

ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH COTTAGE MEETING REPORT

In a series of six, small group meetings, a diverse group of All Saints' parishioners gathered to discuss and reflect on the current state and the future direction for our church. These "cottage meetings" are the initial phase in a process to determine the need and/or focus for a capital campaign. These meetings, facilitated by volunteers, were a critical step in the discernment process and will guide the Vestry and parish in determining whether and how to move forward with a feasibility study regarding a capital campaign.

Each meeting asked the same questions to prompt conversation :

- What ministry at All Saints' (choose the #1) brings you the most joy and energy?
- What does All Saints' do well?
- Is there something you wish we were doing or doing more of?
- Once a person parks easily and safely, what will greet them on the other side of the street? What are we offering them? What encourages them return?
- Is our space welcoming? Comfortable? Accessible?

The following summary identifies four of the most predominant trends in the reflections shared by more than 100 participants during the cottage meetings. These and other concepts shared by parishioners provide a focus for our consideration in determining capital campaign projects and ongoing priorities for our congregation.

A WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE: NURTURING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY & PARISH AS A FAMILY

A significant number of responses shared during the discussions emphasized the importance of extending and experiencing a sense of welcome, fostering communication within our parish, and promoting a sense of acceptance and responsibility for our fellow parishioners.

Sample Commentary:

"We need to frequently publicize what we are offering to parish members and the community programs that we offer or support."

"We need to continue to seek ways to attract young families and actively engage parents and their children."

"Connect young families with older members of the congregation."

"We need to always let people know that there is a place for them and that they matter."

"Asking someone to become a part of a ministry at the right time can help a person feel they are a part of the group."

"The biggest thing we have to do well is to be inclusive."

"We may wish to have greeters standing outside the church at the steps or the circle to welcome newcomers and guests."

"The Messenger continues to be a vehicle for education, communication and self-expression for our congregants."

There are several non-capital initiatives requiring limited or no funding, as well as capital projects that may be considered for implementation. A consideration for a capital project may be the placement of campus directory maps at key locations and signage labeling each of the buildings will enhance the welcoming feeling for newcomers and visitors visiting All Saints'.

A SANCTUARY THAT INSPIRES: THE IMPACT OF ARCHITECTURE & AESTHETICS ON OUR WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Responses clearly indicate how the unique architecture, inspiring music and liturgy, and serene beauty of our campus are significant factors that enrich our worship and spiritual journey. Over 90 comments noted during the meetings, directly expressed how the unique beauty of the church and campus and rich liturgical and musical tradition that surround us during worship are an essential part of our spiritual experience at All Saints'.

Sample Commentary:

"I am uplifted by the architectural beauty of the sanctuary."

"I have seen a lot of beautiful churches. When I first entered All saints', I stopped in the narthex and was amazed."

"The traditions of the Episcopal Church are very important to me."

"The richness of the liturgy and the beauty that each of the services offer. Parishioners are able to select the service that is the best fit."

"The beauty of the campus...and care given the buildings prepare me for worship as I walk from my car."

In order to maintain the beauty of our church and campus facilities, there are capital maintenance projects that need to be considered for funding through a capital campaign. Exterior maintenance projects involving Reynolds Hall are among these considerations.

OUTREACH: CONNECTING AND SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

A recurring theme during the meetings is the interaction and impact All Saints' has on our community and beyond. Comments supported the varied ways in which our parish is involved in local outreach, including our Community Supper, support of the Peterborough Food Pantry.

Sample Commentary:

"Outreach is both a strength and an area where we could do more."

"We need to consider initiatives that directly impact All Saints' visibility in the community."

"The Tuesday night Community Supper brings me great joy."

"Opportunities to help people through outreach efforts strengthens my personal spiritual journey. Juarez is the perfect example."

The success of many of our outreach ministries are primarily based upon the time offered by volunteers, however, we may wish consider capital investments such as improving the kitchen facilities to expand our capacity to serve both our parishioners and community.

ACCESSIBILITY: SUPPORTING A SAFE USER-FRIENDLY CAMPUS

A significant number of individual comments noted during cottage meetings directly expressed the need to address accessibility and safety issues.

Sample Commentary:

"The entire campus needs better lighting, in particular the crossing on Concord St."

"More spaces are needed for the elderly and handicapped adjacent to the church."

"Parking needs to be expanded and reconfigured to make it safer and improve accessibility."

"Make all of our buildings ADA compliant."

NOTE: A full compilation of the cottage meeting notes is available upon request in the church office as well as online.