

Church of the Messiah
Bishop's Direct Appointment
Parish Profile – Oct 15, 2024





Overview - The Pursuit of Discipleship in Jesus

The Church of The Messiah ("COTM") is a low-Anglican church in Eglinton Deanery in the Diocese of Toronto frequented by an experienced, faithful, supportive, energetic, adaptable, versatile, risk-tolerant, and battle-tested congregation of followers of Jesus. A modest number of Sunday parishioners are supported by and support a large community of volunteers, artists, and those we serve through our outreach programs.

We share a mission to seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness through outreach exemplifying Jesus, most particularly in the sharing of the Word and the care of the poor and those of need in our community. The current parishioners might best be described as a relatively low maintenance group of Christians who attempt to grow the church through prayer and consensus, and who are open to new ideas with a focus on these fundamentals.

Today COTM finds itself at the centre of a large and growing community:

- Weekly Sunday service – with a small congregation
- Regular, virtual, Sunday School supporting a geographically diverse group of young people;
- Avenue Road Food Bank ("ARFB") – feeding between 400 and 500 families each week;
- Recently launched Saturday evening service in Spanish and English – in response to the needs of the clients of the ARFB in cooperation with Father Hernan – in coordination with ESL training;
- The Unicorn Daycare operates daily in COTM with approximately 40 children attending daily;
- Good Neighbours Food Market – operating at Toronto Community Housing facility at 250 Davenport Ave;
- The home of the Summerhill Orchestra – founded and directed by COTM's Music Director Sarah John – with weekly rehearsals at COTM with approximately 50 local musicians – with 3 concerts in the community every year;

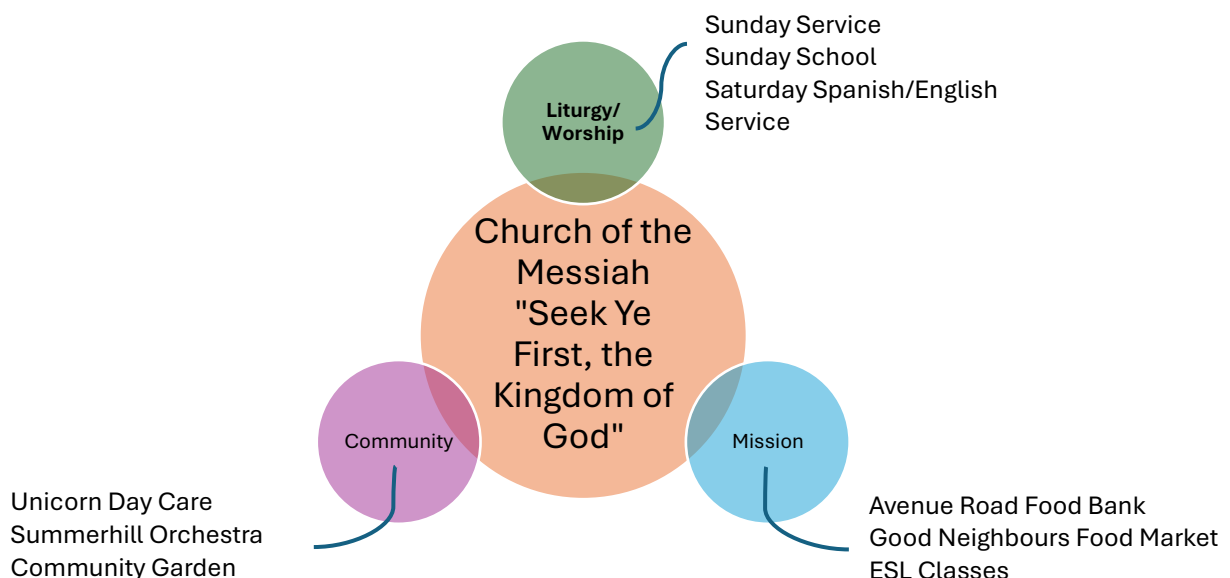
- Community Gardens – on COTM property – supported by residents of 250 Davenport, members of the ARFB, Unicorn Day Care – as well as members of the COTM congregation.

Over the past decade, with the leadership of, former and current Incumbents, Priests-in-Charge and an Honorary Assistant, with assistance of the Diocese, COTM has taken to heart the admonition to prune in order that its gifts might bear good fruit. We have grown in mission by reaching beyond the four walls of its church building. Our parishioners are learning to become couriers in Christ and not courtiers of Christ, working toward becoming disciples and seeking and mentoring new disciples.

This parish profile is intended to provide a snapshot of where the parish finds itself in the summer of 2024 and how it arrived there. It is not intended to describe ministries, liturgy or activities to which the congregation is wedded. COTM has a long history of experimentation, innovation, and change, and its parishioners are excited about the prospect of a new Priest-in-Charge bringing their own vision to ministry and the necessary changes that will entail.

COTM is a welcoming and tolerant community, having been supportive of clergy through major life changes, including growth in families, illness, and personal loss. The congregation is ethnically and demographically diverse. A significant percentage of regular attendees are of African and Caribbean Canadian heritage.

There is more commitment from the congregation than ever to ensure that we continue with our worship and mission at the 240 Avenue Road location.



Charting the way forward:

We share a strong sense that God wants us here to carry out a mission by listening to God and being prepared to try new things.

- ARFB has brought hope to many, and it does not go unnoticed by our neighbours that we are feeding hungry families.
- The burgeoning ESL mission among our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters is gaining momentum.
- Most importantly, under the steady leadership of our interim Priests-In-Charge Bob Bettson and Donald Butler, and Honorary Assistant John Hill, we continue to have meaningful liturgy on Sundays with inspirational music directed by Sarah John. We are supporting and caring for each other amidst our diversity. It is a thing of beauty.

In addition to these articulated strengths, there are also weaknesses: We are too small to take on big projects without careful planning and external support. We must take care to avoid burn-out. Our Sunday services may be almost too intimate to attract new people. We need young parishioners. Our location is odd – a semi commercial and semi residential area. Our outdoor façade needs work – some people don't know we are even open due to the caution tape that has sealed off the crumbling mortar on Avenue Road.

We believe that with the support of the Diocese and dedicated clergy to lead us into the future, this will give us the confidence we need to go “all in”.

COTM has been at crossroads before but through unexpected miracles, has remained an important part of the Anglican tapestry in our city.

Our New Priest In Charge

Since 2022, under the direction of Bishops Andrew and Kevin, Archdeacon Theadore, and our Priests-In-Charge, the congregation has undergone a period of discernment about who we are and where we believe we are called. This process has been facilitated by a series of rotating dinners where the future of COTM has been discussed, and an abundance of ongoing prayer.

The congregation has learned much in the past ten years. Among what it has learned includes the following:

- a) It is not enough that we minister to those in need. We must share the Good News. We must encourage and attract more disciples, especially younger ones. We see outreach as an important element of this attraction;
- b) Outreach – particularly through the food bank, has become a cornerstone of who we are as a congregation:
 - Need not be novel to find favour with God. Attending to the basic needs of neighbours in ways we can is at least as important as finding innovative ways to minister;

- Requires a component of person-to-person interaction to bear fruit. Christ's presence enters where we encounter our neighbour in need and reach out to them with a helping hand;
- Requires that we get beyond the four walls of the church. Those to whom we minister are more comfortable where they are. Frequently they cannot get to us on their own, as was the case with many requiring food during the pandemic; and
- The particular manner in which we reach out, or worship, or glorify God is less important than that it find favour with God. Fundamentals are important.

These imperatives mean that our new Priest-In-Charge will have a significant role in keeping us strong in our ministry through pastoral care and leadership;

- For a small congregation there is a lot happening – for the moment these worship and outreach activities are managed – however we need support from dedicated clergy to help us grow.
- We benefit from leaders who can assist with new relationships, and who can sustain those relationships through leadership and pastoral care. Growth comes with the challenges of change management and we require a leader who can manage change;
- There is much work to do. The Avenue Road façade of the church requires work. We need to grow in numbers, especially with youth and the immediate community. More pastoral care will be required as current parishioners age, as we grow in numbers, and as we support new and growing ministry; and
- If we are faithful to the Word, there is little that we cannot accomplish together.

These things we have learned may be a longer way of expressing the passages of Scripture that adorn the worship space at COTM.

- We seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;
- We understand the promise that the kingdom is attainable;
- God is ever present. He enters the heart of humankind by way of the Cross;
- Our response is one of praise and worship, and of welcoming the stranger and feeding the hungry;
- Our achievements are brought into the centre of God's love and offered to Him; and
- With this attitude, we pursue fundamental excellence toward discipleship in the evangelical, low-Anglican tradition to realize the growing possibilities of the Church.

Church of the Messiah today?

We currently host a modest core community of parishioners who are all active in different facets of COTM life. Every member of the COTM congregation is involved in one way or another with the many activities that are based out of the 240 Avenue Road facility.

Liturgy/Worship:

Sunday Service:

COTM continues with regular Sunday worship based on the BAS combined with experimental liturgy over the years – with approximately 20 regular parishioners – supported by a small choir. Some unique aspects of worship at COTM are enabled by the flexible floor plan of our church – notably the ability to arrange seating for the congregation while facing each other. This strengthens congregational listening – both to scripture and each other, and the inclusion of group discussion during the Proclamation of the Word. During the Celebration of the Eucharist, the whole congregation gathers around the Table as the gifts are prepared, remaining together while all eat and drink until the Dismissal.



Sunday school:

The COTM Sunday School is held online at noon after the service most weeks including during the summer. During 2020 due to COVID, participants started dialling in from Guelph, Scarborough, the Beach and Port Perry and it seemed right to keep going in this format. We attempted a hybrid model, but straight Zoom proved easier. Participants range in age between 12 and 20 years old.



Saturday Evening – Spanish/English Service:

COTM Clergy with the full support of Parish Council began an exploratory ministry with the Anglican Church of San Lorenzo (under The Rev. Canon Hernan Astudillo) in 2023 to host an ESL Course every Saturday at 6 pm followed by a Spanish-English Mass at 7 pm. Both these activities started on Saturday September 16, 2023. Attendance for these Saturdays has been growing steadily: along with several ESL teachers, after only 3 sessions we have seen numbers go from 10 to nearly 50 people. Approval has been reached to include a Children's Play Area on Saturdays. Approximately 4 -7 adherents have attended from COTM. All three events have included relatively recent newcomers from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia and Peru. Currently, this effort is funded through the end of 2024 and we will need

to consider whether and how to extend this further. In the meantime, San Lorenzo plans to add The Mass to its ever-increasing radio followers.

Mission:

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" Hebrews 13:2

Avenue Road Food Bank:

On Wednesday afternoons, COTM's main floor space is converted to a market style food bank which addresses the issue of food insecurity in our city. ARFB is a member agency of Daily Bread and provides food for more than 450 households per week. The ARFB is supported by COTM, the local community, neighbourhood businesses, and committed, generous donors. It has operated in the church building since November 2018 and is staffed by COTM and community volunteers.

The food bank receives food for distribution from Daily Bread, Second Harvest, several corporate donors, and private community donations. It supplements the food it receives with weekly purchases as our number of guests has continued to increase due to present societal economic conditions. The food bank does this to ensure that all the guests are consistently receiving much needed protein items such as eggs, meat, yogurt and milk. Funds to purchase this supplementary food come predominantly from private donors.

November 28, 2024, will mark the sixth anniversary of ARFB's opening day at COTM in 2018.

Our weekly guests are citizens of Toronto who face food insecurity due to rising food inflation costs, unaffordable housing, poverty, unemployment or mental and/or physical health challenges.



Increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees, notably from the Americas, Mexico and the Ukraine, are coming to our doors, as well as residents in a local social housing complex and university students. Our number of new registrations and people at our door rose exponentially as the year progressed, as predicted by Daily Bread, media and economists. By the end of 2023 year, we will be serving over 450 households weekly which represent almost 1000 individuals. We are concerned that the numbers may rise into winter 2024-5.

The food bank has shared perishable produce in the past with several other organizations including:

- A local hot meals project;
- St. Felix (Catholic); and
- The Redeemer (hot meals program),

And has received perishable food from the Churches on the Hill (Timothy Eaton (centre)).

Because of the food bank's presence, COTM is now recognized in the community as a safe and welcoming space and has established informal relationships with the neighbourhood and neighbouring schools and businesses. COTM will host an open house BBQ in September for the community and donors, to thank them for their ongoing and generous support.

Community

Unicorn Daycare:

COTM has had an operating daycare since the building re-opened in the 1980s following the fire. Originally the daycare was operated by COTM – but now we have partnered with the Unicorn Daycare which originated at Brown Public School just up Avenue Road. The financial support as well as community involvement resulting from this partnership is currently key to the financial viability of COTM.

Music:

Directed by Sarah John, our choir and the Summerhill Orchestra are a vibrant part of liturgy and church life. We hold an Advent concert and a spring vespers service. Sarah also founded the Summerhill Orchestra based out of COTM – several years ago – having weathered the challenges of the pandemic, is continuing to thrive.



Garden:



Along with some neighbours we host a vegetable garden on the south side of the church building and two flower gardens. Vegetables are given to the food bank. This is a visible reminder to our neighbours that we are here and we care about our community.

Finances:

Over the last several years COTM has made significant strides in sorting out the parish finances. At the same time significant funds have been raised and directed towards outreach – primarily through the Avenue Road Food Bank. With the following highlights:

- COTM revenue has exceeded expenses since 2019
- Debt to the diocese has been reduced by approximately 25% over this time
- Approximately \$130k has been raised to support capital improvement funds, with approximately \$100k being committed to an accessibility project currently in progress.
- The parish owns a rectory (on Bridgman Ave) which is currently rented – the parish will pay a housing allowance.

- The parish has a fund of approximately \$350k held by the Diocese in the Consolidated Trust Fund to support the parish for capital work.
- Outreach through the ARFB has increased from \$12k in 2019 to a budget of \$295k of which over 85% is directed to food distribution (purchases and in-kind donations)

CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH

I'm at the Church of The Messiah
 And I'm first to the choir
 It's a Thursday at quarter to seven
 And I look at the ceiling
 Some paint, it is peeling
 But the crack might be my gate to heaven
 And I'm searching for Jesus
 But mostly for Charles
 'Cause Jesus is easily found
 Near the place where my daughters
 Felt baptism's waters,
 Near the spot where they'll give me to ground

I'm at the Church of the Messiah
 With the Holy Spirit's fire
 No wonder this place was once burned
 You can see in the stone
 That you're not alone
 Here every last scratch has been earned

Sing me an anthem
 Play me a song
 It's good to feel good
 In a world that's gone wrong
 And there might just be no one around
 Except Jesus, who's easily found
 At the Church of The Messiah

 And the night would end all well
 'Cause we met up with Caldwell
 And Caldwell, God bless, brought his car
 So, tonight it's no subway
 Brendan says it's the dumb way
 So we jump in and follow the star

Sing me an anthem
 Play me a song
 It's good to feel good
 In a world that's gone wrong
 And there might just be no one around
 Except Jesus, who's easily found
 At the Church of The Messiah

Lord Jesus, may you continue to bring broken people to
our church that by your grace they may be healed.

May we have your heart in welcoming and loving all
those in the community where you have placed us.

May we have the wisdom and strength to discern and
carry out your will for the church that bears your name.

The Church of the Messiah

Be with us Lord Jesus.

Amen

