the well-educated, about God?
- Stand and declare our Christianity despite negative connotation in the press.
- Give parishioners tools/space to speak their beliefs IE EfM (Education for Ministry); if you cannot describe your beliefs to yourself how can you explain and welcome others.

- People are asking to be baptized, but have never read the Bible or undergone any spiritual formation. They are attracted to Jesus the person, but don't know his journey. We need basic formation materials, pamphlets, etc. Formation for formation: form our people to form others.
- Our parish is surrounded by high schools, and we have done outreach there – but no one comes to church because of it. And we only have 2 -3 people doing it all.

An important insight:

Cannot do things for people hoping they will come to our church – transactional.

Participants mention various **methods of communication** and gesture toward **possible content**, although a core message or purpose is largely absent.

Some suggest a more **relational approach**:

- We were more direct and energetic in recruiting family and friends.
- Everyone should think what we can do for the church – each of us must take responsibility to call those who haven't heard about us and draw them in.
- Bring back the ideas that worked many years ago: having community dinners, dances, door to door solicitation, not for money but to invite people to join us in church.
- Just show abundant love to others – show them how you love God.
- Had a program "Meet Your Neighbour" last Spring where the Church distributed tomato plants. Response was overwhelming.

Others emphasize **physical location**:

- We need to engage in street ministry.
- We talk about signage (which is so dated), what will attract newcomers or get their attention to make them part of our church community not just for worship perhaps but anyway. What's the first message people get about our church?
- It's difficult to realize our church is in that space – it doesn't have a sign saying it's a church, Unless someone is familiar in that area, they would drive past. We need appropriate signage that an actual church is in this space. Use transit signage to bring people into the space.
- We have a number of younger families, Sunday school is very strong, with lots of good things happening. There is a really good formation that is going on. What has worked? Word of mouth. During COVID moved Sunday School outdoors to a park from indoors. That attracted some new children, and they continue to come.

Marketing or advertising is referenced in both print and digital form:

- We need to advertise what we do in the community – we are not advertising enough.
- Advertise - where churches are, how inclusive and what the Church can give.
- Put flyers into mailboxes introducing the church and its programs.
- There are a lot of new condos going up around us; how can we reach out and connect with these new residents in our community? Maybe letters in people's mailboxes?
- We are using ZOOM equipment; let us keep using it; we need to reach people where they are and give them a reason to join us.
- We have got someone who spent time on our communications online to deal with that increased traffic to services and other events in the parish. All this work brought in people from the neighbourhood.

The importance of a **softer or progressive theological message** is noted:

- Evangelism without dictating what we believe in.
- Show our abundant Christian love not tell others how to live.
- I'd like to share my journey through my belief systems. I often refer to myself as an agnostic Anglican – I struggle with beliefs and the scripture. I had enlightenment when I read some of Spong's books. He was a very liberal theologian who had progressive ideas. I can relate well to the progressive Christianity movement. A lot of people are questioning whether they should stick around. The diocese could well look at progressive Christianity through discussion groups to see if people want to come back after COVID.
- We need to make it more progressive to draw people out.
- The trick is be involved with the community, engaged in the community. Without being too strong-willed find ways to link people back in to the church – be it services on a Wednesday – modeling the good behaviour but making that connection to bring people back to the church. They have to be open and connected to it.
- Communication is important. Being subtle and not too aggressive.
- Reach people at a more unconscious level, not forcing them.
- I'm not suggesting we go door to door like the mega churches. Once you get the people in the door, then the ritual and comfort and solace you get from being part of the community will come.

Social Service / Justice Ministries

The line between outreach as evangelism and outreach as social service or social justice ministry is blurry for many participants. However, serving the community is a central value. This includes meeting material needs, teaching and learning, and advocacy. As discussed elsewhere, buildings are seen as central to this community service.

The primary focus of participants is **meeting material and social needs** for food, shelter, and support:

- One has to feed people who are hungry before we preach.
- Do more; so much need, help the most vulnerable.
- Outreach e.g., foodbank
- Lunches for homeless
- Small food bank – kept it going through pandemic.
- People come to our food bank as clients, stay to be volunteers for the church.
- Get involved in the community – garden/food bank
- Invite community to eat with us (Double Toonie Lunch) -work with the community (Credible Edibles – a program for teaching cooking to grade 8 students – part of some schools' curriculums) – find synergies between food bank and ethnic foods that may appeal to some of those using the food bank.
- Foodbanks right!? I had a loyalty card to shop at Longo's and it had a lot of money on it and I asked my church what the foodbank needed and got a lot for \$200 – they had pasta but no sauce, no peanut butter! No crackers for the soup. Our old priest told us that we couldn't give food away unless people took a church pamphlet. To me that is not being a Christian. It's not transactional – you know giving with conditions. Is this a Christ way of giving? It needs to be without restrictions.
- We have cast the net to the community in downtown Barrie with community breakfasts. One way we have reached out to homeless people is this way. In 5 years, I want us to see our church continuing this, doing more, really connecting with and reaching out to the needs of the community.
- We as a church community should address homelessness and affordable housing in partnership with government and developers
- Huge needs for affordable housing. Church should do something on it.
- Parishioners coming together – sponsorship of refugees.

- We took inventory of all the resources that we had and listed them one by one, looking to develop and exploit them develop them for the benefit of the community, then we took inventory of the community needs and decided that people needed opportunities to get together, especially lonely people.
- We built and organized drop-in centers, gathering places for people who have lost a spouse, especially women, places to connect and feel safe, providing simple activities, even simple art classes, doing things like painting rocks -- this brought people together so they could talk and establish personal connections.
- Focus on community care, like developing ways to help folks living at home, develop meals on wheels programs, remind the community that we are there and ready to help.
- There is a lot of good work that people do; make it known; help refugees; helping feed and provide nursing; all kinds of good work being done; people don't know what we do; incredible work being done; a good selling point.
- Perhaps, serve in the community (like volunteer at senior homes or in soup kitchens). These also appeal to youngsters (woke!) and can teach them to be the hands and feet of Christ.
- And we do go to young people and do outreach but it does not translate into them coming to church – we support Stop 21 and Our Place shelter and Open Door and we help a lot – giving backpacks and Christmas things and clothes.

Teaching and learning related to social justice is the priority for some:

- We should talk more about “what is goodness.” Examples like, socially responsible, what is good or bad, what is right and wrong. (Social issues).
- We'd have lectures on Social Justice topics that attracted our neighbours.
- It's nice to have social justice discussions. Right now everyone's opinions appear to be black and white, right, and wrong and because of this our prime targets are alienated from us. Let's engage and have conversations that go beyond just church talk – open it up to all sorts of things.

There are several participants who see **advocacy** as central to the social justice ministry of the church:

- When we were looking for a new minister we said we wanted our minister to be in the community at community activities, representing our church at the events, presenting concerns about how our community is at council meetings – more social justice. If churches are seen to be doing the work of Jesus, more people will say, “I think I want to do what they are doing.” If we stay insulated, how will anyone now what we do?
- Top of mind – church will be more politically vocal, particularly in regards to social services and I am thinking of mental health and addiction; this should be our area to support as this need is so apparent; our parish and community are not getting the service and support they need; as a church we could step in to carry that load where there is need, as a church we have slipped on supporting people with needs, that has grown during the pandemic – its in my prayers that as a church we can more politically vocal about these needs that matter as I think we have the capability to help in this area.
- If we want to make a more Christian community; harangue our politicians; intolerable and needs to be addressed; AIDS experience started by getting out and making change; be more proactive.
- Very disappointed in the National Church not commenting on the MAID extension. Why would they not articulate the value of every human life?

Two participants offer reservations regarding a focus on meeting material and social needs in favour of a focus on **spiritual needs**:

- We're too busy meeting social needs rather than spiritual needs.
- Double down on following and preaching God's Word. Do not fall prey to worldly ideas and constructs in order to become popular and attractional (i.e do not become a church focused first on social justice issues... remain faithful to God's word and let there become an outpouring of God's love as we live out the gospel message).

Public Image

The public image of the church is a less frequent code found in fewer than half of the documents. However, the underlying discomfort with the **negative public image of the church** may be part of what shapes engagement with the wider community:

- Keep in mind negative views of church are prevalent in society. Looking towards visioning, need to retain hope and faith and carry on.
- Churches who participate in outreach demonstrate an expression of faith. There seems to be a disconnect with what is good in the world and faith. As Christians we hesitate to go out in the world – it’s perceived as collecting parishioners. It’s easier to say “community board” than church.
- Must change image of church in our communities.
- My daughter is so turned off of Christianity she doesn’t want to talk about any future of Christianity. We’re missing that boat. We need to take a good hard look at our theology going forward – I mean Anglican churches around the world.

At times this negative image is associated with **harm perpetuated by the church**, especially residential schools:

- Rebuild trust, no trust, lost trust due to history.
- Those bad news about Church during COVID, like the residential schools hurt church. People don’t want to attach to church.
- Young people don’t trust us anymore. They see what’s in the news about Anglican and Catholic religion and residential schools and everything that’s going on. They don’t trust that not to be us.
- Change people’s perception of church from Residential School to solving homelessness and affordable housing problem or working towards that.
- Adverse history of church - internet made known atrocities of church.
- Looking at engaging community in way not before; critical look at what once did before and also differentially eg. Residential schools, something we have done making effort, still need to do much more. What can we do as a church to make good?

An alternative perspective:

Tell people more about our imperfections – get over perfection complex.

In other cases, it is the distinctive **British Anglican heritage** of the church that is a concern:

- Just the name Anglican can be limiting. People hear the word Anglican and they think, “English? I’m not English so why would I go there?” Even Americans using Episcopalian is more-encompassing.
- Traditionally the ACC is a break off of CofE; English are unappreciated and negative profiling; difficult for me to be proud of my British heritage; increasingly day by day I feel belittled and discouraged about the culture that I have come from; unnerving; clear to me that any work that I could do would be merely to provide service and guidance to other ethnicities that need to form their own congregations I hope we will always maintain the belief in the Christian doctrine – forgiveness; don’t want to see the sacrifice come from one group of people; all accept one another.
- Change the image of Anglicans, what people think about Anglicanism (perception).

The dominant presence of **more conservative Christians** is another issue participants identify:

- The Anglican church – and United and Presbyterian – faces the rise and strength of fundamentalist organizations for example churches in the United States. It colours what young people think – that that’s what church is. When people come through the doors, they need to take into account that we’re not as dogmatic.
- Our vision is that our parish buildings are hospitable spaces open to everyone in the neighbourhood: “We are NOT the Christians who exclude” We want to give space to people who raise questions about the challenges of living.
- Lot of preconceptions of what Christians are. It is really important we are out there. Just be present. Eg: community day. It probably did not bring people into the church on Sunday. But increased our profile in community. Served to remove misconceptions about who we are as a church and as Christians. Important thing is that it communicated that we are here, and if you ever need us get in touch. We are here for you.

Who is responsible for what?

Participants in the listening group speak about their experiences being lay leaders in the church, their hopes for clergy, and what that see as the role of the diocese.

Role of Lay Leaders and Volunteers

There are participants who see and celebrate **a larger role for lay leaders**:

- We have less clergy to go around and we are fortunate to have lay people lead prayer – like Beth here who is great at organizing people. Most people are scared to do it but our congregation is fortunate to regularly see the laity take on leadership roles in preaching and doing food outreach. We will see a new way of discipleship. We will gather people with particular gifts, like folks with community ministry gifts,. We will be about Jesus and feed and clothe people.
- Greater role for lay people – such as giving sermons – moving away from traditional boundaries.
- Engage qualified readers, raise up deacons with general exemptions.
- Review/re-examine the rules for deacons serving at masses and their eligibility in rural areas; review special permission at special times for their services rather than simply saying no; include more opportunities for lay leaders/lay readers.
- Equip laity in new ways to be strong partners/ how can we as lay leaders get better connected with the Diocese?
- Would like to see the Diocese reach out to us; there is too much control with the priest in the conduit/ give more focus on the lay leadership team with the priest in Diocese conversations /find new ways and structure for full team.
- Re-engineer ministry and the roles and functions so the community can be more involved and the burden is less on clergy serving multi-point parishes.
- Yes, we have to expand laity leadership training. We need to empower laity too. Make terms shorter such that folks have energy to do the work.
- Our vision and strategy is based on Acts 2: many diverse people coming together. Diverse, happy worship; small groups on Zoom; a new informal evening service focused on scripture. Many new people and programs. The new incumbent helped catalyze change, but it was driven by laity.
- Although no Priest. Parishioners made personal visits.
- Need more focus on lay leadership, raising up more disciples.

There are also those who are concerned about the **burden on lay leaders**, as is also present in the discussion of the burden of buildings below, and how to build in better support for lay leaders:

- We need to change the Diocesan leadership structure. Its not easy or viable to have Churchwardens doing all this work. It needs an overhaul. We need to rethink this local government model that pushes difficult tasks to us.

- For six years our churchwardens have served with a multi-staff set-up. We have a full-time priest and part-time staff – a youth worker part-time and a worship leader part-time and a Parish Administrator and it is a tremendous burden to deal with the HR complexities. There are so many issues and we are not supported in them. It is a tremendous burden.
- Yes. We have limited experience and if people knew the responsibility they take on as Churchwardens they would reconsider taking on the role. We need to really equip churchwardens. There is too much responsibility, money decisions and liability – its too big and we are too disconnected. It's going to shut church doors – this not equipping Churchwardens. The centre structure needs to share that work and then there would be more of them.
- My experience is shared as others, I did feel faith was strengthened, while church is exceptional beauty, I felt so grateful to be with others on the return to church. As the rector's warden, do we gather or not? The risk seemed so high? How safe was it for us to return? /I felt that God and the Holy Spirit was walking by my side during that time; I felt such responsibility for a parish, particularly held in my thoughts one of the oldest parishioners at our parish; she was my reference when the parish was making decisions; how would she be if she contacted covid, so it felt as though the spirit was with us through that time; never wanted to see people more, they became even more than family to me.
- Resources are scarce for Churchwardens. During the pandemic our CWs were live to figure things out on their own. We were grappling with new technology. We did not have the shared knowledge or staffing and expertise to deliver what was expected. The issues around property are all consuming and so diverse and there is not capacity in the volunteers who lead congregations. We need the Diocese to share the burden of property issues.
- The Diocese could honour laity. There used to be licensed Lay Leaders and we don't have that resource anymore. They need to invest in properly training Churchwardens to do that governance piece not a skimming over the top with a short session. And there is a spiritual piece as well – we need pastoral ministers and support, and training in administration – folks are called to do their part but not trained for it.
- Yes administration in the metropolitan areas is something but Toronto is not truly aware/caring of the needs of rural parishes – four point parishes with services of Morning Prayer most Sundays. All our models are based on Toronto and there is not a Bishop that supports administration and mission in rural communities, our needs. Our costs are lower when 2 or 3 gather together. We need to empower that. Laity has had not real role since the 70s. This is a massive diocese and it is diverse and yet Toronto does not realise that.
- Would like to see less reliance on volunteers and less laity to do things. More work to paid staff – spending more time to connect with the wider communities and the families.

Role of Clergy

Participants have high expectations for their clergy. They are expected to be **emotionally available and relatable**:

- It is so important to be relatable, open and honest. Priests have to be open and honest, that brings more people in. Let's be less judgmental, and push the message that you are welcome, you are loved. Young people want somewhere to go, having events during the week will bring people in.
- Where I have suffered emotional pain is when I have experienced God in my life. Leadership of clergy is important. Clergy need to be emotionally accessible—this is absolutely key!
- It is so important to be relatable, open and honest. Priests have to be open and honest, that brings more people in. Let's be less judgmental, and push the message that you are welcome, you are loved. Young people want somewhere to go, having events during the week will bring people in.

Clergy are expected to be **leaders in reaching out** to the community:

- Priest visible – walk around the neighborhood and greet people.
- When we were looking for a new minister we said we wanted our minister to be in the community at community activities, representing our church at the events, presenting concerns about how our community is at council

meetings – more social justice. If churches are seen to be doing the work of Jesus, more people will say, “I think I want to do what they are doing”. If we stay insulated, how will anyone now what we do? When we had pancake suppers before the pandemic, we had 300 people with free-will donations to a local outreach. People knew who we were.

- Must all understand, can't go back in time; my church is the first church that I have experienced where preacher stands outside church and greets people by name; for new people, he has a small pad and puts name on it to remember for next time and uses this method to make notes and corrections, it makes a difference to be greeted by name; the value we had with some preachers who treat us like their own/someone who is not shy to speak to neighbours, invites these in; just like an old time church; new church is doing a lot but not catering to old values of inviting me in, praying with me, who meets at their homes and calls them by their name – we need to bring that back.
- 2028 – will need people to go out and talk about church but priests don't do it either. Priests should preach about that and teach that. Do they know how to themselves? It is normal in other churches.
- We are a small parish, mostly elderly. It took a new leader in our church who brought a different way of speaking and doing to bring new people to our parish. Finding new people is difficult, you have to do it outside the box. Our leader was successful in that.
- Church and minister were part of the community. Get the community more involved. Incumbent be more visible in the community. Make ourselves more pivotal part of the community.

Excellent relatable preaching and liturgical leadership is emphasized:

- I applaud my priest. Every sermon I hear from my priest is applicable to what is going on today in my life – he knows how to preach – it's not just Jesus said this and Jesus said that – it's about how you can use what Jesus said to transform your life and make it better. Will that attract more people? I don't know.
- If somebody doesn't grab our Priest, we will be bursting at the seams. The energy comes from the person standing at the front of the church conducting the Service. I feel empowered by people, they are kind and willing. I take scripture and relate it to my life.
- We have to change the way of preaching. We get this explanation about the Gospel but its not just that. We need to hear how to apply the Gospel, draw people closer to God – what it actually means today so that we recognize what they are talking about. I'd like to see the priest come down and be closer to the people, with us and then we can hear and feel the message.
- We are getting very good sermons repeatedly. One of the main responsibilities of an incumbent is to educate – not abstract, but what are you going to do about it when you leave church. That is powerful in our congregation.

Younger and more diverse clergy are desired:

- To get more young clergies to appeal to the young people.
- Variety within the Anglican communion/exploring getting younger priest from outside Canada/bring priest from other country/tradition to help with deficiency -people may be more comfortable to see priest from their country/tradition.
- Youth pastor, young family pastor in addition to the incumbent/young family pastor have services specifically for the youth to get young families back in church perhaps a Wednesday night service.
- Our priest is at retirement age, not prepared or allowed to update or change the service. Holds congregation back in some ways.

Spiritual acumen, flexibility, and a commitment to personal growth are valued:

- Their church was discerning a new minister and instead of listing pros and cons, they simply “listened to God” (like the disciples did) in discernment and new and good things have followed.

- During COVID, our incumbent changed. It was a complete reset. Turned out to be positive. We changed from a social club to a much more spiritual focus. More people have joined us. We didn't start Zoom services right away. When we did, it turned out to bring in a lot of new people.
- We need leaders who are consistent and trustworthy, it's difficult as it is, but without a leader it's even more difficult.
- Covenant exists between the priest and the congregation which speaks to how the congregation is supporting the development of the priest, what they are willing to as well as the plan of the priest for the congregation/ document and measure that plan to keep dialogue open. Show where, what, how for growth directions.
- What role do we expect priest to play – how to be flexible, 'rule' book needs to be changed.
- Tradition is often held by the priest. In order to be more successful we need leadership willing to do it another way too.

Pastoral transitions and the **absence of a clergy person** are a significant source of stress:

- Back at Church but Church does not have a Priest so feeling dejected but Parishioners are sticking together and supporting their Lay Leaders.
- We lost our minister of 25 years; the disciples lost Jesus.
- No Priest. Quite challenging.
- Lack of a minister, currently without a minister and can only afford only a ¼ time.
- For 15 months we were without a Minister, now we have a new Minister, new people coming and doing well.
- We have to look for a new priest. We'll have an interim, a Priest-in-charge. We have to spend the next number of months in a selection committee. We are not in the position to plan ahead.
- Our priest – but actually we are in the same position as you. Our priest is retiring at the end of April. I am sad to lose her. I hope we get someone who understands and supports us. Who knows?
- Fear is that we won't have the same minister that has kept our parish going plus the fact that what I know our main congregation relies on the older more established people to keep it together.

Some suggest changing the **approach to staffing**:

- Invest in youth, no turnovers, consistent ministry.
- Support diaconates and deacons who in the world can bring experience and knowledge back to the Church.
- Rotate priests around the Diocese to bring new voices to the parishes.
- We need to match the priest to the congregation. We need more Leadership at the top, someone as leader.
- We engaged a community minister, with the help of a diocesan subsidy.
- The future will have fewer priests and more regional ministry models with teams who serve in larger groupings.
- Regional ministry, churches working together and sharing clergy is better than having a multi point parish.

Only one participant named **the exhaustion and burnout** that is pervasive in the clergy listening groups, although a couple of others reference the burdens priests' bear. The high expectations parishioners have for their clergy may further amplify the mental health struggles many clergy are facing:

As a friend of priests, the church is expecting lay to step up and step in is important, many priests are struggling with anxiety, mental health, burnout; we need to remember to be active members of evangelism, taking ownership and being part of membership means we take the extra mile, need to engage, stop waiting to be asked although that is nice, but must step up and offer if we want to see our dreams realize with the talents we need.

Role of Diocese

Perhaps in part because *Cast the Net* is a diocesan process, participants reference the role of the diocese.

Some are **displeased with the diocese** for either taking too big or too small a role:

- Diocese is the net – problematic – colonial structure carryover.
- Needing to grow to get people there, gospel work was hindered by the bureaucracy created by the diocese.
- There are more rules and restrictions than ever in the Diocese – across the board in the Anglican church.
- Get rid of red tape – diocesan processes that tie hands IE: rentals
- Diocese should give Parishes more autonomy on Programs. What works in Parish A may not be suitable for Parish B. More flexibility with Sunday School Curriculum.
- The congregational obligations to the diocese are time consuming.
- Re-think the church structure so to react to the changing world faster. Examples like many bishops in our system. Waiting too long to respond to the needs of the community.
- Diocese needs to be open to ideas presented by churches – ex: rent rectory to refugees – need Diocese to be flexible.
- I'm mad at the diocese—why are we coming out to these sessions? There is no help, no support from the diocese.
- What can the diocese do to help? Are there resources? Is it going to be too late? We are struggling now.
- I'm angry at the diocese: we could have had some help on-line.
- This discussion is very valuable but I wonder how our conclusions will be received or understood by the high hierarchy of the diocese. The Sunday services will need to be more lively and reflect concerns of parishioners and neighborhoods.

Some suggest **ways the diocese could contribute** to the life of their congregations in various areas.

Participants are looking for support in relation to **outreach**:

- In 5 years 50% of population will be missing in church. We will be the same but 5 years older. I feel the Diocese has not been helpful.
- Need Diocesan direction on how to attract new people.
- How to find seekers – get Diocese to help
- Need Diocese support – churches are declining.
- We want the powers above to tell us what to do differently, otherwise we are failing.
- Diocese can give us some good ideas to attract younger families – no cold calls, but marketing ideas.
- The Diocese must encourage conversations and demographics available to help in needed tasks of helping parishes in developing purpose statements.
- Resources, practically needed to help churches cast the net ie. parish email list (we all collect the same information?); practical tools for all those in the diocese; basic tool box to do what you can do in your own context.
- Building a desirable youth group within our Diocese
- Think strategically, not just tactically. Little individual things are not enough.

Technology is another area where participants see potential for centralization:

- Diocese should get a company to create websites for all churches to have consistency.
- However, preparing content for social media and actively being present takes a lot of time. It is a full-time job. Every parish cannot do it. So, the diocese can create content centrally and give to parishes. Even catechism can be promoted through more visual, accessible ways online.

- I would like to see the Diocese centralize technology; knowing we had Our Faith our Hope to support us again or something such as that; this could be seen as fundamental to get everyone to where they need to be, broadcast so each church has the same ability to connect.
- More support from the Diocese may bring different talents so that we can all have a standard package. We are not techie and don't have that tech support naturally.

As discussed below, **church buildings** are a central concern and opportunity for diocesan support:

- Diocesan considerations: What to do with churches with congregations that can't support the building? Sell the land. Do something creative. The pandemic has booted us into the future.
- The issues around property are all consuming and so diverse and there is not capacity in the volunteers who lead congregations. We need the Diocese to share the burden of property issues.
- Use our facilities to become community hubs. We have to identify the needs in our community - maybe the diocese can help with resources on that front. For example, many young families in our community. How can our facilities cater to them? Can we use the building during the week to help them? It gives them an opportunity to get to know us and relate to us.
- Resolutions adopted at Synod – resource at Diocese level to help parishes with affordable housing on their property.
- Put money into the Diocese – to have the people who truly understand the big picture – and be able to have the extra resources needed to effect change in big areas/new ideas (like supporting affordable housing)
- The diocese has a \$1B real estate portfolio. We need to use it better.

Finally, participants envision the diocese **facilitating collaboration**:

- Cast our net as neighbourhoods in the diocese rather than as individual churches – not view ourselves as in competition for members but do things together on a neighbourhood scale or a diocesan scale that might bring in new people or bring people in a different way. Not be so focused on the parish.
- Lack of volunteers. We have to find ways to work smarter instead of working harder. Can the Diocese find ways for parishes to work together, and learn from each other? As groups of parishes we have a lot of resources, as individuals we don't. So, let's come together.
- Team effort – instead of each parish trying to do everything on their own – take advantage of Diocese structure especially for smaller churches.
- Diocese more flexible – send people with skill set to other parishes to help, people less dedicated to one particular parish.
- We need to stay strong and become more inclusive around race and queer communities – the diocese does this well – we need to continue to stay strong-more affirming communities – people are fleeing churches; no one is going to church to hear about conservative evangelical attitudes.

Collaboration

There is a strong and consistent desire to collaborate among parishes, across Christian traditions, and with community organizations. This collaboration may take the form of learning from one another or working together around shared concerns. As noted above, participants see a role for the diocese in facilitating this collaboration.

There is desire for collaboration among **Anglican parishes**:

- We churches are like a flotilla of ships, and some are doing things remotely well – more ably than other ships are doing. How do we share that?
- In trying to do things differently, what worked and best practices from other, for us to model, adapt or share principle-based.
- Identify churches that are working, study them and share the results.

- Need this sort of forum to exchange ideas. Have not done this in the past, need to continue, not a one-time thing – need ongoing conversations, so that together, we can all move forward.
- Don't give up; sharing ideas with other congregations; what are other churches doing.
- Combine with other churches to get new ideas – working together with our Anglican brothers and sisters.
- Churches in different parts of this city (Toronto) are in different situations. One is not better than another but across the city there is tremendous partnering and resource sharing.
- Local Parishes need to get together for Programs in a centralized location.
- Figured out ways to overcome structures that limit collaboration between parishes/ less "I belong to this parish" rather I belong to Jesus.
- Parishes connected with each other – parishes in neighborhood – value in sharing resources, not reinventing the wheel.
- Changes in (organizational) structure – cooperation not competition – let's try something new and join the 15 churches in our deanery and do something different.
- Teamwork – creatively reaching out through team work. The fishing was teamwork.
- Parishes crying out for help - what help we can give each other.
- I'm relieved and delighted that so many different churches actually are concerned with the same things!!

A summative insight:

Churches will strengthen when we come together for a common purpose – worship, serve, pray – we are more together. Yes, we have individual ways and goals, but we are one.

Ecumenical relationships across Christian traditions present another opportunity for collaboration:

- Can we be more people of God, not just Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians etc.? We need to come together and be salty not to preserve our community but to be part of the wider community. We need spiritual formation and focus on that other side of the boat.
- We have RC and Presbyterian churches right around the corner from us and we should be cooperating - should be community with them. I know the local ministerial used to get together to have 6 or 8 clerics meet – we need to do that.
- Work together with other churches in the area – even across denominations. Our local United Church closed and only one person joined us – the rest drive 20 km or don't go. It's not just welcoming – we need to do more and I am not sure what we need to do or how.
- Partnering with the Lutheran church has been a rich experience.
- Partner with non-Anglican churches to serve Community.
- More communication with other churches, other Christian churches.
- It's really following on the previous discussion – if we're going to continue to be traditional Anglicans, we probably don't have a boat much less a net down the road. But we as a family of Christians - Anglican, United, Baptist – we live as a community by caring for the sick, the lonely, the homeless.
- We drive past churches with 1000s of people, and then we reach our parish and there are 20! What are they doing? We don't need to re-invent the wheel. We shouldn't be afraid to borrow from others. We have to intentionally learn from others what is working for them. We should encourage our own parishioners to go and see what is working in other churches and bring back ideas.
- In my city of 17K people, within 5 square km there are 8 churches, 3 Anglicans, with Unitarian, Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic. Lots of competition means persuasion is exhausting.

Partnerships with **community organizations** are another possibility:

- Collaborate with other groups on common interests to build greater Communities.
- But we need to ask and we should share tricks across non-profits, other churches. We need group licensing pools to lower costs. We let go of the need to do it all ourselves.
- Church has real estate – provide space for people in neighbourhood, start by building relationships with community partners who can help use churches’ real estate to help the community.

Where is the church? Virtual and Physical Spaces

Listening group participants speak extensively about both virtual and physical spaces.

Online / Virtual / Technology

Unsurprisingly, due to the abrupt and wide-reaching shift to online gatherings during the pandemic, almost every group discussed the role of technology in church life, both in recent years and moving forward. A central concern of participants is that those who are worshipping online will “come back” physically rather than remaining online.

There is broad **affirmation for the ways that gathering online** served church communities well in recent years, especially in terms of the surprising capacity of parishes to maintain and expand supportive communities in online contexts through a time of crisis:

- There has been some positive impact of pandemic – zoom technology and people are used to IT. We have differing tools at our disposal; the reach is greater than before. Old parishioners who haven’t attended for many years now attend church from other provinces or countries – even bible study. There are no more barriers; we can reach out in other ways.
- This may not be popular but there were blessings during the pandemic: Zoom was available, we good follow services and feed into group activities online. We showed each other support and online services have helped shut ins and seniors and it helps still in our church.
- At St. Cuthbert’s we continue with virtual meetings and services - and this cyber capability is out there in that each church picked their own way to do that. We know that our online worship has drawn people in. Now I don’t know but in the beginning it was just for shut ins and those holidaying or vacationing away. We can’t get rid of this as something has drawn new people into our worship and our numbers continue to grow.
- We have discovered that our walls are shaky. Our buildings matter less. Yes it was a frustration, but we were blest and have grown because of tech.
- Going online during the pandemic meant having to develop technology, expand Internet to reach out to as many as possible, and not just parishioners – we cast the net and now have viewers overseas – doing weddings and funerals online too.
- The passage talks about seven disciples – two are not named – during Zoom coffee hours we met new people who attended other services or were not sitting near us – standard seating arrangements mean we don’t see others or their reactions, emotions – Zoom has become a missional tool.
- One of the innovative things that happened during the pandemic is many parishes engaged in online interaction. It allowed people to participate but not be physically there. The experimentation was very effective and also gave people in small rural parishes the opportunity to worship with people in other areas for example the Cathedral or St. Mary Magdalene or Penetanguishene. Our small church doesn’t have a choir; online services gave me the presence of music. We need to continue to reach out to people online.
- My father passed away during the pandemic and even after church re-opened I didn’t have enough of a motivation to attend in the building especially because I had developed a healthy, vibrant community of congregants online. We started services and after the zoom service we talked about all sort of things and people stayed for as long or as short as they wanted. That has become one of my favourite communities – especially

now that I'm working almost full time at home and there hasn't been enough gravitational pull to get me out of the house. A lot of my life very much revolves around my membership in my church but it's different now.

- Well for us rallying was hard, hard to keep people, and hard to make it work. We held onto each other online and made it work. Even new people we didn't know joined us.
- We were blessed with virtual worship during COVID.
- God pointed us to Zoom.

Concerns about technology are raised by some participants. Some experience an **absence of community** on online spaces, at least compared to physical gatherings:

- God is love, and calls us to a community of love. Zoom just simply is not good enough to bring us together to build God's community.
- Sense of isolation on zoom, no fellowship.
- Hard to say peace on zoom, prefer to face-to-face.
- As a mom with young kids who enjoyed Sunday School – the provision of Technology like Cast the Net was so effective, yet happy to return to in person School, some still use online technology to connect and I see that as a positive yet a continued necessity at this time.
- Youth group helped us get up and running on line. Different groups within the parish continued on line, but there was less interaction among the congregation as a whole. We are struggling to regain that sense of belonging and community. It's been a long journey.
- When my husband and I went back to church we were excited to have communion again. We could see each other and even though some wore and still wear masks, we could give each other the peace – hugs and being social – though some just raise their hands and make a sign. Zoom helped back then but I like to go to church in the church. I don't like being on Zoom. I miss Coffee Hour – we may start it up again after Easter.
- Social media scares me. It provides us a communication platform. It is only one vehicle. We have to have relevant messages to take through social media. It scares me that we are going to lose a sense of community if we focus on social media.

Others worry that strength and convenience of online options **discourage in-person participation**:

- I wonder if too much online could prevent people from going to church on Sundays and worshipping with other people and not by yourself in front of an iPad. It could be one extreme.
- To get people back to church, we should end online service.
- We got into a bad habit of not attending in person but now something is missing in our lives.
- How to get people back since they have become comfortable at home.
- Beyond cyber worship though – how do we count people? If you weren't in the pews but on Facebook? So, what is the barrier to coming into church in person. How do we get those back who choose to stay remote. We need answers to those why questions.
- Lot of parishioners have changed socially; don't know what to say or do, comfortable staying at home; changed habits.

Still others fear for those who **remain excluded online** or worry about the **financial implications**:

- Difficult to reach people especially those without internet.
- Technology is here to stay. How do we embrace that? Difficult to navigate technological demands with most people over 60....How can we be better with technology?
- Older people not willing to come back to church in person but not comfortable joining online.
- We've become more comfortable with church at a distance although my spouse won't attend the online services but there are moments of feeling alienated from the church. What's still the same if you're a Christian, what doesn't change, is you still look to God for support in your community but the technology has changed.

- I really don't want to talk about this, but in our ability to sustain and use technology there is a cost, with those we reach. Do they understand we need the funds; the Bishop did refer to the unexpected ways funds are provided, how are we creating a way in person or virtual that allows people to say this is my community and I will give in a wide number of ways; such as I am able in three ways to contribute and continue in this community but now, how can we provide going forward and keep the momentum going?

Despite these concerns, there is widespread affirmation that the importance of **technology will continue in the future.**

Central questions include how to maintain and bridge in-person and online communities:

- Look for ways to embrace change, accept technology because it is here to stay.
- Maintain virtual and physical presence.
- Online worship should continue for young people/older people.
- Our vision for the future includes electronic media—we have found that the virtual coffee hour has brought people in their 80s and 90s into a sense of community; they would have been otherwise isolated.
- Integrating virtual and in-person gatherings.
- Accept participating both in-person and virtual attendance.
- Even though people aren't physically in that space, they have the ability to join in service and are still connected with their home church. If I had to work or couldn't attend church – being able to view my home service live or watch later is a benefit. We can focus on who is present but not disregard who isn't present at the time. We don't want to push away people who aren't physically there. Inclusivity means people who are in their own homes are just as welcome as those in bricks and mortar.
- Our church broadcasts on YouTube to 125 viewers, still we see ourselves as a diminishing community despite these numbers; do those numbers acknowledge those on line sharing our faith with us, bothers me that those on line not considered as important when they keep saying its time to come back to church. It bothers me that they are not acknowledged as much as those in the pews.
- Friends/relatives overseas have been following service – some want to contribute – how can we get them to continue and contribute – can they volunteer, what would it look like – readings?
- Engage virtual congregation in the work the church is doing e.g., to eradicate poverty.
- In 2028 we will provide a gentle way to get to know and engage with this group and we have in person new people searching – who have found us. And we will get to know them – both groups, virtual and in person.

Many participants also see technology as an important avenue for **outreach to younger people:**

- Promote church more through internet versus personal for youth since that is what is known to them.
- Let go off our models for church – employ technology more to solidify youths in the faith.
- Part of me wants every person to comeback to in person. But what we need is to ask them why they won't. We need those whys and then we can frame in-person worship for them. And keep virtual worship. Young adults still live in this more virtual world . In their mind , is there even pews? So, if they are not as full churches need virtual for younger people – and that will be 'full.'
- Reaching out to young people using the channels they are using, like social media.
- We should improve our better digital presence. Reinvent being a Christian. Because young people are glued to their phones it would be good to have the diocese produce more digital programs, make it more widely accessible to them. We then have to promote the content well so people know the church is online. We could have cool videos of Bible stories and concepts, they have to be short and catchy. "Ask the pastor" on social media, to engage people and learn about what church means, not the church building, it's not just about Sunday.
- Young people are on the phone, all their business is on the phone/devices. We have to be where these people are. Constantly putting out content digitally, on social media. The outside world looks at us as and don't see us as being relevant. The world has changed, we have to change too.
- Disseminate more effectively knowledge of Christ in young people through technology.

Buildings

Many groups discuss the ongoing role of church buildings. Buildings are seen as both a burden and an opportunity. Participants frequently emphasize the need to “get out of the church building” as well as to welcome the wider community into the building.

Buildings as **burden to the church community** due to cost or inaccessibility:

- Our parishes are property-rich, which means property-poor. We need to get out from under that burden. Do church differently, with less reliance on buildings.
- Old church buildings need a lot of upkeep. Parishioners are mature and might not be around. What can the church be outside buildings viewed as churches?
- We are trying to get an addition done and it will involve the community. We had an amalgamation a while ago and it brought new life to us when that parish joined ours. And we need a simple addition to meet in and there will be money in 2028 to sustain our buildings – and for 20 years not just for now.
- Our church building is old and not very accessible...difficult to get in to and move around in. Too many stairs. We have to make our spaces attractive and easy.
- Accessibility challenges need to be met by re-design, e.g., new chairs.
- For six years our churchwardens have served with a multi-staff set-up. ...There are so many issues and we are not supported in them. It is a tremendous burden. Property issues too. We will only see locked doors and leaks in the basement and roof and furnaces that need replacing. It is all too much work for our churchwardens. It means a negative attitude toward the Diocese. We have felt that 135 were wholly about placing rules on our backs – rules and procedures – and no good will to help us volunteers out.

Others suggest the building is a **barrier to newcomers**:

- In getting most people involved, we don't fully understand the demographics, we don't advertise to the right groups in effective ways with the right message; we only advertise what we do coming from our traditions which won't attract new young people when all they see are plaques, stained glass, and little that garners their interest or reflects their relevant interests.

There is a significant group advocating for the church to **divest itself of buildings**:

- I grew up in a small tourist town and it is close to my heart. I worship in a heritage building in Toronto and part of me feels we need to let go of buildings – spiritually and for paying – we need to stop seeing buildings as the only place where the Spirit dwells. We can spend less, look to the outside and be with the fish.
- We should think about closing down some of our buildings. We can concentrate on our faith if we don't have the burden of finance hanging over our heads. We should be able to concentrate on Jesus and our faith and spiritual growth and not have to worry about survival.
- Get ahead of consolidation – some properties are under occupied – need to respond to this.
- Downsize church and rent gym to Coptic.
- What is most important – may need to renounce stain glass windows, carvings.
- The key about what you said is change; I know that change is difficult; now that we are forced to change; continue to think beyond the building; Jesus was never in a building; opportunity to think beyond the building; discipleship happens everyday; opportunity to rethink how we do church; opportunity to be braver, out of the comfort zone and do something different; our present fears could be realized if we don't do things differently; community needs are obvious; what can we do; great opportunity; mission of Christ to change attitudes.
- Bolder – some parishes are going to close; consolidate our building and parishes; create new parishes.
- Much of our money locally is in the buildings and priests, not the community.
- Plan to make better use of church real estate. Liquidate some holdings and use capital to subsidize adventurous things – summer camps for kids – young adult canoe trips, team sports. Encourage the public to share our space.

Buildings are described as an **opportunity for community service**, most often as a community centre, site for affordable housing, or location for a retirement community:

- Reimagine space to respond to community needs.
- Church is working on a vision – tearing down the building, to become a hub with day care, food bank for the community/ the hub reaching out to the entire community in east city of Peterborough.
- Make better use of church property – add facilities to church to help community.
- Meet affordable housing issue – tearing down the church and building something the community needs; something low-income people can afford and the church can still be in the building.
- Find partners in the community through action in the community e.g., warming room in winter.
- Rent out space to help with homelessness e.g., County needs rental space for homeless.
- Use excess properties in conjunction with Government to address homelessness and affordable housing.
- Re-think and re-use the church real estate to serve the community, like affordable housing.
- Developing a concrete plan for affordable housing on our property.
- Share our spaces with other denominations, low-cost rentals to community groups -look for things our faith has in common and brings us all joy, look for ways to work together – low cost parish hall rentals to community groups, especially kids, keep the hall busy.
- Too many churches, too many properties to care about. Why not providing more affordable housing, senior residence to serve the needs of the community.
- A rural multipoint, the buildings not needed, more outward looking, a retirement community, more dictated to need. Outreach, children’s ministry and use of the facilities for parish purposes and outreach.
- We could plan on making the parish hall available to the community at no cost.

Other see buildings as an **anchor for evangelism**:

- Use our facilities to become community hubs. We have to identify the needs in our community - maybe the diocese can help with resources on that front. For example, many young families in our community. How can our facilities cater to them? Can we use the building during the week to help them? It gives them an opportunity to get to know us and relate to us.
- We made the church a community hub again. At one point, the church was the centre of the community, obviously the religious community but also cubs and beavers and community groups. We make a full community place, daycare, mixed-use, not geared to income, seniors, people in their forties. The property we have is prime real estate crying out for repurposing along those lines. If we did something like that we’d become a community hub again. I’m not suggesting we go door to door like the mega churches. Once you get the people in the door, then the ritual and comfort and solace you get from being part of the community will come.
- Opportunities are starting to grow to bring people to church. The church has a new renovation and enlisted a person to be a “booker” to look after and increase rental/ community bookings.
- Church being more of a community centre; more events and use the space more fully; draw more people into the life of the church community. Community based.
- Open church to community for different events to take away intimidation of church so people feel comfortable entering church space.
- Make parish hall a welcoming space for people in the neighbourhood who are not Christians. Tell the public that as Anglicans, we do not exclude anyone, we have room for everyone.
- Our vision is that our parish buildings are hospitable spaces open to everyone in the neighbourhood: “We are NOT the Christians who exclude” We want to give space to people who raise questions about the challenges of living.
- Church as the heart of the community. We should be the gathering place for them. Make good use of the space we have. The physical structure will attract people to come.

Visionary Minority Voices

The following themes are less prevalent in the notes from the listening groups. However, they represent minority perspectives that may be beneficial for articulating a vision for the future.

Why be part of the church?

One important starting point for developing a vision for the future is recognizing what is valued in the present. Numerous participants imply this in speaking about why being part of the church matters to them today.

Participants name **spirituality**, including spiritual experiences, core beliefs, and values as central to their involvement in with church:

- Church should answer these questions: Why should people be Christians? Why Anglican? Why Jesus? Church should: bring God to people, foster knowledge of Jesus, understand needs of people, have diverse service vs traditional.
- Why do I come to church? There are so many changes in the world our God is not changing.
- Ask myself, why do I worship as an Anglican? Liturgical style is beautiful in all my senses. We have to reach out to different people. Educate people in our pews why do we do certain things – celebrate Lent or advent. Focus on exploring faith with all our senses; why do we do things – saying the creed etc. love us to hold on to the tradition – make the old new and have deep teaching. Apply faith to life through teaching. Beautiful to have a tradition and pass it along in a fresh view.
- On the ACW Board we always ask, “What would Jesus have us do?” when we take a decision. We are with our sisters, and we talk and listen to each other and show each other love.
- When I was in an Anglican university and had to take a course in religion and we went through the creed line by line and it was an absolutely profound experience.
- Some of the profound experiences I’ve had were on a bike tour in the North West Territories and I walked into church that I thought was a museum but I forgot it was a church and they handed me a prayer book. I found myself in a church in Casablanca, and Copenhagen and I got this overwhelming feeling that I’m part of something bigger.
- Yes there’s such dichotomy to peoples’ lives – are you spiritual I’ll ask. They say yes but not religious or they even believe in God but don’t need to go to church. What is it about how we show our values that they are not convinced. It comes back to relationships and how we show what it is to be Christian. I need to share the happiness that I feel as a Christian. It’s a bonus and people have to see it that way too. It’s about our values. It shouldn’t be difficult but it is not easy to talk about it and do it.
- Maybe it’s childhood and memories and feeling safe but many of the rituals are what I enjoy about church.
- Converted to Anglicanism from Catholicism during Covid. Church more progressive, more inclusive. Better expression of Christian truth.

Reflections on an additional question:

Are we going to the question when did we feel close to God? I agreed with what others were saying. There was a question in the handout that the Diocese sent to us related to the scripture. There was a question "Recollect a time when you felt closest to God."

(Facilitator acknowledged the questions sent out to parish are not the same, as we do not have enough time and encouraged parish to have discussion in their own parish).

I reflected on the question, how we start to have faith, when we started feel close to God. I reflected back when I was young, long time ago. When reflecting on the question why did I come to church, all started with parents teaching me about God and bring us to church. I don't see parents and grandparents teaching their children about God these days. Thinking back, the time I felt most close to God is the time I went to my first church.

Social support is another key reason participants value being part of the church:

- It's not a given that people are there for you in crisis. Churches have to be there with compassion. If that's not one of your missions, there is no point. Parishes have to work at that constantly. That doesn't just happen on its own.
- Many of my friends don't go to church and we've had discussions. What happens when the husband passes away? What will happen? They say they are Christian but don't go to church. When I walk into our church, I feel that peace. My friends say oh churches are all about the money. Well I don't mind that because I get so much out of it and we need money to pay for the heating, cleaning and up keep.
- When my husband died everybody in the church hugged me – the whole parish gave me a 'hug' and I felt held by the community. Others will see that care if we can get them through the door.
- Yes, I had health issues in September and people prayed for us, sent cards and made phone calls. When we came back into the church it was all welcoming, and this is what counts. If more people could realise this – that it would give them an anchor.

Others are drawn to the **potential to transform lives and the world**:

- Be aware that we are called to discipleship; looks different; being an agent of change; one of the best tools we can use; Jesus didn't come to keep things the same; came to change things; not for the faint of heart or called to be comfortable; reach out to the unloved; called to be change in the world; can't lose our saltiness and can't hide our light.
- Yes, we need people and finances but we're not fishermen to bring people to us but to bring them to Christ. Not just to bring people to our church but to share God's love. Not just increasing numbers but reaching out to our neighbourhood, sharing resources. It may not show up in the bottom line but keep in mind that isn't the main focus.
- The way to grow in faith and grace is to be even more Jesus-focused than we already are. The disciples had to listen to Jesus. Jesus' core message is not just about what we do, but why we do it. Emulating Jesus, thanking Jesus: that's why we want to serve the community, attract young people, etc. Need to know how we are different from any other social service agency.

Success Stories

Some participants share moments that stand out to them in their recent experience of church. In a different way, these stories are also responses to the question, “Why be part of the church?” The following excerpts from the notes highlight these stories:

- I agree that personal faith is very important to the members of a lot of churches. I saw that in our church. We have a very active women’s group. It started during the pandemic as a knitting group. We met in one of the lady’s backyards. We did projects for the indigenous and homeless. Now we meet in the church once a week. I saw these women reaching out to others. The women weren’t in our church - they were lonely but felt safe to come into this group. That was a positive part and it continues.
- My best experiences of 2020 is that we thought it would all be over but then the isolation and the shock of isolation – so when we were supposed to be staying in our homes and only going out for groceries at our church, Resurrection, we got together outside, distanced and masked, and we built a pollinator garden. That felt like a moment of grace.
- The pandemic struck and it was something how we rallied together. It was something like the 7 out of 11 disciples. We worried about the ones we did not see. We sent daily prayers to them by email. We did a commentary every day of the week. At first it was a small group online – about 5 people – and now today it is still going and we have more that 20 – it’s an everyday thing that brings us together.
- The times I’ve felt the church being the church was at Episcopal elections at St. James Cathedral: a large group gathered—with purpose—said our prayers, did our work, sang hymns. Great feeling of togetherness and purposeful activity.
- During COVID, our incumbent changed. It was a complete reset. Turned out to be positive. We changed from a social club to a much more spiritual focus. More people have joined us. We didn’t start Zoom services right away. When we did, it turned out to bring in a lot of new people.
- Our vision and strategy is based on Acts 2: many diverse people coming together. Diverse, happy worship; small groups on Zoom; a new informal evening service focused on scripture. Many new people and programs. The new incumbent helped catalyze change, but it was driven by laity.
- Before the pandemic, we had a small breakfast group, 10% of men who attended were not church goers, but came to the breakfast. Focus on small group approach.
- I was in Trinidad at an Anglican church and they have done that – everyone came in and there was uplift in the way of singing - joyful and praising God. I was at a funeral and the words were the same (I could close my eyes and recite them word for word) but the hymns were different in the feeling. Someone would start clapping and we would join in and the spirit was different. Trinidad has changed from traditional worship to contemporary and that Family Day tradition is an island-wide event.
- Core people are stepping up to keep the work going. We have young men. We actually have one young man who has joined the Altar Guild now. We are four old ladies, and we will help him be part of the Altar Guild. For me and for everybody this is really positive to have someone useful join us – a man! That gives us a lot of hope but we will have to see where it lands.
- Then the pandemic came, and the church actually grew, and we had new ministries. We had a new family join last fall and the choir has grown from five to 12 people. There’s more singing in the service now and things are more positive. The ACW has grown – doubled its numbers. People are getting back, and we now have 2 services every week, but we need younger people and a way to bring them into the parish. Now we do have 12 Church School students every Sunday and we are hoping for positive results.
- It’s a long night but you have to keep doing what you have been doing. Find new ways of doing things. An example is a portable altar the parish created during COVID. People would stop and offer prayer during COVID. They still do. Invitation is there. The table is anywhere that you want to be.

- We have a number of younger families, Sunday school is very strong, with lots of good things happening. There is a really good formation that is going on. What has worked? Word of mouth. During COVID moved Sunday School outdoors to a park from indoors. That attracted some new children, and they continue to come.
- Example of a church being hybrid between English and Chinese congregations, speaks both languages, running an Alpha course, open discussion for people to get to know each other and to deepen faith and build community. Preparing meals bring people together and is a way to remove obstacles.
- And really there was a feeling of excitement and renewal. We got to go back to church. We got back to doing things again after just surviving. We even have four new parish families – parishioners who came during Covid. We don't know how it happened but it did even in the pandemic – we went from coping to renewal when we opened up.
- I have family and travel to Cape Breton frequently and its an historical Anglican church in Sydney – I don't like it, the music, the sound is terrible with the organ off by itself, it just isn't right. It used to be called high Anglican. And then I went to the Anglican Church in Louisburg and the people there are lovely. The congregation was all men – which was odd until I realized all the women were in the choir and everyone greets everyone.

Spirituality

A desire for spiritual connection with God and a stronger emphasis on spirituality in the church is named by various participants:

- Focus on building the connection with God.
- Bring back Catechism – helps to foster deeper relationship with God.
- Look for calmness in times of turbulence.
- Special service to meet needs of seeker – informal service – sense of spirituality to meet needs not just fishing.
- Create small group gatherings – to help people connect with God and to discern his voice in their lives.
- Contemplative practices to help us see ourselves as created in the image of God.
- How are we building spiritual directions and spiritual directors?
- Church has become more social and less spiritual – get back to spirituality.
- Revitalization – before pandemic, no young people so concentrate on needs of 'old' people – retirees need spiritual and cultural needs met.
- Over the past three years there has been an openness everywhere not just in the Church; we have all been exploring new ways of being and determining what is really important. For me it was sorting the friendships that mattered, realizing that the kids didn't need to be in 6 activities a week, the job became less rewarding and there was a readiness to discipleship of wanting meaningful relationships and be more authentic/it was a period where many of us felt more spiritually alive, able to join small group discussion which got us through the pandemic, some grew from them, we would have been different without them as they played a role through those difficult times.
- Developed lay leaders who are very capable, who enjoy success because they have been developed, supported, and the church has grown more apple trees just apples. Their faith has deepened, spiritually developed, strengthen leadership skills to equip more small groups who then go out and work in and with the community.
- Fishing for principles as compared to programs ie spiritual development, discipleship, leadership at the Diocese can cast the net in that way/ Nourishment Breakfast: where strong group of people needs to be fed and supported through the Diocese addressing spiritual health, avoiding burnout, encouraging cross pollination, collaborative programs, develop local leaders/ Learning from our own mistakes and sharing with others
- The pandemic showed there is a large voice of spirituality and I think there are a lot of lost people.
- We are good at taking sides but not so good at spiritual formation – I'd like to see more emphasis on theological training and spiritual practices like fasting and meditation.

- People are all very, very busy and church needs to become important – so that its not just Christmas and Easter. All about a social club but we need to focus on spirituality and dare people to come in and try it and not just get out.
- Make a priority of intentional spiritual formation and discipleship. This has been neglected in Anglicanism.
- People are looking for spiritual connection. We have something to offer. We have to become better at responding to people's interest where they are at; speaking to them in ways they can understand and relate to, rather than forcing them to be like us.
- I worry about people shopping for the spiritual needs that they want and they might not be the spiritual needs that we address in our parish.
- People these days say they are spiritual, not religious. What they don't want is the institution of the church, the rituals. Love is spiritual, love is religious., And that's what we have to do and show. Just by spreading the love, by being there for people we show love. And that is Christianity. We have to be open about how we present ourselves to the community.
- What is the right way to reach young people, there's a huge void, they want to experience spirituality but do not know how to experience it. Opportunity for church to build bridge to connect with them in the right way.

Going Back to Basics

Some call for simplicity, to go "back to basics" in terms of teaching, learning, and practicing the Christian faith:

- We would be leaning into love and being welcoming instead of emphasizing protocol. We would go back to fundamentals and ask what it means to be loving in 2023.
- Review fundamentals. For things that didn't work, find out why, build on successes and move forward.
- Internet/technology has equipped us to teach newcomers principles of Christian values and the beauty of Christianity.
- Give parishioners tools/space to speak their beliefs IE EfM (Education for Ministry); if you can not describe your beliefs to yourself how can you explain and welcome others.
- I think things don't start organizationally; they start personally with personal faith. If we're finding ways for people to grow in, the faith should be at the core.
- Other creeds might resonate more to express creation story – more modern, easy to understand language – simpler language.
- We have a diverse audience that we have to accommodate and it is more complicated now around the timing of services, providing Christian education, Christianity 101.
- Go back to the basics and go back to the Bible – how Jesus lived with his disciples and his teachings.
- People are asking to be baptized, but have never read the Bible or undergone any spiritual formation. They are attracted to Jesus the person, but don't know his journey. We need basic formation materials, pamphlets, etc. Formation for formation: form our people to form others.
- We need to realize that we are doing something for Christ and interpret what that means. We have to recognise that we need to refresh ourselves and be in line with our values.
- Experience of a pandemic: Forced us to re-evaluate all our priorities and not evaluate in the same spirit that existed when we entered the pandemic.
- We have to distinguish by identifying the core, important things in our church life and expressing them effectively.
- The language we use is not intelligible to a lot of people. Eg: simple Christian contexts like salvation. Many people don't understand that. We have to let go of complex concepts and make it simple.
- Continue to keep Jesus at the centre of church services.
- I think I'd go back to basic, having run a food bank for twenty years, the number of people who ask questions about God or our church. We need Alpha or a primer course.

An integrative insight:

The main difference is Jesus says do it – a command to do and they did. Jesus is leading this, his church and his disciples at different stages. What is Jesus asking us to do that, how well are we doing that – love your neighbour as yourself. Are we listening to our Lord? Even if we are a few, are we actually doing what Jesus asks us to do.

Discipleship Beyond Sunday

There is also a quiet yet consistent theme calling for a shift in focus from participation in church on Sunday toward living as disciples of Jesus every day:

- The way to grow in faith and grace is to be even more Jesus-focused than we already are. The disciples had to listen to Jesus. Jesus' core message is not just about what we do, but why we do it. Emulating Jesus, thanking Jesus: that's why we want to serve the community, attract young people, etc. Need to know how we are different from any other social service agency.
- Work on the other 6 days – we, no I, have to be out there and cast the net.
- Focus on being the Church.
- Church is not something you do only on a Sunday morning.
- Practicing faith doesn't have to be on Sundays.
- Not making attendance at church on Sundays as important as reaching out to the community.
- Churches need to not concentrate only on Sundays – we have a 24/7 culture now.
- Translate the work (ministry) so that scripture means something to their daily lives.
- Opening our churches to the community- more than Sunday morning services – remove the roadblocks as we have to open our hearts and minds to do things differently.
- Starts in the heart; willing to feel the pain.
- How do we find a way to integrate work and church? What are the things we can do to find a way to bring them together? Chaplaincy? Bring together folks who work in a central area.
- Show our abundant Christian love not tell others how to live. Just show abundant love to others – show them how you love God. Love and nurture with no strings attached. Live by example.
- I found the idea of drawing parallels challenging. I felt the fishermen were doing what they're good at but God in their lives - Jesus shows them what they can do. God can help us in our ordinary days to understand what's the next thing to do and help us have a better life.
- Not all of us can have that 2028 vision, I have cloudy thoughts about rootedness and intentionality. Much has returned to normal at our church yet I still feel disconnected. [nods of agreement around the Zoom room] I'd like to see us more clear about who we are as the people of God, listening to our master. I see a picture of being salt that is larger than Covid – it's not over but it's not the same feeling as in February 2020. We feel fractured now and there needs to be recognition of that. Can we be more people of God, not just Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians etc.? We need to come together and be salty not to preserve our community but to be part of the wider community. We need spiritual formation and focus on that other side of the boat. Traditional ministry and worship can be good, but we are more than the formalities of worship. We are made up of ex-evangelicals and are drawn some of us to liturgy and the is good. But we need to be better at creating community and cooperation, being acts of mercy.
- We will see a new way of discipleship. We will gather people with particular gifts, like folks with community ministry gifts. We will be about Jesus and feed and clothe people.
- The key about what you said is change; I know that change is difficult; now that we are forced to change; continue to think beyond the building; Jesus was never in a building; opportunity to think beyond the building;

discipleship happens everyday; opportunity to rethink how we do church; opportunity to be braver, out of the comfort zone and do something different; our present fears could be realized if we don't do things differently; community needs are obvious; what can we do; great opportunity; mission of Christ to change attitudes.

- We are getting very good sermons repeatedly. One of the main responsibilities of an incumbent is to educate – not abstract, but what are you going to do about it when you leave church. That is powerful in our congregation.

A summative comment:

*Would love for us to look at church outside of Sunday.
Not restricted to people in the pews on Sunday.
What can we do to engage people throughout the week.
We have to broaden our view of what Church is.*

Ways Forward

We let go of what we long to see it all to go back. It's important as so many seniors long to have things back the way they were – full pews. We need to help everyone let go of that longing. We have a new reality just like the disciples had a new reality. We let go of the grief of the past.

I hope we are asking the right questions: If we are asking about how we could return to where we were before—that's the wrong question

We need to look at pooling resources not having everyone need to do the same thing. This cooperation will energise the state of the Church. Maybe dedicated resources to that ministry that every parish is specialises in. We are mindful of efficiency and promote creativity. We love think we can do it all but we cannot – we need to promote specialised ministries.

*Conflict is better managed; more open exchanges and clarity of our purpose and direction; focus on being real not just nice. More listening across the parish and with the parish using both head, hearts, and hands as a focus. People pulling and working together on things that matter to our Christian life.
... Same old, same old is gone. There is a willingness to try, and its not ok, that's OK.*

Fishing for principles as compared to programs.

With change and growth, we shift from a focus from the quantity to a focus on the health of our church.

I have a lot of faith and hope that God will guide us – but have no solutions.
