



The Church
of St Andrew and St Paul

REPORT TO THE SESSION OF THE CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW AND ST. PAUL

JUNE 5, 2019

Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
Revelation 2:7

There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries
and the same Lord; and there are different activities but the same God who produces all
of them in everyone.
1 Corinthians 12.4-6

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October, the Session created the What's Next Team to lead the congregation in a visioning exercise regarding the future of our church. Using Appreciative Inquiry through surveys, focus groups and social media from January through May, more than a thousand wishes and comments were gathered.

Comments reflected strong attachment to the church, especially highlight activities throughout the year. There is desire among all ages to strengthen relationships. Traditional worship and music are highly valued as is service to the community. The Church School is strongly supported. Comments support increasing transparency and interaction between organizations within the church.

With the agreement of the Session, this report will be shared with committees which will be asked to consider suggestions that relate to their areas of responsibility. From the gathered data the Team recommends that a second minister focus on building interconnectedness both within groups in the congregation and between the church and those outside it. All data will be made available to the Search Committee.



INTRODUCTION

On October 3, 2018, Rev. Ian Fraser introduced the concept of Appreciative Inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of being and seeing. It is both a worldview and a process for facilitating positive change in human systems, e.g., organizations, groups, and communities. Its assumption is simple: Every human system has something that works right – things that give it life when it is vital, effective, and successful. AI begins by identifying this positive core and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy, sharpen vision, and inspire action for change. Problems get replaced with innovation as conversations increasingly shift toward uncovering the organization's (or group's, or community's) positive core.

centerforappreciativeinquiry.net

Session assented to a Consensus of Agreement to move forward with the search process for a new Associate or Assistant Minister through a series of meetings that would explore our church's vision and thereby help clarify and create an accurate profile for candidates interested in the position.



TIME LINE

December 16, 2018: An initial meeting of the What's Next team was held. Team members are Rev. Ian Fraser, Louis Bucket, Thea Calder, Jacob Dufresne, Sheila Jacob, Betty MacKinnon, Keith Randall, and Gwen Tracy. The team defined its goal as discerning God's wish for the future of our church, a vision that would assist the search for a second minister. Ms. Tracy created and regularly updated a page on the A&P website and a survey was trialed on December 30.

January-May 2019: Surveys were distributed at services on 5 consecutive Sundays starting on Dec. 30, 2018. It asked about participation in church activities, appreciation of various aspects of church life, invited three wishes for our church. A total of 194 surveys were returned of which 100 respondents provided their name and 94 respondents answered anonymously. In addition, because we thought those should be heard who connect with us via our social media outreach, 166 surveys were completed on our website, on Facebook and on YouTube. In all, 465 wishes were expressed and they have been compiled according to the church groups to which they apply. It is striking how many imply cooperation between two or more groups.

A total of ten Appreciative Inquiry focus groups were held: four in downtown, West Island and Laval homes; five at the church with various groups, and a congregational gathering in Kildonan Hall on February 3. Given the range of these conversations, a statistical breakdown is impractical. Therefore, responses to standard questions have been assigned to relevant committees.

Respondents to surveys and focus groups generally reflected the demographics of the congregation. Please refer to Annex 1.

June 2019: Session received the report of the What's Next team and decided that time should be allowed for its study over the summer. Should the September Session meeting approve a motion to accept this report, full results will be distributed to the various committees and other organizations in the church and to the Search Committee when it is formed.

Further steps are outlined under Recommendations.



APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY REPORT

194 completed surveys reflected the participation and demographics of our church. Wishes from the surveys were filtered relative to the various church organizations. Filtering responses to Appreciative Inquiry focus groups has been more complex, given variations in questions asked and differing reporting styles of group leaders. The following summary attempts to capture the general tenor of comments. Several overall impressions stand out:

- There is a strong attachment to our church and little fear for its future;
- The sense of community is much appreciated and hopes are expressed that it might be encouraged and expanded;
- Many wishes and comments suggest increased cooperation between various church organizations, breaking down “siloes”;
- There is strong appreciation among all ages of the Church School;
- Traditional music is much appreciated by many with a dissenting voice from youth.
- Among the hundreds of wishes and comments are some innovative ideas that merit consideration.

Summary of all wishes and comments

For specifics, please refer to the full reports in the annexes.

Session: Appreciation among elders for the honour. A wish from some congregants for more communication and transparency.

Board and Stewardship: Warm memories of the Raise-the-Roof campaign from participants. Respondents expressed concerns about “bureaucracy”.

Guild: Great appreciation for the Fall Fair. Wishes for increasing inclusive occasions.

Ministry: Church School is greatly appreciated (more below). Wishes for more Bible Studies and opportunities for social interaction for and among various demographics. Wishes for increased pastoral care.

Church School: Christmas Pageant is appreciated. Wishes expressed for more interaction with the children and youth, outreach to CEGEPs and universities.

Youth Group focus group: Most had attended all their lives and appreciate the friendships. They report little interest among their friends at school. Interest expressed for more interaction with adults.

Young Adults focus group: The community of friends is important. School friends are disinterested in church. They appreciate VBS and other activities, feel they’re worthwhile. They dislike the present music. They would welcome mentors and more leadership opportunities.

Worship & Music: That this element generated the most responses testifies to its centrality in church life. Strong appreciation of special services. Some propose additional services and would welcome musical diversity. A wide range of comments reflect a wide range of tastes.



Mission & Outreach: Appreciation is expressed for community service with suggestions for more, plus some related to in-house issues (e.g., Coffee & Fellowship)

Communications: Current efforts are viewed positively, with suggestions for modifications and additions. Here, and elsewhere, addition of French is seen positively

Traditions (preserving what we do): This was not directly addressed in focus groups, but surveys strongly endorsed maintaining A&P traditions.

Visitors & prospective new members: Several survey wishes suggested strategies to attract new members.

Other: Many focus-group comments related to multiple activities and merit examination. Much support expressed for maintaining and enriching the church community.



SECOND MINISTER

Views on this subject were not specifically sought. Rather, the overall sense of the What's Next outcome should coalesce into directions for the future in which the second minister will play a role.

Results confirm strong support for the St. Andrew and St. Paul tradition and for existing strengths of worship, music and the Church School. Building on these to answer God's call to our church is the intention of the Appreciative Inquiry process.

A theme throughout is the desire for more and better ways to strengthen the links that bind our community together and to the city around us. Our congregation invites the challenge to grow together - from pastoral care to social opportunities, from Bible Studies to intergenerational relationships, from caring for the needy outside to welcoming newcomers inside, from increasing governance transparency to dissolving barriers between people and committees.

The What's Next results point toward a second minister mandated to build bridges, with strengths in communication, youth, pastoral care and bilingualism. As this cannot be a short-term project, we suggest that a second minister be called with the title of Associate Minister for Bridge Building (or something similar) to assist existing ministries and to develop and implement strategies to enrich our community, that a Search Committee be formed to create a congregational profile and job description which would include examples of how this could be explored.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The What's Next team recommends that:

- The Session approve the following motion:
 - That the What's Next report and further steps in the Recommendations be accepted and approved.
- Upon approval, the What's Next team further recommends that:
 - The full report be shared by members of the What's Next team with committees and other church organizations;
 - Committees and other organizations be directed to report on what, if any, ideas generated from What's Next they plan to implement and to report regularly on progress.
 - The Communications Committee be directed to disseminate the What's Next report and outcomes to the congregation.
 - the position of second minister be that of associate rather than assistant, as described above;
 - the title of the second minister be Associate Minister for Bridge Building (or something similar);
 - A Search Committee be organized in a timely manner and the full report shared with it to assist in creating a church profile, and prerequisites and a job description for the second minister;
 - The profile and other documents be submitted to Presbytery for approval as soon as possible and, when granted, the search process move forward;



CONCLUSION

Members of the What's Next team have been privileged to have this opportunity to serve and hope our report provides a foundation for our church to build upon for years to come. Every effort has been made toward transparency and we remain ready to provide further assistance as the process moves forward.



LIST OF ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Demographics of Survey Respondents

ANNEX 2: What's Next Survey Questions

ANNEX 3: Focus Group Comments

ANNEX 4: Survey Wishes and Comments

To receive a copy of the Annexes, please click on and submit the **Annexes Request Form**. Our team will be happy to forward the requested data to you.

