

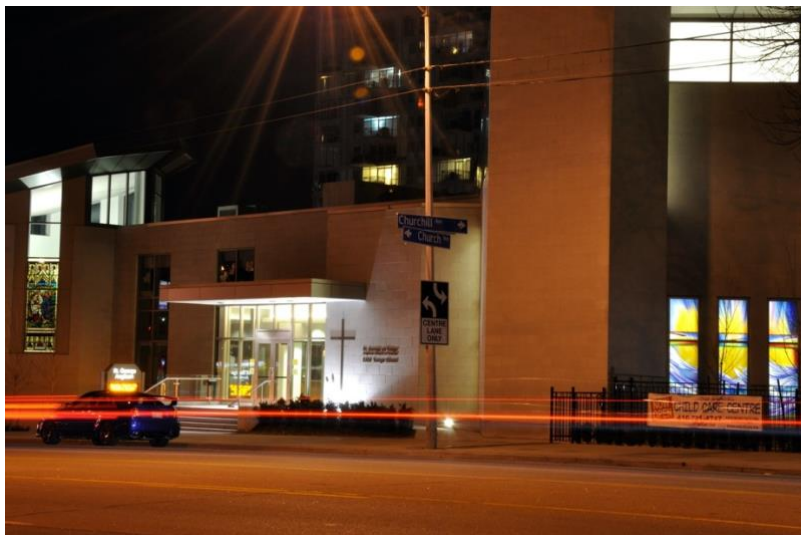
Spiritually alive on Yonge!



 St. George on Yonge
Anglican

PARISH PROFILE

5350 Yonge Street
Toronto ON
M2N 5R5



WELCOME

About us

1. Introduction

St. George on Yonge (SGY) is a parish in transition. We are a resilient and welcoming community, attracting newcomers and those seeking different ways to connect to faith. With over 100 years in our community, we remain 'Spiritually alive on Yonge!' and anxious to do more of Jesus' work.



2. Who we are



Photo credit: Michael Hudson



SGY (originally St. George's Anglican Church, Willowdale) looks to the next phase of growing our congregation and enhancing the ways we serve our local community and show Jesus' presence on Yonge Street. This document profiles who we are, what we do, how we care for ourselves and others, the resources we draw on, and our long-term goals.

SGY is literally right on the sidewalk of Yonge Street. Over the past 20 years, the population in Willowdale has exploded due to new high-rise, 'monster home', and townhouse development. The original 'Anglo-Christian' character of the community has become an ethnically diverse and mainly unchurched demographic. This presents a huge mission opportunity and a great challenge for SGY as we work to connect with and engage the wider population. The makeup of our congregation has also changed dramatically, reflecting change in the community.

In the early 2000s, the Diocese designated St. George as a strategic parish, because of location, strong lay leadership, and a dedicated and enthusiastic congregation. We undertook a series of visioning activities, developing broad consensus on parish ministries and programs. How we achieve these goals post-COVID is less clear, and we are eager to collaborate with a Priest who will work with our committed lay leadership in discovering new ways to develop, grow and serve.

What we do

3. Worship, liturgy, and music

St. George currently offers these worship services (all BAS):

- Sunday Eucharist with music at 10 am — in the Sanctuary, livestreamed on [Facebook](#) and recorded on [YouTube](#)
- Wednesday Morning Prayer at 8 am — on Zoom
- Thursday Evening Prayer at 7:30 pm — on Zoom

Monthly we offer:

- Healing, prayer, and anointing at the 1st Sunday service of the month
- Eucharist service at Delmanor retirement residence just across Yonge Street

Ordained staff and lay pastoral volunteers visit homebound members on request and administer communion.

Sunday service music includes traditional, contemporary, and ethnic music, accompanied by a 3-manual electronic organ and Yamaha grand piano. Guest instrumentalists, singers, and other performers enhance our music at Christmas, Easter, and special occasions.



Photo credit: Michael Hudson



Photo credit: Michael Hudson



Our current building (the 5th St. George on our site) was designed by architect Elizabeth Davidson, and completed in 2012, to support the parish's vision of the future. The Sanctuary has a contemporary and welcoming look and feel and was expressly designed to be multifunctional. The altar, font and ambo were created from trees that once grew on the property and can be moved on air cushions. We also use moveable upholstered pew chairs.

*I want this place to be my church. I just walked by and walked in and asked for prayers
and I fell in love with the place, and I hope to be here a long time.
It's magnificent – architecture is beautiful! — Parish consultation, 2024*

Sanctuary acoustics were designed for live music. There is a superior organ speaker system, and a good sound system for the spoken word. A large-screen TV in the Sanctuary displays announcements and the order of service. Lighting has variable levels with fixed spotlights.

Sliding doors open the southwest Sanctuary wall into the Narthex for additional worship seating or concert overflow. Modern stained glass windows on the northeast wall are a focal point, and several floor-to-ceiling windows on the northwest wall make the space very light and bright. We believe that SGY liturgy, music, and uplifting surroundings all contribute to the increasing number of newcomers at worship services.

The more traditional Chapel contains repurposed and refinished items from our previous building: liturgical furniture, wooden pews and three memorial stained glass windows. The Chapel has moveable pew chairs and a Yamaha upright piano. Acoustics are lively, allowing the room to be used for music practice, in addition to services, meditation, and prayer.

4. Learning and spiritual nurture and development

Children and youth

Church School for ages 3 to 12 operates during the Sunday service, using the 'Sermons 4 Kids' curriculum. We look forward to gradually reintroducing services designed for children's active participation. Youth group attendance is cyclical; ten years ago, we had a large, very active group; 5 years ago, we presented 5 candidates for confirmation; currently, the teenage demographic is absent.



Photo credit: Michael Hudson



Baptism and confirmation classes are offered as needed.

For information on our plans to support our children and youth, see [Children's ministry](#) and [Youth ministry](#).

*I've been here all my life and now I am the Parish Administrator.
I love the kids here and our ESL classes. — K.B.*

Spiritual connection

Bible study sessions are offered during Advent and Lent, via Zoom.

'Pub Knights' meet monthly on the second Friday at a local pub, when members of the parish and a neighbouring church get together and interact with other pub patrons for dinner and discussion.

We seek to incorporate fellowship and a learning component to connect our Christian faith with daily life.

5. Mutual support and fellowship

Ushers at Sunday services welcome worshippers and parishioners keep an eye on newcomers to help them navigate and look for opportunities to involve them in the liturgy itself (e.g., by carrying forward the elements and offertory). After worship, parishioners invite newcomers to Coffee Hour, engage them in conversation, and introduce them to other parishioners.



[SGY seniors](#) meet over Zoom on the second Wednesday of the month for fellowship, connection, and a chance to be heard. This is open to anyone. Some seniors have voluntary personal ministries of keeping in touch with the unwell or homebound by phone or with a card.

We plan to hold more social events for newcomers to meet each other and interact with parish leaders and long-time members to discover what St. George represents.

ESL classes led by parishioners assist 50 to 75 newcomers on a weekly basis offering opportunities for mutual support and fellowship.



I'm a 'baby' to St. George's. I came 19 months ago, and I found the environment to be friendly and helpful. Everyone tries to help where they can, and so do I – helping the priest and with the ESL classes. — P.T.

Our not-for-profit and fully equipped [daycare centre](#) offers support for young families. Many come from the high-rises around us (one of our garage spaces is reserved for 'stroller parking').



6. What has changed since COVID-19?

Congregation makeup has changed substantially, with several members moving away to be closer to family or to take advantage of more affordable housing outside Toronto. The flip side is we are near to the Willowdale Welcome Centre Shelter and newcomers who need community support. Isolation during COVID-19 impacted the well-being of several long-time parishioners. Livestreaming and Zoom allow them to participate in worship and connect with their peers.

7. Pastoral care

There is a long tradition of conducting monthly Eucharist services at nearby retirement residences. We currently serve Delmanor Northtown and hope to return to Canterbury Place.

Our prayer team, including a licensed pastoral care leader, is an essential element of our pastoral care providing support to all our ministries.

8. Human, physical, and financial resources

The church is located at 5350 Yonge Street, at the corner of Yonge St. and Churchill Ave., two traffic lights south of Finch Ave. in downtown North York.

Currently, staff consists of an Interim Priest in Charge and part-time custodian, Music Director/Organist, and office administrator.

SGY houses a large daycare centre for full-day children ages infant to pre-school, and after-school and summer and school break camps for children up to age 12. The centre is owned by an arm's length corporation, Yonge-Churchill Community Centre Inc. (YCCCI), with parishioners forming the Board of Directors, and managed on YCCCI's behalf by EduKids Child Care Centres. Daycare profits are passed on to SGY. The centre implements the government-funded \$10/day daycare plan, and enrolment is about 100.

The current church building has three storeys plus underground parking for 51 vehicles, all connected by an elevator. The heating and cooling system makes the building comfortable throughout the year. Access to all levels is barrier-free.

The Main Level, directly accessible from Yonge St., is used by the parish and licensee faith groups, while space on the upper and lower levels is multipurpose and shared, except for the daycare nursery and office and custodian workroom. The Main Level contains the Sanctuary and Sacristy, Chapel, staff offices, two meeting rooms and library. The main worship space accommodates 175 and can be configured in a variety of ways with mobile furnishings. The Chapel accommodates up to 30, and can also be reconfigured. The Lower Level contains the parish hall, kitchen, daycare nursery, daycare toddler/SGY church school room, daycare office, custodian workroom and storage rooms. Due to the slope of the property, the Lower Level is directly accessible from the driveway and Churchill Avenue. The Upper Level has three large daycare/meeting rooms.

We have several licensees, with three faith groups using the Sanctuary:

- Toronto Korean Methodist Church worships on Sundays and has been with us for over 40 years.
- Living Waters, a ministry for Iranians exploring Christianity, meet on Fridays.
- Zion Alliance Church has begun meeting on Saturday mornings.

Financially, as we emerge from the pandemic, balancing the operating budget continues to be a challenge. For information on our financials, refer to our 2023 Vestry Report.

9. Use of technology

A positive legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic was implementing online worship. Facilitated by a small, dedicated team it proved a spiritual lifeline to so many. We have adopted hybrid worship (in-person with live streaming) that connects in-person worshippers with the homebound, former parishioners, and others separated by distance. Connectivity continues via [Facebook](#), WhatsApp, [YouTube](#), and Zoom, with aspirations to expand to Instagram and other social networking platforms in order to become a stronger, more consistent voice for social justice and issues relevant to our neighbourhood and its demographics.

What we know and what we dream

10. Our neighbourhood and our mission field

SGY draws its members from a much broader area than its official boundaries established by the Diocese.

When I arrived with my daughters we were welcomed. They extended hospitality and were very friendly. [Although I don't live in the area] I stayed, and that welcome has stayed with me all my time here – 16-1/2 years. St. George's is a family and I'm not going to stop attending.
— M.L.

While some members reside within official parish boundaries, approximately 60% of members reside in the broader Willowdale community, in the area bounded by Steeles Ave. on the north, Highway 401 on the south, Victoria Park Ave. on the east, and Bathurst St. on the west. Another 10% of St. George members are widely spread across other parts of the GTA, and a further 10% reside in Peel and York Regions, as far west as Brampton, and as far north as Aurora.

Approximately 20% of members are seniors (mainly lifelong parishioners), 20% are families with dependent children and 3% are single parents with dependent children. However, the proportion of members in their 50s to 60s is below that of the general population and challenges our capacity to providing effective mission. A small group of dedicated volunteers juggle roles in various leadership positions and ministries. The challenge is to encourage new members to participate in the vital roles essential to spiritual growth and service to the wider community.

I came four years ago and I'm the change other folks refer to – now I'm a Deputy Warden. I love reading and doing the Prayers of the People. We are a family. When I first came the parish made me welcome and was caring – more than other churches. — R.A.

Our mission field is focussed on the area immediately around the church, bounded by Finch Ave. on the north, Park Home/Empress Ave. on the south, Willowdale Ave. on the east and Senlac Rd. on the west. There is a large proportion of young families raising children in the surrounding high-rises.

The area's population is growing rapidly and is highly diverse, with all major ethnic and age groups represented. The largest age cohort is 30 to 35 years, most adults have a university education and employment levels are high. While seniors are downsizing, many choose to remain in the local community, in condos or retirement residences. The immediate neighbourhood includes two high-rise retirement residences, with two other senior residences within 3 km.

The local community includes a large population who grew up with a non-Christian faith, are seniors, young people, and unchurched. The dominance of the 'no religion' characteristic provides a unique opportunity for service, outreach, and evangelism.

I love the people and the community. At St. George's we don't spend our time fighting – we have a real community that pulls together. Our demographics have changed since I came in 1977 – like the city and the country – and we welcome all those people here. — G.S.

11. Outreach and evangelism

St. George has an active and diverse internal outreach program. Within our building, we hold weekly [ESL classes](#) and conversation groups for newcomers. On Saturday mornings, we provide a safe space for Creative Inclusion for Ukrainian Children to assist these refugees in dealing with the horrors of war and adapt to Canada. Our periodic secular music concerts attract people who might not otherwise set foot in the building. As well, some parishioners have a personal mission to assist refugees in finding accommodation and employment.

Parish members also support these external Outreach activities with extensive time and treasure:

- Don Valley Refugee Resettlers (DVRR)
- NeighbourLink
- FaithWorks

In terms of evangelism, SGY has offered several Alpha courses. Among our newcomers, some have come from other religions, suggesting they are searching for the light, including a number who have asked to be baptized.

The parish played a key role in the aftermath of the Yonge Street Van Attack, holding vigils, vigil walks, special services, annual memorial services, and community suppers to help re-build the sense of community. SGY is also represented on the Van Attack Memorial working group.

12. Present reality and future vision

This parish has a long, proud history since its founding in 1922 and is a recognized place in the local community. In the 21st century, we have continually articulated and clarified our vision and mission in consultation with the congregation as well as other Willowdale-area parishes. Now, in 2024, there is renewed interest in expanding programs over the longer term for these identified target groups:

- High-rise dwellers
- Seniors
- Music lovers in the wider community
- Young families
- Newcomers to the country
- Youth
- Non-profits and others needing space

Our vision for serving our target groups:

Within the parish:

- **Children's ministry**
 - Reintroduce the weekly children's talk in the Sanctuary at the beginning of Sunday worship.
 - Coordinate with Church School leadership to schedule services designed for active family participation, involving children in Good Friday, Lent, Advent, and Christmas Nativity.
 - Encourage parents to participate in Sunday School teaching.
 - Work with families to formally initiate children into baptism and confirmation.

*I left a few years ago but I came back. I attended other churches ...
but St. George's is really a warm place and people do serve the community and parish.
I am vested in the future here because of my son. — C.L.*

▪ **Youth ministry**

- Identify the needs of youth and give them a voice in how they choose to participate in worship and encourage them to share their gifts and talents by joining the Altar and Server Guilds, singing or playing an instrument in the Music ministry, becoming a greeter, reader, or usher.
- Invite them to volunteer in activities outside worship, such as hospitality, Seniors' Ministry, social media, or Sunday School support.
- Aim to create a Youth Group with dedicated activities.

▪ **Seniors' ministry**

- Understand the different senior dynamics in the congregation, from those active in Church programming and leadership to those who are now homebound and isolated.
- Participate in monthly Senior Connection: Faith and fellowship hour on Zoom with homebound seniors and look for ways that seniors without access to technology can gain access to worship and online connection.
- Facilitate and engage in pastoral visits to those homebound members who want communion and in person connection.



▪ **Music ministry**

- Create a choir and team of interested parishioners to work with the Music Director to lead praise and worship music.



They should promote more exciting music – let us have a variety of songs like Crusade Songs – help bring a praise band here and welcome other ideas – e.g., the songs from [Guide My Feet!](#) — Parish consultation, 2024

For the local community:

- For youth, a drop-in facility for homework help, 'hanging out' and counselling; outreach to alienated youth, and newcomers in the neighbourhood, with coordination and cooperation with the Willowdale Welcome Centre.
- For seniors, a daytime drop-in with friendly visitors and activity programs with coordination and cooperation with North York Seniors Centre and NeighbourLink.
- For young families, exploring ways of reaching out to stay-at-home parents and their young children to help build community. [YCCCI](#) is moving towards \$10/day daycare, addressing the shortage and affordability of daycare spaces in the community.
- For high-rise dwellers, community programs such as newcomer/refugee orientation support, parenting courses, community suppers, etc.
- In music, a full program of presenting public concerts to attract people to the building and its acoustic performance space, as well as attracting established musical groups to make St. George their 'home'.



- In terms of building use, we have allocated space to non-profit groups and others in need of space whose programs are consistent with our vision. These include Alcoholics Anonymous (2 groups), Creative Inclusion program for Ukrainian refugee children, ESL, [YCCCI's daycare centre](#), Toronto Korean Methodist church, Living Waters Iranian ministry, and Zion Alliance Church.
- For newcomers to the country, more volunteer resources for the current program of [ESL teaching and coaching](#), for which the demand seems limitless.

Challenges impacting growth and sustainable outreach — Several factors challenge our growth:

- The pre-pandemic core congregation is aging.
- The recent instability in ordained leadership is an obstacle to maintaining constancy, reliability, and trust. This is compounded by what many perceive as a communication vacuum between the Diocese and the parish.

*Now a senior myself, as well as holding this special congregation in my prayers
I would hope to find an area where I could roll up my sleeves and
join in the work of building this congregation to its new potential.
— Parish consultation, 2024*

13. Our new priest

SGY seeks a Priest in Charge who will inspire our parish through theological depth and provide energetic and effective leadership of the ministry and programs of a diverse parish, in collaboration with dedicated and enthusiastic lay leadership. *We are not asking for much are we?*

We are looking for someone with the ability to teach and grow a congregation in several ways:

- in numbers reflecting the increasing diversity and change in local demographics
- in spiritual maturity, whereby parishioners are empowered to contribute their talents and gifts, and undertake personal ministry
- incarnationally, whereby parishioners live out their faith and make a difference in the world

Responsibilities in full collaboration with lay leaders

- inspire the parish to develop innovative ways of implementing the vision for ministry and programs
- oversee attracting, coaching, and retaining a team of volunteers, that will help build a healthy and effective parish
- communicate with the Bishop, the Diocese, and the Deanery to present the parish's position, needs, and aspirations in the most positive way
- dialogue and partner with other churches, faith groups, and neighbourhood organizations to coordinate activities and maximize outcomes

The Priest in Charge will have these skills and characteristics including:

- inspirational preaching that is relevant to our lives, modern and biblically based
- offering education for a diverse congregation
- pastoral approach
- flexibility
- engagement with all age groups
- fostering involvement for children and youth
- a reputation for integrity, trust, and nurturing
- support for the importance and value of music in worship
- a passion for and commitment to community work

The parish of St. George on Yonge is ready to welcome a new Priest in Charge, and to work heart and soul with that person to do Jesus' work in this place!

Father God,

*We, the people of St. George on Yonge, come to you in prayer
knowing that you hear and will answer our prayers.*

We ask your divine intervention in our search for a new priest.

We long for our own spiritual leader who will nourish our souls and give us stability.

According to your will give us wisdom as we continue our search.

Be present in all our conversations.

Inspire those who speak with clarity of speech and intuitive minds.

Make the perfect pairing of priest and people.

To you, Lord God, be the honor and the glory for Jesus' sake. Amen
