

OPEN DOORS

(SOME OF) YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, ELORA

INTRODUCTION

This document is in response to several questions that the Open Doors team has received about process, next steps, financing, and other issues. It is not meant to be a comprehensive answer for everything. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Open Doors Co-Chairs, Peter Barr and Colleen Murray, or the Rector.

The Open Doors project comes out of the Parish's Vision and Mission Action Plan. In 2021, Vestry authorized four priorities to take St. John's into the 2030s: Proclaim the Love of Christ, Engage and Involve, Musical Outreach, and Open Doors.

In 2022, Vestry authorized the Corporation to investigate how to move forward in making our physical plant accessible and barrier-free to all.

To that end, the Open Doors Committee has developed a plan to build a new facility to bridge the church and the Parish Centre. This is still in the preliminary phases, with a fine tuned budget to come.



The members of the Open Doors Committee are:

Peter Barr, Co-Chair

Colleen Murray, Co-Chair

Rev. Canon Paul Walker

Pam Gradwell

Thomas Littlewood

Catherine Robertson

Chris Rynberk

Jon Warland

Kate Wright

Canon Terry Charters, Bishop's Advisory Council on Church Buildings

Marshall Horner, Finance and Audit Committee

Why?

1. Why are we doing this?



At our core, St John's mission is to tell the Good News of Christ to our community. That's the Church's vocation. Anglicans are not typically 'good' at being evangelists. We spread the Good News by deeds of service and example more easily than by words of conviction and faith sharing. One of the things we do well is gather together for liturgies, studies and fellowship groups. This assumes that people come to us. But we are also called to be an apostolic people. We are sent by the power of the Spirit to be in the world to bear witness to the transforming love of God. To be sent assumes that we have a place to gather that is accessible for all - not just the able-bodied. Our baptismal vows compel us to understand that growing into a mixed ecology of being the church means that the act of proclamation in word and deed is to be valued for all people, so we have an inherent responsibility to create a space for all people to gather together in order to be equipped to be sent.



Furthermore, our electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems are all in need of repair. These items must be taken care of regardless of building an accessible space.

We know that there are over 4,000 people in Centre Wellington that are food insecure-- meaning they don't have enough food to eat. With our present facilities, we are unable to address this need in our community because of our inaccessible space. A new gathering place with a commercial-grade kitchen would enable the Parish to support this ministry.

Financials



2. How much is this going to cost?

We are currently estimating a cost of \$3.4 million. We are currently engaged with the Zehr Group, a development company in Kitchener that specializes in heritage buildings, to further sharpen this figure.

We have launched a capital campaign to raise no less than \$1,000,000. The campaign is going well so far, and in just two months we have reached 10% of that goal.

Thanks to the generosity of past parishioners and the foresight of Canon Hulse, St. John's is fortunate to have a healthy endowment fund that helps sustain the Parish. Some of those monies are restricted (currently about \$1.1 million), and those funds are not going to be used for this project. There is other money in the endowment fund that has been earmarked specifically for accessibility projects (the sale of the Geddes St property is one example). We propose to use some of that money to fund this project. Exactly how much we will need to use will be determined, in part, by how much we are able to raise, the level of grants we're able to acquire, and the final price.

The late Ellen Pearson provided for St. John's in her will. The estate is still in probate, but we expect to receive approximately \$700,000. The Corporation has decided to use the Pearson Estate as seed money for the project.

The Diocese of Niagara holds approximately \$295,000 on our behalf from the sale of our cemetery. We propose to use these funds, pending diocesan approval.

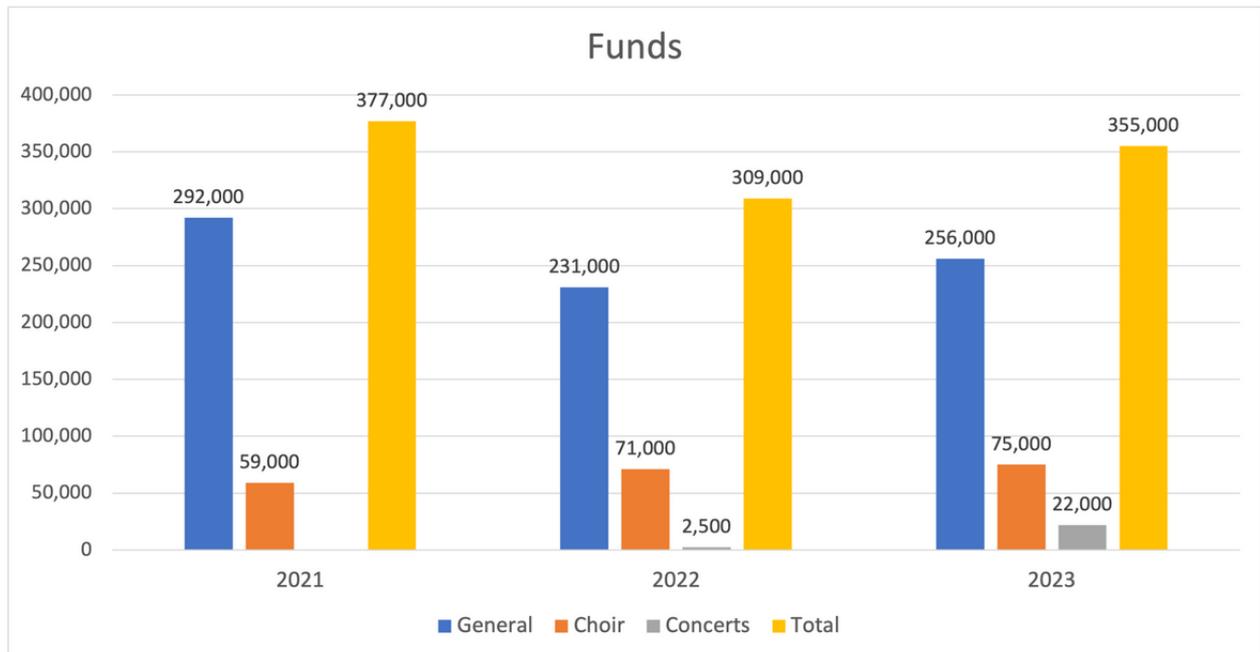


Financials

3. What is our financial picture now?

St John's is fortunate to be in a very good financial position. We are recovering very well from the pandemic, and our 2023 givings are increased 13% over 2022.

The endowment funds currently sit \$4.5 million, and the portfolio continues to perform well. Below is a snapshot of the operating financials for 2021, 2022, and 2023.



4. How are we going to pay for the construction while it's happening?

We will need an estimated \$1.5 million to pay for the construction while it is ongoing. We could fund this through a line of credit at the bank, or we could borrow from our investment funds and pay ourselves back with interest. **Any expenditure from the investment funds will be approved by Vestry.**

Furthermore, the fundraising campaign is planned over a 5 year period, so pledges will be filled during the construction as well, lessening the burden of borrowing.

Financials

5. Once complete, will the new building add to our operating costs?

There will be a modest increase to our insurance premiums, about \$8,000 per year. Otherwise, any increase in our utilities will be offset by a much more efficient system. Any missional, ministry, or programming costs will be determined by Vestry in the annual budgeting process.



Mission

6. Who is going to use this building?

We're going to use it! This is a critical part of our Mission Action Plan.

The mixed ecology of church understands that we first provide a safe and accessible place for all people to gather in order to be inspired to be sent. This is a wholistic approach of human flourishing that understands the fundamental need for all people to have access to the gathered community and gain a sense of belonging regardless of being able-bodied or not. The act of gathering allows us to be sent to proclaim the love of Christ in the world. Without this opportunity increasingly we become a people who are clearly privileging those who are only able-bodied.

Music is a powerful 'on ramp' to church. This is true not only at St. John's but at churches around the country and around the world. We are especially fortunate with its commitment to our professional parish choir, musical excellence, and musical outreach. We know that people come to St. John's in all sorts of ways, and our music is one of those entry points. The new building space will allow us to increase our musical outreach by providing a space where people can gather in an accessible way. Out of the new space, we could run choir workshops, a choir summer camp for kids, provide a bigger 'stage' area for performers, interactive concerts, etc. It might also free up some other spaces which could then be rented by music teachers in the area.



Mission

6. Who is going to use this building?

Food insecurity is a growing problem in Centre Wellington. We know that over 4,000 people in our community don't have enough to eat every day. St. John's has worked to address this in the past, and the new building would allow us to recommit and upscale our ministry and mission in this area. The folks who lead the Community Lunch program have told us that they are in desperate need of freezer space. With the new kitchen in the building, our old kitchen downstairs could be used as a bank of freezers for the Community Lunch program, enabling them to increase their commitments to folks in our community. The new gathering space between the bell tower and the Parish Centre could be used to host community lunches, cooking classes, etc., all of which are part of our mission to Proclaim the Love of Christ.

The Open Doors project offers an enormous amount of potential to increase our presence in Centre Wellington and to have the broader community come into our building for all sorts of reasons. One parishioner is passionate about starting a Memory Café in coordination with the Alzheimer's Society for folks with memory loss. Others have mentioned a homework club for schoolchildren and daytime programming for mothers and babies. The Open Doors team has consulted with a wide variety of community groups, and the following organizations have expressed interest in using our space:

- Rotary Club of Fergus Elora
- Elora Lions Club
- Centre Wellington Children's Drama Club
- Elora Little Theatre Group
- Centre Wellington Seniors Centre
- Aboyne Rural Hospice
- Elora Centre for the Arts
- Township of Centre Wellington
- Centre Wellington Mobile Market
- Elora-Salem Horticultural Society
- Twelve Step Groups
- Puppets Elora

Other Ideas

7. Why don't we just put in an elevator?

St. John's Elora has been talking about accessibility for about 40 years. There have been several proposals discussed, and we have looked into many of them.

We've looked at the possibility of an elevator, and it is not feasible for several reasons.

1. Putting in an elevator is an expensive job. When we costed this several years ago, it was over \$1,000,000, and prices have only increased.
2. It is unlikely that the Heritage Committee would approve such a project. Putting a hole in the foundation of the church to make way for an elevator would cause significant structural issues that may be insurmountable.

An elevator alone doesn't address our needs. We would still need to renovate and/or move the washrooms, and our kitchen is not to code for any food related ministries. Part of the Open Doors project is also to refit the church with adequate plumbing, HVAC, and electrical systems. This would be another \$1,000,000 above and beyond the elevator.

8. Couldn't we take the last four pews out and have receptions there?

This project is about more than reception space. It's about becoming a welcoming place where we can spread the Good News to everyone, regardless of disability. If we take the last four pews out of the back of the church, we will still not have addressed the main concerns of accessibility. This plan would also be disruptive to our liturgies, and it doesn't consider the electrical, plumbing, and HVAC. The interior of our church is also protected by the Ontario Heritage Act, and this would be a significant retrofit that would not likely pass the township's heritage committee.



Process

9. What are the next steps?

We continue to refine the project and the budget. The planning department at the township have told us that they won't be able to close our file before the end of June, or possibly later. So we have some time.

Vestry authorized an expenditure of \$75,000 in December 2022. Once the planning department's work is done, we will need to access more funds to have final architectural and engineering drawings completed. There will be a Special Vestry sometime in the summer or early fall to approve these funds.

We are required to tender the contract, and once tenders have been received, there will be another Special Vestry to give the final approvals for the project before it goes to the Bishop for her sign off.

10. Will we have to "move out?"

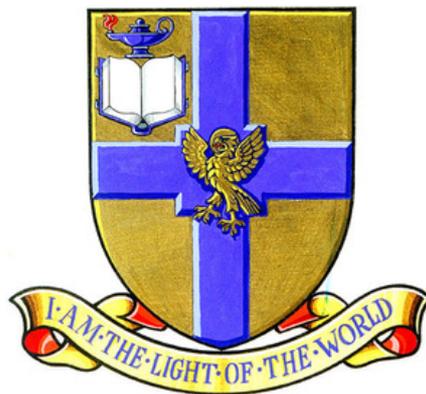
Because of the HVAC work that needs to be done in the sanctuary itself, we will need to be out of the church for some period of time. We will set up a space-sharing arrangement with a local church. We will also ensure that we have full access to the buildings during the month of July (Elora Festival) and in December.



Last Words

St John's is incredibly fortunate to be growing, not shrinking—we have reason to be optimistic about the future. The Open Doors project will help both the church and the community thrive into the 2030s and beyond. As Christ's body, we can use the resources that we have to proclaim His love in the community and in the world.





CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

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