**CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE: OCTOBER 13, 2019**

**VISION, GIFTS, MINISTRY & MISSION**

Beginning with a parish retreat in November of 2018, St. John’s has been seeking to identify how God is calling us to serve our community. We were blessed in 2018 with significant financial bequests and through town halls, open meetings and discussions at Parish Council, we have been prayerfully discerning our baptismal ministry and how to use our gifts wisely, faithfully and effectively, ensuring fiscal sustainability for the physical structure and internal ministry of St. John’s while responding to our call to serve the wider community.

In May, 2019 Canon Catherine struck a working group to investigate and explore possible areas of ministry in response to some of the identified community needs. Members of the Committee are Canon Catherine; Karen Bryan; Brenda Ferguson; Paul Howard; Tammy Mulrooney and Kathy Porter.

**October 6**

A congregational meeting was held following the 10am liturgy. Approximately 30 members of the congregation attended. Archdeacon Peter John Hobbs, Diocesan Director of Mission made a presentation to showcase the work of the Diocese’s current Community Ministries and to provide information about new initiatives (Centre 105 drop in centre at Trinity Church, Cornwall; Christ Church Bells Corners Rectory Redevelopment; Julian of Norwich Redevelopment; Ellwood House expansion; St. Paul’s Almonte Rectory redevelopment).

Paul Howard provided a brief summary of St. John’s journey of discernment since the November, 2018 retreat. Of the interests and priorities identified by the congregation, there are two for which St. John’s is uniquely positioned to make a *significant* impact: Youth and Housing.

***Youth***

Members of the congregation have identified support for youth in the community as important. St. John’s has reached out to Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute to discuss setting up two post-secondary scholarships in the amount of $3000-$5000 each, which can be granted to two qualifying individuals and renewed for up to four years, provided criteria are met.

If St. John’s was to commit to this initiative, we will need to establish the criteria and have a system in place to ensure accountability for its renewal.

***Housing***

Karen Bryan shared that on September 30, St. John’s was approached by the Mayor about a partnership opportunity between St. John’s and a reputable not-for-profit organization that has a long and successful history with affordable and supportive housing in Lanark County. The organization has secured Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) financing to build affordable housing in Smiths Falls.

At the October 6 meeting, not many details could be shared with the congregation, as the early conversation was very preliminary and before proceeding there had to be some sense if St. John’s was interested in pursuing discussions. Of particular appeal for St. John’s is that the not-for-profit organization would own, operate and maintain the housing (St. John’s would not be landlords) and that partnership with St. John’s would involve capital investment by St. John’s and accountability through participation in a volunteer board of management. Those who were at the October 6 meeting were supportive of the idea of partnering with a reputable not-for-profit organization which seemed ready to build affordable housing in Smiths Falls. There was good energy in the room, and excitement about these possibilities.

***Finances***

Bob Mulrooney provided a financial summary of St. John’s assets and a broad-strokes breakdown of financial position and what it currently costs for us to engage in ministry, and ways of funding scholarships and affordable housing through our assets. A working estimate of $250,000-$300,000 for investment in housing/scholarships was used for this presentation. A copy of that financial breakdown is available from Bob, Canon Catherine or the Wardens upon request.

**Who? What? When?**

The Working Group is happy to share the name of the not-for-profit organization referenced in the October 6 meeting. Jeff Mills and Robert Eves of ***Carebridge Community Support*** *(formerly called Mills Community Support Corporation)* met with members of the Working Group along with Mayor Shawn Pankow and Bob Mulrooney on October 11 to share some of their vision for affordable housing here in Smiths Falls.

*Carebridge* maintains that affordable housing isn’t building boxes for people to live in but “building neighbourhoods” where social connection, support and community can thrive. Jeff and Rob are very excited about the possibility of a partnership with St. John’s.

*Carebridge* is not as far along the path of the project as we first understood, but are very committed to affordable housing in Smiths Falls and should St. John’s choose to become a partner. .

**Next steps**

*Carebridge* is happy to meet with the congregation of St. John’s to share their vision. Such a meeting will be scheduled in the coming weeks.

If you have any questions, please speak with Canon Catherine, Karen Bryan, Paul Howard, Bob Mulrooney or any member of the working group.