

NOVEMBER 4, 2018 BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT

Save the Date: Sat Nov 17 Parish Conversation and Visioning

This will be day of discerning our baptismal vocation and ministry here at St. John's in order to map out our mission going forward. All members of the congregation are encouraged to attend. The day will run from 9am-3pm. Lunch and breaks will be provided. Please RSVP with Louise Sherry in the parish office so we know numbers for catering. Our facilitator that day is the Rev'd Dr. Jay Koyle, Congregational Development Officer for the Diocese of Algoma.

In preparation for this day, please consider reading through the Gospel of John, noting any phrases, images or words that speak to you and forwarding them to Canon Catherine. This exercise isn't mandatory for participation in the conversation and all members of the congregation are encouraged to join in the day.

JANUARY 27, 2019 CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE VISION, GIFTS, MINISTRY & MISSION

Recap

During the Nov 17 Visioning Day and the Dec 2 congregational presentation, members were invited to list what "Gifts, Assets and Passions" they believe God has given St. John's. 317 entries were submitted and posted on the walls of the Parish Hall. These 317 entries were then gathered and grouped into seven broadly themed categories. In some cases, an entry could land in more than one category. These categories were: Building; Community; Finances; Music; People; Social Media; Worship.

Jan 20

Following the 10am liturgy on Jan 20, approximately 20 members of the congregation gathered in the hall to consider possibilities for mission and ministry at St. John's.

The Treasurer offered a brief summary of our blessed financial position, explaining different ways we can use our financial resources to fund outreach ministry. We are called to be good stewards of these resources and to continue to use them wisely, faithfully and effectively.

The seven categories where St. John's reflected its gifts, assets and passions were posted around the room with brief summaries of the entries that had been submitted earlier for context. Those present were then asked to go to the category that most resonated and excited them and to have a conversation with others with similar interest. From those conversations, people were invited to record their "blue sky" hopes and aspirations for St. John's under those categories. These have been posted in the hall.

Next Steps

On Jan 27 and Feb 3, those who were not able to attend the Jan 20 gathering are invited to review what is posted thus far and to add their own ideas. People will be on hand to facilitate some conversation and to field questions.

A meeting with community stakeholders (mayor and town council, police, health services, social services, schools, youth services etc.) and St. John's will be convened in the coming weeks to hear what gaps and needs present in our community are not being met, and what opportunities St. John's might discover for ministry.

From that meeting, St. John's will then work to discern, based on our passions and gifts what we might be called to do and how we may collaborate with other local churches, community organizations and deanery churches to respond to the needs in our community.

This is an exciting time for the church and for St. John's in particular. Your input and your thoughts are important. Please continue to pray about what we are called to do. Please continue to support the ministries that feed and nurture those who call St. John's their spiritual home. And if you have any questions, please feel free to approach Canon Catherine or one of the Church Wardens.

MAY 26, 2019 CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE **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.

Approximately 25 people were present at the open meeting here at St. John's on **Apr 25** where some of the needs of the community were shared by Aaron Tompkins from SF Police Services; Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Lanark Cty, Wendy Alford, Town Council, Rev. Christopher Ryan of Trinity Church, Pastor David Stead of First Baptist, Larry Allen of Rotary, and others. Notes from this meeting were taken. Paul Howard facilitated the meeting, explaining that St. John's was looking to help the community in responding to serious need, and that the hope was we could partner with other agencies (private/public) to help make a significant, long term impact in order to help our Community. There was very positive energy and excitement generated in the possibilities that were presented. No decisions or promises were made. The meeting was an information gathering session only. Open discussion was held at the May Parish Council meeting reflecting on the information received.

Since then a working group comprised of **Canon Catherine, Karen Bryan, Brenda Ferguson, Paul Howard, Tammy Mulrooney and Kathy Porter** has been struck to investigate more fully further possible projects and areas of ministry in response to some of these community needs. Some members of the group met with representatives from Rideau Community Health Services to learn more about hopes for an integrated health hub and residential hospice and other people attended information sessions offered at Trinity United Church about Lanark County Community Resources, food security, emergency shelter and transportation needs.

Next steps

Members of the working group will continue to gather information around possible ideas, aligning the community needs with passions and assets that have been recorded by members of the congregation during these past months.

Corporation will meet with the Treasurer to develop a financial plan that will ensure fiscal sustainability for the parish while allowing us to invest in ministry and mission opportunities that will serve the wider community by sharing our possessions and possibilities.

Discussion around possibilities will continue at Parish Council. As a way forward becomes clear, information will be shared with the parish. Any decision around a major project will go to Vestry for approval.

Our Outreach Committee will continue to do its work in managing the disbursements towards local outreach initiatives.

What can you do?

This is an exciting time for the church and for St. John's in particular. Your input and your thoughts are important. Please continue to pray about what we are called to do. Please continue to support the ministries that feed and nurture those who call St. John's their spiritual home. Please share your ideas and suggestions with members of the working group and if you have any questions, please feel free to approach Canon Catherine or one of the Church Wardens.

OCTOBER 13, 2019 CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE **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.

FEBRUARY 2, 2020 CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE

VISION, GIFTS, MINISTRY & MISSION: YOUTH AND HOUSING

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.

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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. Initiatives discussed were providing two post-secondary scholarships in the amount of \$3000 - \$5000 each to be granted to two qualifying individuals, renewable for up to four years pending qualification and partnering with a reputable not-for-profit organization to build affordable housing in Smiths Falls.

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 was available from Bob, Canon Catherine or the Wardens upon request.

There was good energy in the room, and excitement about these two possibilities. Those who had gathered indicated a willingness to find out more about these initiatives.

The parish was told the following week that **Carebridge Community Support** (formerly Mills Community Support Corporation) was the not-for-profit organization St. John's was in conversation with about affordable housing in Smiths Falls. Visit www.carebridge.ca for more information about the organization.

November 3

Another congregational meeting was held following the 10am liturgy. Approximately 40 people attended. Jeff Mills from Carebridge Community Support (formerly Mills Community Support Corporation) presented a history of their organization and its mission to build "neighbourhoods" where social connection, support and community can thrive.

There was a time for questions and answers. Those who gathered continued to register their support for pursuing the possibility of a partnership. Again, there was momentum and excitement in the room. Bob Mulrooney was available to answer questions regarding St. John's financial position.

What has happened since November 3?

Members of the working group met with representatives of Carebridge and the Town of Smiths Falls on December 12 to follow up the November 3 presentation, and we were joined on January 16 and January 30 by representatives of Cahdco (www.cahdco.org), a development consultation firm whose mission it is to help create and develop affordable housing in partnership with not-for-profit organizations, to determine next steps to consider the feasibility of any project here in Smiths Falls. Cahdco has worked on other affordable housing projects with the Diocese of Ottawa, including Cornerstone Housing for Women's Princeton property, Christ Church Bells Corners Rectory Redevelopment project and the Julian of Norwich property redevelopment.

As discussed in previous presentations, there is the possibility that the town may have land to contribute to the project. At its January 15 meeting St. John's Parish Council approved funding a Phase I environmental study on the property in question. This is a necessary step in determining if land is viable for building. The cost of a Phase I ESA is minimal (\$2950+HST) and would indicate whether a Phase II ESA would be necessary. Parish Council discussed and understands that this cost would not be refunded if St. John's chooses not to proceed.

Next steps

Carebridge and St. John's has asked Cahdco to submit an application to CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) for a seed grant with which to conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan and preliminary development designs. We now wait to see if we are successful in obtaining that grant. An engineering firm has been retained to do the Phase I ESA and the report from that should be made available to St. John's by the end of February.

Following the results of these two different processes, there will be a presentation to the congregation. A situation update will be provided at the Annual Vestry meeting on February 23.

If you have any questions, please speak with Canon Catherine, Karen Bryan, Paul Howard, Bob Mulrooney, Brenda Ferguson, Kathy Porter or Tammy Mulrooney.

DECEMBER 20, 2020 IMPORTANT CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE **VISION, GIFTS, MINISTRY & MISSION: YOUTH AND HOUSING**

It has been a long time since there has been a congregational update provided on our Vision, Gifts, Ministry & Mission process begun back in 2018. A written update was last provided on February 2, 2020 and a verbal update was provided by Paul Howard at the annual Vestry meeting on February 23. At that time, St. John's was in conversation with Carebridge Community Support, Cahdco and the Town of Smiths Falls regarding the possibility of an affordable housing project on a vacant property in the town. Cahdco submitted a seed grant application to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) with which to conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan and preliminary development designs, following Phase I ESA (Environmental Assessment Study) on the property. St. John's was represented on Smiths Falls' Housing Task Force, whose mandate it was to examine the current state of housing supply and make recommendations for strategies and opportunities to expand access for residents.

<https://www.smithsfalls.ca/media/2019/10/HousingTask-Force-Terms-of-Reference-Final.pdf>

For earlier congregational updates and timeline, visit St. John's website at www.stjohn-smithsfalls.com

What has happened since?

In March, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in swift and dramatic lockdowns and preliminary suspension of non-essential activity. Cahdco continued to work on the CMHC application and that was submitted. Ultimately, the plight of people precariously housed, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, already a crisis, came more clearly visible when the March lockdown occurred. How do you shelter in place when you have no home? How do you access food when you live in accommodations that don't have adequate kitchen facilities, and day programs are cancelled? Where do you go if you are in an abusive relationship? How do you get to the bathroom, deal with personal hygiene, do laundry, access e-mails or on-line government or medical applications when public washrooms, businesses and libraries are closed? When you have no safe place to go, it is hard to "stay home."

On October 27th, 2020, CMHC launched the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) – a \$1 billion program to help address urgent housing needs of vulnerable Canadians, through the rapid construction of approximately 3,000 affordable housing units.

RHI provides capital contributions for eligible projects and could fund up to 100% of the project cost including land. No operational funding is provided as part of this initiative. All units must serve and be affordable to targeted vulnerable populations that are in severe housing need, at high risk of homelessness, or homeless. Affordability relates to a minimum 70% of median market rent, as defined by CMHC and must be maintained for a minimum of 20 years.

The program has two streams: The Major Cities Stream (\$500M pre-assigned to 15 large municipalities), and the Projects Stream (\$500M not pre-assigned, open to all of Canada). As Smiths Falls is not one of the municipalities identified in the Major Cities Stream, Carebridge would apply to the RHI through the Projects Stream, through CMHC's online portal system. More details about the RHI program can be found here: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/nhs/rapid-housing-initiative>

Applications are due by December 31, 2020, and allocations are targeted to be assigned by March 31, 2021. Completion of projects funded under the Projects Stream must be completed by March 31, 2022 (or 12 months from agreement). A key consideration for applications to the RHI, is whether a project can be completed within the tight timelines. To meet the timelines, only modular construction will be considered for new build projects. Additionally, projects that apply to the RHI Projects Stream will be scored, and the highest scoring projects have the best chance

of being awarded funding. A number of factors can increase a project's scoring, including: appropriately zoned land, other contributions to the project (i.e. land, equity/donations, waived municipal fees, operational funding), projects targeting women and indigenous populations.

In mid-November, St. John's Affordable Housing Task Force reconvened with Carebridge, Cahdco and the Town of Smiths Falls in light of the RHI funding model. Existing properties for renovation were considered, as well as vacant land for modular building. The application deadline was one which normal development processes are accelerated and Carebridge moved swiftly.

Following its November 23rd meeting, St. John's Parish Council passed the following motion which was shared with Carebridge Community Support: **That Parish Council commit to: a) supporting Carebridge Community Support's application to CMHC for RHI funding to create permanent affordable housing units in Smiths Falls; and b) developing a partnership with Carebridge that will call upon St. John's to wisely and faithfully offer its gifts to address the affordable housing shortage in Smiths Falls.** There is no financial commitment attached to this motion. It signals a willingness by St. John's leadership to develop a partnership with Carebridge moving forward, in light of broad support expressed by the congregation in earlier congregational meetings.

On December 10th, members of St. John's Affordable Housing Task Force met with Carebridge CEO Robert Eves, Carebridge Community Engagement Director Jeff Mills, Carebridge Admin. Assistant Annie Wiggins, Cahdco (non-profit real estate development corporation), Project Manager Cynthia Jacques (who is submitting the RHI funding application on behalf of Carebridge). In order to strengthen the RHI application, a letter of support from St. John's was sought. At the December 14th Town Council meeting, Carebridge presented its RHI proposal and concept site plan for a modular build at **44 Chambers St.** and received enthusiastic support: <https://www.hometownnews.ca/carebridge-community-support-smiths-falls-support/>

Here is the current status:

- An intent to purchase the lot on Chambers St. has been filed by a third party;
- Peter Mansfield, an architect based in Almonte has drafted the concept site plan;
- Modular builder RCM in the Eastern Townships has been approached by the Saumure Group and is interested (no contract signed) <https://www.rcmgroupe.com/en>
- Interval House in Carleton Place is willing to fully support units assigned to them for housing women ready to move into permanent housing;
- Lanark County Mental Health is willing to partner to support those who will be housed who will be in need of additional support;
- The concept site plan shows 28 units in a modular build: combination of mostly 1-bedroom with some 2 and 3-bedroom units, community room, laundry facilities and outdoor amenity space. This plan would not require any zoning changes for the property;
- The town is fully on board with waivers on permit fees, property tax abatement and planning;
- Cahdco is submitting the RHI application to CMHC the week of December 21;
- Carebridge is committed to building affordable housing in Smiths Falls even if the RHI application isn't approved;
- A letter of support from St. John's was provided to Carebridge for inclusion in the application package. In this letter, the November Parish Council Motion was stated and it was further indicated that we are now engaging the congregation through our governance process in order to offer financial support to the project.

Next steps

This is simply a briefing note to bring the congregation up to date on what transpired in a very short period of time from mid-November until now, following a period of relative quiet on the file. It was important to get this update to you in order to inform you of the shift in the project plan, the acquisition of partnering agencies and to signal that a process to engage the congregation

through information sessions, Q&A's with the intent to make a decision regarding financial commitment to this project will be put forward very soon. With COVID restrictions in place, this process will present some unique challenges but, as the angel said to Mary in the Gospel reading for Advent IV, "nothing is impossible with God." Other parishes in our diocese have been able to move forward on time sensitive initiatives designed to serve the broader community during the pandemic restrictions. We know it can be done. It is important for the congregation to have access to current and above all, accurate information, and to have a voice in determining our role in the affordable housing solution for our community.

[Watch this space for further updates and information.](#)

This is an exceptionally exciting opportunity for us to make a positive, lasting impact for the most vulnerable in our community. Safe, secure, affordable housing is the necessary platform upon which a person or a family can live a life of dignity and health.

If you have any questions, please speak with one of the members of Affordable Housing Task Force: Canon Catherine Ascah; Karen Bryan; Brenda Ferguson; Paul Howard; Bob Mulrooney; Tammy Mulrooney; Kathy Porter.