

***Growing with the Spirit at the Corner***  
Three-Year Strategic Plan (2013-15)  
Church of the Redeemer  
Toronto

Commentary Document

The Church of the Redeemer is an urban, downtown worship community in the Anglican faith that proclaims four core values that define it: **compassion, openness, respect** and **diversity**. This is not to say that other values are absent; rather, it is to mark these four as our priority values, the keys to defining the nature of our community. It lives these values in many ways and through many actions, whether it is welcoming the hungry in order to feed them, or welcoming those from 'non-traditional' backgrounds who are exploring their faith. We value and celebrate the diversity of those who call the Redeemer their spiritual home, whether they be from near or far, originally Anglican or from another tradition, young or old, gay or straight, rich or poor. We encourage that all those who attend Redeemer develop and own their individuality and unique gifts, and help the community by sharing those gifts.

From those foundational core values, we define our strategic mission in the upcoming years as **Growing with the Spirit at the Corner**. This follows from our earlier plan, "Living with the Spirit at the Corner", and represents our next step. Having made many strides over the years, from (decades ago) being a tiny, moribund community in decline to our current vibrant and large presence, this plan envisions a planned growth grouped within five overlapping themes, each of which is subdivided into plan areas.

The main underlying assumption of this plan is that the next three years will see a continuation, consolidation, improvement, and systemization of what is already done. This takes many forms: implementation of ongoing policy review; developing intentional liturgical planning; improving accountability to the Boards; engaging in a formal review of our history and 'who we are' as part of forming 'who we want to be'; and many more. It makes the assumption that the consolidation and systemization of our activities are necessary as a result of our success: we are now no longer a small organization, but rather, a complex mid-sized organization.

The plan sets our expected outcomes, targets, measurements, and accountability (i.e., the Board responsible for follow through and action). It is designed to be flexible enough to change based on emerging priorities as identified by our community's leadership and by Vestry, but robust enough to provide solid direction to the community. This plan builds on previous successful planning efforts, and most especially on the radical visioning process approved at the regular Vestry meeting in early 2012.

The five themes that define the plan and that will shape our community's actions are

## **Proclaiming God's Presence, Laying a Strong Foundation, Breaking Down Walls, Building a Spiritual Home, and Realizing Bold Dreams.**

### **Proclaiming God's Presence**

This theme carries over from the *Living with the Spirit at the Corner* plan, and necessarily remains Redeemer's central mission. This theme has three primary directions:

*"We reach beyond our place at the Corner."*

*"We encourage active exploration of faith."*

*"We engage and challenge people."*

We actively choose not only to consolidate our gains in congregational size, range of activities and (*inter alia*) budget, but to use those gains to go further. We acknowledge our place within our neighbourhood and our city. We need a larger presence, both with our neighbours and with the larger communities of which we are a part. Our plan envisions our physical plant at the centre of our parish. Our recent history has meant that we have appropriately drawn our congregation from all over; in so doing, however, our in-parish presence is relatively weak. Our parish has seen, and will continue to see in the upcoming years, a significant influx of population. Our plan calls for the development and implementation of a plan to connect with our neighbourhood and communities within the parish.

### **Laying a Strong Foundation**

Our community cannot realistically meet its primary mission of proclaiming God's presence without having a strong basis from which to do so. To put it bluntly, our community has grown so much that it is now a million-dollar operation where it is now practically impossible to know everyone in our community. *Growing with the Spirit at the Corner* addresses these changes in our community through a changed approach to how we operate and how we manage our business processes. Three main themes direct the Church of the Redeemer's ability to fulfill the strategic direction of laying a strong foundation:

*"We steward our resources effectively."*

*"We manage risk and make good decisions."*

*"We support our ministry through our generosity."*

"Resources" is taken to mean our human, financial and physical infrastructure resources – our people, our budget, and our building, essentially.

Our budget has grown significantly, and the means by which we operate have to change accordingly. The range and size of Redeemer's operations mean that a bad

year (i.e., one where we miss our budget to any significant degree) would mean a corresponding loss of our ability to operate important ministries. This cannot hold as a method of running the ministries at Redeemer. Our planning process must allow for the development, by the end of 2015, of a three-year budgeting framework that allows longer-term financial planning than we currently undertake. Specifically, this plan envisions developing and implementing a short- and long-term financial planning process that encompasses both stewardship and budgeting planning. This would enable the development of a three-year planning horizon for budgets that would allow a longer-term vision for how we might develop ministries than the year-by-year budgets allow.

As with all organizations, human resources are of paramount importance within our community. We employ lay and ordained individuals, full- and part-time, and we depend on the volunteer efforts of hundreds to do our work. The Board of Management has recently (Fall 2012) approved a new Human Resources policy that must now be implemented in practice. To do so, we must acknowledge that people within our community arrive and depart. Our Incumbent's term has been a long one. Our paid staff will not be present forever. Smaller organizations can manage changes on an *ad hoc* basis; Redeemer is no longer a small organization. This plan assigns to the Board of Management and its HR Committee the job of developing a succession planning framework for all paid positions that values and is respectful of our current employees, but that acknowledges the certainty of change within the plan's window.

### **Breaking Down Walls**

The theme of 'breaking down walls' has three distinct subcategories, relating to the physical improvements of the space, the engagement of volunteers across a variety of ministry areas, and the liturgical practice itself. Each aspect, performed successfully, will improve accessibility in a myriad of forms.

The first is physical. To put it bluntly, we are near capacity *in our current configuration*. Our 9:30 and 11:15 services are nearly full on a frequent basis. We cannot reasonably expect to grow the 8:00 service significantly. Our evening services offer a diversity we do not want to lose, but that diversity means that not all are drawn to that time. A fifth service is, for the duration of this plan, unrealistic and undesirable. The "Making More Room" project has already completed its first phase and has progressed significantly in its second. A Capital Campaign is about to begin. The most important element of Phase II is a significant alteration to the internal space of the church to allow us to increase capacity and improve our flexibility. This plan assumes the ongoing successful implementation of "Making More Room" and the support of the community to make it succeed.

A result of the successful growth of the Church of the Redeemer is the ability to run a wide variety of ministries that depend not only on paid labour but also on volunteers. Without the extensive volunteer efforts put forth by the congregation,

the Church could not function properly. This plan envisions the development and implementation of a plan for volunteer engagement and management across ministry areas, including a sort of 'volunteer succession plan'. Much of this work is already underway at the Advisory Board, but it should be done with a greater sense of intent.

Lastly, liturgical and music programs are essential to the community at the Church of the Redeemer. Although both liturgy and music planning already is strong, we call for the development of intentional plans for both.

### **Building a Spiritual Home**

To reduce 'building a spiritual home' to a planning process seems self-defeating. In one sense, everything the Church does is to build a spiritual home. For the purposes of this plan, though, we have chosen three main themes to support this goal: we form Christians of all ages; we promote opportunities to be and to become leaders; we are a place of spiritual renewal where people are nurtured and fed. If we are successful, we will see the results of our efforts in vibrant and growing Church school and youth groups along with a strong adult Christian education program. We will develop intentionally members and leaders across all levels and in all facets of our church community. We will share leadership and ministry responsibilities across a larger group than we already do.

This plan therefore chooses to focus on two principal goals, both under the auspices of the Advisory Board. First, the plan calls for the development and implementation of a plan for resourcing educational programs in different ministry areas. The second main goal is to enhance and support engagement with all ministry areas, fitting in with the underlying goal to consolidate and systematize what is already being done.

### **Realizing Bold Dreams**

We enter the 2013-15 planning period from a situation of strength, and we should be proud of how far we have come. We should not, however, assume that that strength will hold indefinitely. We acknowledge the fragility of our situation. Although the community is strong now, it was moribund short years ago. Our strength – in numbers, in theology, in people – may wither. We have grown so fast recently, and our while that growth seems strong, it may not sustain without care and feeding. We must consolidate our growth from the last planning period, and while we should welcome further growth, we should no longer pursue growth as aggressively.

To that end, this plan calls for intentional, critical self-reflection. Both Boards are called to implement an annual process of reflection and perspective-taking on our progress in light of our history. The plan also calls for us to capture our own story as a parish, as far back as we can go, in preparation for our 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary

upcoming. Our story should not only emphasize our long history, but also our development since 1981, when earlier members of our community brought the Church of the Redeemer back from a non-functional state.

## **Conclusions**

As this plan is implemented and overseen, it should neither be considered overly directive nor empty verbiage. Its intent is to provide overall direction and accountability without being a straitjacket, and to assign primary accountability of its success to the two Boards. The Boards, however, are ultimately not responsible for the plan's success; that responsibility lies instead with the Church of the Redeemer community at large.

As noted at the beginning of the document, this is not meant to replace existing efforts; rather, it is meant to help focus those efforts on what we see as key to fulfilling our goals in the short and medium term.