



Let us go then

**Thoughts on Vision,
Mission and Strategies for
the TSP congregations**

2011 - 2013

Mission Strategy Team

1

DRAFT

Toronto Southeast Presbytery: Mission Strategy 2011

Introduction

In its Governance Handbook, Toronto Southeast Presbytery affirms as *mission* that it is called:

to enable and support good, faithful and healthy communities of faith within our member Pastoral Charges, and to provide opportunities for cross-congregational initiatives, where individuals from Congregations with shared calls to specific ministries may work together.

This document names strategies which may be adopted in order that this vision statement can guide future decision making. At the end of the first two years of the new Toronto Conference structure, each presbytery will now have a good understanding of the needs, desires and dreams of its particular context. We are now beginning to see how these translate into plans and priorities, as well as how resources are allocated. Resource allocation includes budgets and staffing as well as application for funding to the Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corporation and other funding bodies. This strategy will guide those decisions and plans so that more faithful and healthy communities of faith may be realized or enriched.

This is not meant to be a long term strategy but one which will guide the presbytery for the next couple of years. During that time there will be opportunities to reassess, evaluate and adjust these strategies to ones more relevant for the rapidly changing context in which we minister and engage in our communities.

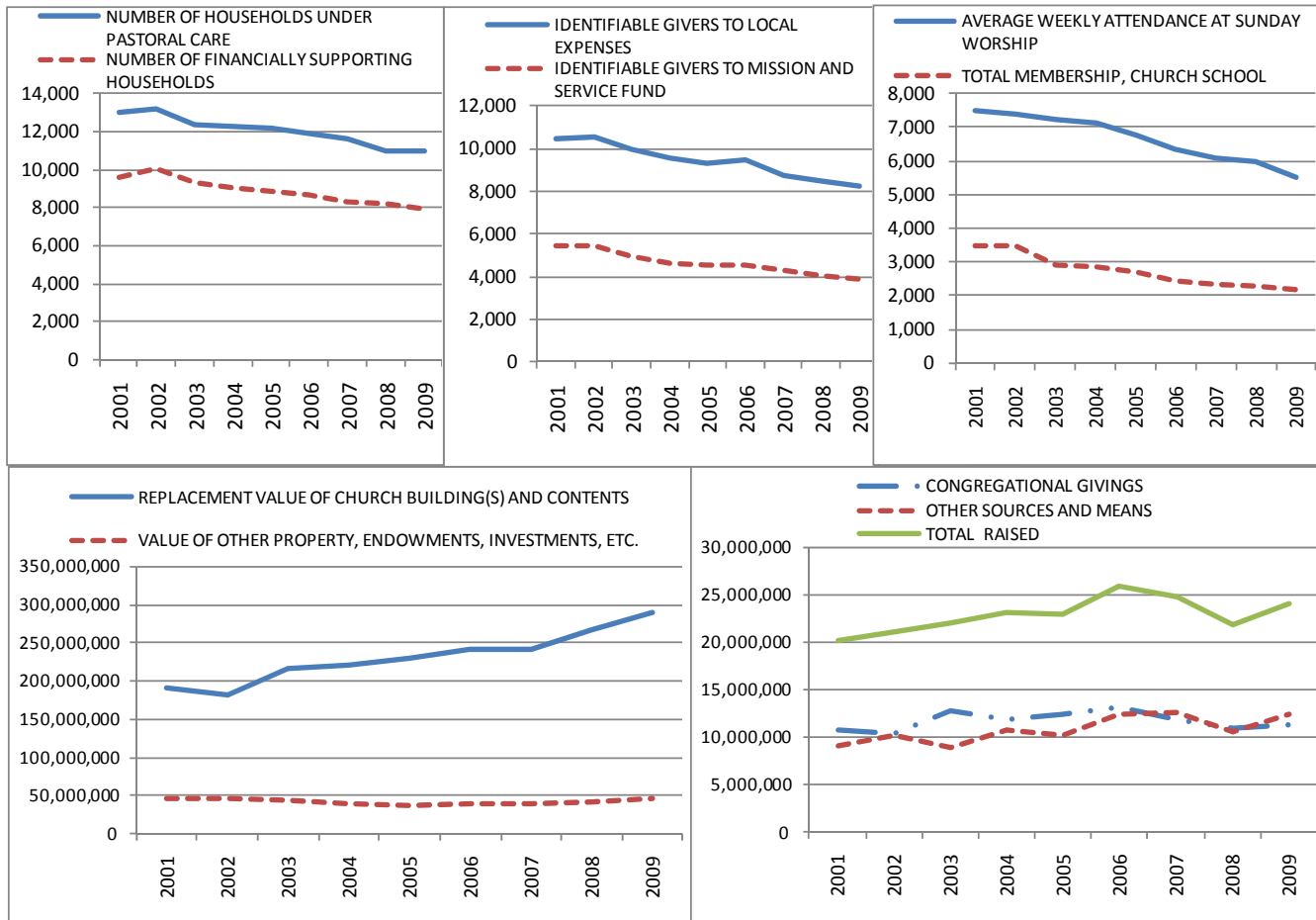
Context

It is that very context that leads Mission Strategy to pay very serious attention to our urban ministry environment. Some area profile data show the following:

Latest available Census Data at a high level says TSP looks something like the following - with an obvious wondering about what the 2011 census will show.						
Data must be used with caution as they are forced into area specifications	TSP area defined on Postal FSA's as assigned to TSP Churches			2006 data assigned to TSP Churches		Variability Index**
	2001	2006	Change	Minimum	Maximum	Max/Min
Population	1,488,226	1,522,174	2.3%	13,995	114,370	8.2X
Families	393,980	402,420	2.1%	3,010	27,915	9.3X
Households in houses	298,385	247,705	-17.0%	1,550	24,325	15.7X
Households in apartments	269,065	342,660	27.4%	1,035	32,310	31.2X
Average house value	\$311,621	\$458,631	47.2%	\$212,108	\$1,090,584	5.1X
Index of income inequality*	1.40X	1.63X	16.4%	1.23X	3.21X	2.6X
Visible Minorities:	678,065	758,735	11.9%	1,125	92,735	82.4X

* As ratio of average to median household income **Very crude overall measure only

A few charts of data from the TSP congregational statistics for the total Presbytery show the following magnitudes and trends for selected data over the period 2001 to 2009.



And a simple look at how the TSP churches related to Census data on religious affiliations in 2001 (the last time at which this data was collected) shows the following:

TSP Data as assigned to Postal FSA's by TSP church locations - approximations only				Related to Data in TSP Church Statistics	
Christian	Totals	Minimum	Maximum	Members	Ratio
Roman Catholic	373,535	2,660	27,980	16,585	18.1%
United Church	91,452	820	5,945		
Anglican	106,355	1,100	6,530		
Greek Orthodox	38,865	105	3,805		
Total	610,207	4,685	44,260	16,585	2.7%
Other Faiths	289,280	165	37,630		
No Religion	322,710	2,185	25,735		

An obvious challenge suggested by these data is that, with the exception of property values, the TSP area data are moving in one direction while the congregational statistics are going the other way. While by no means a surprise, it remains the case that these changing demographics demands a response from both individual pastoral charges and the Toronto Southeast Presbytery to work together to carefully and faithfully consider creative responses.

Some of the challenges currently faced by communities of faith are known and frequently articulated. Others are more fundamental to bringing about transformation. All are difficult to respond to effectively on our own as individual faith communities. These include: 1/ Significant demographic changes in population numbers, age profile, culture, race, economic status and faiths; 2/ Significant changes in people's attitudes and lifestyles; 3/ Perceptions that congregations are becoming increasingly out of touch with people of their neighbourhoods and communities; 4/ Perceptions that church leaders feel they lack the skills and resources for the leadership they are being asked to provide; or 5/ the uncertainty of how to express our faith in either a public way or even within the faith community.

There has been a tendency to lament the current situation of our denomination generally but particularly in urban settings. Lamentation is an understandable human response to change but God's response is to call us in new directions and to new ministries and to be witnesses in the world. This Mission Strategy hopes to open up some of those possibilities and to find new ways to support them.

Core Values of the United Church of Canada

It is always assumed that the pastoral charges that Presbytery seeks to "enable and support" are grounded in and sustained by a set of identified core values within the United Church of Canada. These values may be found in *A New Creed* or other statements of faith. It is a fundamental role of Presbytery to support and encourage activities in its pastoral charges that are consonant with these values and to discourage activities that are not consonant with them. These core values should be explicitly defined by Presbytery from time to time but presumably would include a commitment to spiritual vitality and development as understood by the gospel of Jesus Christ, affirmation and acceptance of diversity, including intercultural, racial, gender and sexual diversity, radical hospitality for all, but especially for the existing neighbourhood where the pastoral charge is located, and a commitment to human and ecological justice, both at the local level and internationally.

Priority Areas

The Governance Handbook goes beyond its *vision* statement to state that "**Presbytery will be a place where mutual support and encouragement are found, collegiality is nurtured, Congregations learn with each other, bonds of shared ministry are forged, and lively, affirming worship is made, while at the same time attending to the administrative responsibilities of personnel and property and engaging in public witness and program activities.**"

The research and consultative work of the Mission Strategy team points to five priority areas that would be effective in shaping our work in ministry in the next couple of years:

1. Equipping new forms of leadership – seeking opportunities to provide congregations with the training, education and resources that are specific to their needs as they seek to redevelop and transform their ministries and mission for the very different leadership challenges we face.

2. Assist congregations in identifying stepping stones for transformation – in the face of large challenges, experience often shows that modest steps forward are more effective, affordable and likely to give progress, than efforts to implement some “grand design”.
3. Initiatives to foster collaboration between congregations, their surrounding neighbourhoods, and other communities of faith to develop new partnerships
4. Creating new forms of urban ministry, particularly intercultural ministries – ministry in a diverse and complex urban context such as Toronto presents many challenges for churches’ competencies, and capacity, however the opportunities are transformative if the necessary supports and encouragements are available.
5. Provide support for collaborative work between/among congregations for shared ministry – many of our communities of faith speak positively about opportunities for shared ministry, but our efforts in that direction are often tentative and defined more by what has been than by what could be if done together, so we need to find ways to experiment with opportunities for collaboration that are transformative

Presbytery Involvement with the Mission Strategies of Individual Pastoral Charges

Presbytery affirms that the living out of these core values of the United Church will only occur within the programs and initiatives of individual pastoral charges and communities of faith. However, Presbytery also claims a supportive role to encourage that to happen, and an evaluative role in assessing our faithful responses to opportunities and challenge. The roles of the teams would be broadened as these strategies are implemented. Much of this work is already happening.

Pastoral Oversight, whose main role has been about compliance and accountability, needs now to take on a significant role in encouraging congregations to reflect on their ministry in new ways, and in encouraging various ministries to undertake creative ways to use resources they have to find a ministry relevant to their context (for example, organize CNAC’s – Community Needs Assessment Committees in the congregations). **Pastoral Relations**, whose primary function is to support pastoral relationships and exercise oversight for pastoral relations systems as outlined in the Manual, should be encouraged to include an analysis of ministry in the area, identification of emerging issues, and the development of strategies and resources required to facilitate healthy faithful ministries. It would be important for this work to be undertaken together with **Education and Students**. **Finance and Property** has undertaken ways to assist congregations in looking at innovative options for buildings, for managing finances, and seeking funding support and there is a need for it to continue to play such a proactive role (consider developing a standard financial model in Excel to help congregations anticipate their future operations and financing needs). **Congregational Life** has the important mandate of congregational development and spiritual nurture which are critical to assisting congregations in understanding the faith that is at the core of their community and which will sustain and inspire them during times of transformation.

The diversity of our urban context offers opportunities to live our core values of justice making and to dialogue with all persons of faith as well as with those of no stated faith. The neighbourhoods of this city offer rich opportunities for partnerships and ministries for the

***Inter-Church Interfaith, Justice and Global Issues* and *Mission and Outreach Teams*.** All have relationships with communities of faith that are not congregational in nature but ones with whom we may learn, work, support and nurture one another as faith filled peoples.

Mission Strategy will continue to provide a lens through which the presbytery focuses on mission strategy discernment. As such, the role of the Team is to provide opportunities for identifying the direction of Presbytery initiatives, to identify needs and opportunities, and to name emerging needs. An analysis of this information would lead to working with other teams to discern implementation strategies.

Evaluation and continuing work on priorities: Recognizing that Toronto Southeast Presbytery is itself going through a process of evaluation following restructuring, and is still seeking an identity emerging from the three Presbyteries that formed it, so also this strategy document remains a work in progress, and needs to be self-evaluating and responsive. How this will be done in practice 2011-2013? In January 2012 Mission Strategy will contact Presbytery committees and groups asking for input, feedback, and evaluation for a new Mission Strategy beyond 2013.

MOTION:

That the Toronto Southeast Presbytery:

A. Accept the following five named priorities

1. equipping new forms of leadership – training, education, resources
2. assisting congregations to identify stepping stones for transformation, vs. grand design approach
3. foster collaboration between congregations, their surrounding neighbourhoods, and other communities of faith to develop new partnerships.
4. creating new forms of urban ministry, particularly intercultural ministries.
5. provide support for collaborative work between/among congregations for shared ministry

B. Request that the Executive consider these understandings of the team mandates as a further expression of the Purpose of each as stated in the Governance Handbook.

C. Encourage the relevant presbytery teams to work together on supporting these strategies and new initiatives

D. Support the ongoing evaluative work of this mission strategy and participate in the evaluative processes of the new structure.

E. Receive the Report from the Mission Strategy Team for information.

Additional Notes

Process – the development of this report by the Mission Strategy Team included:

- Discussions with and about many of our congregations – their concerns, emerging issues, including a review of all available mission statements
- The discussions were also informed by the discussion about urban ministry especially through the work in the West Don Area Ministry and the very initial discussions in the East End
- An analysis of available statistical information
- Some consultation and feedback from the Chairs of Teams and twice with the Executive
- A review of the work done in the three founding presbyteries previous to the creation of Southeast Presbytery and a dialogue with people involved in the Vision to Mission and Spiritwork projects

Understanding of the presbytery's vision and mission:

On Vision

A policy and principle of being **open and respectful** of the views of others will be relevant to providing “mutual support . . . collegiality . . . learning with each other . . . (doing) shared ministry”. A value of wanting others as well as oneself to **realize on potentials** will be relevant to providing “encouragement . . . (building) bonds . . . (participating in) lively, affirming worship”. And a policy of accepting some **personal sacrifice** for the good of others will be relevant in “attending to the administrative responsibilities (that go with Presbytery roles)”.

On Mission

Placing a suitably high value on **being (humbly) proactive in relationships** . . . being willing to **share creativity and ideas** . . . providing **support of such efforts by others** in the pursuit of common goals . . . will likely be relevant actions to “enable and support . . . communities of faith”. Being both **open and inviting** to others and willing to **respond in an accepting manner to offers** or invitations from them for sharing in initiatives, will be important to “providing opportunities for cross-congregational initiatives . . . (where) shared calls to specific ministries” exist.

Appendices

Summary Congregational Statistics for the TSP churches are appended and are organized to give a view of:

- (a) the Presbytery overall;
- (b) churches with reported attendance averaging above 200 per week;
- (c) churches with reported attendance between 100 and 200 per week;
- (d) churches with reported attendance less than 100 per week.

Data are developed on the basis of 2009 reports (latest available). It should be born in mind that these tabulations are only as good as the reported statistics.